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**Adult education policy in the European Union
during the Lisbon decade**

The shift to vocational adult learning and work skills matching

by

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation investigates the adult education policy of the European Union (EU) in the framework of the Lisbon agenda 2000–2010, with a particular focus on the changes of policy orientation that occurred during this reference decade.

The year 2006 can be considered, in fact, a turning point for the EU policy-making in the adult learning sector: a radical shift from a wide-ranging and comprehensive conception of educating adults towards a vocationally oriented understanding of this field and policy area has been observed, in particular in the second half of the so-called ‘Lisbon decade’. In this light, one of the principal objectives of the mainstream policy set by the Lisbon Strategy, that of fostering *all forms* of participation of adults in lifelong learning paths, appears to have muted its political background and vision in a very short period of time, reflecting an underlying polarisation and progressive transformation of European policy orientations. Hence, by means of content analysis and process tracing, it is shown that the new target of the EU adult education policy, in this framework, has shifted from *citizens* to *workers*, and the competence development model, borrowed from the corporate sector, has been established as the reference for the new policy road maps.

This study draws on the theory of governance architectures and applies a post-ontological perspective to discuss whether the above trends are intrinsically due to the nature of the Lisbon Strategy, which encompasses education policies, and to what extent supranational actors and phenomena such as globalisation influence the European governance and decision-making. Moreover, it is shown that the way in which the EU is shaping the upgrading of skills and competences of adult learners is modeled around the needs of the ‘knowledge economy’, thus according a great deal of importance to the ‘new skills for new jobs’ and perhaps not enough to life skills in its broader sense which include, for example, social and civic competences: these are actually often promoted but rarely implemented in depth in the EU policy documents.

In this framework, it is conveyed how different EU policy areas are intertwined and interrelated with global phenomena, and it is emphasised how far the building of the EU education systems should play a crucial role in the formation of critical thinking, civic competences and skills for a *sustainable* democratic citizenship, from which a truly cohesive and inclusive society fundamentally depend, and a model of *environmental* and *cosmopolitan* adult education is proposed in order to address the challenges of the new mil-

lennium. In conclusion, an appraisal of the EU's public policy, along with some personal thoughts on how progress might be pursued and actualised, is outlined.

Keywords: European educational policy, Lisbon Strategy, governance architecture, open method of coordination, adult education, lifelong learning, key competences, skills upgrading, competence development, skills mismatch.

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Post scriptum

This doctoral dissertation is conceived and written in a personal capacity and does not engage the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research in any of its views.

*When you call yourself an Indian or a Muslim or a Christian
or a European, or anything else, you are being violent.
Do you see why it is violent? Because you are separating yourself
from the rest of mankind. When you separate yourself
by belief, by nationality, by tradition, it breeds violence.*

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Introduction

In the light of the ageing European population and workforce, the recent economic downturns, and the labour market's increased flexibility, the participation of adults in lifelong learning paths has firmly entered the political agenda of the European Union (EU). This doctoral dissertation investigates the adult education policy of the EU in the framework of the Lisbon policy agenda during the decade 2000–2010. In this diachronic perspective, longitudinal comparative examination is conducted by means of content analysis and process tracing. In fact, if the EU education policy research is comparative by nature, this is particularly true in relation to the Lisbon Strategy: the whole assumption of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), underlying the harmonisation of the European educational systems, is inspired by the principle of subsidiarity, because the competence for their outline has not (yet) been transferred from the Member States (MS) to the EU. The governance architecture that has consequently been devised is based on systematic comparison of national educational systems through benchmarking, standards creation and performance measurement, which also entails a constant testing of national administrative capacity, in order to establish best practices and urge under-performing MS to endorse the EU's policy recommendations and to conform to common guidelines, eventually adopting measures to improve educational provision and management.

The purpose of the present research in this scenario is to provide an interpretation of the evolution of EU policy on adult education by analysing policy developments since the Lisbon process was launched in 2000, and to attempt to verify to what extent the EU countries are urged to challenge commensurate reforms accordingly in the framework of the 'soft governance' mechanisms described above. This aim embraces the perspective of focusing on selected dynamics without the pretention of explaining *all* the phenomena and visible outcomes analysed or covering the full range of interconnections existing in the European adult learning sector. Notwithstanding, a number of findings allow for the 'thematic understanding' of the questions raised, and a systemisation of the underlying trends in the EU's education policy. In particular, the following issues are approached, verified and substantiated:

- a) consistent ambiguity of the terminology concerning AE and a mismatch between scientific use and policy debate;
- b) the late definition of key concepts such as 'adult learner' (AL) and 'adult education and learning' (AEL) in the core EU policy documents in this field;
- c) the tension and subsequent imbalance between vocational and non-vocational aspects of adult education and learning;
- d) a shift from *education* to *learning* in the EU's policy-making, reflecting an increased importance accorded to the individual's responsibility and duty for

- training and upskilling in a knowledge society driven by re-framed lifelong learning ideals;
- e) evidence of three distinct phases – though strongly interconnected and progressively overtaking – characterising EU adult education during the Lisbon 2000–2010 decade (see Figure 1), namely:
1. dominance and evolution of the overarching *lifelong learning* discourse (years 2000–2005),
 2. drawing from the above lifelong learning theme, launch of education policies explicitly and specifically targeting adult learners (2005–2006), and
 3. re-orientation of the AE policy towards adult skills, vocational learning and work-related competence development models (2007–2010);
- f) overall weakness of the OMC as an expression of the EU ‘soft policy’ in the field of AE.



Figure 1: Evolutionary phases of the adult education policy in the EU during the Lisbon decade.

The findings presented in chapter 3 provide confirmation of the assumptions and hypotheses made in the Introduction and in chapter 2, and add additional nuances to the discourse that is further developed in chapter 4. Concept formation analysis shows, in the first instance, how the target of the EU policy on adult education, *adults*, tends to overlap with the notion of *workers* (or ‘employed citizen’), while the very content of adult education increasingly become vocationally oriented. It also appears evident that the way the EU is shaping the upgrading of adult learners’ skills and the competences is aimed towards a strengthening of basic and digital skills to be implemented in order to cope with the knowledge economy much more than comprehensive sets of life skills and competences for lifelong learning that include, for example, social competences and active citizenship, although these are often promoted in many EU policy documents.

Furthermore, this study discusses whether the above trends are intrinsically due to the nature of the EU governance architecture in the education policy area (namely the OMC), and in which ways and to what extent other supranational actors (e.g. the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank) and phenomena (e.g. globalisation, particularly in relation to the role played by the world's finance in influencing the setting of the international policy agendas) influence the EU policy-making process.

1. Research dimension and background

Adult education can be approached from the point of view of academic research, educational practice, and policy-making. Although it has soon been recognised as “a field of practice throughout history”, adult education (AE) is still a relatively young field of study which has experienced a “rapid increase in research” – especially after the Second World War (Deshler & Hagan, 1990: 147) – and can be traced through the work of Knowles (1950; 1962), Brunner et al. (1959), Kreitlow (1960; 1970), Jensen, Liveright and Hallenbeck (1964), Knox (1965), Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), Peters and Banks (1982), Long (1983), Stewart (1987), and Peter Jarvis (1989; 1991; 1993), to name but a few. The period between the two world wars was a particularly crucial time in the development of the so-called *adult education movement*, especially in the United States of America. According to Webster Cotton (1964), this period was marked by two traditions: the ‘social reformist’ tradition, which emphasised that adult education should address social, political, and economic issues, and included scholars such as Eduard Lindeman, Joseph Hart, Charles Beard, and Alexander Meiklejohn; and the ‘professional’ tradition, which was partially – according to Cotton – a reaction against the perceived ‘utopianism’ of the social reformist tradition, and was represented by Lyman Bryson, Everett Dean Martin, Alvin Johnson, Morse Cartwright and Edward Lee Thorndike.

According to Deshler and Hagan (1990: 148), the first phase of research in the field of adult education, from the 1950s, focused on the description of theoretical programmes (Miller, 1967; Dickinson & Rusnell, 1971; Long and Agyekum, 1974). After that, a second phase emphasised the various improvements of research methods and design patterned after the cognitive and brain sciences (Boshier, 1979; Grabowski, 1980; West, 1985). Then, a third phase was mainly centred in theory building and in defining the research territory, whereas a fourth phase coincides with the *lifelong learning* discourse that is still dominating a policy debate considerably influenced by the phenomenon of *globalisation* and the rhetoric of the *knowledge economy*, within which adult education is today evolving and being reframed.

In the context of the EU policy, the 2000–2010 decade of the Lisbon Strategy is crucial for the definition and ‘endorsement’ by the European Union of the adult education and learning sector for two main reasons: firstly, in this period of time the EU *specifically* addressed adult learners, officially launching its adult education policy with the Communication from the European Commission: *It is never too late to learn* (EC, 2006b); secondly, as it is shown below, the philosophical orientation behind this policy stream evolved from *liberal, humanistic* and *socially-oriented* conceptions of educating adults towards more *professional* and *vocationally-oriented* approaches and practices, which occurred in the second half of the decade.

1.1 The ageing European population

While the 20th century was marked by a radical, global demographic expansion, the present century is going to be the century of the ageing of the population. Because of the important decrease in fertility rates, combined with the progresses made in medical sciences determining a generous increase in life expectancy, the world population is ageing much faster than it has ever done before. Several European Member States (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Finland, France and Portugal) face severe population ageing and, given the increase in old age dependency, demographic pressure on pension expenditures is now increasing as the 'baby boom generation' is reaching the age of retirement (ILO, 2000; see also OECD, 2003; 2006). In all of Europe, the rapidity of this phenomenon will make the intensity of its impact unpredictable: according to Eurostat (2009a: 20), "the population of the EU as a whole would be slightly larger in 2060 than today, but much older":

Half of the population today is 40 years old or more. In 2060, half of the population will be aged 48 years or above. The number of elderly persons aged 65 or above already surpasses the number of children (below 15) in 2008, but their numbers are relatively close. In 2060, there would be more than twice as many elderly than children. In 2008, there are about three and a half times as many children as very old people (above 80). In 2060, children would still outnumber very old persons, but by a small margin: the number of very old people would amount to 80% of the number of children.

CHANGES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION DEMOGRAPHY

These projections made by Eurostat, self-evidently carrying enormous implications for the European welfare systems and even for social cohesion, are illustrated through the supporting graph representing the present age pyramids in the EU and the projection of the structure of the population until 2060:

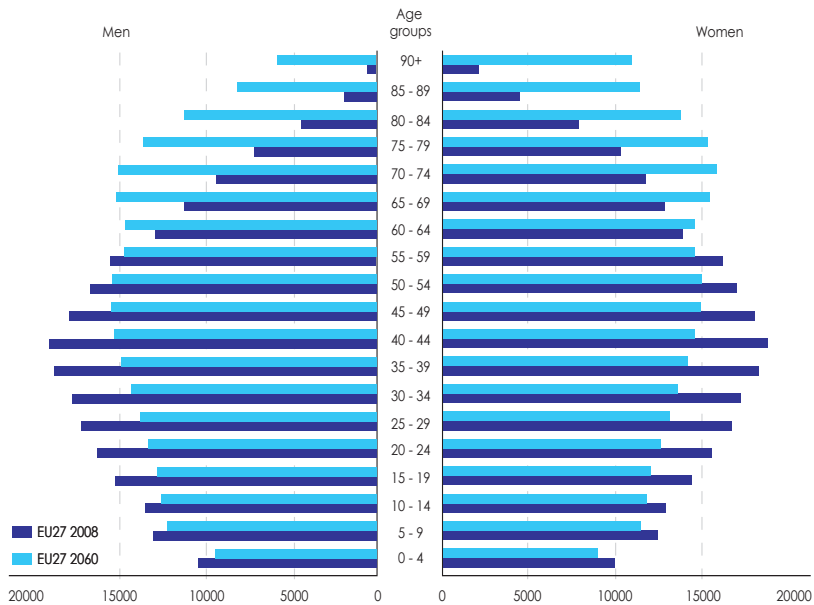


Figure 2: Population pyramids (in thousands), EU-27/EA, in 2008 and 2060. From Eurostat (2009a: 41).

The following chart represents the projected changes in the EU-27 that will affect, in the years to come, the structure of the European population by main age groups (0–14, 15–64, 65–79 and over 80):

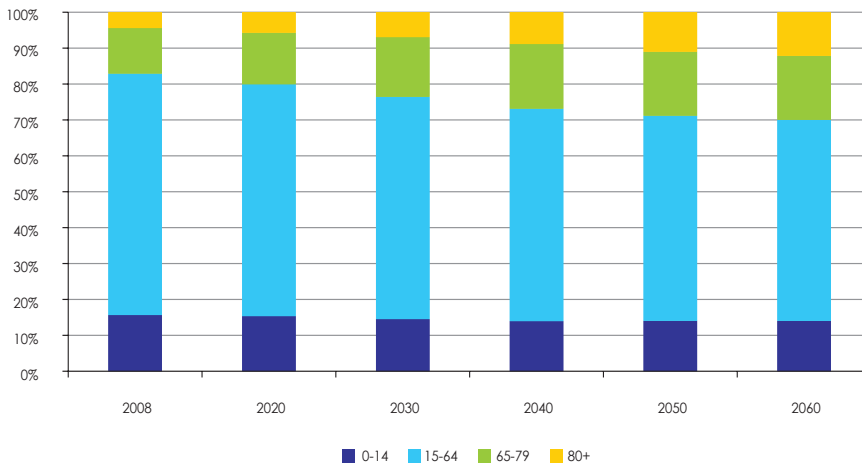


Figure 3: Projection of changes in the structure of the population by main age groups (in %). Source: Eurostat (2009a: 44).

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

The ageing of the population determines substantial increases in several categories of expenditure, such as health care – for which costs are likely to increase dramatically – while others, like education and training, will tend to fall as the population ages, due to the high probability that young people would be more eager to enter a contracting labour market instead of higher education paths. In 2000, the International Labour Organization (ILO) published a report addressing this situation in alarming terms (ILO, 2000: 2), and stressed that the offering of longer job tenures for the older workforce might lead to another inter-generational problem: the increasing competition between older and younger workers. In this respect, the Director of Eurofound and former Chair of CEDEFOP's governing board, Juan Menéndez-Valdés, emphasised the importance of flexibility in the workplace (adjusting, within a reasonable time, the working conditions) and of designing new workplaces “in order to change tasks and procedures to facilitate transition, in a smooth way, for gradual retirement and for transferring knowledge from the older workers to the younger”. (INT12).

Moreover, Menéndez-Valdés noted that, while the present debate on the ageing workforce is usually centred on “its impact in economic terms or in terms of the financing of the pension systems”, the *quality* of work would also be affected by the ageing of workforce (*ibid.*):

We have to work longer, because we live longer, but we have to work better too, so how to make work *sustainable* is a key element for the future. How to manage an ageing workforce means that we have to address the right working conditions to make it possible that people stay longer at work. [...] We have results that show some positive elements, for instance a high share of people think that they can stay longer at work and that they will be working over 60 years old, we have more awareness on health and safety issues, and we have more people involved in lifelong learning. But on the other side we see that work intensity is increasing, while autonomy is not increasing at the same pace, which makes that we will have additional risks in the future, and also the working times will set some challenges.

ILO, Eurofound and other organisations have been warning that “cutting the trend towards early retirement and continue present redundancy policies might simply result in more unemployment at the end of working life, a bleak prospect for developed welfare states” (ILO, 2000: 40). These already severe prospects have further been exacerbated by the “post-2007” crises (CASE, 2012; cf. paragraph 5.1 The Global Economic Crisis and the resurrection of nationalism). In addition, the ILO concluded its study by addressing the problem of the reduced inflows of younger workers that will alter the age structure on the labour markets, in which “the proportion of older workers will increase, while those of younger workers will decline”, and issued an ultimate recommendation to policy-makers to promptly undertake “specific responses in terms of training” (*ibid.*).

CHALLENGES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

In a similar tone, the Communication *Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the EU* from the European Commission (EC) outlined the prospects Europe is preparing to face (EC, 2009a: 2):

For the first time in history, the vast majority of Europe's citizens are able to lead active, healthy and participative lives well into old age. At the same time, ageing societies bring new opportunities to innovative firms through the demand for new or adapted goods and services. However, the combination of ageing and low birth rates also poses major economic, budgetary and social challenges. Europe has started to prepare for these challenges, and encouraging progress has been made by some Member States, notably through reforms of pension systems and a better balance between professional and family life. However, without further institutional and policy changes, demographic trends are expected to transform our societies considerably, impinging on intergenerational solidarity and creating new demands on future generations. Such trends will have a significant impact on potential growth and lead to strong pressures to increase public spending, not only in terms of pension and health expenditure, but also in infrastructure, housing and education.

The question of intergenerational solidarity has been highlighted by the EU and integrated with that of the ageing population in the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations of 2012. With reference to the implications of the demographic changes on the educational systems, the EC principally stressed the fact that elderly people will account for an increasing share of the population and that, "despite the decreasing number of children over the coming decades, current objectives on education policy and targets in the EU, as well as a substantial improvement in the quality of education, may well require higher educational expenditure in the future", because "investing in the human capital of young people and adult workforce will be crucial to future productivity growth" (EC, 2009a: 5; see also Vinokur, 1976). Another consequence of the ageing population on the ratio of the public expenditure in education, resulting from changes in the demographic composition, is also the increased need for adult education provision (Maniscalco, 2010b).

1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning

The general concern of adults with learning and their need to be informed and up-to-date is not new. Similarly to many other problems engaging the attention of present-day scholars, that of adult education and its historical, cognitive and even policy context goes back at least to the Greeks. According to David Deshler and Nancy Hagan (1990: 155), "one of the most long-standing efforts in adult education has been to identify what is unique about adult learning in contrast to child or youth learning". This effort, in their view, "gave rise to the term *andragogy*, the practice of helping adults learn, as distinct from *pedagogy*, the practice of instructing children". Pedagogy is actually derived from

the Greek word *paid*, meaning 'child', plus *agogos*, meaning 'leading/leader of'. Accordingly, pedagogy has been defined as "the art and science of teaching children" (Davenport, 1987: 18). Until recently, however, "the pedagogical model has been applied equally to the teaching of children and adults and this, in a sense, is a contradiction in terms" (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990). The sense of this paradox lays indeed in the fact that "as adults mature, they become increasingly independent and responsible for their own actions: they are often motivated to learn by a sincere desire to solve immediate problems in their lives and, additionally, they have an increased need to be *self-directing* in their learning processes". As the pedagogical model *sensu stricto* would not, according to some scholars, account for such developmental changes on the part of adults, it would thus produce tension, resentment, and resistance in individuals involved in learning processes (*ibid.*).

ANDRAGOGY

Under the umbrella of what today is most often referred to as *adult education*, the growth and development of *andragogy* as an alternative model of instruction has helped to remedy this situation and improve the teaching of adults (Jarvis, 1984). Andragogy as a system of ideas, concepts and approaches to adult learning was introduced in the United States of America by Malcolm Knowles (1975, 1980, 1984). His contributions related to andragogy have indeed considerably stimulated the growth of the adult education field during the past thirty years. As noted by Hiemstra and Sisco (1990), the first academic use of the term *andragogy* to catch the widespread attention of adult educators dates back to 1968, when Knowles, Professor of Adult Education at the Boston University, borrowed the term from Dušan Savićević, who made him aware of its existence, although it was actually coined by a German educator, Alexander Kapp.¹ In his book entitled *The Modern practice of Adult education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* (1970) Knowles defined this term as "the art and science of helping adults learn". Few years later, he explained (1978: 56; own emphasis):

Andragogy assumes that the point at which an individual achieves a self-concept of essential *self-direction* is the point at which he psychologically becomes adult. A very critical thing happens when this occurs: the individual develops a deep psychological need to be perceived by others as being *self-directing*.

¹ Knowles commented this event in the following words (Knowles and Associates, 1990: 6): "I found the solution in the summer of 1967, then a Yugoslavian adult educator, Dušan Savićević, attended my summer session course on adult learning and at the end of it exclaimed, 'Malcom, you are preaching and preaching andragogy' I responded: 'Whatagogy?' because I had never heard the term before. He explained that European adult educators had coined the term as a parallel to pedagogy, to provide a label for the growing body of knowledge and technology in regard to adult learning". The oldest document using the term 'andragogik' is credited to Alexander Kapp, in his book *Platon's Erziehungslehre, als Pädagogik für die Einzelnen und als Staatspädagogik* printed in Leipzig in 1833, while the first Englishlanguage use of the term appears to be in Lindeman's milestone book *The Meaning of Adult Education* of 1926 (cf. Stewart 1987: 108–9).

Later, his thinking changed to the point that, in the 1980 edition, he suggested: “andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about adult learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumptions as to their ‘fit’ with particular situations”. Further to which, he advanced that “the models are probably most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption (about learners) in a given situation falling in between the two ends” (Knowles, 1980: 43). Interviewed in 2009, Dušan Savićević² still considered andragogy as a “relatively independent discipline that came to being in the process of differentiation of science during the 20th century” (INT24):

In eastern Europe and in Scandinavian countries, and even in Germany where andragogy was conceived, some authors use the term ‘Pedagogy of Adults’. [...] When they talk about andragogy, they refer to the concept of andragogy as explained by Malcom Knowles in the US. The similar situation is in Sweden. Nevertheless, changes occurred in the 1990s. The ideological thesis that andragogy is a ‘bourgeois’ discipline and that the problem of andragogy is a ‘scholastic question’ were abandoned. The concept of andragogy grew even stronger out of these debates and became accepted in university circles, in both scientific and educational terms. Acceptance of novelties does not run smoothly without contradictions. It is the dialectics of science. [...] Research and teaching units have been established at universities. Andragogy is included in teaching and research plans of universities. The entire system of andragogy sub-disciplines dealing with certain areas of adult education and learning has been set up.

Nowadays, the notion of *andragogy* has nonetheless been marginalised in scientific debate (Davenport, 1993: 111–2; cf. Jarvis, 1989: 50–2) because of the different meanings attributed to it, and whether it is seen as a theory (e.g. Knowles’ theoretical formulations), a set of hypotheses (based on conceptions of self-directed and autonomous learners and teachers as facilitators of learning), as scholarly approaches to the learning of adults (in which ‘andragogy’ represents the science of understanding and supporting lifelong and life-wide education of adults), or just as practical teaching guidelines (Tight, 1996: 103). The ‘obsolescence’ of this term, however, has left no room for unambiguous alternatives (Davenport, 1987: 19; own emphasis):

Given the semantical problems in Knowles’ definition of andragogy, the lack of clarity and specificity in his underlying assumptions, the research reports which do not support and sometimes even refute it, and the mounting academic criticism of it as a legitimate theory or approach, one might ask if andragogy retains any utility or viability for the discipline of *adult education*.

² Professor Savićević was appointed, after his Ph.D. in adult education in Belgrade, Full Professor of Andragogy. He then founded the Andragogy Department in the same university and is today member of the Serbian Academy of Education.

The concept of *adult education* has instead dominated the scene in many countries and has been preferred by scholars and practitioners, and consequently by policy-makers, especially in Europe.

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education (otherwise known as ‘continuing education’, ‘recurrent education’ or ‘further education’) is a broad term for the practice of teaching and educating adults, which encompasses a variety of targets, purposes, forms of provision, learning environments, underlying philosophies, policies and principles, which makes the term controversial, particularly in relation to the EU policy context. Gale Jensen (1964), for example, argued that adult education is “a practical discipline whose ultimate goal is to give to adult education practitioners better control over factors associated with the problems they face” (Rubenson, 1990: 52). Alan Knox (1985: 183), instead, claimed: “one major reason for adult education research is to produce findings the practitioner can use to improve practice”. In the light of these understandings of adult education, mainly oriented to considering it as a *field of practice* (cf. Richardson, 1994), Martin Lawn, from the University of Edinburgh, explained (INT21):

Adult education is an old term, with a really important past. Understandings about this term are really quite different. It has a strong resistant history in England, for example. It constantly re-asserts itself, but it is *not* a sector. It has always been more *voluntary*. I don’t know how it connects to the very varied world of adult education in Europe. In Sweden it would be a completely different thing, with formal, non-formal paths and so on. [...] Adult education has had different local meanings that existed before the Union and alongside the Union.

The first conceptualisations of ‘adult education’ have actually emphasised the kind of practice which involved *liberal* forms of adult participation to formal and non-formal education, including different modes of independent study consciously pursued. ‘Adult education programmes’ are still known as ‘continuing’ or ‘recurrent education’, and are especially designed for people who are no longer in school and want to obtain a higher level of education. The idea of ‘adult education’ after school was put forward by Joseph Hart in 1927, when he noted (Hart, 1927: vii):

Within the last century, education, having become more or less completely identified with schooling, has been allocated almost exclusively to the period of childhood and youth. This has enabled adult generations to avoid and escape education. All this has taken place in a century of unprecedented industrial and social change – a century that should, because of those changes, have devoted a major part of its energies to the education of adults for intelligent living in this changed world.

Since then, adult education trajectories were developed in Europe to integrate and gradually replace religious education and became bigger and more structured during the

period of the industrial revolution, in such a way that the schooling of children and adolescents would take place in formal environments. At the same time, the need to educate the working class in certain vocational skills emerged. In 1984, for example, Carl Perkins' *Vocational Education Act* in the United States established equal opportunities in the provision of vocational education for adults. In this context, main sources of adult education became public schools, colleges and universities, and other governmental bodies providing formal education. Private schools started playing a role as well, and several policy initiatives allowing for the increased liberalisation of the adult education sector changed considerably AEL as a field of policy and practice as well.

Around the end of the 20th century, a trend emerged offering workshops, classes, seminars and training aimed at teaching knowledge and skills in order to acculturate individuals and which stressed the emotional, physical, and cultural dimensions of adults. These learning opportunities typically took place in community colleges or universities, or community and religious centers. Hence, unlike school, often mandated through legislation and structured in a strict way into steadily advancing levels of achievement and certification, adult education has muted and diversified a lot its scope, and is now normally classified according to its fields of specialisation: it can be related to 'second chance' schools for obtaining a formal diploma, to forms of 'remedial' education and training in literacy and other basic skills, to professional development (vocational adult education), or as liberal or popular forms of learning for 'personal enrichment', normally limited to leisure time. Because of the ageing population in Western societies and as technology has advanced and impacted the labour market, adult education has grown in importance, since industrialisation required an increasing number of skilled workers, who then needed to continue updating their competences, skills and knowledge.

PURPOSES AND PHILOSOPHIES OF ADULT EDUCATION

The purpose of learning plays, in fact, a major role in the very conceptualisation of this field of educational policy and practice. Hal Beder (1990) presented the *Purposes and Philosophies of Adult Education* as basic means to explain what adult education is about by describing its nature, and by defining and classifying it (p. 37):

Purposes, as defined here, are the basic reasons for conducting adult education; purposes are translated into practice. In some cases, purposes are derived from ideals, to abet the so-called good society or to help individuals to achieve their true potential, for example. In other cases, however, purposes derive from more operational concerns such as making a profit or improving organizational effectiveness.

In the above view, *purposes* would determine and realise the participation of adults in learning, while *philosophies* would shape the practice of adult learning. From the point

of view of the “basic purposes of adult education”, Beder (1990: 39) identified four main categories:

- 1) to facilitate change in a dynamic society;
- 2) to support and maintain the good social order;
- 3) to promote productivity;
- 4) to enhance personal growth.

The reference to the need for adults to remain up-to-date in the wake of the rapid, fast-paced societal change and increase knowledge and skills as a core purpose of adult education “is echoed throughout the literature from Hart’s time to the present” (*ibid.*). In addition to the ability to adapt to change, productivity and the contribution to economic growth have most of the time been subordinated to that of ‘maintaining social order’ (in modern terms, *social cohesion*) and to the growth of the “whole person” (*personal development*), in the sense described by Jacks (1936: 4). In effect, Beder (1990: 40) highlighted:

That a major purpose of adult education is to promote the democratic order is an idea with strong roots in the early adult education movement. The logic was as simple as it was powerful: democracy can work only if the citizenry exercises rational, informed choice, for in the absence of informed, rational choice, propaganda prevails, and democracy lapses into totalitarianism. Furthermore, true democracy requires active participation on the part of the citizenry. Since the electorate are adults, it is the purpose of adult education to assist in informing and developing critical skills. [...] Although an informed, critical-thinking citizenry is necessary for democracy, it is not sufficient. Participation is also required, and this too was considered to be a purpose of adult education.

Another category outlined by Beder in relation with the purpose of adult education is that of promoting *productivity* – on both individual and societal level – and contributing to the *effectiveness* and *economic growth* of an organisation (or a country). This category can indeed be considered concurrent and somewhat even antithetical to personal development and to the perspective of contributing to social cohesion, in a means/end dichotomy that critically subordinates individual needs to ‘collective’ goals of *economic* development and *wealth* increases (p. 41; original emphasis):

The third general purpose of adult education, to promote productivity, is manifest on two levels. The first is organizational or institutional level, where adult education is conducted to enhance individual performance as a means towards increasing organizational effectiveness. Adult education at this level is typically termed training, staff development, or human resource development, although *human resource development* frequently includes other development strategies in addition to education – strategies such as compensation. Adult education is also used to promote productivity at the societal level. [...] At this level, human capital theory comes to the fore and is used to justify public subsidy of adult education programs that enhance the productivity of the general economy. [...] Today, the intellectual tradition of education in the workplace has given way to a utilitarian vision that seeks to maximize organizational effectiveness through the enhancement of employee or member competence.

Within this category (i.e. educating adults in the perspective of increasing their professional productivity), Leonard Nadler (1982) identified different outcomes that can be obtained through adult *training*, *education*, and *development* (Beder, 1990: 42):

- a) the improvement of employees' performance in their present jobs (through *training*);
- b) the preparation of employees for future, well-defined positions in the organisation (through *education*);
- c) the learning for the general growth of the individual or organization (through *development*).

In this light, Beder illustrated the three principal philosophical traditions of adult education at that time, before the advent of the lifelong learning discourse³ to serve the rhetoric of the 'knowledge-based society' (cf. page 272 and see par. 4.1 The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing?): namely, the *liberal-progressive* tradition, the *countercritique*, and the tradition of *personal growth*. The first one, according to him, has been "part of mainstream thought at least since the 1920s" and (still today) represents "an amalgam of liberal and progressive views", with adult education playing a "decidedly social role" and whose purpose would be to support democratic order (Beder, 1990: 44). Representatives of this tradition – that Cotton (1964) called 'social reformist' (cf. page 21) – are indeed, to different degrees, Eduard Lindeman (1926), Joseph Hart (1927), and Malcom Knowles (1980). The second tradition was related in many ways to Marxism, even though its representatives considered capitalist democracy to be "inherently flawed by structural inequalities that can be redressed only by substantial reordering of the social system" (Beder, 1990: 45). In their view, any class that wishes to dominate should overcome a narrow economic approach in order to express full intellectual and moral leadership. In this frame of reference, moreover, Antonio Gramsci (1947; 1972), Italian intellectual, political theorist, politician and activist, analysed the role of education in capitalist society and theorised that dominance of the ruling class is exercised through ideological hegemony. Later on, other scholars have focussed on "the way in which the social structure reproduces itself through education" (Beder, 1990: 46): among others, Bowles and Gintis (1976) explored the interdependence between economic means of production, class structure and education, while Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) paid instead more attention to the reproduction of social classes through culture and of culture within social classes. The third tradition of adult education, centred on 'personal growth', was associated by Beder (1990: 47) to thinkers who shared with those of the liberal-progressive tradition the belief that society is essentially good, and tended to focus on the individual

³ Cf. paragraph 3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning*.

rather than on the society. This interpretation was very much similar to the idea of *humanism* in adult education illustrated by Elias and Merriam (1980).

In this respect, Stephen Brookfield (1990: 203) described the *Humanistic Paradigm* as the predominant paradigm of practice in the literature of adult and continuing education. Drawn from the work of humanistic psychologists (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968; Allport, 1955), the tradition of liberal humanism has actually a long history, especially in the United Kingdom, in Canada and in the United States of America, where adult education is deeply rooted “in a view of education as a partnership rather than as an authoritarian transmission of information from the expert to the ignorant”. Its principal representative is certainly Malcom Knowles, even though Knowles’ idea of ‘self-directed learning’ has been criticised and considered “overly consumerist” by his detractors, who have seen an undue prescriptive power of the learner in the choice of the content of learning more than a “smoothly flowing river of increasing self-actualisation” (Brookfield, 1990: 204):

At the root of the humanistic paradigm is the felt-needs rationale. This rationale, briefly stated, holds that good practice in adult education is equated with meeting learners’ felt needs, that is, with satisfying the educational demands and wants expressed by the learners in the manner they prescribe. This rationale is appealing; when curricula, methods, and evaluative criteria are determined by the learners, it might seem to be an admirable embodiment of principles of democratic education. Yet, such a rationale can be overly consumerist. It stresses giving learners what they say they want.

Another, more recent taxonomy of the adult education conceptions is based on the general *attitude* and primary *intention* of the adult education process, and has been illustrated by Katarina Popovic in a paper⁴ published by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). According to the scholar, adult education can be classified as:

- compensatory and remedial adult education, which has the task to correct or compensate for what has been missed or done wrong in the past;
- adult education oriented to professional and other roles of adult people, with the purpose to help a person to adapt, to integrate or to function in their given frame or under changed circumstances;
- humanistic and development-oriented adult education, with the ambition to develop one’s potential or to cause some personal changes;
- innovative and enlightenment-oriented adult education, for which the intention is to offer help, to encourage, reform, and to improve emancipatory adult education and empowerment, which try to enable people to make individual and social changes and to induce some radical transformations.

⁴ Available at <http://www.eaea.org/index.php?k=11952> (last retrieved on 12 March 2010).

Coming to play a significant part within the more recent *lifelong learning* approach, thus insisting on the 'recurrency' of learning throughout life, adult education has also diversified in terms of educational content. Drawing on this paradigm, a functional typology that takes into account the purpose of learning is:

1. 'remedial' and 'second-chance education': basic skills development and literacy education, in order to fulfil the need to compensate for the inadequacies of earlier education;
2. education for vocational, technical or professional competence development;
3. education for 'self-fulfillment', which embraces liberal education programmes: education in music, the arts, dance, theatre, literature, arts and crafts;
4. education for health, welfare and family living, including all kinds of education in health, family relations, planned parenthood, hygiene and child care;
5. education for civic, political, and community competence, including all kinds of education relating to government and administration capacity building, community development, public and international affairs, and political participation.

As a matter of fact, over ten years after the launch of the Lisbon agenda in 2000 and fifteen years after the European Year of Lifelong Learning of 1996, Cotton's *social vs. professional* adult education dichotomy is still present in the academic discourse, and the typology of adult education above outlined falls as well under the umbrella of what is today generally understood as *lifelong learning*.

LIFELONG LEARNING

The idea of *lifelong learning* envisions citizens provided with learning opportunities at all ages and in numerous contexts. Adults learn across their lifespan, and are active in different arenas: as *citizens* in a democratic society, where the demand on individuals is not just that they should be able to receive information, but that they should be involved in shaping modern society; as *consumers* of products and *users* of services, in increasingly deregulated and globalised markets; in working life scenarios that impose new demands, different from those required in the past and changing at an increasingly rapid rate; in family, organisational and recreational life; and in studies, liberal education or vocational learning activities. These arenas are described as *formal*, *non-formal* and *informal* learning environments. In the EU's policy statements, 'formal learning' is referred to "education provided in the formal diploma-based systems of education", typically leading to a certification, and examples are primary and secondary level of education and university or college diploma and degree courses; 'non-formal learning', instead, is defined as "planned and explicit learning which usually takes place outside the formal education and training system and typically does not lead directly to qualifications"; lastly, 'informal learning' is defined as "unplanned learning from daily life activities related to work, fa-

mily, community, leisure” (EC, 2010a: 4–5). Informal learning covers, in effect, learning that takes place in a broad range of situations covering family life, recreational and organisational life, and it is not organised and structured for the express purpose of learning, nor is the focus on the ‘learner’.

Consequently, ‘lifelong learning’ should be considered as learning consisting of two dimensions: the *life-long* and the *life-wide* (Clark, 2005; NIACE, 2007). Kenneth Wain (2009: 338) emphasised that the latter term refers to learning that takes place in the above-mentioned learning environments, including non-formal and informal learning ‘in many different *settings*’ (cf. Desjardins et al., 2006: 19). Indeed, in the arenas in which they act, individuals continuously develop strategies and acquire knowledge, competences and skills. In this regard, the expression ‘lifelong learning’ appears rather trivial. Therefore, policy-makers face an additional challenge related to the *direct accountability* (as opposed to *indirect accountability*: cf. Biesta, 2009) of the policies they devise, which encompass – as further emphasised in the next paragraph – the assessment, recognition and validation of knowledge, competences and skills capitalised by the adult population which do not adequately figure in the formal certification of qualifications, especially when these are based on traditional proficiency evaluation.

1.3 European education policy: an overview

At the dawn of the European Union, the political interest in education was rather poor. Economic integration was at the top of the political agenda and education was not really a part of the action priorities. Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome (i.e. the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, TEEC) signed in 1957, aimed at the foundation of a European Economic Community (EEC) and thus provided very limited influence on national education policies. In 1963, the European Council took the first decision towards the implementation of a common vocational training policy (EU, 1963) and then, in 1976, the Member States agreed upon a first action programme in this policy area (EU, 1976), for which the declared goal was to improve the possibilities of education and training for European citizens through better cooperation and coordination processes between different national educational systems.

As John West (2012: 8) pointed out, the early 1980s “saw an attempt to widen the vision of the Community to embrace the so-called ‘People’s Europe’ launched at the Fontainebleau Summit of 1984”, which stated that it was essential for the Community to “respond to the expectations of the people of Europe by adopting measures to strengthen and promote its identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world” (EU, 1984: 11). Based on this statement and on a fundamental judgement of 1985 made by the European Court of Justice (the *Gravier* case), which held that vocational training, formally included in the Treaty, encompassed “any form of education which prepares for a

qualification for a particular profession, trade or employment or which provides the necessary skills for such a profession, trade or employment” (EC, 2006f: 102), the European Commission (EC) considered itself legitimated to “establish its new programmes in the field of education and training more securely and on a substantially larger scale – these, after all, would affect the people of Europe directly rather than relying on the intermediation of Member States” (West, 2012: 8). Resultantly, despite a strong opposition “amongst the more Eurosceptic Member States (particularly Denmark), which focused on the legal basis for centrally run programmes in the field of education, given that the Treaty of Rome made no mention of education”, the EU launched various programmes, including *Erasmus* in higher education and *Leonardo da Vinci* in the vocational education area.

The 1980s also witnessed important “developments in requirements for the mutual recognition of Diplomas and Certificates, a field which was also plainly in scope to the Community, and indeed one which was central to one of its main tenets – the freedom of movement of workers” (*ibid.*). These initiatives were translated into two Directives issued by the Council of the European Communities, one on the Higher Education Diplomas (EU, 1989) and, three years later, a second, complementary version for “lower and shorter duration training requirements” (EU, 1992). However, whilst the Single European Act (SEA) of 1987 expanded the EEC powers in the field of research and development and thus added new momentum to European integration, the focal points of the 1976 action programme in the field of education defined only basic common education policies, until the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (the Treaty on European Union, henceforth TEU) set the legal basis for a common European framework in the area of education and training.

THE DAWN OF THE EU LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY

The inception of the ‘lifelong learning’ (LLL) concept in the European education policy was in fact realised by the EU with two white papers, typically used to draft policy principles and general guidelines of a non-binding nature (cf. ‘The non-legislative and post-regulatory nature of the OMC’ in paragraph 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU’s soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector). The first one, the Commission’s *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* (EC, 1993), known as the ‘Delors White Paper’, well reflected the Western countries’ growing concerns about economic growth and international competitiveness, and therefore “invoked the importance of education and training in securing growth and in particular introduced the notion of *lifelong learning*, though this had been in currency in earlier OECD and UNESCO publications” (West, 2012: 11; own emphasis). This new approach, aimed to attain growth and competitiveness through a strengthened focus on human capital to “support the medium-term strategy of moving towards the 21st century”, was explained by the European Commission in these terms: “the Community needs to improve its long-term competi-

veness [...] both investing in people and developing an active policy of encouraging new economic activity and employment growth in domestic and internationally competitive sectors” (EC, 1993: 123). Moreover (p. 120; original emphasis):

In their efforts to devise and implement education and training measures which are able to stimulate growth and employment, [...] all measures must [...] necessarily be based on the *concept of developing, generalizing and systematizing lifelong learning and continuing training*. This means that education and training systems must be reworked in order to take account of the need – which is already growing and is set to grow even more in the future – for the *permanent recomposition and redevelopment of knowledge and know-how*. The establishment of more flexible and more open systems of training and the development of individuals’ ability to adapt will become increasingly important, both for businesses, so that they can make better use of the technological innovations they develop or acquire, and for individuals, a considerable proportion of whom may well have to change their line of work four or five times during their lives.

Consequently to the above premises, and in relation with unemployment and the new requirements of society and work market of the new millennium, the white paper addressed the development of a broad set of skills and competences in a lifelong learning perspective of “learning how to learn” throughout one’s life (*ibid.*):

The basic skills which are essential for integration into society and working life include a mastery of basic knowledge (linguistic, scientific and other knowledge) and skills of a technological and social nature, that is to say the ability to develop and act in a complex and highly technological environment, characterized, in particular, by the importance of information technologies; the ability to communicate, make contacts and organize etc. These skills include, in particular, the fundamental ability to acquire new knowledge and new skills – *to learn how to learn throughout one’s life*. People’s careers will develop on the basis of the progressive extension of skills.

According to John West (2012: 12), the idea of having a collective forward agenda across all education and training, and strictly tied to objectives, was clearly mooted when the Commission advanced a proposal for a method based on the constant monitoring of the progress towards reaching the previously set goals, in order to implement the policy outlined in the white paper (EC, 1993: 122; original italics):

The Community should *set firmly and clearly the essential requirements and the long-term objectives for measures and policies in this area* in order to make it easier to develop a new model for growth, competitiveness and employment in which education and training play a key role and to ensure essential equality of opportunity and the coherent development of the three dimensions of the European system of education and training (education, training and culture). One way of sending an important signal and creating added awareness in this area would be to announce and organise a ‘European Year of Education’ (perhaps in 1995).

Furthermore, the first manifestation of this new approach came in the field of employment with the European Employment Strategy launched in 1997, and which inaugurated the so-called ‘Open Method of Coordination’: “as well as the usual fine words the strategy contained a mode of working involving the setting of overall targets, the produc-

tion of action plans by each Member State, review of these by countries jointly (based on assessments by the Commission) and statistical monitoring of results” (West, 2012: 12).

In 1995, the Commission also drafted the guidelines for lifelong learning in another white paper, this time on *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society*, and launched in 1996 the European Year of Lifelong Learning in order to promote the recognition of an integrated European education policy. Since then, ‘lifelong learning’ has become the core ideal of EU policy in education, clearly expressed in the Communication from the Commission *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality*, which aimed at creating a ‘European space for lifelong learning’ (EC, 2001a). According to this policy statement, people of all ages should have equal and unlimited access to offers of high quality learning within the entire EU, in order to achieve competitiveness, employment, social inclusion, citizenship and personal development.

PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Most scholars provide a periodisation of the EU educational policy according to the various stages of development of the Community’s and then the Union’s legal basis (e.g. West, 2012). Hubert Ertl (2003: 2) identified four “discrete phases of development” of the EU educational policies:

- 1) *Initiation phase*, beginning in 1951 with the provisions of the Treaties of Paris and Rome.
- 2) *Foundation phase*, beginning in 1963 with the formulation of ten common principles for vocational education.
- 3) *Expansion phase*, beginning in 1976 with the introduction of the first common programmes for education and the concept of the European dimension in education and training.
- 4) *Consolidation phase*, beginning with the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty), which provided a new legal basis for EU policies and initiatives in the field.

It is straightforward that the European Communities (ECs) and then the European Union have undergone distinct impulses and momenta correlated with the establishment of new legal bases, especially through the progressive consolidation and reform of the EU treaties (Shaw, 1999; Grek et al., 2011). John West portrayed this ‘consolidation’ phase in an interesting ontological perspective, with the EC trying to ‘expand’ its scope and ‘test the limits’ of the new governance tools provided by the Treaty of Maastricht (West, 2012: 10):

This formative period for policy was thus essentially one of experimentation, with the Commission attempting to widen the scope of its activities into education proper, testing the limits of central actions which were acceptable to Member States, establishing some democratic credentials for its activities in education and training through reaching directly to a number of the

stakeholders within Member States, while getting on with the two spheres for which the EU had undoubted legitimacy – the mutual recognition of qualifications and the Social Fund. The education and training provisions of the Maastricht treaty can be seen as a form of ‘settlement’ between the Commission and Member States, allowing it a role in education (as the Treaty of Rome did not), but limiting its role in VET to a rather more realistic level than that which might have been implied in the original Treaty.

Hence, the TEU moved forward from the simple *economic* dimension of the EEC (renamed European Community *tout court*) and led to the creation of the European Union and its single currency. Moreover, it established freedom, democracy and human rights as founding principles of the newborn EU (Art. 6, Par 1), and included for the first time *education* among its policy competences, dedicating special attention to mobility, the acquisition of languages and cooperation in the form of information and experience exchange between educational institutions of the EU countries.

A EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

The most important goal of the consolidated Article 149 of the Treaty of Amsterdam (from Art. 126 of the TEU) was thus the development of a “European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States”, while Article 150 (TEU Art. 127) aimed at improving “initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market” (cf. par. 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC). According to the freedom of establishment principle, mentioned in Article 44 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, an important role was played by the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and study periods among the MS in order to “encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people” (Art. 150) and guarantee, in this way, also the full mobility of workers or future workers: “in order to make it easier for persons to take up and pursue activities as self-employed persons, the Council shall [...] issue directives for the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications” (Art. 47):

Table 1: Historical phases of ECs/EU education policy (EEP).

years	phase	legal basis	principal influences on the EEP
1951–1957	I. European culture and common values	Treaty of Paris (1951)	Dominance of economic integration in policy agendas; setting of common identity and cultural values; launch of common vocational training policy (EU, 1963)
1957–1987		Treaty of Rome (1957)	
1986–1992	II. Educational cooperation and mobility	Single European Act (1986)	Reinforcement of educational cooperation with the first action programme (EU, 1976); projects on language learning and student mobility
1992–1997	III. Subsidiarity and VET	Treaty of Maastricht (1992)	Subsidiarity principle and common European framework in the area of education and training (Art. 149 and Art. 150 of the consolidated Treaty of Amsterdam); action programme for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy (EU, 1994)
1997–2000		Treaty of Amsterdam (1997)	
2000–2007	IV. OMC and European education space	Bologna Declaration (1999), Lisbon Agreements (2000), Treaty of Nice (2001), Copenhagen Declaration (2002)	Education and training are put at the heart of the EU's mainstream policy; the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme is launched; the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in E&T is boosted through inter-governmental agreements and the strengthening of the European education space (EU 2000; 2001; EC, 2001a); European soft law is developed by setting of standards, indicators and benchmarks and increased peer pressure (rankings and sharing of best practices)
2007–present		Treaty of Lisbon (2007) and on the Functioning of the European Union	

Especially important from the point of view of the recognition and validation of prior qualifications were the *Sorbonne Declaration*, a voluntary, inter-governmental agreement signed in 1998 by higher education Ministers of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) for a progressive 'harmonisation' (see p. 62) of the overall framework of higher education (henceforth HE) degrees and cycles, and the more substantial *Bologna Declaration*, another inter-governmental agreement signed by the European Ministers of Education in 1999 aiming to uniform European higher education systems and establish a world-class *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA) among European states by the year 2010 and to improve the worldwide competitiveness of the continent through academic

education and by fostering research and development (R&D). One of the main initiatives related to this framework was to develop a system of comprehensive and comparable certificates by introducing a two-level system of HE diplomas (bachelor and master) as well as a *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System* (the 'ECTS model'). In this regard, West (2012: 17) noted that the *Sorbonne Declaration*, mentioning the goal of 'harmonising' HE degrees and cycles, "went beyond the powers of the Community in the Maastricht Treaty, so when the declaration was reformulated into European Union terms in 1999 in Bologna the word 'harmonisation' was not included" (cf. paragraph 2.1.1 Post-ontological approach to the EU education policy-making).

Vocational education and training was also included in the approach of an open 'European education space' (hereafter EES; cf. Dale, 2006; 2009b) when baselines for an extensive cooperation process were defined in November 2002 with the *Copenhagen Declaration*, which in fact referred to a 'European education and training area' (EETA). This Declaration aimed to promote the transparency of formal qualifications and non-formal and informal prior learning of European workers, but also the *voluntary* maintenance of minimal quality standards in vocational education and training. Another step towards the recognition and validation of diplomas and certificates was the Action Plan for *Promoting of language learning and linguistic diversity* (EC, 2003a).

Furthermore, in 2004, the EC introduced the *Europass* to improve the transparency of qualifications and competences of the European workforce. It comprised five tools which made experiences, competences and qualifications gained inside and outside the EU countries visible and comparable in the whole Union: the Europass CV, Europass language passport, Europass mobility, Europass diploma supplement, and the Europass certificate supplement were all included in this package. In 2006, the EC eventually presented a proposal (EC, 2006c) to implement a *European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* (EQF) in order to promote a system of certification based on *competences* instead of one based on certificates (EU, 2008c), which was closely linked to the *European Credit System in Vocational Education and Training* (EU, 2009b). The EQF represented a standardised way to compare competences in school, vocational and university education with the goal of increasing the mobility of Europe's citizens (and workers).

EU BODIES OPERATING IN THE POLICY AREA OF EDUCATION

The development of the European institutional system included the creation of specialised bodies to support the achievement of the EU goals, even in absence of specific reference or legal grounds for their existence in the Treaties. Among others, several agencies – decentralised bodies owing legal personality and distinct from the various EU institutions – have been established to accomplish a number of specific tasks, suggesting recommendations and issuing technical advice and even assents. Some agencies answer

the need to develop scientific or technical know-how in certain fields, such as promoting environmental protection, transport safety and multilingualism, while others bring together different interest groups to facilitate the political dialogue at European and international levels, and many exert a function of quality assurance. The most important ones, with relevance for the educational sector, are listed in the following table:

Table 2: Agencies of the EU with relevance for educational policy.

acronym	full name	legal basis	main functions
CEDEFOP	Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)	Council Regulation N. EEC 337/75 of 10 February 1975 (as last amended by Council Regulation EC No 2051/2004).	CEDEFOP is the EU agency of reference for vocational education and training for the European Union. It provides evidence to European Commission, Council and European Parliament as well to the MS and the social partners who work together in this field. Among other projects, CEDEFOP reports on policy developments in the EU countries, forecasts the medium-term supply and demand of skills in Europe as a whole, analyses financing schemes, and studies the benefits of tools, such as the Europass and EQF. CEDEFOP is also responsible for the coordination of the transversal study visits programme for education and vocational training specialists and decision makers, on behalf of the EC. ⁵
ETF	European Training Foundation	Council Regulation N. 1360 of 7 May 1990, recast No. 1339 of 2008.	ETF is another EU agency that helps the Union's partner countries to develop education and training systems. It also helps transition economies and developing countries reform their education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy. ETF was established in 1990 and is based in Turin (Italy). ⁶
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions	Council Regulation N. EEC 1365/75 of 26 May 1975.	Eurofound is one of the first European Union agencies to be established to work in specialised areas of EU policy. The role of Eurofound is to provide information, advice and expertise on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Europe for key actors in the field of EU social policy on the basis of comparative information, research and analysis. ⁷

⁵ Cf. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop.aspx>.

⁶ Cf. http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/who_we_are.

⁷ Cf. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/about/index.htm>.

EACEA	Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency	Council Regulation No EC 58/2003 (2009/336/EC), repealing Decision 2005/56/EC.	EACEA has operated since 1 October 2006 under the supervision of three parent Directorates-General: Communication, Education and Culture, and the EuropeAid Cooperation Office. Similarly to all other executive agencies, it is an organisation established in accordance with the Council Regulation n. EC/58/2003, with a view to being entrusted with certain tasks relating to the management of one or more Community programmes. The EACEA, in particular, is responsible for the management of certain parts of the EU's 'Education and Training' programmes, including centralised actions of the <i>Grundtvig</i> (adult education) sub-programme of the <i>Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013</i> and multilateral projects aimed at improving adult education systems through transfer of innovation (TOI) and good practice exchanges. ⁸
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As said, EU agencies were created, especially since the 1970s, in the run of the development of the European Communities, and their establishment and functions have slowly muted background and legal basis.

EU AGENCIES' AND EURYDICE'S LEGAL BASES

The creation of the EU agencies was traditionally grounded on regulations of the Council of the EU based on Article 235 of the Treaty establishing the European Communities (now Art. 308 of the consolidated EU Treaty), principally for the reason of their legal personality. This is the case of the four above-listed agencies, which play a role in the field of education and training (E&T), plus the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union, set up on 28 November 1994 with Council Regulation n. 2965/94.⁹ Only recently has the establishment of new EU agencies been grounded on regulations of the policy area in which every agency is asked to operate with respect of the competence borders accorded to the EU policy-making and governance and the principles upon which they rely (cf. Table 1 and the next paragraph). The oldest EU agency is CEDEFOP (INT11), whose functions and goals have been described by its former Director, Aviana Bulgarelli, as follows:

⁸ Cf. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/about_eacea_en.php.

⁹ Firstly amended with Council Regulation n. 2610/95 of 30 October 1995, and lastly on 18 June 2003 with Council Regulation n. 1645/2003.

CEDEFOP does two major things. On the one hand, we provide knowledge, which is part of our tradition to put together the best European research and to do our own research to see where the really challenging issues are. At the same time, our task is to analyse and report on developments in the Member States. This task was reinforced during the *Helsinki Communiqué* two years ago. CEDEFOP produces new knowledge in that field and monitors developments in Member States. [...] We not only provide information but this information is so relevant that it has an impact on European policy.

Legally and structurally different from the EU agencies, the *Eurydice* network is coordinated and managed by the EACEA, which drafts its future studies and provides a broad range of online resources. Eurydice today consists of 38 national units based in all 34 countries participating in the EU's *Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013* (EU and EFTA countries, Croatia, Serbia and Turkey), and provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies.¹⁰ Together with Eurostat, the Eurydice network is the main source of data for the EU educational system comparison, allowing researchers and policy-makers to use wider empirical support for their research and policy debates (Lawn & Segerholm, 2011).

1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC

With the *Lisbon process*, the common European education policy gained significant importance, which was also reflected in educational research, where a number of thorough studies have focused specifically on the education policy related to and influenced by the Lisbon agenda (e.g. Nóvoa & Lawn, 2002; Phillips & Ertl, 2003; Kuhn & Sultana, 2005). In 2000, drawing on the prospected macro-economic scenarios and the goals¹¹ established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and in the perspective of joining forces to respond to the challenges of globalisation cooperatively, the Heads of the EU governments adopted the 'Lisbon Strategy', which pursued the goal of developing the Union, by 2010, as "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs, greater social cohesion and respect for the environment" (EU, 2000). This ambitious project for the construction of a 'Europe of knowledge' through a 10-year strategy for economic and social renewal, was supposed to make European economies more competitive worldwide, eradicate unemployment and transform the EU into a true 'knowledge society' by encouraging investment in knowledge, research and development (hereafter R&D), and technological and scientific innovation as sources of higher productivity and profitability.

¹⁰ Cf. <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/> (last retrieved on 30 December 2012).

¹¹ Also known as the *convergence criteria*, the criteria for the European Union MS to enter the third stage of European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and adopt the euro as their currency impose control over inflation, public debt and public deficit, exchange rate stability and convergence of interest rates.

BACKGROUND OF THE LISBON STRATEGY

Crucially, the socio-economic background of the Lisbon Council embraced several challenges taking place on a global scale: cumulative growth of information and spread of knowledge in the ‘information economy’ and ‘knowledge economy’ (Porat, 1977; Foray, 2000; Peters & Besley, 2006; Peters, 2010); the creation of novel epistemologies of the ‘learning economy’ (Lundvall & Johnson, 1994; Lundvall & Borrás, 1999; Lorenz & Lundvall, 2006) and ways of interaction thanks to the progress of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In addition to these, the problems related to the growing population, increasing immigration fluxes and the need for innovative social services also required commensurate answers (Maniscalco, 2010a). Moreover, several variations within the above challenges appeared even more difficult for the EU countries to tackle in the following years: on the one hand, the ageing population meant that the supply of young people and new talents for the labour market was decreasing, with negative effects on economic growth and welfare sustainability; the increase of competitiveness in the economic system implied, on the other hand, more dynamics and flexibility in the work market (INT12), and entailed the risk of job mobility not yet supported by ‘flexicurity’ mechanisms; and finally, as a consequence, more and older people were going to be in need of lifelong learning (Maniscalco, 2010a: 54–5).

DEFINITION OF THE LISBON OBJECTIVES

In February 2001, the European Ministers of Education adopted the Report on *The concrete future objectives of education and training systems* (EU, 2001), agreeing for the first time on shared objectives to be achieved by 2010, whilst the *Education and Training 2010* document (EC, 2002a) illustrated the contribution of the E&T systems to the Lisbon process. Since then, the label ‘Education & Training 2010’ has integrated all the European actions in the fields of education and training, including those initiatives which fell under the umbrella of the Copenhagen process and the Bologna process. Both processes would in fact contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives, and were therefore closely linked to the ‘ET 2010’ work programme.¹² As a result of Article 7 of the Lisbon Council Presidency Conclusions, the work programme was meant to be implemented through the ‘Open Method of Coordination’ (OMC): the Lisbon Strategy, in fact, was expected to be “achieved by improving the existing processes, introducing a *new open method of coordination* at all levels, coupled with a stronger guiding and coordinating role for the European Council to ensure more coherent strategic direction and effective monitoring of progress” (EU, 2000; original emphasis).

¹² Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/cooperation-issues-en_en.pdf (last retrieved on 30 December 2012).

The concrete definition of the 'Lisbon agenda' as a whole was completed by the EU in May 2003, when the Council of the European Ministers of Education approved five *Reference Levels of the European Performance* (better known as "benchmarks", they are quantitative reference levels for the comparison of the MS's performances and the identification of best practices to be exchanged) and 29 indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the Lisbon Strategy, and fixed the main objectives to be achieved by 2010 (EU, 2003). Since then, the EC has performed a detailed examination of the progress towards these Lisbon objectives on a yearly basis. The benchmarks used to measure the progress in E&T systems were:

- The average rate of early school leavers should be no more than 10%;
- The total number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology should increase by at least 15%, while the gender imbalance in these subjects should be reduced;
- 85% of 22 year olds should complete upper secondary education;
- The share of low achieving 15 year olds in reading should decrease by at least 20%;
- The average participation of the adult population (age group 25–64) in lifelong learning should rise by at least 12.5%.

In parallel with the Lisbon Strategy, Eurostat undertook several initiatives to operationalise the concepts needed to achieve a standardisation of statistics on lifelong learning. Two task forces – one on the measuring of lifelong learning (2000–2001), later followed by the task force on the Adult Education Survey (2002–2004) – were created with the active involvement of EU countries, other non-EU countries (Switzerland and Canada), international organisations which had experience of and interest in the activity, IOs such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ILO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (Eurostat, 2005a: 3).

THE LAUNCH OF THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION

As mentioned, in order to achieve the goals of the Lisbon agenda, the EU launched the OMC, encompassing the field of education and training. This was meant to provide a new framework for cooperation between EU and MS that would include coordination activities, action programs, benchmarking and sharing of best practices, and which pushed national policies to agree on common objectives (Nóvoa & Lawn, 2002) with the intention of reforming national educational systems (Baker & LeTendre, 2005) under the impulse of the globalisation of cultural, economic and political structures (Kamens & McNeely, 2009). Susana Borrás and Claudio Radaelli (2010: 16) provided a "standard description of the Open Method of Coordination":

It is the method of EU policy-making that promotes the voluntary coordination of national policies through a series of interconnected steps. Firstly, the Member States define a set of common policy targets or guidelines (qualitative or quantitative) which are typically decided at Council level and which aim at setting a collective course of action. Secondly, each Member State sets up its own national (reform) programme for action, defining more specific national targets, and aligning its national policies to the common targets. Thirdly, national progress is periodically reported, monitored and assessed by peer reviewers and bilateral/multilateral interactions in view of encouraging the national enforcement of the necessary actions aiming at those targets. Fourthly, the cycle starts again with the change and definition of new common guidelines.

Hence, with this new method, the MS have been subject to evaluations under 'peer pressure', which put the EC in a position of monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives (through complex reporting procedures; cf. Figure 4 on page 49) and 'officially' limited to coordination.

FUNCTIONING AND TOOLS OF THE OMC

The OMC was actually based on quite a sophisticated and well integrated system that principally involved jointly identifying and defining objectives adopted by the Council and monitored by the Commission, establishing measuring instruments (i.e. statistics, indicators, guidelines) and benchmarks. In the Lisbon Council Conclusions, these 'tools' for the functioning of the OMC were explained as follows (EU, 2000: 12):

- fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long terms;
- establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice;
- translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;
- periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as mutual learning processes.

This 'liturgy' allowed the EC to involve the MS, to support and sometimes urge them to implement common policy objectives and orientations while respecting the principle of *subsidiarity* established by the Maastricht Treaty (Maniscalco, 2012: 156–7), and ultimately expressed the 'soft law' of the EU in areas in which it had no mandate for common European policies. In effect, Articles 126¹³ and 127¹⁴ of the TEU signed in 1992 (cor-

¹³ Art. 126 (general education): "The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action".

¹⁴ Art. 127 (vocational education and training): "The Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States".

responding to Articles 149 and 150 of the consolidated Amsterdam Treaty of 1997), combined with Art. 5, inhibit the EU from harmonising the education and training sectors – and is anyway limited to regulations in “areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community” (Art. 5). In effect, the EU does not have general legislative competence, but only specific competences that the MS have transferred to it in policy areas or fields where the European Treaties legitimise the EU’s bodies to exert policy-making power and governance.

This legal framework, through which the EU promotes the opportunity for the MS to learn from each other, entailed however what Roger Dale described as a ‘significant loophole in the Treaty’ (Dale, 2009: 375), similar to Dawson’s argument of the ‘reflexive loop’ that the OMC would produce “between overall objectives and national efforts to meet them” (Dawson, 2009b: 5; see also Gerstenberg & Sabel, 2002: 291–2; Sabel & Zeitlin, 2008: 274). In order to foster mutual cooperation and inter-institutional learning, in fact, the EC promotes and coordinates peer learning activities (PLAs), regional meetings, clusters, and thematic working groups and exploits them in addition to the tools above-mentioned for the implementation of its policy. Within the framework of the OMC, the *Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning (KSLLL)*¹⁵ was also created, providing the MS with an opportunity to disseminate information on PLAs and have access to best-practice databases as well as other information from other member countries. Moreover, the KSLLL provides access to three main types of national reports: summary sheets on education systems in Europe and on-going reforms (e.g. by Eurydice), strategy documents on lifelong learning, and national reports on the implementation of the ‘Education and Training’ Work Programme.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN EDUCATION SPACE

Roger Dale (2006: 32–6) described the OMC as the very policy “designated by the Lisbon summit as the means of achieving its objectives” and used by the EU, at the same time, to construct the *European Education Space* by establishing the borders within which the EU would exert its subsidiary policy-making and coordinate this policy area (*ibid.*):

¹⁵ Defined as “a support mechanism for both the Education and Training 2010 work programme and its successor, the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training”, the KSLLL is a database of good practices and information on national policy initiatives and practices in prioritised areas in the field of Education and Training for the development of lifelong learning. It mainly builds on the work of ‘Peer Learning Clusters’ and other working groups. Cf. www.kslll.net.

Theoretically, while the Lisbon Declaration made attaining the educational goals of Lisbon a Community matter, it did not and could not (because it enshrined in the Treaty) alter the formal application of subsidiarity in the case of education; this means that education is national and not Community responsibility. The implication of this is that the Community could not attempt to replicate or displace existing national provision. Its only basis for an education contribution, then, had to be one that was different from MS education systems; very simply, in order to do this was necessary to construct its own education policy capacity and education sector that were distinct from existing MS education sectors. Such a 'new' sector would by no means confine existing MS education sectors. [...] The means by which the hypothesised European education sector and education policy were constructed was the Open Method of Coordination.

In the context of the Lisbon Strategy, the OMC actually promoted cooperation and enhancement of mutual learning by exchanging good practices among EU countries in order to strengthen and develop national policies, and required the MS to draw up national reform plans and to forward them to the EC.

A COMPLEX MONITORING AND REPORTING SYSTEM FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

The sophisticated monitoring and reporting system, serving the peer pressure and the EU soft law in the context of the Lisbon process, was meant to build or enhance, in the MS, adequate institutional capacity in order to deal with the OMC tools and fulfil its requirements, as it was "very demanding in terms of administrative capacity" (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 8):

The so-called new modes of governance are very demanding in terms of administrative capacity. They are not soft at all when considered from this perspective. It is wrong to proceed on the assumption that administrative capacity will be automatically generated to accommodate the modes of governance – atrophy of the 'new' modes is most likely to happen if there is not enough capacity at the domestic level. For this reason, capacity building at the national level is key to the success of open coordination.

Susana Borrás and Claudio Radaelli emphasised in this regard that, although the national administration capacity building is promoted by the EU only on a voluntary basis, "as a response to that pressure most countries have empowered their core executives, with trends towards the centralisation and politicisation of administrative structures, in the belief that this move will strengthen that capacity" (p. 25). Contextually, referring to Schout et al. (2010), they noted that "the organisational impact of OMC procedures is unveiling a set of important deficiencies in the administrative capacity at the national level" and ultimately highlighted that "the OMC could benefit from the gradual institutionalisation of instruments of appraisal and coordination at the national level", since "tools such as impact assessment, the standard cost model, and *ex-post* evaluation of regulatory regimes generate capacity for coordination across policy problems" (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 63).

The articulation of the administrative and institutional capacity from a EU-national coordination perspective appears straightforward when illustrating the complex monitoring and reporting system put in place in order to implement the Lisbon Strategy through the OMC, exemplified by the Commission with the following Figure 4:

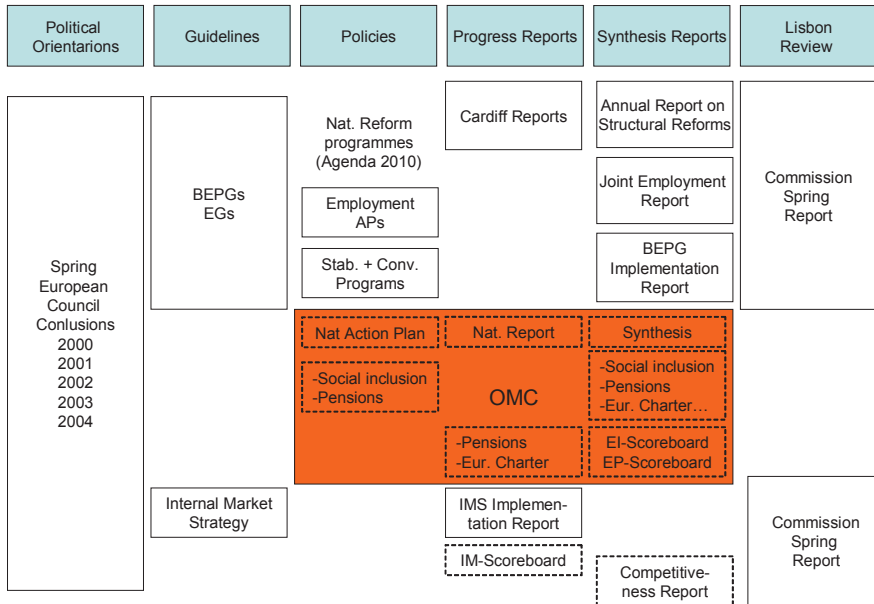


Figure 4: Lisbon Coordination Process. From EC (2005b: 6).

Furthermore, administrative capacity building, according to Borrás and Radaelli, must be correlated to the “OMC instruments for learning”, which could be improved by “institutionalising multilateral thematic OMC learning cycles, by advanced databases of national policy instruments and by intelligent indicators” (p. 8).

A NEW START FOR THE LISBON STRATEGY

The Commission’s *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training* (EC, 2006d; 2007c; EU, 2010) showed how MS improved their education systems in key areas over the Lisbon decade, even though they achieved only one of the five benchmarks set for 2010. The EU succeeded in its target to increase the number of mathematics, science and technology graduates, with a 37% rise from the year 2000 – easily outstripping the target of 15%. Significant, but insufficient, progress was instead made in reducing the school drop-out rate, increasing the number of pupils completing upper secondary education, improving reading literacy skills and increasing the share of adults participating in lifelong learning (cf. EU press release IP/11/488 on Rapid of 19 April 2011). The first

signals of this overall failure came with the very first reports on the Lisbon benchmarks (EC, 2004; 2005a), while the Commission and the Council admitted: “the reform undertaken are not up to the challenges and their current pace will not enable the Union to attain the objectives set” (EC, 2003c: 3) and “the pace of reforms of education and training systems should be accelerated” (EU, 2004: 6).

Soon after, the Lisbon Strategy was revised in 2005 and labelled the ‘Growth and Jobs’ strategy, due to the economic conjuncture in which it was born. As a result, the prominence of education and training was enhanced in the EU mainstream policy, and the Council re-launched the Lisbon agenda with a more economic-growth ambition described as the “new integrated economic and employment coordination cycle in the EU” (EC, 2005c: 6):

The European Council of March 2005 has just re-launched the Lisbon Strategy by refocusing on growth and employment in Europe, in accordance with the Commission’s proposals. By taking this decision, the Heads of State and Government have delivered a clear message concerning the Union’s priorities over the next few years. The Union, at both European and national levels, is to focus on these areas from now on and take the necessary action to promote knowledge, attract more people into the labour market and create more jobs.

According to Borrás and Radaelli (2011b: 465–6), this new focus permeated rapidly all policy areas directly or indirectly related to the Lisbon Strategy, determining the so-called “Lisbonization of individual policy areas”, including that of education, “adding to the overall goal of ‘competitiveness’ and expanding the reach of this Strategy”. In effect, the Council of the EU further underlined the importance of developing *human capital* as Europe’s main asset and called for the implementation of lifelong learning (considered indispensable in order to achieve the Lisbon objectives, in particular those related to the renewed focus on innovation and competitiveness),¹⁶ which was then translated into the Decision N. 1720/2006/EC establishing the *Lifelong Learning Programme* (EU, 2006a). This statement represented “one example for the transmission of supranational policies in national contexts” (Ertl, 2003: 6), in the sense of the direct implementation without a prior policy convergence or national-level legal recognition.

THE ACTION PLAN ON ADULT LEARNING

Consistently, the European Commission called on the Member States to promote adult learning by adopting, in October 2006, the Communication *It is never too late to learn* (EC, 2006b), which set out the general approach for developing the adult learning sector, and one year later the Communication *It is always good time to learn* (EC, 2007b), which

¹⁶ Cf. <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st05/st05430.en07.pdf> (last retrieved 30 December 2012).

launched the 'Action Plan on Adult Learning' (APAL). In the 7th annual report¹⁷ examining performance and progress under the 'ET 2010' Work Programme *Progress towards the Common European Objectives in Education and Training*, the EC emphasised that "the European benchmark on lifelong learning concerns what could more strictly be called adult education and training", and that, "originally established in 2003, it now sets the objective that by 2020 15% of 25–64 years old adults should participate in lifelong learning" (EC, 2011a: 34). The choice of this target age group describes the very ontological perimeter and political approach established by the EU with regard to the adult education policy, and is analysed in chapter 3.

As the participation of adults in lifelong learning was one of the missed targets of the Lisbon Strategy, the APAL aimed, first of all, to help MS to remove the barriers that prevent adults from engaging in learning activities, and to improve the quality and efficiency of the adult learning sector according to the following principles:

- increasing the chances for obtaining a higher level of qualification ('one step up');
- the assessment of previous skills for a better and more efficient recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The EC complemented this initiative with external studies and PLAs to ensure adequate levels of investment in, and better monitoring of, the adult learning sector (Maniscalco, 2010a: 55).

DISTINCT PHASES OF THE LISBON STRATEGY

Although the Lisbon Strategy, with its extension in the 'Europe 2020' goals, is indeed a continuum in the EU mainstream policy, encompassing several (more or less) integrated policy areas, distinct phases can be identified, each carrying significant adjustments to the general bias and, consequently, to the balance struck between fields and tools, the definition of goals, benchmarks and indicators, and the distribution of instrumental and economic resources accordingly. Drawing on the above analysis, combined with insights advanced by several scholars (Ertl, 2006; Dale, 2009a; Borrás & Radaelli, 2010; West, 2012), three main phases can be outlined for describing the Lisbon Strategy:

1) *Launch phase* (2000–2005)

In this period of time, the OMC in the education policy area was launched by the EU, and its implementing tools were tested and run. The close monitoring of the progress towards the Lisbon objectives was used not only as a knowledge base but more as a polar star for the MS. Soon, and more intensively since the first data on

¹⁷ Launched following agreement within the Council of Education Ministers in 2001, "the report also reflects the creation during 2010 of the EU's 'Europe 2020' Strategy for its socio-economic development to 2020" (EC, 2011a: 3).

the progress were available, this reporting and benchmarking system was coupled and complemented by expert networks and peer learning activities, involving a growing number of stakeholders.

2) *New start* (2005–2010)

This phase was characterised by the response to the negative outlook portrayed by the first Progress Reports (based on the 5 benchmarks and 29 indicators agreed upon) and Wim Kok's influential review of the Lisbon Strategy conducted in 2004 (Kok, 2004), which led the Barroso Commission to re-launch the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, "with a new focus on securing 'more and better jobs' in Europe: the 'Growth and Jobs' agenda was born" (Borrás & Radaelli, 2011b: 465):

Most important in the 2005 relaunch was the reorganization of the procedure into three major steps; namely, the definition of a set of European Integrated Guidelines, their implementation through three-year national reform programmes and the monitoring of progress on a country by country basis and collectively. These procedural changes meant a significant redefinition of the roles of the Commission, the Council and Member States.

This revision reflected the strong opposition of various MS to the use of the OMC to produce rankings in order to push poorly performing countries to respond and nationally compensate for the deficiencies highlighted and to comply with the EU recommendations, somewhat forcing the subsidiarity borders established by the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam. Hence, the 'naming and shaming' of non-compliers "has been vigorously rejected by the Member States as a general approach to monitoring progress with policy reforms at the domestic level" (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 31), and this "rejection of a more prescriptive strategy for the OMC's development" led to a new agreement between MS and the EU: "it was agreed that – while Lisbon suffered from a major 'implementation gap' – the way to overcome it was through peer review and learning rather than 'naming and shaming' (Wim Kok's initial suggestion), or any other subtly coercive method" (Dawson, 2009b: 6). In conclusion, a smoother approach replaced the old multi-lateral surveillance, exploiting further the identification and consequent sharing of best practices through expert networks, PLAs, thematic conferences and other pan-European training events with sessions on best practices and occasions for interacting with a wide range of stakeholders.

3) *2020 Extension* (2010–present)

On 12 May 2009, the Council of the EU adopted a new policy for "European co-operation in education and training" to be matched to the overarching strategic framework 'Europe 2020' to be applied until year 2020 (EU, 2009a), putting "more emphasis on innovation, green technologies and social cohesion" but keeping in force the procedures defined in 2005, "based on common targets, national reform

programmes and monitoring” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2011b: 465). In this framework, the main goals of the ‘ET 2020’ were set to support E&T systems in the MS in order to ensure “personal, social, and professional fulfilment of all citizens; sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue”, and based on four key priorities: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; finally, enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship.

As the EU press release IP/11/488 of 19 April 2011 acknowledged, although it is still probably too early for precise projections, past trends and the present international economic conjuncture suggest that most of the benchmarks for 2020 are still barely attainable, unless the EU Member States give them a high priority and invest efficiently (in education and training as well) despite the reduced economic resources (cf. paragraph 3.5 A new centrality of adult and lifelong learning in the EU mainstream policy?). This is particularly true for the two education headline targets for early school leavers and graduates.

2. Background, aims, methodology and data

In 1990, Kjell Rubenson endorsed the approach to the sociology of education introduced by John Richardson (1986) in his preface to the *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, where he suggested that what characterises and unifies the modern sociology of education is a “preoccupation with two interrelated questions” (Rubenson, 1990: 51), which he then applied to adult education:

- To what extent does education make society better by making it more egalitarian?
- To what extent does education legitimate, and even enhance, existing social and economic inequalities?

Far from attempting to provide answers to these questions, the consequent attempt by Rubenson to provide a framework within which to address Richardson’s interrogative allowed him to put forward a description of the “two predominant paradigms within the sociology of adult education” (*ibid.*). The first paradigm draws on Marxist theorisations based on “the implicit assumption that the pedagogic actions of families from different social classes, as well as the actions of the schools, work together in a harmonious way to transmit a cultural heritage which is considered the property of the whole society” (Rubenson, 1990: 55) and on the further assumption that educational systems promote mobility between social classes “in a fair and equal way” (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). Bourdieu, in particular, investigating the controversy on idea, examined the role of *culture* in the reproduction of social classes and class hierarchies, and observed that the culture of the school system is that of the dominant group: those who control political, economic and social resources (Rubenson, 1990: 56). Building on this interpretation, the second paradigm maintains that “the structure of symbols and of knowledge in educational institutions is that of the dominant culture (p. 55) and is therefore “intimately related to the principles and practices of cultural and social control”, as advanced by Apple (1982) and Althusser (1971), who suggested the school as the most important source of reproduction of capitalist society (Rubenson, 1990: 55):

Instead of regarding the education systems as being fair and equal, serving society at large, [education is viewed] as an instrument for domination that perpetuates the inequalities of society – inequalities reflected in the selection and lack of [social] mobility that occur. According to this perspective, then, schools reproduce and legitimate the ubiquitous power structures of today’s society.

Other conceptualisations regarding adult education contemplated the *capitalist* paradigm (Gramsci, 1972), related to human capital development, and the *humanistic* paradigm (Hart, 1927; Brookfield, 1984; 1987; cf. also Elias & Merriam, 1980 and Brookfield, 1990: 203), related to personal development and community well-being, both of which ac-

count is given throughout this study. Moreover, the above polarisations, hypothetical at this stage, are constantly verified in the frame of reference of the adult education policies of the EU, which are as well influenced by incidental phenomena such as the aging population and globalisation (Kwiek, 2009; Dale, 2009a; Maniscalco; 2010a). The main preoccupation in this dissertation remains, however, the verification of the extent to which – and the ways in which – these policies are consistent with the main ideals underlying the EU political mainstreaming. The adult education policies devised by the EU during the Lisbon decade *formally* include, in fact, the development of comprehensive sets of life skills in order to promote personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and, consequently, to increase *social cohesion*, one of the pillars of the Union of together with *employability* and *economic growth* (Adnett, 2001; Dawson, 2009a), as exemplified by Title XIV of the Maastricht Treaty. As a matter of fact, the latter instances seem to lead and orientate considerably the educational policies in all Western countries, and from the promotion of key competences for lifelong learning the EU seems to be slowly but inexorably moving towards a neoliberal paradigm of work skills upgrading for adult workers (the labour force) in the scope of training European people and allowing them to cope with the requirements of the ‘knowledge-based’ economy. This seems to be put forward by establishing, at the same time, an ideological framework for the ‘responsibilisation’ of people for their lifelong learning in order to justify wage distribution imbalances, social and economic inequalities and the legitimisation of the reproduction and perpetuation of hegemonic power structures.

2.1 Theoretical background

In a geopolitical scene of growing worldwide interconnectedness, new modes of governance are being devised in order to deal with the increased complexity and changing dynamics and expectations of the society, to overcome the ineffectiveness of traditional governance arrangements, and to adapt to globalisation (Kwiek, 2009; Maniscalco, 2010a; 2012). Referring to Pierre and Peters (2000), Borrás and Radaelli (2011b: 468) advanced that “the basic logic of the governance concept is that a society needs mechanisms to identify some common problems, deciding a set of goals in order to address those problems, and then designing and implementing the means to achieve those purposes”. Today, all Western countries are part of a complex and multi-level “transnational structure comprising of nation-states, international organisations, inter-state unions, regional and local governments, governmental and non-governmental institutions and private corporations”, which are involved in policy-making in a wide variety of areas. This is particularly true for the European Union, where the MS’s legislations are framed by several treaty commitments, international law, policy regulations agreed with and through the

institutions of the EU, to the point that Stavros Moutsios (2007: 15) argued that “nowhere has transnational policy-making been more prominent than in Europe”.

THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THE EU: AN ONTOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Claudio Radaelli advanced that the policy process of the EU can be analyzed from different angles: “the ontological perspective of macro-theories, for example, deals with the nature of the EU political system” (Radaelli, 2000: 25; cf. Caporaso & Keeler, 1995). Using this perspective the EU’s policy-making it is normally noted that a real common government does not exist: there is no directly elected decision-making authority at the EU level (even with the increased competences conferred to the European Parliament by the new Lisbon Treaty, this body has still very limited legislative abilities). Nevertheless, policies are made, even with education, one of the most critical areas of the nation-states’ sovereignty, not falling within the exclusive competence of the EU (INT2). In effect, as said above, this peculiarity hinders the EU from applying the Community Method of governance (henceforth CM), dominant in the Single European Market (SEM). In this respect, the Union serves as a prime example for a novel entity: it is indeed a political system that is much more than an IO, but is not comparable to a nation-state or a federation of states (Kohler-Koch, 1999: 2; cf. Sbragia, 1992). Supranational and intergovernmental elements co-exist in the anomalous position of trying to create a new system, which not only overlaps with those of Member States, but also needs to ‘incorporate’ them without removing them. This kind of a *sui generis* system is certainly due to the anomaly of the ‘governance without a government’ that Beate Kohler-Koch addressed in the following way (p. 14):

The ‘sovereign people’ are sovereign citizens only within the boundaries of their individual nation-states. Representative democracy stops at state borders. There is no delegation of political power to a directly responsible top decision-making authority at the European level. Nevertheless, policies are decided at the European level and decisions have binding force on citizens within each Member State. Although there is no government, citizens are governed.

Kerstin Jacobsson (2004: 5) correlated the introduction of the OMC set up by the EU with the fact that “the integration process has reached a phase where not only the core areas of the welfare state are directly affected, touching upon the very heart of national sovereignty, but also where increasingly dense cooperation does exert an increasingly powerful social and moral pressure on (elite) actors, politicians and civil servants, to adapt to a common framework”.

EUROPEANISATION OF EDUCATION POLICY THROUGH THE OMC

In response to this dilemma, ‘new modes of governance’ were introduced: the EU policy-making and governance in the field of education, for example, subject to the *subsidi-*

diarity principle (cf. par. 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC), and thus limited to ‘support measures’, was consequently inscribed in non-coercive mechanisms of *isomorphic* Europeanisation based on a horizontal soft mode of governance (Radaelli, 2001: 124–5). Referring to Articles 126 and 127 of the TEU, Hubert Ertl (2006: 10) highlighted that “both articles are similarly structured and extremely cautiously formulated” in accordance to the principle of *cultural autonomy* (Art. 128) that emphasises the respect of “national and regional diversity”, therefore leaving full responsibility to the Member States in relation with the organisation of their own educational systems and design of learning curricula, and the implementation of the EU objectives in a way that best suits their national contexts (Scott & Trubek, 2002: 4–5). The Open Method of Coordination is indeed, in this sense, an innovative mode of governance in the EU’s polity panorama.

Hence, although the OMC cannot be considered as an example of European integration limited to the transfer of competences and shares of national sovereignty to the EU, it nevertheless enlarges the borders of the *Europeanisation* of policy areas such as education. Therefore, “the EU institutions and the Member States have used the OMC to set the *boundaries* between exclusive domestic action and EU-level coordination, and also to define the contents of coordination” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 46; own emphasis). In this regard, Lawn described the education policy area as a “residual element of nation-states’ governing”, stressing how the power relationship between the EU and its MS is evolving since the ‘knowledge economy’ discourse entered the European political agenda (INT21):

Many of European societies spent a long time creating school systems. And some of them spent a *very* long time creating school systems. They have structures, departments, investments in buildings, and that is their ‘world’, that is what they do. But I think that the EU was in a difficult political position. The ministers of education wanted to work together, but did not want the EU get involved in their education systems. And up to about 1996, although you cannot really say an exact date, things were just kept apart. They talked about common culture, or access to museums across Europe, or study visits. There was a lot of work in that area. But since the knowledge economy emerged, combined with the ‘new methods of governance’, *education* as a policy term – which was not strong at European level – was replaced by *learning*. Then they talked about workplace *learning*, for example, not workplace education. It is symbolic, it seems to be a term about making the European individuals responsible for their continued learning. It is a much more ‘limited’ notion, but is also a much clearer notion. It does not say: ‘you ought to be educated’; it says instead: ‘what have you learnt?’ or ‘what are your certifications?’ And that is happening more and more.

In this very sense, Roger Dale (2009b: 381) described the OMC as operating on the basis of *proscription* instead of ‘hard law’ *prescription*, since this new mode of governance “tends to patrol the boundaries of the possible rather than defining precisely what the territory thus defined should contain”. Conversely, one limitation to the use of this tool of ‘soft governance’ as main instrument for the implementation of the Lisbon agenda draws from a paradox that he explains in these terms (Dale, 2009a: 127):

The complexities of the OMC expose the limitations of 'implementation' as a means of conceiving of the 'policy process', where a policy is devised by groups legitimated to do that and 'implemented' in a polity through the capacities of a governing body with legitimate authority and sovereignty. None of these features is found in the OMC and approaching it and seeing it as a form of implementation in this 'traditional' sense is somewhat misleading.

Another feature of the OMC is its multi-level nature (Eising & Kohler-Koch, 1999), in which national governments no longer freely legislate or establish their own policies unless they respect the above-described 'boundaries', i.e. within the limits of policy competence and subsidiarity (INT7; INT8). This 'multi-level governance' (MLG) was described by Eising (2004: 215) as a "dynamic and complex networklike process that evolves continuously" which connects institutions at national and supranational levels of governance, and which has opened up opportunities for the interests of different actors holding a stake in the policy-making process, with the aim of 'imperceptibly undermining' the MS's sovereignty (cf. par. 2.1.2 The Lisbon Strategy as a case of governance architecture).

Interestingly, although it was created in the 1990s, the OMC is still often referred to as a 'new governance pattern' or a 'new mode of governance' (Borrás & Jacobsson, 2004) despite over a decade of use by the EU in the framework of the Lisbon agenda (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 12; López-Santana, 2009; De la Porte & Nanz, 2004). Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 6) defined the OMC as "the method of European Union policy-making that facilitates the voluntary coordination of national policies through a series of interconnected steps, including European-level definition of common goals, definition of national reform programmes implementing these goals, regular national reporting, and EU-level monitoring of national progress". According to them, the OMC has in fact "a cyclical nature, as goals may be revised, and it is used in different policy areas, often in combination with classic EU legislation" and policy tools, such as 'minimalist' directives or non-compulsory regulations which, by their nature, "do not create any pressure in terms of adaptation" but yet they can "prepare the ground for major policy change [...] providing additional legitimacy to domestic reformers in search for justifications, by 'inseminating' possible solutions in the national debate, and by altering the expectations about the future [...] and trigger learning dynamics or a different political logic" (Radaelli, 2001: 123, 127–8). Evidently, this is also the case of the EU policy-making in the field of adult education, which has been accompanied, during the Lisbon decade, by Conclusions and Resolutions of the Council of the EU (EU, 2008a; 2011), but also involved Recommendations, working papers and guidelines (e.g. white papers) which were not even meant to be implemented, but aimed at the rise of consensus for MS to sign up to the more or less binding policy that were going to be put forward by the EU.

Moreover, the OMC is considered an example of 'post-regulatory' policy-making (see Lodge, 2007: 344; Nantali, 2009), firstly because "the post-regulatory modes seek to couple different autonomous social systems, such as economy and law" and, secondly,

“whilst regulation controls business and citizens’ behaviour, post-regulation controls public agencies and the state” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 22).

2.1.1 Post-ontological approach to the EU education policy-making

It is the raising of international testing, comparative assessment and benchmarking of education systems (Kamens & McNeely, 2009), combined with the rapid ‘international data contagion’ (cf. par. 3.2.2 Governing through data and the influence of supranational regimes on national adult education systems), that provided the EU with more effective tools and allowed the OMC to possibly express its full potential. These phenomena, however, led the coordination of the EU educational systems towards an impasse. As Martin Lawn put it (INT21):

The EU was not able to organise itself in such a way as to meet the challenge that it set itself about the ‘knowledge economy’ and so forth. I don’t know whether they felt that goals were too ambitious, or they didn’t have the *mechanisms*, the tools to keep working on that properly. They did not have the *integration*, and the technocrats as well did not have that kind of strong mediation and movement forward. I would tend to think of it as a problem of *governing*. They set themselves politically necessary goals, which they could not achieve not just of some ‘economic difficulties’, but because they didn’t have the governing tools that they needed. [...] They are trying to ‘assemble’ a field to govern it and they’re still using persuasive tools as much as possible to pull these things together, which includes standards and benchmarks.

One icon of the limited effectiveness of the EU’s soft governance is embedded in the description of the previously-mentioned 5th Lisbon benchmark, measuring the goal of 12.5% of ‘adults’ (people 25–64 years old, i.e. the working-age population) participating in lifelong learning to be reached by 2010, which referred to the necessity for individuals “to maximise their personal development and to maintain and improve their position in the labour market” (EU, 2003). Such a reduction in breadth of the Lisbon goal on lifelong learning reflected how constraining policy principles into policy tools could eventually result into inconsistent statistical patterns.

As seen, although the OMC is grounded on a number of principles, most of all it is subsidiarity which lies “at the heart of the debate about the relationship between national sovereignty and the convergence of national provision in education” and which creates, at the same time, “considerable uncertainty on the part of national ministries as they attempt to interpret EU policy” (Ertl, 2003: 6). The OMC certainly reflects the growing complexity of the EU’s evolving policy-making, and is considered by Borrás and Jacobsson (2004: 202) as an attempt to deal with both multi-level governance (*vertical dimension*) and higher cross-policy interdependency (*horizontal dimension*), similarly to European integration theories focusing on whether this process “strengthens the state (inter-governmentalism), weakens it, or triggers ‘multi-level governance’ dynamics” (Radaelli,

2001: 114; cf. Börzel, 1999: 576–7). The ‘vertical and horizontal dimensions’ of Europeanisation have been explained by Radaelli (2001: 124) as follows:

There are two types of mechanisms, that is, ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ Europeanization. ‘Vertical’ mechanisms seem to demarcate clearly the EU level (where policy is defined) and the domestic level, where policy has to be metabolized. By contrast, ‘horizontal’ mechanisms look at Europeanization as a process where there is no pressure to conform to EU policy models. Instead, ‘horizontal’ mechanisms involve different forms of adjustment to Europe based on the market or on patterns of socialisation. In ‘horizontal’ Europeanization, the process is not one of conforming to EU policy which ‘descends’ into the domestic policy arenas like in a hierarchical ‘chain-of-command’. ‘Horizontal’ Europeanization is a process of change triggered by the market and the choice of the consumer [...] or by the diffusion of ideas and discourses about the notion of ‘good policy’.

As a matter of fact, while the CM and ‘classical’ EU legislative modes in general rely on *adaptational pressure* in order to attain the goal of (*vertical*) Europeanisation (with ‘hard governance mechanisms’), the OMC is instead a ‘soft governance mechanism’ alternative to the Community Method, based on ‘non-legislative’ policy processes which does not use coercion (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 12). The Europeanisation of education in a context of OMC is thus a “process of domestic assimilation of EU policy and politics” (Radaelli, 2001: 110-1), a *horizontal* framing mechanism which *can* be (although is not necessarily) triggered by mimetic channels of *institutional isomorphism* as a ‘tendency to become alike’ (Radaelli, 2000; 2001). As Radaelli (2001: 124–5) put it:

Some European policies are adopted only by a limited number of Member States. Flexible integration is an option available in a number of policy areas. The open coordination method introduced by the Lisbon summit is another example of soft Europeanisation policy, being based on guidelines and the diffusion of best practice. This implies that adaptational pressure can operate with mechanisms different from coercion. Mimeticism illustrates this alternative channel of Europeanisation. If the countries adopting EU models provide a critical mass, the remaining countries can feel the force of attraction of the EU ‘center of gravity’ and join in. Mimeticism and coercion are mechanisms of isomorphism, that is, the tendency to become alike.

Moreover, Radaelli (2000: 28) identified ‘institutional isomorphism’ as a “source of legitimacy” for the EU within the overarching framework of policy transfer (cf. par. 3.3.1 Consultative, decentralised and outsourced legitimation):

Mimetism stems from the need to cope with uncertainty by imitating organizations perceived to be more legitimate or more successful. In this case again, the imitation of models may not assure efficiency, but is nonetheless extremely effective in generating legitimacy.

Legitimacy is indeed a key element for interpreting the policy learning processes that characterise the EU governance architecture. Radaelli ultimately defined the legitimacy of the EU a ‘technocratic’ one, “confined to the success of the Commission’s proposals *vis-à-vis* the other institutions”, as it would just exclude “broader issues such as the

consensus of citizens" (Radaelli, 2000: 27). This is probably the reason why some scholars (Lawton, 1999; Milana, 2009) intensively approached the EU policy-making using the ontological perspective of the 'pooling of sovereignty', or in the light of the progressive transfer of competence and political power from the MS to shared institutions (restricted only by subsidiarity in policy areas such as E&T), and consequently identified the process of Europeanisation with "the emergence of EU competences and the pooling of power" (Milana, 2009: 9). These kinds of ontological perspectives of macro-theories, which deal with the nature of the EU political system (Caporaso & Keeler, 1995) and which are consequently "essentially focused on the issue of the intergovernmental versus supranational essence of the EU", would have, however, "limited value for the analysis of the policy process" (Radaelli, 2000: 25; 2001: 109). In this context, Caporaso (1996: 30) highlighted that "the study of European integration is moving into a post-ontological stage", where scholars are becoming less concerned with "how to categorize than how to explain process and outcome" as Europeanisation involves a response of the MS to the EU policies, whose impact "may not necessarily be one of convergence" (Featherstone, 2003: 3–4).

Accordingly, drawing upon institutionalism and institutional isomorphism (first developed within organisational theory), Radaelli (2000; 2001: 123) introduced instead the concept of *mimesis* – i.e. normative pressure and other non-coercive framing mechanisms in the EU policy diffusion – as a more adequate angle in order to analyse the several ways through which 'Europeanisation' takes place (Radaelli, 2000), and explored the process of EU-induced policy assimilation in the absence of a direct supranational compulsion (Radaelli, 1997) applying this post-ontological perspective, which better supports the analysis of the EU policy-making in the field of adult education as well, largely characterised by 'soft governance' mechanisms.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, CONVERGENCE OR HARMONISATION?

Radaelli (2001) established a distinction between Europeanisation and apparently specular concepts such as European *integration*, European *convergence* and European *harmonisation*, differentiating them in terms of governance mechanism or policy outcomes. First of all, according to his interpretation, Europeanisation "is not political *integration*" (although it would not exist without it), because "the latter concept belongs to the ontological stage of research, that is the understanding of a process in which countries pool sovereignty, whereas the former is post-ontological, being concerned with what happens once EU institutions are in place and produce their effects" (*ibid.*). Moreover, Europeanisation does not correspond to *convergence* (e.g. Dale, 2009a: 128) because "there is a difference between a process and its outcomes" (Radaelli, 2001: 113), so that policy *convergence* would be a consequence of Europeanisation to the same degree as policy *divergence*: "if Europeanization encourages domestic policy change, not all Member States will opt for

the same types of change” (Montpetit, 2000: 590, cited in Radaelli, 2001: 114). West (2012: 27) acknowledged:

In VET, as no doubt in other areas of policy, the history has been one of a series of initiatives, often but not always taken by the Commission, which have run into the ground either through the inherent impracticality of the task (cf. the CEDEFOP exercise in ‘equivalences’) or the lack of interest (and sometimes opposition) of Member States in taking concerted action (cf. unwillingness to expand the EU’s education programmes, lackadaisical efforts in pushing forward VET in the Lisbon context).

Moreover, the OMC, as “part of a trend towards proceduralisation in EU politics”, is viewed by Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 23–4) as a mode of governance which enables MS to confront, but grants them, at the same time, the freedom to eventually disagree, on the policy solutions to be implemented (own emphasis):

Procedures are typically chosen by constellations of actors when there is disagreement on the substantive policy outcomes and institutional competence. Since the Member States cannot agree *ex-ante* on the substantive policy goals in terms of employment, social inclusion, and whether there should be new competences of the EU in sensitive policy areas, they activate a procedure that enables them to keep on discussing, exploring solutions, and possibly *disagreeing*.

In effect, as Adnett (2001: 360) observed in relation to the EU social policy, “whilst policy transfer is to be encouraged to the extent that it promotes symmetrical labour market adjustments to symmetrical shocks within the EU, differences in labour market fundamentals provide a continuing rationale for national policy divergence”. Even, according to him, the fact that there are “desirable limits on policy convergence within a modernizing process should not be a cause for concern” since “both the European social model and national variations are sustainable in the modern global economy”. This “difference in national responses” to the various policy processes, such as the Bologna process or even to assessment instruments as the OECD’s surveys, is actually observable in the European education policy as well (INT26).

Europeanisation, notably in the field of education, can thus not be considered as a process of *harmonisation* in its coercive sense either, since the Treaty of Maastricht formally exclude this possibility (as already discussed in paragraph 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC). In the field of education and training, in fact, Articles 126 and 127 (Points 4) of the Maastricht Treaty both clearly specified that all measures adopted and actions taken at Community level “to contribute to the achievement of the objectives” listed in the same articles (points 2) should exclude “any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States”. This concept was further pointed out by Johannes Laitenberger, Head of the Cabinet of the President of the European Commission (INT4):

European coordination and support does not mean that EU laws or harmonisation initiatives should be anticipated because in this case the EU clearly only has supplementary and support-

ing competences and the main responsibility is borne by the Member States. We don't intend to change anything here. It also doesn't mean that the EU can provide the bulk of the required investment. With a EU budget of approximately 1% of the EU GDP, it is in no position to do so. It is a common misunderstanding that something that is in the common interest, for example, a coordinated economic, education or social policy, must lead to complete harmonisation, to comprehensive European legislation or to massive European allocation of resources. Both for reasons of effectiveness and of subsidiarity, a graduated procedure is appropriate.

In this line of reasoning, Borrás and Jacobsson (2004) advanced that the OMC does not fall under the umbrella of what is normally defined as 'soft law' for a series of reasons (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 41):

- a) it has an intergovernmental approach rather than the supranational approach of soft law;
- b) it is monitored at the highest political level (Spring Council) rather than administratively as soft law;
- c) it has an iterative process rather than the *ad-hoc* procedures of the legal interpretation focus of soft law;
- d) it aims at linking systematically different policy areas rather than the traditional single-policy focus of soft law.

Even in the frame of reference of the recent Lisbon Treaty, which has reformed the EU legal basis, little has been added to the understanding of the functioning of the OMC and the EU educational policy-making, although Art. 5 of the Treaty explicitly defines it "within the context of the catalogue of distribution of competences between the EU and Member States, for the areas of economic, employment and social policy coordination" (p. 12, 19):

In the long run-up to the Lisbon Treaty reform, there was a debate about the formal enshrinement of the OMC in the Treaty. The idea was to assign a wide treaty status to the method. Although full constitutionalisation has not been reached, there are articles in the Treaty of Lisbon which will impact on the operation of the OMC, although it is difficult to say how exactly they will operate. [...] Article 5 is the closest that the OMC comes to being enshrined in the Treaty in a generic way. This is the end point of the otherwise intense debates about constitutionalising the OMC that took place during the Convention debates and in the negotiations leading to the failed Constitutional Treaty.

THE NON-LEGISLATIVE AND POST-REGULATORY NATURE OF THE OMC

To summarise, the OMC is a mode of governance¹ of a "non-legislative nature" (Radaelli, 2003; Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 10) alternative to the CM – which involves in-

¹ As pointed out by Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 12, note 3), 'modes of governance' define "the general processes of policy-making (e.g. Community Method or Open Method of Coordination)", as opposed to 'policy instruments' (or 'policy tools'), which are "the concrete tools that enfold those [modes] in particular mixes" such as monitoring, benchmarking, national reporting, peer learning from best practices and QAE systems.

stead regulations that are binding for the MS. The distance of the OMC from the CM has been explained by several scholars in terms of absence of the classical elements of legal logic (Scott & Trubek, 2002; De Búrca, 2003), to the point that Linda Senden (2005) put forward the idea of the ‘para-law’ nature of the OMC, which she saw as a “steering instrument”, different than other ‘post-law’ instruments mainly complementing the Community law (original emphasis):

The Commission’s communications and notices and also certain guidelines, codes and frameworks [...] bear resemblance to the administrative rules or policy rules that exist in quite some national legal systems. They are usually not intended to substitute for legislation, but rather to complement it. As such, they can be considered to fulfil primarily a *post-law* function, being adopted subsequent to already existing Community law with a view to supplementing and supporting it. [A different] category covers what one could call – formal and non-formal – *steering instruments*. These aim at establishing or giving further effect to Community objectives and policy or related policy areas. Sometimes this is done in a rather political and declaratory way – in Declarations and Conclusions – but often also with a view to establishing closer cooperation or even harmonisation between the Member States in a non-binding way, as occurs in particular in recommendations, resolutions and codes of conduct. The recommendation constitutes a formal steering instrument; it is presented as a Community legal instrument in Article 249 EC. The other instruments are non-formal instruments, in the sense that they occur only in daily practice. To a certain extent at least, the latter instruments are used as alternatives to legislation and, in view of this, they can often be said to fulfil a *para-law* function.

DEFINITION OF ‘EUROPEANISATION’ UNDER CONDITIONS OF SUBSIDIARITY

In the light of the questions hitherto discussed, Radaelli (2001) defined the concept of Europeanisation as the “process of construction, diffusion and institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies”, hence stressing the processes of the adaptation, policy learning and institutionalisation of the MS (and the EU as a whole) as *learning organisations*, involving the “domestic assimilation of EU policy and politics” (p. 110–1). This post-ontological and post-regulatory approach appears to be the most appropriate to the analysis of the EU adult education policy, as it is especially determined by the various framing mechanisms of the OMC and its implementing tools (e.g. governing through data: see par. 3.2.2 Governing through data and the influence of supranational regimes on national adult education systems), much more than by ‘regulatory ideals’ (Milana, 2009), and is thus used in the next chapter for the disclosure of the process tracing and – partially – in the critical discourse related to the implications of the main findings.

2.1.2 The Lisbon Strategy as a case of governance architecture

Another theoretical model used in this study to approach the EU adult education policy in the wider frame of reference of the Lisbon Strategy is that of the *governance architectures*, defined by Borrás and Radaelli (2011b: 463) as “strategic and long-term institutional arrangements of international organizations exhibiting three features; namely, they address strategic and long-term problems in a holistic manner, they set substantive output-oriented goals, and they are implemented through combinations of old and new organizational structures within the international organization in question”. As already anticipated in paragraph 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC, in fact, the EU educational policy has been mainly affected by the regulatory framework of the Treaty of Maastricht and the Lisbon Strategy. Indeed, this strategic policy framework, defined as “a case of governance architecture” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2011a; 2011b), launched in Lisbon does not correspond to the Open Method of Coordination, which is instead its primary *implementing method*. However, they need to be considered jointly, as “the latter is a fundamental instrument for unfolding the former” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 38).

2.2 Research questions

Significant answers to the issues and challenges illustrated thus far still need to be found, as they would allow for the considerable substantiation of the following questions:

1. How is the EU defining its objectives in the adult education policy area in relation to its target population? How is this cohort defined in the EU policy statements?
2. On what kind of epistemic process is the EU policy on adult education based? And what scientific significance can be granted to the EU policy documents in this field?
3. Is the EU policy on adult education relying on valid socio-economic assumptions? Is the theoretical framework of the Lisbon Strategy faultless and reliable?

The recent Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning (EU, 2011) returns to the highlighting of the *social* dimension of adult education, thus integrating the experiences of the closing European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) and the upcoming Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (2012), by stressing the importance of intergenerational learning and *social cohesion*. In chapter 4, where the implications of the analysis conducted in chapter 3 are discussed, an attempt to provide an overview on this issue is also made, particularly in relation to the meaning the latter term gains when used in EU education policy documents.

2.3 Methodology

The methodology used in this study is based, first of all, on a complete review of the official policy documentation issued by the EU – including road maps and progress reports – as well as the relevant academic literature, in order to draw the overall context of the European adult education policy in the reference period of the years 2000–2010 (i.e. the Lisbon agenda timeline).

In the first part (section 3.1 Formation and transformation of key AE concepts in core EU education policy documents), special emphasis is given to the analysis of two reference concepts – ‘adult learner’ and ‘older worker’ – able to illustrate the hypothesised discourse polarisation in the EU policy on AE by examining the occurrence variations (frequencies) of their descriptors in the policy statements released in this field across the years of the Lisbon decade (2000–2010). For the purposes of this content analysis, two different semantic networks of indicator items (Punch, 1998: 93–4) – one for each of the two ‘first-order’ concepts – are outlined, in order to subsequently examine the correlations existing between the different items (p. 208–9) of the reference concept *generally* related to adult learning, particularly in its ‘liberal’ or ‘humanistic’ connotations, and those related to vocational adult learning and the ‘economic dimension’ of the sector. Hence, the moving from the disaggregated data of the single indicator items to a higher level of abstraction by aggregating items into variables (which allows for a multi-level reasoning), together with the diachronic perspective, enables the identification of the most relevant features and provides solid empirical support for the tracing of the policy-making process, which follows. Moreover, other concepts are investigated in this part of the study using the method of analysis of the concept formation (Bennett & Elman, 2006), namely ‘adult learner’, ‘adult education/learning’ and ‘lifelong learning’.

A more holistic approach is used in the second part to draw a systemic framework for the policy analysis, emphasising both economic and non-economic outcomes, even though – as it is shown – EU policy-makers seem to have privileged, especially in the last years of the Lisbon decade, the work- and economic-related issues in the policy agendas, thus providing greater support to vocationally-oriented adult learning rather than to general or liberal forms of education for adults (cf. Eurydice, 2007: 8). The analysis of the official policy outputs² combined with the tracing of the EU policy-making process in the field of AE eventually provides further empirical evidence for the hypotheses and predic-

² A policy *output* is defined by Rosenbloom and Kravchuk (2005) as any “official statement of governmental intent, delineation of powers and allocation of resources”, as opposed to policy *outcomes*, which are the implementations of policy outputs and are thus subject to performance measurement. With reference to the American policy, for example, “statutes, congressional resolutions, presidential proclamations, and the allocation of staff and funds are policy outputs”.

tions made at the early stage (chapters 1 and 2), for example in relation to the role played by the OMC in the determination of the phenomenon of interest, i.e. the switch in the EU education policy orientation within the multi-actors context of the AL sector in Europe.

2.3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is a research methodology focused on actual content and internal features of texts and media “for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications” (Berelson, 1952: 74). It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts and themes within texts or sets of texts by first identifying manageable categories in order to consequently quantify this presence in a more objective manner. The attempt for understanding and describing the phenomenon investigated in this dissertation is twofold, being explored through both *conceptual* and *relational* content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Neuendorf, 2002) in a longitudinal dimension, in such a way as to provide statistical rigor and strong empirical support to the subsequent analysis of the policy-making process conducted through the more qualitative method of process tracing (Packer, 2011).

The corpus of documents that has been used for the content analysis – carried out in the sub-paragraphs of section 3.1 Formation and transformation of key AE concepts in core EU education policy – comprises all relevant policy outputs produced by the EU’s legislative bodies (EC, EP, Council of the EU) and its decentralised agencies operating in the field of education and training (notably³ EACEA, CEDEFOP, ETF, and Eurofound), plus all empirical studies supporting the official statements in relation to the adult learning sector released within the reference timeline of the Lisbon agenda (from the year 2000 to 2010). Issued after 2010, the Commission Staff Working Paper of 2011 (EC, 2011b) has not been included in the list but is used to enucleate the relevant statements published within the timeframe of the Lisbon decade because it reports the results of the Adult Learning Action Plan 2008–2010.

Policy outputs have been considered to be ‘relevant’ for the analysis whenever expressly presented by the above EU bodies as fundamental or crucial for the adult education policy area. Cascading from this corpus, all the explicitly mentioned supporting documents gathered through internal (European Commission, including Eurostat⁴ and Eu-

³ Cf. paragraph 1.3 European education policy: an overview.

⁴ Eurostat was established in 1953 to meet the requirements of the Coal and Steel Community. Over the years its task has broadened and when the European Community was founded in 1958 it became a Directorate-General of the European Commission. Eurostat’s key role is to supply statistics to other DGs and supply the Commission and other European Institutions with data so they can define, implement and analyse Community policies. See http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/about_eurostat/introduction (last retrieved on 7 November 2012).

rydice⁵) and in-house (EU agencies) preparatory acts (see note 9 on page 70), research and surveys published within the timeframe of the 2000–2010 decade have also been included in the analysis. The data set has therefore been developed starting from the following list of six key ‘policy initiatives and outputs’, selected by the EC itself with the title “Official EU documents on adult learning”, and available online inside the ‘Adult Learning’ webpage of the EC institutional portal:⁶

1) January 2000: Decision N. 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education *Socrates* (Grundtvig 2000–2006);

2) November 2006: Decision N. 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Action programme in the field of lifelong learning (Grundtvig 2007–2013);

3) October 2006: Communication from the Commission on Adult learning *It is never too late to learn*;

4) September 2007: Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions *It is always a good time to learn: Action Plan on Adult learning*;

5) May 2008: Council conclusions on Adult Learning (2008/C 140/09);

6) March 2011: Commission Staff Working Paper *Action Plan on Adult Learning: Achievements and results 2008–2010*.

Drawing on these, all supporting documents cited as references and/or included in the preambles⁷ have been consequently retrieved. As a result of this derivation process, the final extensive list of policy documents includes the 51 policy statements, which can be found in Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis. Studies outsourced by any of the EU bodies (e.g. EU agencies or the Commission) to external research contractors⁸ are not considered at this stage as they “do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Commission” or the EU (as stated by the most common dis-

⁵ Cf. 1.3 European education policy: an overview.

⁶ Last update of this list retrieved on 6 July 2012 from http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/policy-adult_en.htm as linked page of http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/adult_en.htm.

⁷ The *preamble* of the official acts issued by the EU bodies is the part of the text between the title and the enacting terms of the act, namely comprising the citations, the recitals and the solemn forms which precede and follow them. Citations, in particular, indicate the legal basis for the act – (a) *primary acts* (treaties, acts of accession, protocols annexed to the Treaties) and ‘international’ acts (agreements, protocols, conventions) which constitute the general basis for the text in question, (b) *secondary acts*, which constitute the specific basis for the text, and *preparatory acts* (e.g. proposals, recommendations, initiatives, requests and opinions provided for in the Treaties). Recitals, instead, set out the reasons for the contents of the enacting terms (i.e. the articles) of an act.

⁸ As a form of work outsourcing, the European Commission allocates to contracting parties a number of tasks and services (e.g. translations) or studies and surveys, notably through calls for tenders, calls for proposals and calls for expression of interest.

claimer⁹), and they are therefore taken into account for the concept formation discourse (and, indeed, for the process tracing), in which academic literature and media (press and memo) releases are also reviewed. When documents are available in different languages, only the English version is taken into consideration.

As mentioned above, in the first phase of the quantitative content analysis, two first-order concept variables and their indicator items are approached in a diachronic perspective, with *per year* frequency distributions which offer a “useful way to summarise and understand data” and “to stay close to the data, at least in the initial stages of the analysis” (Punch, 1998: 115). Moreover, all indicator items are matched and organised in semantic pairs in order to balance the overall ‘context of occurrence/concordances’ and their contextual ‘networks’ (Neuendorf, 2002) but also to examine occurrences as part of well-structured concept maps (Buzan, 1993; Hay et al., 2008), from which inference can be made by aggregating the data of the traits and/or showing the relationship of these traits with the first-order concept (Punch, 1998: 93). Because terms may be implicit or have synonyms, a clear description of each observable indicator item used is provided in this paragraph to limit the subjectivity of interpretation of the concepts analysed.

Drawing on the premises presented in the Introduction of this dissertation, the first-order concepts of ‘adult (learner)’ and ‘(older) worker’ – variable in occurrence absolute values and frequency distribution over the Lisbon decade’s time lapse – have been identified as best representative of the two main divergent orientations in the EU policy panorama on adult education. From these, their descriptors (indicator items) have been semantically developed as follows:

⁹ This formula is normally required by the EC to be reported at the beginning of studies commissioned by external contractors in order to emphasise that the views expressed in it are primarily the author’s, as they may even be critical towards – or even in contrast with – those of the EU and its bodies.

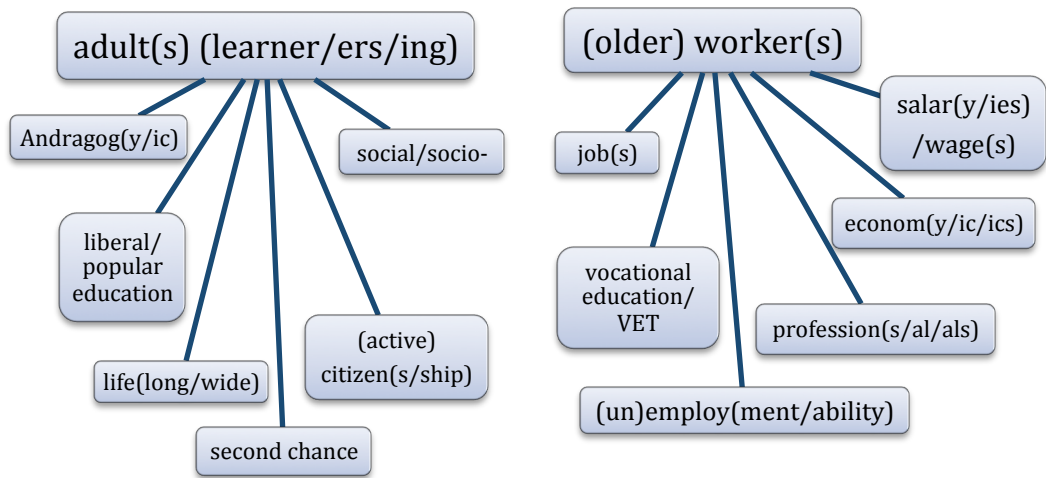


Figure 5: First-order concept maps for ‘adult (learner)’ and ‘(older) worker’ with their indicator items.

The preliminary definitions of the terms illustrated in Figure 5 and used as indicator items for the content analysis (independently from the meaning which they have acquired in the EU policy debate, as shown in section 3.1 Formation and transformation of key AE concepts in core EU education policy documents) are listed in Table 3 below. At this stage, they help in identifying the causal variables to be taken into consideration for the subsequent tracing of the EU policy-making process in the field of adult education, especially in the light of the ongoing debate on the vocational/non-vocational dimensions of this sector.

Table 3: Preliminary definitions of the indicator items composing the first-order concept maps in Figure 5.

term	preliminary functional definition
andragogy	Conceptions and approaches to the learning of adults as self-directed and autonomous learners based on Knowles' theoretical formulations, supporting lifelong and life-wide education of adults (see par.1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning).
(active) citizen(ship)	Cultural, economic, political/democratic and/or social participation of citizens in society as a whole and in their community (Eurostat, 2005a: Annex 3); participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy (EC, 2008d: 111).
economy	The wealth and resources of a country or region, especially in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services, and their careful management (Oxford dictionary of English).
employment	The condition of having a paid work or a person's trade or profession (Oxford dictionary of English).
job	Paid position of regular employment (Oxford dictionary of English).
liberal/popular education	Non-vocational adult education for purpose of enculturation and inscribed in a liberal-humanistic paradigm of personal development and self-fulfilment (cf. par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning).
lifelong (education/learning)	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 (EC, 2001a: 33).
lifewide (education/learning)	All learning activity whether formal, non-formal or informal. Lifewide learning is one dimension of lifelong learning (EC, 2001a: 33).
profession(al)	Paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification, or something related to it (Oxford dictionary of English).
salary/wage	Fixed regular payment made by an employer to an employee (Oxford dictionary of English).
second chance (education)	Educational paths providing some opportunities for people who left initial education without lower or upper secondary qualifications to upgrade their level of education at a later stage in life (Eurydice, 2011: 23).
social	Relating to society or its organisation (Oxford dictionary of English)
VET	All more-or-less organised or structured activities that aim to provide people with the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to perform a job or a set of jobs whether or not they lead to a formal qualification (CEDEFOP, 2004b: 13).

The definitions above are also functional to the semantic opposition of the indicator items, for example liberal and popular education as opposed to vocational education

and training, even though they belong to specific philosophical and scholarly traditions and orientations (cf. par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning).¹⁰ Moreover, the word count performed for the content analysis has included a systematic review of each and every occurrence in the context of the sentence/paragraph it belongs to in the light of the above definitions, in order to avoid and exclude false positives, i.e. descriptors not used in the text with their intended functional value or meaning (e.g. in expressions such as ‘a popular book’ and ‘during the life of the project’). Furthermore, the six indicator items associated to each of the two reference concepts analysed – that of ‘adult (learner)’ and that of ‘(older) worker’ – have been used to build coherent and fully opposable first-order concept maps of descriptor variables, each of which can be expressed in terms of *semantic opposition pairs* (see Table 4):

Table 4: Semantic opposition pairs composing the concept maps in Figure 5.

adult(s) (learner/s/ing)	(older) worker(s)
second chance	employment
andragogy	economy
social	salary/wage
life	job
citizen(ship)	profession(al)
liberal/popular	vocational

Whereas some of these descriptor pairs may seem rather obviously correlated (e.g. job/life, employment/second chance, economy/andragogy, vocational/liberal or popular education), others need to be considered in the context of the structural content analysis, with the other preceding or following words in the text, providing them with additional meanings. The social/salary opposition of indicator items, for example, must be viewed in the light of the most common terms associated to these two words: social needs, social participation, social success, social networking, social care. Considering this semantic characterisation, it becomes more straightforward to see ‘social’ success, and recognition by the members of the community to which a given person belongs, as opposed to ‘salary/wage’, as the economic recognition of individual work success.

Pairs of indicator items often entail more than one single semantic opposition: it is the case of ‘job/life’, which may simplistically appear, referring to trade-offs, arguments

¹⁰ Rinne et al. (2007: 14) noted that, in the nordic countries, the adult education tradition is referred to as “folk enlightenment (Denmark), liberal adult education (Finland), popular education (Sweden and Norway) and sometimes even as community education”; however, as they eventually put it, “the different concepts stress somewhat different but still interconnected aspects of the tradition they are still proud of: citizenship in democratic societies, individual growth and personal fulfilment or a strive for social change at a local level”. Liberal orientations of education and learning are also contextualised and illustrated by Martin (1926), Rogers (1969), Kidd (1973), Smith (1982), Jarvis (1989; 1991; 1992), Griffin (1987), Knowles (1990), Courtney (1992) and others.

and work/life balance speculations, while it actually enables the inscription not only of the work/life skills dichotomy but also the contrast of workplace and work-related learning indicator items versus life-wide and life-long learning items (cf. par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning). Similar reflections can be made in relation with the citizenship/profession and citizen/professional descriptor pairs.

2.3.2 Concept formation

The longitudinal examination that follows the content analysis described in the previous paragraphs is based upon the methodological approach of concept formation (Bennett & Elman, 2006), and accounts for the transformation of concepts such as 'adult learner', 'adult education/learning' and 'lifelong learning' across time (cf. Table 7 on page 120). Drawing on the data exemplified, it aims to infer that their semantic development coincides with or ultimately leads to the outcome of interest of this study.

Hence, through the methodological solution of the concept formation, the EU discursive articulation of the EU policy on AEL is analysed with a post-structural approach, in order to describe the process of fixation on key meanings which indicates a clear attempt to recompose and re-articulate ideas around signifiers and paradigms consequently gaining positivity. In particular, according to the hypothesis made, EU policy-makers would orient arguments and thematic selections according, to a large degree, to the policy signals and concepts converging or agglomerating around key features dominating the inter-institutional debate, and thus directly or indirectly transferring these features from the stakeholders (EU Member States, IOs, unions, NGOs, HEI, research institutes, EU agencies, third sector) to the EU coordination level. For this reason, a disambiguation of the main terms used is necessary before approaching the qualitative analysis preceding the process tracing in chapter 3.

In fact, the terminology used in the AEL sector (and research field) is heterogeneous and often controversial. Several traditions influence the study, research and overall understanding of the adult education. A first comprehensive clarification of terms such as 'adult', 'adult learner', 'adult education' and 'lifelong learning' can be found in the book *Key concepts in adult education and training* by Malcom Tight (1996). Other editions that aim to establish an unambiguous scientific terminology in this field are indeed the *International Encyclopedia of Adult Education and Training*, edited by Albert Tuijnman (1996), the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* edited by Arthur Wilson and Elizabeth Hayes (2000), as well as the more recent *Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, edited by Peter Jarvis (2009) and the *Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning* (2012) edited by Aspin et al. Several policy documents issued in relation to the EU educational policy-making also contain glossaries and definitions of the key terms and concepts related to the adult education field. These are taken into account in the next paragraphs,

when presenting the meaning making and concept formation of the central 'operational' terms.

As a matter of fact, it was already in the 1970s that Peterson remarked that "the field of adult education has evolved a vocabulary possibly unparalleled in its confusion" (Peterson, 1979: 13). Later on, Tight described it as a "contested terrain", acknowledging that the terms used to label 'adult education and training' (hereafter AET) are "themselves contested concepts" since this field is "broad, fractured and amorphous, differently understood, labelled and defined in different countries and by different interests" (Tight, 1996: 3). Also in the early 1990s, Stephens observed an already visible "division of adult education between what is crudely seen as *vocational* provision and *non-vocational* courses and groups" (Stephens, 1990: 1; original emphasis). This "major" distinction still appears rather evident in the education policy debate and in recent research on adult education and learning.

2.3.3 Process tracing

Indeed, co-variation does not automatically imply causation (Punch, 1998: 51–6, 120–1). For this reason, while the content analysis of EU policy outputs that is carried out in this study provides it with solid empirical support, the more interpretive (therefore more qualitative) method of research of the process tracing contributes to the exploration of the causal mechanisms through which explanatory variables produce effects within the realm of the policy *outcomes* (cf. note 2 on page 68).¹¹ This combined method of analysis also seeks confirmation of the empirical evidence gathered by verifying the predictions made (George & Bennett, 2005) in a more precise way. Studies that rely on process tracing aim, in effect, to "investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes" (George & McKeown, 1985: 35), as this method enables one to "identify the intervening causal process: the causal chain and the causal mechanism" (George & Bennett, 2005: 206). The aspects influencing the transformation of policy *outputs*¹² into policy *outcomes* are thus central at this stage of analysis (cf. Kingdon, 1984).

This type of analysis is certainly not effortless, but it is crucial when approaching highly complex policy-making processes (Checkel, 2006), including those of the EU. The first difficulty is epistemological: process tracing is notably a constructivist technique, even though those who endorse it usually employ it in association with discursive and interpretive analyses (Checkel, 2007: 15). Process tracing is also compatible with positivist

¹¹ Policy *outcomes* are henceforth considered as implementations or impacts of policy outputs (Rosenbloom & Kravchuk, 2005).

¹² The term policy *output* is hereafter used in relation to "official statement of governmental intent, delineation of powers and allocation of resources" (Rosenbloom & Kravchuk, 2005).

epistemologies that comprise “statistical techniques, analytic narrative (Bates, 1998), case studies and content analysis” (Checkel, 2007: 4), but which require additional rigor to anchor them to the causal mechanisms observed. The second difficulty is the qualitative nature of the empirical data used, which needs to be carefully selected and sampled to be relevant for the analysis of such mechanisms, which are normally recursive, fluid, dynamic and sometimes volatile. The sources of empirical data are, in this case, the policy outputs produced by the different bodies and agencies of the EU (EC, EP, Council of the EU, CEDEFOP, ETF, Eurostat), as well more comprehensive *corpora*, such as:

- all stages of EU working documents, from preliminary studies to executive and final reports;
- other IOs’ (e.g. OECD, UNESCO) policy outputs;
- surveys and studies carried out by EU external research contractors;
- documents issued by NGOs, international unions and associations/third sector in relation to adult education;
- scientific literature in the field of adult education and EU education policy;
- interviews (N=28) of key actors involved in the policy-making process and academics in relation to the topic of interest.

The review and analysis of these data is indeed part of both the concept formation discourse (as approached in paragraph 3.1.2 The *adult learner* concept and definition, for example) and process tracing. The latter, however, is further supported by other kinds of documents, statements and sources, such as working papers, institutional websites and newsletter postings, speeches, press releases, and various dissemination documentations released by EU agencies and the Commission (e.g. brochures, conference papers and presentations).

2.3.4 Interviewing

Thematic interviews with policy-makers, administrative officers and civil servants, as well as other relevant actors and academics, have been conducted between November 2009 and February 2013, thus maintaining an acceptable distance in temporal perspective from the Lisbon decade, which allows *ex-post* cognition and therefore a deeper insight and better understanding of the phenomenon researched (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Kvale, 1996). On the one hand, the unstructured form has been chosen for the face-to-face interviews, exploiting non-standardised open-ended questions to obtain in-depth insights from the interviewees. This has allowed a deeper understanding of the high complexity of the process analysed without imposing or suggesting any *a priori* categorisation, which might have limited the field of inquiry (Punch, 1998: 178). On the other hand, due to the opportunity of having *in medias res* data (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001) within the 2000–2010 reference timeline, several interviews of key actors (heads of unit and directors) released

by the media have been included in this corpus, which best reflects the chosen approach of combining content analysis with the process tracing methodology, and allows the use of selective non-probability sampling (Weisberg et al., 1989: 32–5) proposed by Oisín Tansey for the ‘élite interviews’ to reproduce hierarchical structures, for example that of the EU and of other complex organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD. In effect, according to Tansey (2007: 4–6), this methodological solution is “highly relevant for process tracing approaches” because it enables scholars to “interview first-hand participants of the processes under investigation”.

Hence, the interviewees have been sampled according to their institutional role in public institutions and private policy agencies or NGOs – indeed selecting more sources from the European Union bodies, especially the Commission. Academics were chosen because of their fields of expertise, covering principally the EU policy-making and Europeanisation, adult education, and skill/competence development (also from a cognitive perspective). In the following Table 5, this selection is made clear and roles and expertise are illustrated:

Table 5: Interviewees’ institution agencies, roles and expertise.

institution	agency	role	expertise
EU	EP	MEP	EU educational policy
	EC	European Commissioner for Education	EU educational policy
		European Commissioner for Education	EU educational policy
		Head of the Cabinet of the President of the EC	EU policy-making
		Head of Adult Education & Grundtvig Unit, DG EAC.	EU adult education policy
		Grundtvig Coordinator and Deputy Head of Unit Adult Education & Grundtvig, DG EAC	EU adult education policy
		Civil servant, DG Education and Culture	EU educational policy
		Civil servant, DG Education and Culture	EU adult education policy
		Project manager, DG Education and Culture.	EU adult education policy
		Civil servant, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.	EU policy-making
		CEDEFOP	Director

	Eurofound	Director	EU policy-making
IO	OECD	Deputy Director and Special Advisor on Education	Supranational education policy-making
		Director for Education	Supranational education policy-making
		Team leader, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation	Supranational education policy
	UNESCO	Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning	Supranational education policy-making
		Consultant to UNESCO and the EU in the field of adult education	Supranational adult education policy
		Project manager, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning	Supranational education policy
NGO	EAEA	Secretary General	International education policy
	ICAE	President	International education policy
Academia	University of Oxford	Professor of the Sociology of Education	Sociology of education
	University of Edinburgh	Professor, Centre of Educational Sociology	European education policy
		Lecturer in Social Policy at the School of Social and Political Science	International education policy
	University of London	Chair in Education at the Institute of Education	International education policy, skill and competence development
	Harvard University	Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education	Knowledge, skill and competence development
	Universit of Belgrade	Professor of Andragogy, Member of the Serbian Academy of Education	Adult education and andragogy
	University of Bath	Professor of Education and Political Economy	Economy of education
	Sciences Po/CNRS	Director of research	Educational policy

As the ideological background and commitment of the interviewees is predictable on the basis of the institution/organisation/university they belong to, the critical problem

of the choice of the source has been integrated by an 'insider', direct knowledge of the sampling frame (available population and their characteristics for the purpose of this study) by the author, in a way in which the above selection allows to "estimate the relationship of the sample to the population of subjects it was drawn from" (Tansey, 2007: 9). The criterion adopted in this framework is thus based on the identification of major, crucial themes related to the legal basis and decision-making of the EU (with special focus on the area of adult education), which are discussed with the chosen interviewees. Data drawn from the interviews are integrated in the analytical reflections of the process tracing and, when relevant, directly reported through citations. The full list of the interviews (N=28) used in this research can be found in Appendix D – List of interviews. Some of the interviews of officials and policy analysts of the EC and of the OECD were released on the condition of anonymity of the informants; six of the 28 interviewees are therefore referred to by their job titles or positions. In fact, when the availability of higher-profile subjects was overcome, another problem that needed to be handled was the confidentiality of the interviews made, since some of the sources (notably policy actors holding key roles in the decision making) requested that their identity would not be disclosed.

3. Research findings

The demographic metamorphosis that Western societies are currently experiencing indeed requires workers to stay longer in the labour market, which determines, among other consequences, job flexibility imposed on the workforce (INT12), the need for higher levels of qualifications, increased competitiveness, and a strong focus on individual and collective productivity. Governments are also requested to become equipped with new and better systems of continuing education and training in order to cope with these transformations and adapt to the so-called 'knowledge(-based) society'. The inception of the latter concept in the EU policy debate dates back to the 1980s, after the accomplishment of the single market project, when the Delors Commission "started considering the next steps for the socio-economic strategy of the Union" and the 'more competition' logic of the single market project (1985–92) "was complemented by a vision of a model of economic growth based on environmental sustainability, the information society, and job creation" (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 17). This model, according to Borrás and Radaelli (*ibid.*), led to the White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (EC, 1993; cf. par. 1.3 European education policy: an overview):

Admittedly, the 1993 White Paper on competitiveness had little political impact at the time it was published; nor did it have any specific focus on policy instruments or modes of governance. Nevertheless, it struck a chord in many of the academic discussions addressing the 'knowledge based economy' and 'green economy' which were drawn into the centre of political discussions in the late 1990s.

With the launch of the Lisbon agenda, the concept of economic growth was eventually matched with that of *competitiveness*, "a term focusing on a wide set of framework conditions shaping the institutional context for economic activity" (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 17). It is today a widely shared opinion that the prosperity that Europe will attain in the next decades will be the result of an intense and difficult competition amongst the most developed economies (the United States, the European Union, Japan) and the fastest developing ones (China, India, South America, South Africa; cf. CIA, 2012).

HUMAN CAPITAL AND THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

The effects of this competition will certainly depend on the quantity but also the quality of the *human capital* (Becker, 1964) each of these economies will be able to deploy (Maniscalco, 2012: 150), but also the *vision* that Western political leaders will apply, for example in expanding their trade and cultural cooperation with other nations and the extension of strategic alliances. One crucial challenge for the EU could include the re-launch of a political dialogue with the northern African countries in the framework of the Barce-

lona process, and the multilateral partnership framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (Maniscalco, 2010c).

By reason of “the elegant appeal” of the *human capital* discourse (often considered an element of the evolution of capitalism) and despite the fact that “theoretical and empirical verification has been difficult to establish” (Savvides & Stengos, 2009: 4), the influence of this proposition, picturing a society where investment in workers’ knowledge and skills would generate prosperity (Schultz, 1962; Becker, 1964) and unprecedented social equality (Barro, 1999; Barro & Lazear, 2002), combined with that of the *knowledge society* (Stehr, 1994; 2001), has played a crucial role in the definition of the AL policies at an EU level during the last decade (Maniscalco, 2010a: 57). In 2003, the OECD (2003: 3; own emphasis) asserted:

Adult learning has taken on a much higher profile in the last decade, as OECD economies and ageing societies are increasingly *knowledge-based*. High unemployment rates among the unskilled, the increased and recognized importance of *human capital* for economic growth – together with public interest in improving social and personal development – make it necessary to increase learning opportunities for *adults* within the wider context of lifelong learning.

THE LAUNCH OF ADULT EDUCATION POLICIES BY THE EU

In the EU, the first phase of this policy trend can be identified in the impulse given by initiatives to promote *lifelong learning* in the first instance (in particular between 2000–2005), as exemplified in Figure 7 on page 85, thus targeting adult learners ‘by inclusion’. The years 2005–2006 were, instead, an incontrovertible turning point for the adult education policy in the EU context, which meant:

- the introduction of the first explicit definition of *adult learner* in February 2005 (cf. paragraph 3.1.2 The *adult learner* concept and definition in EU policy documents);
- the constitution, in October 2005, of a Working Group on ‘EU data needs on adult skills’ (later called upon to meet on a regular basis and called *Working Group on Adult Skills*) composed by national experts to advise the European Commission on this topic;
- the adoption of the Communication *It is never too late to learn* in October 2006 (cf. 1.4 The Lisbon process) which included the first official definition of *adult learning* provided by the EC;
- the introduction of the first explicit definition of *adult education* in November 2006 (cf. 3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning*);
- a radical increase of the frequency of key terms such as ‘adult learner’ (cf. Figure 14 on page 99) in the core AE policy documents (cf. Figure 9 on page 90);
- the multiplication of calls for tenders by the DG Education and Culture for commissioning external studies on adult education and learning (cf. paragraph 1.4 The Lisbon process, and 3.3.1 Consultative, decentralised and outsourced legitimation).

All these signs of increased attention towards the AEL sector materialised in 2007 when, with the launch of the *Action Plan on Adult Learning* (EC, 2007b), it gained “lots of visibility”: in the words of Marta Ferreira, former Head of Adult Education & Grundtvig Unit at the DG Education and Culture, “the importance that adult education has now gained is also reflected in the fact that in the Commission, at the EAC Directorate-General, a specific Unit was created, [and] started on 1 October 2007 dealing with adult education policies, the Action Plan on Adult Learning follow-up and the *Grundtvig* programme” (INT5). Moreover, as she explained:

During 2007, it was subject of a large debate at the European Parliament: three Commissions of the EP approved reports on the Adult Learning Action Plan and finally, on 16 January 2008 the European Parliament approved a resolution on Adult Learning, based on the report of MEP Doris Pack. Meanwhile, the Economic Social Committee (CESE), representative of social partners, and the Committee of the Regions (RC), were consulted by the Commission for the Action Plan. After interesting consultations and debates, two respective reports were approved, on 21 February 2008 by the CESE and on 28 February 2008 by the RC.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADULT EDUCATION POLICY THROUGH THE OMC

In 2007, yearly reports on progress towards the Lisbon objectives – used by the EU to monitor the failures and successes in the reaching of the agreed goals, as part of the OMC – showed that the levels of adults’ educational attainment in the EU were worryingly poor. Statistics rendered a sobering picture: 40.4% of adults between 55 and 64 years old had not reached a level of post-secondary education, and for people over 65 the average rate reached 62%. Further data gathered by the EC acknowledged that, while the Lisbon benchmark on adults’ participation to lifelong learning aimed at reaching a rate of 12.5% by 2010, starting from 7.1% in 2000, it actually rose up to 9.6% in 2006, but then the growth slowed down and, in 2007, the percentage was still 9.7% (EC, 2008a) and would “hardly increase significantly” in the following four years (Maniscalco, 2012: 151). Afterwards, in fact, it even started decreasing.¹

¹ Cf. EC (2008a): “Progress towards meeting the five benchmarks set for 2010 has been insufficient” (p. 13) and “most of the benchmarks that the Council set for 2010 will not be reached” (p. 3). In 2010, the EC commented: “adult (age 25–64) participation in lifelong learning fails to increase. Compared with the benchmark goal of 12.5% participation in lifelong learning by 2010, the average rate in 2008 was 9.5%” (EC, 2010a: 4).

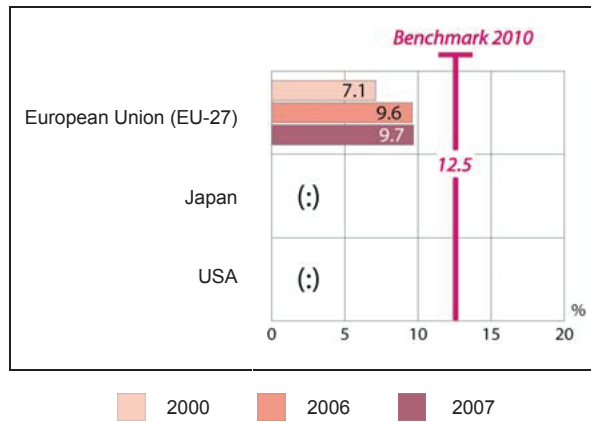


Figure 6: Participation of adults in lifelong learning. Source: EC (2008d: 26) from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The statistics presented in Figure 6 are juxtaposed “with the EU’s perceived main competitors, the USA and Japan” (Moutsios, 2007: 18; see also Streeck & Schmitter, 1991: 49) because “the detail of the strategy for education and training after Lisbon is to a considerable degree based on comparisons with the USA and Japan, and this can also be seen as enabling the identification of ‘Others’ against whom ‘Europe’ can identify itself”.² Such identification of a “common, European level” of problems would represent, according to Roger Dale (2006: 30), “an important part of the discursive construction of Europe and a European education policy distinct from that of MS, both individually and in aggregate”.

THE RE-LAUNCH OF THE LISBON STRATEGY AND NEW TOOLS FOR THE OMC

One response to the ‘announced failure’ of the EU policy to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning paths was “a new wave of EU initiatives in the field, sometimes updating or recycling activities that had not been successful in the past” (Ertl, 2006: 5), which fell under the umbrella of the OMC. One example is the working group for the implementation of the APAL (hereafter ALWG) established in 2008 and supported by five focus groups of non-governmental experts, which promoted initiatives for the elicitation of best practices such as PLAs and regional meetings organised with a strong involvement of national representatives, and for the strengthening of sectorial networking. Social partners and the ‘civil society’ were also increasingly being recognised as col-

² This graph included in the *Progress Report Towards the Lisbon Objectives* presents the statistics about the participation of adults in lifelong learning in the EU in comparison with Japan and the United States. For the last two countries, however, data is missing. Since this was the only graph of the report presenting the exhausting trend discussed in this paragraph, and considering that the data for Japan and the United States were not relevant for this analysis, it has nevertheless been used to support it.

laborators in this process, and their involvement ranged from simple consultation to participation in formal structures at national and/or regional levels (Eurydice, 2007: 12).

Simultaneously to the mentioned Communication *It is always good time to learn* (EC, 2007b) and the ALWG, addressing the need to invest in *human capital*, another response of the EC was the launch of a policy stream stressing the links between advanced knowledge acquisition strategies, key skills and competences development and economic growth (Maniscalco, 2012: 150). This new policy orientation was inaugurated with the Recommendation on the *Key Competences for lifelong learning* (EU, 2006b), and was extended one year later with the Resolution *New Skills for New Jobs* (hereafter NSNJ) addressing adults' upskilling and establishing a systematic monitoring of skill mismatch and shortage (cf. 3.3.2 Towards the adult competence development and skill matching model). In this regard, the Commission underlined that "the concept of *lifelong learning* within a *knowledge-based society*, resulting from various societal changes which have progressively emerged in the EU" reinforced the necessity for specific policies on key competencies for lifelong learning and, "significantly, the need to support the adult population in developing and updating individual competences throughout their lives is emphasised in several policy documents at the EU level" (EC, 2010a: 25–6; original emphasis).

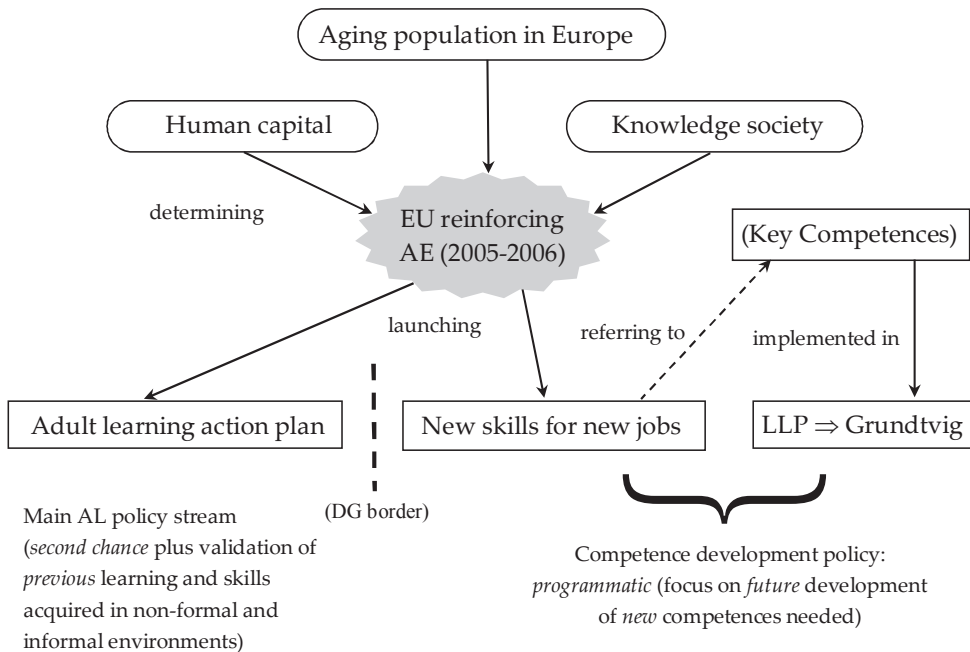


Figure 7: Integrated explanatory model of the adult education policy in the EU during the Lisbon decade.

The strength of the *Key competences for lifelong learning* was indeed that they could be easily transfused and implemented in the *Grundtvig* sectorial sub-programme for adult education as part of the *Lifelong Learning Programme*, managed by the DG Education and Culture (EAC).

EU SKILLS AND COMPETENCES UPGRADING POLICY AND BUDGET LIMITATIONS

Its major limitation, however, was intrinsically linked to the structure of the 2006 Recommendation and to the “really inadequate budget allocated to the programme”; in effect, “despite increases over the years, this is still much too small relative to the high demand for grants from the adult education community” (INT6). This strong criticism, expressed by Alan Smith, former *Grundtvig* Coordinator and Deputy Head of Unit Adult Education and *Grundtvig* at the DG Education and Culture, was perfectly in line with Marta Ferreira’s: “the only problem of *Grundtvig* is, for the moment, the limited amount of funds” (INT5). The *Grundtvig* sub-programme for adult education actually received a minor percentage of the *Lifelong Learning Programme* funds, as little as 4% of the total budget (cf. Figure 36 on page 264), which makes it “simple to figure out how modest and limited the overall impact of these policies has been” (Maniscalco, 2010a: 59).

In spite of, and perhaps attempting to compensate, by reason of the limited investment in human capital by the EU Member States,³ the *New Skills for New Jobs* Council Resolution (EU, 2007a) and the following Communication by the EC (2008b) aimed to create opportunities to adapt skills and competences to the needs of the *knowledge economy* (Foray, 2000; Peters & Besley, 2006). This policy initiative, administered by the Commission’s DG Employment and Social Affairs, was a tentative response to the growing demand for adult skills and competence upgrading that the APAL had left aside, as it concentrated its action on promoting the participation of adults in lifelong learning through the ‘one step up’ principle (EC, 2007b: 3; EU, 2008a: 2; UOF, 2009) – obtaining higher levels of qualifications – and recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning (INT8). First and foremost, the DG Employment – which counts on a larger mandate from the MS in its areas of competence – could resultantly emerge as a better actor to attract and mobilise economic resources for the purpose of work-skills upgrading and competence development (INT2).

³ According to the EC (2006d), investment in human capital is “one of the key factors for strengthening Europe’s position in the knowledge economy and to increasing social cohesion in the 21st century” (p. 23). Nevertheless, “public spending as a % of GDP did not increase in all Member States and private spending in this period stagnated”, so that “an increased private contribution is considered necessary to increase availability of resources and improve efficiency of spending” (p. 24). The European Council of March 2000 in Lisbon acknowledged this by calling for “a substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources” (EU, 2000: paragraph 26).

In fact, these include more consistent funds such as the EU Structural Funds, e.g. the European Social Fund (ESF), and the Cohesion Fund (INT10). In the list of ‘policy recommendations’ of the cited external study *Adult Education Trends and Issues in Europe*, the EAEA remarked: “the Commission regularly encourages innovation, development and cost effectiveness and this should be applied to the EU itself”, therefore “effective support for lifelong adult learning means that core EU Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund and the much larger resources spent by and through the Member States must incorporate the more integrative perspectives” (EAEA, 2006: 55). In this sense, in the press release of December 2008 by the DG Employment of the EC, who was responsible for the launch of the *New Skills for New Jobs: better matching and anticipating labour market needs*, it was clearly reported that “the Commission will help Member States and regions and all actors involved in the upgrading and matching of skills by mobilising existing Community policies and funds, especially the European Social Fund” (IP/08/1984 on Rapid). Furthermore, on the EC’s webpage⁴ dedicated to the NSNJ agenda, among the ‘key actions’ that are mentioned the “EU funding – via the European Social Fund and the Lifelong Learning Programme” is also included, as well as the “European Framework for the *Key competences for lifelong learning*” and the EQF. The extent of the implications of this ‘catch-all’ policy is further discussed in par. 3.3.2.3 The *New Skills for New Jobs* initiative.

CONFLICTS OF COMPETENCES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The policy stream of the adult skills formation and competence development established a certain ‘conflict of responsibilities’ (INT9) rather than synergic collaboration between the DG Education and Culture (coordinating the APAL and administering the *Grundtvig* resources) and the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (responsible for the *New Skills for New Jobs* initiative and the monitoring of the skills mismatch in the European labour market). As anticipated, even though the raising of the skills of the adult population was included in the two Communications (EC, 2006b; EC, 2007b) and in the Council Conclusions (EU, 2008a), these statements clearly reported that the Action Plan “focuses on those who are disadvantaged because of their low literacy levels, inadequate work skills and/or skills for successful integration into society” and “depending on the Member State, these could include migrants, older people, women or persons with a disability” (EC, 2007b: 3). The APAL, moreover, primarily concentrated its efforts on establishing an EU coordination in the field of AL, keeping up with the ‘emergency’ of the institutional gap in a demanding economic and political conjuncture by insisting on the increase of participation by adults in lifelong learning (cf. the 5th Lisbon benchmark), removing the barriers that had kept people out of learning paths, sharing experiences and good practices in order to improve the governance in the AL sector, and improving the

⁴ Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568> (last retrieved on 19 July 2012).

use of European and national funding (i.e. the ‘key actions’ of the APAL). Conversely, the concern of the *New Skills for New Jobs – Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs* was evidently not the remediation of the sector but its *future* developments in order to serve the labour market’s needs and economic growth.

3.1 Formation and transformation of key AE concepts in core EU education policy documents

Before approaching a close analysis of the core EU documents⁵ that focus on the AL sector, an overview of the conceptual context and main trends is first shown in Figure 8. This illustrates the presence (through the absolute number of occurrences) of keywords between which a tension appears to exist; the analysis of these keyword variables is expected to provide a certain preliminary understanding of the phenomenon as the first-order concepts’ semantic networks of descriptors are then developed and their indicator items taken into account and further explored.

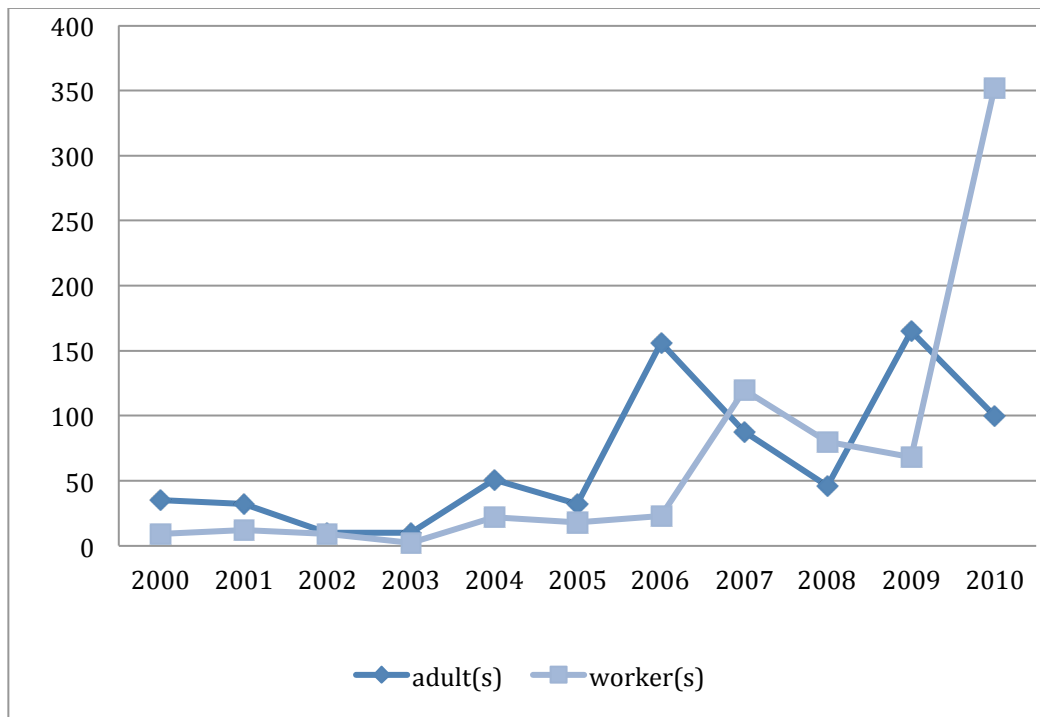


Figure 8: Frequency distribution of two reference terms in core EU policy statements on AE.

⁵ See Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis.

Two elements appear evident in the above graph,⁶ showing the presence of two simple but central (and very efficient) reference terms as descriptor variables in a series which helps in the contextualising of the concept formation process underlying AE policy-making in the EU:

- 1) the presence of the keyword 'adult(s)' increased radically in the EU policy documents from 2006;
- 2) the occurrences of the keyword 'worker(s)' dramatically overtook those of the 'adult(s)' after 2006.

In relation to the second point, the exception of 2009 (albeit 'compensated' with the impressive peak of 2010) does not fully reflect the complexity of the series, as the focus of the EU education policy on AE actually shifted towards workers' competences and the adult *learner's* perspective. In effect, the frequencies of the combined items 'adult learner' (only four occurrences in 2009) and 'older worker' combined (18 occurrences in the same year) show more clearly how multi-faced this trend is, and how deconstructing the data can support the analysis of the phenomenon.

3.1.1 Statistical insights: *adult learner vs. older worker*

The following pie chart, for example, is a longitudinal representation of the 'adult (learner)' concept variable (as composed in Figure 5 on page 71), with *per year* frequencies of its aggregated indicator items:

⁶ Data tables for the graphs in this chapter can be found in Appendix C – Tables of data used for content analysis.

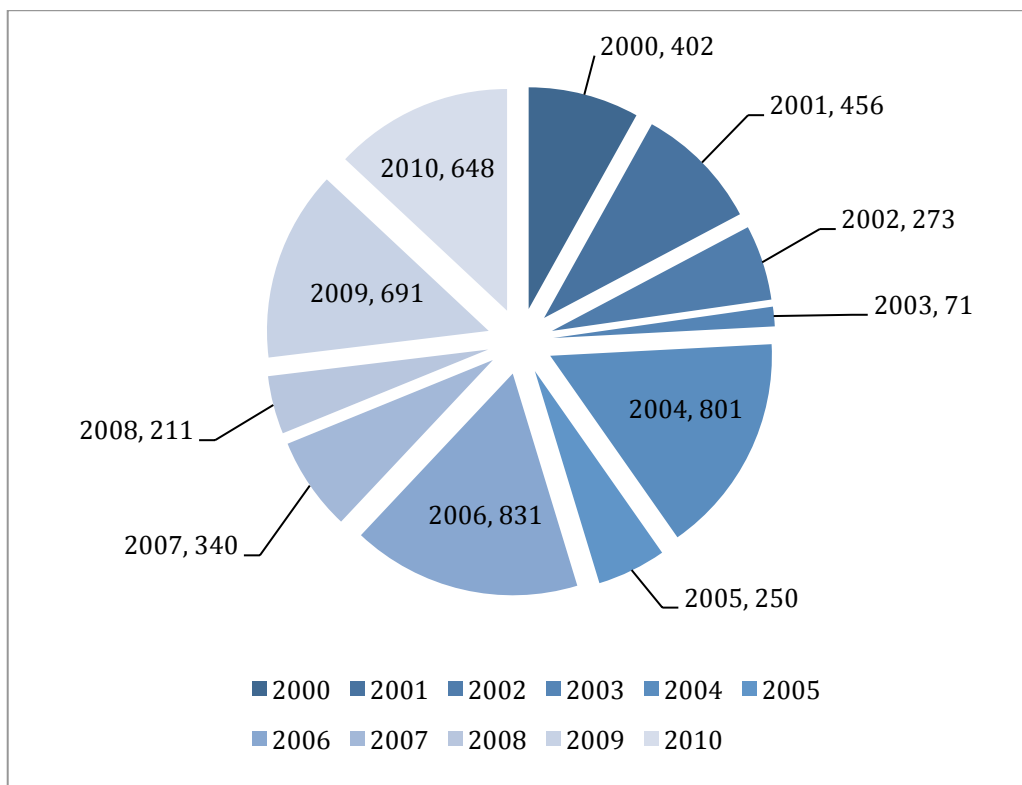


Figure 9: Frequency distribution of the 'adult(s) learn(er/ers/ing)' concept's aggregated indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

The data shown in Figure 9 confirms the occurrence of a peak in 2006, as the true 'explosion' of the adult learning theme in the EU education policy. It also illustrates an 'incubation period' around 2004, within which – even though the term 'adult' was not as present as in 2006 (cf. graph in Figure 8 on page 88) – several indicator items of the 'adult (learner)' concept variable were already present. Moreover, across the end of the decade (2009–2010) the adult learning discourse re-entered the European policy debate and was re-launched through specific EU policy documents, even if with a milder intensity. In the next graph, which reports in detail the frequency distribution of the various indicator items of the reference concept, a certain semantic convergence of the term 'adult learning' around the 'lifelong/life-wide' descriptor variable is visible, showing the persistence of the lifelong learning discourse in the EU policy debate:

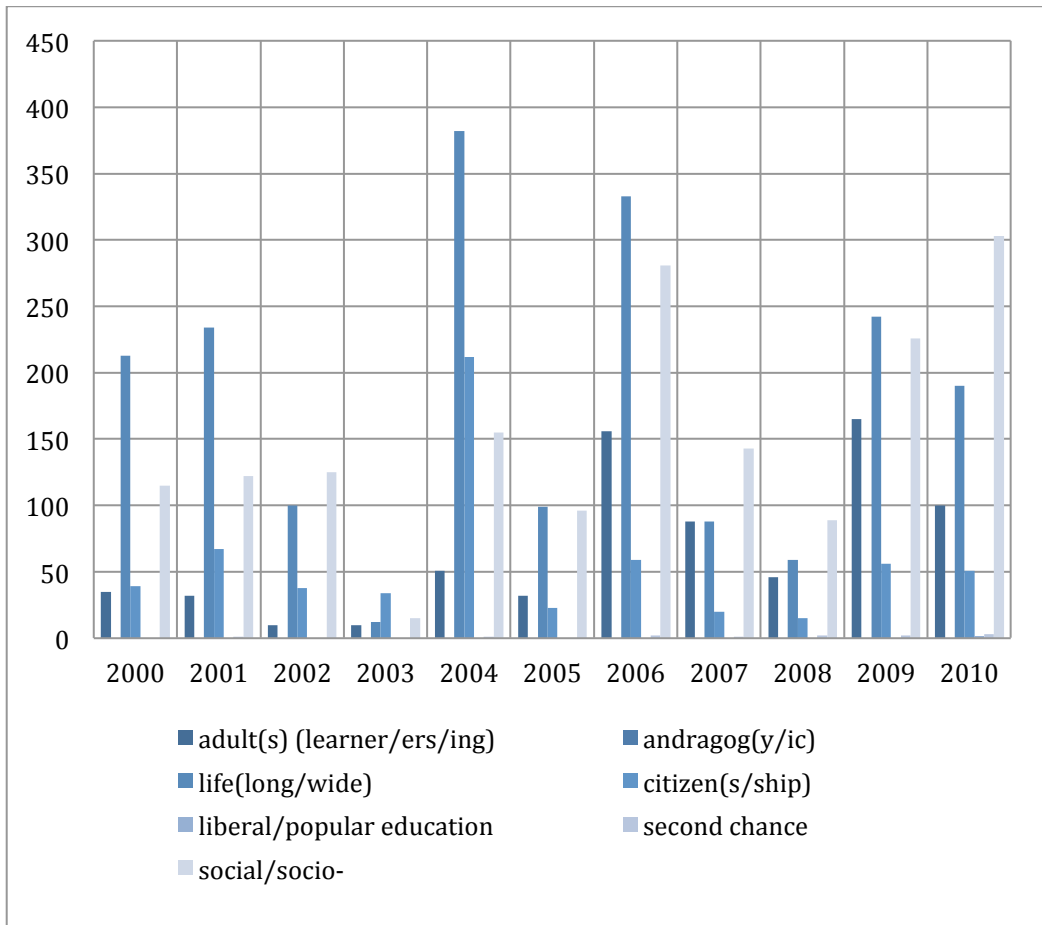


Figure 10: Frequency distribution of the 'adult(s) learn(er/ers/ing)' concept's disaggregated indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

Among all the indicator items that tend to show high frequencies, the descriptor for the 'social' dimension of AE policies is particularly evident, whereas the northern European terminological tradition of 'liberal' or 'popular' education does not appear to have entered the debate at an EU level.

LIBERAL EDUCATION AND COSMOPOLITAN ENCULTURATION

Liberal education is typically described in opposition to vocational adult education (cf. the preliminary definitions outlined in Table 3, on page 72). Carl Bereiter proposed, in this frame of reference, a humanistic conceptualisation of this term, anchored on *cosmopolitan* ideals of education (Bereiter, 2002b: 12; own emphasis):

Liberal education is essentially *enculturation*. It is more than the handing on of a body of knowledge and wisdom, although that is a large part of it. That is the part that liberal education has in common with enculturation in all societies. What makes liberal education distinctive – what makes it ‘liberal’ – is its *cosmopolitanism*. Liberal education initiates [individuals] into a culture that transcends the particularities of their social and ethnic backgrounds.

In the article where Bereiter proposed this understanding of liberal education, he also commented on the actual competition between this concept and the “new wave of economic globalisation” and the ideals of the *knowledge economy*, concluding that “a major concern of many advocates of liberal education is that cosmopolitanism itself is coming under attack” (*ibid.*). Similar insights have been advanced in some contributions of Risto Rinne and Anja Heikkinen’s edition focusing on adult education in the nordic tradition (Rinne et al., 2007) as well as in Henderson and Smith’s edition (2002), in which the two authors presented the debate around the ‘pluralistic’ vs. ‘elite’ liberal education, and identified four main intertwined trends (p. 1):

Four trends have changed the problem of liberal education beyond recognition in recent decades: 1) knowledge is growing so rapidly and uncontrollably that the very idea of an ‘all-round’ (or ‘general’) education is coming to seem unfeasible; 2) nonetheless, it seems increasingly obvious that knowledge skills of some kind are essential in a society where ‘knowledge work’ has become the most productive and highly remunerated kind of work; 3) moreover, it seems clear that these knowledge skills, whatever they are, can’t be confined to an elite, but must be imparted to everyone; 4) in a pluralistic society, the old classical model of learning knowledge skills (illustrated for example by the European elite education) is challenged by some groups in society who reject the culture in which such education has been embedded.

SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION

Second chance education and ‘one step up’ principles for the ‘remedial’ education of adults (cf. par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning) seem not to have considerably influenced the EU policy on AEL, even though the latter in particular was presented as a major objective in the 2007 Communication *It is always good time to learn* and in the Action Plan (EC, 2007b: 3; EU, 2008a: 2; cf. also UOF, 2009), and despite the intense debate around EQF and NQFs (National Qualification Frameworks) that took place. A further point to note here is the total absence of the item ‘andragogy’ – even in empirical documents and scientific/historical backgrounds that introduce terminological studies and glossaries or support the policy statements related to adult education. This would indicate that this concept has been practically ignored by policy-makers, whereas it is actually still used in cognitive and learning sciences,⁷ especially in opposition to *pedagogy* (as anticipated in par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning). In the words of Malcom Tight (1996: 105), “it can reasonably be concluded that any aspirations

⁷ Cf. paragraph 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning.

for presenting andragogy as an overarching theory are now gone, though it retains some value as a guide to practice, and remains popular in some arenas". This absence, nevertheless, indicates a mismatch between the scientific discourse in the field of adult education and the policy discourse, which includes the elicitation and gathering of scientific evidence that is carried out by the EU in the phase of legitimation of its policy-making, which will be further discussed in paragraph 3.3 Scientific- or evidence-based policy-making and governance.

EU POLICY’S TARGET POPULATION: ADULT LEARNER OR OLDER WORKER?

Figure 11 shows a constant increase of the overall weight of the indicator items associated with the concept of ‘(older) worker(s)’ between 2000 and 2010, with really high values in 2009 and 2010 – especially in comparison with the frequencies of the items associated with the ‘adult(s) learn(er/ers/ing)’ concept presented in Figure 9 above.

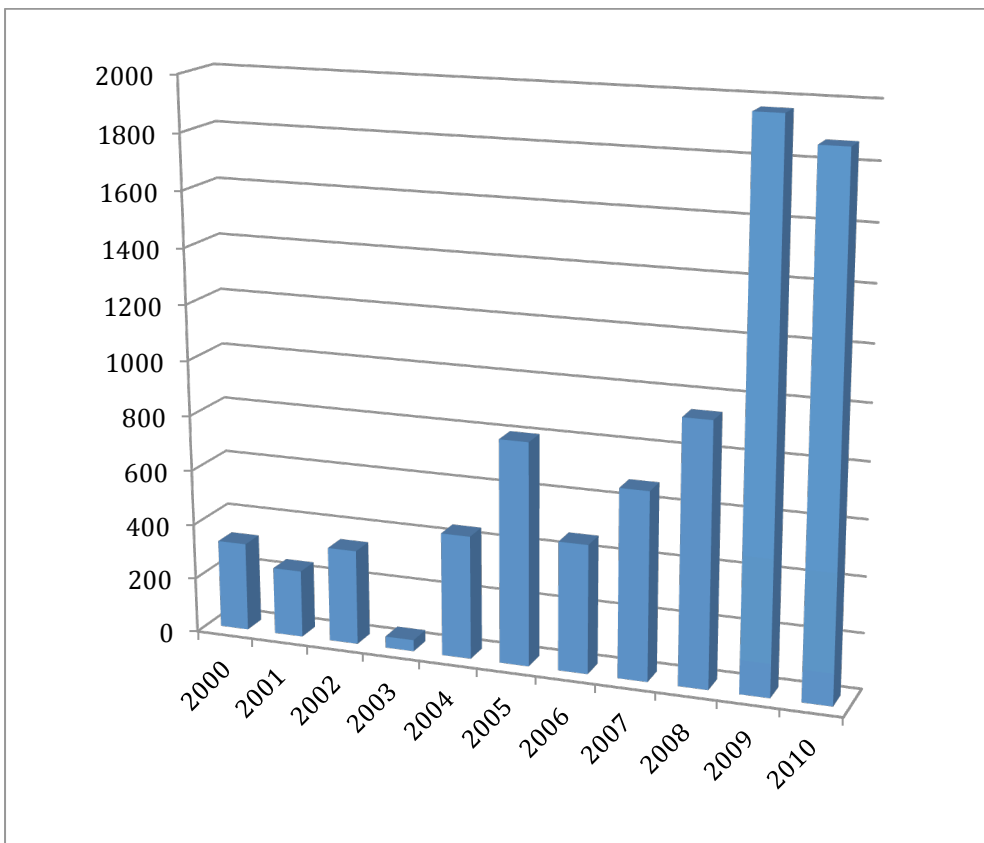


Figure 11: Frequency distribution of the ‘(older) worker(s)’ concept’s aggregated indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

AN EXQUISITE ECONOMIC DIMENSION FOR THE AE POLICY

The above chart confirms the hypothesis formulated in the previous paragraph as the background condition for the phenomenon observed. In effect, according to Figure 12, the indicator items related to the ‘economic factor’ in particular (which falls under the umbrella of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ discourse as well as in the EU education policy debate) appears to hold constant values over the ten years of the Lisbon agenda, with small frequency fluctuations (occurrences varying between 15 and 159 instances). The item of wages and salaries has also very little increase (from one figure to two figures from 2008), whilst almost all of the other descriptors are subject to a considerable increase from 2007 (with the exception of the indicator item ‘profession(al)’ – see below).

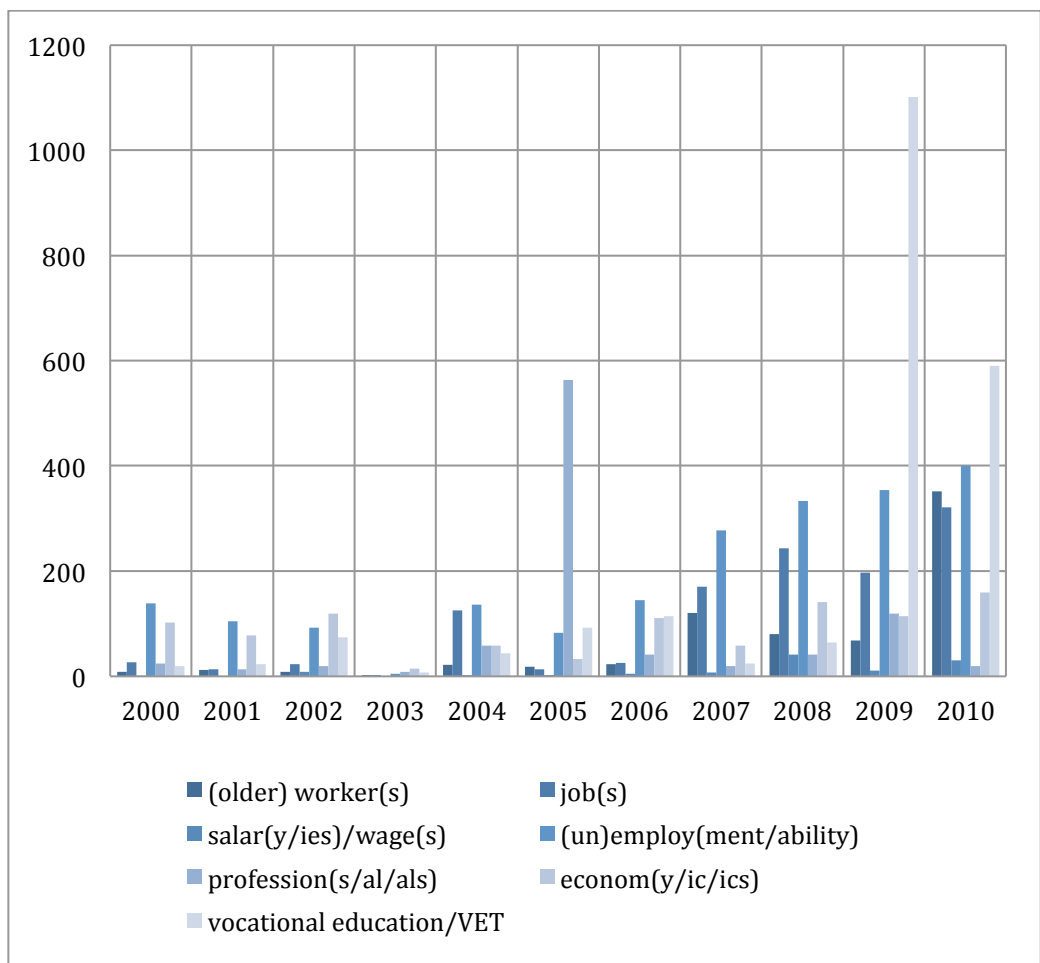


Figure 12: Frequency distribution of the ‘(older) worker(s)’ concept’s disaggregated indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

The peak of the indicator item ‘profession(al)’⁸ recorded in 2005 is also the result of the 2005/36/EC Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications, while the 2009 peak for the VET item is due to its abundance in at least three important documents on this subject (e.g. the Recommendation on ECVET and especially the CEDEFOP reference document on VET), which also involve the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.



Figure 13: Contrastive superposition of the two reference concepts' aggregated indicator items frequency distribution in core EU policy documents on AE.

⁸ A detailed description of the terms ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ in relation to adult education can be found in the *Key Concepts in Adult Education and Training* (Tight, 1996: 84–6).

Based on Table 18 and on Table 19 (cf. in the Appendix C – Tables of data used for content analysis), and probably the most descriptive of all the graphs hitherto presented, the radar chart in Figure 13 shows two more elements that contribute to the present analysis:

- The total size of the '(older) worker(s)' concept's aggregated indicator items series is almost double that of the 'adult (learner/s)' concept's aggregated indicator items series (8126 vs. 4974 occurrences);
- Frequencies show that the descriptors composing the '(older) worker(s)' concept's aggregated indicator items series occur more frequently during the years 2005–2010, when they hold *by far* higher absolute values.

The superposition of the two reference concepts' aggregated indicator items frequency distribution also suggests that, apart from the primacy of the 'absolute weight' of work-related items, the two areas are compatibly overlapping. As it will be also shown through the concept formation analysis, this infers that the meanings associated with the two reference concepts – and, by extension, to the descriptors related to them – have also been combined by the EU in the policy discourse in the field of AEL.

3.1.2 The *adult learner* concept and definition in EU policy documents

An *adult learner* is, first and foremost, an *adult* involved in a learning process; it is therefore not possible to define 'adult learner' and 'adult learning' unless the notion of *adult* (and *adulthood*) is clarified.

DEFINITIONS OF 'ADULT'

An *adult* is an individual of 'mature age', typically associated with sexual maturity and reaching the age of reproduction. Further to this, the term has subordinate meanings related to social and legal notions: legally, an adult is a person who has attained the age of *majority* and is therefore regarded as independent, responsible and self-sufficient (in contrast with a *minor*). Michael Stephens (1990: 2), for example, considers 'adult learner' a learner "over the legal age of 18 years" who has "completed his or her initial education". Likewise, Titmus (1999: 11) claimed that adult educationalists have been influenced in their thinking by the fact that *adult* denotes a distinctive stage of physiological and psychological development, and recognised that the concept differs from society to society. He thus defined adults as individuals "regarded as an adult by the society to which they belong" and underlined that no existing definition would manage to reconcile these different senses of the term *adult* in the expression *adult education* (*ibid.*):

Not all persons who, according to chronological and administrative criteria, are engaged in adult education, are adults in terms of social function or development maturity. Some of those who are, are not considered to be participating in adult education. Some people who, for instance, are to be treated as adults because of their role as wage-earners or parents, are not at an adult level of cognitive or affective maturity.

In the words of Marcie Boucouvalas and Judy-Arin Krupp (1990), the andragogic system introduced by Malcom Knowles “represents a well-developed link between adult development and adult learning” and promotes the “adult developmental perspective” which poses the question of how individuals change during adulthood (p. 183). In fact, *adulthood* can be defined in terms of physiology, psychological development, law, or social ‘sub-set’ (Rogers, 1986: 5). The four derived definitions can be expressed in the following way:

- *Biological Definition*: the age at which an individual can reproduce.
- *Psychological Definition*: the age at which an individual develops a self-concept of being responsible for his or her own life.
- *Legal Definition*: the age at which an individual can vote, drive, marry, work, etc.
- *Social Definition*: the age at which an individual begins to perform adult roles such as that of a full-time worker, active and participating citizen, spouse, parent, etc.

The age specified by law (the age of majority) not only indicates that a person acquires full legal capacity to be bound by various documents, such as contracts and deeds, that he or she makes with others and to commit other legal acts such as voting in elections; it also includes the age at which an individual is entitled to marry or to enter the labour market. This age varies from country to country, depending on the nature of the action taken by the person and the cultural and religious traditions. Consequently, a person wishing to obtain a license to operate a motor vehicle may be considered an adult at the age of 16, but may not reach adulthood until the age of 18 for the purpose of marriage, or 21 to purchase liquors.

CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF ‘ADULT LEARNER’

In the *Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector* (IOE, 2008a) carried out in 2008 by the University of London’s Institute of Education⁹ for the European Commission, ‘adult’ is defined as follows (p. 5):

Any person aged 16 years or older who has left the initial education and training system (Note: This is a pragmatic definition for EU purposes, based on the fact that 16 is the age of majority in

⁹ The research for this study was “led by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC)”, of the Institute of Education (part of the University of London), in collaboration with “the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE), the Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l’illettrisme (ANLCI) and the University of Warsaw” (IOE, 2008a: 2).

some EU countries, e.g. Scotland, and that international surveys of adult literacy and numeracy tend to cover the age range 16 to 60, 64 or 65).

With reference to the addressing of adults in European education policy, an intertwinement of legal and social aspects appears in the core documents¹⁰ analysed in this research.

THE 'ECONOMIC IDENTITY' OF THE EU ADULT LEARNER

This fusion is nevertheless incomplete, as only certain aspects are retained in the 'adult (learner)' concept formation throughout the policy-making process that occurred between 2000 and 2010. Indeed, the cluster of elements in common in the legal and the social spheres for the definition of 'adult' all fall under the umbrella of the *economic* theme; or simply: *work*. This indeed reflects the limitations given by the normative bias inherent the legal basis of the European Union: this argument will be further explored in par. 3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning* and 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU's soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector. According to the last EC report on the Lisbon agenda's progress, for example, the European benchmark on the participation in lifelong learning – which “concerns what could more strictly be called adult education and training” – is “measured by the European Labour Force Survey, which asks about participation in formal and non-formal learning” to the European labour force,¹¹ i.e. *workers* (EC, 2011a: 34). Even in the light of the conceptual content analysis hitherto presented and illustrated through Figure 13, the relational comparison between 'adult'-'learner' and 'older'-'worker' confirms the trend previously described and suggests an evident terminological 'substitution' of the subject of the policies that the EU undertook during the 2000–2010 period (cf. Figure 14 below).

¹⁰ See Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis.

¹¹ The Labour Force Survey (LFS) was conducted in 2004 in the 25 Member States of the EU plus 3 countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) N. 577/98 of 9 March 1998 and three Candidate countries also participated in the 2004 survey. The active population (labour force) is defined as “the sum of employed and unemployed persons. Inactive persons are those who are neither classified as employed nor as unemployed” (Eurostat, 2005b: 9).

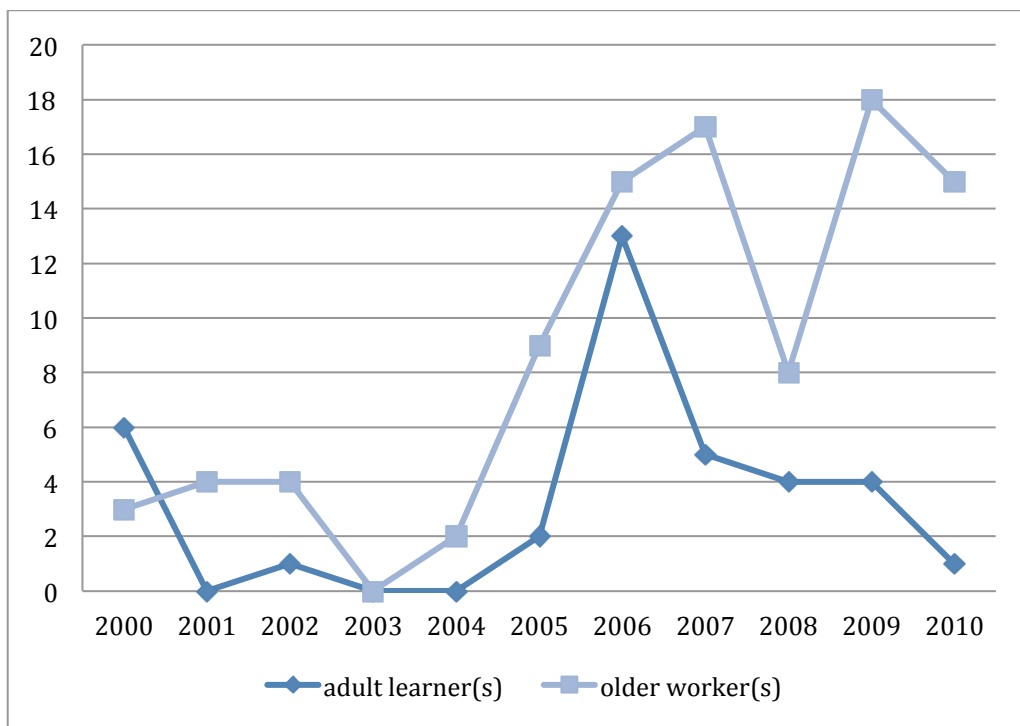


Figure 14: Frequency distribution of combined indicator items related to 'adult learner(s)' vs. 'older worker(s)' in core EU policy documents on AE.

KEY CONCEPT 1) DEFINITION OF 'ADULT LEARNER' BY THE EU

As already remarked (Maniscalco, 2010a: 66), the main definition of *adult learner* in official EU statements is provided by the EC in the report on the Adult Education Survey (Eurostat, 2005a: 30; original emphasis):

The objective of the AES requires the production of information on adult education and learning in a very broad sense. This means that the survey should cover the population as a whole and not concentrate on the labour force only. In the discussions several lower age limits have been proposed (16, 18, 19 or 25 years of age) as well as upper age limits (64, 69, 74). In the youngest age groups there are many persons participating in initial education and training and in the oldest age groups the amount of those participating in adult education and learning is quite small. The demand for data on older age groups is related to the link between learning of seniors and its impact on health and social engagement which has become an issue of political debate in many countries. The final recommendation is to focus on the *working age population, i.e. 25–64 year-olds*. This has clearly been based on practical considerations as this is the age group common for most potential policy users of the AES information. This would be the core sample which all participating countries should use. If a country wishes to widen the age bands it

should report results outside agreed limits separately. Residents of institutions (like old people's homes, prisons etc.) are excluded.

Considering that the AES has been – and still is – the most important empirical base for practically all EU policies on AE, this definition shows unambiguously the 'philosophy' underlying them. This 'working definition' is similar to others used for statistical and evaluation purposes, as the OECD's definition in its *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences* (PIAAC), which includes the assessment of "reading literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving in technology-rich environments" within a target population of "adults aged 16 to 65" (EC, 2011a: 104; cf. OECD, 2008). The appropriateness of the 'working definition' of *adult learner* in use in EU policy-making has also been raised within the Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) organised by the EC in the framework of the APAL.

In one PLA in particular, which took place in Bratislava between 22–25 March 2009, the national experts on AE representing the eleven MS that participated discussed the meaning of the term 'adult' in the expression 'adult learning'. Ultimately "there was little agreement on what constitutes an 'adult' or when 'adulthood' begins in this context", and even "the concept of the end of 'uninterrupted initial education' as used in the 2006 Communication *Adult learning: It is never too late to learn* to signal the beginning of adult learning was questioned" (EC, 2009b: 10; original italics). Moreover, "questions were also raised regarding the age parameter of 25–64 years if age in the LFS and the AES", notably in relation to the function of the "lower and upper age limits" and the criteria used to establish them (*ibid.*). Despite there being no answer or explanation, nor any terminological clarification, provided in the report, it is evident that the choice of the 25–46 year old target population was first of all a political one – monitoring the working age population – and also reflected a philosophical orientation that will be further described in the next paragraphs.

3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning*

Drawing on the reflections made in the previous paragraph about the concept of *adult*, it can be observed that the scientific literature makes as well use of the previously mentioned four dimensions that are associated with this core notion (Rogers, 1986: 5; original emphasis):

A wide range of concepts is involved when we use the term 'adult'. The word can refer to a *stage* in the life cycle of the individual; he or she is first a child, then a youth, then an adult. It can refer to *status*, an acceptance by society that the person concerned has completed his or her novitiate and is now incorporated fully into the community. It can refer to a social *sub-set*: adults as distinct from children. Or it can include a set of *ideals and values*: adulthood.

Likewise, *adult education* in its more ‘traditional’ sense “refers not just to the age and status of its clients, but also encompasses the notion of participatory learning for its own sake and not for credit” (Tight, 1996: 59).

ADULT EDUCATION AS A VOLUNTARY AND SELF-DIRECTED FORM OF LEARNING

Such an interpretation of AE based on *voluntary* participation (which Malcom Tight described as a “great tradition”) is indeed “closely linked with the idea of liberal education, so that the term liberal adult education is in wide usage in some countries”, whereas “more recently, with changes in public policy and funding, the retreat away from the liberal conceptions of the great tradition has become more a rout” (p. 59–60). The wider sense of the term ‘adult education’, referring to *all* education for adults, seems thus to have replaced its original ‘liberal’ conception, occupying, “like further and higher education combined, the whole territory of post-compulsory provision” (p. 60). As a matter of fact, the first definitions of adult education in policy documents issued by some other international organisations reflect this broader meaning, encompassing both formal and non-formal education, with vocational or non-vocational purposes. In *Learning Opportunities for Adults*, the OECD (1977: 11) reported:

Adult Education refers to any learning activity or programme deliberately designed by a providing agent to satisfy any learning need or interest that may be experienced at any stage in his or her life by a person who is over the statutory school leaving age and whose principal activity is no longer in education. Its ambit, thus, spans non-vocational, vocational, general, formal and non-formal studies as well as education with a collective social purpose.

Since the 1970s, two trends have influenced the evolution of this term: firstly, “the concept of the *self-directed* learner has come to the fore, championed in the writings of Knowles”; secondly, there has been a tendency to substitute *adult education* with *adult learning* “as if to reflect the growing interest of the field of learning [...] beyond the classroom [...] however unorganized, episodic, or experiential”, as Sean Courtney (1990: 19; own emphasis) pointed out. After all, more recent research shows that nowadays this balance is exactly reversed, with informal and non-formal learning covering almost three-quarters of the total share of adult learning in Europe (cf. next paragraph, note 23).

KEY CONCEPT 2) DEFINITION OF ‘ADULT EDUCATION’ BY THE EU

Concerning the formation of the *adult education* concept in EU educational policy documents,¹² it was not until 2005 that the problem of its definition entered the policy debate, when the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) – in partnership with the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE) and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) – was charged to undertake a study on adult

¹² Cf. 3.1.2 The *adult learner* concept and definition in EU policy documents.

education providers for the European Commission. The objective of the contract was to support the EC in monitoring and analysing adult learning within the 'ET 2010' strategy, and the implementation of the *Grundtvig* sectorial programme, by assisting the statistical and analytical work linked to it. In particular, the study was commissioned to "contribute towards the closing of a statistical information gap regarding adult learning providers, while the Eurostat Adult Education Survey (AES) would focus on learners" (NIACE, 2006: 4). The NIACE study did not explicitly define adult education, even though it underlined that a classification for adult education "relates to the division between vocational and non-vocational adult education, in which the former is clearly concerned to provide training related to employment needs and the latter to provide learning relating to personal, social or community interests" (p. 11).

In an almost parallel study carried out by the EAEA¹³ alone for the DG Education and Culture, called *Adult education trends and issues in Europe* (EAEA, 2006), the problem of the definition of *adult education* was again raised – and well illustrated by the title of the report (p. 5):

We use the term adult learning following the terminology of the Communication for [sic] the Commission *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, November, 2001: "All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, and social and/or employment-related perspective".

In the cited Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* issued in 2001 no definition of 'adult learning' or 'adult education' was actually given. Instead, 'lifelong learning' was defined in the policy statement (EC, 2001a: 9) and in the glossary (p. 33) as in the above quotation (and associated in the EAEA report with the notion of 'adult learning'). The first exhaustive definition of 'adult education', actually borrowed from UNESCO (namely, from its International Standard Classification of Education of 1997), can be found in the Eurostat Task Force report on the AES survey of 2005 (Eurostat, 2005a: Annex 3):

The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose: to complete a level of formal education; to acquire knowledge and skills in a new field; to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field.

¹³ EAEA is a European association with 127 member organisations from 43 countries working in the fields of adult learning, whose mission is to connect and represent European organisations which are involved in adult education. See <http://eaea.org/index.php?k=3032>.

Nonetheless, the Eurostat report provided a clarification about the use of the above definition, somewhat refusing to use it as an official, definitive and consensual outcome of an agreement or a mandate given to the Eurostat's Task Force (TF):

The term 'Adult Education Survey' is used as a convention for the work of the TF AES. It is used to denote a 'lifelong learning survey', as was the proposal of the Eurostat Task Force on measuring lifelong learning. Even if it is limited to a certain definition of 'adults' it will still be a survey on the 'participation of adults in education and learning'. 'Adult education' as understood in the term 'AES' is by no means restricted to the ISCED97 definition of adult education, which is restricted to 'organised' learning. This point has been further discussed by the TF AES, especially in relation to the final name of the survey. However it was decided to will also be proposed.

KEY CONCEPT 3) DEFINITION OF 'ADULT LEARNING' BY THE EU

As a matter of fact, one year later the first EC definition of *adult learning* was finally given, and included in the official policy statement *Adult learning: It is never too late to learn* issued in October 2006. Here, the European Commission acknowledged that although "definitions of adult learning vary", for the purpose of the Communication "it is defined as all forms of learning undertaken by adults after having left initial education and training, however far this process may have gone" (EC, 2006b: 2). After one month, the definitions of *adult education* and *adult learner* eventually appeared in the Decision N. 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an *Action programme in the field of lifelong learning* (EU, 2006a), within which 'adult learner' was defined as a "learner participating in adult education" (Article 2.8), with 'adult education' described as "all forms of *non-vocational* adult learning, whether of a formal, non-formal or informal nature" (Article 2.13; own italics).

VOCATIONAL VERSUS NON-VOCATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION

The tension between the vocational and non-vocational aspects of adult education (Merricks, 2001: 10) has "a long history, probably going as far back as the history of the core concepts themselves" and continues to underlie a very active contemporary debate (Tight, 1996: 30). The understanding of the field of adult education (and training) is strictly linked to this tension, which overlaps with the concept of 'liberal/popular' and 'continuing' education. At the end of 2005 the European Commission made a request to the Eurydice network to carry out a general survey of national policies in the area of adult education to "provide information for the preparation of the Communication from the Commission, which was adopted in October 2006 under the title of *Adult learning: it is never too late to learn*", allowing for a "better understanding of the different national contexts, their common and characteristic points, and the challenges they face" (Eurydice, 2007: 5). The result was a working document published in 2007, entitled *Non-Vocational*

Adult Education in Europe. Non-vocational adult education (NVAE) and learning (NVAL) were here not meant, however, to only define what adult education (AE) and adult learning (AL) were about. In fact, the Eurydice team of researchers explained (p. 8):

In late 2005 and early 2006 there was a number of reasons for drawing a distinction between vocational and non-vocational adult learning. Firstly, the review sought to emphasize NVAE in a context where, in practice, the majority of countries in the Eurydice Network appear to privilege work-related learning needs. Policy statements espouse an holistic approach to adult learning, stressing both economic and non-economic outcomes, but, in reality, policy implementation privileges the economic agenda, thus providing greater support for vocationally-oriented adult learning than for general adult learning. Secondly, in a context of many existing overviews of vocational adult learning throughout Europe, it was considered that an overview of NVAE would be a useful contribution to the European Commission's then proposed Communication on adult learning.

Hence, "NVAE is adult education as both social policy and social movement and comprises adult learning – formal and non-formal – not directly linked to the labour market" (Eurydice, 2007: 7). The Eurydice researchers made a distinction, in their report, between *formal* and *non-formal* NVAE, and signalled an overlapping of meanings for what was "generally publicly funded as a form of 'continuing', 'further' or, to use a deficit model, 'second-chance', 'palliative', 'recovery' or 'compensatory' education". However, they ultimately acknowledged that "the use of a negative term defining a phenomenon by what it is not rather than by what it is, is not entirely satisfactory".

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND THE SHIFT FROM EDUCATION TO LEARNING

As anticipated, NVAL in formal or non-formal environments was embedded in the very first definition of *adult education* provided in a policy document (EU, 2006a, Article 2.13) issued by the EU, thus reflecting the shift of focus from the teacher/educator to the learner, as well as from the 'classroom' to 'beyond the classroom'. In this respect, Karin Filander (2007: 262–3) argued that also lifelong learning was interpreted as a real "shift of responsibility from the state to the individual, which corresponds to a withdrawal of the public authorities' responsibility for educating their citizens:

The rhetoric of lifelong learning subjectivizes individuals themselves to be responsible for their success and failure. Self-directed, active learners carry the main responsibility for their own learning and continuous renewal in the different phases of their lives. Individuals make their own destinym bit tge statem municipalities or teacher in the education system. Individuals carry on their own choices and responsibilities as self-directed customers in the markets of education. As customers of the education systems, individual students choose from several alternatives of the supermarket of educational institutions their own paths and their own individual study plans. School-based study plans and teacher-centred models of teaching and knowledge structures belong to the old times of the centralized welfare state.

This conceptual association between the formality of the learning environment and the vocational orientation of adult learning, indeed carrying terminological confusion, was somehow overcome through a CEDEFOP glossary published in 2008, where *adult education* was considered as comprising both NVAL and VAL aspects and defined as “general or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes” with an aim to “provide general education for adults in topics of particular interest to them (e.g. in open universities); provide compensatory learning in basic skills which individuals may not have acquired earlier in their initial education or training (such as literacy, numeracy) and thus to; give access to qualifications not gained, for various reasons, in the initial education and training system; acquire, improve or update knowledge, skills or competences in a specific field: this is continuing education and training” (CEDEFOP, 2008: 24). Likewise, the cited *European Adult Learning Glossary* by the London Institute of Education provided, in the same year, a parallel definition of *adult learning* that re-established a clear separation of the learning environment and the object of the learning process, and their independence (IOE, 2008a: 5):

The entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities which are undertaken by adults after a break since leaving initial education and training, and which results in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

TERMINOLOGY AND DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF ADULT EDUCATION

In relation to the object and the focus of the EU educational policies, the frequency distribution of observable indicator terms that recurrently refer to adult education and learning (and which are obviously not synonyms¹⁴) such as ‘popular/liberal education’, ‘second chance education’ and ‘vocational education/VET’, further helps to understand the evolution of the policy discourse on AEL within the EU:

¹⁴ In a comparative study carried out by Eurydice during 2005 to “provide information for the preparation of the Communication from the Commission, which was adopted in October 2006 under the title of *Adult learning: it is never too late to learn*” (Eurydice, 2007: 5), it is shown how different the nomenclature on AEL is (p. 66). Likewise, in the 2008 glossary on the *Terminology of European education and training policy*, CEDEFOP states that “adult education is close to, but not synonymous with, continuous education and training” (CEDEFOP, 2008: 24).

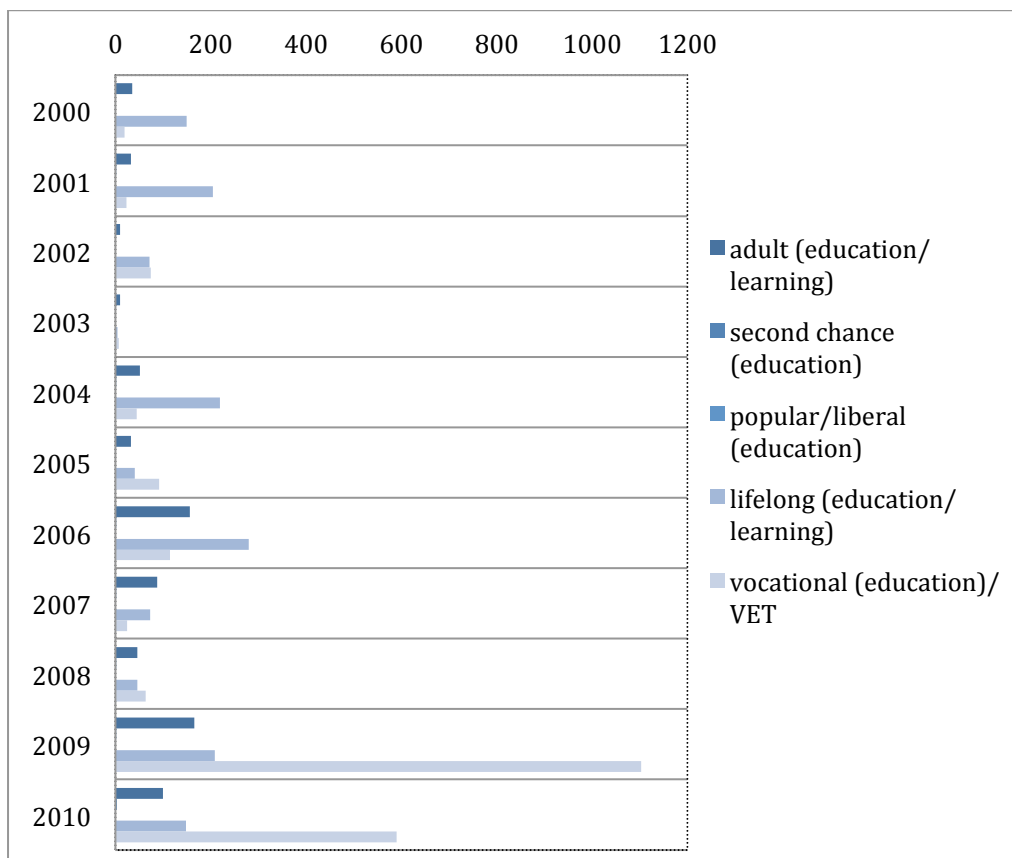


Figure 15: Frequency distribution of indicator items related to the ‘adult education/learning’ definition in core EU policy documents on AE.

TOWARDS VOCATIONAL ADULT LEARNING

The abundance of instances related to vocational education and training in comparison with the more limited presence of NVAL – e.g. popular/liberal education and second chance education, but also with the general terms of adult education and lifelong learning – clearly indicates that from 2006–2007 the policy debate in EU education policy in the AEL area changed its focus from the non-vocational to the vocational dimension. A progressive transformation occurred from the original definitions of *adult learning* given in the 2006 Communication on adult learning (EC, 2006b) and that of *adult education* in the 2006 Decision on the lifelong learning programme (EU, 2006a); although Eurydice noted that the provision of NVAE and second chance education remained limited across the EU Member States, since “for historical, political-educational

and resource reasons, in a number of countries public adult learning opportunities are at a low level of provision and the main focus is on ‘second chance’ formal opportunities for young early school leavers” (Eurydice, 2007: 8). As a matter of fact, “while the demand for traditional programmes of folk or liberal education was stunted by comprehensive systems of primary and (lower) secondary education by the 1970s, the field became dominated by other forms of adult education-like vocational training, human resource development and academic (encyclopaedic) education” (Heikkinen, 2007: 88–9). In this sense, vocational adult education and training and human resources (henceforth HR) development became so intertwined during the Lisbon decade that the whole stream of the AE policies from the EU after 2006–2007 could not be understood without considering this overarching context.

EUROPEAN E&T PROGRAMMES AND THE MOBILITY FOR THE WORKFORCE

Even the ‘first generation’ of European educational programmes such as *Socrates*, *Erasmus*, *Comenius*, *Leonardo da Vinci* and *Grundtvig* which ran from 2000 to 2006, as well as their extensions for the period 2007–2013 under the overarching *Lifelong Learning Programme*, the most successful (and well-funded) education policy tools established and administered by the EU can be seen in the light of the support they provide for employability and economic growth, as they not only (and maybe not principally) target the building of a European cultural identity, but also promote the European mobility of people¹⁵ as workers (thus as means of production¹⁶) and students (who will possibly later consider and benefit from employment opportunities in other countries much more easily than in the past). As anticipated (see par. 1.3 European education policy: an overview), in the dawn of the common European education policy, one of the principal preoccupations was the mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates, “a field which was also plainly in scope to the Community, and indeed one which was central to one of its main tenets – the freedom of movement of workers” (West, 2012: 8). Milana also noted that, as the Commission stressed the need for ‘encouraging labour force mobility’ in order to fill new jobs, meet the needs of the labour market, and attain the Lisbon objectives through its Communication on *New European Labour Markets, Open to All, with Access for All* (EC, 2001d), “mobility in relation to the labour force was consequently strengthened” (Milana, 2009: 11). Furthermore, she argued (p. 12):

Individuals who have not yet entered or are temporarily excluded from the labour market are welcomed by the institutional triangle to take up formal education and vocational training op-

¹⁵ Mobility actions account for about 80% of the LLP budget. Cf. EU (2006a).

¹⁶ See Vinokur (1976: 289): “human beings are ‘factors of production’ (like machinery, raw materials, etc.) when seen from the point of view of capital, the predominant social relation”. Cf. paragraph 3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning*.

portunities in a country different from that where they reside, i.e., educational mobility. But it is first and foremost workers, who are expected by the institutional triangle to be mobile, in order to fully explore the 'benefits' of the internal market, i.e., occupational mobility. In the latter sense mobility is envisaged as both geographical relocation, which implies the movement of the work force within and between Member States, as well as transfer between jobs or sectors, either within or between geographical borders. In both cases individual mobility is the response to enhancing the internal market's economic efficiency.

It is possibly not a coincidence that the next European Programme from 2014–2020 in the field of E&T has been named after the LLP mobility sub-programme by excellence: *Erasmus for All*,¹⁷ provoking a strong opposition in the EP, which eventually proposed the alternative name of *YES Europe* (cf. paragraph 3.5 A new centrality of adult and lifelong learning in the EU mainstream policy?). In this regard, Antonio Giunta La Spada (2008: v–vi; own translation) correlated the importance accorded to mobility with the new VET orientations of the EU education policy:

As occupation and work are vital, today as in the past, the issue of the common market is directly linked to the principles of freedom of movement and relocation, and the auspices of common policies for vocational education. This is why – and the statement on the *New Skills for New Jobs* is a significant example – vocational education and training will advance much faster than the educational sector, towards stronger forms of integration.

THE ROLE OF VET AND VAL FOR THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY OF THE EU

A report by CEDEFOP, symptomatically published on the eve of 2010 (when the Lisbon agenda was coming to an end), was actually entitled *Continuity, consolidation and change: towards a European era of vocational education and training*. The discourse it engaged in largely reproduced that of the *New Skills for New Jobs* (EU, 2007a), addressing “the skills of Europe’s workforce” that “remain crucial to its economic recovery” and “are needed to respond to the new economic structures that will emerge”. In this scenario, VET was seen to be “undergoing systemic change strongly supported by European policy cooperation” because “as a main pillar of lifelong learning, VET has a crucial role to play in Europe’s effort to raise the skills of its citizens” (CEDEFOP, 2009a: 1). In the globalised panorama of educational policy-making these instances did not represent an isolated pattern: the OECD, in effect, after publishing *Live longer, work longer* (2006), had reinforced its position *vis-à-vis* VET with the report *Learning for jobs* (2009a), in which it urged the educational systems to involve adults in vocational paths of lifelong learning and prepare them with ‘new skills’ for the emerging jobs and the challenges of the labour market, particularly in ageing Western societies (INT12).

¹⁷ See the EC’s official webpage dedicated to the new programme: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/> (last retrieved on 4 January 2013).

UPDATED EU DEFINITION OF 'ADULT LEARNING' AND RECENT POLICY TRENDS

In January 2010, on the Lisbon deadline, a conference¹⁸ organised by the EC's DG Education and Culture to celebrate the first decade of the *Grundtvig* programme and the adult education policy in Europe presented an updated definition of *adult learning*, confirming the first definition (EC, 2006b) which recognised, in a holistic vision, the importance of civic and social dimensions, but which also endorsed the latest vocational-driven impulses: "in European policy discussions, [adult learning] is defined as all forms of learning undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training, however far that process went" which "includes learning for personal, civic and social purposes, as well as for employment-related purposes, and can take place in various environments in and outside formal education and training systems" (EC, 2010a: 5).

3.1.4 The evolution of the 'lifelong education and learning' concept in the policy debate

Scholarly approaches to 'adult education' as a field of research as well as a policy area and a sector of educational practice tend, for all the reasons hitherto discussed, to inscribe its developments within the evolution of the *lifelong learning* concept. In fact, in the second half of the 20th century the scientific and policy debate on *learning* as a natural, evolving process was coupled with theories of cognitive sciences on brain functioning as a development of prior studies on the learning process (Hebb, 1972; Hart, 1975), which suggested that the human brain is designed to allow learning throughout life (e.g. Hart, 1983).

GENERATIONS OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING DISCOURSE

Kjell Rubenson (1999; 2004; 2007), in particular, remarked that "critics of the present discourse on adult learning often invoke the ideals and goals that dominated during the first generation of lifelong learning" (2007: 48), and traced a 'three-generation' progression of the on-going discourse, summarised in the following table:

¹⁸ Entitled to "Grundtvig: a decade of European innovation in adult learning" and held on 26–28 January 2010 in Brussels.

Table 6: Generations of the lifelong learning discourse. Adapted from Rubenson (2007: 48–9).

generation	years	wave's topics	main discourse characteristics
I	early 1970s to mid-1980s	positivist philosophy humanistic tradition democratic values equality concerns	Post-World War II optimism about welfare development, individual and collective well-being and prosperity; challenge of the ability of schooling to promote social equality; self-directed personal development (encouragement for learners to 'make themselves' rather than to 'be made'); strong role to be played by the 'civil society', in particular by the volunteer sector.
II	late 1980s to late 1990s	societal changes uncertainty relation between education and the economy	Global challenges and economic crisis, carrying rising unemployment, declining productivity, increase in public debts; ways for education to serve the economic growth are explored; 'education and the economy' became a catchphrase; increasing stress on the 'ability to cope with changes' that individuals should acquire.
III	during 2000s	apparent 'softening' of economic philosophy and policy	Giddens's (1999; 2000) 'third way' proclaiming to reinsert issues of social cohesion, civic participation and democracy into politics, although "according to critics, under Third Way governments' upskilling, training or lifelong learning are conceived mainly in terms of generating wealth – for the individual, and for the country" (Rubenson, 2007: 50); E&T playing a key role in easing the transitions into a knowledge economy.

In the first wave or generation of lifelong learning, UNESCO actually promoted a positivist, humanistic idea of *lifelong education*, and stood up for the reform of educational system based on this approach (Faure et al., 1972).¹⁹ The book entitled *Foundations of Lifelong Education*, published by UNESCO in 1976, provided a very comprehensive definition of this term (Dave, 1976: 34):

Lifelong education is a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life-span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals

¹⁹ As Kjell Rubenson points out, "while it is true that the Faure report (1972) resulted in lifelong education becoming the official position of UNESCO, it should be noted that this was an idea that UNESCO staff had engaged with during the entire 1960s" (Rubenson, 2009: 411).

and their collectives. It is a comprehensive and unifying idea which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning for acquiring and enhancing enlightenment so as to attain the fullest possible development in different stages and domains of life. It is connected with both individual growth and social progress.

More synthetically, according to Dino Carelli, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Education at that time, lifelong learning should be considered a “continuing process guided by the over-riding goal of improving the quality of life” (p. 9). Since then many variations of the concept have been established worldwide, ranging from the ‘pedagogical’ concept, to the ‘biographical experience’, sometimes using it as a synonym for adult and continuing education (mainly in the United Kingdom and in some northern European countries) or second chance education (e.g. in Belgium), with a narrower conception of the term to forms of learning after initial education (Jakobi, 2006). Bridging former adult education traditions with the rise of the lifelong learning era, Mal Leicester (2012: 130) noted that “while the idea of lifelong learning has most frequently emerged from discussions about adult education and vocational training (or increasingly for career education in secondary schools), the ‘cradle to grave’ understanding of lifelong learning [...] has re-conceptualised the whole area of adult education to the extent that adult education can no longer be seen as remedial catching up of lost schooling – a second chance”.

In the 1990s, as illustrated in the above table, lifelong education re-entered the political agenda with a revised outlook that overcame the limitations of the adult education and second chance education traditions and included a novel emphasis on *learning*, in place of *education*. Contextually, this rather new concept intensified economic perspectives in line with the new economy’s “promise of increased productivity” which was supposed to engender “improved standards of living” (Rubenson, 2007: 49). In spite of this emerging trend, Norman Longworth and Keith Davies (1996) proposed a still ‘mediated’ definition of lifelong learning in their reference book especially dedicated to the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning (p. 22):

Lifelong learning is the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments.

If the above view, the *empowerment* of individuals which “reinforces the concept that knowledge is power” and the development of the *human potential* became central in the process of learning, although they presaged the advent of increasing attention being accorded to *competence development* (Leicester, 2012). Notwithstanding, knowledge was still defined in humanistic terms as “the interpretation of information which gives it greater meaning by placing it in a learning continuum leading to *wisdom*” through *understanding* and *insight*, while skills “enable learning to be turned into action” and are part of

a comprehensive, 'encyclopaedic' epistemic pattern (Longworth & Davies, 1996: 23; own emphasis):

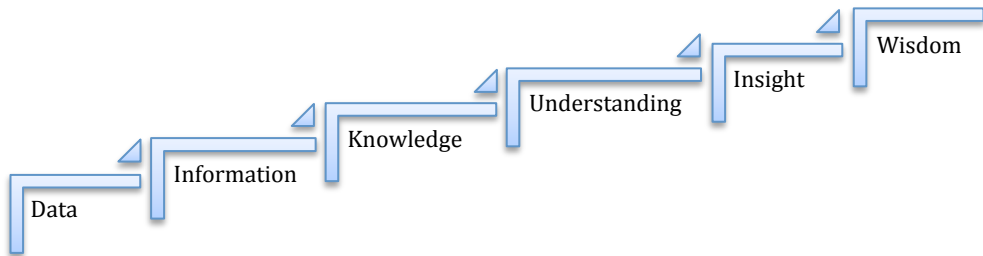


Figure 16: The 'information ladder'. Adapted from Longworth and Davies (1996: 93).

(LIFELONG) LEARNING FOR EARNING AND FOR SURVIVAL

However, introducing the notion of *Learning for Earning: Learning for Survival* (p. 57), the book framed the transformation of this concept towards a 'skills-based curricula' within the 'information society and lifelong learning' discourse (p. 41; cf. Bell, 1973; 1979; Porat, 1977), where life skills such as *flexibility* and *continuous learning* become a necessary condition for 'survival' (p. 41; own emphasis):

We are rapidly moving into a society dominated by the power of information – an 'information society'. [...] It puts great pressure on our institutions because it demands new, arguably more democratic, systems, a *high level of flexibility* and *versatility*, and a lifetime of *continuous learning*. Educational organizations and those who work within them will have to adapt in an unprecedented way to new thinking, new methods of teaching, above all, new *skills-based curricula* which enable children (and adults) to *accept change as a fact of life*. They will need the ability to understand fully, and handle effectively, the dominant commodity of this revolution, information. Learning to *cope with this* becomes the key to personal and organizational *survival* in the information society.

Moreover, Longworth and Davies' analysis correlated lifelong learning with the emerging discourse on skills and competence upgrading in the wider frame of reference of the *knowledge society*: while "*factual knowledge* and *hard skills* are only a small part of the learning requirement", in the new lifelong learning paradigm the "old skills based on memory and manual competence are being replaced by knowledge and brain skills requiring mental dexterity and problem-solving capability" (*ibid.*: 61; own emphasis):

New working methods, based on *competencies* and *speed*, need *highly competent, multiskilled experts* with a *broad set of skills and competencies* and who are *entrepreneurs*, not machines. Further, the urgency for greater *effectiveness* in the marketplace requires that all employees become more

aware of a company's objectives, and that they strive towards jointly defined goals with the higher order mental tools and means to achieve them. Nor is this a one-time requirement. Individuals, whatever their specific fields, *must cope with business demands*, that require them to renew their knowledge and competence *continuously*. In many instances professional education must be completely *renewed* three or four times during a person's career, or a professional person may have several completely new careers during a lifetime. There is a lifelong need for *upgrading, updating and relearning*.

The influence of *human capital* theory on the evolution of the lifelong learning policy debate has also been described by Philip Brown and Hugh Lauder (2012: 152) as "not limited to issues of skills upgrading but to the broader relationship between credentials, jobs and rewards", since "a great deal of political capital has been invested in the idea that *learning equals earning*". At this stage, "discussions on lifelong learning and adult learning became framed within a politico-economic imperative that emphasized the importance of science and technology, as well as highly developed human capital", and it is interesting to note that "while the first generation of lifelong learning talked about education as enabling individuals to control and adapt to change, the second generation saw learning only as a mechanism for individuals to adjust to society which was shaped without their input" (Rubenson, 2007: 49).

HUMANISTIC ENDS WITH VOCATIONAL MEANS

Despite the widespread scepticism about what Erica McWilliam (2002: 3) defined as "one absurdity that demands scrutiny", namely "the ironic marriage of the humanist ends of professional development with its technicist means", the OECD, an "expert organisation with an *economic bias*" (Noaksson & Jacobsson, 2003: 49; own emphasis), first developed its own *humanistic* ideals of lifelong learning in the early 1970s (CERI, 1973) and progressively recalibrated the design of its educational strategy on skill formation, skills upgrading and the competence development approach (OECD, 1997b; 2001), later re-named the 'OECD Skills Strategy'.²⁰ Hence, the EU as well as other IOs (supranational regimes and epistemic communities²¹) simultaneously integrated and re-oriented their policies in the direction of the mainstream paradigm 'economic growth-employability-social cohesion' where the EU progress and economic flourishing became, however, increasingly associated and conditioned to the success of employability and, 'consequent-

²⁰ The OECD officially launched the OECD Skills Strategy on 21 May 2012, in order to provide a coherent policy framework to the several on-going and future skills- and competences-related activities and assessment programmes like the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* and the *Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)*. Cf. <http://skills.oecd.org>.

²¹ As Lawn et al. (2011: 15) emphasised, the OECD, in relation with its influence on the EU politics, "has been termed a key 'epistemic community', because it draws on knowledge-dependency in international behaviour and forms networks of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain and area. These epistemic communities do not literally generate the truth, but they provide profoundly consensual knowledge with epistemic ideas".

ly', of social cohesion. In relation to the EU policy-making, for example, Noaksson and Jacobsson (2003: 35) remarked:

The economic integration of the EU had gone far in the late 1980s. But the European single market for goods, services, capital and people could not thrive if the social agenda lagged behind. What is the use for a single market if people are unemployed and unable to consume products? As the unemployment figures turned bad in the early 1990s this question needed a profound answer.

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education and Culture, argued that a way to address this concern could be a bridge between education and employment in the Single European Market (henceforth SEM), and highlighted the importance of connecting "the world of work and that of education" in order to model learning curricula around the labour market's needs and adapt teaching methods to the requirements of employers (INT2):

Connections across borders, both between individuals and between companies and education and training organisations, make it easier for graduates to make the most of the single European labour market. And by encouraging closer cooperation between the world of work and that of education and training, curricula and teaching methods become more relevant to labour market needs.

HUMANISTIC VERSUS ECONOMIC-ORIENTED LLL PARADIGMS

Criticisms to the emerging neo-positivistic 'marketised' philosophy of education arose accordingly. Kjell Rubenson defined UNESCO's idea of lifelong learning as "humanistic-inspired", and contrasted it to the OECD's economy-oriented policy development in this field, while also recognising them as two sides of the same coin that "together express the ambiguous nature of lifelong learning", albeit recognising that today's national policy debates would be "almost exclusively driven by the OECD's economic paradigm of lifelong learning and with the European Union as its prophet" (2009: 411). The proposition that Rubenson consequently defined as "the OECD's hegemonic influence on the lifelong learning agenda" could be exemplified by the fact that – within the above described dichotomy – whereas the EU tried to "concretise the Faure Commission's inspiring but vague²² ideas on lifelong education", the OECD's impulse "came to comprise the *raison d'être* of lifelong learning in the industrial world" (p. 412–3). Likewise, in his preface to *The age of learning: education and the knowledge society*, Peter Jarvis commented on this phenomenon in the following way (Jarvis, 2001b: vii; own emphasis):

²² Kjell Rubenson relates the weaknesses of the contributions by UNESCO on the definition of a lifelong learning approach, exploring mainly "the foundations of lifelong education, and pedagogical and curriculum aspects" with the absence of an explicit link between these views and the "political structural perspective", which made "UNESCO's work highly idealistic" (Rubenson, 2009: 412).

Learning has itself become a contested concept and the discourse about it is being captured by the world of *work*. The learning society is one of the products of globalisation and knowledge, learning and education are inextricably intertwined with *global capitalism*. Education is regarded as a servant to global capitalism, enabling transnational companies to function more effectively in the knowledge society. Learning has become a central plank in governmental education policy in many countries and it is being treated as an *investment*, adding value to *human capital* and *social capital*, resulting in *employability* and then in *work* which makes an even greater contribution to the *economy*, rather than being treated as a natural human process that results in the development of people as human beings.

The 'philosophy' of lifelong learning had been transforming what represented an instrument for the democratic development of individuals into a sort of 'economic tool' to strengthen *human capital*. Thus, as the 'learning society' slowly started turning into the 'lifelong learning society', individual growth became a 'learning career' and the quality of life a "condition of survival" (Hake, 1999: 79):

Late modernity is the period of social development in which lifelong learning becomes the necessary condition of *survival*. Societies, organisations and individuals have to learn in order to *survive* in the lifelong learning society.

MEASURING THE ROI IN AE IN DIFFERENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A 'life-wide' dimension of lifelong learning as a diachronic complement to life skills and citizenship development has been taken into consideration in a number of European education policies, but 'operational' policy-making is indeed also a question of trade-offs and, very often, power relationships. The main idea of *lifelong learning* is that learning is not just limited to the years spent at school; however, embracing life-wide learning as an aspect of the lifelong learning concept would carry far-reaching consequences for public policy as "the essentials of educational services must be reconsidered, and increased value must be allocated to learning events and opportunities outside the formal education system" (Desjardins et al., 2006: 20). In such understanding, the lifelong learning approach should not consist merely in the integration of traditional education programmes and modern learning opportunities: on the contrary, it should comprise the "development of individual capabilities and personal learning competences" and emphasise this aspect even more than just transmitting knowledge.

As discussed above, while "the *time* dimension has often dominated the discussion about lifelong learning", underlining that learning activities occur in different phases over a lifespan, "there is also a *lifewide* dimension to be recognised", which takes into account "that learning increasingly takes place in a multitude of settings and situations in real life" (EC, 2002b: 78; original emphasis). Unfortunately, European governments have shown resistance to this 're-consideration' of the E&T provision, and the reason for their difficulty is twofold: firstly, they have thus far been uncomfortable with funding private

companies and corporations (although they are responsible for at least twice the share of AET provision in comparison with the formal provision)²³ and, secondly, the return of investment (ROI) used to justify the public expenditure in education and training normally only takes into account the parameter of the *public* provision of learning pathways, and relates it to other parameters measuring economic growth (Jäntti, 2006). In effect, the most common index to measure *human capital* in econometric studies is “the quantity of formal education each adult member of a society possesses” (Savvides & Stengos, 2009: 9).

It is the OECD that, at the end of the 1980s, “again turned its attention to education as the generator of economic growth” and stressed “the need to adopt a human resources perspective within the context of lifelong learning” (Rubenson, 2009: 413). The OECD also worked in the *Human Capital Indicators Project*, after the OECD Council of Ministers requested that the organisation prepare a report on this subject and develop indicators based on existing data. In 1998, the OECD publication *Human Capital Investment: An International Comparison* emphasised that “traditional indicators based on the formal education system (enrolment, attainment, and costs) do not directly measure the capabilities of individuals”, nor do they “reflect experiences in the range of environments outside of the formal education systems that contribute to accumulation of human capital in individuals”. Furthermore, according to the OECD, “indicators based on investments and wage differentials are even more indirect, and are based on larger assumptions” (OECD, 1999: 35). However, in spite of these reflections about the inadequateness of wage parameters for the design of efficient indicators, these would later be consistently used by the OECD and by CEDEFOP in their tools for the assessment of skills mismatch in relation to the labour market’s skill needs (cf. paragraph 3.3.2.4 Adult skills upgrading and the ‘skill matching challenge’).

Within the framework of the Lisbon process, the Communication from the Commission *Investing efficiently in education and training* (EC, 2003b) set out the investment paradigm in E&T, while a joint report by the Commission and the Council of the EU defined human capital as “the Union’s main asset”, and argued (EU, 2004: 7):

It is now acknowledged that investment in this area is a determining factor of growth and productivity, in the same way as investment in capital and equipment. It has been calculated that raising the average educational attainment of the population by one year represents a 5% increase in growth in the short term and a further 2.5% in the long term.

²³ The Adult Education Survey (AES), carried out by Eurostat in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries between 2005 and 2008, shows well how almost half of adult learning takes place in informal environments: “in 2007, the EU participation rate for informal learning among adults was 46.5%, notably higher than the rate for non-formal activities (32.7%) and formal education (6.3%)” EC (2011a: 92), and “workplaces are in most countries the main providers of adult lifelong learning” (p. 34).

In this regard, relaunching the neo-liberal idea of the economic benefit determined by investing in adult education and training, the EAEA reported that “the social return on adult learning, with special regard to basic skills for adults, may be between 10% and 20%” (EAEA, 2006: 18).

KEY CONCEPT 4) DEFINITION OF ‘LIFELONG LEARNING’ BY THE EU

After a first appearance of the ‘lifelong learning’ concept reduced to ‘lateral’ measures for vocational training, and in effect defined as “lateral cooperation between the fields of training as well as measures concerning the continuity of training throughout life” (EU, 1994), it is with the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000) that a wider and more ‘stable’ definition of *lifelong learning* entered the official EU policy documents. It was actually established in the context of the European Employment Strategy²⁴ (EC, 2001a: 9) as a starting point for debate during the consultation. In effect, in accordance with the Treaty of Amsterdam (which introduced a new title on employment) this strategy was built on a number of thematic priorities, grouped into four pillars and described in the Employment Guidelines (cf. EC, 2001c). The definition of lifelong learning was then: “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an on-going basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (EC, 2001a: 35). In the paragraph ‘What do we mean by lifelong learning’ of the Communication *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality* issued in 2001 by the Commission, a similar definition was provided: *lifelong learning* is considered 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” (p. 9).

Contextually, the EC explained under which ideals and impulses the lifelong learning concept, which “draws attention to the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activity”, evolved in its policy documents as well as the intentions that the EU wanted to express through it (EC, 2001a: 9; original emphasis):

The consultation particularly welcomed the idea that lifelong learning should comprise all phases and forms of learning from preschool to post-retirement. There were, however, concerns that the employment and labour market dimensions of lifelong learning were too dominant within the definition. Indeed, in relation to specifying the objectives of lifelong learning, responses tended to echo the *Memorandum* as well as citing wider aspects such as the spiritual and cultural dimensions of learning. Overall, consensus can be surmised around the following four

²⁴ This emerged in the 1990s, when Europe faced high unemployment rates and prepared the introduction of the single currency; the European Employment Strategy was the first occasion in which the EU used the OMC (cf. 1.4 The Lisbon process and 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU’s soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector). With this system, the EU Member States agreed on a set of shared objectives, but were left the freedom to choose how to implement the policies to reach them. Previously, employment policy was handled solely on the national level.

broad and mutually supporting objectives: *personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability.*

Table 7 presents a longitudinal schema showing the parallel developments of the hitherto discussed four key concepts related to AEL in the core²⁵ EU policy documents.

²⁵ See Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis.

2008		<p>The entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities which are undertaken by adults after a break since leaving initial education and training, and which results in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Note: This includes university-level or higher education undertaken after a break (other than for deferred entry) since leaving initial education and training (IOE, 2008a: 5)</p>	<p>General or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes (CEDEFOP, 2008: 24)</p>
2010		<p>All forms of learning undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training, however far that process went. It includes learning for personal, civic and social purposes, as well as for employment-related purposes, and can take place in various environments in and outside formal education and training systems (EC, 2010a: 5)</p>	

Roger Dale (2009b) rightly emphasised the ‘catch-all’ use that the EU made of the expression ‘lifelong learning’ since the first “promotional project launched by the EU” with the European Year of Lifelong Learning of 1996, which also appears quite evident in the above analysis. In his analysis, he also reported scholarly interpretations according to which the lifelong learning concept was tackled in a “slogan-like quality” debate within the EU, thus conceived as “a catchphrase that seems to fit perfectly almost anywhere without further explanation” (Dehmel, 2006: 56 quoted in Dale, 2009: 382). Emphasising the absence of any ‘further explanation’ accompanying EU policy-making in the lifelong learning field, Alexandra Dehmel referred indeed to an estimated lack of evidence base that might have fed and supported this process before, or simultaneously with, the political endorsement that determined its launch, and which had possibly not been gathered to the extent that would sufficiently support a policy initiative that was going to have a major impact on the European education space (cf. paragraphs 3.3 Scientific- or evidence-based policy and 4. Implications).

The terminological shift from ‘education’ to ‘learning’, already discussed in the previous paragraph in relation to AEL, has affected the definitions of lifelong education and learning as well. Tuijnman and Broström noted that “the emphasis on ‘learning’ rather than ‘education’ is highly significant because it reduces the traditional preoccupation with structures and institutions and instead focuses on the individual” (2002: 103). Analogously, Jennifer Ozga et al. (2011: 86) remarked that “education is now a key element in the new knowledge economy goals of Europe and the states within Europe and, redefined as ‘learning’, it has become the centre of European Union policy-making, as well as a new field of commercial activity”. Moreover, “in this new form, learning is one of the key policy domains of the EU, whereas education continues to be largely characterised as contained within state borders”. In line with them also stood the EAEA, which observed that “in recent times the term ‘learning’ has found favour in preference to ‘education’ in policy discussion about adults and more broadly”, because “lifelong learning displaced the earlier term lifelong education used by UNESCO, and the term *éducation permanente* also fell into partial disuse, since it was seen, perhaps inaccurately, to imply being ‘imprisoned in a global classroom’ rather than learning throughout life” (EAEA, 2006: 5). This change of focus from the *provider* to the *learner* in extended notions of learning environments could be seen as a political ideal or goal more than a description of the real evolution of the individual’s experience of lifelong learning. In this respect, Peter Jarvis underlined that the learning process is “self-evidently good” as it is “impossible to conceptualise a human being who does not learn”, but contextually argued that lifelong learning, being conceived in the rhetoric of the *learning societies*, would not have the same implicit value simply because the learning market “is not driven by concern for the learner but for

the provider” and the provider of lifelong learning is driven by its own profit and interests (Jarvis, 2009: 14).

3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU's soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector

As anticipated in paragraph 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC (A new start for the Lisbon Strategy), halfway through the Lisbon agenda there was much criticism about the progress of the strategy and its implementation, as since its launch in 2000 the overall growth performance had been disappointing due to several reasons. Poor performance had partly been the result of global and European slowdowns, but also because, in times of economic downturns, governments had not prioritised the pushing through of difficult and unpopular reforms or the focus on increasing expenditures in education and R&D (INT10).

THE KOK REPORT AND THE ‘SLOW START’ OF THE LISBON STRATEGY

As mentioned, in 2004 the EC acknowledged the overloaded policy agenda and made failing coordination (Kok, 2004), and sometimes conflicting priorities, responsible for the limited progress towards the Lisbon objectives (INT8). Referring to Majone (2005), Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 39–40) argue that the failure of the EU coordination was strictly linked to that of the agenda-setting, since “the EU is judged on the mobilising power of its initiatives, or, put differently, on its success as moves towards more integration and political attention for EU-level coordination”, thus “not necessarily as a solution to policy problems”. In this sense, according to them, “the expansion of the rationale(s) does not bode well in terms of chances of delivery, but realistically this is the way the EU can generate commitment for integration in the Member States”.

Another reason why the Lisbon agenda had been relatively ineffective was its lack of focus and clarity about its contents (INT7): the breadth and ambition of its scope made the Lisbon Strategy very different from other Community initiatives such as the internal market or the European Economic and Monetary Union (henceforth EMU) created in the late 1990s, which had narrower and more precisely defined implementing programmes (EC, 2005b; 2005c). Borrás and Radaelli (*ibid.*) argued that, “instead of learning from the difficulties encountered in delivering on the 2010 targets, and narrowing down initiatives to the core, essential business, the EU has launched an even more ambitious cross-cutting programme with Europe 2020”. This way, according to the two scholars, “the OMC runs the risk of falling into the trap of escalating expectations”, and “linked to this possible trap is also the risk of a widening gap between the OMC capabilities and expectations”.

LIMITATIONS OF THE OMC FOR THE EU EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING

According to Martin Lawn, the very the tools utilised to implement the OMC as a MLG system have, in effect, shown some limits (INT21):

[The EC] assumed that the more data they had the more comparisons they could make, the more transparent Europe could become, and then people could clearly act on the basis of that. I think that the problem is that now they realised that there is not a necessary connection between 'data knowing' and *action*. I don't think they thought they could have this problem.

In the field of AE, moreover, MLG has only partially functioned as well as it has done for the European Employment Strategy, coordinated by the EC in the 1990s, since the "adult education sector is much less institutionalized than other fields of education" (INT6). Addressing the fragmentation of this sector, in effect, one civil servant from the EC explained (INT8):

Consensus is important for us as much as cooperation. This is why we base our work on the feedbacks that we receive from public consultations and from the several stakeholders who contribute to our working groups [...] One big difficulty that we faced when we set up the working group on adult learning was that the parties were not clearly identifiable, there is such an incredible variety of providers of adult education in Europe, and even dealing with Ministries we soon realized that they did not account for the whole sector in their respective countries but only for a small part of the formal adult education offer.

AEL is, in many EU Member States, the least regulated and most fragmented sector of the national education system (Maniscalco, 2010a; 2012). In the words of Helen Keogh, consultant to UNESCO¹ and the EU² in this field, "multiple partners have a stake in adult education policy-making and implementation, including ministries, regional governments, local governments, social partners, public providers, nongovernmental organisations and private for-profit providers, all frequently operating from different values, objectives and approaches" (INT17). Desjardins et al. (2006: 24) remarked that the complexity of the adult education policy field is connected to the "frequently inadequate co-ordination between the different players involved – several levels of government, many ministries, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and educational providers", and that "rarely can (does) one ministry assume complete accountability for adult education systems or, more broadly, lifelong learning systems, including their design, implementation, management and overall guidance". Addressing the consequent fragmentation of resources and investments and the duplications of efforts (cf. Noaksson & Jacobsson, 2003: 53), Helen Keogh also noted that many countries in the EU have es-

¹ Cf. Keogh's report for UNESCO on CONFINTEA VI (Keogh, 2009).

² Cf. the programme of the 2010 Conference "Grundtvig: a decade of European innovation in adult learning" and the Meeting of Grundtvig Projects held on 19 February 2009, both organized by the EC (DG Education and Culture and EACEA).

established “cooperative partnership models of working through a range of concrete inter-ministerial structures and mechanisms to promote coordination so as to maximize investments in adult learning” (INT17).

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL SUPPLEMENTS FOR THE LISBON PROCESS

As a more or less direct consequence, the ‘post-Lisbon’ policy model would build, according to Hubert Ertl (2006: 20), “on intergovernmental legal foundations that follow the rationale dictated by the concept of global economic competitiveness”. Indeed, the pressures of the on-going process of economic integration “were used by the Commission to justify increasing financial incentives for the coordination of national policies in education and training”, even though “the extended and more integrated EU activities still had limited impact on national systems” (Ertl, 2006: 10). With regard to the Lisbon agenda, if the solution to the challenges of the new millennium was to strengthen and promote economic growth, employability and social cohesion – in tandem with ‘active citizenship’ – by investing in human capital (Maniscalco, 2012: 158), the main limitation of this proposition was actually the tension between the economic dimension and the social dimension, which the EU resolved with an increased interest in the former, and by promoting vocational education and training (Merricks, 2001: 10):

The ‘vocational’ aspect could be justified in terms of pragmatic economic need, but notions of knowledge designed to create more democratic or informed society are rather more difficult to justify, especially since even ideas about ‘citizenship’ have historically embraced very different views. In practice, this problem was dealt with within the EU by concentrating on vocational training initiatives.

Similarly, the EAEA, specifically addressing European adult education, remarked that “supporting adult learning mostly means funding the VET and labour market training activities” and “support of non-formal and informal learning has been undervalued”, since “all kinds of returns of adult learning have been analysed principally in terms of economic benefit only” (EAEA, 2006: 59). In 2008, Giunta La Spada had already asserted that the “non-compulsoriness” of the OMC, which allowed a “variable flexibility” with regard to the common objectives, was calibrated on “levels of trust/endorsement, or distrust/disaffection of being in Europe” although, “regrettably, the elements of distrust and disaffection seem to be dominant in the present conjuncture”, and concluded by acknowledging that “the enthusiasm of Lisbon seems to run aground on the threshold of year 2010 and call into question even the prospects of revitalizing the co-operation” (Giunta La Spada, 2008: vii).

In relation to the EU governance, Ertl (2006: 5) remarked that the discourse on the concept of economic competitiveness “has changed the formulation of new EU policies in education and training, exemplified by a strong emphasis on educational indicators,

benchmarks and quality controls” which he considers as “intergovernmental extension of the foundations” (p. 14). Inter-governmental agreements (IGAs) can be subscribed between (or among) broad ranges of governmental or quasi-governmental entities, such as two or more countries, states, *länder* or municipalities. IGAs are normally used to establish more or less comprehensive sets of common goals and objectives to improve the quality of services and save money through economies of scale, and thus lead to a culture of inter-community cooperation in many areas. Conversely, by consolidating resources, IGAs can reduce local control and determine, in some cases, longer response times, eventually producing governance instability, especially if not accompanied by adequate reforms.

Referring to Ertl (2006), Marcella Milana (2009: 9) claimed instead that the “legal restrictions” of the Treaty of Maastricht could be ‘bypassed’ whenever the EU Member States “agree upon new common objectives by means of inter-governmental activities and agreements”, and on this assumption she identified the Lisbon agenda as the main expression of this bypassing: “in the field of education and training, the principle of subsidiary [sic] has been de facto circumvented at the Lisbon meeting of the European Council (2000) when the Heads of EU Governments approved the Lisbon Strategy”. As a matter of fact, more than a set of normative, ‘hard’ regulations for specific policy areas or for measures and actions to be taken simultaneously, and thus compensating the actual ‘weakness’ determined by the EU subsidiarity, the Lisbon process has been the very expression of this principle in the E&T field, both as an overarching framework of intents and objectives to guide EU policy-making and political cooperation between the MS during the 2000–2010 decade, and as an ‘appendix’ of the legal basis for the ‘soft governance’ established through the OMC. Intergovernmental agreements such as the Bologna and the Copenhagen declarations, conversely, indeed produced even more impactful policy outputs at the level of the national educational systems than the Lisbon process alone could afford, as Ertl (2006: 14) intelligibly remarked:

The Treaty of Maastricht explicitly excludes any harmonisation in education and training. Therefore, it is not surprising that the agenda set in Lisbon is accompanied by intergovernmental activities and agreements. The so-called Bologna process aims at the creation of a European higher education area. The *Bologna Declaration* was signed by 29 European countries in 1999. In 2002, 31 countries signed the *Copenhagen Declaration* on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. By extending the existing legal basis for cooperation as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty, and increasing the number of cooperating countries beyond EU membership, EU policy-makers seem to have managed to revitalize some of the aims for education and training the EU failed to achieve in the 1980s and 1990s.

The next paragraph will help such a transition from ‘traditional’ macro-analyses of political, legislative or juridical aspects of the EU polity to the exploration of the several framing mechanisms which emerged in the EU governance architecture (cf. par. 2.1.2 The

Lisbon Strategy as a case of governance architecture). These mechanisms, in fact, have been determined by the implementation of a *European* (more than EU) policy, in the sense of the concurrence of the MS to its definition through their different responses to the OMC (thus somewhat regardless of its binding power). As suggested by Radaelli (2000), this approach allows to overcome the limitations inherent the analyses of the educational policy-making in the framework of the OMC that are anchored on ontological attempts to explain the 'nature of the beast', and therefore preoccupied with the less fructuous debate around the 'inter-governmental versus supra-national' nature of the EU in this specific policy area (e.g. Antunes, 2006; Ertl, 2006; Dale, 2006; 2009a; Milana, 2009; 2012a; 2012b; West, 2012).

3.2.1 Groups of experts and committees: a restricted steering system for the EU

Interest groups traditionally play a crucial role in the definition of policy (for the setting of the policy agenda in particular) in international and complex organisations (see paragraph 3.4 Public policy formation and scientific impact on EU policy-making). The role of interest groups in the agenda setting stage has been well drawn by Baumgartner and Jones (1993: 190), who highlighted that "interest groups play an important role in formulating questions, affecting public opinion, and defining the terms of the public debate", and was already described by Kingdon in terms of *delimitation* and *restriction* of the policy-making: "much of interest groups' activity in these processes consists not of positive promotion but rather of negative blocking" (Kingdon, 1984: 49). In the panorama of the EU polity, several interest groups *may* join the lobbying accompanying the policy-making processes or even hold an active role in these; however, they are seldom granted an independent status. Conversely, they gather around several networks and groups of experts operating within the EU institutions and its legislative or administration bodies (INT8).

NETWORKS AND GROUPS OF EXPERTS IN THE EU POLICY-MAKING

Expert networks and working groups hold a complex and multi-faceted position within the EU policy-making. In fact, according to an EC officer, although there is no real regulation allowing to define the role they play by them in the OMC, "everybody knows that there is a difference if an external is offering his or her expertise in MADO [tower] or in Borschette [center]", since "the Borshette center, for example, is like a 'playground', where you would tell that people there are just requested to let us know their opinions or share a nice time together and enjoy some chat over coffee or the beautiful weather in Brussels, even if there are certainly remarkable exceptions of important activities from the point of view of the policy decisions such as the committees, but in fact it is the very place

where the Open Method of Coordination expresses its full potential” (INT8). Experts involved in ‘building’ EU policies actually range from variously ranked representatives of the MS governments (e.g. civil servants or policy officers) or national or trans-national NGOs, or unions, or private corporations. Apart from the governmental, corporate and third sector, other experts come from academia and the scientific community (cf. Figure 32 on page 239). In relation to the OMC, its implementing tools, and in particular the sharing of best practices, Claudio Radaelli (2007: 197) highlighted that, “on 2 March 2006, the Commission finalized a list of ‘high-level experts’ to provide an interface between Brussels and the Member States, contribute to the diffusion of best practice, and ‘assist the Commission in improving the regulatory environment for enterprises, industry, consumers, the social partners and citizens at large’ (press release IP/ 06/254)”.

These ‘assets’ normally contribute at specific stages of the EU policy definition, for example by participating in dedicated ‘focus groups’ or ‘expert groups’ which do not have a direct cooperation with their ‘governmental’ counterparts, who would just receive the outcomes of the experts’ work in the form of working documents to build on or to just agree upon or as a knowledge base to orientate their policy debate. Such a layered system could be described, with a limited degree of approximation, considering that hierarchical connections are sometimes bypassed (for example when some working groups – like the ALWG – contribute directly to a policy initiative of the EC or when a restricted group is composed by national experts who participate in committees or are identified by them), through the following graph:

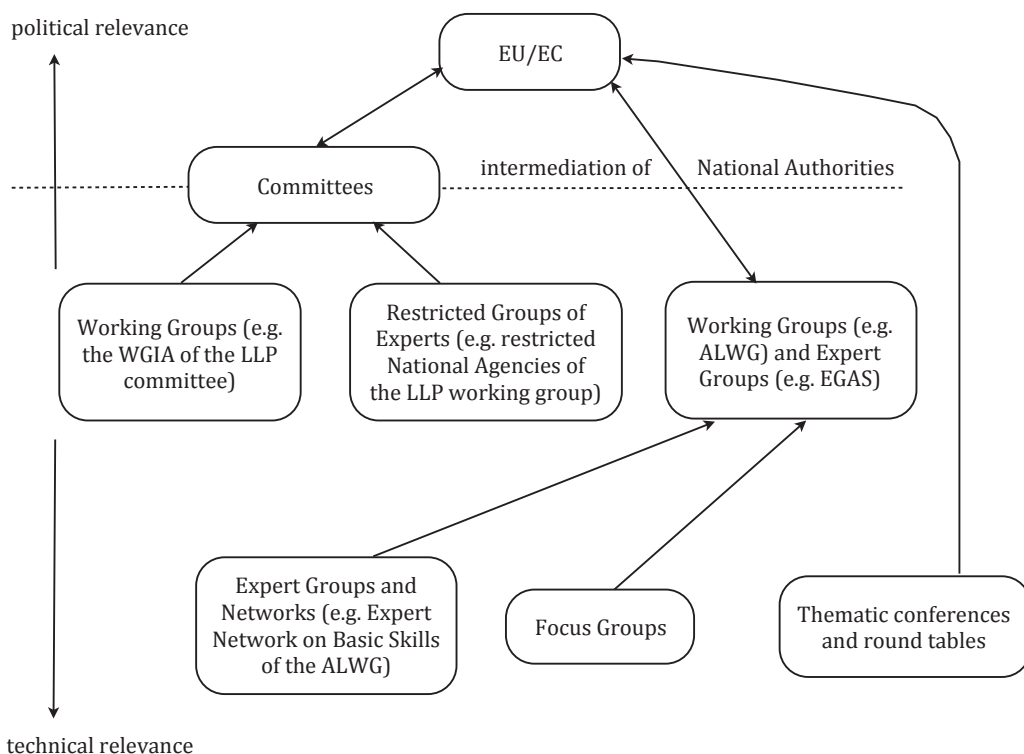


Figure 17: Forms of participation of external experts to the EU policy-making ranked by nature of their contribution.

The method of identification of external experts as relevant for the purpose of the EU policy-making is also defining their status, the role they are asked to play and the contribution they are expected to provide. For example, ‘professionals’ in a certain field or EU projects’ representatives are ‘appointed’ by the EU (in particular by the EC) as potential contributors to focus or expert groups (e.g. those contributing with knowledge base to the ALWG: see page 84), expert networks (e.g. the Expert Network on Basic Skills, also of the ALWG), or – with more limited outreach – to thematic conferences and round tables (including some of those taking place at the EP). Conversely, working groups (e.g. the ALWG and the Working Group on the Impact Assessment of the LLP: see page 84 and par. 3.4 Public policy formation and scientific impact on EU policy-making), expert groups (e.g. the Expert Group on Adult Skills: see par. 3.2.2 Governing through data and the influence of supranational regimes on national adult education systems) and/or restricted groups of experts (e.g. formed on the basis of the EC’s networked portfolio and typically composed by governmental representatives or other actors closely cooperating

the DG in question, e.g. the LLP national agencies or important NGOs) are designated by their respective institutions or organisations after official invitation by the EU/EC. Moreover, in terms of the use of their contributions, while in the former cases the instances put forward by 'technical experts' are normally merely of a consultative nature, and form a database on which the EC (with or without national authorities) would build further, in the case of 'governmental experts' participating in working and expert groups, contributions normally rely on a specific mandate to deliver the EU policies in question cooperatively under the EU/EC coordination (INT8).

Finally, since most of the knowledge base is thus created in the form of structured policy insights, working documents and reports are channelled into the scrutiny of EU committees (or when not directly used, internally by the EC), these ultimately serve as 'skimming actors' or 'organisational synapses' connecting the flux of knowledge and ideas from the lower 'technical' level to that of the decision-makers (with the exception of thematic conferences and working groups, where they can have a position anyway). In effect, although there is not a perfect overlapping, the national authorities involved in the formation of working groups and expert groups normally coincide with the national representatives in the EU committees, i.e. the Ministry(ies) or institutional board(s) which have competence for the policy in question (namely, in the education field: the Ministry of Education and Culture or the Board of Education and/or the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in relation with VET and VAE – or local equivalents).

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF COMMITTEES IN THE EU POLICY-MAKING

Since the few EU education policy measures and initiatives which are easily and directly implemented in the MS (e.g. the *Lifelong Learning Programme*) are governed and administered by a system of committees, another critical issue for the EU governance lies in the comitology reform that took place in July 2006 and the new regulations connected to the Lisbon Treaty, in force from 1 March 2011. Since the European Communities were founded, committees have been strategic steering powers which allow for coordinated governance and viable administration of community policy. As Kohler-Koch (1999: 14) explained, the EU policy-making "gains direction from the allocation of competence, formal and informal rules of decision-making, administrative routines and the working of *comitology*". A first 'comitology decision', which rationalised the structure of the EU committees and established the rules and principles underlying their functioning, was adopted in 1987. It was then revised in 1999 with the Council Decision n. 99/468 (which laid down the *Procedure for the Exercise of Implementing Powers Conferred on the Commission*) to keep legislative control over implementation procedures, establishing that the Council could oblige the EC to adopt implementation measures only after a *comitology process*.

The strongest criticism of the old comitology system pertained to the fact that the elected European Parliament (EP) had no right to block implementing measures: only so-called ‘comitology committees’ could, and if they did the proposal was referred to Council alone, even when the initial delegation of powers came from an act adopted jointly by both the EP and the Council under the co-decision procedure. In this sense, the European Parliament argued that the system lacked transparency and democratic control (cf. EP press release³ of 6 April 2010), and with the Austrian Council Presidency of 2006 the EP was given the right to block individual decisions where the nature of the decision was quasi-legislative and where the original legislation was adopted under the EU’s co-decision procedure by EP and Council. The renewed definition of responsibilities and competences attributed to EU committees raised nonetheless several criticisms “in terms of transparency, governance and in terms of the balance of power between the Commission, the Parliament and the Council” (Guéguen, 2011: 7).

This way, the power shift from the MS to the EU, treaty after treaty, would have substantially increased the role played by the EC, the only body holding the right of initiative but also a pro-active pragmatism: “the Member States and the Parliament are constantly slowed down by the search for consensus while the Commission can go ahead more easily” (p. 23). From this point of view, the EC is characterised by its ‘hybrid’ nature: it is not, in fact, a government in the traditional sense of the term, but a mixture of a political body and a public administration. Whereas Commissioners and General Directors actually play a fundamentally political role, civil servants, policy officers and the several branches of Commission’s hierarchical structure have a technical function comparable to that of a public administration.

ACTUAL RELEVANCE OF THE EU COMMITTEES IN THE OMC

Moreover, according to Guéguen (p. 25), the EC would be delegated by the EU a series of technical implementing measures, principally covered through comitology, which would also express its executive power. As a matter of fact, in specific policy areas affected by the principle of subsidiarity committees serve the OMC as *advisory committees* (Council Decision n. 99/468)⁴ or as ‘coordination units’ (Truman, 1951) for a process of *policy learning* (INT26) in the main context of the EU ‘soft governance’ (cf. paragraph 3.2

³ Article *What is comitology and does it still have a role under Lisbon Treaty?* Retrieved on 13 November 2012 from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=en&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20100406STO72095>.

⁴ Three types of committees were established by the Council Decision 99/468: these had varying levels of legislative control over the EC and followed different procedures. The type of committee assigned normally depended on the policy area being regulated. In the case of ‘advisory committees’, the Commission submitted a draft of the proposed measure to the committee and the committee delivered its opinion. The Commission was not bound by this opinion, but should take the ‘utmost account’ of it and had to inform the committee on the manner in which its opinion had been taken into account. This procedure was used when policy matters considered were not very sensitive politically.

Limits and limitations of the EU's soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector). Specifically, whereas implementing 'hard' regulations established by the committee coordinating the *Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013* (which includes the *Grundtvig* sub-programme for adult education) are directly binding for the MS, and thus immediately applicable throughout the EU, all other policy instruments and tools that fall under the umbrella of the OMC (working groups, PLAs, drafting of action plans, monitoring through indicators and benchmarking) and policy outputs typically used in this context (recommendations, white papers, communications) are actually not.

The committees that operated in the field of education and culture halfway the Lisbon decade were:

1. C19100 - Programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries (*Erasmus Mundus*)
2. C19200 - *eLearning* Committee
3. C30400 - Committee *Europe for citizens*
4. C30800 - Committee of the integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning (LLP Committee)
5. C31100 - Committee *Youth in Action*
6. C31700 - Culture Committee
7. C32700 - European Year Committee

The political influence exerted by these committees (composed by national civil servants or policy officers and representatives of the EC) is indeed proportional to the funds allocated to the respective budgets they rely on and the extent of the actions they embrace. In general terms, "with the EU diluted into 27 Member States", framework regulations (e.g. the Decision on the LLP) would be "becoming less precise" since they would be "setting out some general principles and leaving it to implementing measures – i.e. comitology – to resolve the technical details". However, the word 'detail' would be "completely inappropriate because beneath these 'details' are hidden key issues in terms of the economy, production, consumption, health, prices, etc." (Guéguen, 2011: 28).

It is also evident how the dynamics underlying the committees' activities are central in the light of the average quota of 75% of national laws, for example, which are simple ratifications or direct applications of EU regulations (p. 13) and that "since the 1960s, the Commission has adopted over 80,000 measures via comitology" (p. 26). Moreover, if compared with the other main forms of legal regulations such as directives, implementing measures established through comitology would represent 98% of the regulatory activity of the EU in a year (p. 69). The point is that as the interests of the MS and the Council of the EU largely coincide; even if the Council is no longer the referral body, it keeps an indirect voice on implementing acts through the strong role enjoyed by the MS in the

examination committee. Since the EP has no binding say in this process, the Council appears to have retained an overall advantage over the Parliament instead of yielding to full parity. The metaphor that Guéguen uses in this regard (p. 45) is the one of an iceberg, with “a small part that you can see and a big part that you can’t”, where the former corresponds to the “basic legislative acts” (around 50 acts per year) and the latter to the “implementing measures” (ca. 2500 per year).

Furthermore, the Commission seems to consolidate rather than disperse its influence under the new rules for delegated acts and advisory procedures, insofar as it can now decide autonomously over a large amount of execution measures. In effect, unlike the committees in the Parliament and in the Council of the EU which are ‘self-managed’ by the MS representatives (as they are chaired by the national civil servant of the country holding the six-month presidency), EC committees are chaired by a Director or Head of Unit of the Commission. According to Guéguen (p. 30), this would cause the MS to conform most of the time to the impulse and policy orientations of the EC (which would promote them with intense lobbying activity parallel to the meetings and by ultimately holding much of the control of the process in its hands⁵) to the point that the EU would be “sliding towards inversed subsidiarity” (p. 45). From this perspective, the EC would consequently hold an enormous responsibility *vis-à-vis* a number of missing or missed reforms in the field of adult education that are or have been called out by multiple stakeholders (including the MS), such as the strongly requested increase of the very modest funding allocated to the *Grundtvig* programme in the LLP budget described in the introduction of chapter 4.

THE CASE OF THE LLP AND THE REFORM OF THE EU COMITOLGY

The approval of the newly created *Lifelong Learning Programme* (LLP) in 2006 was a privileged occasion for the EC to modify the existing comitology in order to reduce the role played by the committees. Having started from the exclusion of the committees from the whole procedure, the compromise found after an intense debate with the MS was a reduction of the perimeter within which they could revise implementing measures (INT7), leaving *de facto* the EC “free from the mandatory acquisition of the formal opinion of the Committee for all activities”, with the exception of the decentralised activities (with the consequence, in the education field, of considerably increasing the autonomy of the EACEA) and of those of particular economic value, of which the MS did not systematically receive all the information and for which “in the past there had been disputes over questionable choices of the evaluators” (INT9). Additionally, in consideration of the fact

⁵ In his study prepared for the European Training Institute, Guéguen (2011) noted that “the number of cases when the regulatory committee (there are 83 of them in all) has opposed a Commission proposal is very limited. On average there are seven of these cases per year out of some 1,500 votes” (p. 31).

that the new system did not guarantee any role to non-institutional stakeholders, the resulting overall democratic legitimacy level did not really increase.

In 2008, the EC again proposed a renewed procedure, formally aimed at “reducing losses of time for the definition of grant contracts and important delays for promoting common project and actions” but with a ‘side effect’ of excluding the committee involved from the implementing decisions. For example, proposals to amend the previous decision of 2006 establishing the *Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013* were presented to the Committee on Education and Youth and finally to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (INT7), since “when the Commission is faced with a blocking minority from the comitology Committee, the draft Regulation goes to the Council of Ministers and its preparatory groups: the relevant Council working group and COREPER” (Guéguen, 2011: 54). The motivations and the effects of the proposed amendments to the Decision establishing the *Lifelong Learning Programme* (EU, 2006a) were clearly illustrated in the new Decision n. 1357/2008/EC of 16 December 2008, where it was reported that “in order to allow selection decisions to be implemented more quickly and efficiently, it is necessary to replace the advisory procedure with an obligation on the Commission to inform the European Parliament and the Member States without delay about any measures taken for the implementation of Decision n. 1720/2006/EC *without the assistance of a Committee*” (EU, 2008b; own emphasis).

The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in December 2009, further reformed the comitology procedure by increasing the Parliament and the Commission’s power within the system. Under the previous system, national governments were able to block an EC proposal by a simple majority. The new procedure enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty instead only allows the MS to stop an EC decision by qualified majority (INT9). The Commission’s plans to reduce the MS’s influence on the EU education policy-making were finally realised in February 2011, when the Council for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport adopted a new regulation intended to put into practice the implementing powers conferred to the EC through Article 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) – which replaced the above-mentioned Council Decision n. 1999/468 as far as consultation, management and regulatory procedures are concerned. In fact, the new regulations conferred on the European Parliament and the Council a right of scrutiny. Where the basic legislative act is now adopted under the co-decision procedure, the EP or the Council may at any time inform the EC that it considers the draft implementing act to exceed the powers which they conferred on it. In such a case, the EC must review the draft act and decide whether to maintain, amend or withdraw it (cf. Council’s press release n. 6378/11 PRESSE 23 of 14 February 2011). However, under the new rules only a qualified majority vote in a comitology against a draft implementing act can prevent the EC from adopting it.

Although many policy measures are subject to the new comitology rules, “certain sensitive aspects remain under national control” and, most of all, “the Commission needs the Member States as they are the ones implementing these laws in practice and they have the expertise” (INT9). With regards to the OMC, for example, Professor Agnès van Zanten underlined the ‘restricted’ steering power determined by technocrat experts, from both the Commission and from the MS, which would provide important *know-how* to count on in the task of outlining and managing complex governance architecture, such as the Lisbon Strategy (INT27):

Considering that in the field of education the EU has no authority as such, like political national authorities, the OMC is a powerful tool to create the ‘political power’ based on soft governance in a system where there is not a strong ‘support’. But it is of course a big problem that it is not a *democratically constructed* mode of governance, and that it can be very easily controlled by a group of experts who only know what is really going on.

This technocratic system would thus create a ‘niche’, upon which, on the other hand, the EU would depend in order to carry out its actual coordination.

3.2.2 Governing through data and the influence of supranational regimes on national adult education systems

Globalisation, Europeanisation and trans-nationalisation of policy-making carry important implications for education policy studies (Radaelli, 1997; 2001; Kwiek, 2009; Dale, 2009a; Dale & Robertson, 2009; Borrás & Radaelli, 2010). The structural changes these three intertwined phenomena entail need to be analysed in order to identify the emerging actors and their relationships, which might improve the understanding of the evolution of European educational systems in general, and of the EU policy addressing adult education as well.

INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING AND THE ROLE OF STATISTICAL DATA

The centrality of the international benchmarking and the role played by statistical data gathered across the time in relation to the implementation of EU ‘soft policy’ with the OMC has been addressed by many in recent years (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; Rinne, 2006; Dale, 2009a; 2009b; Borrás & Radaelli, 2010; Simola et al., 2011; Grek & Rinne, 2011). It is today evident that there has been a shift from the national collection of data to a demand for international comparative data – which in turn have come to play a crucial role in orienting national policy-making (Kallo & Rinne, 2006; Dale & Robertson, 2009; Kamens & McNeely, 2009; Ozga et al., 2011) – under the influence of managerial, neo-liberal approaches such as performance management, the New Public Management (NPM) and ‘knowledge capitalism’ (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peters & Besley, 2006), which have consequently emphasised “the need for data about the working of the public or state sectors,

and particularly that of education, one of the biggest areas” (Lawn et al., 2011: 14). In this regard, Borrás and Radaelli (2011b: 479) noted that the Lisbon Strategy is “largely inspired by new public management organizational forms, which contrast with the Napoleonic or Weberian type of political-administration traditions of state-society relations”. From the socio-cultural point of view, instead, David Kamens and Connie McNeely (2009: 20) put forward that the combined diffusion of international educational testing and cross-national assessment of educational systems has spread on the basis of three principal features of the ‘modern world polity’: first of all, ideologies of education as a “source of national and world progress”; secondly, the “hegemony of science as a critical means to development”; and lastly, the idea that “educational systems – and, indeed, society in general – can be managed to produced desirable outcomes”.

A EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Accordingly, the OMC in the field of E&T requires the MS to continuously perform effective assessments and evaluations of the EU policies and their implementation in the national educational systems. The discussion on quality assurance in the EU formally started in 2000 with the launch of the *European forum on quality*. In June 2009, through a Recommendation of the EP and of the Council (EU, 2009d), the EU established a *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework* (EQARF) to serve as a reference instrument for the MS to promote and monitor continuous improvement of their lifelong learning systems. The EQARF for VET, in particular, belonged to a series of initiatives to encourage mobility and promote the implementation of EQF and ECVET, and the Member States were ‘invited’ to develop and use this instrument on a voluntary⁶ basis. Thus, the main users of this reference framework were supposed to be national (and local/regional) authorities as well as public and private bodies responsible for ensuring and improving the quality of VET. Conceived as a reference instrument, the EQARF actually advanced methodological suggestions that would help MS to assess clearly and consistently whether the measures necessary for improving the quality of their VET systems had been implemented and whether they needed to be reviewed.

The EQARF Recommendation responded to the resolutions of the Lisbon Council of 2000 and the Barcelona Council of 2002, which set the target of making Europe’s education and training systems a model for the world by 2010, and was in line with the Copenhagen process, which concerned the re-launch of the cooperation in VET. This framework was intended to “encourage mutual trust in national education systems within a borderless lifelong learning area”, and the methodology proposed was based on the

⁶ In spite of the subsidiarity principle, the Recommendation announced nevertheless that, drawing on the framework, Member States should develop approaches for improving their national quality assurance systems “not later than 18 June 2011” (EU, 2009d: Periods 1 and 2).

quality cycle consisting of four different phases (planning, implementation, assessment and review). The assessment phase, namely, dealt with the design of the mechanisms for evaluation and the evaluation of achievements and outcomes at individual, provider and system levels.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION FOR INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY

Quality assurance (QA) is a key feature determining the widespread use of data and systems based on quantitative analysis and the monitoring of the educational sector, providing insights for resource allocation and performance management of this field, while accountability, which in many scholarly interpretations includes QA, aims to “enhance efficiency and effectiveness and to thereby gain a competitive edge” (Vidovich, 2009: 551). In the education field, accountability “has exploded to the foreground in an era where the discourses of a ‘global knowledge economy’ permeate public policy” (p. 550). These structures and cultures imported from the corporate sector are not, however, the only elements that have determined this extensive and widespread phenomenon. While educational systems are coming under increasing pressure to show greater accountability and effectiveness (INT27), the NPM approaches promote enhanced use of management practices with explicit and measurable standards of performance (Hood, 1991; 1995; 2007), competition and rankings.

In this context, policy-makers increasingly express the need to collect and interpret empirical observations to corroborate meaningful (and preferably economically-oriented) implications for education policy and practice, which Stephen Ball (2001; 2003) defined as “new technologies of policy”. According to Rinne and Ozga (2011: 75), over the decade of the Lisbon agenda the EU and the OECD also drove their member countries towards an increased interest in analysing and assessing their educational systems “with various statistical comparisons” which became “more and more important in determining the image, status, and prestige of Member States in terms of education”, with the result that nowadays “rankings and classifications based on such comparisons guide national governments”. In effect, a “highly significant element” of this ‘new method of governing’ based on accountability and assessment relies on this “capacity to attract organisations, nation-states and individuals to submit themselves to evaluation” (p. 67):

Every new space subjected to assessment and measurability summons its population to evaluate and measure themselves, to translate their activities into measurable and economic language in order to maximise efficiency and income, cut waste and reorganise inefficient activities.

International assessments and comparative statistics, in particular, can be used by policy-makers not only to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programmes and to analyse the convergence or divergence between countries, systems, organisations and social groups, but also to attain multiple goals by manipulating data in several ways in or-

der to illustrate desired insights, for example by isolating a “few, major variables” to measure the relevant factors that prevent or favour policy change (INT27).

THE ACTUAL (INSTRUMENTAL) USE OF INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE DATA

The goals of providing models and identifying ‘best practices’ to import are indeed strictly intertwined with that of deriving recommendations and, on a political level, this “instrumental use” of comparative data can serve to legitimise *policy changes* (reforms) or *policy stability* (absence of reforms), as above noted by Radaelli (1997; 2001), equally remarked by Montpetit (2000), and explained by Agnès van Zanten in the following terms (INT27):

There are several problems and questions involved in the use of comparative data. When it is about the type of studies that are made, quantitative studies sometimes are ‘artefacts’, because they use a lot aggregated data. But there are other questions also when policy-makers use these kinds of comparisons. One has to do with the *selection* that is made, as sometimes only *certain* studies are used, because they really ‘interact’ with the policy-makers’ intentions, policies and so forth. There are so many studies that are now available about educational research that it makes more likely that people might be selecting some and not others. Another question has to do with the *instrumental use* of the studies. I think that there is nothing ‘bad’ in this, in the sense that the role of policy-makers *is* to make policy, so anyway they have to create a bridge between what they know and what they are going to do, so I am not criticising the instrumentality in itself. The problem is that in many cases there is this ‘selection process’, and there is also a problem related to the fact that, in order to make it *instrumental*, they go over all the cavils and nuances that researchers put in their studies, even when they include them with a degree of uncertainty or reserve. In addition to that, the idea that from co-relationship and co-variance, that is possible to find in such kind of comparative studies, policy-makers deduct that one factor is the cause of a phenomenon, while researchers are instead always very cautious about multi-variance and probability, is another important question. And, finally, the main problem is that this kind of use of the scientific data can be made by policy-makers to legitimate their position when they have to devise recommendations and ‘best practices’.

In this light, not only do “indicators and benchmarks necessarily have ‘political’ consequences, even if (which may be unlikely) they are not chosen with a view to ‘political’ advantage” (Dale, 2009a: 134), but they are apt to be used in order to produce unduly generalisations, thus determining the risk of “launching new policies on the basis of false assumptions” (INT27). Indeed, the political use of quantitative comparative data on education systems, policies and practices is not ‘innocent’ by nature and entails, first of all, deontological questions in relation to the design of comparative assessments – in particular quantitative data and statistics by the academic community and in-house or independent research centres that provide empirical data to public administrations and institutions – and ethical questions about the legitimacy of the policy-making operating according to the above-described dynamics (cf. paragraph 3.3.1 Consultative, decentralised and outsourced legitimation). Standardised international assessment tests such as the

OECD's *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) and the *Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies* (PIAAC) make voluntary and abundant use of *aggregated* data, by reason of lower costs and the ease of design of the relative analytical tools, and the fact that they better serve the ultimate goal of producing country *rankings*, although they seldom take into account the purposes for which, and the ways in which, data has been collected. Smaller sets of variables, furthermore, allow the 'selective use' of data in order to emphasise certain aspects instead of others, especially because of the "strong economic focus" that IOs which conduct these kinds of assessment have (INT27).

THE TRAVELLING POLICY: POLICY BORROWING AND POLICY LEARNING

Building on the analysis carried out thus far, it emerges that there is an increasing demand for informing and developing policy-related processes, including knowledge-based evidence and tools for research and analysis, to ensure better understanding of important educational issues among stakeholders. In the overarching interconnected framework of the globalised education policy-making, the extension of the influence exerted by supranational and IOs has consequently determined the rise of a "competitive attitude" between nations in response to international assessments they run and their discretionary use of data in the production of country rankings, which are subject to variability according to this 'almost exclusive' discretion (INT27). Hence, international comparisons accompany the growing phenomena of a 'travelling policy' (Ozga & Jones, 2006) such as *policy borrowing* and *policy learning* (May, 1992; Haas & Haas, 1995; Bennett, 1997; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Wallace et al., 2005; Raffe & Spours, 2007), which are also amplified by *country rankings* since policy-makers are increasingly interested in learning from the experience of the countries believed to represent potential sources of 'best practices', and see successful foreign experiences as a source of *policy borrowing*, in which 'best practice' from abroad is identified and transferred back home.

Hence, as national governments would overlook the opportunities for more varied and more productive forms of *policy learning* which offer a promising way to use proven international experience to inform policy-making, De Wet and Wolhuter (2007) argued that the optimal solution for them should be "policy learning rather than borrowing", since policy learning uses this experience for a wider range of purposes, including understanding the local policy system better, identifying common trends, pressures and issues raised by each strategy as well as alternative strategies. Since the EU co-production of policy is mainly based on *voluntary* collaboration, however, it is mediated by the EC and the expert networks (cf. Networks and groups of experts in the EU policy-making on page 127) that the EC involves in each initiative or activity; resultantly, this mediation often determine the actual nature of the contributions that stakeholders are asked to bring in these policy-making exercises, and it is also reflected in the actual choice of the 'sup-

porting' policy instruments used. Examples of tools serving, in the first place, policy borrowing and learning processes are large scale comparative studies by the OECD, such as the previously-mentioned PISA and the newest PIAAC, characterised by an approach to learning in relation to *employability* and *competitiveness* as a main focus. Presenting the latter programme, for example, Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director and Special Advisor on Education at the OECD, built a causal chain that links together human capital and labour force upskilling with productivity, and ultimately with economic competitiveness (INT13):

If you look at the industrialised world, competitiveness very much depends on productivity today, and productivity is largely a function of skills, of human capital, of the capacity of individuals to do something, so it is very important to look at the skill distribution in the population. Competitiveness is not just a function of the 'average' skills in the population, very much the distribution that a country has, the most talented people that you need to create the 'next generation' of innovation, does it have the basic skills that people need to 'absorb' those skills to basically use modern technology and so on. Those are very important aspects of competitiveness in high-wage industrialised countries.

Simola et al. (2011), among others, underlined the "responsiveness to PISA across the different participating nations" to its use "as a form of domestic policy legitimation, or as means of defusing discussion by presenting policy as based on robust evidence" (p. 102). With a similar understanding, Johanna Kallo (2006; 2009) analysed the influence of the OECD on national education policy-making, often accompanied by uncritical or unconditional acceptance by its member countries. In addition, Sotiria Grek and Risto Rinne (2011: 69) advanced that "no international organisation is as influential in the education policy of western industrialised countries as the OECD, which has its main focus on activities in *economic* cooperation" (own emphasis). In fact, the main criticisms expressed about the 'influence' (or power) exerted by the OECD policy have principally stressed its *economic dimension* and the excessive *standardisation* of its activities.

STANDARDISATION AND SIMPLIFICATION IN INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT

As explained, data management standardisation and 'simplification' indeed helps in reducing the costs of surveys and assessments, and leads to more affordable explanations based on fewer major variables, offering a more scientific outlook to the assessment design, but also providing an "extremely abstract level of reasoning", especially with regard to typically qualitative data such as equity or social cohesion (INT27):

The main problem is that there are different levels of abstractness that 'add up' to each other: you can start with the test, and how abstract it can be, more or less related to what is actually learnt, then you add the way results are analysed, then the way results are used, and each time there is a *loss of information*, which is very strong. And at the end, you get something that can be extremely simplistic. Plus, sometimes, it is based on these simplistic models that huge policy de-

cisions might be taken, and will have big impacts. [...] Indeed there are political orientations 'embedded' in the way the data is constructed, but I think that sometimes people might be conscious of that, and sometimes it is also due to simple lack of knowledge. To measure inequality, for instance, depending on the indicators you take, or whether you split or aggregate the resulting data, you can say that inequalities has been reduced, or increased.

Moreover, further limitations to this approach come from the difficulty to preserve a reasonable approximation in relation to the specificities of educational systems and with the comprehensiveness of data, as well as with the controversial parameters of historical and socio-economic backgrounds not only on a micro but also on a systemic level. Local adaptations of national policies, in effect, should naturally be part of the policy implementation.

Regardless of the 'technical' quality of the impulse underlying it, evidence shows that the benchmarking regime defined by the cross-national and top-down influences of international assessments, carried out by UNESCO, the OECD and the EU in particular, has in the long run determined a progressive adaptation in national educational systems (INT13). In relation to the OECD's PISA study, for example, it has been asserted that "what is constant is the acceptance of PISA – and the parameters and direction that it establishes – and its incorporation into 'local' policy-making" (Simola et al., 2011: 101). Moreover, the yearly report by the OECD called *Education at a Glance*, describing the key features of the OECD Member States in a comparative perspective, "has gained the position of statistical *doxa* or orthodoxy, as has the PISA survey: its indicators, ranking and league tables are considered as absolute truths, which indicate the way forward in national education policy in order to improve results and rankings" (Rinne & Ozga, 2011: 70). Likewise, Lawn et al. (2011: 15) recognised that the OECD, in its role as a "major international agency", has developed a "significant steering power, based on its publication of analyses, statistics, indicators, country reviews and thematic surveys".

THE OECD AS A POLICY-MAKER

As Johanna Kallo (2009: 366) argued, provided that the term 'policy' is understood as "measures and aims to influence direction, resources, structures, processes, contents, and outcomes of education", then the OECD has practiced education policy "since its inception". This kind of 'soft governance' exerted by supranational organisations through statistical tools and benchmarking, as opposed to the 'hard governance' based on more precise and legally binding regulations, was defined by Rose (1991: 673) as "governing by numbers" (see also Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003; Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Grek, 2008; 2009) – with a clear reference to the abundant use of 'rough quantitative data' in this mode of governance – and "governance by persuasion" by Noaksson & Jacobsson (2003), stressing the "multilateral surveillance" exerted by IOs as the OECD through a "very thorough examination process with a long preparation period, and plenty of occasions for dialogue"

(p. 33), which ultimately allows policy to be endorsed and thus assimilated by national governments as a consequence of their increased awareness of their good and bad practices. In relation with the Lisbon Strategy, Borrás and Radaelli (2011b: 463–4) referred instead to a “governance by blueprints”, in which strong emphasis is given “on output-oriented goals as signalling devices” and where “lines of action agreed in various combinations of formal and, sometimes, participatory decision-making fora” are typically implemented “through targets and indicators that guide voluntary or conditioned action”.

THE OECD AS AN ACTOR OF GLOBALISATION AND ITS EPISTEMIC MISSION

Andreas Schleicher, responsible for the PISA, the PIAAC, and for the *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS), confirmed the influence of the OECD by presenting a causal nexus between the production of international comparisons such as the PISA tests and national on-going reforms as axiomatic or self-evident (INT13):

Look at Germany, for example. When the PISA results came out in 2000 people were very disappointed by the large impact that social background had on success of young people. In 2009, the results were a lot better because policy-makers had been working on this, providing better support for students with an immigrant background, strengthening all the child early education. Lots of this has been happening. [...] You look at a country like Japan, where students always did well on tests, but where students, boys *and* girls, generally did not show very strong levels of interest, engagement, enjoyment of learning. Japan put a lot of emphasis on those kind of issues in its reforms, and it did succeed. There was no other country in the world that has seen as much improvement in student-teacher relations and student enjoyment and engagement with learning, so it really shows that where you make an effort, you can actually achieve results. [...] The future of PISA is about much more linking what we see with instructional policies and practices, to the use of technology, sort of creating closer links between the outcomes that we observe and the kind of learning processes that lead to them. [...] So, we can develop ways to improve education.

The OECD has been criticised for “promoting a neoliberal form of globalisation together with other actors [and] institutions of economic multilateralism, such as the World Bank, the IMF” (Kallo, 2009: 359). Detractors of those who Tom Schuller⁷ called the ‘Finnish school’ (with reference to the scholars who express criticisms addressing the influence of the OECD’s neo-liberal paradigm on European nation-states) highlight, on the contrary, the ultimate ‘mission’ of the OECD as that of “promoting lifelong learning in a world of increasing global competition” (Schuller, 2009: 293). In this light, the OECD would propose itself as an actor of globalisation, promoting a vision of a globalised, free-marketed world in which its epistemological role would be that of a ‘problem solver’ to challenges that nation-states could not deal with individually as they would not have appropriate instruments to draw the ‘big picture’ (and which the OECD can instead pro-

⁷ Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the OECD.

vide), thus actually 'creating' the problem of a globalised contest in which educational systems cannot but be involved. As a result, many scholars insist on the correlation between a thus constructed status of the "OECD's capacity to authoritatively provide comparative expert knowledge" and the consequent "discursive advantage" of this IO, and this kind of interpretation has therefore become widely shared if not preponderant within the academic community (Rubenson, 2009: 414). Likewise, van Zanten (INT27) asserted:

The OECD proclaims frequently that its intention is *not* to influence policy but to just provide tools to national governments for them to improve their educational systems, but the more the PISA consortium and consequently the influence of the OECD grow, the more it goes well beyond its initial project, which was to provide instruments for comparison. We know it is *already* a way of interpreting reality, but they go much beyond. And national policy-makers don't frequently take the time to tell themselves that they should interpret that data with their qualitative national knowledge, for instance, or [...] a strong work to *contextualise* the PISA results and *interpret* them.

THE OMC AND THE OECD'S STEERING POWER IN EDUCATION

This form of soft governance applied by the OECD in order to influence its MS's educational policy-making, involving policy tools such as best practices elicitation and inter-national peer learning, describes the margins for manoeuvre drawn by the OMC too, since standards not only allow for comparison, but also for cooperation across borders, and for making governance more transparent and therefore more 'manageable'.

In fact, the EU participates in most of the activities, programmes, studies and surveys of the OECD alongside the EU Member States. The pragmatics behind this participation is, first of all, the saving of economic resources to launch a 'European version' of similar assessment activities, which would also determine any unnecessary duplication of data collection and multiplication of questionnaires, or data requests to the MS. In this regard, Noaksson & Jacobsson (2003: 53) noted, in effect "the EU and the OECD underline the importance of avoiding duplication of work" when dealing with similar policy issues. A second reason is the political *modus operandi* of the EU in the international-cooperation arena,⁸ and its interest in influencing the decisional processes and policy-making of other supranational entities from the inside (Jørgensen, 2009). In fact, much international diplomacy, beyond the different processes launched by the EU, occurs within the framework of orthodox international organisations. The EC is a member of a small number of international organisations whose responsibilities cover, but are not limited to, matters under exclusive Community competence. Thus, it is a full member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and of a

⁸ Cf. the article *Hard Power, Soft Power and the Goals of Diplomacy* by Robert Cooper (2004), Director-General for external relations and political-military affairs in the EU Council Secretariat.

number of fishery organisations. In the case of the OECD, it enjoys a special status under the Supplementary Protocol of the OECD Convention of 1960 where “the Commission participates in all the OECD committees (except the budgetary committee) on a basis superior to that of observer but falling just short of full membership” (MacLeod et al., 1996: 194). One of the committees in which it participates, for example, is the Education Policy Committee. Concerning the EU–OECD cooperation, it is also significant that the 27 Member States of the EU hold a significant share of the 31 active members of the OECD. As a result, the EU provides a major chunk of financial contributions to the different activities the OECD runs, including in the AL sector. Some critics even speak about a ‘European overrepresentation’ (INT15).

Having such a high share of membership, an observer could perhaps expect a considerable EU influence in determining the OECD’s general mission and operational missions. However, such assumption is risky if not misleading. It is indeed worthwhile to emphasise not only the share of membership but also the form of EU representation. There is certainly a visible tendency for the EU to “reproduce itself” as an independent voice when participating in IOs’ policy tables, to overlap the policy agendas as a “preferred platform and vehicle” for its influence and soft power (Jørgensen, 2009: 142). The cooperation between the EU and the OECD has also evolved over time, and different “levels of collaboration” have been identified by Noaksson and Jakobsson (2003: 53), which would include participation in meetings and conferences, participation in ministerial meetings, exchanges of views between officials, and possible joint projects. Nonetheless, it has been noted that the paradigms of the cooperation between the two IOs have recently changed “when the OMC and its attendant processes required the EU to develop its own data and indicators” (Lawn et al, 2011: 15).

LEARNING SOCIETY OR POLICY PANDEMIC?

Relating this discourse with the various developments of the theory on the *learning societies* (Hutchins, 1969; Hughes & Tight, 1995; OECD, 2000b),⁹ Ozga et al. (2011: 89) and Simola et al. (2011: 103) emphasised that “the involvement of the European Commission in a growing range of education-related steering actions has meant a rise in necessary support activities; these are evidenced in expert exchanges, secondment of experts, observatories, advisory committees and working groups, information networks and gateways, consultation of stakeholders, [...] consortia in framework programmes, peer reviews, conferences, seminars and symposia, monitoring, evaluation and focused research”. As a result of such an enlarged, transnational political cooperation, national educational systems undertook a slow process of standardisation based on the building of the necessary administrative capacity, however not always leading to the alignment to

⁹ Cf. paragraph 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning.

the best performing countries (see paragraph 2.1.1 Post-ontological approach to the EU education policy-making).

Scholars like Bennett (1991: 220) adopted terms such as ‘emulation’ to denote these kinds of processes of “conscious copying, lesson-drawing or adaptation”. Others, instead, were inclined to consider them as phenomena of ‘policy learning’ and ‘policy borrowing’, since they encompass “the means by which international and transnational influence is spread through international organisations such as the OECD and the EU, which operate by enabling policy learning and borrowing to take place” (Rinne & Ozga, 2011: 68). Hence, policy learning and policy borrowing are presented as fundamental elements of the EU education policy-making, but not always with a positive connotation: Benjamin Levin (1998), for example, used the more alarming disease analogy of a ‘policy epidemic’ to describe the spread of the ‘policy contagion’ across countries, similar to a virus that spreads internationally ‘infecting’ those national contexts in which governance exert a lower resistance to global influence to change. Drawing on Levin’s conceptualisation, Lesley Vidovich (2009: 548–9) moved one step further and advanced the argument of a ‘policy pandemic’ of neo-liberal forms of accountability in education, which would ‘infect’ education across the globe since “the terrain for policy borrowing expands across continents” and would “distort ‘authentic’ education practices, as well as undermine diversity, social justice and democracy in education”.

INTERNATIONAL DATA COMPARISON IN THE EU ADULT EDUCATION POLICY

In the sphere of adult education, the international collection of data holds an even more emblematic role. It has been explicitly remarked by the national authorities of the MS participating in the activities related to the APAL that in the EU there is no unified methodology for recording the participation of adults in lifelong learning other than the collection of data for the national statistics feeding the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) and the *Adult Education Survey* (AES) by Eurostat, or the *Continuing Vocational Training Survey*. Not only as integration, “supra-national bodies such as the OECD, the EU and UNESCO have made and are making significant contributions to data collection at international levels” (EC, 2009b: 6). The OECD undertook its first international comparative survey on adult learning, the *International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS), in three rounds of data collection between 1994 and 1998 (OECD, 2000a). Although limited to the assessment of adult literacy,¹⁰ the IALS was attractive because it provided “the relation of literacy skills

¹⁰ The specific literacy items were designed to assess skills in three areas (OECD, 1999: 23): *prose literacy* (knowledge and skills needed to “understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction”), *document literacy* (knowledge and skills required to “use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and graphics”) and *quantitative literacy* (knowledge and skills required to “apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially,

to labour market outcomes, such as employment earnings for workers in different occupation and industries” and, at the same time, “an opportunity to move the assessment agenda beyond schools and schooling and beyond standard assessment of curriculum-based skills” (p. 25). Building on the IALS, the following *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* (ALL) and the *International Life Skills Survey* (ILSS) further elaborated the topic of adult skills and addressed ‘life skills’ comparatively, and in the intergenerational context, as a more comprehensive set of data, exploring the twin processes of skill gain and loss.

Notwithstanding, the ILSS was described by Noaksson and Jakobsson (2003) as an example of cooperation *failure* between EU and OECD, as confirmed by the interviews with the two IOs’s policy officers they collected and the report from “high officials’ meetings between DG employment and OECD” (p. 70) of July 1999, which stressed that “bilateral contacts, especially through Eurostat, had shown that we [the Commission] appear to be granted very limited room for an active collaboration in its technical design” (p. 55):

An example of one area in which co-operation had not been successful concerned the OECD International Life Skills Survey (ILSS). The project aim was to gather country-comparable data on people’s skills at work. The Commission was partly funding the project but did not consider receiving a reasonable trade-off between financial means and influence.

Within the framework of the OECD skills strategy and indicators setting, a three-year project entitled *De.Se.Co. – Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* – was also launched with the aim of “identifying a set of competencies that are needed by both children and adults to lead responsible and successful lives in a modern, democratic society and for society to face the challenges of the present and the future” (OECD, 1999: 5; cf. also Rychen & Salganik, 2001; OECD, 2002; 2005b). Lastly, the most recent PIAAC, which is currently under development, is expected to provide a broader outlook of the adult skills and competences needed in the framework of *knowledge societies*. Differently from the case of the ILSS, the importance accorded by the EU to the brand new OECD Programme has been described by Grek and Rinne (2011: 27) as follows:

Given the focus on lifelong learning as a central policy priority by the Commission, the development of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies has been emerging as the new, post-PISA success, a data dream for education steering in Europe and beyond.

to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement”).

THE OECD'S PIAAC AND THE EU EXPERT GROUP ON ADULT SKILLS

To summarise, internationally comparable and reliable policy-relevant data have increasingly been considered essential for the development of an effective, evidence-based European education policy. Yet, the EU acknowledged that the monitoring of the progress towards the Lisbon goals in the field of E&T was hampered by a severe lack of comparable data sets. The knowledge gap about adult competences was even more visible considering the fact that adult competences cover formal education as well as non-formal and informal learning as important components of lifelong learning. In the light of such limited amount and fragmentation (or unavailability) of data for the AE sector Europe-wide, the EU created, during the life of the Lisbon agenda, a 'bridge' between its internal-expert network and the PIAAC group of experts. Namely, an *Expert Group on Adult Skills* (EGAS), formed by national experts together with representatives of the Commission, Eurostat and CEDEFOP, was set up in 2005 by the DG Education and Culture with the mandate of evaluating the 'data needs' of the EU and, at a second stage, contributing to the start-up of the new OECD's PIAAC through its own analysis, building on the actual developments: in particular, in view of the Council Conclusions (EU, 2007b), on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training (i.e. the *Report Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training* of 2007) and of the Communication from the Commission on the Action Plan on Adult learning *It is always a good time to learn* (EC, 2007b).

In January 2007, the EGAS met with OECD representatives in Brussels in order to be introduced to the PIAAC and to reflect upon the "EU data needs on adult competencies" by advising the Commission on "whether EU data needs in this area can be satisfied by the OECD project PIAAC", and what kind of cooperation between the EU and the OECD could be envisaged, "including the issues of the governance and possible joint activities to launch" (INT7). One year later, the EGAS was called on to specifically examine the PIAAC's 'survey instruments' for the "direct measurements of competencies, background questionnaire and the module on job-related assessment" as well as "information on the new management structure and international costs for PIAAC", in order to provide "considerations of the member countries following to participate in the Programme, including considerations about joining to the survey in the future" (INT7). It is clear that one advantage of PIAAC for the EU was the opportunity to have the OECD "contributing in building on the European education policy framework, concepts and definitions", and "the link to other data sources producing data within the European Statistical System, namely to Adult Education Survey" was also highly relevant. Ultimately, the EU proposed its support for the participation of all MS (including EU non-OECD Member

States) to PIAAC and its “developmental work focused on preparation of the OECD survey on adult skills”, albeit subject to the following conditions (INT7):

- Coverage of all 27 EU Member States.
- Issues covered to be EU-relevant and not already included in existing or planned EU-surveys.
- Use of existing EU-harmonised classifications and concepts, such as background characteristics of individuals.
- Use of good quality statistical methods for definition of population, sampling frames, sampling and estimation methods etc.
- Free access to methodology for assessment and to micro data and property software needed for analysis.
- Participation in all relevant OECD groups involved in the developmental work.

Indeed, the parallel between the EU activity related to adult skills and the OECD’s PIAAC goes beyond simultaneity. As Grek and Rinne pointed out, while the EGAS was “established by the DG Education and Culture for cooperation with the OECD in the area of adult skills and PIAAC in particular”, the EC Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRELL) “contributed substantially to the development of the PIAAC background questionnaire; most importantly, a total amount of €1.05 million was budgeted in the 2008 EU budget for the support of European countries in PIAAC”. These elements, as a consequence, would “raise questions around the politics and practices in the construction of PIAAC within the OECD” (Grek & Rinne, 2011: 28). Interestingly, the final architecture of the PIAAC actually mirrored very precisely the first ‘data needs’ assessment made by the EGAS in its meeting of 12 October 2005. According to a key officer at the DG Education and Culture, the direct participation of CEDEFOP – also financially supporting the research programme for the Job Requirements Approach (JRA) Module of the PIAAC with a grant of 60,000 euros – and of the DG Employment of the Commission in this activity “was also meant to ensure that the EU policy goals were taken into account and that the EU data needs on job-related generic skills was fully covered by the PIAAC” (INT7). In effect, the official meeting’s Conclusions of 13 February 2006 stated that the experts assumed that the ‘data needs’ on adult skills of the EU “will be met by a survey which will assess following skills/competencies” (INT7):

- literacy, numeracy and problem solving;
- ICT skills;
- job-related ‘generic skills’.

It also acknowledged that “for some skills recognised as EU politically relevant, such as learning to learn, interpersonal and civic competences, cultural awareness and entrepreneurship, more effort is needed to be put into developing suitable methodologies and instruments” and that “the possibility to focus on some of these skills in the second

round of a survey should be examined". Conversely, one actual concern expressed by the EGAS about the PIAAC's theoretical framework and subsequent design was that "the PIAAC concept of competencies was too strongly focused on ICT skills" (INT7).

Other 'transversal' skills such as teamwork, interpersonal skills and social competences are actually taken into account in the PIAAC, albeit through a highly subjective 'self-assessment' qualitative approach, and hence very much related to the perception that individuals have of their skills and competences, as explained by Andreas Schleicher from the OECD (INT13):

In addition to literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills in technology-rich environments, we look at some other competences such as interpersonal competences, intrapersonal competences, our capacity to relate well with other people, to work in teams and so on. Those are skills that we cannot assess directly, but that we look at through how people use them at the workplace. [...] Through what we call a *Job Requirement Approach*, we look at how able are people to deploy them at the workplace: how frequently they use certain skill sets, how well they use those kinds of skill sets. That's a very important added value, because at the end of the day, your *success* does not just depend on the skills you have, it does depend on the interaction between the skills you have and the opportunities you get to use them.

In 2004, in fact, the OECD launched an initiative to develop "a specific module in PIAAC on generic work skills requirements as a complement to the direct assessments" through which "workers are asked to indicate the level of skills that is required in their current work in several skill domains" (OECD, 2009b), later called the *Job Requirements Approach* (JRA). Such an approach of course elicits a critical question about the final robustness of the data and results thus collected. A closer examination of the conceptual framework¹¹ of the PIAAC survey (OECD, 2009b) also points to the final bias of the self-assessment used for the JRA, explained in terms of progressive decomposition of the skills required in the job where workers are employed using statistical techniques to "generate several generic skill indicators" and smaller, agglomerated sets of 'generic skills' (p. 17):

First, the module will generate many items describing the generic activities involved in doing the job. The choice of items is informed by theories of skill and the practices of commercial occupational psychology. To reduce the multiple items to a smaller and theoretically meaningful set of generic skills, statistical techniques are used to generate several generic skill indicators from the responses on these items.

The choice of the main focus of PIAAC to be concentrated on basic, ICT and job-related skills as the 'pendent' of "professional expertise" (p. 16), to be directly measured through adult skills surveys, was justified by the fact that they had proved to be relevant indicators of success in the labour market and that, according to the OECD, despite the

¹¹ Cf. <http://www.oecd.org/edu/48865373.pdf> (last retrieved on 20 April 2012).

fact that employers “often list generic cognitive skills and personal traits skills as the most important skills required in the workplace, professional expertise is a condition *sine qua non* for success in many occupations”, as claimed by the German psychologist Weinert (2001: 53, quoted in OECD, 2009b: 16):

Over the last decades, the cognitive sciences have convincingly demonstrated that context-specific skills and knowledge play a crucial role in solving difficult tasks. Generally, key competencies cannot adequately compensate for a lack of content-specific competencies.

In effect, apart from the overall consensus about the requisite of basic and general ‘content-specific’ skills in order to fit the requirements of most jobs on the labour market, and their vital role played in employability as much as ‘soft skills’ or ‘transversal’ key competences (INT27), improving understanding about the supply of job-related ‘generic’ skills and their demand in the labour market has played an important role in identifying where skills mismatches and underutilisation lie and how this issue could be addressed. In this sense, it has been increasingly considered “important information to devise initial and further education and training opportunities that ensure adequate supply of skills to the labour market” (INT7). CEDEFOP’s active involvement and financial contribution to the PIAAC, for example, were intended to produce, in exchange, rights over the first applicable instruments developed by the JRA module on generic work skills, which would allow the agency to support the European Commission, Eurostat and the Member States “in implementing international JRA adult skills surveys by making JRA instruments available to them” (INT15).

INDEPENDENT EU DATA COLLECTION FOR VET AND ADULT EDUCATION

With the cited Conclusions of 24 May 2005 on new indicators in E&T, the Council of the EU recognised that “enhanced co-operation in education and training could be used for the establishment of a coherent indicator framework supported by appropriate data sources, going beyond the 2010 Lisbon horizon” (EU, 2007b). In response to this input the European Union, from its perspective, also started and conducted independent surveys through Eurostat in a similar timeframe to the PIAAC’s preparation and development. In 1994, for example, the *Continuing Vocational Training Survey* was launched, which after only a few years provided relatively fresh data on investment by enterprises and participation in vocational training. Overcoming the limitation of the enterprise-related learning environments, the AES – as anticipated – extended information on the participation of adults in lifelong learning (not only in VET), gathering information within a 12-month reference period with a target group of people aged 25–64 years old. The survey was carried out by countries in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries between 2005 and 2008. Moreover, the AES was launched as a pilot exercise, which proposed a common EU framework including a standard questionnaire, tools and quality reporting (Eu-

rostat, 2005a: 32). It covered participation in formal, non-formal and informal education and lifelong learning activities including job-related activities, characteristics of learning activities, self-reported skills as well as modules on social and cultural participation, foreign language skills, IT skills and background variables related to selected main characteristics of the respondents. The pilot AES conducted between 2005 and 2007 covered the main structures of lifelong learning and a total of 29 EU countries, even though the first publication presented results for only 17 Member States (Eurostat, 2009b: 1), although representing a combined population of 413 million Europeans (83% of EU-27 population in 2007).

According to the experts of the ALWG, despite the availability of international surveys and some national-level statistics, “data on adult learning at all levels are weak or missing”, since there still is “limited or no information on the economic importance of adult learning, on the volume of national public and private investment in the area, on the volume of income it generates from learners, enterprises, individuals working in the sector and/or private providers, on the personal and social benefits it produces for individuals or on the wider benefits on the society” (EC, 2009b: 7). This data weakness, moreover, would be “exacerbated by the fact that adult learning providers are multiple and dispersed, frequently operate outside the public sector and support many different forms of learning by a wide range of adults” (INT6). This situation is further complicated “by issues of ownership and privacy of data and rights and obligations at all levels” (EC, 2009b: 7). The growing need for fresh, reliable ‘hard’ data has determined, among other things, the closer and deeper involvement of CEDEFOP in this task, as confirmed by former director Aviana Bulgarelli, who emphasised that as a response to this situation “it is now focused on providing hard evidence to underpin policy” (INT11).

From the frontline of NGOs’ activities, Alan Tuckett, President of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), underlined how efforts put into data collection in the field of AEL are today directed at providing governments with evidence “based on numbers” for the assessment or evaluation of the economic return of the investments made in adult education (INT20):

The thing that was good was that we have systematically collected quantitative evidence, evidence based on numbers, and qualitative evidence at the same time. We have deliberately explored storytelling through *Adult Learners’ Week*, through diaries of learning, through learner’s voice as a way of bringing alive adult education to busy decision makers who do not understand the details. We have been good in doing that, but you can’t do that without collecting the numbers. Where we have been less successful and I wish I had seen it earlier, was in developing the skills of economists to use analysis on the wider benefits of learning. How to show what is the benefit to public spending of learning? What happens if you don’t educate people in care homes? How much more does that end up costing the state?

The multi-level governance in the sphere of adult education, however, determines that the information collected by EU bodies and agencies for comparative international assessment and study would not “meet the systematic monitoring and feedback needs of countries” participating in these activities (EC, 2009b: 7). This incongruence indeed shows one additional difficulty related to the monitoring of the sector, but highlights as well the existence of undeniable ‘trading dynamics’ underlying the construction of data sets and analysis and force-relations applicable to statistical studies and assessments conducted by an IO acting as an epistemic community that represents, at the same time, its MS, which try to orientate its policy and strategic choices.

3.3 Scientific- or evidence-based policy-making and governance

The steering power of the supranational regimes based on ‘soft governance’ tools such as benchmarking and international data comparison engenders indeed a “call for policy evaluation” (Schmiedeberg, 2010: 389), which mirrors increasing quality assurance concerns of national governments, sometimes also under the pressure of international organisations as supranational regimes.

PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION AND THE ‘NEO-LIBERAL WAVE’

Evaluation of public activities is nowadays a very widespread governance formula: since the turn of the 1990s, policy evaluation “has completely exploded” because, while in the post-war years of economic growth “public activities gained acceptance through proper procedures and strong economic investments, combined with beautiful rhetoric seasoned with reference to noble principles, the best intentions and decent goals”, the following ‘neo-liberal wave’ from around 1980 “pushed for market orientation”, and nowadays “good intentions, increased funding and exciting visions are not enough; it is real results that count: the public sector must deliver, it must produce value for money” (Vedung, 2010: 263–4):

Rarely was the public sector legitimised by reference to achieved results. Yet proponents of evaluation argue this is no longer sufficient. What count are actual achievements. Public policy must become results oriented.

Evaluation is generically understood as *ex-post* assessment of adopted, on-going or accomplished policy measures and activities, in line with Evert Vedung’s definition of this term as “careful retrospective assessment of public-sector interventions, their organisation, content, implementation and outputs or outcomes, which is intended to play a role in future practical situations”. Thus, although evaluation as a governance mode has taken a “myriad of forms”, it revolves around the “systematic assessment and reporting of results as well as the implementation of on-going or recently completed public activi-

ties in addition to, or at the expense of, on the one hand, control of whether rules of conduct are followed in the agencies and, on the other, future-oriented planning of pending operations” (p. 264). Indeed, it manifests itself as a quality assurance or “goal-achieving” process, merging or creating wider doctrines falling under the umbrella of the New Public Management (Hood, 1991; 1995; 2007; Hood & Jackson, 1991; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004), as performance management and evidence-based management. In fact, Power (1994: 43) described the advent of NPM principles as a widespread “desire to replace the presumed inefficiency of hierarchical bureaucracy with the presumed efficiency of markets”. Accordingly, the public sector in representative democracies was suddenly seen too heavily based on “biased ideological beliefs, political tactics, pointless bickering, passing fancies and anecdotal knowledge”, and the response to this paradigm then encompassed a “strong dose of science focusing specifically on intervention effects” (Vedung, 2010: 270; own emphasis):

What was novel was not that goal achievement, effectiveness, efficiency and productivity became catch phrases but that these objectives were to be achieved by government marketization instead of stakeholder involvement or scientification from the top down. *Decentralisation*, *deregulation*, *privatisation*, *civil society* and in particular, *customer orientation* became new slogans. Previously regarded as solutions to problems, the public sector now became the problem to be resolved.

Rinne and Ozga (2011: 67) put forward that, in the area of education as well, the terms governance and evaluation differ considerably from the way they were once used: “since the end of the 1980s, quality and evaluation have been bound up with such deeply political concepts as, for example, the evaluative state, the audit society, new public management and the competition state”, so that evaluation has become “an essential part of politics and governance”.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Thus, the culture of accountability that has permeated the public sector involves systematic auditing and evaluation strategies in order to implement an efficient quality cycle within the corporation or administration (Biesta, 2009; Vidovich, 2009). However, as schooling is normally related to public education provision, it also entails profound transformations in the teaching practice. As a result, quality assurance and evaluation (QAE) “restructure education in Europe” and, cascading from education policy-making to educational curricula, impact the policy implementation at the level of educational institutions: “QAE is an important ingredient in the restructuring of schools and teaching practices if not in the restructuring of the very idea of education in modern western society” (Dahler-Larsen, 2011: 150; original emphasis).

THE SHIFT TO THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

In light of what has been hitherto discussed, the pressure exerted by ‘new modes of governance’ and their tools, such as peer learning, benchmarking and standardisation, can be seen as driven by globalising approaches to policy-making which encompass, for example, the phenomena of transnational *policy learning* and *policy borrowing*. Moreover, this pressure produces at a lower level what has been defined as the ‘shift to the learning outcomes’ (CEDEFOP, 2008a; 2009a). This label attempts to describe a very complex and multi-faced phenomenon which is a direct consequence of the change of focus, in education policy and practice, from the object of *education* (knowledge base) to that of the *learner’s* proficiency (Biesta, 2006), as the result of the individual’s knowledge and competence background plus the *learning* process applied. This shift fits very well with the most recent educational policy trends, which pay increasing attention to the measurement of the *outcomes* of learning, mostly through skills or competences assessment, as they produce results that are expected to better reflect the multi-faced dimension of the learning processes (INT27), hence embracing all forms of learning, inside and outside the classroom (formal, non-formal and informal learning).

This ideology underlying the current political orientation reflects the aim of policy initiatives that the EU has launched in the second half of the Lisbon decade, such as the EQF and the ECVET, in which qualifications are based on *learning outcomes*, defined as “statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence” (EU, 2008c: Annex 1). According to CEDEFOP (2009a: 106), “the most visible and successful part of the Copenhagen process is development and implementation of European tools increasing the transparency and comparability of education” and, in this perspective, “the fundamental basis to these instruments and a key to achieving these ambitious objectives is the shift to a learning outcome-based approach”. The ‘ambitious’ objectives underlined by CEDEFOP are actually discussed as follows (p. 107):

Recent national developments in Member States confirm a growing priority in policy agendas to increase the flexibility and permeability of qualification systems and the shift to learning outcomes is acknowledged as a prominent tool in this respect. [...] The same tendency is reflected in efforts of European sectorial organisations using a learning outcome approach to bridge qualifications and competence demand in sectors and improve access and transparency to sectorial career pathways at European and national levels.

LEARNING OUTCOMES, SKILLS UPGRADING AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Drawing on the analysis hitherto conducted, it appears straightforward that the centrality of skills and competences development, and the focus on learning outcomes and proficiency in European education policy-making, have emerged “in tandem with

labour market changes, the dominance of the service market industries in Europe and the US, and the requirement by business that education systems prepare a flexible workforce" (Grek & Rinne 2011: 28). On this subject, Norman Longworth and Keith Davies (1996: 63) also wrote:

The process of acquiring and maintaining a job in the future will be very different. No longer will the universities be trawled for talent in the annual 'milk round', no longer will several thousands of graduates be taken into the bosom of the great companies for the remainder of their working lives. Instead, large enterprises will employ a highly educated, highly paid, highly productive core staff to run the core business and outsource all their other requirements to specialist providers.

As Hal Beder (1990: 39) noted, the linkages between adult education and the dimensions of *flexibility* and facilitation of *change* in an increasingly 'dynamic society' has been "echoed throughout the literature from Hart's time to the present". In his book *Adult Education* published in 1927, in fact, Joseph Hart (1927: vii) had already noted:

Within the last century, education, having become more or less completely identified with schooling, has been allocated almost exclusively to the period of childhood and youth. This has enabled adult generations to avoid and escape education. All this has taken place in a century of unprecedented industrial and social change – a century that should, because of those changes, have devoted a major part of its energies to the education of adults for intelligent living in this changed world.

Almost one century later, at the beginning of 2010, the EC published the following data concerning in particular the situation of the adult population in the EU, in order to support the preparation of consequent educational policy statements (EC, 2010a: 4):

- in 2007, there were almost 80 million low-skilled workers in the EU (nearly 30% of the adult population);
- by 2010 only 15% of newly created jobs will be for those with low skills, and 50% of new jobs will require higher education level qualifications;
- around 30% of adult population in the EU still has at most lower secondary education.

Plus, in the field of adult education, over 80% of the non-formal activities would be job-related, while "employers and non-formal educational institutions provide half of the total non-formal activities" (EC, 2010a: 4). From the above figures, the implicit policy message was then that a vocational-driven AEL sector will need to play an increasingly crucial role for the support of older workers' skills upgrading, and since the provision of AET in Europe (as in almost all Western countries) falls under the umbrella of the private and corporate sector, initiatives should take into account ways to reach these non-institutional stakeholders, while involving 'traditional' governmental actors in the challenge of

a globalised competition between economies facing fast-pace transformations worldwide, pushed forward by technology advancements and market changes.

LEARNING FOR JOBS: FOCUS ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

An emerging dominance of the vocational aspect in the E&T policy of the EU has been substantiated by CEDEFOP in the framework of the Copenhagen process up to the Bordeaux Communiqué of 2008 (see Figure 18) with data on skill gaps and mismatches and statistical insights particularly focusing on the need to upgrade the skills of the EU *working age population*, i.e. regardless of their involvement in working paths (CEDEFOP, 2009a: 1):

Europe already has too many unskilled people. Around 78 million – a third of its working age population – have no or only the lowest level of qualifications. At their meeting in Bordeaux in November 2008, ministers responsible for vocational education and training together with the European Commission and European social partners underlined that investment in skill development remains paramount.

Copenhagen declaration 2002

- strengthen the European dimension;
- improve transparency, information and guidance systems;
- recognise competences and qualifications;
- promote quality assurance.

Maastricht communiqué 2004: national and EU-level priorities

- put Copenhagen tools into practice;
- improve public/private investments;
- address the needs of groups at risk;
- develop progression and individualised paths;
- strengthen planning and partnerships; identify skill needs;
- develop learning methods and environments;
- expand teachers' and trainers' competences;
- EQF, ECVET; improve VET statistics.

Helsinki communiqué 2006

- improve image, status, attractiveness of VET; good governance;
- develop further, test and implement common tools by 2010;
- more systematic mutual learning; more and better VET statistics;
- take all stakeholders on board.

Bordeaux communiqué 2008

- implement tools and mechanisms;
- raise quality and attractiveness;
- improve the links between VET and the labour market;
- strengthen cooperation arrangements.

Figure 18: VET policy in the EU: from Copenhagen to Bordeaux. From CEDEFOP (2009a: 19, Box 2).

The above-cited booklet *Continuity, consolidation and change: towards a European era of vocational education and training* issued by CEDEFOP appears in this sense as the EU's E&T 'manifesto' more than a simple report on VET (p. 14):

Education and training are seen more and more as important instruments which in the medium to longer term are indispensable to contribute significantly to managing the present global crisis. They generate human capital with relevant skills and hereby improve competitiveness and ad-

aptation to new demands. Research has provided clear evidence of the significant contribution of education and training to economic growth, productivity and social cohesion. Therefore, stronger investment in education and training becomes a *sine qua non*.

The emphasis given to the vocational dimension within the EU education and training mainstream policy is in fact not just a detail. The legal framework in which the EU agency operates implicitly legitimates its assertion that VET is “a main pillar of life-long learning” and that it “has a crucial role to play in Europe’s effort to raise the skills of its citizens”. Following this line of reasoning, CEDEFOP further asserted that “barriers to lifelong learning for adults and older workers still need to be brought down” and, accordingly, “more people need to be attracted to VET”. For these purposes, and with the ultimate objective of “raising the skill levels of the workforce a truly European endeavour”, CEDEFOP would thus have “played its part collecting information and analysing progress made to provide evidence and insights to inform policy-making” (CEDEFOP, 2009a: 1–2).

3.3.1 Consultative, decentralised and outsourced legitimation

Public policy is determined in the first place by political institutions, which give it legitimacy. Governments universally apply policy to all citizens of society; nevertheless, the policy-making model of the EU (both an IO and a union of independent States at the same time) is certainly different than that which is normally used in relation to nation-states. In the EU context, selection and enactment of policy are the result of negotiations and, in certain cases, the votes of the MS: key means through which policy decisions are made. Prior to this stage, legitimacy is elicited and gathered by the Commission through *consultations* involving various stakeholders, in order to raise the national and transversal consensus before decisions are made and policy is devised, sometimes even before the discussion enters the EU political agendas and roadmaps, and through lobbying. This applies particularly to the OMC, as a ‘non-binding’ alternative to the ‘classic’ CM (Borrás & Radaelli: 43–4 referring to Borrás & Conzelmann, 2007 and Kröger, 2007):

Despite their non-binding nature, alternatives to the classic Community Method entail a process of choice, selection and interpretation of specific norms and values. This is the reason why the modes of governance outside the Community Method are in need of democratic legitimacy, just as any other form of public action is. In the case of the OMC, this need is particularly high because it has an explicit expectation that various actors will shape policy content, and because it follows an institutional logic that is alternative to law, and hence not subject to conventional parliamentary scrutiny and other forms of representative democratic mechanisms. [...] However, the empirical evidence is rather negative. Expectations about the participation and inclusion of local and social actors in the OMC have not been met.

Moreover, while “the OMC has been relatively more open in the phase of decision-making at the EU level” in terms of involvement of civil society and a widening number

of key actors, Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 44), with Nantali (2009), De la Porte and Nanz (2004), underlined that “the doors for participation are opened during formulation and *shut in implementation* – a sort of participation control mechanism that perhaps delivers on conflict management but not on the participatory expectations of deliberative governance” (own emphasis). The limits of the implementations of the EU policy in areas where the OMC is applied have been discussed in paragraph 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU’s soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector. It is worth recalling, however, that the legitimacy arena and the way the EU tackles the legitimization of its policy has been proven to be crucial for the success or failure of its implementation. This is a reason why the legitimization of the EU policy-making should be as transparent and widely shared with the MS as possible, not only gathering experts, national officers and representatives from the third sector in the phase of raising consensus and creating a knowledge base for public policy, but also co-creating the ways to implement it and be jointly accountable for it to the EU citizens. It is unambiguous that “the OMC’s lack of transparency and scarce involvement of social and sub-national actors limits its ability to act as a replacement for the accountability present in traditional legislative mechanisms” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 42).

In the field of adult education, the legitimating role and extent of consultations and lobbying have been considered as limited or restricted to those key actors which have developed a ‘strategic’ relationship with the EU (and the EC in particular), as Gina Ebner from the EAEA emphasised (INT19):

Many consultations are broad-based, which is partially really necessary. I know that our members participate in the consultation processes, depending on the capacity of the organisation. We put more effort in supporting our members by providing a model they can supplement by adding specific paragraphs. We have to improve the co-ordination of lobbying on European and national level in future. It works well with organisations that have already developed a lobbying strategy for adult education. Not every organisation has such a strategy; we have very differently structured member organisations and the adult education work is often a priority. We should strengthen the co-operation with our members on different levels in order to better lobby for adult education, more and better structures, more and better funding etc.

Classical policy analysis models cannot, in the above light, be applied to EU policy-making without taking into consideration its multi-faced nature of supranational political entity, public administration *and* epistemic community at the same time, particularly in relation to policy arenas like education, where the subsidiarity principle established by the Maastricht Treaty led the EU to develop alternative supranational governance models as the OMC. Lawn and Segerholm (2011: 36), for example, portrayed an even more varied and ‘multi-sourced’ system for the EU governance in education, which “not only involves a mixture of state and non-state agencies, and the coordination of non-governmental and non-legislative policy tools, but is undertaken by independent agencies and actors not

formally involved (in the sense of being funded or coordinated) in EU-sponsored projects”.

THE GENESIS OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

As a matter of fact, public policy-making based on scientific evidence has gained importance since the 1980s and the advent of the policy evaluation culture (cf. EC, 2007a). An example of the intertwining of supranational epistemology and public policy can be found in an interesting article by Michael Peters (2010) with reference to the genesis of concepts such as the *knowledge economy* and the *knowledge society* in policy models (and outputs) by IOs such as the OECD and the World Bank, until the EU ‘knowledge economy’ Lisbon goal and the “new workforce skills set” (p. 67–8; original emphasis):

In the 1970s, 80s and 90s there were various attempts by theorists from different disciplines to theorise aspects of the emerging economy. [...] James Coleman (1988) analysed how social capital creates human capital and Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Robert Putnam (2000) further developed the notion providing distinctive notions of cultural and social capital. The Stanford economist Paul Romer (1990) argued that growth is driven by technological change arising from intentional investment decisions where technology as an input is a non-rival, partially excludable good, and the OECD [1996a], basing its work on Romer and endogenous growth theory, provided an influential policy model of the ‘knowledge-based economy’. Meanwhile, Joseph Stiglitz (1999), ex-chief economist, developed the World Bank’s *Knowledge for Development and Education for the Knowledge Economy* programmes based on the notion that knowledge is a global public good. In the wake of these reports, employers called for a new workforce skill sets (Partnership for 21st Century Skills) and public policy applications and developments of the ‘knowledge economy’ concept began to appear in authoritative policy anthologies at the end of the decade (Hearn and Rooney, 2008).

The “policy model of the knowledge-based economy” proposed by the OECD on the basis of Romer’s work was actually so influential that it permeated all aspects of the Western economic (and social) policy, becoming the core of the mainstream Lisbon goal which has guided thus far the EU decision-making, through a technocratic governance architecture, much more than it had ever done in the past.

After Daniel Bell’s and Marc Porat’s definitions¹² of the *post-industrial information society* or *information age* (Bell, 1973; 1979; Porat, 1977; also Castells, 1996; 1997; 1998; Stehr, 2001), Peters highlighted the influences exerted on the “public policy applications and developments” by other theories such as the *learning economy* and the *learning society*, based on the assumption that in rapidly changing societies the need for on-going learning and re-learning is strong and will increase its importance and influence on the overall competitive advantage of the modern, globalised economies.

¹² Daniel Bell put forth the concept of a *post-industrial society* or *information age* in his book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973). Later, he renamed this concept the *information society* (1979).

TOWARDS THE LEARNING SOCIETY

Elaborating on this 'rapidity of change', Robert Hutchins (1969) forged the concept of the *learning society*, suggesting that having the conditions for lifelong learning is a *social* issue, and that the democratisation of education has positive impacts on the economic, technological and ethical aspects and goals of the entire society. Kenneth Wain (2009: 340) noted that, "having virtually disappeared through the later 1970s and 1980s, the expression 'learning society' received a new lease of life in Europe in the early 1990s when its reappearance coincided a renewed interest in lifelong learning generated from a different source, mainly employers and governments, and within a difference ambience, namely in the work and employment sector". Hence, it is not a coincidence that when the EC endorsed this ideal through the White Paper of 1995 *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (EC, 1995) it echoed the book *Towards the Learning Society* by Stewart Ranson (1994) and "replicated the emphasis on employment and employability given to it in the lifelong learning discourse at work in the employment and economic camp" (Wain, 2009: 341; cf. also paragraph 3.1.4 The evolution of the 'lifelong education and learning' concept in the policy debate). In this scenario, Åke Lundvall (Lundvall & Johnson, 1994; Lundvall & Borrás, 1999; Lorenz & Lundvall, 2006) first used the term of a *learning economy* "to discuss technological change innovation and institutional learning" (Peters, 2010: 69–72):

The concept of the *learning economy* was first coined and has been championed by Bengt-Åke Lundvall, a Swedish economist from Aalborg University, who uses the term to talk about a new concept for European innovation policy. [...] Lundvall also emphasises 'learning by doing' and 'learning by using' after Kenneth Arrow (1962) to talk about the need of firms and the workforce to engage in building new competencies in order to survive global competition. To this he adds 'learning by interacting' (Lundvall, 1988) which purportedly has the effect of transforming local learning into general knowledge. In the context of the EU's emphasis on creativity and innovation, Lundvall has focused on innovation as an interactive learning process and the relation of the national innovation system to science and technology policies with a focus on knowledge management design and strategies [in his report with Susana Borrás (1999) for the European Commission].

Wain (2009: 349) also remarked that the adoption by the EU of the concepts of a 'knowledge-based society' and principally 'knowledge-based economy', notably since the EC *Memorandum on lifelong learning* of 2000 (EC, 2000) and throughout the Lisbon process, brought the Commission's policy language "in line with the growing orientation of its lifelong learning agenda away from the EU's earlier socio-political goals identified in the 1995 white paper [EC, 1995]; i.e. those of democratic citizenship and social cohesion, and closer to its more overt socio/economic agenda for the new millennium".

EPISTEMIC DECENTRALISATION AND OUTSOURCING

Apart from such a recurrent endorsement of scientific ‘vogues’ into the broader EU policy orientations, the Union shows a propensity towards *decentralisation* and *outsourcing* to scientific and technical think-tanks, in addition to the mentioned ‘classic’ tool of the *consultation* (cf. Figure 19 below), reflecting the NPM principles of increasing the use of indirect instead of direct control and also using evaluation for accountability purposes (Vedung, 2010: 272–3):

An important trend [in the context of NPM] is outsourcing (contracting-out). After a phase of competition for tenders among various private and public providers, public agencies commission some outside body to carry out certain tasks for which the public sector is responsible.

While public consultation and the work of governmental representatives, through secondments and working groups formed by national experts, contributes to building internal knowledge base of the EU in order to tackle the definition of the policy issues (problematisation) and agenda setting, the commissioning of thematic surveys and studies by EU agencies and external contractors is a form of outsourcing part of the process of the *legitimation* of the policy, and corroborates the increasing referencing to the scientific community or other epistemic communities such as the OECD, UNESCO and other IOs from the early stages of EU policy-making.

SCIENTIFIC POLICY LEGITIMACY VS. POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

This post-ontological process of *scientific* policy legitimation (Maniscalco, 2012), different from the ontological *political* legitimacy, introduces a typical ‘means-to-an-end’ rationality as a replacement to hermeneutic processes or the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas in the construction of the EU policy legitimacy. In this view, through sound policy evaluation and “the use of research and science-like analysis, sensible and long-term policies should significantly affect, if not completely replace, the short-term games between parties and interest groups, who by means of rules of thumb, passing fancies and anecdotal knowledge attempt to muddle through societal problems” (Vedung, 2010: 265).

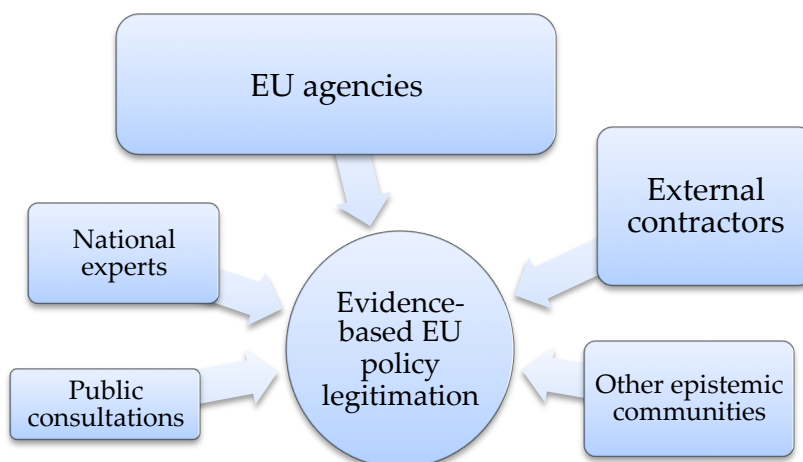


Figure 19: Sources of technical think-tanks and scientific legitimation for the evidence-based policy-making of the EU.

The role of European agencies as decentralised bodies providing technical advice to the EC and the other bodies of the EU has already been introduced in the paragraph 1.3 European education policy: an overview. Analogously to the various ‘independent’ contractors applying to European calls for tenders through which the Commission outsources segments of scientific evidence construction, they support EU policy-making and other processes of policy reform based on inter-governmental agreements such as those related to the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. Nevertheless, differently from most government-related institutions and in-house national agencies, EU agencies do not have the same degree of independence, as their governing bodies are formed by representatives of the Member States. Whereas EU agencies reflect in the first instance the formal expression of an administrative decentralisation (with a technically competent outlook) much more than the withdrawal of the responsibilities above described from the conditioning of the political power, outsourced studies and surveys, as well as interest and focus groups supporting the work of the EP and the EC in particular, are instead subject to higher levels of freedom and self-determination. Their objectiveness and impartiality are strictly related to their selection and formation criteria.

A ‘SCIENTIFIC APPROACH’ TO THE EU POLICY-MAKING

In the White Paper on *European Governance* (EC, 2001e), the European Commission emphasised the “confidence in expert advice” (cf. paragraph 3.2.1 Groups of experts and

committees: a restricted steering system for the EU) to feed the evidence basis for the EU policy-making (p. 19):

Scientific and other experts play an increasingly significant role in preparing and monitoring decisions. From human and animal health to social legislation, the Institutions rely on specialist expertise to anticipate and identify the nature of the problems and uncertainties that the Union faces, to take decisions and to ensure that risks can be explained clearly and simply to the public. [...] Such structured and open networks should form a scientific reference system to support EU policy-making.¹³

In line with the OECD's establishment of a systematic "scientific approach to political decision making" (Martens, 2007: 42), exemplified by the 2007 statement *Evidence in education: Linking research and policy* (OECD, 2007), the EU intended to create a similar epistemic *modus operandi* with the EC staff working document *Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in E&T* (EC, 2007a), specifically addressing the achievement of the Lisbon goals "through a stronger knowledge base in the field of Education and Training" (p. 3). In the introductory paragraph, the EC emphasised that "Member States and the EU institutions need to use evidence-based policy and practice, including robust evaluation instruments, to identify which reforms and practices are the most effective, and to implement them most successfully", and referred expressly to the above-mentioned OECD policy statement (OECD, 2007) and to the EC Communication *Implementing the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs* (EC, 2006f: 28, 53). The involvement of the EU and its role "in linking knowledge to policy and practice on education and training" was described by the EC (2007a: 4) as "instrumental in the production and dissemination of educational research, notably through its successive research framework programmes, its expert agencies in the field of training (CEDEFOP and ETF), an information network on education in Europe (Eurydice), and the educational research centre (CRELL), within the Joint Research Centre" (JRC; cf. note 17 on page 173). The EC also created two expert networks, the European Expert Network on the Economics of Education¹⁴ (EENEE) and the Network of Experts on Social Sciences in Education¹⁵ (NESSE), "to strengthen the know-

¹³ The creation of such a broad set of scientific reference systems is one of the objectives of the European Research Area.

¹⁴ Based in Germany, the EENEE is presented as one of the EU's think-tanks "sponsored by the EC's Directorate-General EAC" with the mandate "to give policy advice to the European Commission, to disseminate knowledge on the economics of education in Europe, and to further research in the economics of education in Europe" (cf. http://www.eenee.de/portal/page/portal/EENEEView/_generische_page_eenee?content=eenee-mandate.htm). One of the external advisors of the EENEE is Andreas Schleicher, Head of the Indicators and Analysis Division of the DG Education of the OECD, and coordinator of the PISA.

¹⁵ The NESSE presents itself as a "network of scholars working on social aspects of education and training" (cf. <http://www.nesse.fr>). It was established in 2007 by a call for tenders by the EC's Directorate General EAC. The NESSE is 'hosted' by the French Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique (INRP), while Professor Roger Dale, from the University of Bristol, is the NESSE's scientific coordinator (cf. <http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/about-nesse/mandate/members/experts/dale>). The NESSE's mission is to "advise and support the European Commis-

ledge base in education and training". These two differentiated sources of research-based evidence would be available, according to the EC, to "support Member States in conceiving and implementing their education policies and practices". When describing the value of the 'contribution of evidence-based policy and practice to the knowledge economy and society', the above-mentioned Commission staff working document framed it however within the European Union's QAE system in relation to economic competitiveness and growth, and (only) 'resultantly' to social cohesion (EC, 2007a: 11):

The aim of research/evidence based or research/evidence informed practice is promoting economic competitiveness and social cohesion by improving educational resources, structures, and practices. For promoting these two objectives, we need an educational infrastructure that provides all learners with opportunities to obtain an education at the highest level commensurate with their own growth and growth potential.

FUNCTIONAL USE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH BY POLICY-MAKERS

In a research paper that explores the relationship between scientific research and public policy, William Gormley Jr. (2011: 979) pointed out that some of the factors that influence the use of research by policy-makers "are largely beyond the researcher's control", particularly if a political system is "designed to inhibit non-incremental change" or whenever "the poor quality of some legislative debates poses an obstacle to scientists who hope that the scientific approach will prevail". As already discussed, the functional use of scientific research by policy-makers necessarily determines their nature and outlook (cf. par. 3.2.2 Governing through data and the influence of supranational regimes on national adult education systems). First of all, public officials and civil servants "typically prefer relatively short, easily readable documents, such as executive summaries and policy briefs, to lengthier tomes such as books or scholarly articles" (*ibid.*), policy recommendations and guidelines or summaries, characterised by clarity and brevity, are therefore more attractive to policy-makers (Mooney, 1992: 345). Secondly, rhetorical emphasis on certain aspects or issues can facilitate research use by public officials by changing public opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 103). Finally, scientific research is more likely to be used, on the one hand, when is highly reliable and thus credible, "either because the methods are highly rigorous or because the research team is perceived as being nonpartisan and objective" or, on the other hand, as it is more subject to rejection when there is no scholarly consensus or agreement (Gormley, 2011: 979).

sion in the analysis of educational policies and reforms, and to consider their implications at national, regional and European level" and to contribute "to the dissemination of knowledge on social aspects of education and training" (cf. <http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/about-nesse/members/experts/nesse/about-nesse/mandate/>).

Scientific and empirical studies gathered by the EU to feed and legitimate the policy-making process in the field of adult education are all written in the English language (cf. Appendix E – Studies and reports on adult learning and internal/external studies in the References); present predominantly quantitative approaches and aggregate data and measures; often suggest correlations with economic dimensions in order to reflect, whenever possible, quality assurance principles and respond to accountability constraints and concerns; and preferably propose explanatory models for causality relations (INT9). In this light, the selection criteria for externalised studies, of which an account will be given in the next paragraphs, seem to reflect a close compatibility with benchmarks and indicators-driven policy strategies, such as the OMC which, according to the EC (2007a: 3), is based on “research, evaluation and the collection of evidence, particularly the results of peer learning and the exchange of good practice, and the development of indicators and benchmarks”.

3.3.2 Towards the adult competence development and skill matching model

The discussion around which relevant skills (usually referred to as ‘key’ or ‘core’ competences) were to be introduced in the European learning curricula, at all levels of education and training, has been coupled, in the EU education policy debate, with the rhetoric of the so-called ‘soft skills’ of the knowledge societies. One emblematic example of this emphasis is in the speech given by Odile Quentin, Director General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth at the DG Education and Culture of the EC, on the occasion of the open debate “Beyond chalk and talk: creativity in the classroom” held in Brussels in March 2009 (cf. Maniscalco, 2010: 61; own emphasis):¹⁶

The crisis makes the input of skills, *creativity* and *innovation* into the economy and society even more critical than before. [...] More and more, people in the workplace will need know-how and *soft skills*: the ability to think *creatively*, to organise work independently, to work in teams, to communicate, with strong intercultural, language and ICT skills. If we are to prepare our young people so they can adapt to change, to work in jobs that may not even exist yet, we need to re-think education. We have to focus not on knowledge but on skills – on what we can do with our knowledge.

A similar emphasis on the ‘perfect mix’ of domain-specific or ‘hard’ skills and more ‘transversal, ‘transferable’, generic ‘soft’ skills has also been given, for example, by Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education and Culture (INT2):

¹⁶ Retrieved from the official website of the 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation at http://www.create2009.europa.eu/fileadmin/Content/Downloads/PDF/Events/Speech_Mme_Quintin_second_Brussels_Debate.pdf on 3 November 2009.

There is no doubt that in today's labour market, specific vocational and professional skills are only part of the picture. Ensuring that these are delivered at a level of excellence is a priority for Europe. But equally important are the so-called 'softer' transferable skills, which each of us needs throughout our working life. A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, adaptability, team-working and strong communication skills – these can make the difference both for young people searching for a first job and for employers striving to remain competitive.

In the last decades, academic research on knowledge, skills and competences has developed into three main fronts: human resources development (henceforth HRD) and organisational studies, the psychology of education, and cognitive neurosciences. Cognitive research, in particular, has progressed intensively and extensively on this topic, especially as a consequence of the advancement of, and findings on, the functioning of the human brain, providing important empirical support for the development of several theories and models of human intelligence, relating them to the transferability of skills.

KEY COMPETENCES, CORE COMPETENCES, SOFT SKILLS

As a matter of fact, 'soft skills', 'key competences' or 'core competences' have been given a much higher profile in recent decades, especially since new kinds of skills have been shown to be key indicators in identifying top performers (Goleman, 1998; Harms & Credé, 2010): creativity, intercultural awareness, problem- and conflict-solving, but also risk management, the ability to adapt to new work environments, and the capability to diversify and to qualify for new tasks and new responsibilities. The 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation is an example of the extent to which EU policy makers have endorsed these instances as a natural development and extension of the 'knowledge economy' discourse, and the more recent policy initiative 'Creative Europe' followed this trend, as explained by the European Commissioner for Education and Culture herself (INT2):

The idea behind this [initiative] is that we *had* to help the cultural and creative sectors to reach their full potential. First of all because of their 'intrinsic' value, because they help for a more cohesive society, and of course because they contribute also to the creation of jobs and development in Europe, which we very much need these days. Now, let me remind ourselves that these cultural and creative sectors comprise of many areas: music, dancing, literature, cultural heritage, TV, cinema, and all these sectors employ about 8.5 million persons in the European Union alone. So we have to support them to face these challenges and to make their life easier, but also more *productive*. [...] Culture *itself* produces growth: we have evidence that cultural and creative industry is creating more jobs and more growth than the food industry or the car industry. I think it is self-deficient to say: 'I cut culture because I want to save', you simply stagnate.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Creativity and *innovation* have been seen as a necessary response to the challenge of economic recovery, and governments are increasingly asked to invest in R&D so as to

provide a basis for firms, and the whole economic system, to regain a competitive advantage and support employability (Peters, 2010: 71–2; own emphasis):

Today there is a strong renewal of interest by politicians and policy-makers world-wide in the related notions of *creativity* and *innovation*, especially in relation to terms like ‘the creative economy’, ‘knowledge economy’, ‘enterprise society’, ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘national system of innovation’ (Baumol, 2002; Cowen, 2002; Scott and Urry, 1994). In its rawest form, the notion of the creative economy emerges from a set of claims that suggests that the Industrial Economy is giving way to the Creative Economy based on the growing power of ideas and virtual value – the turn from steel and hamburgers to software and intellectual property (Florida, 2002; Howkins, 2001; Landry, 2000). [...] At the same time, this focus on *creativity* has exercised strong appeal to policy-makers who wish to link education more firmly to new forms of *capitalism* emphasising how *creativity* must be taught, how educational theory and research can be used to improve student learning in mathematics, reading and science, and how different models of *intelligence* and *creativity* can inform educational practice. [...] There is now widespread agreement among economists, sociologists and policy analysts that *creativity*, *design* and *innovation* are at the heart of the global *knowledge economy*: together with *creativity*, *design* and *innovation* define *knowledge capitalism* and its ability to continuously reinvent itself.

Creativity and innovation are often considered as skills or competences, and used as synonyms even by the policy makers (cf. Maniscalco, 2010: 61). Scholars, conversely, refer to creativity as a ‘high-order’ or ‘transversal’ competence (especially De Bono, 1967; 1971; 1985; 1992; also Gardner, 1994, 2008a; Amabile, 1996; Gurteen, 1998) either as a process (since Wallas, 1926; then Osborn, 1953; Bandrowski, 1985; Barron, 1988; Fritz, 1991) or as a prerequisite for innovation, which is the outcome. Amabile et al. (1996) suggest, in effect, that while innovation “begins with creative ideas” and “creativity by individuals and teams is a starting point for innovation”, the first is a “necessary but not sufficient condition for the second”. In their preface to what they called the “pivotal book on lifelong learning chosen for delegates to the theme conference of the European Year of Lifelong Learning” of 1996 (above cited), Longworth and Davies defined the 21st century as “a creative century”, arguing that “lifelong learning concepts will change the way in which we see our social, educational and business needs over the next 70 years”.

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE IN A LIFELONG LEARNING AGE

Accordingly, the two scholars proposed the following list – *in order of importance* – of the “future skills requirements” which resulted from a survey carried out by the Creative Education Foundation (Longworth & Davies, 1996: 3):

1. Teamwork
2. Problem-solving
3. Interpersonal skills
4. Oral communication
5. Listening

6. Personal/career development
7. Creative thinking
8. Leadership
9. Goal setting/motivation
10. Writing
11. Organisational development
12. Computation
13. Reading

In the light of the dominance of the 'soft skills' over the more basic or generic 'hard skills' such as reading, writing or computing, Longworth and Davies (1996) introduced a detailed synoptic table where they summarised what the 'skills for a lifelong learning age' will be. This framework comprised the most popular competences and competence development ideals that found a central place in the debate of the skills upgrading policy for lifelong learning which lead to the EU Recommendation of 18 December 2006 (cf. next paragraph).

Table 8: Skills for a Lifelong Learning Age. Source: Longworth & Davies (1996: 62), adapted from Community Action for Lifelong Learning (1995).

Skills for a Lifelong Learning Age	
<i>Learning to learn</i>	Knowing one's learning style Being able to 'pile up' knowledge and to combine new information with the existing
Putting new knowledge into practice	Seeing the connection between theory and practice Transferring knowledge from the head to the hands
Questioning and reasoning	Being continuously aware of changes Curiosity Assessing information
Managing oneself and others	Setting realistic targets and communicating them to others Recognizing the gap between the current and the target and understanding how to fill the gap
Managing information	Retrieving, analysing and combining information Using information technology
<i>Communication skills</i>	Ability to express oneself verbally and in writing
<i>Team work</i>	Sharing information Receiving information Collaborating Achieving goals
<i>Problem-solving skills</i>	<i>Creativity and innovation</i>
Adaptability and flexibility	Facing changes Adapting to new situations and tasks
Understanding the responsibility of updating and upgrading one's own competence	Understanding <i>competence development</i> needs and the value of competence Developing one's competence

In relation to the implementation of 'creative economy' ideals (which originated between the late 1990s and 2000s in the work of Charles Landry, John Howkins and Richard Florida) into education policies and learning curricula, Michael Peters noted that the problem is that "beyond formulation of concepts such as 'creative industries', 'creative cities' and 'creative class' little analysis has been made of creativity in schools, apart from fostering instrumental versions of creativity or simply regarding 'education, training and skills' as one aspect of the creative economy". Much of the academic literature concerning education and the creative economy actually emphasises "the role of the arts in economic

development and the need for building forms of cultural, social and public entrepreneurship" (Peters, 2010: 71–3; see also Peters, Marginson & Murphy, 2009).

PROPOSITIONAL AND OPERATIONAL OR PROACTIVE KNOWLEDGE

In fact, while in most education systems *knowledge* is increasingly being identified as what is expressed or described by language (Gustavsson, 2002), the requirement that knowledge can be formulated linguistically becomes necessary for various levels and stages of the learning assessment (*knowing* has almost become equivalent to formulating written or oral statements that can be verified). Skills are instead more correlated to what individuals can 'do' with knowledge, and are normally demonstrated by carrying out a task leading to a desired result (Maniscalco, 2010: 61). As Longworth and Davies (1996: 17) put it, "teaching children *how* to think rather than *what* to think will have a much more long-lasting effect". In this sense, this "shift to the learning outcomes" (CEDEFOP, 2008a) is one of the causes for formal learning, typically in line with the 'propositional knowledge' and focused on the evaluation of contents, not being likely to match the market's needs, as it is more oriented towards an 'operational', 'proactive knowledge' (proficiency) and the assessment of performed tasks.

COMPETENCES VERSUS SKILLS

The terminological disambiguation is certainly not straightforward. Behavioural analyses show how difficult it is to establish univocally what is *competence* and what are *skills* (CEDEFOP, 2000: 12):

Today, 'competence' has become a general-purpose term. It is used in various scientific disciplines, but often with different connotations. In the context of employment, it is tending to supplant formal qualifications. In education and training, its acquisition is becoming the ultimate objective. Competence is coming to the fore in a context of socio-economic crisis and transformation of work organisation, which in itself justifies the transition to a new management model. An attempt is even being made to define the competences individuals must have in order to take their place in our society. In the field of vocational training and work analysis, skill has traditionally been regarded as something highly specific, associated with a job. Technical and social developments have stimulated a quest for transverse competences, in addition to specialised skills.

Mulder, Weigel and Collins (2007) also denounced "the lack of a coherent definition of the concept of competence, the lack of a one-to-one relationship between competence and performance, the misled notion that employing the concept of competence decreases the value of knowledge, the difficulties of designing competence-based educational principles at the curriculum and instruction levels, the underestimation of the organizational consequences of competence-based education, and the many problems in the field of competence assessment" in most European countries. According to Karen Evans, Chair in Education at the Institute of Education of the University of London, the

definitions of skills and competences have actually been “used in different ways and have been expanding and changing all the time” (INT23):

Historically, the definition of skill has been a bit ‘narrower’ than the one of competence. Competence itself has several different approaches: the behavioural notion of competence, which is very narrow, the cognitive notion of competence, which is a bit broader but is still quite limited, and then the more ‘generic’ notions of competence, which emphasise the underlying capabilities of people, closer to the ways in which the key competences for lifelong learning are now being talked about rather than in terms of narrowly defined, directly measurable sets of performances.

In addition, in their research *Knowledge, skills, competence: European Divergences in Vocational Education and Training*, Brockmann, Clarke and Winch (2008) acknowledged the presence, in Europe, of “distinct understandings and meanings of outwardly similar terms” used in relation to knowledge, skills and competences. Furthermore, they argued that “these meanings are deeply rooted in the countries’ institutional structures and labour processes and still inform national debates and policies today”, and concluded their study by emphasising the “need to develop transnational categories that take into account the social construction of terms such as *skills* and *qualifications*”.

A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCES (KSC)

As a matter of fact, *knowledge, skills* and *competences* are usually described as resources that individuals can combine, ‘mobilise’ and activate in order to deal effectively with a specific situation. In some languages, as in French, there is not even such a distinction, as the scientific literature uses the term ‘compétence’ as a hypernym (INT28). Within the realm of the cognitive studies, Le Boterf (1995) defined the term ‘competence’ in the following way: “competence is the mobilisation or the activation of various knowledge in a given situation or context”, similar to the definition proposed by Sandra Bélier in the *Traité des sciences et des techniques de la Formation* by Philippe Carré and Pierre Caspar (1999): “competence allows one to act and/or to solve professional problems in a satisfactory way in a certain context, by mobilising different capacities in an integrated way” (Maniscalco, 2010: 58; own translations). Hence, the term *competence* is normally considered as multi-faceted, holistic and integrated (Gerber & Velde, 1996; Velde, 1997; 1999).

Howard Gardner’s conceptual tripartition of *knowledge, skill* and *competence* (KSC), echoing the model proposed by Katz (1955), comprised the existence of a knowledge base and a method to access it (a ‘structure’ within which it can be ‘aroused’), but also introduced a new element, the ‘pragmatics’ related to the environment in order to enact pertinent behaviours (Gardner, 2000; own italics):

It makes sense to think of human cognitive competence as an emerging capacity, one likely to be manifest at the intersection of three different constituents: the individual, with his or her skills,

knowledge, and aims; the structure of a *domain of knowledge* within which these skills can be aroused; and a set of institutions and roles – a surrounding field – that judges when a particular performance is acceptable or even constitutes a creative breakthrough as well as when it fails to meet specifications.

This kind of holistic approach to KSC is included, for example, in the above-cited project *Definition and Selection of Key Competences* (De.Se.Co.) conducted by the OECD (2002; 2005b; cf. also Rychen & Salganik, 2001). In the context of EU education policy and practice – where the latter in particular is still widely anchored to traditional ‘static’ knowledge paradigms based on educational contents (much more than skills) – the following glossary (CEDEFOP, 2001: 13) represented an important attempt to conceptualise terms such as *skill* and *competence*, albeit still containing some ambiguities and cross-definitions (‘skills’ are here defined as ‘knowledge’ or ‘experience’, ‘competence’ as ‘capacity’ to use “know-how, skills, qualifications or knowledge”; cf. Maniscalco, 2012: 154):

- *Skill*: the relevant knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job and/or the product of education, training and experience which, together with relevant know-how, is characteristic of technical knowledge.
- *Competence*: the proven and individual capacity to use know-how, skills, qualifications or knowledge in order to meet both familiar and evolving occupational situations and requirements.
- *Generic skills*: the skills that support lifelong learning, including not only literacy and numeracy (i.e. basic skills), but also communication skills, problem-solving skills, team-working skills, decision-making skills, creative thinking, computer skills and continuous learning skills.
- *Transferable competences*: the competences individuals have which are also relevant to jobs and occupations other than the ones they currently have or have recently had.
- *Key/core competences*: the sets of skills which are complementary to basic and generic skills and which enable individuals to acquire new qualifications more easily, to adapt to changing technological or organisational contexts and/or to achieve mobility in the labour market, including by means of career development.

The recurrent use of the words ‘skill’ and ‘competence’ as synonyms in EU policy documents has been acknowledged by the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning¹⁷ (CRELL, 2008: 12), which noted that while in educational research these words are defined differently, “in policy texts, as well as in many other contexts, the words skills and competences are used interchangeably”, although a *skill* “is normally defined as an *abili-*

¹⁷ Recognised by a Council decision in 2005 on new indicators in education and training, the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) “was created inside the European Commission at the Joint Research Centre in Italy”. It was constructed with the purpose of “supporting the DG Education and Culture in the development of indicators and benchmarks in Education and Training” (CRELL, 2008: 9).

ty, usually learned and acquired through training, to perform actions which achieve a desired outcome". Furthermore, as Chisholm (2005: 1 quoted in CRELL, 2008: 12) pointed out:

[Skill and competence] do not really mean the same thing. Competence means the ability to apply knowledge, *know-how* and skills in a stable/recurring or changing situation. Two elements are crucial: applying what one knows and can do to a specific task or problem, and being able to transfer this ability between different situations.

In this sense, Dominique S. Rychen (2004: 21–2) underlined in her research on *key competences* that “the terms competence and skill were not used as synonyms”, as “skill was used to designate an ability to perform complex motor and/or cognitive acts with ease and precision and an adaptability to changing conditions, while the term competence designated a complex action system encompassing cognitive skills, attitudes and other non-cognitive components [...] in this sense, the term competence represented a holistic concept”.

As mentioned, the term ‘skill’ is traditionally associated with a range of technical, task-specific abilities that require training and instruction for an individual to become proficient or ‘skilled’ within a particular activity or job. Only in recent times has there been a growing interest in another range of abilities, variously referred to as ‘emotional’, ‘behavioural’ or ‘soft’. The need for these types of skills is indeed not new; however, contemporary changes in the structure of work, the focus on team-working and job outsourcing, the rise of co-creative enterprises, and the growth in the services sector have increased in importance and are now emerging as critical for organisational success. Knowledge is today broadly accessible to Western populations, to an increasing extent. Nonetheless, without scanning and synthesising skills, or without critical thinking, it has become almost impossible to organise the information retrieved into coherent and usable frameworks. Learning how to perform a Google search, to give one example, does not automatically imply that one is able to deal with the impressive amount of data this tool can provide (Hindon, 2009; Chiesa, 2013: 119–21; cf. paragraph 5.4 Filtered information and informal mediated learning). In fact, ‘soft skills’ significantly affect many aspects of individuals’ work, careers, well-being and life in general.

FROM THE ‘EMOTIONAL BRAIN’ TO ‘EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE’

Daniel Goleman (1995; 1996), referring to former theories on the so-called *emotional brain* (e.g. LeDoux, 1992; 1994; 1996), launched the concept of the *emotional intelligence* (EI), and distinguished what he called *personal competence*, related to the way we control ourselves, from *social competence*, related to the world and the way we interact with other individuals. This dichotomy (Goleman, 1995: 39) was actually derived from concepts such as *intrapersonal intelligence* (the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one’s

feelings, fears and motivations) and *interpersonal intelligence* (the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people), already introduced in Gardner's book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 1983: 9; cf. also Gardner, 1993). In its sequel, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1998) also proposed a synoptic table of 'soft skills' (which he calls "human talents"; cf. Goleman, 1998: 4) in the work context from a behavioural perspective, which he named the *emotional competence framework*. Goleman developed the mainstream concept of the emotional competence into macro-areas, and further divided these areas into specific *operational competences*, establishing an interesting bridge between the HRD discourse and the psycho-cognitive approach to competence and skills. In his framework, 'competences' are not simply considered a cluster of human capabilities (motivational, emotional and rational) but primarily an expression of the interaction of human beings with other individuals and in different environments. This experiential, heuristic vision positioned the learner in a condition of exposure to stimulus leading him/her to the building of a specific awareness and perception of him-/herself and the acquisition of certain attitudes. Conversely, he presented broader concepts such as metacognition, which he called 'self-awareness' (p. 46), as comprising features of both knowledge and skill, and sometimes in his book work skills and domain-specific competences are blended with more 'transversal' skills, usually considered 'cross-disciplinary' or 'cross-curricular', e.g. conflict management, risk taking and initiative.

HARD SKILLS VERSUS SOFT SKILLS

In the world of work, 'hard skills' are likely to refer to practical or technical procedures related to the company or organisation's activities. Examples include financial procedures and sales administration, using tools, operating machinery, typing, proficiency with software applications and computer protocols, mathematical ability, and dealing with safety standards. These skills appear to be relatively easy to train, because they are normally new to the learner and no unlearning is involved. Other kinds of skills are more difficult to observe, quantify and measure. Some people make friends easily, for example, which would be considered a valuable skill in the world of sales. Others are extremely punctual, or able to make rational decisions under pressure. A person may also have the ability to work with co-workers from other countries and cultures, or learn a new language quickly. By contrast, companies call these abilities 'soft skills', a definition nowadays widely used in business and corporate jargon (Bereiter, 2002b), which also opens the door to ample discussion. Unlike *hard skills*, which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity, *soft skills* are seen as broadly applicable, since 'it is possible to identify a number of cognitive skills and procedures that are common to many subjects' and domains of knowledge (Blagg, 1991: 145). Moreover, these skills are often considered as 'in-

nate'. Soft skills actually refer to a cluster of qualities, habits, personality traits, attitudes and 'social graces' that everyone possesses to varying degrees, and are needed for everyday life as much as they are needed for work. It is often said that hard skills provide a job but soft skills are necessary to keep it (Maniscalco, 2010: 57–8). In relation to 'soft skills', Howard Gardner argued (INT22):

It is not a term that I use myself, and I probably wrote that to you.¹⁸ As I was saying, what you need to survive in the global, technological, lifelong learning world is very different from what you need when you just have to live in the same area, do the same work that your parents did, and where there is no need to keep learning. Calling that 'soft skills' is often a way of minimizing, let's say, what is really *important*. And that's why my colleague Murnane uses the term 'new basic skills', because that is a less 'tendentious' word. [...] Whether you call them all 'soft' or all 'hard' to me is more important than calling some soft and some hard, which I think for many people is a way of dismissing them, and saying that they are not really important, as they are the 'options'.

This is to say that being open-minded and empathic, or able to work a team would indeed help a doctor in the emergency of assisting a patient having a heart attack, but without the very basic notions of cardiovascular pathology and the proper operational reanimation skills, any healthcare worker would certainly not succeed. According to Richard Murnane, Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (who also contributed to the OECD's De.Se.Co. project), and Frank Levy, Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), "in today's competitive economy [...] firms search for applicants with the *new basic skills*, the mix of *hard* and *soft skills* that all high-wage employers now require" (Murnane & Levy, 1996; own emphasis). Attempts to classify skills and competences from a qualitative perspective have advanced that the term 'soft skills' is normally integrated in complex sets of 'core' or 'key' competences in the field of HRD and business practice, while this expression is not present in almost any scientific conceptualisation (Bereiter, 2002b).

LEARNING TRANSFERABLE, HIGHER-ORDER OR 'SOFT' SKILLS

One crucial question is whether it is even *possible* to learn or teach 'soft' or 'transferable' or 'higher-order' skills like entrepreneurship, leadership or empathy and, if so, through which teaching strategies. As the best way to develop skilfulness is still considered to practice 'by doing' the object of learning repeatedly, which entails the 'learning by doing' or 'learning by using' and 'learning by interacting' approaches (Arrow, 1962; Lundvall, 1988), a similar approach can be applied to 'soft' or transversal skills. Barbara

¹⁸ Gardner refers to an email exchange with the author on the issue preceding the interview, where he correlated the use of this term with the work of Levy and Murnane (1996) on the 'new basic skills' and their references to the 'soft skills'.

Ischinger, Director for Education at the OECD, expressed her optimism in relation to the ‘teachability’ of these kinds of skills, leadership in particular (INT14):

Leadership can indeed be taught. Education and training, as well as systematic and disciplined experience with feedback, are essential building blocks of effective leadership. We can run aground, when we confuse the essence of leadership with a set of traits, say, assertiveness or charisma. Some inherent characteristics have indeed been shown to be useful attributes to or underpinnings of leadership. But we now understand so much more about leadership and no longer see it as an assemblage of personal traits. Habits of mind, or values and dispositions, skills, and knowledge are all requisite aspects of leadership, and all can be developed.

People nowadays start working in companies and organisations with behaviour patterns already thoroughly ingrained, and claim that they already possess those ‘innate’ qualities and personality traits or that they were not learned in a classroom, but ‘on the street’ since a very early age. Thus, they observed how the people around them did things, they experimented, learned ‘by doing’ and modelled the attitude that was more compatible and effective for their own purposes, and finally created a unique portfolio of competences that fit their specific skills need. In the scientific literature, this is often referred to as *tacit knowledge* (Polanyi, 1966; Schmidt & Hunter, 1993; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Lam, 2000; Von Krogh et al., 2000; Collins, 2001) and is supposed to be acquired mainly through non-formal and informal learning (Eraut, 2000).

3.3.2.1 Knowledge building, learning transfer and (adult) skill transferability

Human cognitive resources are, as Daniel Kim (1993: 4) argued when describing the cycle of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences, “active structures that affect our thinking process and the actions we take”. Likewise, introducing the concept of *knowledge building* (Wells, 2002; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006), Bereiter also noted that substantial similarities exist between deep learning processes and the processes by which knowledge advances in the educational disciplines (Bereiter, 2002b: 23). However, while some of the adults’ crystallised skills and behaviours could be more effective, others might be ineffective or inappropriate. As adults (re-)enter a learning path, in fact, they have often already worked for decades and reinforced the way they deal with their job, with people and with the everyday challenges of life (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Similar to most behaviour patterns, interpersonal and other ‘transversal’ or ‘soft’ skills are ‘hard-wired’ in the neuronal pathways of the cerebral cortex: whenever a certain behaviour is repeated often enough, neurons grew dendrites that reach out to other neurons and make the behaviour pattern’s connection preferential, thus ‘automatic’. Bio-physically, a myelin sheath coats the brain cells and makes the connection extremely efficient, with a resulting behaviour (that Barbara Ischinger called the “habit of mind”) that then feels natural, easy and comfortable for the individual. This is one of the reasons why people consider these

particular types of skills to be 'innate'. In this light, introducing a new skill or competence could be more difficult in adulthood, since it would mean adapting old attitudes and modifying the crystallised behaviour. New patterns, even when they appear plausible to the individual, or are expected and desired, are first considered 'awkward'. In his preface to the book *Education and Mind in the Knowledge Age*, Carl Bereiter (2002a) argued that, in similar circumstances, "it takes a lot to convince us that we need a new tool, especially since the new tool will at first be unwieldy, unreliable, and just won't feel right".

MEMORY RECONSOLIDATION AND LEARNING AT LATER AGE

Moreover, as Piaget pointed out in the 1970s, learning processes integrate the brain's existing cognitive structures without radically transforming them (cf. Donovan et al., 2000; Blume et al., 2010). Although behavioural patterns are deeply established at the physical level of the brain's synaptic networks, the "conception that treats knowledge as stuff in people's minds and learning as a process that produces it there" – thus imagining the human brain similar to a computer's memory and suggesting "that education's main mission should be stuffing students' filing cabinets" (Bereiter, 2002a) – has been put into question by several scholars, who have called for a substantial revision of the whole architecture of the 'classical' cognitive science to be re-written into a new 'theory of mind' (Gardner, 1985; 2008a; Bereiter, 2002a). For example, recent experiments have showed that even long-term memory wired into brain cells is not an 'engraving' of information, and that *reconsolidation* occurs (LeDoux, 2001).¹⁹ In general terms, the 'replacement' of an old pattern can occur through the repeated manipulation of existing ones until a new pattern that provides better results is eventually established. Whenever the new pattern proves to be more efficient than the former, and is thus perceived as more 'satisfying' to the individual, and provided that the new connection is subject to an adequate period of reinforcement, it will have a higher probability of generalising, and becoming the preferred conduit in the brain's neuronal pathways. Conversely, former 'familiar' paths could simultaneously and consequently fall into 'disuse' (albeit not totally erased) over time. Another possible scenario is when, without enough reinforcement, new pathways do not establish themselves in a stable way, and individuals fall back into the old maintained patterns they grew up with (cf. Donovan et al., 2000).

In the light of the above reflections, lifelong learning would indeed appear as a unique learning solution to this scenario at the individual and macro level: promoting an environment of continuous learning reinforcement, governments and corporations might

¹⁹ Memory reconsolidation – the idea that we alter our memories just remembering them – is part of a larger about-face in neuroscience research. Until recently, long-term memory was thought to be physically etched into our brain, permanent and unchanging. Now it is becoming clear that memories are surprisingly vulnerable and highly dynamic. Several experiments show that every time we remember we add new details, shade the facts, and modify memory with elements of our imagination (Monfils et al., 2009; Schiller et al., 2010).

achieve the desired return on a considerable investment in people's education and training, by adopting such a new paradigm. However, if the causal relationship between *education* and performance can be considered subsidiary, the causal relationship between *training* and performance now appears more evident. In effect, to *educate* chiefly entails increasing the learner's knowledge and intellectual awareness of a specific subject or discipline; to *train* means to make the learner proficient in the execution of a given task. Providing a pupil the instructions on how to ride a bicycle will not, in all probability, make him or her able to do it, because knowing about a skill does not correspond to being skilful. While the transfer between knowledge and another cognitive resource like a skill or a competence is marginal, the transfer from one skill to another skill is, on the contrary, more easily predictable (Annett, 1989).

In terms of teachability, this assumption has important implications, first of all for the revision of archetypal and stereotyped ideas of 'classroom' conceived as a place where *education* happens. Most of the 'traditional' learning environments are, in effect, designed as places where people are provided with knowledge about the world instead of opportunities to experience it (Fleming, 1992; Ettington & Camp, 2002; De Corte, 2003; Blume et al., 2010). To experience *training*, instead, the whole axiomatic structure of the Western education systems has been put into question, and a deep revision has recently started with the above discussed shift from an *educational paradigm* to a *learning paradigm* (cf. Biesta, 2006; INT16).

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS, TRANSFER SKILLS AND SKILL TRANSFERABILITY

Understanding the degree of skill transferability, in fact, is considered crucial "for explaining individual adjustment to economic and structural shocks" since "different jobs require different types of skills, which makes human capital imperfectly transferable across occupations" (Nedelkoska & Neffke, 2011: 1). The work of Shaw (1984, 1987) is considered by Nedelkoska and Neffke as the "first attempt to define a measure of occupational distance which proxies the skill transferability across occupations" (p. 3) and "to overcome the misspecification of individual human capital accumulation" (p. 5). According to Shaw, skill transferability between two occupations would actually be "highly correlated with the probability of switch between the two occupations". Newer methods of analysis (Poletaev & Robinson, 2008; Geel & Backes-Gellner, 2009; Gathmann & Schönberg, 2010) also propose measurements that "incorporate the fact that different occupations report similar bundles of tasks or skills", in a way that "the higher the overlap in the task or skill portfolio of two occupations, the more related the occupations are considered to be" (Nedelkoska & Neffke, 2011: 3–4). Cameron et al. (2011: 13) have further reflected on what does and does not constitute transfer: "arguably, the kind of transfer described is part and parcel of general learning for life – we all adapt our existing skills as and when

we perceive a need to do so”, because “learning always involves building on what has already been learnt”.

Suggestions for how to teach transferable skills came from Annett and Sparrow (1985), who identified a few key elements in the teaching and training practice – for example the use of *discovery learning* methods to promote involvement, the raising of awareness in the learners of the possibility of transferring skills from the learning environments to real life situations, and the use of varied training contexts – but also from Baldwin and Ford (1988), Fogarty et al. (1992), Donovan et al. (2000), Keiler (2007), Merriam and Leahy (2005), Blume et al. (2010). In this regard, Annett (1989) introduced the distinction between *transferable skills* and *transfer skills*, arguing that transferable skills are commonly occurring skills and routines required by many different ‘job contexts’, and the possession of such specific kinds of skills can be assessed by “observing trainee performance” of a variety of tasks. The key to transfer would lie, instead, in teaching the “higher level executive processes” rather than the “lower order component skills”. Blagg (1991: 146) built on this idea, noting that “it makes sense to address both lower and higher order components at the same time” in a paradigm in which “the content of the cognitive skills course will determine which lower order components are addressed, whereas the extent to which higher order processes are elaborated and exercised will be largely determined by the manner in which the tasks are presented and mediated”.

SKILL TRANSFER AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Concerning the transfer in workplaces, Cameron et al. (2011: 17) claimed that the most frequently cited model is that of Baldwin and Ford (1988), based on the analysis of 63 empirical studies of transfer research from 1907 to 1987. This model (Figure 20 below) would show the interconnectedness of learning during the training programme (training inputs) and learning and retention after the programme (learning outputs), and demonstrate that “training inputs and outputs also affect whether learning is able to be generalised to new situations and maintained over time (conditions of transfer)”:

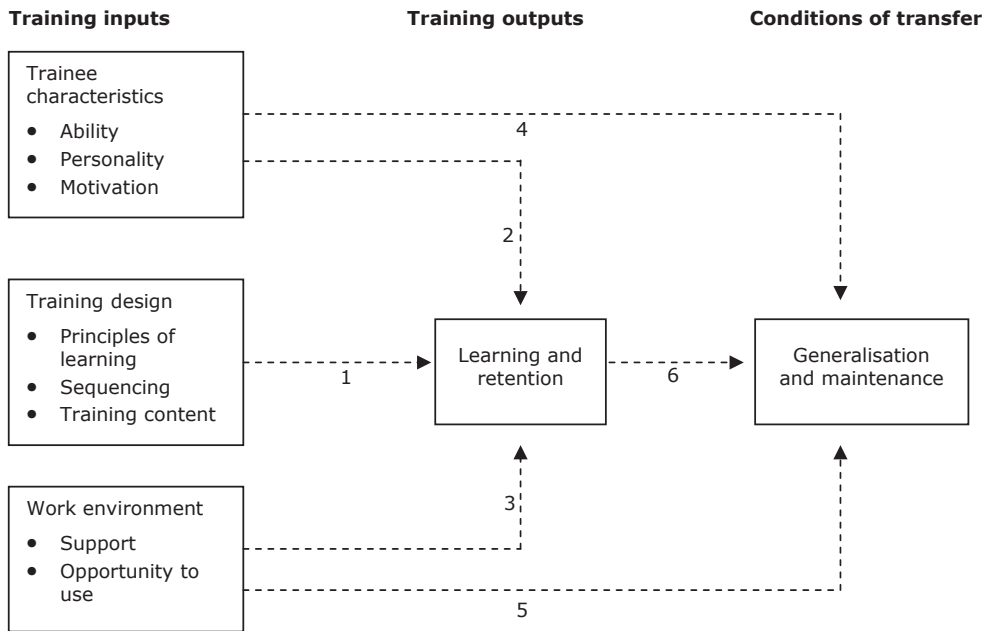


Figure 20: Model of the transfer process. From Baldwin & Ford (1988: 65).

Furthermore, building on Haskell’s remark about the correlation between the failure to find learning transfer and the “conditions that prevail during the original learning” (Haskell, 2001: 173), Cameron et al. (2011: 20–1) approached individual (subjective) and training context-specific (objective) factors which can influence learning transfer, and summarised the relevant literature on this subject in the following schema:

Table 9: Training characteristics that could impact on transfer. From Cameron et al. (2011: 21, Table 4.2).

characteristic	how characteristic influences transfer	reference
Appropriate to learner's needs	Courses are structured around what the learner needs and wants to know Prior understandings impact on what is learnt	Taylor (2000) Kakavelakis et al. (2008)
Seen to be relevant	Both a company needs analysis and an individual needs analysis should be undertaken so learners know what they are learning is important Near transfer is more likely to be successful than far transfer (e.g. using a manual that workers actually use on the job) Learning makes explicit links to work contexts, using task simulations, workplace examples and so on Programme planners liaise with supervisors to ensure learning is reinforced in the workplace	Benseman et al. (2005) James (2009) Benseman et al. (2005) Taylor (2000) Merriam and Leahy (2005)
Sufficient time to learn and practise	Training too slight so no solid basis for transfer established. Practise is essential for transfer At least 100 hours of learning and practise needed to acquire significant cognitive skill/proficiency levels	Haskell (2001) Anderson (1982), cited in Haskell (2001)
Able to be generalised	Knowledge learnt at rote level rarely transfers Learners prompted to observe similarities and differences in tasks/contextes Attention should be drawn to underlying principles, patterns, and relationships, and instruction is linked to larger ideas that can be translated across contexts The tutor needs to frame contexts of learning and of work so that links between them are made clear (intercontextuality)	Donovan et al. (2000) James (2009) Gillespie (2002b) Taylor et al. (2009)
Variety	Use of a range of examples increases likelihood that general patterns and so on will be seen	Gillespie (2002a)
Opportunities to reflect	Learners need to be supported to make new links and practise doing so Encourage learners to identify and discuss any barriers to the use of strategies in new contexts	Haskell (2001) Taylor (2000)

The plasticity of the human brain and its functional diversity infer the interaction of different intelligences²⁰ an individual can dispose of to a given extent. Some scholars in the field of linguistics, for example, support arguments about the relevance of certain

²⁰ With Gardner's words, "an intelligence refers to a bio-psychological potential of our species to process certain kinds of information in certain kinds of ways" (Gardner, 1993).

cross-abilities, such as Jim Cummins with the 'Common Underlying Proficiency' (CUP) model²¹ or Noam Chomsky with his 'Universal Grammar' theory²² (both reflecting Charles Spearman's 'general factor of intelligence' assumption and its developments, e.g. the 'Three Stratum' theory by John Carroll and Arthur Jensen's work), while others investigate the transferability of language and literacy skills (Teich, 1987; Koda, 1988; Eisterhold Carson & Kuehn, 1990; Maniscalco, 2008b).

INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITION TO TRANSFER AND TRANSFERABILITY POTENTIAL

In contrast, educational psychologists like Howard Gardner reject the traditional notion of a general cognitive ability and its implications, such as Alfred Binet's IQ model (Goleman, 1998: 38–9), and are also fundamentally sceptical about transversal and 'cross-intelligences' skills, for example in relation to critical thinking: "all the education is predicated on the assumption that it will be transferred; we would not have people spending fifteen years at school if when they come out they could not use what they have learnt... but all the evidence suggests that most people do not transfer easily" (INT22). Likewise, Taylor noted that while the notion of transfer appears to be straightforward, "it is a highly complex concept to investigate, measure, and demonstrate" (Taylor, 2000: 1). According to Haskell (2001: 29), "decades of research across different disciplines, using various methodologies, in varied learning contexts, including laboratory, classroom, and vocational education and training have found that transfer is rarely achieved". Analogously, Karen Evans objected to the "transfer of skills in a sort of 'decontextualised' way", advancing instead that "the transfer of skills and knowledge takes place when skills and knowledge are 'put to work' by people in different contexts" (INT23).

In Howard Gardner's understanding, skill transfer would be individually correlated with the varying degrees of transferability potential an individual possesses, which Haskell (2001: 117) described as personal *disposition to transfer*, in a situation in which transfer "is possible, but it does not happen for most people for free" (INT22):

Some people are very 'lucky', and they do the transfer, but it is not the norm. As far as the intelligences are concerned, most of us use them together all the time, but you can never assume that because a person is strong in one intelligence that is going to happen elsewhere. So you should better make the opposite assumption and say: how can you use your language to help you with music and help somebody do that, not sure that is going to happen.

²¹ The CUP model or the 'one balloon theory' described by Jim Cummins purports that proficiencies involving more cognitively demanding tasks (such as literacy, content learning, abstract thinking and problem-solving) are common across languages. The CUP model is represented with the 'dual iceberg metaphor' and is the basis of the hypothesis called the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. See Cummins (1981; 1992; 2000).

²² According to Chomsky's still controversial work as a linguistic philosopher, the human brain is somehow equipped at birth with a Universal Grammar from which all human languages later develop (Chomsky, 2007).

Furthermore, skills such as communication, creativity and problem solving would be 'naturally distributed' across several kinds of intelligences. Organising and processing skills,²³ for example, are defined as "overlapping, related and often complementary processes" as they "underpin all of the main stages of problem solving, enabling the individual to understand, organize, re-organize, memorize and retrieve information" (Blagg, 1991: 154).

CREATIVITY, RISK-TAKING AND CRITICAL THINKING

Concerning creativity in individuals, instead, Gardner (1994) related this 'higher-order' competence to the inclination towards taking risks: "those who are not afraid of failure, who are attracted by the unknown, who are uncomfortable with the *status quo* are the ones who are likely to make creative discoveries". Hence, independently from the domain²⁴ of reference, creativity could be fostered through *positive feedback* (Long, 1983; Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991) for mistakes made by the learner,²⁵ not only because the focus of the learning should primarily be the *process* and not the outcome (Edmondson, 1996; Hess, 2007), but also in order to improve self-confidence, critical thinking and risk-taking skills, which largely contribute to the creative drive and therefore to innovation (Drucker, 1985; Brookfield, 1987; cf. also Bereiter, 2002a). Stephen Brookfield (1987: 5), in particular, emphasised this nexus in his book *Developing Critical Thinkers*:

Critical thinkers are actively engaged with life. They see themselves as creating and re-creating aspects of their personal, workplace, and political lives. They appreciate creativity, they are innovators, and they exude a sense that life is full of possibilities. Critical thinkers see the future as open and malleable, not as closed and fixed.

According to Stella Cottrell (2011: 1), "learning to think in critically analytical and evaluative ways means using mental processes such as attention, categorisation, selection and judgement". This rather complex "cognitive activity associated with using the mind" involves the ability to identify the need for additional information in order to understand and assess a complex situation, and especially that of "selecting effectively the right type and level of information for the purpose" (p. viii). When applied to human interactions

²³ Examples of organising and processing skills include: "scanning and focusing, analysing and synthesizing, hypothesizing and testing, including and eliminating, recollecting and anticipating, labelling and coding, describing and comparing, grouping and classifying, imagining and brain-storming, ordering and prioritizing, collating and recording, drafting and redrafting, interpreting and summing, memorizing and recalling" (Blagg, 1991: 154-5).

²⁴ The term 'domain' is henceforth referred to with a very specific connotation, as defined by David H. Feldman (Feldman, 1981; Feldman & Goldsmith, 1986), in relation to any organised activity in society, where individuals can eventually be ranked in terms of expertise.

²⁵ Recently it has also been shown that eight-year-olds learn primarily from positive feedback, whereas negative feedback rarely results in acquisition. Twelve-year-olds are better able to process negative feedback, even if not as well as positive feedback, while adults do the same, but more efficiently (Duijvenvoorde et al., 2008).

and deliberation, for example, critical thinking is seen by Cottrell as “a complex process” which includes “a wide range of skills and attitudes” (p. 2), such as:

- *identifying other people’s positions*, arguments and conclusions;
- *evaluating the evidence* for alternative points of view;
- *weighing up opposing arguments* and evidence fairly;
- *being able to read between the lines*, seeing behind surfaces, and identifying false or unfair assumptions;
- *recognising techniques* used to make certain positions more appealing than others, such as false logic and persuasive devices;
- *reflecting on issues* in a structured way, bringing logic and insight to bear;
- *drawing conclusions* about whether arguments are valid and justifiable, based on good evidence and sensible assumptions;
- *synthesising information*: drawing together judgements of the evidence, synthesising these to form a new position;
- *presenting a point of view* in a structured, clear, well-reasoned way that convinces others.

Brookfield also addressed the important role critical thinking plays in dealing with diversity and building democratic values in adults, and to consequently sustain a healthy democracy (Brookfield, 1987: 5, 66–8):

When we think critically we become aware of the diversity of values, behaviors, social structures, and artistic forms in the world. Through realizing this diversity, our commitments to our own values, actions, and social structures are informed by a sense of humility; we gain an awareness that others in the world have the same sense of certainty we do – but about ideas, values and actions that are completely contrary to our own. [...] Evidence of adults exercising critical thought is one of the chief things we look for when assessing the democratic health of a society. Encouraging the kind of debunking skepticism involved in critical thinking often brings people into conflict with established norms, laws, and institutions. [...] For the continued health of democracy, helping adults become critical thinkers should be fundamental concern of educators, trainers, community workers, social activists, counselors, therapists, and others in the helping professions. Only if adults’ powers of critical analysis and reflection are nurtured will a truly responsive democracy flourish.

In conclusion, he recognised that “critical thinking in adulthood has greatly been neglected in the educational literature” (p. ix), and that this dimension of learning as a process ultimately figures more strongly in childhood and in adolescence (p. 37) than in later stages of life.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION

As a response to this kinds of paradoxical imbalances, Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter (2006) invoked the necessity for a new learning principle that encompasses both *pedagogic* and *andragogic* dimensions for the development of creativity throughout

life to be included in a “developmental trajectory leading from the natural inquisitiveness of the young child to the disciplined creativity of the mature knowledge producer”, which they called *knowledge building* and defined as follows:

Knowledge building may be defined as the production and continual improvement of ideas of value to a community, through means that increase the likelihood that what the community accomplishes will be greater than the sum of individual contributions and part of broader cultural efforts. Knowledge building, thus, goes on throughout a knowledge society and is not limited to education. As applied to education, however, the approach means engaging learners in the full process of knowledge creation from an early age. This is in contrast to the three approaches identified above, which focus on kinds of learning and activities that are expected to lead eventually to knowledge building rather than engagement directly in it.

Somewhat similar to the idea of *knowledge creation* expressed by Von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka (2000), the principle of knowledge building would provide, according to the Scardamalia and Bereiter (2006), an alternative which more directly addresses the need to educate and train people “for a world in which knowledge creation and innovation are pervasive”. In their view, in fact, only mastering knowledge, or even ‘soft skills’ (as they name ‘component skills’), such as critical thinking, scientific method, empathy, or teamwork, would not be enough to challenge the ‘knowledge age’. Moreover, if it occurs at all, the key capacity to assemble these ‘components’ into competent original research, design, and so forth, would typically only occur at advanced levels that are only reached by an élite and, additionally, the core motivation – advancing “the frontiers of knowledge” – would be missing, “with the result that the component skills are pursued as ends in themselves, lacking in authentic purpose” (*ibid.*).

3.3.2.2 The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning Recommendation

In consideration of the transversal nature of key competences and the increasingly holistic approaches applied to them, the keynote that caused them to be regarded as essential in educational curricula was the added value that they would provide for employment and social cohesion, which also explains their integration into the EU lifelong learning mainstream policy. In fact, the reference indicators and benchmarks, featured in the 2004 and 2005 reports (EC, 2004; 2005a), that made it possible to judge the improvements in European lifelong learning performances presented contrasting results and emphasised the need to boost the knowledge economy by improving the efficiency of the investments in human capital. As a response to the concerns expressed at the Lisbon EU Council on 23–24 March 2000 (cf. par. 1.4 The Lisbon process), which were repeated in the renewed Lisbon Strategy in 2005 (EC, 2005b), the ‘key competences’ consequently became an integral part of the objectives of the *Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs* (EC, 2005c), of the subsequent *Innovation Strategy for the EU* (EC, 2006a), and of the *Updated Strategic Framework for the European Cooperation in E&T* (EC, 2008a). These last two state-

ments put forward specific proposals on making *key competences* a priority for all age groups. For its part, the 2004 *Joint Interim Report on the Progress of the Education and Training 2010 work programme* (EU, 2004) already made the case for drawing up common European references and principles on this issue.²⁶

BACKGROUND STUDIES FOR THE EU KEY COMPETENCES

In this policy framework, a study that CEDEFOP commissioned to the Groupe ESC Toulouse of the Centre for European Research on Employment and Human Resources (CEDEFOP, 2006b) carried out a wide scientific review on KSA/KSC and further enlarged the reviewed academic formulations, introducing a new theoretical ‘prototype’ in order to solve the fragmentation of the existing terminology (Table 10).

Table 10: Unified typology for Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes. From CEDEFOP (2006b: 40).

	occupational	personal
conceptual	cognitive competence (knowledge)	meta-competence (facilitating learning)
operational	functional competence (skills)	social competence (attitudes and behaviours)

Fully respecting the mandate of bridging academic research and HR literature with the EU policy agenda comprising statements on competence, skills, qualifications and focusing on the recognition and validation of previous learning,²⁷ it aimed at “combining knowledge, skills and attitudes” (CEDEFOP, 2006b: 40) and thus clearly reflected the more recent trends in the scientific debate on ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes’ that use holistic approaches to competence (Hager, 1994; Engle et al., 2001). Nonetheless, the “decision to retain ‘knowledge, skills and competences’ (KSC) as a unified statement” did not mean, for the French research contractor, simplifying the conceptualisation of ‘competence’ as a result of the incorporation of the “meta-competences within the social competences category” (p. 41; original emphasis):

The problem with using the term KSC is that without further qualification, the term competence alone is too broad. [...] Using the term competence as a short-hand for social competence is potentially problematic because the term is most commonly used as a general term for demonstrating requisite knowledge and skills as well as appropriate behaviour *in a work context*. We

²⁶ Cf. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm (last retrieved 12 November 2011).

²⁷ First of all the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), then the European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

therefore strongly recommend that in the interests of analytical precision, ECVET adopts the terminology of cognitive competence, functional competence and social competence.

In fact, in the Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework, the EU introduced its 'official' definitions of *knowledge*, *skills* and *competences* (EU, 2008c: Annex I) accordingly:

- 'Knowledge' means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.
- 'Skills' means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- 'Competence' means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

Moreover, in Annex I of the cited Recommendation on the EQF, *learning outcomes* are consequently defined as "statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence" (*ibid.*). The conceptualisations presented in the EQF and its background study did not refer to any specific context in order to provide a general and broader applicability, although their political coverage in many ways emphasised the relevance of this framework for the use of the labour force and for employability. Correspondingly, the EC press memo²⁸ of 16 December 2008 stated (own emphasis):

Skills refer to the *ability* to apply *knowledge* and use *know-how* to complete tasks and solve problems. They can be accumulated throughout working life, not only through formal education and training but also through informal training and work-related *experience*. Unlike traditional qualifications, the concept of skills focuses on *learning outcomes* (rather than years of studies, for example).

In the last years, epistemic communities have actually tried, under various titles, to correlate competence development models with the work market's skill needs. CEDEFOP (2000) brought the attention of the European education policy-makers to the following

²⁸ MEMO/08/791 on Rapid, available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/791> (last retrieved on 19 July 2012).

schema (from a *First Interim Report*²⁹ of the research commissioned to the Work Research Centre of the University of Tampere and published two years later: cf. SOWING, 2002: 93), highlighting the causal relations between knowledge, skills and competence relevance, work orientations and the labour market's needs:

Table 11: Knowledge and skills needed in the global economy. From CEDEFOP (2000: 17).

Knowledge	Underlying cause
Theoretical knowledge	Work as a process of problem-solving
Technical (digital) knowledge	Introduction of modern ICTs
Practical, work process knowledge	Increased uncertainty, risk situations caused by technical integration
Skills and Competences	Underlying cause
Professional skills, multiskilling	Integration of tasks, de-specialization, group work
International skills	Globalization of markets and production
Social skills	Direct interaction within and between work groups, customization, direct interaction with suppliers
Management skills	Flat hierarchies, decentralization, increased information exchange
Work orientations	Underlying cause
Quality consciousness, reliability	Quality and time as key aspects of global competition
Creativity, entrepreneurship	Innovativeness as a key element of global competition
Leadership	Coordination of autonomous work groups
New work virtues	Commitment, trust, industrial citizenship

According to CEDEFOP, the above correlations, defined as the 'skill-labour nexus', would be "only partially able to explain [...] the role of different actors (individuals, employers, social partners, training institutions, State) in linking the labour market and education/training system", because "up to now, empirical evidence of the interplay between all types of labour markets – external, internal and occupational – and their links to education, training and skills have been rather scarce" (CEDEFOP, 2000: 17). The OECD has also addressed this issue with the aim to strike the best balance between 'hard' and 'soft' skills (2009: 40–1):

²⁹ Available at http://www.gesci.org/assets/files/Knowledge%20Centre/InformationSociety_work_exclusion.pdf.

Those learning the baking trade need to acquire a diverse range of competencies to enable them to practice the trade. They need a good theoretical understanding of the baking process as well as all the hands-on skills. They may also need entrepreneurial skills, knowing how to run, or assist in a small retail business – and so have some understanding of accounts, as well as soft skills, such as dealing with customers. [...] Although skills requirements inevitably vary among industrial sectors, virtually all workers will need to acquire new skills during their career.

A PARALLEL STUDY ON KEY COMPETENCES: THE OECD'S DE.SE.CO. PROJECT

Another effort in this direction was the De.Se.Co. project (Rychen & Salganik, 2001), launched by the OECD at the end of 1997 (although conducted between 2002 and 2005) and managed by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office with the support of the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education. Following the path created by the INES project, the De.Se.Co. continued the OECD's work in the area of competences and skills of the youth and adult population and to develop over time a coherent strategy for defining, selecting and measuring competences and skills (OECD, 2002; 2005b). The EU's response to such an increasing focus on 'key competences' was hence translated into a policy Recommendation one year after the results of De.Se.Co. had finally been published.

THE RECOMMENDATION ON THE KEY COMPETENCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

The Recommendation n. 2006/962/EC of 18 December 2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on *Key competences for lifelong learning* (EU, 2006b) set a frame of reference which defined eight key competences, conceptualised as "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context", and described the essential KSC related to each of these competences:

- *Communication in the mother tongue*, which is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.
- *Communication in foreign languages*, which involves, in addition to the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue, mediation and intercultural understanding. The level of proficiency depends on several factors and the capacity for listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- *Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology*. Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations, with the emphasis being placed on process, activity and knowledge. Basic competences in science and technology refer to the mastery, use and application of knowledge and methodologies that explain the natural world. These involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and the responsibility of each individual as a citizen.

- *Digital competence* involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) and thus basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT).
- *Learning to learn* is related to learning, the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.
- *Social and civic competences*. Social competence refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation.
- *Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship* is the ability to turn ideas into action. It involves creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The individual is aware of the context of his/her work and is able to seize opportunities that arise. It is the foundation for acquiring more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance.
- *Cultural awareness and expression*, which involves an appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts).

In the Recommendation, these competences are all considered as *interdependent*, and 'transversally' focusing on "critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and constructive management of feelings" (EU, 2006b: Annex), although the way in which this kind of 'cross-competence' dimension should be realised in terms of teaching methods or learning strategies is not clarified. According to the EU,³⁰ the key competences are necessary "for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society" and were presented by Ján Figel' – the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth – as a "major factor in the EU's innovation, productivity and competitiveness" (EC, 2007d):

Growing internationalisation, the rapid pace of change, and the continuous roll-out of new technologies mean that Europeans must not only keep their specific job-related skills up-to-date, but also possess the generic competences that will enable them to adapt to change. People's

³⁰ Cf. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm.

competences also contribute to their motivation and job satisfaction in the workplace, thereby affecting the quality of their work.

Furthermore, this reference framework was meant to “support Member States’ work in ensuring that by the end of initial education and training young people have developed the key competences to a level that equips them for adult life and which forms a basis for further learning and working life, and that adults are able to develop and update their key competences throughout their lives” (*ibid.*).

THE KEY COMPETENCES AND THE EU POLICY ON ADULT EDUCATION

The relevance of the *Key Competences* for the EU policy on AE was illustrated in the “Overview of the Adult Skill’s issue on the European Agenda”, in which the EC underlined that “the Recommendation of the Parliament and the Council on ‘Key Competences for Lifelong Learning’ and the Council Conclusions on the Action Plan on Adult Learning ‘It is always a good time to learn’ constitute the main reference tools to support policy makers, education and training providers, employers and learners in the Member States to help education and training systems ensure the development of these competences” (EC, 2010a: 26). Accordingly, in relation to the educational policy orientation of the EU towards skills and competences acquisition, the EAEA (2006: 43) asserted:

Until the mid-nineties, the traditional approach towards basic skills in Europe was generally narrow. Lack of basic skills was identified as a literacy problem; the successful completion of basic schooling implied possession of reading, writing and numeracy skills, which was mainly treated as a part of initial education. Only the formal literacy of adults was taken into consideration. Governments and education authorities were convinced that more or less everything was in order, and that the problem existed mainly in third world countries. However, the International Adult Literacy Survey [...] presented evidence of the nature and magnitude of literacy gaps in the OECD countries. From a quarter to over half of the adult population failed to reach the threshold level of performance considered a minimum for coping with the demands of modern life and work. Europe has some 72 million low skilled workers, one third of the labour force. [...] The proposal on the key competencies for lifelong learning set out concrete recommendations and focused on how to approach the problem at a policy level.

Since the EU established such a clear intertwinement between the *Key competences* and the AE policy promoted by the EU, it is somewhat puzzling that in chapter 5 of the EC working document *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training* issued in 2008 (EC, 2008d) – entirely dedicated to the ‘benchmarking’ of the *Key Competences for lifelong learning* (from p. 89) – the list of the competences taken into consideration did not reflect the complexity and amplitude of their original purposes, especially in relation to adult learning:

- 1) Reading, Mathematics and Science Literacy
- 2) Language skills: Learning and Teaching
- 3) ICT skills of young and adults

4) Civic skills and Active citizenship

Hence, the European Commission comprised ‘only’ literacy (including ‘language skills’), numeracy (including ‘mathematics’), science literacy and ICT (digital) skills plus civic competences for active citizenship for the assessment (and for the implementation: cf. page 251) of the ‘Key Competences’, determining *de facto* a considerable reduction of the breadth of the policy which had just been devised. In fact, the main attention of the EU in the assessment of skills and competences has been focused on *basic skills* such as literacy and numeracy (EC, 2008d: 92):

The Lisbon European Council of 2000 and the Barcelona European Council of 2002 both drew attention to the importance of basic skills. In 2002 the Council adopted a Resolution acknowledging the importance of acquiring basic skills. The Council adopted a benchmark of reducing the percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy in the European Union by at least 20% by 2010, compared to 2000.

In this regard, Sotiria Grek noted that, similarly to what happened to the main implementation tools of the EU *Key Competences* (the Lisbon objectives’ indicators), the OECD surveys on student performances – the PISA – also set basic skills at the forefront, since “the focus on ‘real-life’ circumstances and on students’ capacity to enter the labour market with core competencies, such as literacy and numeracy, has taken PISA’s focus of interest away from less explicit educational aims that resist measurement (e.g., democratic participation, artistic talents, understanding of politics, history, etc.) towards a more pragmatic view of education’s worth” (Grek, 2010: 399).

MEASURING SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

In comparison with the first three sets of skills and competences included in the monitoring of the Lisbon benchmarks (EC, 2008d: 89), ‘social and civic competences’ and ‘active citizenship’ appear to be measured and benchmarked in voluntarily selective, non-comprehensive ways. In effect, although ‘active citizenship’ has been identified by the EU as one of a wider themes in the field of E&T that needs to be monitored through indicators within the Lisbon process, the EC acknowledged that “research in this field has been limited due to the lack of breadth and timeliness of data” (EC, 2008d: 111). On the one hand, the actual scarcity of a significant ‘critical mass’ of data on social and civic competences or on active citizenship in collected in international assessments of student proficiency or adult competencies and, on the other hand, the objective difficulty to collect comparable data at national level have considerably inhibited the implementation and inclusion in national learning curricula of this key competence (INT8).

One external research contractor, in particular, carried out two broad studies on active citizenship (GHK, 2005; 2007) for the Commission, and presented social and civic competences as necessary pre-conditions for an active citizenship, normally understood

in terms of participation, namely the “political participation and participation in associational life characterized by tolerance and non-violence and the acknowledgement of the rule of law and human rights”; for all that, “in order to be able to participate, citizens have to acquire knowledge, attitudes, values and skills” (GHK, 2005: ii–iii):

These preconditions for active citizenship are ideally the results – or outputs – of citizenship education. [...] In order to promote the acquisition or learning of these preconditions, citizenship education has to transfer the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills concerned, [which entails] a pedagogical approach for the transfer of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills.

According to this interpretation, GHK proposed a set of indicators for citizenship education based on the *transferability* of ‘input indicators’ (knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and culture/values) to ‘output indicators’ (mainly behavioural but also conceptual):

Table 12: Indicators for citizenship education. From GHK (2005: iii, Figure 2).

	input indicators	output indicators
transfer of knowledge	Background knowledge Factual knowledge Functional knowledge	Background knowledge Factual knowledge Functional knowledge
transfer of attitudes	Political efficacy Political trust Political interest	Political efficacy Political trust Political interest
transfer of values	Tolerance Non-violence Acknowledging rule of law Acknowledging human rights	Tolerance Non-violence Acknowledging rule of law Acknowledging human rights
transfer of skills	Critical reading skills Debating skills Writing skills Critical listening skills Empathic skills Social skills	Critical reading skills Debating skills Writing skills Critical listening skills Empathic skills Social skills
culture in education	Classroom climate Teaching methods Assessment methods Opportunities to participate in and have an influence on school Opportunities to participate in the community through school	

According to GHK, the monitoring of citizenship education is anyway problematic (GHK, 2005: 158), since “due to the lack of knowledge about the causal relationship be-

tween active citizenship and citizenship education, it is difficult to judge the relevance of good input and output indicators”; in fact, “many elements of citizenship education are expected to have an impact on active citizenship, but there is little empirical evidence for this”. Hence, the ‘transferability potential’ of the social and civic competence ‘input’ is indeed crucial, and a comprehensive, multi-source approach would be preferable. In this light, citizenship education should be extended to non-formal and informal education, including adult education paths (p. iii):

Citizenship education is not something that is limited to formal and secondary education. The indicators identified also apply to non-formal or informal education, and to all levels of education including adult education. [...] Most of the results regarding input and output indicators, however, focus on secondary education, because this is the subject of existing data sources.

Table 13: Summary of the active citizenship topics. From GHK (2007: 65, Fig. 21).

values	Cultural diversity/ Multiculturalism; Democracy; Human Rights; Gender equality; Minority Rights; Environment and quality of life
knowledge	Understanding specific terminology and main characteristics of certain values; Awareness of civic rights and duties; Awareness of gender issues; Understanding diversity
attitudes	Tolerance; Responsibility and autonomy; Cultivation of interpersonal relations; Curiosity; Motivation; Valuing diversity; Confidence to act, empowerment
skills	How to raise issues; How to design action; Problem definition; Strategic thinking; Project design and management, Organisational Skills, Leadership; Facilitation, Dialogue; Making changes; Team work; Demand driven action
contexts	Local community, School

The GHK researchers, drawing on literature and European case studies review as well as on theoretical discussion, devised a broader conceptualisation which took into account a larger set of components that would characterise the ‘transversal’ competence of *active citizenship* (above Table 13). They described it as comprising cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions and illustrated it with the Figure 21 (below), which they explained as follows (GHK, 2007: 64):

The analysis shows that the concept of active citizenship used is often influenced by the values the practices were focused on (i.e. democracy, multiculturalism, gender equality, etc.). When looking at the competences and skills gained, these relate to the three categories as introduced above: knowledge (i.e. awareness, comprehension and familiarity with certain issues), attitudes (i.e. a mindset, feelings and personal conviction on certain issues) and skills (i.e. ability to put learning into practice).

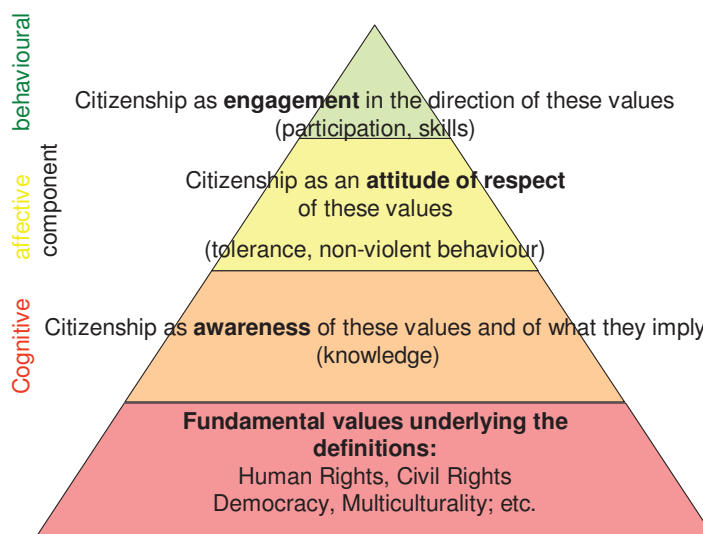


Figure 21: Building blocks of Active Citizenship Education. From GHK (2007: 68, Figure 23).

As a matter of fact, the EC put considerable effort in order to draw the state of the art in this policy arena, and established a research network with the specific purpose of “monitoring policy on active citizenship using indicators” in order to set as a priority “both to reengage citizens and to establish the importance of this policy field within the Lisbon process” (JRC, 2006: 3). The genesis of this exercise was explained by the JRC in these terms (p. 4):

The European Union political context is the Lisbon process in which goals were set for Europe to become ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’. In this context, the common European objectives in the domain of education concern: increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems; facilitating the access of all to education and training systems; and opening up education and training systems to the wider world. Active citizenship is comprehended in the second of these objectives. The main instrument for monitoring progress is the use of indicators. Originally the Council (Education) adopted 29 indicators and five benchmarks to monitor this process and a report has been published each year to record the progress which has been made towards the objectives. None of the indicators that have been agreed with the European Union Member States so far have covered active citizenship. This project has been launched to support the process of creating indicators in this field. In 2005 the European Council invited the European Commission to develop indicators in the field of active citizenship and social inclusion and to cooperate with organisations already undertaking relevant data collections.

In September 2006, the network presented a selection of “over 200 indicators on active citizenship and education and training for active citizenship” proposed by the members of the expert network which contributed to the research project *Active Citizenship for Democracy* funded by the EC in cooperation with the Council of Europe (COE) and carried out by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL). The synoptic table of the selected indicators (see Figure 22 below) reflected indeed the complexity of the task and the holistic, cross-curricular nature of ‘active citizenship’, understood as a competence (in a cognitive approach) or as a set learning outcomes (in a behavioural approach). The expert network emphasised, in this regard, the necessity to agree upon the working definitions, which oscillated within the range of the two above-mentioned approaches, and to put forward “short term pragmatic use of existing data” while “improved data/indicators” were developed through medium and long-term “upcoming surveys” (p. 3). Considering this complexity, the experts made a clear choice in the restrictive terms advanced by Richard Deiss from the Commission, who emphasised how the indicators for active citizenship and E&T for active citizenship should (p. 8):

- relate to the policy goals;
- demonstrate the impact of policy-making;
- reflect key aspects of an issue;
- reduce complexity (thus reducing the numbers of indicators).

Drawing on the principles set by the EC, the expert group “concluded was that there is no single indicator to measure all – there is too much complexity in the domain of active citizenship” (JRC, 2006: 8).

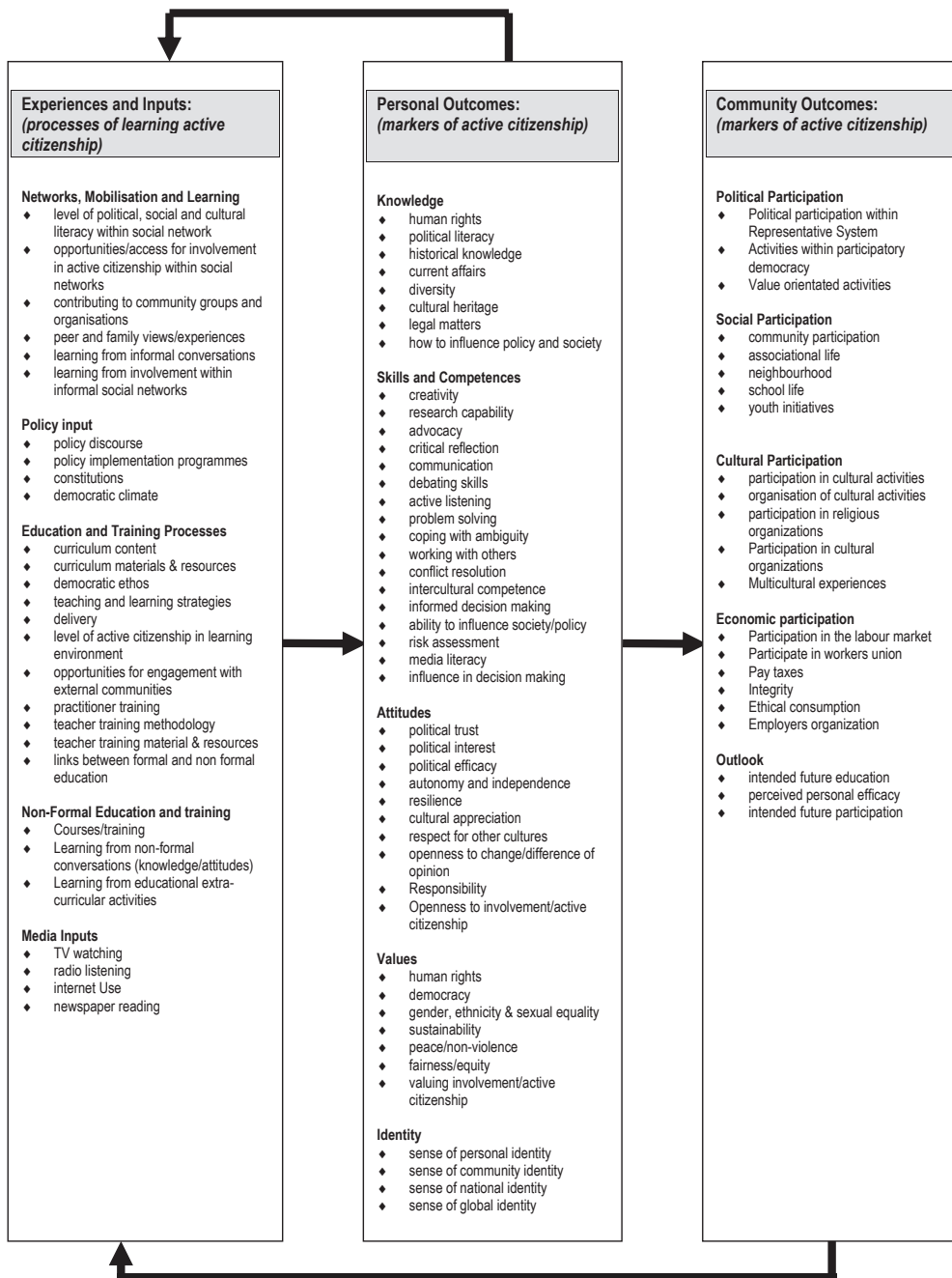


Figure 22: Overview of domains for indicators for active citizenship and education and training for active citizenship. From JRC (2006: 26).

In order to provide some data on civic competence and on active citizenship in the framework of the monitoring of the progress towards the Lisbon objectives, the CRELL (2006; Hoskins et al., 2006; Hoskins et al., 2008) eventually developed two composite indicators, with a first subset encompassing “civic competence (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)”, based on the outcomes described in column 3 of the following model (Figure 23), and a second subset on “active citizenship (actions)”, illustrated by the ‘outcomes’ of column 4:

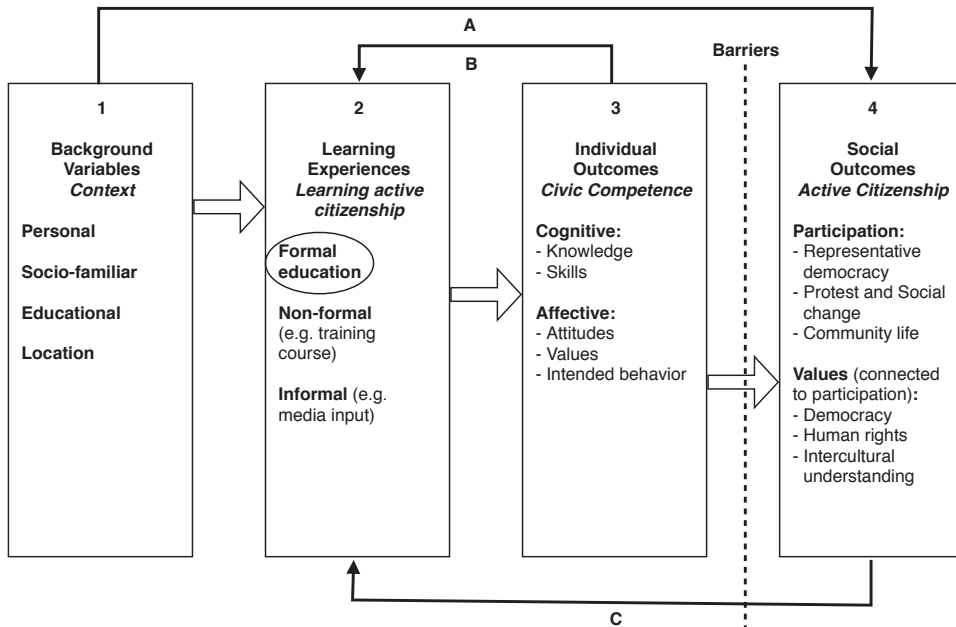


Figure 23: Working Model for Measuring Active Citizenship. From EC (2008d: 111).

Examining the structure of this indicator, it is easy to understand how challenging the collection and analysis of this kind of data is for the EU national authorities, with or without the coordination of Eurostat or the Eurydice network. As a matter of fact, in 2005, the DG Education and Culture of the EC had launched a research entitled *The development of active citizenship through non-formal and informal education and training* (call ‘Action 6.1.2-6.2 Observation and Innovation’). Since then, several projects have been co-funded with a specific view to identifying activities carried out in non-formal and informal E&T, limited to a small number of fields and characterised by a significant impact on the development and the level of active citizenship. The above-mentioned study on active citizenship by GHK (2007: 55) concluded that “given the enormous amount of literature on the subjects

of citizenship and citizenship education, it is impossible to review all definitions". Yet, it stressed that "at EU policy level, there is overall agreement that active citizenship is indeed about belonging to a certain community (especially when the latter is democratic) but that it also includes an essential active component", and provided the example of a policy document in which the EC stated that "practicing active citizenship involves empowering individuals, enabling them to feel comfortable in democratic culture, and feeling that they can make a difference in the communities they live in" (p. 57). The external study also reported that the CRELL had chosen a "complementary definition insisting on respectful and non-violent attitudes", presenting active citizenship as the "participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy" (p. 58; cf. JRC, 2006: 46), which basically corresponded to the very definition chosen to outline the indicators in the mentioned Commission's Report of the progress towards the Lisbon objectives in E&T (EC, 2008d: 111).

CIVIC COMPETENCE AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN ADULT EDUCATION

Building on these studies, the Lisbon benchmarks Report (EC, 2008d: 91) stated: "recent research shows that increased educational attainment has a very positive effect on active citizenship" and "higher education attainment has by far the biggest effect". In line with such considerations, Milana (2007: 9) advanced, in her edition of the final Report of the study *Adult Education for Democratic Citizenship* financed by the *Grundtvig* programme, the argument that "both educational policy and curricula at national and international levels have often adopted a *narrow definition* of education for democratic citizenship, which tends to focus too much on formal structures and school-based interventions" (own emphasis). The report actually also acknowledged that a new emphasis on learning for democratic citizenship had been "championed" already with the EC Communication *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality* (EC, 2001a) and, as outlined above, since active citizenship was included in the objectives of the lifelong learning strategy and civic competence among the eight *Key Competences* (Milana, 2007). Notwithstanding, the report concluded that "where it is available, research that focuses on the links between adult education and learning for democratic citizenship is highly theoretical and rarely supported by empirical evidence" (p. 121). This insight was confirmed even in the above-mentioned *Report from the Active Citizenship for Democracy conference* of 20-21 September 2006, where it was highlighted that "what is missing [...] is data on adults and non- and informal learning" and that, "in this respect, it is necessary to support the development of research projects to explore these aspects, including through supporting the following activities: the OECD survey on adult skills (PIAAC)" (JRC, 2006: 54). More precisely (p. 11):

There is a lack of existing data on all dimensions of education and training for active citizenship. Formal education had the most data from the IEA - CIVED study (1999) and Eurydice (2005) and informal education had the least data. In the case of informal learning there was an overlap with the practices of active citizenship – the ‘learning by doing’. Indicators in the field of education and training for active citizenship were discussed as requiring a two stage approach. Indicators in the short term had to be created from existing data that would most likely be limited to formal and non-formal learning. Indicators in the long term required a strategy towards collecting new data that would include better indicators for all dimensions of education and training for active citizenship and incorporating the dimension of informal learning.

In the last paragraph entitled ‘Directions for future research’, closing the report, the report stressed the need for the EU to link more closely with other “upcoming surveys” and, hence, the opportunity to use in particular the PIAAC survey in order to fill the actual lack of data on adult education, and echoed the previous statement announcing that a section of the PIAAC’s background questionnaire on civic and social engagement “will be developed in the cooperation between CRELL Active Citizenship for Democracy project and the OECD” (p. 14). Similarly to what has been said in relation to the conclusions of the EGAS (cf. page 147), this indication further shows the extent of the increasing data interdependence between the EU and the OECD.

Moreover, while the CRELL researchers provided as a working definition of ‘active citizenship’ the people’s “participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy” (EC, 2008d: 111; see also Table 3 on page 72), in relation to the ‘civic competence’ some complexity of assessment seems to lie in its very intricate definition as included in the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* agreed by the Council and EP (EU, 2006b; own italics):

Civic competence is based on knowledge of the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights, including how they are expressed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international declarations and how they are applied by various institutions at the local, regional, national, European and international levels. It includes knowledge of contemporary events, as well as the main events and trends in national, European and world history. In addition, an awareness of the aims, values and policies of social and political movements should be developed. Knowledge of European integration and of the EU is structures, main objectives and values is also essential, as well as an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe.

In contrast with all attested conceptualisations of *competence*, the above quotation shows how ‘flexible’ the terminology used in the Recommendation is, loosely building the description of civic competence around the ‘static’ notions of *knowledge* and *awareness*. Furthermore, according to the Recommendation, the “*skills for civic competence [sic] relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in the public domain, and to display solidarity and interest in solving problems affecting the local and wider community*”, which

“involves critical and creative reflection and constructive participation in community or neighbourhood activities as well as decision-making at all levels, from local to national and European level, in particular through voting” (*ibid.*). The ‘rich ambiguity’ of the conceptual overlapping of terms such as *knowledge* and *awareness* with those of *skill*, *competence* and *ability* – regardless of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were available on this specific subject to the EU officers and expert networks (as discussed more in depth in the previous paragraphs) – has important implications and consequences.

A LITTLE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY DIGRESSION ON SOCIAL COMPETENCES

Drawing on Wynne-Edwards’s work (1962), Nobel prize winner Konrad Lorenz (1965; 1974) explored, in the 1960s, the concept of ‘social justice’ from an evolutionary perspective. He developed the idea of an instinctive component characterising certain animal species, according to which the members of the same species would possess instinctive mechanisms of ‘mutual support’ that would allow them to protect themselves individually and as a group or community or species at the same time: a ‘collective competence’ comparable to that determining, for example, the synchronisation of a shoal of fish or flock of birds and which, in the case of the ‘social justice’, would provide the species with more chances to survive the natural selection. Lorenz, in his peculiar ‘cross-disciplinary’ approach, built on some reflections of the German scholar Peter H. Sand (1971) and other researchers of comparative law in relation with the structural similarities of various legal systems existing in different countries and hypothesised, making a parallel with the above premises, the innate nature of the human ‘sense of justice’ and collective morality (Lorenz, 1974: 34–8):

Whatever future research may tell us about the phylogenetic and historical sources of man’s sense of justice, we may accept it as a scientific fact that the species *Homo sapiens* has a highly differentiated system of behaviour patterns at his disposal, which, in a way analogous to that of the system of antibody formation in the cell state, serves to eliminate socially dangerous elements. [...] Unquestionably the mysterious ‘sense of justice’ referred to by Peter Sand rests on a system of genetically anchored reactions, impelling us to take energetic action against asocial behaviour in fellow human beings. These reactions set the basic theme, unchangeable throughout the ages, on which the variations are the systems of justice and morality composed by independent evolutions in different cultural groups.

This ‘sense of justice’ and ‘system of morality’ would then be connected to the role of *trust* and *reliability* between human beings, as the article ‘The story of man’ published in the *Economist* of 24 December 2005 emphasised, as follows:

Modern Darwinism’s big breakthrough was the identification of the central role of *trust* in human evolution. People who are related collaborate on the basis of nepotism. It takes outrageous profit or provocation for someone to do down a relative with whom they share a lot of genes.

Trust, though, allows the unrelated to collaborate, by keeping score of who does what when, and punishing cheats. Very few animals can manage this. Indeed, outside the primates, only vampire bats have been shown to trust non-relatives routinely.³¹ The human mind, however, seems to have evolved the trick of being able to identify a large number of individuals and to keep score of its relations with them, detecting the dishonest or greedy and taking vengeance, even at some cost to itself.

Hence, the selection ability based on moral judgement that characterises the human species, which could be considered as ‘social competence’ ruled by reliability and trusteeship versus betrayal and ‘dishonesty’, would have an innate component that could be subject to the extent of an individual behavioural component: that of *learning*. According to Lorenz (1969; 1974), “phylogenetically programmed” mechanisms would be constantly modified and adapted to the environment and interactions among members of the same species, thus adding an ‘external variable’ that would organise these mechanisms in a more balanced system which would ultimately allow humans to dominate instincts and control them through education and culture (Lorenz, 1974: 35–6):

Man is by nature, i.e. phylogenesis, a cultural being. In other words, his instinctive drives and the culturally conditioned responsible control over them form one system, in which the functions of both subsystems are exactly in tune. [...] If everything phylogenetically programmed were, *ipso facto*, incapable of being influenced by learning and education, man would be the irresponsible plaything of his instinctive drives. It is the prerequisite of all civilized communal life that people learn to control their impulses: the exhortations of the ascetics stress this very truth.

According to the EAEA, equalitarian and anti-discriminative components should have been embedded in the ‘active citizenship’ indicators when devised the EU policy, since “learning active citizenship is part of the fight against discrimination, embracing all citizens including the unemployed, underlining the importance of the citizenship dimension, and bringing into force an anti-racism directive” (EAEA, 2006: 46). Clearly, how to correctly build coherent and well-targeted indicators, together with how to effectively collect data to adequately substantiate the ‘active citizenship’ key competence, are sensitive but crucial questions. With reference to the European adult population, for example, “adult learning cannot succeed without comprehensive identification, integration and development of adult learning activities for active citizenship”, because “winning visible and measurable active citizenship benefits and integrating its indicators will bring many other benefits” (*ibid.*). Economists like Ha-Joon Chang (2010: chapter 5), moreover, have emphasised how ethics and other social values have positive outcomes on corporations’ success and on the overall economic system, contesting – for example – the advocates of the free market who assume that self-interest is not only the most powerful human trait,

³¹ “Well-fed bats will give some of the blood they have swallowed to hungry neighbours, but expect the favour to be returned when they are hungry and will deny favours to those who have cheated in the past” (*ibid.*).

but also the only one which may allow to “produce a durable economic system”, as if “the market beautifully harness[ed] the energy of selfish individuals thinking only of themselves (and, at most, their families) to produce social harmony” (p. 41):

Self-interest is a most powerful trait in most human beings. However, it’s not our only drive. It is very often not even our primary motivation. Indeed, if the world were full of the self-seeking individuals found in economics textbooks, it would grind to a halt because we would be spending most of our time cheating, trying to catch the cheaters, and punishing the caught. The world works as it does only because people are not the totally self-seeking agents that the free-market economics believes them to be.

It is worth remarking that the ‘working definition’ of *active citizenship* used in the Lisbon benchmarking reports was, as outlined above, related to the “participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy” (EC, 2008d: 111 from CRELL, 2006), which therefore reflected the behavioural nature of this competence that has emerged in the above analysis (it is indeed not a coincidence that the very term ‘morality’ is derived from the Latin *moralitas*, meaning ‘proper behaviour’). However, despite the presence of institutional and scientific arguments supporting the importance of developing cognitive aspects such as social and civic competences, the choice of the scientific basis which served as theoretical background for their conceptualisation in the Recommendation on the *Key Competences* of 2006 is yet not straightforward.

EMPIRICAL DATA AND INDICATORS FOR SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES

Social and civic competences were formally included in the Lisbon benchmarking and monitoring system in 2008 using the “IEA CIVED data 1999 by CRELL” (Hoskins, 2008) and the data and empirical analysis of “IEA 2009 *International Civic and Citizenship education Study* (ICCS)” in 2010/2011. The results of these studies reflected however “only the situation for 14 year old pupils and not for the general population”, while the ranking based on the ‘Civic Competence indicator’ did *not*, “in general, show clear geographical patterns” (EC, 2008d: 111–2). As a result, for example, Finland (one country consistently among the best performing in the OECD’s PISA tests) appeared only at the bottom of both rankings: “northern European countries such as Denmark and Finland are found in the lower-middle part of the Civic Competence Composite Indicator rankings” and, in relation to the citizenship values, “Romania and Lithuania are high performing countries, with southern European countries again giving the best results, Greece and Cyprus being the highest performers”, whereas, “northern and western Europe tends to perform less well, with Denmark, England, Belgium (French speaking) and Finland closing the ranking for this dimension”. Furthermore, the 2008 Report emphasised that “overall, southern and eastern European countries tend to perform better in this domain; in particular Cy-

prus, Portugal, Romania, Poland, and Slovakia are high performing countries for this dimension” while “most of the northern European countries taking part in the survey (Denmark, Sweden and Finland), and most of the western European countries that participated (Germany, England and Switzerland) are at the foot of the rankings”. Notwithstanding, the CRELL explained that “certain regional results deserve further exploration” (p. 112) and that composite indicators “are often highly complex and are sometimes contested”, so that “in-depth and qualitative and statistical analysis of the results is needed” (note 55, p. 228).

In the 2010/2011 Report, however, statistics concerning active citizenship (which used the same indicators illustrated in the above Figure 23 as in the 2008 report;³² cf. EC, 2011a: 104) presented, surprisingly, a complete reversal of the previous ranking, with a few exceptions, e.g. Poland: “the study found that pupils from Finland, Denmark, Korea and Chinese Taipei (Taiwan) showed the strongest results in citizenship education” and, this time, “other EU countries with relatively high scores [...] were Sweden, Poland and Ireland”, while “EU countries scoring below the international average were Malta, Latvia, Greece, Luxembourg, Bulgaria and Cyprus” (p. 105). The CRELL measured as well the impact of years of formal education on the active citizenship of adults, and “a significant return in terms of increased democratic participation and other measures of active citizenship behaviour associated with formal education” was recorded, even though the CRELL admitted that it was “difficult to say for sure that this correlation is causal: many variables have been controlled for, but there could be other factors involved” (p. 109).

LEARNING TO LEARN: A METACOMPETENCE

Another ‘Key Competence’ that has been subject to divergent understanding in the scientific debate is ‘learning to learn’, especially when correlated with the concept of “innovation as an interactive process” and in the framework of the *learning economy* (Lundvall, 1988; Lundvall & Borrás, 1999). MacKeracher (1996: 15) even contested the usefulness of such a competence as an independent human ability, since “when we learn we are also learning how to learn”, whilst other scholars stressed that, like learning, *learning to learn* can be thought of as a goal or outcome as well as a process. Candy (1990: 45) described this process as involving ‘higher-order’ cognitive skills that include problem solving, critical thinking and planning for learning purposes, each of which comprises specific attitudes and behaviours. Analogously, according to Dearden (1976: 70), a key competence should refer to “second-order learning”, thus not content or context based but

³² “Two composite indicators have been developed – one on civic competences of pupils and one on active citizenship (actions) of adults. The civic skills composite indicator was based on the 1999 IEA CIVED survey and development of another similar indicator began in 2010 using the results of the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)” (EC, 2011a: 105).

'transdisciplinary' by definition. As a matter of fact, the definition of this competence in the Recommendation of 2006, described as "the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities", most strongly emphasised methodological and procedural aspects (organisation of learning, planning of further learning, appropriateness of learning strategies in relation to own needs), which basically coincided with Pintrich's definition of 'self-regulated learning', referring in effect to *motivation* in the broader description of the competence provided in the Annex of the Recommendation (EU, 2006b: Annex, Par 5).

Motivation has in fact been proven to be among the main components of learning as a cognitive process (Brackney & Karabenick, 1995; Pintrich & Schunk, 2001; Pintrich, 2003), and notably so from the perspectives of self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 1999; 2000) and lifelong learning (Smith & Spurling, 2001). This psychological aspect has also been included in various conceptualisations of key and core competences for lifelong learning and for the 'knowledge society' (Longworth & Davies, 1996: 3; Goleman, 1998), while Liu et al. (2012) showed its fundamental influence in relation to students' performances in objective testing, and argued that motivation would have insufficiently been addressed in the standardised outcome assessments "widely used to evaluate learning and inform policy" (p. 352). Furthermore, Paul Pintrich (1999: 459) defined self-regulated learning as "the strategies that students use to regulate their cognition (i.e., use of various cognitive and metacognitive strategies) as well as the use of resource management strategies that students use to control their learning", and argued that it would be facilitated "by the adoption of mastery and relative ability goals and hindered by the adoption of extrinsic goals".

Yet, if compared with Longworth and Davies' definition (1996: 62; cf. Table 8 on page 170) of a twofold conceptualisation of learning to learn, encompassing both awareness (knowing one's *learning style*: cf. Pashler et al., 2008; Gardner, 2008b; Dunlosky et al., 2013) and 'propositional' competence (being able to 'pile up' knowledge and to combine new information with the existing), the 'fifth European key competence' appears to rely less on holistic, 'higher-order' cognitive processes such as critical thinking and creativity, and more on 'static' or behavioural components. In the Report by CRELL (2008) *Learning to Learn: What is it and can it be measured*, Bryony Hoskins and Ulf Fredriksson introduced the importance of measuring learning to learn as a "part of a process to establish and monitor the learning processes and outcomes needed to facilitate the development of lifelong learning in Europe" and highlighted "the European political developments that have taken place, which have placed learning to learn as a political priority within the Lisbon 2010 Education and Training process" (p. 4). Furthermore, the authors framed this

competence within the 'knowledge economy' discourse (par. 2.1) and the Lisbon process (page 9; original emphasis):

In 2006 the Commission proposed 8 areas for indicators, including key competences. In this domain, the indicators proposed were on *Literacy in reading, mathematics and science, Language skills, ICT skills, Civic skills, and Learning to learn skills*. All the indicators on key competences were adopted as core indicators in the Council in 2007 (Education Council, 2007). In total 16 core indicators were adopted and, with 5 of these indicators being on key competences, it gave a significant position to the development and measurement of key competences in Europe.

In this respect, referring to Lundvall's theory and to the OECD's skill formation policy, Peters (2010: 70) correlated the pragmatic 'motivational drive' of a simplified and functional conceptualisation of the 'learning to learn' competence with the prospected *sustainability* of the knowledge or learning economy, as it would determine not only the 'relative position' of individuals in the labour market, but also that of firms and national economic systems:

In the learning economy it is the *capacity to learn* that increasingly determines the relative position of individuals, firms and national systems and Lundvall claims that the growing polarisation in the OECD labour markets is explained by the increasing importance of learning and the acceleration in the rate of change. *Sustainability* of these learning economy tendencies ultimately depends on the distribution of capabilities to learn. The OECD highlights the importance of skills and learning, focusing on life-long learning becoming the central element in a high-skills, high-wage jobs strategy.

WHAT ARE KEY COMPETENCES IN FACT?

In order to answer the question of whether learning to learn could be considered a key competence (par. 3.2), the CRELL Report firstly defined 'key competences' as "those competences which are quintessentially necessary throughout life for continuing to gain employment and be to integrated in everyday life activities including those of civil society and decision making" (CRELL, 2008: 11) and juxtaposed this definition with that proposed by Rychen and Salganik (2003: 43), in the OECD's De.Se.Co. project: i.e. "the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilisation of psychosocial prerequisites (including cognitive and non-cognitive aspects)". With these premises they concluded that, "from a research perspective, it seems reasonable to refer to learning to learn as a key competence" (CRELL, 2008: 15) provided that 'key competences' were considered as "competences required for an individual well being" in the society in which he or she lives (p. 13), and also because "it is a competence that is a highly valued outcome at the individual and societal levels in terms of an overall successful life and a well-functioning society, an instrument for meeting important, complex demands and challenges in wide spectrum of contexts and important for all individuals" (p. 15, quoting Rychen, 2003: 66-7).

CRITICISMS TO THE KEY COMPETENCES RECOMMENDATION

The multi-level or transversal nature of some of the eight *Key Competences for lifelong learning* (EU, 2006b) has also been a reason for punctual criticisms that further substantiate the problem related to the *Key competence's* limited transferability potential. In fact, in the framework of the Copenhagen process, and under the umbrella of the EU quest for scientific legitimacy to feed the EU education policy-making with theoretical, conceptual and empirical grounds, comprehensive literature reviews and theoretical studies on knowledge, skills and competences were launched to support “transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications” (CEDEFOP, 2006b: 1). Some of these were published before the reference guidelines in Europe for the definition and orientation of competences-based learning curricula were established by the Recommendation on the *Key Competences*. Despite the quality of some of this background research, of which some account has been given in the previous paragraphs, the Recommendation was incidentally critically addressed two years later by the very same EU agency that was charged to provide legitimacy to that policy (Maniscalco, 2012: 154–5). In effect, analysing the *Key Competences* in taxonomic terms of learning outcomes CEDEFOP (2008a: 49–50) described these as a mixture of “cognitive competences” (providing the example of mathematics), “cross-curricular” competences (e.g. learning to learn, social and civic competences) and “underpinning transversal competences” (e.g. critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, decision taking and constructive management of feelings) and finally categorised them as only partially based “on a theoretical or research formulation”, as they were “based on negotiation between stakeholders” (principally the MS), or even “borrowed/adapted from elsewhere” (for example from the De.Se.Co. project, probably the most influential scientific-based project on competences, released one year before the Recommendation and addressing specifically the education policy-makers; cf. OECD, 2005b). In this regard, Karen Evans remarked that the *Key Competences for lifelong learning* “have been subject to a lot of critique and debate and have been broadened and balanced as a result to that, so that policy makers from different context can sign up to it” (INT23):

In a sense there is nothing in there that anybody could object to, although some people might want to emphasise different aspects more than others. But concerning the competences, what I actually think is more important in today's society than specific competences is what I am educated to *be*, which not only has to do with critical thinking skills I gain to understand the world and how the world works, not in general terms but in terms of how you hold a position within it. [...] This includes a ‘dynamic’ element, of how people respond to and deal with change, not just reactively, but making a social contribution. This is very important and I think that these kinds of sociological aspects are completely *missed* by lists like the key competences’.

A key officer of the European Commission, explaining how the process of selection of the key competences evolved, emphasised the role of the MS in the co-creation of the list, which ultimately reflected the different – and perhaps even contrasting – views and interpretations of the Member States and the actual ‘trends’ of the moment (INT7):

The way I see it, the key competences worked like a sponge. In that period, there was a lot of excitement for the competence development, static knowledge was integrated with tacit knowledge and skills that people could spend in everyday life and at work. Employability was also a big issue and statistics told us that traditional teaching in school needed to be updated with more actual skills and competences in order to give youngsters instruments to compete in the globalised world. [...] What happened is that the Recommendation on the key competences reflected those concerns and absorbed that excitement about what the Member States considered preferable to have in their national curricula. [...] Maybe today we would think of the key competences in a very different way and write down a very different list than the one that we made in 2006. In any case, I really think that was an important step forward to make.

Moreover, Evans objected to the implicit neutralisation of the intrinsic diversity of skill and competence needs according to the different age cohorts within a lifelong perspective that was made by the Recommendation on the *Key competences* (INT23):

It is completely nonsensical just to think about lifelong learning as homogeneous, because you have childhood, early adult life, mid-career, third age – now being active, creative etc. – and now you have also fourth age. The same core competences *cannot* apply to all these life stages, it does not really make sense sociologically.

In her contribution to the *Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning* (Aspin et al., 2012), Evans further elaborated on this idea, putting forward that “approaches that can differentiate between subgroups, contextualised capabilities and actual life chances and opportunities [...] achieve a better understanding of human development over the life course and in different cultural contexts” (Evans et al., 2012: 246).

As anticipated, the Recommendation partially endorsed the theoretical proposal of the Group ESC (CEDEFOP, 2006b) and defined the key competences as “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context” (EU, 2006b). In relation to the adult education and learning policy, however, even though the importance of the key competences was “clearly stated in the Action Plan on Adult Learning”, the Commission acknowledged that “though interdependent, the emphasis is primarily laid on the development and mastering of literacy and numeracy usually qualified as basic skills” (EC, 2010a: 27). In addition to the above-represented undue homogenisation of the key competences over the entire life span, produced by the EU Recommendation, one reason for this pragmatic ‘reduction to essentials’ could be found in the complex assessment and evaluation system that becomes necessary for ‘transversal’ competences such as those that were included in the *Key Competences* Recommendation. In the survey conducted by Eurydice on the *Key Competencies* published in 2002, the EU research network had already

noted that it is only possible to testify to an individual's *potential* to develop these competences and, because of such difficulties, formal and often non-formal exams tend to concentrate on the testing of knowledge as a much easier measure for individual achievement (Eurydice, 2002). In 2009, moreover, as a result of a new call for tenders by the European Commission's EAC Directorate-General, another survey for the assessment of the 2006 *Key Competences* Recommendation was published. The Centre for Social and Economic Research of Warsaw, which carried out the study, reported (CASE, 2009: 224):

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key competences for lifelong learning defines key competences as comprising knowledge, skills and attitudes. The policies of most EU Member States refer explicitly, or at least implicitly, to knowledge, skills and attitudes in their curriculum frameworks. However, whilst the stated aims of assessments may refer to competence, in practice assessed learning outcomes less frequently include attitudes than knowledge and skills.

In similar terms, Karen Evans stressed the limited extent of the implementation of the European Union's *Key Competences*, despite "a lot of rhetoric, and a huge volume of policy documents", in reason of both the quantity and the quality of the resources deployed and the "engagement of different stakeholders" (INT23).

OTHER LIMITATIONS FOR THE EU KEY COMPETENCES POLICY STATEMENT

The formal introduction of standards is normally characterised by their description and the subsequent definition of progressive levels for their measurement or assessment that should take into account a relationship between progressivity and interdependence (Guasti, 2002: 24). As previously noted (Maniscalco, 2012: 155), a comparison with other competence reference frameworks uncovers the lack of an evaluative paradigm based on progressive levels in the Recommendation on the *Key Competences* of 2006, which could be another obstacle for the EU countries to implement it (CASE, 2009):

For example, the EQF refers to knowledge, skills and competences across eight levels, while the key competences for lifelong learning refer to knowledge, skills and attitudes and are not identified at different levels; the Council of Europe language framework is competence-based, widely used and contains at present six levels.

In fact, on the one hand, "experts in nearly every discipline have developed both quantitative and mode qualitative (or subjective) ways of assessing individual attainment in the discipline [...] and indeed, we could not legitimately teach the disciplines in the school, and award licenses or diplomas, without reasonably consensual metrics of evaluation" (Gardner, 2008b: xiv). The 'metrics' for traditional discipline-related or 'basic' skills such as literacy, MST or ICTs could have therefore been provided by the EU Recommendation. On the other hand, however, skills like social competence, active citizenship or creativity "can be assessed only after the fact" or performance: in effect, "an individual

work or product is creative if and only if it changes the ways in which others in the relevant field think and act”, and therefore “sometimes this judgment about creativity can be assessed quite rapidly (as in the case of a new movie format), but it can take years or even decades” (*ibid.*).

The measurability of skills like creativity, teamwork, leadership and motivation is still at the heart of a largely ‘unsolved’ debate. Hugh Lauder emphasised that when performance assessment involves ‘soft’ skills, related to ‘novel’ or ‘problematic’ cases, “objectivity in terms of the judgement of those skills becomes much more complicated” (INT25). Nonetheless, as shown, creativity for innovation and other ‘transversal’ or ‘soft’ skills have been identified as ‘key competences’ by the EU, the OECD and several EU national governments for the contribution they might provide to countries emerging in the global economic competition (Murnane & Levy, 1996; Goleman, 1996; 1998; Florida, 2002; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2003; Peters, Marginson & Murphy, 2009; Peters, 2010). Since this point, attempts have indeed been made by policy-makers to include them systematically in learning curricula at all levels of education and training (cf. *Economist*, 2013a; 2013b). In this regard, Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter (2006) emphasised that, in what is called the *knowledge age*, the wealth of societies increasingly depends on their capacity to innovate, provided that people “need to work creatively with knowledge”. Michael Peters also addressed the problems that the emergence of a global knowledge economy raises in relation to the neoliberal economic theory, asserting that “only new, creative approaches to knowledge, to the organization of knowledge, and the free exchange of ideas can solve these problems” (Peters, Marginson & Murphy, 2009: vii).

PRAGMATIC ADAPTATION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: AN EU-OECD PARALLEL

Evidence has thus far been presented for the ‘adaptive use’ of the scientific bases and conceptualisations that provided a frame of reference for the EU policy on adult skills and competence development (e.g. CEDEFOP, 2006b), and the subsequent disentanglement of this theoretical scaffolding has been discussed. A rather similar phenomenon of popularisation can be found, for example, in the genesis of the most recent OECD *Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies* (PIAAC). Analogously to the Group ESC’s research (CEDEFOP, 2006b) preceding the Recommendation on the *Key Competences* of 2006, the mentioned *Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* Project (OECD, 2005b),³³ run by the OECD between 2002 and 2005, provided a solid scientific background to the highly funded ‘policy tool’ that was going to be launched. However, despite the description of the full range of key competences it provided, which varied from basic and work skills to life skills and soft skills, a much narrower set of skills –

³³ Cf. Salganik et al. (1999). See also paragraph 3.3.2 Towards the adult competence development and skill matching model.

“reading literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving in technology-rich environments” (EC, 2011a: 104; cf. OECD, 2008) – were chosen by the PIAAC for assessment due to “costs and difficulties of implementing the whole range of key competences” (INT15). A possible further reason also being the distance between the highly theoretical insights of the De.Se.Co and the pragmatic use the PIAAC intended to investigate (INT28):

De.Se.Co. prepared the field for such a study. It was not particularly successful in terms of *impact*, but I think that at the end it didn’t matter, because the OECD was already thinking of the next step, and the next step was obviously to create PIAAC.

It is not surprising, in this light, that the EC ‘road map’ for the 2012 policy initiative *Rethinking Skills in Europe*³⁴ by the DGs Employment and EAC of the Commission stresses basic and language skills, digital/ICT skills and entrepreneurship (see Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map), mirroring the pragmatics of the OECD international comparison and assessment programmes, which are now part of its ‘Skills Strategy’. The choice of ‘technological’ competences next to basic skills in the brand new EU road map appears to be perfectly in line, for the most part, with trends emphasising a primacy of mathematics, science and technology (MST) over the other disciplines, to feed the workforce and boost competitiveness and economic growth: a principle that is well reflected by the Lisbon benchmark on the MST graduates. Academics and social scientists highlight, nonetheless, the lack of foresight and intellectual insight of these ideals and recognise that “in the world that so honors the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), we require extra efforts to make certain that the other fields of human knowledge and practice are not ignored” (Gardner, 2008b: xvii). These ‘fields of human knowledge’, in fact, are not just subsidiary or ancillary to other human activity: they are crucial to provide the connectives to build a systemic vision of the world, organise matter, knowledge and data, forge critical thinking to support cognition in a modern society of unprecedented complexity. ‘Non-STEM’ disciplines are sometimes as transversal as they should be considered privileged tools to inoculate citizens from the exploitation of their STEM knowledge, skills and competences for the purpose of corporate competitiveness or economic growth. And they should contribute to the latter too by determining a higher involvement of peoples in the responsible co-construction of healthy corporative, societal, political, and governmental infrastructures.

As anticipated in chapter 1 and further substantiated in the introduction of chapter 3, all these premises have provided a basis for the Lisbon Strategy, and within the Lisbon process and other policy initiatives such as the ‘New Skills for New Jobs’, analysed in depth in the next paragraph.

³⁴ Document retrieved on 29 November 2012 from http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/2012_eac_014_rethinking_skills_en.pdf.

3.3.2.3 The *New Skills for New Jobs* initiative

The ventilated shift from the ‘industrial society’, principally concentrating on the manufacture of goods through the service economy, to the ‘information society’, based on the principle of adding value by turning information into knowledge, has inducted a certain ‘migration of work’ from classical occupations towards reputed ‘higher value’ service and to the *creative industry* (Howkins, 2001; Florida, 2002; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2003), with high-skilled jobs in the tertiary and ICT sector supporting and sometimes replacing traditional notions of work content (Murnane & Levy, 1996; OECD, 1996a; 2000b; CEDEFOP, 2008c; 2010a). By the end of the 20th century, Longworth and Davies (1996: 29–30) asserted:

Most forecasts for skills needs show a massive reduction in the need for a semi- and unskilled work and a consequent increase in the future demand for management, professional and administrative staff. [...] The extension of decision-making down the line and the greater responsibility being thrust upon individual shoulders highlights the need for high quality lifelong education and training in all sections of the population. Indeed if innovative programmes which match skills to jobs are not developed there is high potential for increased unrest and instability as unemployment grows and the social fabric of a nation break down.

Within this framework, the *New Skills for New Jobs* scheme was launched by the EU in 2007 to equip European workers to deal with rapidly changing realities they confront with – shaped by globalisation, fast-paced technological progress, ageing societies – and developments such as the turmoil in financial markets that would lead, a few months later, to the first economic downturn of the new millennium. From statistical reports and projections by Eurostat (namely in the LFS and in the AES), it appeared evident that pragmatic intervention in people’s skill and competence development was imperative (cf. Bierema, 2000) as the constraints on the funding allocated to education did not allow for impactful measures to be foreseen or taken in that state of affairs. The very opening of the NSNJ Communication (EC, 2008b) reported, symptomatically:

The severity of the financial crisis adds an exceptional degree of unpredictability about the future of the world’s economy – yet in order to put Europe on the road to recovery it is essential to enhance human capital and employability by upgrading skills. But upgrading skills is not enough: ensuring a better match between the supply of skills and labour market demand is just as necessary.

The NSNJ initiative ultimately attempted to help the workforce, but also to improve the capacity of the MS to assess and anticipate the skills needs of their firms and corporations. A joint statement by the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla, and the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel’, explained that the scope of this initiative was to “ensure a better match between the skills that workers have and the jobs that are available”, “better

anticipate the skills the European economy will need, and reform our education and training systems so that they can properly prepare people for the jobs that will exist in 10 years' time". Plus, they explained how "the measures proposed in *New Skills for New Jobs* will help Europe address the short-term employment impact of the economic crisis and improve the long-term job prospects of the EU workforce" and that "they are part of a package of measures for Growth and Jobs and complement the [...] European Economic Recovery Plan" (EC press release IP/08/1984 of 16 December 2008).

THE FOUR 'STRANDS' OF THE NSNJ STRATEGY AND ITS ACTION PLAN

As reported in the EC press memo³⁵ of 16 December 2008, the NSNJ strategy was composed of four 'strands'. First of all, it addressed the monitoring of short-term trends on the European labour market, to be improved by developing tools and services to promote job guidance and mobility and to address skills mismatches. Secondly, it would help to develop better information on the skills needs in the EU in the medium and long-term with regularly updated projections of future labour market trends and analyses of skills needs by sector (see next paragraph), taking into account business needs and the employment impact of the transition towards a *knowledge economy*. It also targeted the overall understanding of global challenges related to skills and jobs through cooperation with other dynamic economies (the United States, China, Canada, India, South America) and international organisations (OECD and ILO). Finally, it aimed at helping MS in tackling skills upgrading and matching by mobilising existing EU policies (such as the strategic framework for cooperation in E&T) and European funds in line with these objectives.

Indeed, upgrading skills was identified as a crucial means for Europe's growth and productivity, its capacity to adapt to market change, and for equity and social cohesion, in consideration of the fact that low-skilled people were seen as more vulnerable in the labour market and therefore would be exposed to the economic crisis first. However, skills upgrading alone was not the only issue debated by the EU decision-makers, as skill gaps and mismatches were also a concern. This was one reason for the attempt to ensure a better match between the supply of skills and labour market demand, which rapidly grew in importance in the latest EU statements. The European Economic Recovery Plan, which was presented by the EC on 26 November 2008 (cf. press release IP/08/1984 of 16 December 2008) and which aimed to improve the monitoring and matching of skills, was set as a priority both in the short and the long-term in order to address the employment impact of the crisis, facilitate matching with existing vacancies and help people return to the labour market, and ensure that European labour markets anticipated future needs, ameliorated the long-term job prospects of the EU workforce and exploited opportunities

³⁵ MEMO/08/791 on Rapid, available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/791> (last retrieved on 19 July 2012).

for growth and jobs. Precisely, according to the EC,³⁶ the NSNJ measures (EU, 2007a; EC, 2008b) would “promote the anticipation of future skill needs, develop better matching between skills and labour market needs, and bridge the gap between the worlds of education and work” through practical measures such as:

- forecasts by CEDEFOP;³⁷
- analysis of emerging trends at sectorial level and the development of sectorial skills councils;
- European framework for *Key competences for lifelong learning* (which defined the eight key competences that “everyone, should have to thrive in a knowledge society”);
- research with the ILO and the OECD;
- ESCO: Classification of European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations;
- European Qualifications Framework (which defined qualifications on the basis of learning outcomes “so everyone can understand what they mean in practical terms”);
- EU funding via the European Social Fund and the *Lifelong Learning Programme*;
- University-Business forum to encourage dialogue between business and education and training providers.

LABOUR MARKET’S NEEDS AND SKILL MISMATCHES FORECASTS BY CEDEFOP

As requested by the European Council, the Communication on *New Skills for New Jobs* presented, primarily, an assessment of the EU’s future skills and jobs requirements up to 2020. Although the unexpected nature of the economic crisis showed the limitations of forecasting exercises, forecasts were considered apt to indicate general trends (cf. MEMO/08/791 of 16 December 2008, available on Rapid). Hence, the preliminary forecast by CEDEFOP (2008b) warned that (cf. EC press release³⁸ of 16 December 2008):

Europe will see the creation of new jobs in the service sector: by the year 2020, almost three quarters of jobs in the EU-25 will be in services. Further, there will be many jobs created in high-skilled occupations, but also some job creation in ‘elementary jobs’. More and more jobs will require high and medium education levels from the working population. Across sectors, transversal and generic skills will be increasingly valued on the labour market: problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, the ability to work in a team, linguistic skills and digital competences.

³⁶ As reported on <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568> (last update retrieved on 19 July 2012).

³⁷ The forecasting and monitoring of the skills mismatch in Europe has actually been assigned by the EU not only to CEDEFOP but also ETF and Eurofound: cf. 3.3.2.4 Adult skills upgrading and the ‘skill matching challenge’.

³⁸ IP/08/1984 on Rapid, available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1984> (last retrieved on 19 July 2012).

According to CEDEFOP's forecasts (2008b; 2008c), moreover, by the year 2020 almost three quarters of jobs in the EU-25 were likely to be in the service sector, which would justify the emphasis on 'soft skills' or 'high-skills' opposed to the 'elementary' or 'basic skills' of the previous statement. The shift in Europe away from the primary sector and traditional manufacturing industries towards services and 'knowledge-intensive' economies would also have been likely to continue, in spite of the economic conjuncture. Additionally, a focus on net job creation by occupation (CEDEFOP, 2008c) showed that there would be many jobs created in high-skilled occupations, but also significant job creation in low-skilled jobs in the service sector, while efforts to tackle climate change and environmental degradation were expected to create a 'green economy', with millions of new jobs across the world, and the market for environmental products and services doubling by 2020 (CEDEFOP, 2009b). Consequently, the increased need for higher-level sets of skills applicable across different occupations and across sectors – i.e. 'transversal' or 'soft' skills (see Maniscalco, 2012b) such as problem-solving, the ability to work in teams, self-management, communication skills, linguistic and digital skills – would create a 'skill gap' between the highly-skilled and highly-qualified workers (more valued in the labour market) and lower-skilled and lower-qualified people (who would risk becoming marginalised). Moreover, a general rise in educational attainment levels would imply that employers should adapt their recruitment criteria, and that a growing share of low-skilled jobs could be filled by workers with medium levels of qualifications (as reported in the cited press MEMO/08/791).

The same EC press memo³⁹ also put forward that "awareness and involvement of businesses in forecasting skills needs will be reinforced under the initiative, through a survey of employers and qualitative studies on the skills needs of businesses, notably SMEs", and "there will be a dialogue between business and universities to take into account *employers' expectations* of university students and graduates" (own italics). Contextually, the EC highlighted that the "European social dialogue is a key instrument for mobilizing social partners to invest in the right skills through education and lifelong learning" and that "the Commission will invite social partners to develop joint initiatives to promote skills forecasting and upgrading, and to accompany short-term restructuring". Furthermore, the EC "will also consult with social partners at the sectorial level" and "will discuss with stakeholders, notably the existing sectorial social dialogue committees, the possibility of establishing 'sector councils on employment and skills' at EU level, which will enable representatives on both sides to organize collective discussions, where consensual positions can be reached" (*ibid.*).

³⁹ MEMO/08/791 on Rapid, available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/791> (last retrieved on 19 July 2012).

The central role played by the third sector in this process has been praised (EC, 1997), but also criticised for the excessive weight it has been given by the EC, for example in *The response of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) To The Communication from the Commission: 'An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: A European contribution towards full employment'* (EAEA, 2011), which the President Sue Waddington and the Secretary General Gina Ebner underlined, on behalf of the EAEA Executive Board (p. 2):

The communication includes an interesting call for “social dialogue on the implementation of lifelong learning”. We propose that this be extended to a ‘social and civil dialogue’. AE institutions on the national, regional and European level might be initiators and moderators of this process, using their competence to facilitate discussion in difference frameworks and their huge experience and continuity of the work in this area. We strongly ask for the participation of civil society organisations in the planned Tripartite Social Forum in order to bring ALL involved stakeholders together.

The Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Adama Ouane, recognised, for example, that “given the challenges we have to face, all social players, including families, must be included” among the key stakeholders next to “trade unions, associations, and national and international NGOs” (INT16). In addition, with more general regard to the whole NSNJ initiative’s bias, the EAEA (2011: 2) emphasised that “flexible, tailor made and learner centred approaches are required which go beyond narrow vocational training programmes”, since “engaging hard to reach learners requires an holistic view and learning opportunities that respect the individual, social and economic situations of the potential learners”. The very focus of the NSNJ reveals, in effect, a preoccupation for the positive impact of this policy initiative not only in terms of employability but – primarily – of economic growth and ROI in the human capital involved. Karen Evans put forward, for example, that the notions of *flexibility* and *adaptability* promoted in earlier policies would be “old-fashioned” in today’s debate, and “the New Skills for New Jobs are now focusing on innovation so that they emphasise more the creativity” that would allow workers to provide better services in a new way: not only ‘knowledge workers’, but all levels of the workforce. However, “the New Skills for New Jobs might be away from the old discussion of flexibility and adaptability to the economy towards focus on creativity and innovation, but it is creativity and innovation within the confines of the organisations intending to making profits out of that, it is not about wider active engagement in society and so forth” (INT23).

3.3.2.4 Adult skills upgrading and the ‘skill matching challenge’

In 1989, the Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee⁴⁰ (IRDAC) of the European Communities established a WG on E&T relevant to industry. A sub-group working on *skill shortages* considered the issue from the macro-economic perspective in a European context and examined demographic trends that would lead to tighter labour markets, a need for higher educational attainment and new and multidisciplinary skills, changes in skills demand and the impact of advances in R&D and technology. A number of sectors were explored to prove the crucial importance of *human resources* and adequate skill levels. As a result, the IRDAC published a report on European skills shortages (IRDAC, 1990), which highlighted:

The demographic evolution of the European population is such that, by the year 2000, the number of retirements will overtake new entrants into the workforce. The ageing of the population will also mean that Europe will have to compete with countries which have a much younger workforce, will be more up to date and probably more highly qualified.

Moreover, the report proposed a number of recommendations to remedy some “disturbing” trends: continuing training for the existing work force (adult education); acquisition of adequate skills for the young; a European investment in human resources, training tools, and technology; a deeper understanding of skills requirements (see also IRDAC, 1994).

THE ‘PERFECT’ MATCHING OF WORKERS’ SKILLS AND LABOUR MARKET’S NEEDS

In fact, according to recent studies (CEDEFOP, 2008b; 2008c; 2009b; 2010a; 2010c; 2010d), the EU would then experience a paradox in the labour market of high rates of unemployment alongside talent gaps and unfilled vacancies due to skills mismatches. Accordingly, the EU Member States were asked to consider how they should react in the ‘rapidly changing and competitive global economy’. The discourse around the knowledge economy put forward that new growth sectors are ‘skills hungry’ and that highly skilled economies have higher productivity and GDP per capita (Milana, 2009), whilst emerging economies would catch up faster in terms of their rapidly improving the relevant skills base. Hence, skills forecasts become an important part of this picture, as they should allow for the quantifying of future skill demands and the facilitating of an ‘evidence-based’ dialogue and decision-making.

In this regard, Aviana Bulgarelli, former Director of CEDEFOP, noted that many recent EU policy documents, such as “the Council Resolution on ‘new skills for new jobs’ or the current revision of the Lisbon Strategy, show that, compared to the past, there is greater emphasis on education and training as key drivers of growth” (INT11). Likewise,

⁴⁰ Inglobed in the European Research Forum (ERF) with EC Decision 98/611/EC/Euratom of 23 October 1998.

Andreas Schleicher commented on the PIAAC survey in the light of this new political framework (INT13):

We have been long enough into this economic crisis to understand that we cannot simply bail ourselves out of the crisis, or ‘stimulate’ our way out of the crisis, but what we can do is to equip people with better skills to compete, collaborate and connect to drive our economies forward. Our data show a very clear link between skills and employment, skills and inclusive growth. Giving more people the tools to contribute to our economies means that we need to recognise the kind of skills that matter for economic success, we need to ensure that we provide education and training over the life cycle of people that equips them with the right skills. We need to activate these skills ensuring that people actually deploy their talent, and they have the intensive support to deploy their talent to the labour market. And, finally, matching demand and supply, that’s perhaps the most important challenge these days, to ensure that we actually use the kind of skills that we have in the most effective way to actually promote growth and promote economic success of individuals and of our countries. And that means figuring out what the demand of skills is, matching that with the kinds of skills peoples have, and raising, moving from a low-skills equilibrium where employers hire maybe cheaper labour and employees don’t have the right skills, to an equilibrium where *everybody* uses their skills at the maximum potential.

The narrative of a *mismatch* existing between the European labour force’s skills, the ‘higher’ skills needed by labour markets in the supposed post-industrial economy, and the “normative discourse” of a *shortage* of these ‘new skills for the new jobs’ (INT27) –impregnated with almost ‘totalitarian’ ideals in Schleicher’s interview (INT13) – were brought to the attention of the EU decision-makers by a report focusing on *Information Society, Work and the Generation of New Forms of Social Exclusion* (SOWING, 2002: 83):

The change in qualification requirements as a result of technological change is at the centre of the discussion on the information economy. There is no doubt that the speed of change in modern ICT places great demands on the adaptability of working people, companies and also educational establishments. Still it is highly disputed whether the widespread use will lead to re-skilling, as some scholars argue. In addition, there is an intensive debate on what kind of skills and competencies are needed most. While it is often assumed that the widespread use of ICT will increase the need for information or digital skills, companies often mention a great demand for social skills. A further research question concerns the forms of learning. While increasing demand for ICT specialists seems to indicate the importance of formal learning, some scholars strongly emphasise that informal learning-on-the-job, including ‘learning-by-doing’, ‘learning-by-using’ and ‘learning-by-interacting’ is gaining importance.

In the wake of the ‘information society or the ‘knowledge economy’ influencing the policy debate, the study nonetheless concluded that, in relation to the “demands for new skills and competencies” by the labour market, digital/ICT skills would *not* be as relevant and urgent to re-train the workforce to as other ‘soft’ skills such as social competences and ‘learning to learn’ skills (p. 3):

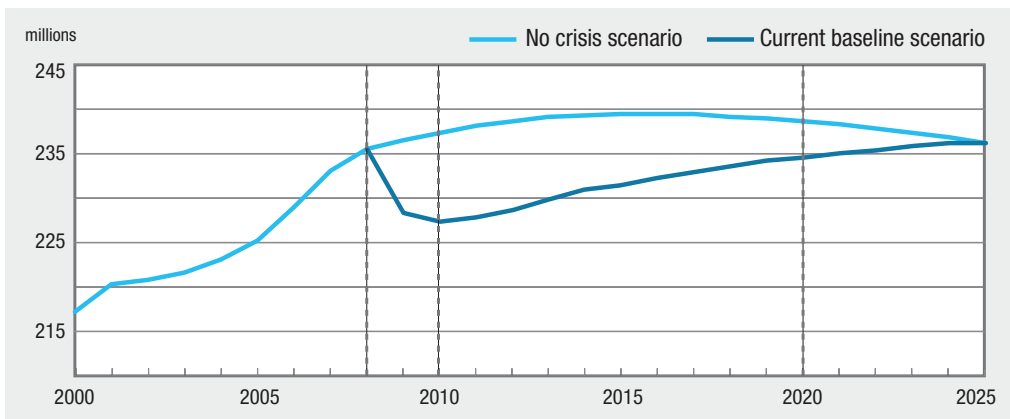
Concerning demands for new skills and competencies, we can conclude that digital skills play a less significant role in the current transformation process compared with social and learning

skills. Consequently, missing digital skills rarely represent a risk of losing one’s job and becoming excluded from the labour market. [...] So far, it can be concluded that we are just at the beginning of the transformation of the economy into a network-based information economy with little evidence of massive exclusion and segmentation problems. [...] There is no one European path to the information economy. The fact, however, that ICT-based organisational restructuring is more an emergent than a completed process makes it very important to further monitor employment risks but also possible opportunities associated with the emerging information economy. This will give us the time to warn policy makers about the potential exclusion risks for specific social groups in the information economy.

As outlined above, improving the monitoring and the assessment of skills in order to anticipate their development in the labour force and to match them with those required by the labour market was identified by the NSNJ policy statements (EU, 2007a; EC, 2008b; 2008c; 2010b) as crucial for addressing both the employment impact of the crisis and long-term job prospects of the EU workforce. Hence, part of the NSNJ initiative was the development of skills forecasts by CEDEFOP. These and previous studies also analysed the discrepancies between skill demand and supply, although in a ‘static’ dimension (Leuven et al., 2004; Kranz, 2006).

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS MATCHING IN THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Moreover, with the foundation of the SEM and the impact of the economic crisis on employment (cf. Figure 24 below), the identification of comprehensive and comparable information on the interrelations between jobs, skills, competences and qualifications also became central in the efforts of the EU (and other IOs) for understanding how the work market and the economic system was functioning.

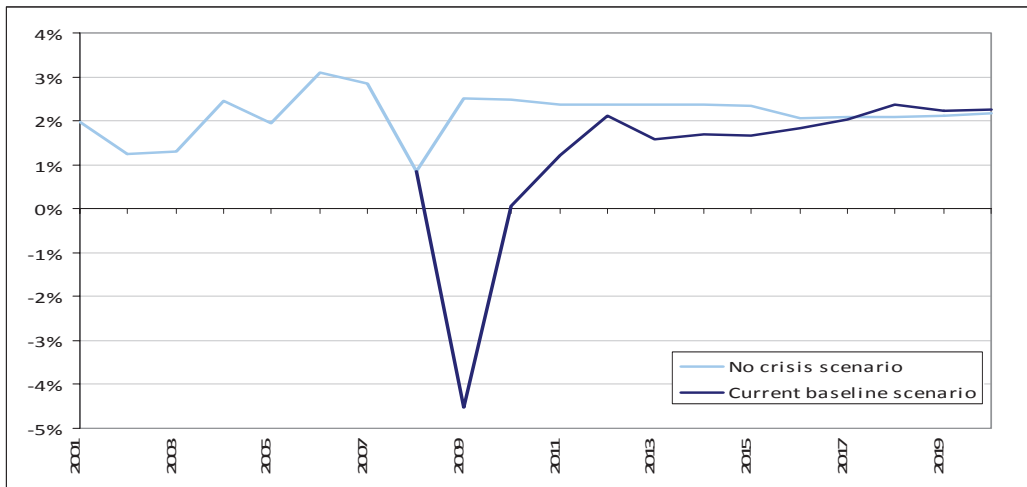


Source: Cedefop (CE estimates based on E3ME).

Figure 24: Impact of the recession on employment, EU-27. From CEDEFOP (2010d: 36, Figure 3).

The first pan-European forecast of skills demands, published by CEDEFOP (2008c), provided comprehensive medium-term projections of employment and skill needs across Europe until 2015 and 2020, and further work has been done to produce regular forecasts integrating skills supply and needs by CEDEFOP (2008b, 2009b; 2010d). These were built on two assumptions: firstly, CEDEFOP relied abundantly in its projections on a 'no crisis scenario', and explained (CEDEFOP, 2010d: 11–12, 35; cf. Figure 25):

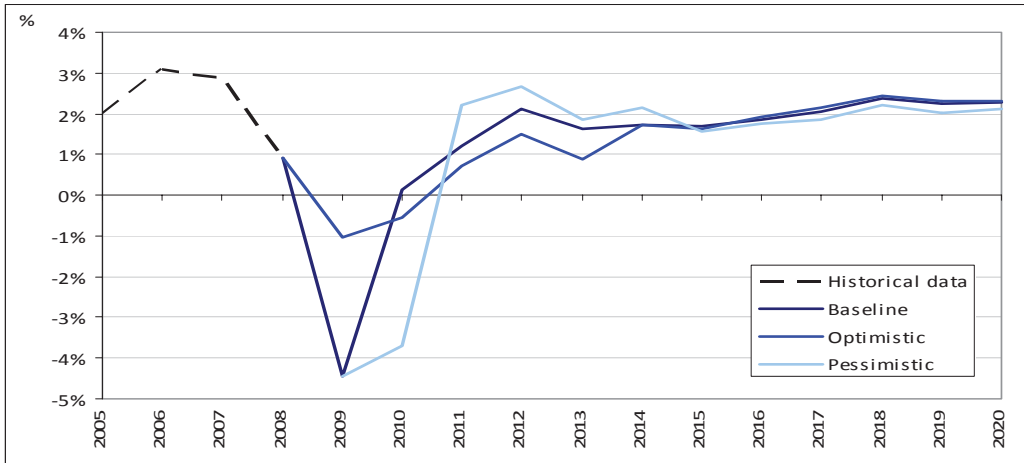
Sectoral employment trends post-recession are projected to be broadly similar to those pre-crisis, namely towards a service economy and away from primary and some manufacturing activities, albeit at lower absolute levels. [...] Compared to an estimated growth in the case of 'no crisis' scenario (2.5%), this means real depression by 7%. The projected baseline scenario assumes termination of slow down in 2010. The EU's economy is expected to get back on track of the 'no crisis' scenario only after 2017.



Source: Cedefop (CE estimates based on E3ME).

Figure 25: Impact of the recession on GDP growth, EU-27. From CEDEFOP (2010d: 35, Figure 2).

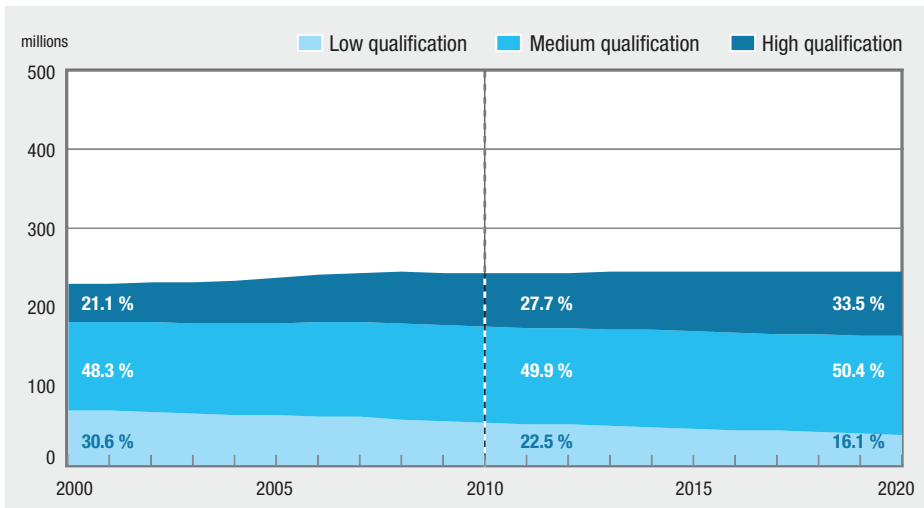
Even considering the present economic crisis, CEDEFOP assumed that the EU will recover its 'normal' levels of economic growth by 2025 (cf. Figure 24), and presented an alternative scenario which is illustrated in Figure 26 below:



Source: Cedefop (CE estimates based on E3ME).

Figure 26: Alternative scenarios for European GDP growth, EU-27. From CEDEFOP (2010d: 37, Figure 4).

Secondly, CEDEFOP assumed that jobs are becoming increasingly knowledge and skills intensive, claiming that, by 2020, 33.5% of all jobs available in the labour market may require high-level qualifications, as exemplified in the following graph:



NB: This figure deliberately uses the same scale as Figure 8 to compare the size of population and the labour force.

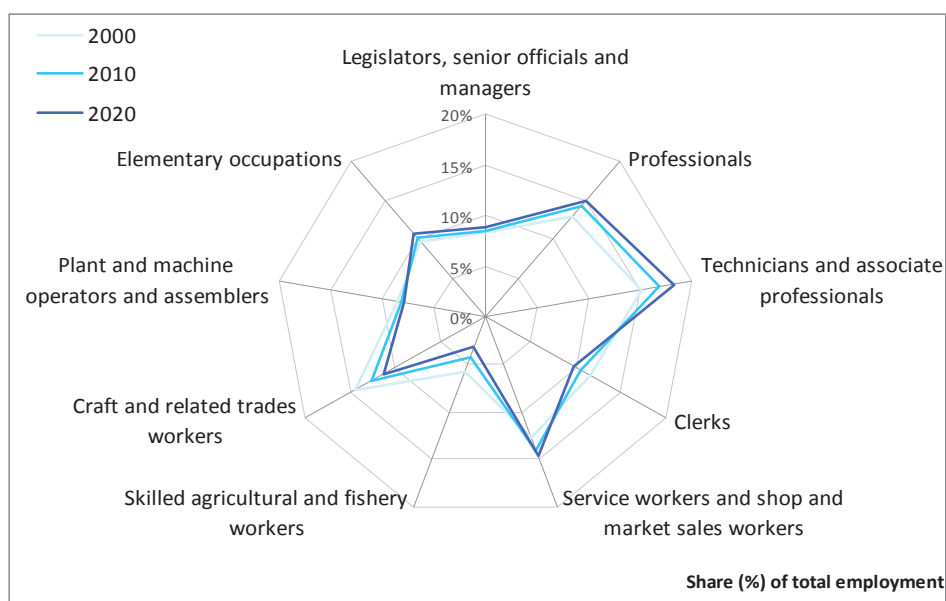
Source: Cedefop (IER estimates based on E3ME and StockMOD).

Figure 27: Supply trends in labour force (15+) by qualification, EU-27. From CEDEFOP (2010d: 43, Figure 10).

Also assuming a full recovery of the EU economy by 2025 (cf. Figure 24), which is indeed fully debatable in the light of the instability due to the latest developments of the sovereign debt crisis which indicate a rapid worsening of the economic prospects for the eurozone and highlight the various weaknesses of the EU banking and financial systems (see par. 4.1 The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing? and par. 5.1 The Global Economic Crisis and the resurrection of nationalism), CEDEFOP tabled a forecast representing constant increases in employment prospects from 2009 (CEDEFOP, 2010d: Figure 5 on page 38 and Figure 6 on page 39) and stated that the crisis may even increase the participation in E&T in the short term, while it acknowledged the possibility of “potential financial constraints” in the “longer term” (p. 52):

Initial indications suggest that the crisis may lead to increased participation in education and training and acquisition of qualifications, as individuals delay entry into a depressed labour market; they probably also expect better opportunities with higher-level qualifications after recovery. In the longer term, potential financial constraints (for both individuals and governments) may discourage investment in human capital. Policy-makers may need to take proactive steps to ensure that the projected improvements are actually realised and that investment, both in initial education and in continuing training as well as other forms of adult education, will continue.

Accordingly, CEDEFOP pictured changes in the structure of the EU job market in terms of occupational shares by sector as represented in Figure 28 below:



NB: Based on numbers in employment (NA-based estimates).

Source: Cedefop (IER estimates based on E3ME and EDMOD).

Figure 28: The changing occupational structure of employment, EU-27. From CEDEFOP (2010d: 59, Figure 21).

Furthermore, CEDEFOP emphasised a substantial and pervasive mismatch of the skills in the European labour market, with only half of workers holding jobs that fit their education, their training and their skills levels and an average 11% experiencing a ‘wage penalty’ (see Table 15 in CEDEFOP, 2010c: 42), whereas out of a net employment increase of over 13 million jobs between 2006 and 2015 almost 12.5 million will be at the highest qualification levels (ISCED 5 and 6).

FORMAL QUALIFICATION ATTAINMENT: A CONTESTED INDICATOR

The use of qualifications for the identification of ‘highly skilled’ workers, however, has been considered insufficient, and most of all incongruous, by both scholars (INT25) and policy-makers (INT11; INT13). This is seen to the point where the principal value of the OECD’s PIAAC survey, for example, has been presented in terms of a change of focus from formal qualifications and diplomas obtained in the workers’ past, on which the UNESCO’s ISCED educational classification is based (see note 56 on page 257), to the assessment of the actual ‘tacit knowledge’ possessed by people (workers) today, and not years before. In fact, governments and IOs are increasingly addressing the emergence of *tacit knowledge*, in the same way as they are promoting the recognition and qualification

of non-formal and informal prior learning, which has been often referred to as 'making learning visible' (INT23). According to Karen Evans, this interest could generate from the purpose of eliciting this knowledge and transferring it to the benefit of the corporations:

The point is that companies and organisations are increasingly aware that workers have all this 'tacit knowledge'. [...] And this of course raises controversial questions. The challenge of 'making learning visible', for example, is it about empowering people? Or – even more – empowering companies *over* people? [...] From the point of view of the scientific debate, the more sceptical ones see this as an opportunity for organisations to 'appropriate' the workers' knowledge: not empowering them, but taking *from* them.

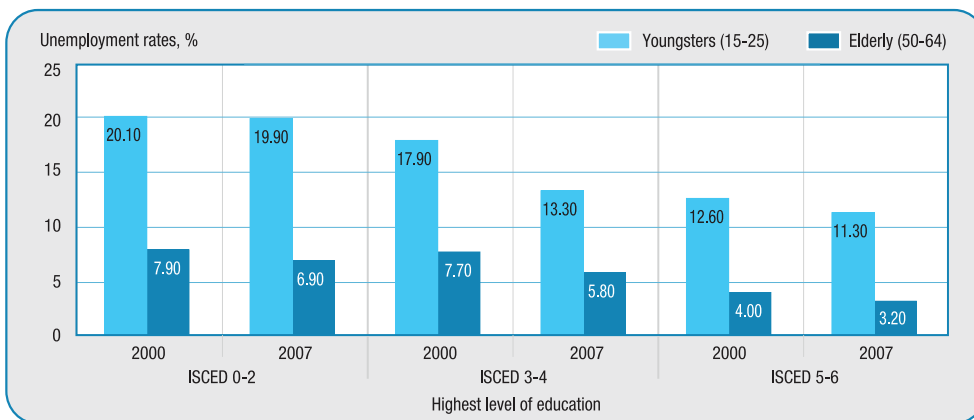
Andreas Schleicher addressed this problematic issue when he presented PIAAC as a revolutionary tool for the assessment (albeit largely based on self-evaluation) of adults' skills and competences (INT13):

Skills and qualifications are something *very* different. You can see that in the labour market today: you have, on the one hand, this 'toxic' mix of people unemployed, sometimes with high levels of qualifications, and at the same time employers desperately looking for key skills. That tells you that we cannot just equate formal qualifications with the skills people have. And that's one of the most important aspects of the PIAAC survey as it looks not at the qualifications that I acquired some time in the past of my life but the *actual* skills that I can deploy *today* in a specific situation. That's the *driver* of economic and social advantage today.

Notwithstanding, the rationale of the skills mismatch analysis thus far carried out by CEDEFOP is still anchored to indicators that CEDEFOP and the EC itself considered marginal or inconsistent for this exercise (cf. the political and policy debate around the EQF, and the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning), as also emphasised by Desjardins and Rubenson (OECD, 2011: 6):

Current understandings of mismatch rest on a relatively weak knowledge base. Much of the analysis of mismatch issues has had a tendency to neglect the type of education undertaken, actual skills held, work experience and the fact that people engage in formal and non-formal learning both inside and outside of work over the lifespan, all of which contributes to a limited understanding of mismatch. This is partly a consequence of a reliance on what is easiest to measure and what we can measure, rather than what we should measure and would be feasible to do so. A key drawback to education mismatch studies is the near exclusive reliance on quantity and qualification based measures of education such as years of schooling or educational attainment credentials.

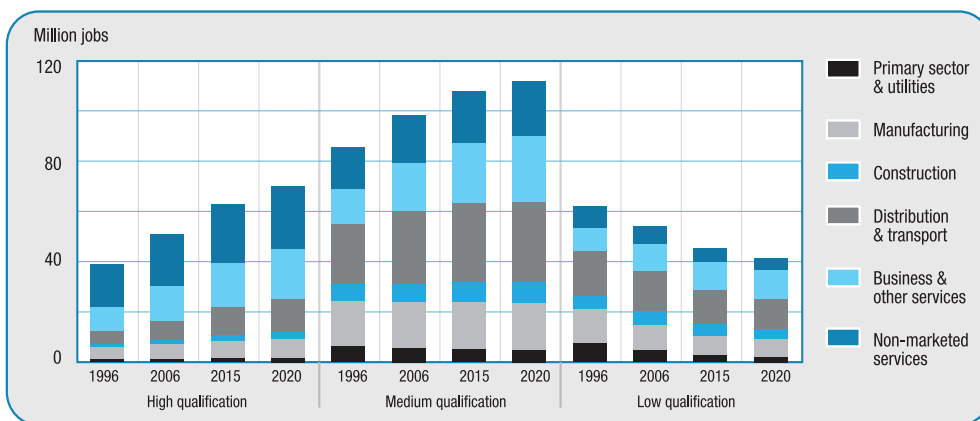
Indeed, budget constraints play a major role: the available data has thus far come principally from the Eurostat's LFS, and the results of the analysis from the PIAAC questionnaires will only be released in 2013 – albeit with the characteristics, bias advantages and limitations that have been underlined in the above analysis, and which will further be discussed in the next paragraphs.



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey (LFS), 2007, date of extraction: 7.1.2009.

Figure 29: Unemployment rates of young and older persons by highest education level, EU-27. From CEDEFOP (2009a: 39, Figure 16).

Examples of this logic can be seen in Figure 29, showing the correlation between the unemployment rates of younger and older persons in the EU and their highest *education* level, and Figure 30, illustrating the employment trends in relation with the people's *qualification* level; both thus supporting the argument of the existence of a skill matching problem (CEDEFOP, 2009a).



NB: EU without Bulgaria and Romania.

Figure 30: Employment trends by level of qualification and broad sector (million jobs). From CEDEFOP (2009a: 26, Figure 5).

Another fundamental problem of this approach is that the links between data and policy actions needed to support policies aimed at preventing or counteracting the skills mismatch were not clearly shown in CEDEFOP's reports. Understanding the demand for skills, according to the EU, was thus just a first stage to be followed up with 'supply-side' forecasts, as skills mismatches could only be identified by analysing the employers' needs in the labour market (OECD, 2011: 6, point 6). EU-wide forecasts have thus become pieces of information that are meant to contribute to the creation of a more detailed picture of the European economy.

THE ROLE OF CEDEFOP IN THE 'SKILL MATCHING CHALLENGE'

The task of analysing and monitoring this skills mismatch was officially attributed to CEDEFOP, together with ETF and Eurofound, by the Council of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs in its 2930th meeting that took place in Brussels on 9 March 2009, and which established "a regular assessment of long-term supply and skills needs, by harnessing existing resources and, in particular, CEDEFOP, Eurofound and European Training Foundation" (cf. Maniscalco, 2012: 158). Hence, this formal investiture lies in the Resolution of the Council of the EU on the *New Skills for New Jobs* (EU, 2007a). Since then, CEDEFOP has published at least three important reports that introduced the issue of the skill mismatch as a 'problem', and has started forecasting the gap existing between skills supply and demand (CEDEFOP, 2008b, 2008c, 2009b). *The skill matching challenge* (CEDEFOP, 2010a), however, has a programmatic value and 'ideological' (and political) relevance, and is actually presented as "the first in a series bridging the worlds of research and practice, aiming to provide insights that enable evidence-based policy-making" (p. 1). Another issue encompassed in the skills mismatch discourse is related to 'older workers' (cf. Figure 5 on page 71), i.e. learners in ageing societies such as Europe (INT12), whom CEDEFOP addressed specifically with the paper *The right skills for silver workers* (2010c: 1) because "not only is population ageing a dominant trend in the EU, but ageing workers are one of the groups particularly affected by skill mismatch". This is further contextualised in the above-cited report on *The skill matching challenge* (2010a: 1):

The European population is ageing rapidly, leading to a large outflow of experienced workers in the coming decades while those nearing retirement will need to adapt to the new skills that many jobs require. The dynamics of today's labour markets not only create new jobs while others shrink or disappear, but also contribute to changing skill requirements in many existing jobs.

The concern for the updating and upgrading of skills for the ageing workforce is due, in effect, to the higher risk of them facing skills obsolescence and deterioration. In

the OECD (2011) Working Paper *An analysis of skill mismatch using direct measure of skills*,⁴¹ Richard Desjardins and Kjell Rubenson emphasise the need to point out at “the potential causes of skill mismatch, the extent of skill mismatch, the socio-demographic make-up of skill mismatch” as well as the “possibilities for skill gain and skill loss over the lifespan”, but all their analysis eventually converges towards “the consequences of skill mismatch in terms of *earnings* as well as employer sponsored adult education/training.” (p. 3; own emphasis). In this perspective too, CEDEFOP remarked however that “skills obsolescence is often hard to measure using currently available data sets”, and put forward a proposal for better targeted measurements (p. 67):

Questions on skills obsolescence should allow differentiation between economic and technological change explanations. The latter will be illustrated by reductions in overall employment and relative employment by occupation, on which the employer is more likely to have information, while the former is more related to the individual. This needs to be linked to age and the provision of retraining. Using a panel, workers can be asked at different times to rate the extent to which their skills are suitable for their current job; the reduction in the score will then indicate the degree of obsolescence.

Several questions in relation to the policy initiative above outlined have been raised, e.g. how policy-makers can address the persistence of the skill mismatch, and how (and how fast) skills can be considered ‘obsolete’.

WAGES AND SALARIES: ANOTHER CONTESTED INDICATOR

The major limitations of CEDEFOP’s skills mismatch forecasts and the OECD’s assessment approach have been identified by Sgobbi and Suleman (2012) in the choice of ‘wage’ functions or ‘earning’ differentials as reliable variables to determine whether an employee holds a position below or above his or her levels of skills and qualifications, as skills mismatch “refers not only to skill gaps and shortages, but also to skills exceeding job requirements” (CEDEFOP, 2010a: 1). In fact, no data is available or collected in relation to the worker’s future career prospects, family constraints, personal job satisfaction, work environment, or the very subjective ‘life values’ that transcend the individuals’ professional dimension. Moreover, as noted by Desjardins and Rubenson, “skill supply characteristics are important determinants of earnings, but not independent of skill demand characteristics”; although this implies that workers’ skills matter for their earnings only if they are required by the job they hold, “a lot of the research on earnings functions has nevertheless been dominated by a supply side view of the labour market, namely the

⁴¹ Prepared “in view of the forthcoming data from the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)” this study undertook “a stock take of what is known about skill mismatch and investigates the influence of skill mismatch on earnings as well as on participation in adult education/training, using a prior survey of adult skills (i.e., the 2003–2007 Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey – ALLS)” (OECD, 2011: 5).

human capital approach, which has tended to underplay the role of the demand side of the labour market” (OECD, 2011: 6–7):

Workers who are in a situation of skill deficit are found to receive on average about 21% more in monthly earnings than those who have a low level of literacy proficiency but who engage very little in literacy related activities at work. This finding is counterintuitive from the human capital perspective. It confirms the idea that the type of job and job tasks one performs is an important determinant of earnings regardless of one’s human capital. It also points to substantive interaction between the worker and the job that they are performing in determining marginal productivity and hence pay.

In order to address the question of over- or under-education and under- or over-qualification, CEDEFOP advanced the solution of focusing on both “qualifications and time spent on being educated” and “on the education level required to do the job rather than to obtain the job” (p. 66–7).

INDICATORS’ LIMITATIONS: THE MEASUREMENT OF THE EDUCATION LEVEL

In this respect, Francesca Sgobbi and Fátima Suleman (2012: 2) advanced the idea that “especially when measured as the length of time spent in the education system, educational qualifications provide a mono-dimensional, easy-to-treat quantitative measure of individual competences” and suggested therefore “an empirical measure of skill mismatch based on the opposition between core skills, which dramatically affect the performance of an individual in his/her job, and supplementary skills”, which appears – elaborating qualitatively on CEDEFOP’s hint – as a better targeted proposition. Another solution to measure the skills shortage and skills mismatch has been put forward by Ljubica Nedelkoska and Frank Neffke (2011), who related the measurement of skill mismatches for ‘occupational switchers’ in terms of skill-shortages and skill redundancies with the assessment of skill transferability (p. 30; cf. also par. 3.3.2 Towards the adult competence development and skill matching model):

There are considerable asymmetries to be reckoned with when studying human capital transferability in job switches. We construct two sets of asymmetric measures of skill mismatches between occupational pairs, and use these to study job switching across occupations. These measures provide information above and beyond existing symmetric measures of occupational distance. We additionally propose a measure of skill experience that captures the cumulative skill formation over the course of individuals’ occupational history. The measure of skill experience further allows us to disentangle accumulated skills that are useful from those that are redundant in the current occupation. Our measures show superior predictive power with respect to between-occupational moves compared to existing measures. Furthermore, their asymmetric nature allows us to shed light on a hitherto neglected aspect of occupational switches: the direction of the switch. Occupations do not only differ from one another in terms of their skill profiles, but they also require these skills at different levels. As such, occupations can share a similar set of skills, but may differ in their position on the occupational ladder. We show that this asymmetry has profound effects on between-occupational moves and wage dynamics.

In effect, Nedelkoska and Neffke recognised that “uncertainty about the future demand for skills renders the question about the transferability of skills across jobs, industries, and occupations of utmost economic importance” as “individuals’ adaptation to skill demand shocks is reflected in their career paths” (p. 2). Accordingly, addressing the “returns to useful and redundant skills along the wage distribution”, they assumed two different scenarios (p. 27): first, one in which workers who are unable to find a job that fits their profile “keep wandering from one occupation to the next without building up a coherent set of skills”; and second, where another cohort of workers “are able to combine experiences from a wide range of contexts, often generating novel solutions to the problems they encounters”. Drawing on these premises, they showed that ‘useful’ transferable skills determine higher percentiles of the wage distribution than ‘simple’ redundant skills, using a rather similar model than the one developed by Åstebro, Chen, and Thompson (2010).

CEDEFOP acknowledged that broader and more qualitative information “would provide substantial gains in understanding the mismatch problem”, but concluded that “developing a new data set would be very costly” and collecting “new information cost-effectively would demand funding and support for adding a set of pertinent labour-market mismatch questions to several existing large data sets” (p. 65):

One of the current problems in analysing mismatch in Europe is the absence of appropriate questions in regular series such as labour force surveys and household panels. A panel with enough observations to observe changes in mismatch over the business cycle would be ideal and, if a matched employer/employee panel, this would enable control for unobserved individual heterogeneity both in relation to personal characteristics of individuals and establishments.

However, the above alternative examples illustrate to what extent the forecasting architecture set up by CEDEFOP relies on a theoretically ‘closed system’, which might engender a much too simplified reading of the *dynamic* system of skills-jobs dominating the education policy discourse in the EU and in OECD countries, in particular whenever it is linked to the discourse of social exclusion and social cohesion. In this respect, Karen Evans and Beatrix Niemeyer (2004: 4) noted:

Policies which aim to help people to raise their level of basic skills, develop new skills and renew their levels of confidence after periods out of the labour market or ‘social mainstream’ are based on evidence of the protective and ‘risk-reducing effects’ of skills, but it is a one-sided social analysis which looks only at the assumed deficits of individuals. This analysis asks ‘what skills do people need to re-enter the labour market?’ A more balanced analysis of social dynamics would ask: ‘whose problems is it to tackle the mechanisms which are detaching people from the social mainstream?’ Increasing individual skills tend to ‘change the order of the queues at the factory gates’ but it does not materially affect the overall balance of inclusion and exclusion. [...] Raising skills levels is important but this alone will not tackle the mechanisms which are locking people out and detaching them.

AN ECONOMIC PARADIGM FOR THE WESTERN E&T SYSTEMS

Likewise, Marianne Horsdal (2007) remarked that employability, as a pre-requisite for economic growth, has indeed become predominant in the contemporary discourses on lifelong learning and, accordingly, work/skill matching plays a crucial role in the promotion of an adult skill and competence development policy strategy to fit the requirements of the knowledge economy. According to her, this paradigm is strongly endorsed by the EU, the OECD and the World Bank, “whose missions call on them to give greater weight to economic goals” even when it is not necessarily considered the most important by national governments (p. 38):

Employability seems to be more and more predominant in the contemporary discourses on lifelong learning, in spite of the fact that the study of national responses to the EC *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* concluded that eight of the 15 members states found that employability and citizenship development were equally important, while seven found that citizenship development was the single most important issue – and none said that employability was the most important issue in its own right.

Referring to a report by the Council of Europe, illustrating its vision on educational quality, Horsdal also showed how this IO expressed discontentment and severe doubts in relation with the current skill policy trends, which would be misbalanced towards professional development and would pay too little attention to the development of the human dimension consistent with sound citizenship (quoted in Horsdal, 2007: 38–9; own emphasis):

Do the skills needed by a good citizen and decent human being converge with those needed for rewarding jobs in a competitive economy? Employers for instance demand that young people should acquire the same skills in communication and teamwork that are required for intercultural dialogue and democratic participation. This happy complementarity is unlikely to be universal. In this case, the Council of Europe is unafraid to assert that *peace, security and justice are preconditions for social and economic development*. Just as a class teacher must first assure an orderly working environment before any learning can take place, so the educational system as a whole must assure that young people are good citizens before it can try to make them prosperous. The cost of failure in both cases is unacceptably high.

Such a limited understanding of the (original) lifelong learning ideal, constrained within a merely economic perspective, would subordinate “citizenship, social coherence and personal development under employability”, and consequently produce a new kind of citizen: the ‘employed citizen’ (p. 39):

An understanding of lifelong learning in which the focus of employability has the upper hand reduces lifelong learning to a means for enhancement of productivity in a global competitive economy. Thus, the objectives of lifelong learning policies narrow down to furnishing the labour force with adequate qualifications for participation in the ever-changing labour market, and this understanding makes way for a preoccupation with problems of ‘mismatches’ and ‘goal-distor-

tions', meaning that learner's aspirations are not necessarily identical to those of the government.

This 'pathological' conception of the mismatch between the need for skills and qualifications from the point of view of the learners and from that of the governments has been further developed by Milana (2009) in her analysis of the 'skill matching challenge' initiative, on the basis of which she advanced an emerging post-Lisbon "regulatory ideal" upon which the EU would rely by assuming "the existence of a perfect match between specific skills provided by the education and training system and skills recognized by the labour market, [and of] a perfect match between the levels of skills and competences individuals possess and the jobs they can acquire" (p. 19).

A POST-ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EU SKILL POLICIES

Apart from the necessity of testing the validity of these assumptions attributed by Milana to the EU decision-makers, a "regulatory ideal" would actually be 'technically' out of the question because of the inability of the EU to establish binding regulations in this policy area (cf. paragraph 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU's soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector). On the contrary, the skill matching policies of the EU could more simply be considered as a shift of policy orientation, and possibly political outlook (for the reasons above discussed: cf. in particular 3.1 Formation and transformation of key AE concepts in core EU education policy documents; see also 3.6 A market model for the adult and lifelong learning policy, and 4.2 Adult skills matching: work skills vs. life skills) and a consequentially increased focus on the economic and employment policy that is indeed expanding in the EU's policy panorama and affecting by osmosis other (weaker) policy areas (cf. 3.5 A new centrality of adult and lifelong learning in the EU mainstream policy?). None of the EU policy statements or reports by CEDEFOP, for example, are included by the EC in the list of 51 key documents for the adult education and learning policy (cf. Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis), although they are indeed correlated with the European E&T policy-making, and adult education has been identified as a crucial sector to challenge the EU's economic growth. In effect, all evidence suggests instead, especially in consideration of the European Union's governance architecture (cf. paragraph 2.1.2 The Lisbon Strategy as a case of governance architecture) that will be discussed more in detail in the next chapter, a shift of power from the educational to the employment policy areas, in order to circumvent the limits (and limitations) of the OMC, with the DG Employment in many ways overtaking the DG Education and Culture with the activity coordination and budget administration of E&T policy within the EC (INT28). The reason for this is not only the accessibility of EU structural funds (INT2; INT10; cf. also chapter 3. Research findings) but

also because of a new focus on skills for the ‘knowledge economy’, since the launch of the NSNJ initiative, and throughout the ‘EU 2020’ Strategy (INT28).

Moreover, the analysis conducted thus far has provided enough evidence to claim that the framework and background policy devised by the EU very often refer to and promote social cohesion and personal development and well-being, and social and active citizenship: this is the case in the Recommendation on the *Key Competences*, which is still the core reference document for the European E&T policy. Whenever policies are then translated into benchmarks, indicators, quality assurance and evaluation and soft governance tools in general, in fact, professional development is always dominant in the knowledge society discourse, work-related activities are best funded in European projects and programmes, and ultimately education tends to overlap with vocational training. In conclusion, by placing E&T under the umbrella of the wider policy area of economic growth and employability, more abundant financial resources are available for policy initiatives, and it becomes less difficult for the EU to gain a pre-emptive consensus from the MS, therefore gaining wider margins for manoeuvre. Hence, antithetically to Milana’s positive interpretation of an EU “regulatory ideal”, the vocational connotation of the EU skills and competence upgrading increasingly characterising the E&T strategy should rather be described in the post-ontological, pragmatic terms of a ‘re-oriented soft governance’, as it does not disclose the above characteristics until its implementation phase, which – as it will be shown in the next chapter – coincides, in the Lisbon OMC, with the *ex-post* policy evaluation.

3.4 Public policy formation and scientific impact on EU policy-making

The EU has indeed absorbed several scientific developments in relation to AEL and especially the market economy, sometimes integrating them to various degrees in the EU policy released during the Lisbon decade. In this sense, it can be asserted that, similarly to the OECD, whose “power pervades academia and society and diffuses beyond democratic decision-making through various networks of civil servants, bureaucrats and consultants” (Kallo, 2009: 356), the EU can also be considered an *epistemic community*. One difference between the EU and the OECD, from this point of view is, nevertheless, that the latter has managed to “take on issues” that have been harder for other organisations like the EU to endorse. One reason for this ‘misbalance’ is that “epistemic communities like the OECD draw on knowledge dependency in international behaviour, which refers to increasing requirements of decision makers to deal with a broader range of issues in expanding global economy and their needs for external advice” (p. 357–8), while the EU, through the OMC, has created its own ‘knowledge dependency’ only as far as its policy

can rely on effective implementation and the establishment of good practices (Zito, 2001). This is actually the case, to the extent that has been described in the above analysis, of the school and curricular education policy. School curriculum, early childhood education and special education are in fact, worldwide, the fields where public policy has absorbed the most and relied on scientific research (Shavelson & Towne, 2002; Towne et al., 2004; Gormley, 2011). In the AL sector, on the contrary, the EU has found weaker grounds to grow and develop its scientific epistemology, and it cannot be said as certainly that its epistemic instances pervade academia and society.

Noaksson and Jacobsson (2003: 10) illustrated the perception of the EU–OECD epistemological weight and role divergence suggesting an interpretation of the EU as a political organisation constrained by “political bargain”, versus the OECD as a ‘truth seeker’ or ‘truth teller’ with a more “dogmatic relationship to knowledge”, arguing ultimately that “while the EU attempts to adapt knowledge to fit reality, the OECD attempts to adapt reality to fit existing knowledge”:

The OECD, seen as an ‘expert organisation’, differs from the EU, seen as a ‘political organisation’ and as such more coloured by, and constrained by, political bargaining. We will argue that the EU is characterised by a more pragmatic knowledge-use, while the OECD can be characterised as a ‘truth-seeker’ and ‘truth-teller’ with a more dogmatic relationship to knowledge (in the sense of believing firmly in one orthodoxy and attempting to put aside political considerations and values when assessing economic situations, based on that orthodoxy). This also has implications for their respective implementation strategy, where the OECD strategy is characterised by decontextualised policy advice addressed to other actors ‘from a distance’ while the EU strategy is characterised by a more contextualised strategy negotiated among a wide range of stakeholders.

EU policy-making can be seen, in the above light, as a process that involves several actors and stakeholders which contribute to the endorsement or the rejection of policy proposals, justifying their choices on the basis of arguments that vary in range from scientific research grounds to milder rhetoric and political opportunity (Gormley, 2011: 978).

COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

The analysis of the factors, situations and practices that influence or even facilitate the conversion of scientific research into public policy shows that, while the relationship between science and public policy should appear opportune and even straightforward, holding that “a well-crafted piece of policy-relevant research should convince public officials to alter their policy preferences” and induce them to “translate good science into good public policy”, the adoption and sustenance of legislation consistent with the findings of scientific research is flawed for several reasons, as Gormley explained in these five points:

1. Scientific research is only one of the many inputs of the policy-making process; in a crowded political arena, scientists can be eclipsed by other actors, events, and trends.⁴²
2. Scientific knowledge accumulates through multiple studies, some of which reach different conclusions. A single study, no matter how finely crafted, is not likely to carry the day, nor should it. Astute public officials, like astute scientists, weigh the evidence from multiple studies before reaching conclusions.
3. The applicability of a given study to a particular policy choice is a matter of judgment. Extrapolation from one program to another or from one site to another can be problematic.
4. Scientific research is translated, condensed, repackaged and reinterpreted before it is used. Journalists, legislative staffers, advocates and others participate in this process. Occasionally, something is lost in translation.
5. The use of scientific information by public officials, when it occurs, is more likely to involve justification (reinforcement of a prior opinion) than persuasion (conversion to a new opinion).

The main spheres of influence of the scientific research on policy-makers for its strategic use (policy justification) or substantive use (persuasion to support a reform) have been outlined by Gormley (2011: 979) through the following Figure:

⁴² In one study of the US federal policy-making process, researchers, academics and consultants were judged to be 'very important' by only 15% of respondents, including congressional staff members and civil servants; in contrast, 33% of respondents viewed interest groups as very important, and legislators and executive branch officials were judged very important by even higher percentages of respondents (Kingdon, 1995: 94–100).

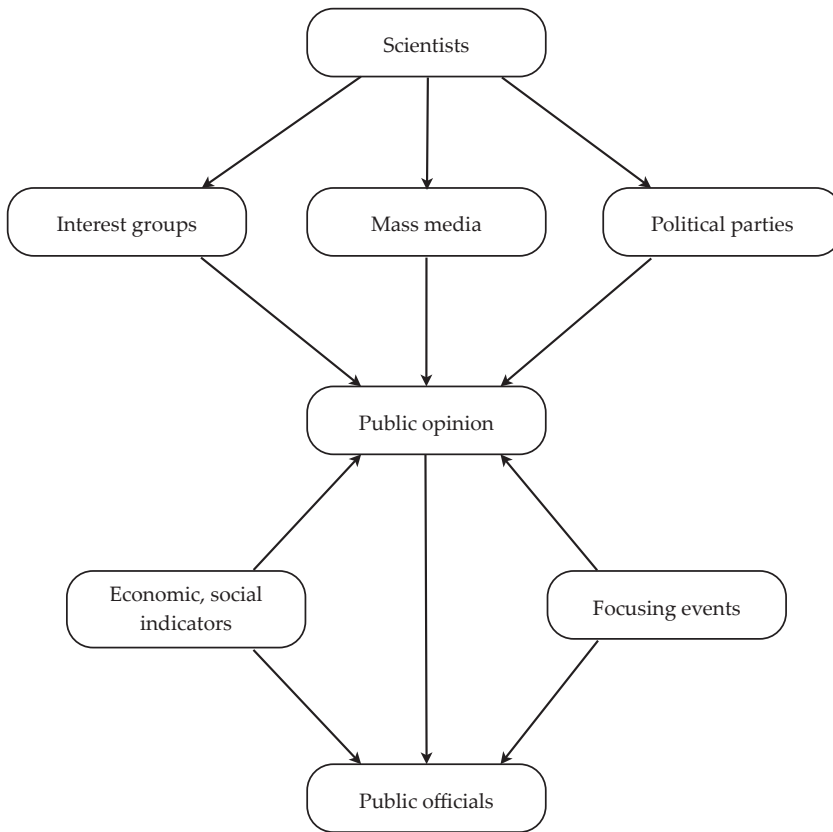


Figure 31: A ‘filtered view’ of scientific impacts on public policy. From Gormley (2011: 979).

DIFFERENT PHASES AND ACTORS OF THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

Classical models used to describe public policy-making processes usually consider five-stage cycles that include: 1) definition of the problem/issue or problematisation and agenda setting; 2) definition of goals to reach; 3) selection and formulation of policies; 4) policy implementation; 5) policy assessment and evaluation (Jenkins, 1997; Radin, 2000; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). These phases are, nonetheless, a simplification that Jennifer Ozga defined as an “ideotype” (INT26), a mere ‘idealised’ generalisation that does not correspond to any real governing systems or modes, especially in the case of the EU. John Kingdon defined the policy agenda a “list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention to at any given time” and further explained that “the agenda-setting process narrows this set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually be-

comes the focus of attention" (Kingdon, 1995: 3). In the wider meaning of the *agenda setting*, the main problem is described, goals and policy alternatives are identified, the various supporting arguments are examined, and any possible obstacles to the implementation of the policy are analysed. Thus, agenda setting plays a crucial role in the policy-making process, and has actually been identified as the most sensitive phase of the whole process (Kingdon, 1984; Brine, 2000; Zito, 2001; From, 2002).

Table 14: Key stakeholders involved in the European adult education policy-making and their roles. From Gellis (2012: 11).

	a) European Commission	b) National governments	c) Regional & local governments	d) Associations & NGOs at European & national level (e.g. National institutes for AL)	e) Education providers	f) Social partners (e.g. trade unions, employers)
Target groups	B2B (National, regional, local governments, education providers, NGOs, media)	B2B (Regional & local governments, education providers, NGOs, social partners, media), B2C (learners)	B2B & B2C (National governments, education providers, NGOs, social partners, media, learners)	B2B & B2C (EC, National, regional & local governments, education providers, social partners, media, learners)	B2B & B2C (Regional & local government, NGOs, social partners, learners)	B2C (learners)
Funding	Provide funding	Provide funding	Provide/receive funding	Receive funding	Receive funding	Provide/receive funding
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate national research efforts Collate & disseminate emerging best practice Mainstream AL into other European policy areas Communicate & disseminate socio-economic benefits of AL & potential of impact on other sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use national statistics & data to develop evidence-based plans Develop national campaign frameworks Set national objectives, targets & goals Create identity of campaigns Monitor, evaluate & quality assure activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research local needs & identify socio-demographic targets Implement national campaign activities locally Initiate regional/local awareness-raising plans Monitor & evaluate activities Develop learning regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research learners' needs & barriers to access Lobby policy makers Develop campaigns targeting learners – tying AL to their interests Provide training & mentoring to other NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplify offer to meet demand Communicate individual, social benefits of AL Recognise value of prior/experiential learning Base & adapt AL education offer on needs Monitor & evaluate activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate tools produced by other stakeholders
Tactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create shared learning & networking opportunities Empower implementers through thought leadership Encourage interaction & exchange among sub-national actors (e.g. staff, practice, projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate campaign efforts at regional levels Create opportunities for networking & collaboration Promote, encourage, incentivise & recognise participation from private sector Mobilise national media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate efforts at civil society level Rely on multipliers for dissemination Create best practices & exchange with other cities & regional authorities Mobilise regional & local media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of networks amongst NGOs & civil society Work with policy makers & social partners Interact with learners to customise education offer Advocacy for AL sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form strategic partnerships with other stakeholders to provide education Cooperate with businesses & NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interact with target groups to educate them on benefits & importance of AL
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop online tools (for local adaptation, translation, printing) Organise conferences, seminars & tutorials Develop online collaborative platform to favour e-learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop national guidelines, information packages & toolkits Organise forums for civil society & businesses Organise conferences, seminars & tutorials Develop training & capacity-building activities Phone-in strategies and systems Create necessary infrastructure for AL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on accreditation & available courses in different formats (e.g. distance learning & per target group) Provide information on available funding Facilitate events & public spaces for fairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of events Use face-to-face communications Develop print publications Use online tools for resource sharing & learning Research & development experimentation and cooperation in European projects and networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop internal communications tools for staff members & teachers Market educational offer through intermediaries Use online tools to raise awareness of & deliver education courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use face-to-face communications Develop print materials Create networking events Develop training for employees

The fragmentation of the AEL sector (INT6; INT8), discussed in chapter 3, and the multiple stakeholders involved (cf. Table 14 above and Figure 32 below, built around the two WGs which have operated in the EC and the *Grundtvig* sub-programme) further contribute to the increased complexity of the EU policy-making system in this area.

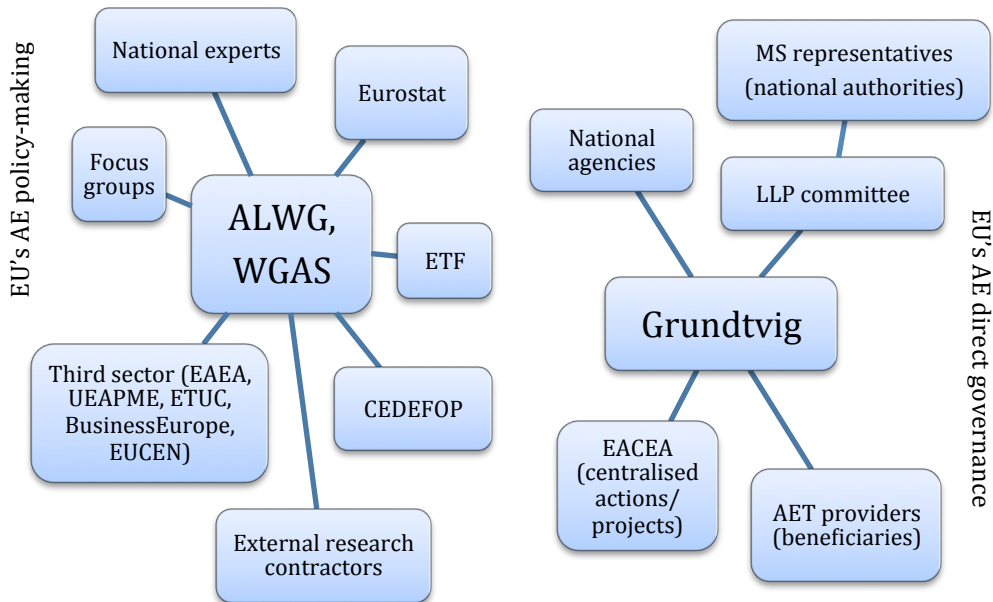


Figure 32: EU policy-making and governance on AEL under the DG EAC coordination during 2000–2010: networks of stakeholders involved.

In the framework of the OMC, the setting of the policy agenda for the EU adult education policy area has been linked to the EU legislative impulse – traditionally exerted by the Commission’s initiatives and put forward after it has adopted prior proposals – and has revolved around multi-level governance and multi-source coordination (Figure 32 above) in the first instance, but also multi-dimensional legitimation (Figure 33 below) at the same time, with the scope of identifying and introducing problems and issues as ‘objective’ and considering them as significant in order to start the process of policy-making:

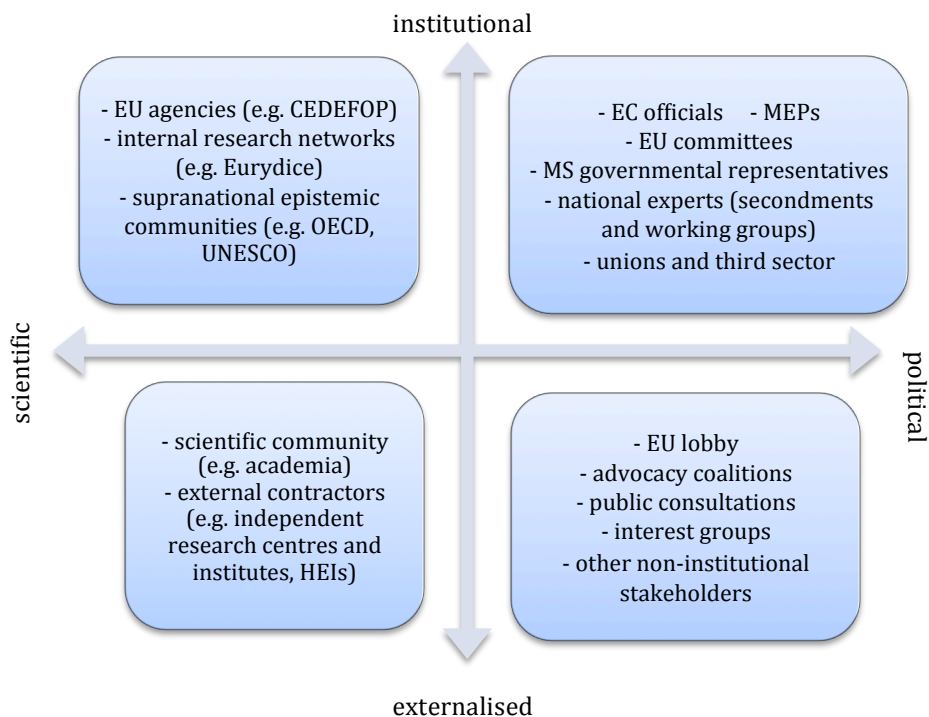


Figure 33: Model for *policy legitimation* by main actors contributing to or influencing the agenda setting phase in the OMC context.

In the above model describing of the agenda setting of the Lisbon Strategy in the OMC context, the different sources of legitimation and actors/stakeholders contributing to or influencing this phase of the policy-making process are distributed across the axis of the *scientific* vs. *political* dimensions, and the *internal* (institutional) vs. *external* (consultative or outsourced) dimensions.

THE EU POLICY LEGITIMACY AND THE ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

The balancing between political legitimation and scientific legitimation composing the EU policy legitimacy within the Lisbon process is modulated across the prior building of an ‘evidence base’ which tends to involve a range of policy actors and to include non-institutional stakeholders to ‘compensate’ the lack of political legitimacy determined by the ‘democratic deficit’ that has been attributed to the EU (Biesta, 2006; Kröger, 2007). At the same time, the European education sector “benefits from the EU’s independence and lack of need for electoral accountability”, since “the process is largely depoliticised, with the Lisbon OMC providing a managed consensus over the aims of the sector and the

means of achieving them, as opposed to highly politicised national education debates” (Dale, 2006: 45).

It is also clear that the sources of scientific legitimation (blocks on the left in Figure 33) are very diverse, and provide different contributions to the several phases of the policy-making process. While external providers of scientific evidence, e.g. higher education institutions (HEIs) or independent centres for research, are in fact mostly present in the agenda setting phase, the institutional research providers (i.e. EU agencies, Eurostat, Eurydice) are also involved in the last phase of EU policy-making. The main qualitative difference of the evidence provided at the different stages of this process by technical or statistical units (Eurydice, Eurostat), in-house research centres and networks (e.g. CRELL, NESSE or EENEE), and especially by decentralised research bodies (EU agencies), is that while in the agenda-setting stage it is mainly presented as *scientific* in nature (in the sense of *theoretical*), in the evaluation stage it is substantially *empirical*. In order to understand this bias, it should be noted that, shifting from the analysis of processes, epistemologies and theoretical formulations to the evidence of ‘whatever works’, the EU policy-making process slowly moves from traditional NPM approaches towards QAE-driven dynamics, supported by arguments based on successful examples of implemented policy (evidence-based *lessons learned*⁴³ and *best practices*).

Around 1995, an evaluation trend started impacting the North Atlantic world and from the year 2000, the ‘evidence movement’ established more firmly in the Western countries demanding that “government activities be based on success: ‘what matters is what works’, and what works is called evidence” (Vedung, 2010: 273–4; original emphasis):

The evidence wave tends to structure the field from a social science methodology point of view, not a political, administrative or client-oriented one. Tacitly at least, it is based on *means-ends* rationality, where the task of evaluation is to enhance and disseminate knowledge of means. The evidence movement, some pundits argue, involves the return of science-based evaluation, but in a new disguise.

Characteristic of this new evaluation trend was thus the effort to make policy-making and governance more scientific by relying on the gathering of empirical evidence rather than theoretical conceptualisation and political idiosyncrasy. It was more concerned with ‘what actually works’, and found sources of inspiration from randomised experimentation. Linking the above considerations on the evidence-based evaluation movement with policy borrowing related to globalisation (Kwiek, 2009), Lawn et al. (2011: 15) commented that “the logic is the one of *bricolage*: borrowing and copying from elsewhere, trying whatever works”. In this regard, although with the opposite focus, Nicoletta Stame

⁴³ Cf. Vedung (2010: 273): “the lessons learned are about intervention consequences at outcome levels”.

(2010) addressed policy evaluation in terms of “what doesn’t work” (suggesting lessons learned from the ‘bad practices’ are more fruitful than those from good or best practices). Hence, ‘methodology failures’ would provide alternative evidence of impact by subverting the epistemic focus that should feed evidence-based and evidence-driven policy-making and evaluation processes.

A MODEL FOR THE EU POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

Accordingly, in the model of the policy-making process context proposed by John Richardson (1996), at the *agenda setting* stage ideas and solutions are promoted by a wide range of interest groups in response to perceived problems or interests. In the EU, when a problem arises or an issue is suggested by the EU citizens or the MS, ideas are selected and *formulated into policies* aimed at responding to the problem or issue. Following a process of deliberation and consideration of alternatives, a *policy decision* is thus made, which is then *implemented, monitored* and finally *evaluated*. In the following Table 15, an adaptation of Richardson’s model is drawn, including a new description of the processes that take into account the reflections hitherto made in relation with EU policy-making.

Table 15: Model for EU policy-making process. Adapted from Kingdon (1995), Richardson (1996) and Jenkins (1997).

Policy Stage	Actors	Processes
Agenda setting	Council Presidencies European Parliament Commission Officials MS Governmental Representatives EU Committees Epistemic Communities Policy entrepreneurs Lobby/Interest groups National Experts Third sector and other stakeholders Advocacy coalitions	Problems and issues are recognised as significant (e.g. skills mismatch); public consultation is launched; research is conducted and/or commissioned; networks are activated; lobbying starts; interest groups work to trigger interest in solutions (e.g. integration of key competences in national curricula); new regulations or agreements are considered; priorities are set in the agendas.
Policy formulation	European Commission EU Committees Expert Groups Policy entrepreneurs Policy networks	Lobbying intensifies; documents are discussed; expert and focus groups are formed and develop what interest groups have prepared; consultation meetings are arranged; budget negotiations are made.
Policy decision	European Parliament EU Council National Governments	Policy outputs (legislation): directives, regulations, recommendations, papers.
Implementation	EU Commission Member States National Networks Project participants	Action programmes (e.g. <i>Grundtvig</i>) launched; benchmarking processes start; peer learning activities conducted; clusters and working groups activated; country interim and final reports are prepared.
Benchmarking and evaluation	EC (incl. Eurostat) Member States National Networks EU Agencies Epistemic Communities External research contractors	Setting of benchmarks and indicators to carry out monitoring and <i>ex-post</i> evaluation of the policy implemented (e.g. <i>Progress Reports</i>); collection of performance data from the MS through national networks (e.g. Eurydice), Eurostat and other supranational regimes (e.g. OECD and UNESCO); production of Reports and studies on the data gathered and identification of best practices to disseminate and promote through OMC tools (PLAs, working groups, involvement of national experts and governmental representatives at various stages); audit and monitoring visits by EC officials in the national authorities' units.

This last phase of the policy-making process, that of the policy evaluation through setting of benchmarks, analysis of comparative data and statistics, is a direct result of the

accountability needs that have been discussed in paragraph 3.3 Scientific- or evidence-based policy. In ‘traditional’ legislative systems and ‘hard’ governance architectures, this ‘retrospective assessment’ eventually results in the cyclic modification or re-adaptation of the legislation according to such *ex-post* knowledge. In the framework of the OMC, however, the policy-making cycle is quite different: the last two phases of the process are strictly intertwined, and happen practically simultaneously (INT26) as benchmarking and evaluation – background for the following peer pressure through best practice exchange – are the very implementation tools used by the Lisbon coordination in the EU policy areas in regime of subsidiarity.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR THE EU

The Lisbon coordination encompasses a variety of actors and influences at each phase of the policy decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation. As part of the policy initiative assessment (and thus prior to the first phase of the agenda setting), *impact assessment* (IA)⁴⁴ is conceived by the Commission as an *ex-ante* planning task (despite the term *impact* implicitly projects the assessment to an *ex-post* dimension). On its official website,⁴⁵ the EC explains that “before the European Commission proposes new initiatives it assesses the potential economic, social and environmental consequences that they may have” and, in this perspective, “impact assessment is a set of logical steps which helps the Commission to do this”. Moreover, an inter-institutional agreement on better law-making signed in 2003 by the EC, the EP and the Council stipulated that all “substantive amendments introduced by the Parliament and the Council will be subject to impact assessment” (Radaelli, 2007: 195, note 2 on page 204).

Hence, impact assessment is a process to “prepare evidence for political decision-makers on the advantages and disadvantages of possible policy options” by assessing their *potential* impact under the guide of the so-called ‘Impact Assessment Board’ (IAB).⁴⁶ The rationale of this exercise is presented by the EC as follows (original emphasis):

⁴⁴ See http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/index_en.htm.

⁴⁵ Available at http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/index_en.htm.

⁴⁶ According to the EC, the Impact Assessment Board is a “central quality control and support function” working under the authority of the Commission President. It was created at the end of 2006 and is chaired by the Deputy Secretary General responsible for Better Regulation. The Board examines and issues opinions on all the Commission’s impact assessments. It is *independent* of the policy-making departments and its members are “high-level officials from the Commission departments” most directly linked with the three pillars of the impact assessment – economic, social and environmental impacts. The members have been appointed “in a personal capacity and on the basis of their expert knowledge”. The Board examines and issues opinions on the quality of individual draft impact assessments prepared by the Commission departments and can also draw on *external expertise*. The Board also provides advice to Commission departments on methodology *at the early stages of preparation* of the impact assessments. The opinions of the Board are not binding. However, its opinion “accompanies the draft initiative together with the impact assessment report throughout the Commission’s political decision-making”. The Commission impact assessment is an aid – not a substitute – for political judgement. Ultimately,

- The Commission believes that the most effective way of *improving the quality* of new policy proposals is by making those people who are responsible for policy development also responsible for assessing the impact of what they propose.
- To this end, the Commission has rolled out a wide-ranging impact assessment system. It is based on an *integrated approach* which analyses both benefits and costs, and addresses all significant *economic, social and environmental* impacts of possible new initiatives.
- This approach ensures that all relevant *expertise within the Commission* is used, together with *inputs from stakeholders*. In doing so, it also enhances the coherence of initiatives *across policy areas*.
- The Commission's system is both *accountable and transparent*. It strives for full involvement of stakeholders. All *impact assessments* and all *opinions* of the Impact Assessment Board on their quality are published online⁴⁷ once the Commission has adopted the relevant proposal.
- Impact assessment also helps to explain why an *action is necessary at the EU level* and why the proposed response is an appropriate choice. It may of course also demonstrate why *no action at the EU level should be taken*.

The stress on *quality assurance* (QA) and the attention paid to *accountability* is here evident, and provides the present analysis with deeper insights. First of all, as Claudio Radaelli (2007: 194) noted, while impact assessment in the EU accountability underlines the cost-benefit constraints, its main emphasis would be “on systematic consultation, the analysis of different options (regulatory and not), and the identification of the trade-offs that decision-makers have to face”. Secondly, as the EC clearly put it, impact assessment follows a policy-making *proposal* and precedes its adoption by the Commission in order to start the agenda setting. Finally, impact assessment would help “to explain *why an action is necessary* at the EU level and *why the proposed response is an appropriate choice*” or otherwise “why no action at the EU level should be taken”.

EU ‘INDIRECT’ ACCOUNTABILITY AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Although some scholarly interpretations tend to advocate that the EU is *formally* accountable to the MS by legal mandate, (e.g. Milana, 2012b: note 12), the above-outlined assessment of the impact of the prospected policy options that the EC has established is instead a *voluntary* exercise of transparency related to its quest of political legitimation,

“it is the Commission which decides whether or not to adopt an initiative, taking account of the impact assessment and the Board’s opinion”. All impact assessments and all IAB opinions are published once the Commission has adopted the relevant proposal. Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/iab/iab_en.htm.

⁴⁷ See http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/ia_carried_out/ia_carried_out_en.htm.

which is especially necessary to the EU in policy areas where it does not have exclusive legislative competence. Bovens (2007) defined it as a ‘new form of accountability’ that falls under the umbrella of what Biesta (2009) described as ‘indirect accountability’ as opposed to ‘direct accountability’ or social and political *responsibility* in the ethical sense of the term (cf. also Fisher, 2004; Vidovich, 2009). Indeed, the OMC itself is, by definition (see par. 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC), the method for EU policy-making “that facilitates the *voluntary* coordination of national policies” (Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 6; own italics). This interpretation is corroborated by Jennifer Ozga (INT26) and Mark Dawson (2009b: 6), who further substantiated it by saying that any attempt made by the EU to turn the OMC into an even slightly ‘harder’ method of governance, by increasing its prescriptive power or coercive potential, has been shown to engender a deadlock and a fading of endorsement, or even a substantial rejection of the policy infused by the MS (cf. paragraphs 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC and 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU’s soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector).

In effect, whilst the Commission is accountable to the Parliament – requiring its approval to take office and having to report back to it and subject to motions of censure from it, but not to the MS (INT26) – the EU as a whole is *not* directly accountable to the European electorate (Harlow, 2002; Arnall & Wincott, 2002; Borrás & Conzelmann, 2007). In addition to this ‘democratic deficit’ (Biesta, 2006), Jennifer Ozga commented on the “widespread decline of political accountability” in relation to the ascent of technocracy in the EU institutions (INT26):

Politicians conventionally constructed have lost influence because often they do not understand or they cannot interrogate the evidence or data that are being presented to them. In this sense, it is not confined to the relationship between the Commission and the Member States. [...] Technocrats have already arrived at a stage of *choice-making*, that excludes the politics and translates the activity into something that is driven by *evidence*. Of course it *isn't*, it is driven by *their* views of what the evidence *should* be telling. It is the way the *élites* maintain their positions, but there is also a subtle and interesting tension about the evidence and the politics when policy-makers believe that data and evidence actually tell them what to do, and I think the Commission has that dream as well: it would know everything, see the landscape, and things would become self-evident.

In this scenario of ‘accountability shortcoming’, the IA was presented by the EC (2002c: 2) as “a tool to improve the quality and coherence of the policy development process” to be implemented “gradually from 2003, for all major initiatives, i.e. those which are presented in the Annual Policy Strategy or later in the Work Programme of the Commission”. It found its policy basis (not by coincidence) in ‘soft governance’ policy outcomes in the form of a *white paper* (EC, 2001e; cf. EC, 2002c: 2), subsequently translated

into a detailed statement of common *policy guidelines*⁴⁸ (EC, 2009c; cf. Radaelli, 2001: 124–5). In tandem, and possibly as a consequence of the ‘political accountability weakness’ of the EU (INT26; BBC, 2013), scientific legitimation became increasingly employed to justify either policy change or, alternatively, the absence of reforms (cf. par. 3.2.2 Governing through data and the influence of supranational regimes on national adult education systems).

REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND THE OMC

In their description of the ‘regulatory impact assessment’ (RIA) approach to policy-making, Kirkpatrick and Parker (2007: 2–3) defined IA as a “tool of public policy analysis which contributes to better policy selection” by informing policy decisions through an assessment of the impact of policy options “in terms of the costs, benefits and risks of a proposal”, and thus in line with a conceptualisation of IA deprived of all regulatory or adaptive pressure. Moreover, the systematic appraisal of the positive and negative impacts of policy reforms can involve public consultations to identify and measure benefits and costs. The IA would thus have the “potential to improve transparency of governmental decision-making” and “promote government accountability by reporting on the information used in decision-making and by demonstrating how the regulation will impact on the society”. However, when IA or RIA is imported and applied to EU policy-making as an expression of the QAE system, it is “difficult to scratch below the surface of new public management rhetoric”, because “the notions of quality that circulate in the current debate are insensitive to context” (Radaelli, 2004a: 271; see also Radaelli, 2004b).

Also, from the opposite perspective and especially in the context of the E&T policy area and whenever the EU policy-making occurs in regime of subsidiarity, EU Member States are certainly not becoming *formally* accountable, by reason of the OMC’s soft governance. Conversely, they are subject to the peer pressure it determines which, on the one hand, calls upon national governments to increase transparency in terms of both policy and governance *vis-à-vis* their (national) peers and, furthermore, expresses supranational ‘independent’ soft power while respecting the nation-states’ sovereignty. In this regard, Dawson (2009b: 4) highlighted:

Under the OMC, the iterative nature of structures of national reporting and peer review make holding actors to an *a priori* defined legislative mandate impossible. [...] The nature of peer review holds out the possibility of establishing new accountability relationships. Here, actors are accountable on a ‘dynamic’ basis, to standards and expectations that evolve as national preferences, and social structures, change. Under this model, we are not accountable upwards to an original purposive ‘mission’, or to an ultimate legislative superior (of which, in the EU, there is none), but accountable side-ways, to other state and non-state actors, who share a mutual inter-

⁴⁸ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/commission_guidelines/commission_guidelines_en.htm and http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/commission_guidelines/docs/iag_2009_en.pdf.

est in ensuring that all policy actors takes common procedural and political commitments seriously.

Hence, although the OMC contains “structures of horizontal review and scrutiny”, it also fundamentally relies on *voluntary* opportunities of learning from peers – with the paradoxical result of even becoming an *obstacle* to effective policy learning⁴⁹ – and from the increased awareness of the local system alone and in systematic comparison with other MS’s (Dawson, 2009b: 11):

These structures are both designed, and used by administrative actors, as learning opportunities, rather than as a means to call other states ‘dynamically’ to account. While this function may itself be important, the effectiveness of peer review has been further constricted by its confinement to a select group of explicitly ‘Europeanised’ policy actors. Not only are traditional, hierarchical forms of accountability diluted under the method, but there is little evidence of the multiplication or ‘broadening’ of accountable actors upon which the transformation thesis relies. While we may therefore have a more ‘dynamic’ form of rule, this dynamism could precisely inhibit the necessary procedural frameworks, and temporal space, within which adequate accountability relationships can arise.

In a similar perspective, Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 6) conceptualised the OMC within the general “observable trend towards proceduralisation in EU politics”, as opposed to the other ‘new mode of governance’ of the ‘regulatory impact assessment’. It now appears evident that IA, in the context of subsidiarity, does not possess such regulatory property or ideal (cf. par. 3.3.2.4 Adult skills upgrading and the ‘skill matching challenge’). In this regard, Sandra Kröger (2009: 6) noted that most scholars “perceive a lack of openness in the OMC processes, which are found to be even more closed than their hard law equivalents” and, in this view, the OMC does not “live up to the deliberative ideal in any way, but rather resembles deliberation between elites for elites in which parliaments, social partners and NGOs are hardly involved, and political alternatives not discussed”. Moreover, in relation to expert networks and similar soft governance tools in the framework of the OMC, she ultimately argued that “accountability does not exist as the involved experts cannot be held accountable by anyone, not least due to a lack of transparency” (cf. Berghman & Okma, 2002; see also Radaelli, 2003; Arrowsmith et al., 2004; De la Porte & Nanz, 2004; Goetschy, 2004; Smismans, 2004; Papadopoulos, 2005; Friedrich, 2006; Jacobsson & Vifell, 2007; Kröger, 2007; 2008).

⁴⁹ According to Kröger (2009: 6), “the OMC does not satisfy the requirements for a learning-friendly environment”, for “macro-, meso- and micro reasons which can act as obstacles to learning” (argument further elaborated in her paper, on pages 6–8).

SYSTEMATIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR THE EC POLICY-MAKING

IA procedures are considered as opportune “for the most important Commission initiatives and those having the most far reaching impacts” and are therefore prepared for (EC, 2002c; 2009c):⁵⁰

- legislative proposals which have significant economic, social and environmental impacts;
- non-legislative initiatives (white papers, *action plans*, expenditure programmes, negotiating *guidelines for international agreements*) which define future policies;
- certain implementing measures (*comitology* items) which are likely to have significant impacts.

Furthermore, the European Commission itself explained⁵¹ that, each year, “the Secretariat General, involving the Impact Assessment Board (including a ‘high-level group of national experts’)⁵² and the EC’s departments, screen all forthcoming initiatives and decides for which an impact assessment is needed” and “all above mentioned initiatives are *preceded* by a roadmap” (own emphasis). Such kinds of policy ‘roadmaps’ (e.g. Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map), intended by the Commission to give “a first description of a planned EC initiative”⁵³ belong with all evidence to the *scientific legitimization* phase that *precedes* the ‘forthcoming policy initiatives’ (cf. Figure 35). Almost simultaneously with the launch of the LLP in 2007 (thus not earlier, e.g. at the moment of the selection of the policy options), the EC established a specific Working Group for the ‘Impact Assessment of the Lifelong Learning Programme’ (WGIA) with the mandate of measuring the impact of the 2007–2013 action programme in the field of E&T (EU, 2006a). The administrative grounds underlying this activity of the EC were indeed similar to the above described *ex-ante* IA procedure, and paid as much attention to accountability and quality assurance, although the WGIA’s work was carried out in a different legal setting (the subsidiarity principle). In the area of E&T, in fact, impact is assessed, by definition, in the long term, *after* the education or training has taken place, albeit some programme benefits could be assessed over a reasonably short period of time. In the case of the LLP, however, the EC was invested with the responsibility of providing the EP and the Coun-

⁵⁰ List available on the official EC website:

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/which_com_init/which_com_init_en.htm.

⁵¹ Cf. web address in note 50 above.

⁵² Endorsing the principle that “smart regulation is essential for generating more growth and employment in Europe and making life easier for enterprises and citizens”, the EC has set up a *Group of high level national regulatory experts* who advises the Commission on its general strategy to “simplify and improve European legislation and to facilitate the development of better regulation measures at both national and EU level” (EC, 2006e; see also http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/high_level_group/index_en.htm). Complete list of members of the group available at http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/docs/high-level-group-national-experts-members_en.pdf (updated to 22 March 2012).

⁵³ See http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/planned_ia_en.htm.

cil with some evidence of the ROI in the Programme, which was attuned to the Lisbon objectives (to be attained by the 2010 deadline *also* through the LLP) and progress towards them needed to be monitored and some impact relating to the operational objectives measured by the same deadline – which was half-way through its whole duration – recognising, nonetheless, that farther-reaching impacts could be assessed only after the end of the LLP in 2013.

REVISION OF THE OMC ACCORDING TO IA AND QAE SYSTEMS

After the IA system was introduced with the Communication from the EC (2002c) and alongside the WGIA, the Commission also proposed, half-way through the Lisbon decade, a ‘simplified model’ of coordination for the OMC – illustrated through Figure 34 below – which would allow balancing of the legislative phases of the EU policy-making (first three columns on the left) with the assessment and evaluation phases (three columns on the right) as part of the EU soft governance: to merge the national with the supranational levels of such re-designed governance and to better coordinate the various stakeholders involved in the Lisbon governance (EC, 2005b: 6):

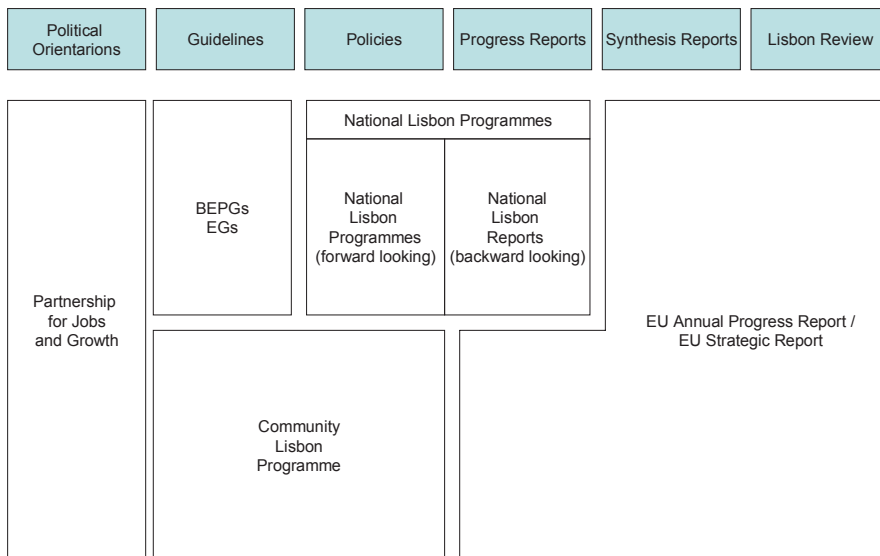


Figure 34: Model of proposal from the Commission for a simplified Lisbon Coordination Process. From EC (2005b: Appendix 1, p. 6).

The above figure shows the ‘cyclic nature’ of the *ex-ante* (‘forward looking’) Lisbon agenda-setting perspective and the *ex-post* (‘backward looking’) evaluative retrospective,

expressed by the recurrence of the Lisbon reports. If compared with the former model for the Lisbon coordination (Figure 4 on page 49), the effort made by the Commission to include more systematic reporting duties borne by the MS in the OMC to provide it with a more broadly legitimated administrative 'tempo' is evident.

AN INTEGRATED MODEL FOR THE EU (ADULT) EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING

As a matter of fact, the complexity of the Lisbon Strategy and of the OMC overlaps with the peculiarities of the EU policy-making in regime of subsidiarity. In this frame of reference, the last two phases of this process (policy implementation, benchmarking and evaluation) influence and cyclically modify each other. Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 6) emphasised this cyclical feature of the OMC as "part of an observable trend towards proceduralisation in EU politics", i.e. "the situation where Member States, disagreeing on the substantive content and distribution of institutional competences, choose to establish a set of procedures that allow flexible forms of coordinated action". Consequently, the mainstream EU education policy and the OMC can be exemplified with an integrated explanatory model, as shown in Figure 35:

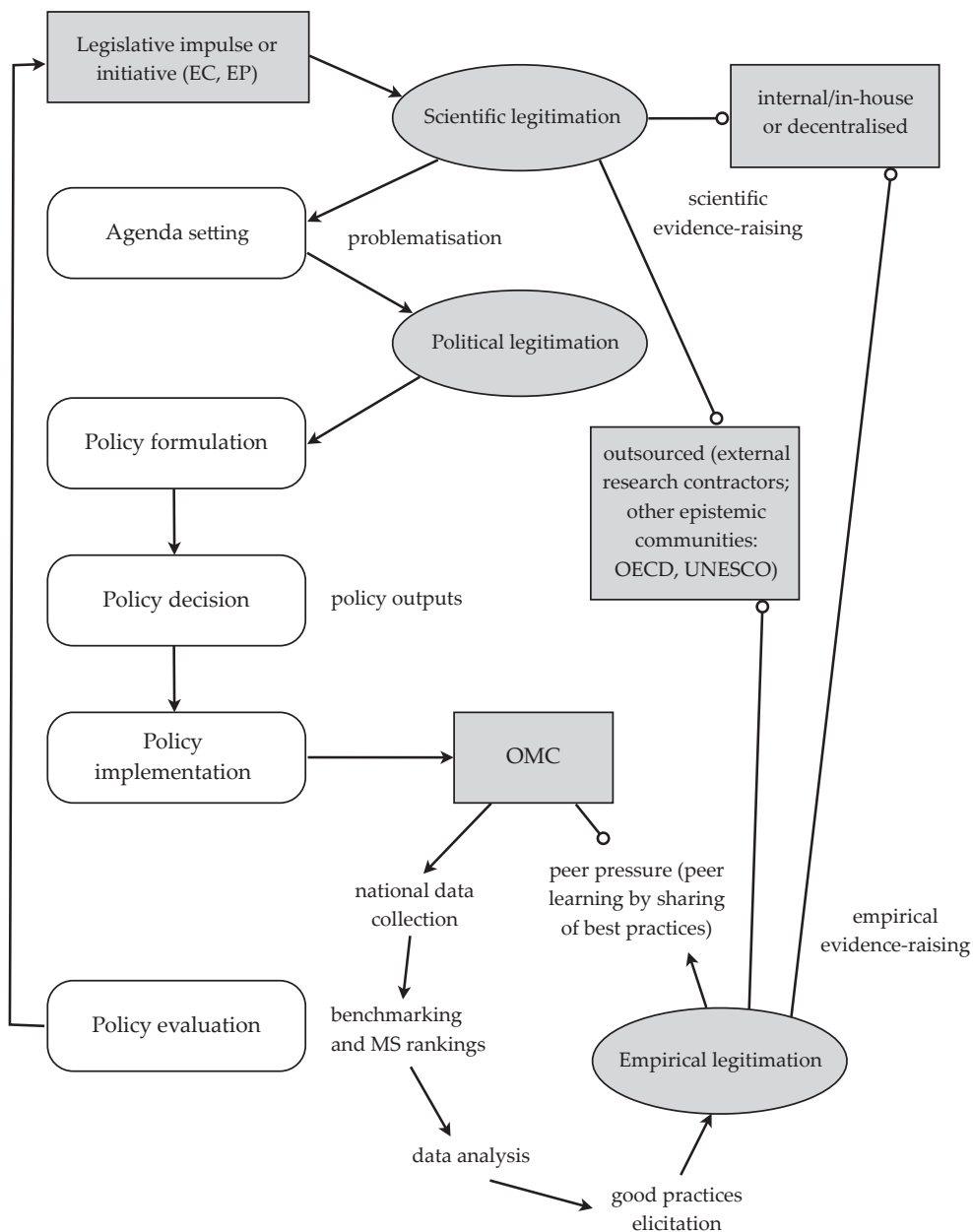


Figure 35: Integrated explanatory model for the EU education policy-making and the OMC.

The reason why the agenda setting phase intensively relies on the theory-driven and *deductive* evidence legitimisation expressed by NPM approaches, is that the alternative

of an empirical legitimation through inductive generalisations based on case studies, best practices and quality assurances does not serve well the stakeholders of this *ex-ante* activity with an 'objective' problematisation. The MS representatives, for example, would not accept a peer country's model of a benchmark to be shared and considered as a collective goal without it first being empirically evaluated as 'good practice' or 'good performance' (INT8). In effect, a 'second best' principle⁵⁴ in a policy area lacking a common European competence would engender a rejective attitude from those countries that do not share the same views or support, conversely, the respect of minorities' and national diversity ideals or political views. At this stage – called 'impact assessment' by the EC – which comprises the legislative impulse to the problematisation and feasibility study, more *theoretical* grounds (detailed, for example, in the "evidence base" section of the policy 'road map' for skills upgrading: cf. Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map) "can be used much better" (INT8) to involve national actors, which are then asked to 'politically' legitimate the policy process in question. This is why much of the scientific legitimation occurs 'off the record' and often even precedes the formal collegial agenda-setting phase, with the exception of the externalised and outsourced studies, which need agreed specific budget coverage. Enabling a 'whatever works' QAE approach reflects the choice, conversely, of a much more viable (although *inductive*) solution for "assessing and evaluating policy" parallel and functional to its implementation through OMC policy tools (INT7), and it corresponds, at the same time, to a – more or less conscious⁵⁵ – instrument for testing the preconceptions, hypotheses and generalisations endorsed in the agenda-setting through deductive logic.

AN EUROPEAN EDUCATION SECTOR (EES)

Consistent with the findings of the above examination of EU policy-making in the framework of the OMC, the analysis of the *European education sector* also contributes to the disclosure of a cost-benefit drive, firmly established within a European QAE system. Roger Dale (2009b: 377) emphasised the role of quality assurance in relation to the construction of the EES in the framework of the subsidiarity principle arguing that "Article 149 [of the Amsterdam Treaty] expressly permitted intervention in the 'quality' of education systems and 'quality' is an ideal basis for providing an entrée, or a plank of intervention, for the EU in education policy, indeed, for the construction of a European education policy". Furthermore, according to Dale (2006: 44–5), the EES would differ from the national education sectors in several respects; in terms of focus, in particular, this

⁵⁴ The principle of the 'second best' refers to what is the optimal policy when the true optimum (the first best) is unavailable due to constraints on policy choice (Lipsey & Lancaster, 1956; cf. also Maniscalco, 2012: 151).

⁵⁵ The parallel with Popper's arguments on the limitations of inductive logics of enquiry, which can generate hypotheses but cannot test them, is quite surprising (cf. Popper, 1959).

'policy space' is be concerned with the following elements, already discussed in the previous chapter:

- *learning* rather than *education* (cf. 3.1.4 The evolution of the 'lifelong education and learning' concept in the policy debate);
- *competence* instead of *content* (cf. 3.3.2 Towards the adult competence development and skill matching model);
- specific, *employment*-related focus rather than comprehensive social policy, nation building and scope (cf. 3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning* and next paragraphs).

All these elements are actually present in the latest policy streams and trends in the field of *adult education* as well, now increasingly referred to as *adult learning* or just *continuing learning*, stressing the individual's responsibility for skills and competences updating and upgrading, to be mainly oriented to occupational or professional purposes (EAEA, 2006: 6):

The individualisation of learning, whereby each adult chooses their own learning priorities connected to their unique prior knowledge and experience, is devalued in this context to become, or rather at least to be seen as, the transfer of blame for failure from 'the system' to the learner. The system means specifically an education system which favours those who already have, or more comprehensively the new world economic order which requires compliant, productive insecurely 'flexibilised', workers and active consumers.

Analogously, Biesta (2006: 169; own emphasis) commented on the normative character of this "individualisation of learning":

Under the conditions of the *learning economy* lifelong learning itself has become understood as an individual task rather than as a collective project and that this has transformed lifelong learning from a right to a *duty*. This raises important questions about who has the democratic right to set the agenda for lifelong learning. It also raises important issues about the motivation for lifelong learning and points particularly towards the predicament of the lifelong learner who *has* to engage in forms of learning without being able to *control* his or her own 'agenda' for learning.

In conclusion, lifelong education and learning has been present in the European policy agenda for many decades, but with a different intensity and with a different focus. At the beginning of this millennium, in particular, adult education was considered a vital component of the E&T policy of the EU and essential for its mainstreaming (comprising economic growth, employability and social cohesion). Given the discussed changes in demographic patterns in Europe, and its ageing population, it was then seen as urgent to extend learning opportunities over the course of adults' lives, offering them more possibilities to renew their skills and competences for life and work. As a result, the EU led national governments to switch from *lifelong education* to *lifelong learning*, so that it would

be ‘vertically’ articulated, first of all, throughout all stages of life and, secondly (but equally important functionally), no longer limited to specific institutions, but ‘horizontally’ integrated in all social and learning activities, and set it as the basic principle underlying all E&T policies.

3.5 A new centrality of adult and lifelong learning in the EU mainstream policy?

In the cited *locus classicus* on lifelong education published by the UNESCO Institute for Education (Dave, 1976), Annie Vinokur provided a snapshot of the discourse around this concept at a time when it was slowly muting in nature, describing it as twofold (Vinokur, 1976: 286; original emphasis):

According to one of the definitions most frequently given, lifelong education is ‘a creative process continuing throughout life which aims at integrating all kinds of learning experience for the development of the total human personality’. This formulation calls for two preliminary remarks: [...] lifelong education would, on the one hand, meet the needs of development of the total human personality and the necessity to develop in every individual creativity, initiative, a critical mind and *autonomy*; on the other, it would permit a better *adaptation* to ever more rapid economic and social change.

It has been illustrated how the comprehensive and ‘humanistic’ dimension of the above formulation has somewhat been dismissed in the EU policy debate of the last years, in exchange for the narrower principle of competence development as a response to the increasingly higher demands imposed on individuals by global competition and the knowledge economy, which therefore considers individuals as ‘passive’ actors of the knowledge economies and which primarily encompasses human capital and economic growth. However, these new demands not only provide opportunities, but also entail risks. In a society like the one described above, it is possible to look at the individual’s situation from different perspectives. The dominant perspective in the actual policy debate is that individuals have to confront demands and challenges, which implies that they must always be prepared to learn, re-learn and expand their learning. On a policy level, these demands on the individual have been successfully re-launched under the expression *lifelong learning*. As the EC put it, “in a Europe characterised by rapid technological and economic change and an ageing population, lifelong learning has become a necessity; the need for a continuous renewal of citizens’ knowledge, skills and competences is crucial for the EU’s competitiveness and social cohesion” (EC, 2006c; on the use of the term *social cohesion* in the EU policy documents see also Moutsios, 2007: 23).

NEW STRATEGY, SAME PRIORITIES?

As said, the rhetoric of the knowledge economy and the policy discourse about competitiveness and innovation revolve around 'new skills' formation and key competence development systems (Crouch, Finegold & Sato, 1999; Brown, Green & Lauder, 2001). Green (2006) noted that, whereas "the Anglo-Saxon model is typically associated with skill formation systems that create polarised skills distributions, combining high skills elites with a substantial number of poorly qualified low skills employees", the European 'social market' model, conversely, is associated with "skills formation strategies that generate high levels of skills distributed throughout the workforce" (p. 55). However, "research into recent trends in western economies [...] suggests that the various binary models that pit economic competitiveness against social cohesion need to be rethought and that there are possible models of the knowledge society that combine both", and "the evidence also suggests that lifelong learning regimes may play a part in this" (p. 56–7). Throughout Europe, the concept of *lifelong learning* is actually operating as a vision and a guiding principle for policy-makers in the above terms, and, in this frame of reference, EU countries are also striving to increase the quantity and the quality of *adult education* provision (INT17). Despite the common overlapping of meaning of the two concepts, it is undeniable that the two initiatives were not always coordinated and inscribed in a systemic strategy.

After the EU Member States had strengthened their political cooperation through the Education and Training 'ET 2010' Work Programme launched in 2001, its follow-up, the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training*, was adopted by the Council of the EU in May 2009 (EU, 2009a). Both programmes, as mentioned above, integrated the various European actions in the field of E&T, including those related to the Bologna Process and to the Copenhagen Process, which played a fundamental role for the establishment of the *European Research Area* (ERA) and the *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA). The renewed 'ET 2020' Strategic Framework set key objectives and targets to be reached by 2020, and identified four long-term strategic objectives (cf. par. 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC):

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

Additionally, it set five new education and training benchmarks to be attained by 2020, which complemented or refined the existing ones, namely that:

- the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10% (at the current rate of 14.4%, this would mean at least 1.7 million fewer school drop-outs);
- the share of 30–34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40% (at the current rate of 32.3%, this would mean an additional 2.6 million graduates);
- at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education (now 92.3%; achieving this target would mean 250,000 more children in education);
- the share of 15-year-olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15% (from around 20% for all three in 2010; achieving this target would mean 250,000 fewer low achievers);
- an average of at least 15% of adults (age group 25–64) should participate in lifelong learning (in 2010 this share was 9.3%; achieving the target would mean 15 million more adults of working age participating in education and training).

In May 2010, while re-defining the targets and objectives for the European Education Systems for the next decade, the EU Council of Education underlined the principles of the OMC, on the basis of which lies the whole structure of the *Education and Training 2020* Work Programme and, in the Presidency Conclusions of the 3013th Education, Youth and Culture European Council meeting in Brussels, held on 11 May 2010, the education targets of the ‘Europe 2020’ strategy were addressed as follows:

The Council agreed to propose to the European Council in June 2010 the numerical rates of the EU headline targets to improve education levels of the new strategy Europe 2020, building on the two corresponding levels of European average performance (European benchmarks) approved in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ‘ET 2020’, that is by 2020, the school drop-out rate should be less than 10% and the share of population having completed tertiary or equivalent education⁵⁶ should be at least 40%. In line with their responsibility for their education and training systems, the competence of the Member States regarding the setting and implementation of quantitative national targets in the area of education and training is fully maintained. The principles and working methods agreed under the strategic framework for European cooperation in this field play their full role in monitoring progress towards the EU headline targets for education.

When analysing the focal points of the ‘ET 2020’, different approaches between background principles and expected outcomes emerge, with the latter ensuring more

⁵⁶ I.e. the percentage of those who have successfully completed education at ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education by UNESCO) levels 5 and 6. Member States may in justified cases include national qualifications currently classified at ISCED level 4 into the definition of their national target for tertiary or equivalent education. Cf. www.uis.unesco.org/isced.

continuity with the ‘relaunched’ Lisbon agenda of the second half of the decade which focused on ‘growth and jobs’ and the skills upgrading and matching (INT11):

If you look closely at the differences between the Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy, you’ll see an extraordinary change of approach in our field, in learning. The Lisbon Strategy’s main objectives were to strengthen and modernise education and training systems. In ‘Europe 2020’ the approach has become ‘let’s develop the right skills for new and changing jobs’. Of course the way to do this is to develop modern education and training systems – but the orientation is toward the outcome, not the process. This represents a general change of approach in Europe, and the crisis has really pushed it to the forefront. What’s important is not the system *per se*; it’s the impact of the system. The crisis has stepped up the turn towards this outcomes-based approach. [...] Our skills and competence analysis: the forecasts, the learning outcomes approach – all that was taken on board in ‘Europe 2020’ and in several other policy decisions. [...] CEDEFOP has been part of this process every step of the way. We are happy to see that not only our evidence and analyses but also our ‘motto’ has been adopted in the new strategy. This is rare for an organisation that does not make policy, that provides technical support to policy.

Whereas it is not surprising that CEDEFOP has “taken a pragmatic view of training in conjunction with employment”, because of its institutional mandate, it is indeed quite exceptional that the whole strategic framework for education and training in the EU adopted the motto of its VET agency, providing the policy area with a vocational connotation that – in effect – is also revealed in its architecture.

CONFINTEA AND THE UNESCO PARADIGM FOR ADULT EDUCATION

This orientation indeed appears to be more evident, especially in consideration of the approaches and policy developments of others IOs such as UNESCO or the COE in the same period of time (during 2010). The sixth UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education (usually referred to with the French acronym of *Confinte*, for Conférence Internationale sur l’Education des Adultes) held in December 2009, for example, represented an important platform for policy dialogue on AEL at a global level (INT18). In fact, Confinte VI actually brought together governments, agencies of the United Nations (UN), organisations from the private third sector, civil society, Ministers and Deputy Ministers from 144 UNESCO Member States. The conference objectives were: to create commitment and action on adult learning and education; to push forward recognition for adult learning and education as an important element of, and a factor conducive to, lifelong learning, for which literacy is the foundation; to highlight the role of adult learning for the realisation of international policy frameworks; and to renew political momentum and commitment, and to develop tools for implementation, in order to move from rhetoric to action (UNESCO, 2010). Confinte VI closed with the adoption of the *Belém Framework for Action*, which recorded the commitments of UNESCO’s Member States, and presented a “strategic guide” for the global development of adult education within the perspective of lifelong learning which included, among others, the following points:

1. Youth and adult education must be recognised as enforceable human rights (see comment 13 on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and discrimination in provision must not be tolerated.
2. Participation is essential to ensure that programmes take into account the specific needs of marginalised groups, and encourage development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.
3. Literacy must be seen as a continuum and the old polarised dichotomy of literacy and illiteracy must be abolished. New national surveys are needed that collect data on a spectrum of literacy levels to show the real scale of the challenge and to end the myth of there being a magic line to cross from illiteracy into literacy.
4. There should be no more short-term campaigns to eradicate adult illiteracy. Rather, sustained investment is needed in programmes that work with learners for at least two or three years, with continuity into programmes of lifelong learning.
5. The International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy, published by GCE, should be used as a starting point for new national dialogue, for the design of effective programmes and as a basis for monitoring and evaluation of existing provision.
6. States should commit themselves to allocating a minimum 6% of their GNP to education and, within the education budget, to assign a minimum of 6% for Youth and Adult Education, with a priority given to literacy.
7. Donors should pay their fair share of the external financing requirement for Youth and Adult Education. At least 6% of aid to education from all donors should go to Youth and Adult Education in order to fill the financing gap in this area, which is at least two billion dollars a year.
8. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) macro-economic conditions that undermine investment in education should be challenged, especially in the present context of global recession, so that States can adequately invest in the full EFA agenda. The G20 should not give the funds they have pledged to the IMF until there is real reform of the conditions that block investment in education.

As highlighted by the above points, the overall thrust of Confintea VI was an attempt to “regenerate the international momentum for adult learning and education” (which was not really fading but impressively fragmenting and developing separate streams and approaches) and to draw attention to the contribution of AEL to sustainable development (SD), conceived to *comprehensively* include social, economic, cultural and ecological dimensions (cf. paragraph 5.2 The environmental emergency and the Lisbon call for sustainability), with a special focus on the promotion of *equality* and respect of *human rights* (UNESCO, 2010). The international conference was also accompanied by a *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, which dealt with most of the contents on the agenda of the

inter-governmental conference. It was based upon 154 national reports submitted by the UNESCO Member States – albeit with the quality, depth and coverage of the data varying enormously between the different countries (INT18) – and different conceptual understandings of key terms emerged, with “huge variations in methodologies and instruments used to collect data, and inconsistencies in their application limited the extent to which cross-national analysis could be conducted” (Man, 2010: 3). Notwithstanding, the Report included sensitive themes such as the financing for adult education, and explored factors conducive to inclusion and participation in adult learning, the quality of adult education and the role of adult education and learning for critical democratic citizenship and for the eradication of poverty.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE ‘EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN LATER LIFE’

Similar themes were approached by the Council of Europe, in relation to language policies specifically addressed to adults with migrant backgrounds (COE, 2008) and especially to the promotion of *active citizenship* and *human rights*.⁵⁷ Reflecting on the future of adult education and its contribution to the challenges of the 21st century, Alan Tuckett acknowledged that, although AEL is “a marginal part of the wider education system”, it is perhaps primarily a “catalyst, a change agent for the achievement for lots of other social policy goals: in health, in justice, in the economy, in preserving effective citizenship in later life” (INT20). It is undeniable that AEL has suffered from a fragmentation of the goals, ideals, and financing of its provision (INT6; INT8), but this higher and further-reaching coverage has certainly been turned into a privileged ground to grow adaptive ‘on-call’ policies. This ‘field flexibility’ has indeed been tested by EU policy-makers who, to an increasing extent, seem to use it as a ‘sponge’, to absorb ‘marginal’ policy initiatives, otherwise reputed to be irresponsive or intricate, or arduously accountable.

THE EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR ADULT LEARNING

Taking into account several questions raised by OECD policy statements, issues emphasised by the COE, and recommendations put forward by UNESCO in Confintea VI, on 28 November 2011 the Council of the EU adopted an important policy document, the *European Agenda for Adult Learning* (EU, 2011), which consolidated the former EU policy in the field of AEL under the four objectives of the ‘ET 2020’ Strategic Framework for European cooperation in E&T. Aimed at “enabling all adults to develop and enhance their skills and competences throughout their lives” (*ibid.*), the Council Resolution built on the the Action Plan on Adult Learning (2008–2010) and complemented existing policy initiatives in the areas of school education, higher education (e.g. Bologna process) and vocational E&T (e.g. Copenhagen process). Addressing national authorities with a view

⁵⁷ See http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default_en.asp.

to encouraging them to take the necessary steps to improve the AEL sector in their respective countries, the *European Agenda for Adult Learning* was supposed to provide the basis for the EC's policy activities at a European level in the coming years, and to steer the priorities to be adopted in the AL sector within the EU education and training programmes (*ibid.*) – the *Grundtvig* sectorial programme for adult learning within the LLP. The importance of this sub-programme for the development of a 'European dimension' in this sector was explained by Alain Smith (INT6) in the following terms:

The key question we have to pose before any programme design is: what is it that we want to achieve? The answer must be that we want to endorse a *holistic view* of adult education. This encompasses the vocational side, i.e. the upskilling of the workforce, but also the side of adult education that is so much more than updating our skills. Lifelong learning is a main ingredient in creating a society of *inclusion*, with an *active civil society*. Again, this is in line with our policy objectives for Europe 2020. It's not just 'Youth on the Move' or 'New Skills for New Jobs', there is also 'European Platform against Poverty' among the flagship initiatives.

Partially reflecting this 'holistic vision', the new Agenda for Adult Learning actually emphasised important issues such as "the autonomy of the learner but also responsibility for his/her learning pathway and outcomes, learning later in life to promote active, autonomous and healthy ageing among seniors and using their knowledge and experience for the benefit of society, greater access to higher education for adults, developing new skills necessary for active participation in modern society, solidarity between different age groups, between cultures and people of all backgrounds, designation of national coordinators to facilitate cooperation with the EC and effective liaison with multiple stakeholders in each country".⁵⁸

On 23 November 2011 the EC presented its proposal for the future pan-European programme in the field of Education and Training, with the name *Erasmus for All*⁵⁹ (EC, 2001c; EU, 2012b: 1), to run from 2014 to 2020 and aimed to replace the present *Lifelong Learning Programme* 2007–2013 and its sectorial programmes (including *Grundtvig*) as well as other current programmes such as *Youth in Action*. One year later, on 27 November 2012, the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) of the EP adopted its legislative report on the multi-annual programme for education, training, youth and sport, and endorsed the report of MEP Doris Pack, establishing that the 'brand names' of the present LLP (which includes *Comenius*, *Erasmus*, *Grundtvig* and *Leonardo da Vinci*) would also be kept after 2013. Contextually, the CULT voted against the proposal of the Commission to group the different programmes under the name *Erasmus for All* by reason of the disproportioned highlight on mobility (INT7; see also par. 3.1.3 From *adult education* to

⁵⁸ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20111128_en.htm.

⁵⁹ Cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/>.

vocational adult learning), as Pack explained in a recent press conference:⁶⁰ “the new programme includes three major fields: general and vocational education and training, youth and sports, therefore I consider our proposal *YES Europe* (YES for Youth, Education and training, Sports) the right message”. The EC’s programme proposal (and relative regulations: EC, 2011c; 2011d), as well as the Parliament’s and the Council’s amendments (EU, 2012b), have significant implications for adult learning, although it is not yet clear if the new programme (*Erasmus for all* or *YES Europe*) will be structured according to E&T sectors, such as adult learning, or to the types of activity to be supported as in the first Commission’s proposal (EC, 2011c), i.e. mobility (in the case of adult learning: mobility of adult education staff, and most probably overtaking the financing of mobility of adult learners in general), cooperation between organisations to generate innovation and improve the quality of provision, and support for policy development and reform. In effect, this new architecture would mean that the previous sectorial programmes, including *Grundtvig*, would not continue in their actual form and could potentially result, for the above-mentioned reasons, in a reduction of the target beneficiaries (adult population) to which the policy is addressed. Gina Ebner, Secretary General of the EAEA, has in fact already warned of such an unfortunate eventuality, and recommended instead that “the basic structure of the programmes remains unaffected” since, “as the programme works well, any modification would disturb it” (INT19).

The EAEA – which also participated to the lobbying accompanying this policy-making process as a representative of the NGOs – commented on the new European E&T programme through an official press release,⁶¹ stressing its “impression that ‘Erasmus for all’ is mainly a Higher Education and student mobility programme” and that the EAEA ‘strongly felt’ that the EC proposals need “to be re-balanced in order to fully support the EU and ET 2020 strategies”. Moreover, according to the association, “adult education and learning has to remain a sector of its own”, since it is “desirable that there are close links with vocational training, but nevertheless a distinct stream for non-formal and non-vocational adult education is necessary”. Finally, the EAEA underlined that “in times of a crisis that is not only financial but also concerns European cohesion and identity, adult education has to be the place for European active citizenship, which a strong adult education programme can further develop and promote”. They concluded the press release with the following statement:

⁶⁰ Cf. Doris Pack’s declarations in the press release by the European People’s Party (EPP) in the EP at <http://136.173.161.106/Press/showpr.asp?PRControlDocTypeID=1&PRControlID=11553&PRContentID=19210&PRContentLG=en>; see also the comments by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats at http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/gpes/public/detail.htm?id=137600&request_locale=EN§ion=NER&category=NEWS and (retrieved on 4 January 2013).

⁶¹ Available at http://www.eaea.org/doc/eaea/EAEA_erasmusforall_draft.pdf.

In the current crisis and the years after, Europe will need highly skilled workers, but also active citizens that support and promote the European idea and European values. We need creative and innovative people who are resilient and can overcome challenges and difficulties. We need people with all the key competences that improve their own but also other people's lives. We need citizens who support democracy, human rights and solidarity and do not seek refuge in hateful, nationalistic thinking. Adult education and learning are indispensable for achieving this.

Drawing on these principles, Gina Ebner underlined the need for the EU to grant a higher share of the post-LLP budget to the *Grundtvig* programme for adult learning (INT19), as members of the European Commission's DG Education and Culture had also pointed out (INT5; INT6; cf. chapter 3. Research findings):

An important item for EAEA is more funds for *Grundtvig* in the next funding period. Currently its percentage share is about 4%, negligible compared to other programmes. Considering how successful the programme has been even so and what could be reached more, we would like to see 20% for *Grundtvig*. That could have a positive effect on the impact *Grundtvig* will have combined with the Action Plan. *Erasmus* for example has reached a high awareness and a dimension, which makes a real difference for students in Europe. If one could adopt this only partially for *Grundtvig*, we could reach a significantly different impact.

In the light of the analysis hitherto conducted, it is possible to assert with rather good approximation that these policies, in order not to be considered mere declarations of intents, need to be substantiated with: 1) adequate funding and financial support; and 2) effective implementation tools, i.e. in the framework of the OMC: policy monitoring, assessment and evaluation through specific indicators and benchmarking to 'activate' real peer pressure. Thus, exploring these two main factors in the renewed European AE policy stream, the evidence renders a sobering picture for the following reasons:

- a) Despite a considerable increase in the proposed total budget for the new EU education and training programme (still justified in economic terms of ROI and beneficial impact on employability and on the overall economic growth;⁶² cf. INT2; INT9; INT10), the minimum allocation for the adult learning sector *as part of VET* in the Commission's proposal for a Regulation of the original *Erasmus for All* programme to be adopted by the EP and the Council was set at 2% (with a reduction of 50% of the present share and the introduction a vocational connotation of AEL: see EC, 2011d: 6). The funding of the EU policy on AE for the period 2014–2020 thus seems to lose half (or the entirely, depending on the interpretation of its inclusion in the VET) its actual 4% 'guaranteed' funding accorded to the *Grundtvig* sub-programme

⁶² The European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou explained the exceptional raising of funding in the budget for E&T, in a conjuncture of economic downturn and cuts in the budgeted expenditures, with the fact that education and training "is one of the very few fields where we are proposing an increase and not a decrease because we realised that, without giving our young people the skills and the competences that they need to be employed and to *create* jobs themselves, we cannot go ahead" (INT2).

(cf. EU, 2006a; Art. 14, Annex B.11) in the *Erasmus for all* overarching programme (see Figure 37 and Figure 37 below). In the Commission’s proposal, the different sectorial programmes were actually supposed to disappear and be replaced by three *key actions*: learning mobility of individuals, cooperation for innovation and support for policy reform (EC, 2011c: 5). According to the EC proposal, however, it seems that adult education would *de facto* become ‘adult training’, as it could be absorbed – until eventual amendments become effective – by an *Erasmus Training* sub-programme (corresponding to the former VET programme *Leonardo da Vinci*) described by the EC as comprising VET and adult learning (cf. Table 2 on page 16 of the EC proposal). Only after several amendments by the Council of the EU was an *Erasmus Adult Education* mentioned, as associated with “all forms of non-vocational adult learning”; however, this mention represented just a “brand name” for specific purposes of “communication and dissemination of information relating to the Programme” (EU, 2012b: 32). Any additional amendments that might be adopted by the EP’s CULT will be discussed, and voted on, in plenary sessions during 2013, when the Parliament will also begin negotiations with the Council and the Commission in order to establish the final legislative resolution.

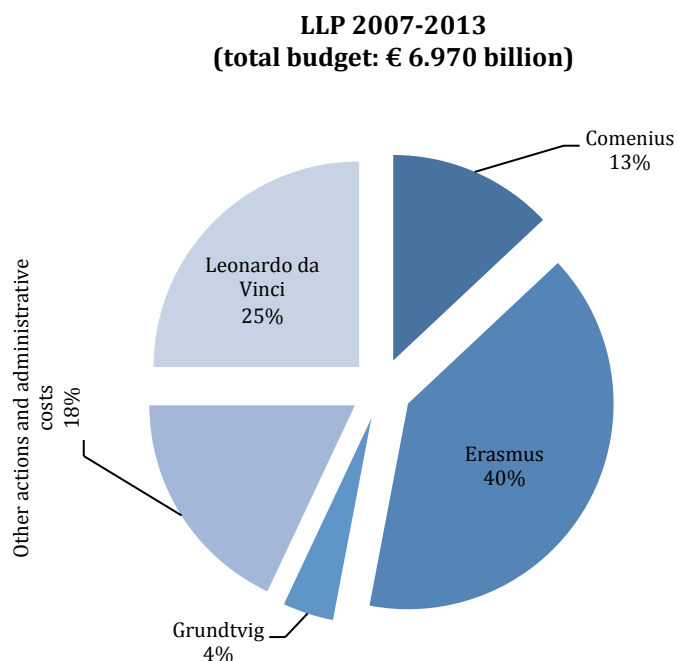
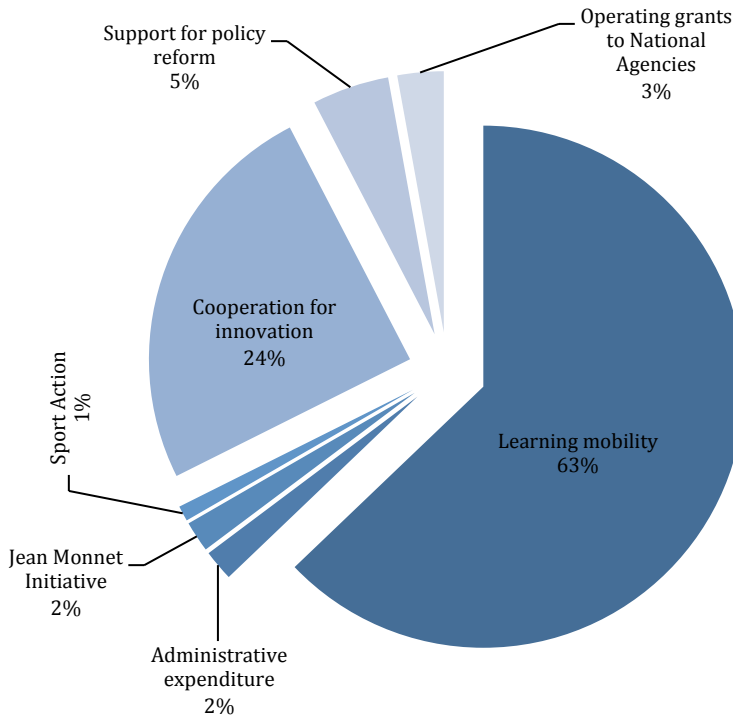


Figure 36: LLP 2007–2013 budget allocation shares. Based on EU (2006a; Art. 14, Annex B.11).

**Erasmus for all/YES Europe 2014-2020
(proposed budget: € 19 billion)**



**Figure 37: Erasmus for all/YES Europe 2014–2020 proposed budget allocations.
Adapted from EC (2011c: 14–5) and EU (2012b: 2, 26).**

- b) The significant dominance of mobility in the new programme might not appear particularly striking, especially when considering the ideals of multiculturalism promoted by the EU (INT8) and other benefits that the actions related to it provide, for example in terms of social and civic awareness, and in the perspective of the building of a European citizenship (INT7; INT8; El País, 2012b). What perhaps looks perplexing is the rationale that is behind such an increased focus within the new E&T programme, clearly explained by the Commissioner for Education and Culture, Androulla Vassiliou, when asked about the importance and value of the *Erasmus* programme and the reasons for promoting mobility (INT2):

[Mobility should be promoted] for the simple reason that it gives a young person, in addition to the academic qualifications that he or she gets from the university or the education institutions that he goes [sic], additional transversal skills and competences that help the young person become more *employable*. Skills like 'learning to learn', how to learn for yourself, or to take difficult

decisions; to have teamwork, to learn how to work as a team; to be adaptable, because of the changing circumstances, you need to adapt to new circumstances and to the new needs of the work environment; learning foreign languages, learning about new cultures, how the people from other countries are dealing, in the business world for example, knowing how the different people do their business is very important. So all these 'transversal' skills, that one *cannot* get through formal education, are given through these mobility programmes.

Moreover, as the Commission's proposal for the new E&T programme put it, "the management of international mobility will be based on the current *Erasmus* system, whereby scholarships are awarded on the basis of inter-institutional agreements" (EC, 2011c: 6). This simple funding principle would entail major limitations for the adult learning sector (INT7), since it is notably characterised by non-formal and informal educational trajectories and – considering that the AEL is organised around institutional environments – represents only 6.3% of the total provision (EC, 2011a: 92; cf. also note 23 on page 116).

- c) In the new 2014–2020 programme EC proposal (EC, 2011c: 2; own emphasis), the measurability of its objectives were expressed in these terms:

A concerted effort to reach the EU benchmark of less than 15% of low achievers in *basic skills* by 2020 would lead to long-term aggregated *economic gains* for the EU. Raising the ratio of people with *higher education* to 40% would contribute to *increasing GDP* per capita in the EU by 4%. Ensuring education and training systems can deliver the *skills needed on the labour market* will contribute to reaching the Europe 2020 target for employment (75%).

Furthermore, according to the EC, "the Programme's European added value will be: to help citizens acquire more and better skills, enhance the quality of teaching in educational institutions both in the EU and beyond, support Member States and non-EU partner countries in modernising their education and training systems and making them more innovative, and promote youth participation in society as well as the construction of a European dimension to grassroots sports", where alongside a QEA dimension the preoccupation with 'more and better skills' cannot be understood, but is closely linked to the NSNJ and skill matching initiatives, analysed above. Concerning the new programme's focus, the Commission specifies that, in effect "the budget constraints of the EU and its Member States require a focus on results and cost-effectiveness, a concentration of efforts to enhance systemic impact, and a reduction in administrative and operational costs" (*ibid.*).

- d) Finally, the new benchmarking system for the 'ET 2020' Strategy includes, once again, indicators for the overall participation in lifelong learning by learners of working age (25–64 years old), updated only with an increase from the previous benchmark of 12.5% by 2010 to the new one of 15% by 2020 (see above) regardless of the purpose of learning and the quality of the learning outcomes, which are simply not assessed. Despite the EC (2011a: 34) explaining that this benchmark

“concerns what could more strictly be called adult education and training” (cf. paragraph 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC), it indeed appears to be a ‘reduced’ version of the ideals of the *Memorandum on lifelong learning*, especially in consideration of the increased median age and life expectancy statistics of the ageing European population (EC, 2000; INT12; INT16).

The bias of the ‘Europe 2020’ Strategy is as clear as its targets: it includes a punctual revision of the former Lisbon agenda within which the ‘ET 2010’ has been extended, with a very similar outlook, in the ‘ET 2020’ Framework. In particular, the lack of data for the monitoring and benchmarking of a wider target population range⁶³ that would include, for example, older adults, which induced the EAEA to denounce, as far back as 2006, that “satisfying set of indicators and benchmarks in terms of a systematic development of adult learning in the framework of lifelong learning policy and as the tool of the Open Method of Coordination have not yet been introduced” and that “if it stays at this level, any kind of recommendation or message remains mild rhetoric only” (EAEA, 2006: 62) seems, unfortunately, to have materialised.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE EU AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ‘GROWTH AND JOBS’

Consistent with this line of reasoning, Johannes Laitenberger, Head of the Cabinet of the President of the EC Barroso, presented the ‘ET 2020’ Strategy as a ‘framework for growth and jobs’ and projected its potential added value, as a conditioned reflex, to the education and social policy, which would contribute in affecting positively the main employment target (INT4):

The ‘Europe 2020’ strategy is the framework for our common efforts aimed at creating growth and jobs. Educational and social policies are central elements of this strategy because they help us to avoid the growth of unemployment in Europe.

In relation to the budget constraints that have guided, to a large extent, the discussion about the new E&T programme 2014–2020, and the necessity to apply QAE criteria to it, Laitenberger further explained (*ibid.*):

The objectives, structure and financial funding of future programmes as of 2014 are currently being discussed. The Commission will present its suggestions for the new programme generation in the coming months. [...] However, it is important to make it completely clear that in a time of economic, financial and debt crisis, programmes can only be *justified* when a European *added value* of the promoted campaigns can be *demonstrated*; meaning that support at the European level is more effective than at the national level. Europe would not be doing itself a service

⁶³ As acknowledged as well by one policy officer of the EC: “Lack of monitoring and data deprives policy-makers and researchers of a strong evidence base on senior participation in learning. Eurostat, through its surveys [LFS and ALS], processes data only up to the age of 64 and there is not any evidence or analysis of the participation of the ‘oldest old’ in learning, with the exception of a few countries that have added the cohort up to 70” (Ní-Cheallaigh et al., 2012: 31).

if it allowed itself to be viewed as a symbol of useless expenditures or as an institutional end in itself, the benefits of which for citizens remain unclear.

All this says that, beyond rhetoric, political slogans, propaganda and speculations, the economic agenda for growth and jobs through work skills upgrading and competence development leads the way. Furthermore, the EU adult education policy is currently being transformed, albeit progressively through vocational training, into an independent ‘vocational adult learning’ sector (cf. paragraph 3.1.3 From *adult education* to *vocational adult learning*) subject to QAE principles, with its own training objectives, curriculum features, and target population expressing a (real or induced) demand of specific learning needs.

FROM ADULT EDUCATION ‘WORKLONG’ LEARNING

What is increasingly characterising the EU policy in AEL is a compression of the lifelong learning policy implementation (in particular through benchmarking) into the working age range of adults (25–64 years old) and of the younger workforce (15–24) through stronger VET, traineeship and apprenticeship initiatives, and a reduction of the discourse on the *Key competences for lifelong learning* of 2006 to the ‘new skills for new jobs’ and the competence development for the knowledge economy. The transition from adult education to lifelong learning, in this light, seems to have not been accomplished except for its work-related dimension, creating a new ‘worklong’ learning paradigm. If the first point contrasts the very definition of adult education as relating to all forms of learning that occurs in the period of “15-plus to the end of our lives”, according to Adama Ouane, Director of the UIL and organiser of CONFINTEA VI, the last point is indeed even more controversial (INT16):

Attaining technical skills tends to be the most valued, because it has to do with making a living – learning and earning – but more than ever we know this is not enough. We are not merely producers and consumers. We are citizens, with family and personal lives. Adult education, which we may acquire at home, at work, through the media, confronts real life. Only through adult education can we address the real problems of society – like power sharing, wealth creation, gender and health issues. [...] We have to address issues holistically. There is evidence now that investing in adult education makes it possible not only to increase productivity, but also social cohesion and equilibrium and individual self-esteem.

Adults’ learning needs, which are obviously different from those of compulsory (primary and secondary) school pupils and students, are always the result of a more or less careful mediation of real needs. These needs are directly related to the individuals’ values, interests, life plans and expectations, and the demands induced by external actors influencing, to various degrees, the self-directing and self-determining adult learner (cf. par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning), because, “those relationships, activities and roles of middle age” should be replaced “with new ones to maintain activi-

ties and life satisfaction" (Walker, 2002). Also in this sense, the above described policy tendency in the EU can be considered to be problematic because adults' engagement in learning should seem "meaningful to the participants according to where and how she [sic] is situated in her [sic] life at this particular time", and question "whether or not a learning experience is felt to be meaningful is a much broader issue than the connection to employability" (Horsdal, 2007: 40–1). In its Response to the Communication from the Commission *An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*, the EAEA (2011: 2) actually concluded that the renewed action plan for adult learning "should not be restricted to measures designed to meet labour market needs, but should recognise the role of lifelong learning in contributing to individual and collective well being, active citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue".

3.6 A market model for the adult and lifelong learning policy

According to Kjell Rubenson (2007: 48), while "adult learning has become a central issue in national policies on education, the economy and welfare", it has been "driven by a mainly neo-liberal agenda that has promoted economic or corporate globalisation", which led to a "colonisation of adult learning and its humanistic and liberatory traditions by an 'economistic' agenda, resulting in a drastic change in the conditions under which adult education operates" (see also Gustavsson, 2002). More generally, Michael Golby (1987: 12) noted that the whole education policy area "has always been intimately connected with the world of work" since "impulses to provide schooling for the masses contain a mixture of motives but all of them take cognizance of the social reality of employment". In this light, while the suspicion of a causal relation that might exist between schooling and the origins of industrial success remains debateable, the claim of the role played by education in the late 20th century economic renewal would be equally uncertain, and possibly aleatory (p. 16).

THE 'ECONOMIC PROJECT' BEHIND THE LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES

By the end of the 20th century, Annie Vinokur (1976: 287) had already argued, in relation to the rise of the 'lifelong education' discourse, that "the transformation of educational structures, which lifelong education aims at, is defined by reference (opposition) to the school system as it was founded and has developed in capitalist societies", whose characteristics "made school an important instrument for the reproduction of such societies, i.e. for transmission of the dominant value system, training of the qualified labour force, maintenance of social hierarchies, allotment of individuals to the various positions resulting from the division of labour in the society". Moreover, "if in the nineteenth century the contribution of the schools was to provide a docile labour force in turbulent political times, then perhaps today's role for the schools is, minimally, in being seen to re-

spond to economic crisis and unemployment” (Goulby, 1987: 16). In this very sense, drawing on Alan Burton-Jones’s model (1999: vi), Peters and Besley (2006) defined the present era as the ‘age of knowledge capitalism’ (see also Olssen & Peters, 2005). Reflecting on the primacy of VET and VAL, Howard Gardner warned the education policy-makers of the risks connected to the dismissal of humanistic disciplines and liberal education from the E&T policy and provision (Gardner, 2008b: xvii–xviii):

I worry particularly about the arts and humanities. There is less demand for these topics that were once seen as central to a liberal education. Parents, policymakers, and pupils are all pulled toward the professions, and particularly those that have the potential for making one wealthy (preferably quickly). Yet, I believe that one cannot be a full person, let alone and have a deep understanding of our world (including its epochal changes of climate), unless one is rooted as well in art, literature, and philosophy. Moreover, these should not be rewards available primarily to the harried middle-aged executive, but rather the cornerstone of education for all.

The unconditioned establishment of lifelong learning in the public policy debate that Stephen Ball (2009: 202) described as “constituted in relation to the fuzzy fictions of ‘the knowledge economy’ within which a new kind of worker, who is innovative, creative and enterprising, is hailed”, has indeed generated what Norton Grubb called the ‘education gospel’ – i.e. the faith in the fact that increases and improvements in education (especially in VET) can resolve many individual and social problems, including those related to growth and competitiveness (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004).

THE FAITH IN ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Correspondingly, Giddens (1999: 109) remarked that “education and training have become the new mantra for social democratic politicians” (quoted in Rubenson, 2007: 50), while, according to Chris Falk (1999: 7), lifelong learning would be “largely a project of economic, social and epistemological recuperation dedicated to delimiting rather than expanding the subjectiveness of learners”, to the point that he described the imperative of learning throughout the entire lifespan as “sentencing learners to life”. Furthermore, “along with the rise of the lifelong learning policy, adult education has become a new form of ‘educational religion’ in the rapidly changing risk society” (Jauhiainen & Alho-Malmelin, 2004: 459). With such beliefs, adult and lifelong learning (hereafter ALL) would have gained a more important role in the assumption that workers will need to upgrade their skills and change their jobs as the economy rapidly evolves following technology changes (Griffin, 1999a; 1999b). Thus, AEL seems to have moved, together with other economic sectors, towards market dynamics and forms of government, and its financial basis has come under increasing pressure and scrutiny, through quality assurance and accountability controls (Griffin, 1987: 56):

Adult education, whether as product or process, has often been seen as something which could and should be 'marketed'. This means only that adult education is as susceptible as any other commodity to attractive presentation, effective publicity, market researching, product evaluation and so on.

The overlapping conceptualisations of adult *learner* and adult *worker* in the EU's (and in other IOs') educational policy discloses the "economic Darwinism" (Edwards & Nicoll, 2001) that lies behind these transformations. Throughout the Lisbon agenda and, in particular, in the context of the OMC, the EU has actually produced a considerable substitution of the subsidiary strategies for individuals' empowerment with those for employability (Kröger, 2009: 12).

Åke Lundvall underlined⁶⁴ that "knowledge is becoming obsolete more rapidly than before" and consequently, provided that workers constantly have to learn and acquire new competences, innovation is today "crucial to economic competitiveness and learning is crucial to innovation" (Peters, 2010: 70; own emphasis):

Lundvall and his colleagues argue that traditional schooling isolated from society and organised according to traditional disciplines and educational cultures focusing on collaboration, interdisciplinarity and engagement with real-life problems are required to produce *flexible workers* who can successfully participate in the *new economy*. Learning in this conception is not an end in itself but only in the service of *innovation* policy.

This new form of human capital shows the extent to which schooling and learning throughout life are constrained within the paradigms of the 'new economy' based on an increased competitiveness and performativity, where the participation in the knowledge economy (in the form of *work*) is not optional but should invest *individually* the people's responsibility for contributing to the *economic growth*. As a result, ideals of creativity, innovation, flexibility, and adaptability associated with the rhetoric of adult education and lifelong learning are "mobilised through the policy tropes of LLL and are becoming the new technologies for managing whole populations in economic and social conditions of instability and uncertainty" (Ball, 2009: 203). In the very same light, Moutsios (2007: 20) discussed the justification of economic-driven policies by policy-makers as follows:

There is widespread consensus that it is the 'knowledge-based' economic restructuring that should guide European integration and give the EU a prominent place in the world. This has tremendous implications in politics across European countries. Politics has been largely reduced to economic growth and economic growth has become the main political problem. Political debates are considered relevant as long as they are occupied with the increase of productivity, competitiveness and economic performance of a given nation and of the EU as a whole. Mainstream debates are largely occupied with a set of objectives related to this performance whose pursuit transcends ideological boundaries. The general consensus between most political parties on the absence of alternatives to the project of economic growth removes largely the political

⁶⁴ Cf. Lundvall & Johnson (1994), Lundvall & Borrás (1999) and Lorenz & Lundvall (2006).

ground for critique and contestation of ideas on the part of citizens. Politics then is absorbed by the economy, and therefore the politics of education too.

Stavros Moutsios also claimed that “already since the early 1990s the EU has been promoting new human capital development, so that education systems serve the economic restructuring of its state-members” (*ibid.*). Indeed, the latest EU policy documents have placed *human capital* and *employability* at the heart of EU objectives by emphasising that “investing in human resources is not the task of business alone, it is also the task of government: it is no longer possible to leave masses of unemployed people in Europe unoccupied” (EC, 1993: 18), and that “the main principle of the various types of measures to be taken should be to develop human resources throughout people working lives, starting with basic education and working through initial training to continuing training” (p. 119). Likewise, more recent official EU policy statements stress that the main focus of policy strategies must take into account the best use of *human resources* and their *competence development* in order to achieve maximum return of the investment (ROI) in E&T, and to avoid widening the gap between the EU and its main ‘competitors’ (EC, 2003c: 4).

A close link emerges, in fact, between the supposed transformation of EU Member States into knowledge societies and their educational systems into learning environments where vocational training provides the labour force possessing the right skills to match the needs of the labour market (Moutsios, 2007: 21; own emphasis):

As work segmentation and individualisation are spreading across labour markets, what becomes crucial for the employee to maintain his/her bargaining position is the ‘learning portfolio’ that he/she possesses. This is, actually, the condition which has given rise also to the EU discourse on lifelong learning. Lifelong learning as a concept and as a human activity is being linked with *competence development* as the mains means to augment knowledge-based productivity. The European citizen is being asked by official education policies to focus on the use value of knowledge in order to obtain access to or upgrade his/her position in the labour market. Through the expansion of flexible types of employment the individual is also being socialised to view re-training and re-skilling as a mainly personal responsibility – as the conceptual shift from ‘lifelong education’ to ‘lifelong learning’ signifies. The personal disposition and availability to learn new *work skills* is directly linked with one’s employability. The individual must be reforming him/herself cognitively so that the economy draws the appropriate *human capital* and he/she manages to survive or progress under the conditions of economic and technological restructuring. The individual must be trainable in order to be employable. In short, the EU’s educational ‘common good’ is that citizens become lifelong learners of ‘useful’, exchangeable knowledge, capable of changing jobs according to the growth requirements of the European knowledge economy.

THE POLICY BUZZ OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The *knowledge economy* has been defined as the ‘policy buzz’ of the 21st century (Robertson, 2009b: 235), where knowledge serves as a panacea for the success of nation-states in the game of globalisation: “if we don’t have enough of it, we are destined to be-

come third world countries". In this context, according to Susan Robertson, "education is formulated in a very particular way: as investments in science and technology, upper secondary and higher education, and research and development, whilst other ways of thinking about education, such as the development of the individual through social and cultural knowledge, is made absent" (p. 236). It is clear that the discourse around human capital and employability (especially combined with the shift from *education* to *learning*, discussed above; cf. INT16; Biesta, 2006) producing the economic restructuring required is strictly correlated with the "involuntary re-training and re-skilling" that "subverts the pattern of stable lifelong career following one's formal education" (Moutsios, 2007: 20). As a matter of fact, whereas UNESCO's conceptualisation of lifelong education from the 1970s was preoccupied with *being*, in the EU's lifelong learning policy discourse the economic language preoccupied with *having* has prevailed, reflecting a "crucial shift" towards capitalist societies as venues for economic growth, influenced by the human capital theory "where the individual is a consumer of skills and information in an open learning market" (Wain, 2009: 336).

One political rationale of this change is that, according to the estimates of the EU and its agencies (CEDEFOP, 2008b; 2008c; 2009b; 2010a), the work market in Europe is undergoing a rapid and profound transformation, with 'old jobs' involving 'traditional skills' disappearing every year and being replaced by 'new jobs' which require 'new skills' (EC, 2008b; EC, 2008c; EU, 2007a). This scenario overlaps corresponds to the prospects of the 'work skills' that should now form a new 'learning portfolio' for the European citizens. In its Conclusions of 15 May 2009, the Council of the EU actually invited MS to "consider the needs of society and the labour market, taking into account both the existing situation in local, regional, national and European labour markets and any expected changes to these, when developing and implementing education and training policy", and more specifically ensuring that (EU, 2009c):

- a) the provision of education and training courses at VET, higher education and adult education levels takes into consideration the needs of the labour market, while greater account is taken of the relevance of study programmes to the labour market within quality assurance systems for education;
- b) theoretical educational content is complemented as far as possible with a practical component adapted to the needs of the labour market, while more account could be taken of employers' and other relevant stakeholders' views when defining learning outcomes and, where appropriate, curriculum or course contents;
- c) sufficient attention is paid in education and training institutions at all levels to the potential offered by new pedagogical tools and technologies, as well as to the acquisition of transversal key competences useful in professional life, such as com-

munication and organisational skills, the ability to work with others, problem solving, risk assessment and decision taking;

- d) individuals acquire the experience, skills, competences and attitudes needed to embrace change as an opportunity and to remain both receptive to and capable of producing new ideas in a culturally diverse, knowledge-based society, while a favourable climate is created at all levels of learning for the development of a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- e) high-quality lifelong guidance, information and support are provided, these being especially crucial at the time when educational or professional career choices are made.

Hence, the new political imperative in the prospected 'knowledge-based economy' set in 2000 by the Lisbon goal has intelligibly become, approaching the deadline of 2010 fixed by the Council of Minister Conclusions, the quest for the best matching between E&T outcomes, expressed and measured in terms of skills and competences needed in the labour market (INT2; INT10; INT25). At the EU level, a wide range mechanisms, some of which have been investigated and discussed in this thesis, has been put into place to support the creation of the conditions to fulfil the E&T objectives embedded in the Lisbon Strategy (INT10).

4. Implications and prospects

In the run of the progressive adaptation of the European economies to the dogmas of the knowledge economy, including the E&T systems, scholars and economist have tried to answer an apparently provocative question: are Western (and EU) economies knowledge-based? Do we really live a post-industrial age? As shown (cf. paragraph 1.4 The Lisbon process and the OMC), the Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon Council of 23–24 March 2000, which launched the Lisbon agenda, stated clearly that the mainstream goal for the EU to be attained by 2010 was to become “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world” (EU, 2000).

4.1 *The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing?*

The background assumption that the EU countries’ economies were already or were to become knowledge-based has not been questioned very much by its detractors and by the EU political leadership, which promoted it since its inception in the policy debate. An example of such undisputed trust can be found in the very introduction of the cited *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000: 3, 7; own emphasis):

The European Council held in Lisbon in March 2000 marks a decisive moment for the direction of policy and action in the European Union. Its conclusions affirm that *Europe has indisputably moved into the Knowledge Age*, with all that this will imply for cultural, economic and social life. Patterns of learning, living and working are changing apace. This means not simply that individuals must adapt to change, but equally that established ways of doing things must change too. [...] Today’s Europe is experiencing change on a scale comparable with that of the Industrial Revolution. Digital technology is transforming every aspect of people’s lives, whilst biotechnology may one day change life itself. Trade, travel and communication on a world scale are expanding people’s cultural horizons and are changing the ways in which economies compete with each other. [...] The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council confirm that the move towards lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a *knowledge-based economy* and society. Therefore, *Europe’s education and training systems are at the heart of the coming changes*.

Furthermore, even the incipit of the EC Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, within which the whole EU education policy has been framed, stated solemnly (EC, 2001a: 6; own emphasis):

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 set the European Union the strategic goal, reaffirmed at the Stockholm European Council in March 2001, of becoming the most competitive and dynamic *knowledge-based society* in the world. Key elements of the strategy to achieve this were the adaptation of education and training to offer tailored learning opportunities to individual citizens at all stages of their lives; the promotion of employability and social inclusion through *investment in citizens’ knowledge and competences*; the creation of an *information society* for

all; and the fostering of mobility. The *knowledge-based society*, along with wider economic and societal trends such as globalisation, changes in family structures, demographic change, and the impact of *information society* technologies, presents the European Union and its citizens with many potential benefits as well as challenges. Citizens have vast new opportunities in terms of communication, travel and employment. Taking advantage of these opportunities, and actively participating in society, is reliant on the ongoing acquisition of knowledge and competences. At the same time, competitive advantage is increasingly dependent on *investment in human capital*. Knowledge and competences are, therefore, also a powerful engine for *economic growth*. Given the current uncertain economic climate, *investing* in people becomes all the more important.

However, the “the elegant appeal” of investing in human capital, people’s skill and competence upgrading (as well as the promotion of ‘new skills for new jobs’ policies) as a solution to produce employability, competitiveness and – resultantly – economic growth underlying the ‘knowledge-based society’ assumption seems to be weaker than the more ‘traditional’ approach of an integrated industrial policy as a part of a comprehensive and balanced economic strategy, given that its “theoretical and empirical verification has been difficult to establish” (Savvides & Stengos, 2009: 4; cf. section 3. Research findings).

WE DO NOT LIVE IN A POST-INDUSTRIAL KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Ha-Joon Chang, Reader of Political Economy at the University of Cambridge, argued as well that “we do *not* live in a post-industrial knowledge economy” (Chang, 2010: xvi; original emphasis), as the manufacturing sector is still the main source of GDP in the EU and in Western countries in general (p. 91–6):

It is indisputable that much lower proportions of people in rich countries work in factories than used to be the case. [...] However, they have *not* become post-industrial in the economic sense. Manufacturing still plays the leading role in their economies. [...] The fall in share of manufacturing in total output in the rich countries is *not* largely due to the fall in (relative) demand for manufactured goods, as many people think. Nor is it due mainly to the rise of manufactured exports from China and other developing countries, although that has had big impacts on some sectors. It is instead the falling relative prices of the manufactured goods due to faster growth in productivity in the manufacturing sector that is the main driver for the de-industrialisation process. Thus, while the citizens of the rich countries may be living in post-industrial societies in terms of their employment, the importance of manufacturing in terms of production in those countries has not been diminished to the extent that we can declare a post-industrial age.

In effect, as explained by Chang, de-industrialisation has “negative consequences for economy-wide productivity growth and for the balance of payments” (p. 89), which the disproportioned growth of public debts in many EU countries depends on (Rowthorn & Coutts, 2004). A shift to a post-industrial, service-based knowledge economy could, in this perspective, affect negatively, in a vicious circle, the country’s economic growth (Chang, 2010: 89, 98):

Their limited scope for productivity growth makes services a poor engine of growth. The low tradability of services means that a more service-based economy will have a lower ability to ex-

port. Lower export earnings means a weaker ability to buy advanced technologies from abroad, which in turn leads to a slower growth. [...] Indeed, not all services are equally non-tradable. Knowledge-based services [such as] banking, consulting, engineering, and so on, are highly tradable. [...] However, even in Britain, which is the most advanced in the exports of these knowledge-based services, the balance of payments surplus generated by those services is well below 4 percent of GDP, just enough to cover the country's manufacturing trade deficits. With the likely strengthening of global financial regulation as a consequence of the 2008 world financial crisis, it is unlikely that Britain can maintain this level of trade surplus in finance and other knowledge-based services in the future.

According to Hugh Lauder, Professor of Education and Political Economy at the University of Bath, the reason for the downturn that Western countries are experiencing nowadays could be that "we have never replaced the fordist system where you had a low skills-high income economy". Furthermore, the actual rhetoric used by policy-makers in relation to the role of lifelong education and learning would be based on assumptions that are not entirely wrong, but are blemished by being inaccurately or improperly presented as the solution for the challenges of competitiveness and employability, which would just be misleading (INT25):

If lifelong learning is about self-development that's one thing. But if it is about rhetoric of what you need to constantly change your skill sets to get new jobs because technology is moving so fast, then that's wholly problematic, because if the technology takes over your skill sets then what are you doing? It's a huge problem. In a way, if you say that you need to change your skill sets in order to keep up with technology, that is probably true, but it can't be true for everyone if jobs are being taken away by the technology. [...] Lifelong learning is something that people should do because they enjoy it. Then you need to look at particular countries, of course. The point is that you need some set of 'basic skills' to operate in the modern economy: you need to be numerate, a bit, but not as much as they claim in this country or any other, because technology can do that for you; you need to be literate, that is certainly the case; you need to be able to operate a computer to a certain level; and you need to be able to control your emotions and be civil to people.

Following the counter-current research (e.g. Ashton & Green, 1996) questioning the equation E&T input equalling higher employment, productivity and ultimately economic growth (cf. Stronach, 1989) – which IOs like the OECD have promoted in the run of the human capital theory and its derivatives – Pritchett conducted a cross-national study for the World Bank in which he came to the apparently surprising conclusion that "data show no association between increases in human capital attributable to the rising educational attainment of the labor force and the rate of growth of output per worker", which implied that "the association of educational capital growth with conventional measures of total factor production is large, strongly statistically significant, and negative" (Pritchett, 2001: 367). Referring to Stronach (1989), Azizi and Lasonen (2006: 27) noted that the scientific evidence supporting a causal nexus between education, worker productivity and economic success is "hopelessly fragmented between monetarist, neo-Keynesian and

neo-classical paradigms” and the enquiry logic underpinning them would be “fundamentally partial” since these studies tend to “highlight a tendency for economic explanations to explain what they can in economic terms such as investment, and then to attribute any remaining discrepancies to an unexplained set of residual differences”. Moreover (*ibid.*):

Quantitative evaluations of the relation between education or training and economic growth are controversial and imprecise, with researchers still at a loss to account for the real dynamics of economic growth, and the spectre of an uncomfortably large unexplained residual persists, [while] conclusions from evaluations of programmes that try to link education to economic outcome are indecisive. [...] The methodologies behind these confident assertions of deficiency and remedy suggest an uncertain science of weak and highly mediated correlation between factors which do not necessarily make much sense as separate variables and whose national ‘cases’ are neither comparable nor independent of each other.

Elaborating on Ashton & Green’s suggestions, Pritchett’s statistical analysis and Wolf’s results (2002), Chang (2010) highlighted that “there is little evidence showing that the more education leads to greater national prosperity”; even, he advanced that “the view that the rise of the knowledge economy has critically increased the importance of education is misleading” (p. 178–83):

The idea of the knowledge economy itself is problematic, as knowledge itself has always been the main source of wealth. Moreover, with increasing de-industrialisation and mechanisation, the knowledge requirements may have fallen for most jobs in the rich countries. Even when it comes to higher education, which is supposed to matter more in the knowledge economy, there is simply no relationship between it and economic growth. What really matters in the determination of national prosperity is not the educational levels of individuals but the nation’s ability to organise individuals into enterprises with high productivity.

TACKLE GLOBALISATION BEFORE SKILL POLICY

Analogously, according to Philip Brown and Hugh Lauder (2012), the equation that determines implicit and automatic increases of employability, competitiveness and economic growth through investments in people’s skills upgrading would thus be valid, but to an extent that is limited, for example, by the sustainability of job marketisation on a global scale, beyond the borders of national labour markets (which they call ‘global auction’): “there is little evidence to support the claim that the value of human capital will continue to rise as leading companies restructure their global operations to deliver innovative ideas at the lowest cost” (p. 165). As a consequence:

The interpretation of human capital theory found in the official policy discourse is in our view flawed because it rests on an evolutionary model in which investment in education and skills will continue to provide increasing returns in the labor market. The global expansion of higher education has outstripped the demand for high skilled workers, creating downward pressure on the incomes of skilled workers in the developed economies along with some upward pressure

on those in emerging economies. At the same time there are trends towards 'winner-takes-all' markets which reveal that people with similar qualifications in the same occupations, organizations and countries are experiencing increasing polarization in future career prospects, thereby intensifying positional competition within the middle classes.

Lauder, noting that the criticisms in the discourse on employability come from a peculiar way of seeing skills as crucial national competitiveness, and thus as a source of economic growth, put forward "fundamental questions about whether the focus should not in fact be on skills, and whether it should be on employability" *tout court*: indeed, globalisation has already determined an increasing internationalisation of manufacturing and – on a minor scale – service industry by de-localising the production of goods and services in economic areas where the cost of labour is more affordable (e.g. China, India, South America), which is now determining a considerable reduction of the jobs available in the EU labour market (INT25):

It is very clear that in the Western world many skilled jobs can now be done for fractions of the cost, in East Asia for example, or Mexico if you are from America, where the cost of labour is so much cheaper, and related to that there is another issue: the very rapid development of forms of computer algorithm that can replace many relatively high-skilled jobs. And so there are much bigger questions now, I think, that we need to address: the kind of 'comfortable' assumption that skills and competences or what is required to grow the 'knowledge economy' is just very problematic. It does not mean you don't need skills, but the question is: first of all, you need *jobs*. [...] And I think that the direction I would be going in is to say not to get the jobs which have relatively high skill content to people who have those skills, you need to have some kind of industrial policy. Market don't work anymore in a way that you can just automatically assume that there will be demand for high skilled labour.

Because of the widespread use of ICTs, not only jobs related to administration and data processing but also all jobs that can be automatised or replaced by computers are constantly being reduced in (and are disappearing from) the labour market. And even for the traditionally 'highly-skilled thus highly-paid jobs', the increased cost-effectiveness of the companies' modes of production is starting to determine a reduction of their 'added value' and, consequently, their wage (Brown & Lauder, 2012: 165):

As the global supply of highly skilled labor increases, many in the West will find that their credentials are subject to the laws of diminishing returns, not because they are being out-smarted by college graduates in China and India but because companies are discovering new ways of doing the same things in more cost effective ways.

In fact, another 'paradox' is that the marginal productivity of workers in Western countries is not necessarily higher than that of non-Western's, unless the former employ forms of protectionism in the labour market in order to maintain wage levels regardless of the effective returns from the individual or the role played by the system, e.g. the work environment and the country's infrastructure (Chang, 2010: 29–30; original emphasis):

Even in sectors where rich country individuals are genuinely more productive than their counterparts in poor countries, their productivity is in great part due to the system, rather than the individuals themselves. It is not simply, or even mainly, because they are cleverer and better educated that some people in rich countries are hundreds of times more productive than their counterparts in poor countries. They achieve this because they live in economies that have better technologies, better organized firms, better institutions and better physical infrastructure – all things that are in large part products of collective actions taken over generations. [...] What an individual is paid is *not* fully a reflection of [his or] her worth. Most people, in poor and rich countries get paid what they do because there is immigration control. Even those citizens of rich countries who cannot be easily replaced by immigrants, and thus may be said to be really paid their worth, [...] are as productive as they are only because of the socio-economic system they are operating in. It is not simply because of their individual brilliance and hard work that they are as productive as they are.

Several studies have shown, as a matter of fact, a consolidated propensity not only for governments to establish a protective ‘filter’ over the workforce import/export fluxes (especially in those countries affected by the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon: see note 4 on page 285), but also through a ‘culturally rooted’ form of national protection operated by private enterprises and the corporate sector as employer.

A SINGLE EUROPEAN MARKET, WITH BORDERS HOWEVER

Analysing the effects of the present economic crisis, Giovanni Graziani (2011: 72–3; own emphasis) correlated the worrisome, “numerous ‘behind the border’ protectionist trends in MS that are in contrast to official EU trade policy” with job protectionism:

‘Buy national’ clauses have become fashionable among European governments, following the ‘buy American’ provisions that require government procurement of US-produced products. [...] Rising unemployment has also given new voice to job protectionism. [...] Individual EU Member States might resort again to ‘behind the border’ measures. Certainly, the increase in unemployment will continue to fuel protectionist pressures in the future.

In an article published in the *European Journal of Comparative Economics*, Michela Martinoia (2011) explored the phenomenon of the extraordinary “immobility of European workers” and concluded that “Europe is a continent where workers are less willing to move for working reasons” (p. 102) and that even “migration flows do generate an effect on the European labour market” (p. 97). In effect, she reported that “less than 1 in 200 workers changes their region of residency annually, against 5 in 200 workers in the US” (p. 102). Among the main reasons for this immobility, she identified the responsibility of local institutions, which determine job protectionism in various ways (*ibid.*):

Different institutions are responsible for the scarce mobility of the European labour force and some of them play a fundamental role within the different countries of the EU. Mobility is weakened by the wage compression created by centralised agreements on remuneration; regimes of job protectionism make it more difficult for workers from poor regions to find a job in other parts of the country; and unemployment benefits (transfer payments offered to working

age individuals who do not have a job) can discourage workers from accepting a slightly lower wage. Meanwhile, shifting jobs to exploit new opportunities created in different geographical regions is more expensive due to fiscal deductions that favour the ownership of houses, as well as regulated rental fees. Moreover, other institutions discourage mobility between countries in the EU. Language differences certainly constitute a sizeable obstacle to the flow of labour force among each country and the lack of co-ordination among national institutions of the different EU Member States represents a real tax over the flow of labour force. Variations in national legislation regarding pensions and a lack of harmonisation in taxation procedures relating to social welfare, lead to a significant reduction in pension rights of those workers moving through various countries. For whatever reason, it is without doubt that labour is a largely immobile factor in Europe.

Paradoxically, and apparently contradicting several CEDEFOP statistics supporting the core arguments around intensive investments in human capital and skills upgrading policy (cf. Figure 29 on page 226), most European countries (including Germany, France and Italy) experience today a *low-skilled* (and even *unskilled*) workforce shortage. A recent study conducted by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) for the European Commission, with the purpose “to provide an inventory of the admission and residence procedures for unskilled and low-skilled third-country workers (ULSWs) entering the labour markets of the 27 EU Member States”, acknowledged that “many of the country reports collected in the course of this research reveal that there is a need for third-country ULSWs” (BEPA, 2010: 8–9). Among the main reasons for this shortage would be, in effect, the aging population – and the consequent shrinking of the working age between 15 and 65 – as well as the reluctance of highly skilled workers to accept lower skill-level jobs (which, in fact, flaws the implications of CEDEFOP statistics showing EU unemployment rates by highest education level illustrated on page 226, Figure 29), as a consequence of the constant increase in tertiary education enrolment and graduation (p. 7, 10):

Many suitable candidates within the EU no longer apply for certain categories of work in spite of the economic crisis. In Italy, for example, there are as many as 30 000 low-skilled jobs unfilled. [...] Some EU countries, especially in the South of Europe, tend to need more unskilled and low-skilled migrants than highly skilled ones. Low-skilled migration is therefore a major phenomenon. [...] Low-skilled migrants already form an important part of the workforce in many EU countries (in 2006, just under 2.5 million temporary migrants arrived in OECD countries). This is mainly due to the fact that, as the education levels of native-born people rise in several EU countries, migrants from third countries play an ever increasing role in low-skilled occupations, including care for the elderly, construction, food processing, catering and household work.

The study concluded that “despite the existing need for an unskilled and low-skilled immigrant labour force, the immigration of unskilled and low-skilled workers is not addressed specifically” and that “the research clearly indicated that actions need to be taken at national and EU levels in order to create effective and flexible mechanisms that

would allow Member States to meet the existing need for third-country ULSWs". As a matter of fact, despite this, the report noted (BEPA, 2010: 8–9; own emphasis):

None of the 27 EU Member States has specific institutional or legislative systems in place addressing their *access* to the national labour market. Instead, general immigration provisions are usually applied to third-country ULSWs. In a number of countries, admission procedures involve both potential third-country workers and employers. For employers, the administrative procedures for employing third-country ULSWs are usually long, bureaucratic, and, in some cases, also expensive; this can all be discouraging. The study shows that only one country has simplified rules for employing third-country workers. In most EU Member States, employment of third-country workers is subject to a labour market test, quota system, or both.

As explained in the report, 'labour market test' refers to "a test designed to assess whether there are persons in the domestic labour market available for the work in question" (p. 9, footnote 6). This test is actually based on the 'Community Preference principle' established with a non-binding Council Resolution of 20 June 1994, which requires that "Member States will consider requests for admission to their territories for the purpose of employment only where vacancies in a Member State cannot be filled by national and Community manpower or by non-Community manpower lawfully resident on a permanent basis in that Member State and already forming part of the Member State's regular labour market" (EU, 1994). In addition to this measure, "in some EU Member States, like Belgium, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, halts on recruitment of third-country nationals still exists", with only a few exceptions from the 'general restrictive policy' limited, when existing, to highly skilled workers (BEPA, 2010: 109).

Moreover, even in the case of highly skilled migrants, another study carried out by researchers of the University of Tampere (VALOA, 2012) showed that even international *graduates* looking for a job in Finland face several obstacles to getting employed in the country, among which there are "ethnic discrimination and the employers' unwillingness to hire foreigners", with employers "not giving foreigners a chance, even though the actual job wouldn't require Finnish skills", in addition to the fact that they "are not eligible for the social benefits, which makes this group extremely vulnerable" (p. 70). This combination of juridical and/or administrative constraints and the labour market discriminative selectivity might certainly concur to the much higher unemployment rates among foreigners living in the country than that of the native-born population.¹ In this regard, another publication by the Finnish statistical office highlighted (HS, 2005):

¹ As reported in the Finnish national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*, according to an estimate by the Ministry of Labour, the general unemployment rate of immigrants was about 29% at the beginning of 2004. In comparison, the unemployment rate for the Finnish population was 9% (HS, 2005). After the financial crisis of 2008–2009, the unemployment rate among foreigners living in Finland was still 25.2 percent in late 2009, which was anyway more than double that of the native-born population in the same period (HS, 2010).

One reason for the high unemployment rate of immigrants in Finland is related to the fact that Finnish employers regard Finnish education and work experience as better than foreign equivalents. This fact is indicated in a selection of articles to be published today by Statistics Finland, entitled *Maahanmuuttajien elämää Suomessa* (Immigrant Life in Finland). Consequently, a majority of immigrants have been forced to change their profession in order to get work. [...] When looking for a job, the citizenship clearly makes a difference. It is a little easier for those who have already been granted Finnish citizenship, but even in those cases, employers frequently ask for their country of origin.

These forms of formal or informal labour market protectionism should also be seen in the light of the diploma inflation and the need for European (as Western) countries to preserve adequate salary levels to native-born people, in consideration, for example, of legal instruments such as, among others, the “ILO Convention n. 97 concerning Migration for Employment (Revised, 1949) and International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 1990” which “apply to all migrant workers, independently of the level of their skills” and aim at ensuring that all “migrant workers should be afforded treatment no less favourable than the nationals of the receiving state” (BEPA, 2010: 8).

THE PLAGUE OF DEGREE INFLATION AND THE DOPED LABOUR MARKET

Indeed, similarly to most other Western countries, Europe is today experiencing a persistent condition of ‘diploma inflation’ or ‘degree inflation’ (Collins, 1979; Dore, 1997; Symes, 2002; Hammer, 2003), correlated to the phenomena of the overeducation, overskilling and overqualification² of EU workers (Büchel et al., 2003; Green et al., 1999; Brynin et al., 2006; McGuinness, 2006; CEDEFOP, 2009c; 2010a). As CEDEFOP (2010a) emphasised in a report in 2010, “the extent to which a particular form of mismatch persists over time determines the costs to the individual, firm or economy” and, in Europe, “evidence on persistence of overeducation is rich” (p. 22), with a “overeducation incidence averaging around 30%” (p. 6).

From a psycho-cognitive point of view, a study by De Grip et al. (2002; 2008) puts forward, in the first instance, that overeducated workers face higher risks of deterioration of their skills and competences acquired in the past, as their cognitive abilities decline at higher rates, while undereducated workers use their knowledge, skills and competences as a basis to build further KSCs (cf. CEDEFOP, 2009c: 11). Furthermore, individuals experiencing a mismatch between their qualifications and work responsibilities as in the case of overskilling and overqualification “may suffer from lower wages and are less satisfied with their jobs than if they were properly matched; employers may suffer from lower

² Overeducation is defined by CEDEFOP (2010a: 13) as a “situation in which an individual has more education than the current job requires” and, in the case of the overskilling, he or she “is not able to fully utilise his or her skills and abilities in the current job”; in a situation of overqualification, instead, “an individual has a higher qualification than the current job requires”.

productivity; and the economy may suffer from a loss of output” (p. 7–8). Ultimately (p. 52):

Overeducated workers often exhibit counter-productive behaviour in the workplace, but this might also be influenced by their lower ability, health problems or a different attitude towards work. The effects of overeducation on productivity can be measured in two ways. If wages equal marginal productivity, the finding that overeducated workers receive a wage premium over matched colleagues, though less than matched workers with the same education as themselves, suggests that such workers are somewhat more productive than matched colleagues. An alternative and preferable approach, given the presence of imperfect labour markets, is to measure productivity directly through analysis of output per head in individual companies or industries. The expectation is that, since overeducation reduces job satisfaction, there will also be a negative effect on productivity, through higher shirking, absence and quit rates.

Diploma inflation, together with overeducation, overqualification and overskilling, are not the only phenomena supporting the paradox of justifying higher wages granted to the EU populations than those which should be awarded (as above illustrated), but entail at the same time considerable reduction of the net ‘quantity’ of work provided by European workers, as they spend more years in E&T, learning conceptual knowledge, competences and skills that they will possibly use only in a small part (Pritchett, 2001; Chang, 2010: 182), while in other geopolitical areas, where individuals enter the labour market earlier and with lower wage expectations, they resultantly work for longer time. In the latter case, indeed, the labour market faces higher risks of skill shortage than overeducation, overskilling or overqualification, but the wider number of workers supplied combined with the smaller cost of the workforce (for reason of the lower levels of qualifications possessed) carrying out the same tasks with very similar marginal productivity than their European counterparts would abundantly compensate the skills mismatch (Chang, 2010: 187–9; original emphasis):

With the increasing emphasis on higher education in the recent period, an unhealthy dynamic has been established for higher education in many high-income and upper-middle-income countries that can afford to expand universities. [...] Once the proportion of people going to university goes over a critical threshold, people *have to* go to university in order to get a decent job. When, say, 50 percent of the population goes to university, not going to university is implicitly declaring that you are in the bottom half of the ability distribution, which is not the greatest way to start your job search. [...] Over time, this leads to a process of ‘degree inflation’. Now that ‘everyone’ has a university degree, you have to do a master’s, or even a PhD, in order to stand out, even if the productivity content of those further degrees may be minimal for your future jobs. Given that Switzerland was until the mid 1990s able to maintain one of the highest national productivities in the world with a university enrolment of 10–15 percent, we could say that enrolment rates much higher than that are really unnecessary. Even if we accept that skills requirement has risen so much with the rise of the knowledge economy that the 40-plus percent enrolment rate that Switzerland now has is the minimum (which I seriously doubt), this still means that at least half of the university education in countries such as the US, Korea and Finland is ‘wasted’ in the essentially zero-sum game of sorting. [...] What really distinguishes the

rich countries from the poorer ones is much less how well educated their individual citizens are than how well their citizens are organized into collective entities with high productivity – be the giant firms such as Boeing or Volkswagen or the smaller world-class firms of Switzerland and Italy.

While it is clearly acknowledgeable that degree inflation due to high enrolment rates in HEIs, such as 94% in Finland or 96% in Korea³ (Chang, 2010: 186), resulting in overeducation, overskilling and overqualification provokes undeniably negative effects in the labour market (Finland, for example, is among the few OECD countries suffering from a brain drain⁴) and on the whole economic system (cf. CEDEFOP, 2009c; 2010a), the validity of some of the above assumptions needs however further specification. As a matter of fact, apart from individual benefits not directly related to a country's economic performance and competitiveness, the citizens' ability to organise themselves into 'highly productive collective entities' is anyhow directly proportional to their educational levels – including not only a sectorial knowledge of economic theories and principles acquired through MBAs, robust leadership or entrepreneurship competences, and 'hard' or 'soft skills' proficiency – and to their 'general culture', which allows them to better immunise themselves from being manipulated by populisms (cf. paragraph 4.3 Adult education and the challenge of a European citizenship) and to consciously choose their leadership and representatives, who will then provide them with systemic support, best allocation of resources to create legal, administrative and physical infrastructures which will increase considerably not only the system's but also the single individuals' marginal productivity (see above).

BETTER SKILLS FOR (MUCH FEWER) NEW JOBS

In addition to diploma inflation, the standardisation of 'knowledge jobs' through computer algorithms and digital processing of information traditionally managed in the 'heads' of highly skilled individuals – which Brown et al. (2008) called 'digital Taylorism' – is contributing to the growth of unemployment by affecting the so-called 'knowledge work' market (p. 138; own emphasis):

³ The percentage of young people entering university-level education has constantly grown in the last decade in EU countries (cf. OECD, 2012: 18–9). The OECD's *Education at a glance* report, however, shows smaller values for Finland and Korea than those provided by Chang: according to the IO, the 'entry rate' in higher education in 2010 was 68% in Finland and 71% in Korea, while the highest rates were recorded in Australia, with 96% of people entering HE, and Iceland, with 93% (see <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932667140>). The net entry rate for a specific age is obtained by dividing the number of entrants of that age to each type of tertiary education by the total population in the corresponding age group (OECD, 2012: 18).

⁴ The Finnish Ministry of Education noted that "more people with higher education degrees are moving out of than into Finland" (MINEDU, 2009: 14), and also emphasised that "there are very few non-Finnish researchers, teachers and persons with a foreign educational or research background in the personnel of our higher education institutions".

If the twentieth century brought what can be described as mechanical Taylorism characterised by the Fordist production line, where the knowledge of craft workers was captured by management, codified and re-engineered in the shape of the moving assembly line, the twenty-first century is the age of *digital Taylorism*. This involves translating *knowledge work* into *working knowledge* through the extraction, codification and digitalisation of knowledge into software pre-scripts that can be transmitted and manipulated by others regardless of location.

More specifically, in relation to 'highly innovative productive clusters such as that of mobile communication and smartphones, outsourcing or even multisourcing via new IT platforms introduces new global competition opportunities that outrun consolidated recruitment praxis and work market policy (Brown & Lauder, 2012: 168):

The market value of knowledge work is no longer judged solely in comparison to one's neighbors but in a global auction for jobs, where the bidding for many kinds of skills has gone into reverse with the rise of high skilled, low waged global workforce. The response of governments has been to seek the high ground of innovation and high skilled work, in order to protect workers and economies from low-cost competition. Yet what the Nokia case shows is that even highly innovative R&D capabilities, of the kind Nokia has demonstrated in the past, cannot be sheltered from technological innovations that create new global platforms, where the workers for these platforms and their applications will be determined in part by the global auction for skilled workers.

In report on *The knowledge economy in Europe* prepared by the Work Foundation for the 2007 EU Spring Council, the editors Ian Brinkley and Neil Lee emphasised how the notion of 'knowledge economy', as understood in the early years of the Lisbon decade, should be revised in the sense of re-establishing a balance between 'knowledge industry' (and 'knowledge jobs') and the more 'traditional' concept of the manufacturing or service economy 'based on knowledge'. Since one could argue that all manufacturing and service economic activity is ultimately based on knowledge – and it has always been – Brinkley and Lee narrowed down this idea in the sense of an economy based on technology and innovation, an approach which indeed enabled them to anchor their study on the available data on R&D and facilitating their investigation. Accordingly, they advanced (WF, 2007: 5):

The Work Foundation Report *Defining the Knowledge Economy* reviewed the common definitions used. The knowledge economy has most commonly been defined in terms of technology and knowledge based industries reflecting R&D intensities, high ICT usage, and the deployment of large numbers of graduates and professional and associate professional workers. An industry-based definition is not entirely satisfactory because, as the report showed, the knowledge economy applies across all industries. However, an industry-based approach has the advantage of being able to draw on official statistics based on internationally agreed definitions of knowledge-based industries.

This interpretation started shining its own light into the shade of the upcoming EU economic crisis, and was somewhat vouched for by corporate business evaluations and

rankings by observers Forbes (2011b) or Bloomberg (2013), which provided consistent data (based on sources including CIA World Factbook, IMF, ILO, UN, World Bank, and WTO) showing that EU countries whose economies were identified as most 'knowledge-based' in the Work Foundation's report (i.e. Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, Finland and the Netherlands) were, although in the top-20 positions, downgraded, mainly due to failures in monetary or financial policy during the financial turmoil of 2008–2010 (Forbes, 2011b):

Denmark dropped from the top spot in 2010 to No. 5 this year as its relative monetary freedom declined as measured by the Heritage Foundation. Denmark's stock market also fell 14%, which was the worst performance of any of our top 10 countries. Four other European countries in last year's top 20 also dropped in the rankings, with Finland sliding to No. 13, the Netherlands to No. 15, Germany to No. 21 and Iceland to No. 23.

Moreover, the ratings by Forbes and Bloomberg illustrated how countries with not only lower cost of labour, material and logistics but also "less tangible costs" such as those related to corruption, international property rights, inflation, taxes and "accounting adaptability" were considered as more attractive to businesses as they would provide more favourable grounds and prospects for their success.

The analysis conducted thus far suggests that the transformations in the EU policy on AEL in the sense of the bolstering of the European human capital through intensive development of key skills and competences across the lifespan to access or even create the jobs of the new 'knowledge-based economy' is, indeed, creating expectations in the individuals that will be fulfilled in a very small part: only few of those people accessing the labour market will be able to employ the full range of KSCs predicated as a 'minimum requirement' for the modern economy.

4.2 Adult skills matching: work skills vs. life skills

With the 're-launched Lisbon Strategy' (EC, 2006d), the EU drew a state-of-the-art picture of the progress and stage of implementation of the Lisbon agenda in order to further emphasise the importance of urgent policies that would enable MS to adapt their E&T systems to the transformations that are occurring in Europe and to stress priorities and actions to be taken (p. 7):

Even more than in its first phase, the revised Lisbon Strategy places strong emphasis on knowledge, innovation and the optimisation of human capital. The onus put on European education and training systems is immense. Investing in research, education and innovation play central roles in generating added value and contributing to the creation of more and better jobs.

In the same year, the EAEA (2006: 43) highlighted how the challenge of the adult skill formation and competence development in EU educational policy was focused by

the knowledge economy while, even on this basis, despite wide-ranging theoretical and strategic responses, practical responses were “still narrow, approached from the viewpoint of the economic competitiveness of human resources”. In effect, the EC stressed that “adult lifelong learning is one of the four components of the flexicurity approach of the European Employment Strategy” (EC, 2011a: 34), and that “education and training have a critical impact on economic and social outcomes”, while “ineffective, misdirected or wasteful education policies incur substantial financial and human costs”. Furthermore, that it is therefore essential that investment in education is “as efficient and effective as possible” (EC, 2007a: 3).

THE ‘POLICY MANTRA’ OF AN HIGH SKILLS, HIGH WAGE ECONOMY

As shown, the “policy mantra” of a prospected “high skills, high wage economy” (Brown & Lauder, 2012: 164) as an evolution of the ROI in education (INT27) has been endorsed by the most recent international comparison programmes and statistical tools, and can be exemplified through the explanation provided by Schleicher in relation to the PIAAC’s highlights (INT13):

The idea of PIAAC is to extend the range of competences, to those that are critical to the *success* of individuals and nations today. [...] What you can see already from the initial results of the PIAAC field trial is that there are very close relationships between the skills people have and the position they have on the labour market. And the reason is – financial crisis illustrates this very well – the people who have paid the price for the recent crisis were the ones with low skills. So there is a very close link between *employability* and *skills*.

This connection has long been seen as an involution towards the human capital theory (Becker, 1964), but new interpretations and questions are now being raised. As above argued, the causal nexus of ‘skills upgrading–higher employability–economic growth’ has largely been scaled down, if not broken entirely, by several econometric and statistical studies. An adequate matching of the right skills for the jobs actually available in the labour market (possibly created as a result of strategic investments meant to increase the overall national productivity) and an effective use of the workforce appears actually even more important than a ‘generic’ upskilling of all people regardless of the work they are contributing to the economic system (Chang, 2010: 182–9; original emphasis):

Education is not as important in rising productivity of an economy as we believe. [...] Not all education is even *meant* to raise productivity. There are many subjects that have no impact, even indirectly, on most workers’ productivity – literature, history, philosophy and music, for example. From a strictly economic point of view, teaching these subjects is a waste of time. We teach our children those subjects because we believe that they will eventually enrich their lives and also make them good citizens. Even though this justification for educational spending is increasingly under attack in an age in which everything is supposed to justify its existence in

terms of its contribution to productivity growth, it remains a very important – in my view, the most important – reason to invest in education. [...] Education is valuable, but its main value is not in rising productivity. It lies in its ability to help us develop our potentials and live a more fulfilling and independent life. If we expanded education in the belief that it will make our economies richer, we will be sorely disappointed, for the link between education and national productivity is rather tenuous and complicated.

According to the scholar from Cambridge, the reason for the ‘zero-sum’ game of an almost useless widespread upskilling of the population of a country is twofold: on the one hand, a large part of the KSCs learned at school or at university is not (and often just should not be, as above illustrated) relevant for the job in which the individuals will be employed (*ibid.*):

Even subjects like mathematics or sciences, which are supposed to be important for raising productivity, are not relevant for most workers – investment bankers do not need biology or fashion designers mathematics in order to be good at what they do. Even for those jobs for which these subjects are relevant, much of what you learn at school or even university is often not directly relevant for practical work. For example, the link between what a production line worker in a car factory learned in school physics and his productivity is rather tenuous.

On the other hand, as anticipated in the previous paragraph (cf. 4.1 The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing?), the mechanisation and the automation of the manufacturing (and often the service) industry engenders the waning of skills and competences which were once necessary to carry out the same tasks (p. 184–5):

With the continuous rise in manufacturing productivity, a greater proportion of the workforce in rich countries now works in low-skilled service jobs that do not require much education – stacking shelves in supermarkets, frying burgers in fast food restaurants and cleaning offices. Insofar as the proportion of people in such professions increases, we may actually do with an increasingly less, not more, educated labour force, if we are only interested in the productivity effects of education. Moreover, with economic development, a higher proportion of knowledge becomes embodied in machines. This means that the economy-wide productivity increases despite individual workers having less understanding of what they do than their counterparts in the past. For the most striking example, these days most shop assistants in rich countries do not even need to know how to add – a skill that their counterparts in earlier times definitely needed – as bar-code machines do that for them. For another example, blacksmiths in poor countries probably know more about the nature of metals in relation to tool making than do most employees of Bosch or Black & Decker. For yet another example, those who work at the small electronics shops littering the streets of poor countries can fix many more things than can individual workers at Samsung or Sony. At the large part, this is due to the simple fact that mechanization is the most important way to increase productivity.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

In recent EU education policy trends, the mainstream of the public policy trend of ‘knowledge capitalism’ (Burton-Jones, 1999; Peters & Besley, 2006; cf. par. 3.6 A market

model for the adult and lifelong learning policy) and human capital development through skills upgrading seems to be strictly intertwined with the lifelong learning discourse (Olssen & Peters, 2005: 331):

For Burton-Jones and analysts of world policy agencies such as the World Bank and OECD, the shift to a knowledge economy involves a fundamental rethinking of the traditional relationships between education, learning and work, focusing on the need for a new coalition between education and industry. 'Knowledge capitalism' and 'knowledge economy' are twin terms that can be traced at the level of public policy to a series of reports that emerged in the late 1990s by the OECD [1996a] and the World Bank [1998], before they were taken up as a policy template by world governments in the late 1990s [Peters, 2001]. In terms of these reports, education is reconfigured as a massively undervalued form of knowledge capital that will determine the future of work, the organization of knowledge institutions and the shape of society in the years to come.

The deep intertwinement between EU governments and the various supranational agencies expressing the interests of the 'capitalist side' of the Western economies such as the World Bank, OECD, as well as ECB and IMF, is evident, as already introduced in the above analysis in relation to 'The genesis of the Knowledge Economy and Knowledge Society' (paragraph 3.3.1 Consultative, decentralised and outsourced legitimation). The axiomatic transfusion of 'policy templates' – models to reproduce without being filtered by a geolocal debate or in a critical adaptation to the country's needs and peculiarities – into national guidelines and initiatives seems to be justifiable in terms of co-responsibility in the definition of the 'series of reports' within an epistemic community of which the country is integral part. In this belief, the inconsistency laying on the illusion of the co-creation, nation-states have accepted policy dogmas delivered unilaterally, aside all democratic involvement or even consultation, by the technocrats of the supranational apparatus they rely on, without any negotiation.

In the above-cited working paper produced for the OECD (2011), Desjardins and Rubenson explicitly pointed out that such an increasing "focus of recent thinking around skills for economic prosperity" should at least be questioned, in order to avoid a possible skill surplus that could hardly be compensated by a parallel and consistent employment policy (p. 7):

Several policy documents have stressed that the answer to the present economic and social challenges is to improve the supply of skilled labour. This view tends to ignore the demand side and takes upskilling for granted or as inevitable. It also ignores the observation that the actual utilization of foundation skills is itself a major factor implicated in skill formation as found in this study, and that large segments of the workforce are still not required to use their foundation skills at work. Evidence thus suggests that there is a need for a more comprehensive view involving both the demand and supply sides. Otherwise, a view based on the supply side only ignores the possibility that there may be structural conditions in the economy, as well as labour market, work and organisational practices that lower the demand for and utilization of skills, which in turn can affect not only investments in skill formation, but may lead to a lack of use of existing skills, and ultimately skill loss.

Concerning the way the EU has embedded the human capital development as inevitable implication of the 'knowledge society' within the on-going lifelong learning policy, Brown et al. (2008) advanced the following interpretation (p. 142; own emphasis):

The technocratic model of skills upgrading and rising value of investments in human capital on which the European agenda rests is subject to the laws of diminishing returns. Human capital theory does not offer a universal theory of the relationship between education, job and rewards, but represents a 'transitional' case in the second half of the twentieth century characterised by educational expansion and a rising middle class. We argue that *developed economies in Europe and North America are not 'knowledge' economies*, where the value of knowledge continues to rise, but they are characterised by an economy of knowledge, that is transforming the relationship between education, jobs and rewards. This will inevitably lead to claims that education is failing to meet the needs of industry, but the overriding problem is a failure to lift the demand for 'knowledge' workers to meet the increasing numbers entering the job market with a bachelor's degree.

For these reasons, Brown, Lauder and Ashton put forward the idea that the European policy discourse does not challenge the notion of the expansion of the higher education sector, but maintains instead the principle of "the supply of workers rather than the demand for their services" as the dominant policy issue. Moreover, this rationale would also serve "to heighten the individual's responsibility for labour market outcomes not simply by applying neo-liberal notions of market freedom but through the rhetoric of lifelong learning" until "the individual, disembedded from national institutions of education, training and labour markets, is transformed into an individual learner responsible for the development of their capabilities within a European-wide framework of lifelong learning" (*ibid.*)

SOCIAL COHESION FOR A COMPETITIVE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

The correlation between investing in human capital for the sake of the knowledge society, the concerns for employability and the prospects of increased 'social cohesion' has been explored by Moutsios (2007: 20), who stated that "human capital development is conceived as the educational 'common good' and as the major source of legitimacy for transnational education policy-making in Europe". In this light, according to him (p. 23), 'soft governance' based on the OMC and its data collection, reporting and benchmarking system, as well as the consequent peer pressure exerted on the MS would mainly serve the economic growth and competitiveness targets of the EU, even when the policy debate (or rhetoric) encompasses principles and political goals such as *social cohesion* (*ibid.*):

Social cohesion is largely understood again in terms of building human as well as social capital under the conditions of economic restructuring. Socially cohesive, according to this perception [...] would be societies comprised of aggregates of individuals networked with shared norms and values that would facilitate co-operation in a harmonious, well-functioning European single market oriented towards economic growth. This perception is being promoted by the EU

through its research and benchmark-setting industry on citizenship education, where, again, the main concern is to facilitate economic growth rather to create a European public sphere.

The Council of the EU, in the cited Conclusions of May 2009 (EU, 2009c), indeed very clearly presented its interpretation of the role that education should have in fostering *social cohesion, active citizenship and individual well-being and fulfilment*:

Whilst acknowledging the wide range of roles which education and training fulfil, an important part of education's role in fostering social cohesion lies in its ability to equip people with the knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes needed to enter and remain in the labour market. Integration into the world of work gives individuals an opportunity to have a full stake in society, thus contributing to their social inclusion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment.

On the subject of this "economic rationalism", which allows European leaders like Margaret Thatcher to describe the free market imperative as working positively "to change the soul", Erica McWilliam (2002: 5) advanced:

Such special pleading has already been heard and de-legitimised by an earlier generation of free-market advocates who argue the morality of the market, by means of linking the achievement of individual enterprise with the improvement of 'community' outcomes. Such a re-configuration makes it possible to equate the market's ability to achieve a 'trickle down effect' (and so improve socio-economic standards) with greater democratic opportunity. Indeed, some of the most influential architects of the 'free market' have directly linked democratic values and capitalism.

Similarly, the EAEA (2006: 44) commented on the questions related to 'active citizenship' which have come to the fore since the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* was released, arguing that its importance "is universally acknowledged but little has been done to have it recognised, enforced and extended into the practice of lifelong and adult learning".

INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS PLUS INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS EQUALS ECONOMIC GROWTH

With the communication of May 2012 by John Higgins and Marc Durando of the *European Schoolnet*, addressed to four members of the EC, the idea to support a "grand coalition" of stakeholders has also been advanced in order to secure the right supply of skills needed to serve creativity and innovation across Europe, as the "initiatives taken so far to improve the situation of the imbalance between ICT skills supply and demand" would be "obviously unable to keep this disastrous inadequacy from eroding our competitiveness", and "curbing this fatal trend calls for action which runs deep into the EU educational fabric and which never stops". Simultaneously, the OECD presented an increasing interest in competences related to *innovation and economic growth*, to also be assessed on a permanent basis among school students, by including them in the future PISA tests (INT13):

There have been basically two dimensions among which we have tried to innovate, to develop PISA. The first, and perhaps most important, relates to the *kind* of competences that we assess. Currently it is still limited; there are still very important competences that we know matter a lot for us, for the success of people, that are very hard to capture and measure. PISA is investing a lot of effort in doing this better. For example, in year 2000 we focused the assessment on reading, maths and science: things that we know how to assess and that we know are important for people's life. Measuring *meta-cognition* is something that we have done for the first time in 2009, about not only what I know but also how I approach fields of knowledge. For 2015 we have the ambition, for example, to assess not only problem-solving, that has always been an important part of PISA, but *collaborative* problem-solving: to what extent can people *share* their knowledge, jointly use knowledge. Because innovation today is no longer: 'I invent something for the world', but: 'I work with other people'. The other track is understanding *success*.

These instances are indeed perfectly in line with the keynotes of the *Skill Needs in Europe* forecasts (CEDEFOP, 2008b; 2008c), and ultimately express the growing interest in continuing and expanding the NSNJ policy agenda (EC, 2008b) with entrepreneurially-oriented competences and ICT skills, although the prospected resulting "success" for both individuals and societies is clearly approached, in the above views, in terms of *wealth* rather than people's *well-being* and overall social cohesion. By reason of the evident and *fundamental* interconnectedness with other EU policies – notably those concerning adult skills upgrading and adult education more generally – the EAEA (2011: 3) pointed out the excessive emphasis on vocational training and basic and 'hard' work skills given by the Communication that launched the NSNJ policy initiative (although they were part of the 'growth and jobs' strategy), and the little attention paid to life skills, including social and civic competences:

The Communication outlines the need to develop a range of competences which are necessary to meet the requirements for future jobs. We would also suggest that consideration is given to 'soft' skills, including team building, participation, problem solving and social skills which can be acquired in a range of non formal and formal learning environments. In this case, general 'liberal' education is as significant as vocational training. Consideration of these skills should be included in the EU Skills Panorama.

The 'key competence development', upon which the EU has insisted in the last years, does not appear, as shown in the analysis hitherto proposed, to play the role prospected by the policy statements of the EC. Life skills (in their broader sense), social competence development and citizenship education have been put in the shadow of other sets of skills, firmly anchored to the political drive and ideals of innovation, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and employability for the growth of the EMU. At the European Council of 28 and 29 June 2012, the EU stated uncontroversibly:

Europe is once again going through a period of heightened tensions. The crisis surrounding sovereign debt and the weakness of the financial sector, together with persistent low growth and macroeconomic imbalances, are slowing down economic recovery and creating risks for the

stability of EMU. This is having a negative impact in terms of unemployment and may weigh down Europe's potential to benefit from a gradual improvement of the global economic outlook. We are therefore committed to taking resolute action to address financial market tensions, restore confidence and revive growth. We reaffirm our commitment to preserve the EMU and put it on a more solid basis for the future. Strong, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, based on sound public finances, structural reforms and investment to boost competitiveness, remains our key priority. This is why today the Heads of State or Government decided on a 'Compact for Growth and Jobs', encompassing action to be taken by the Member States and the European Union with the aim of re-launching growth, investment and employment as well as making Europe more competitive. We also endorsed the country-specific recommendations to guide Member States' policies and budgets. Finally, we emphasised the role that the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework should play in strengthening growth and employment. The President of the European Council presented the report *Towards a Genuine Economic and Monetary Union*. We are determined to take the measures required to ensure a financially stable, competitive and prosperous Europe and thus enhance the welfare of citizens.

Most of the education policy statements by European Union in the Lisbon decade (EC, 2000; 2002a; 2003c; 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d) are actually impregnated with a concern about quantitative and qualitative increases in mathematics, science, ICT skills and all the 'entrepreneurial skills' required by the 'knowledge economy' in the European national curricula at all levels of education. One reason for this is that 'modern' Western educational systems have been created during the end of the 19th century, when nation-states calibrated the human invention of 'disciplines' and 'subjects' to match the needs of the industrial society (Meyer et al., 1992). As Howard Gardner remarked (2006: 145):

Discipline refers to domains of knowledge or competence within a society; individuals enrol in scholastic or informal apprenticeships and eventually achieve a certain degree of expertise in a discipline. While most educators recognize the need for the acquisition of academic disciplines, a rather widespread conviction obtains that such disciplines are good for you ('that a child needs to master the disciplines before going to college') rather than enjoyable to pursue, ultimately useful, or essential for full development.

Literacy, numeracy, languages, ICT, together with a number of 'analytical' subjects that do not involve high degrees of creativity, still hold the top positions in terms of prestige, learning assessment, and evaluation, while arts, transversal and 'global' skills very often still hold a marginal place. According to many, however, the ultimate goal for education systems should be to provide the *right mixture* of knowledge, hard and soft skills – the key/core competences relevant for the individual's personal and professional development – recognising various intelligences and learning styles (Gardner, 1993; 2008b; Pashler et al., 2008) and valorising such differences (Dunlosky et al., 2013). As Ján Figel' put it (INT3):

We are increasingly in need of people who have both *horizontal* and vertical *knowledge* – that is, not only very specific knowledge and skills in their own field but also a broader socioeconomic

maturity, a *human* maturity. While seeking to develop skills, we must never lose sight of *values*. For too long there has been an artificial polemic between the humanities and vocational education. But, to me, this reflects an immature understanding of tomorrow's world. We should instead look to the example of personalities like Leonardo da Vinci, a great artist who also had a technical side. There should be no conflict between various kinds of knowledge.

TRAINING ADULTS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

A skills mismatch, as outlined and illustrated in the previous chapter, implies two terms of confrontation. One is the set of skills needed in a community of reference; the other one is the set of skills available in this community. This very simple idea entails, nonetheless, further specifications. First of all, putting forward the *need* for different, better-targeted skills relies on the "*meeting needs* rationale for justifying adult education practice", an expression of a "reified and hegemonic assumption" that corresponds to the attempt of representing what is "good and true about the field and therefore to be in educators' and learners' own best interests" (Brookfield, 2000: 41).

This normative approach is very clear in the policy outcomes hitherto analysed, while institutional press releases (cf. EC Press Releases IP/08/1984 of 16 December 2008 and IP/12/1137 of 23 October 2012) and the interviews to key policy-makers above presented (INT2; INT3; INT11 and especially INT13) add further nuances to this approach, by expressing a 'hegemonic reification' that indeed pervades all the EU discourses on lifelong learning and E&T policy, encompassing the AEL sector. Other elements to clarify are the relevance or necessity of such an interconnection, and what arena is taken into account when we are talking about 'community': in relation to the EU adult education policy statements, the 'target population' is actually invariably identified with adults aged between 25 and 64 years old (cf. par. 3.1.2 The *adult learner* concept and definition).

The narrowing of the 'concept' of the ageing European *population* to an ageing European *workforce* (INT12) has in fact provided additional lines of reasoning to support the linkage of skills available and skills needed by a community of reference as defined above, notably in relation to skill *obsolescence* in the adult labour force (INT11; CEDEFOP, 2010a). This leitmotif has dominated the debate of the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations of 2012, and could be indeed understood in the light of public expenditure and state budgets' sustainability, determining an impellent need for all cohorts of the population to be active in the labour market and, in order to do so, be fully and properly equipped with the right skills it requires (EAEA, 2006: 56):

The new demography has far-reaching consequences as there are fewer employees to pay taxes and more retired people draw pensions and use health, nursing and related services more heavily. A 'pensions crisis' and a health budget or 'care for the elderly' crisis loom in many places while adult education suffers greater competition for public expenditure from health, welfare and other portfolios. Meanwhile it becomes necessary to keep people active and employed

longer for economic reasons and up to date and with the appropriate skills for work. Adult learning can contribute to these measures.

Discussing the focus on active ageing of the 2012 European Year, Aviana Bulgarelli emphasised, in effect, that governments reforming their pension systems and increasing the age of retirement would not be sufficient to tackle the active involvement of older cohorts of the population (i.e. that of the people “over 50” years old), and that welfare systems should support the efforts made in this direction by creating the conditions for them – women in particular – to re-enter and stay longer in the labour market (INT11). According to Bulgarelli, moreover, an ‘inter-generational contract’ could supplement the simple upgrading of the older labour force’s skills and competences and produce a transfer of competences from older to younger workers in a perspective that has been called by CEDEFOP the ‘skill matching challenge’ (CEDEFOP, 2010a).

As anticipated, the EC is currently developing a ‘road map’ for a policy initiative on skill formation and development called *Rethinking Skills in Europe* to be launched in 2013 under the supervision and coordination of the Commission’s DGs Employment and EAC (cf. Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map). This road map mirrors the *Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment* (EC, 2010b), and proposes specific actions at an EU level on “better anticipating and matching of skills and labour market needs to be carried out in partnership with Member States, social partners, labour market and education institutions”, setting as a focus of this initiative “basic skills such as literacy and numeracy” and “transversal competences such as entrepreneurship, digital competence and multilingualism” (cf. Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map).

Today’s European economic stagnation and lack of competitiveness is still one of the main reasons for the slow growth and slow GDP increase in EU countries (Green, 2006). Nonetheless, if innovation is to be the solution proposed to boost competitiveness, the EU should perhaps better substantiate concepts such as ‘entrepreneurship’ or ‘innovation’ itself, stating clearly, for example, that it needs people to consider work and the social *implications* of technology development and progress, to think laterally to *generate* change, not just keep up with it. According to many economists, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, that is not likely to happen through a simple skill matching policy. These considerations are not an attempt to deny the importance of linking the labour market to vocational adult education and training. Nevertheless, attaining this goal should not be, from the author’s point of view, to the detriment of individual interests, and the ‘full-range’ of personal development and the adult community’s well-being should be taken into account. In fact, democratic ideals and political objectives do not seem to align when it is time to decide on the use of public funding, and *human capital* seems to firmly hold its primacy in the EU and other IOs’ policy for AEL, in spite of the widely-shared opinion that “the total potential of a society’s active human capital is an

important economic value, but in addition the quality and extent of civic-mindedness, trust and participation form the basis of civil society” (EAEA, 2006: 44). A snapshot of the funding of the ‘adult learning tradition’ in the sense of the corporate responsibility for workplace learning, for example, was given by Aviana Bulgarelli in the following words (INT11):

The tradition that adult learning is financed by the public has changed step by step into a model in which adult learning is also company or individual task, financed by the participant him – or herself or by the company the person is working for. There have been some interesting new trends, such as joint agreements with social partners to establish sectorial training funds. In general, Member States are making some progress; countries are developing measures to integrate working and learning. We need a coherent approach to adult learning and lifelong learning for the workplace. These are different components of one field.

However beneficial they might be for the growth and improvement of a country’s economic system, the primacy of work skills in sectors such as lifelong and adult learning does not seem to be sustainable nor legitimate even in the present economic downturn: life skills do play a very important and effective role in economic growth as they increase motivation and entrepreneurship, but also overall work efficiency thanks to ‘soft’ skills, and ultimately competitiveness through critical thinking and creativity. Hirschham et al. (1989: 185; own emphasis) recognised, on this subject:

Workers and managers in a post-industrial economy must learn primarily not new skills but new *roles*. But, since training [...] is based on the rigid separation of the training encounter from the natural world of work, it is unsuited as a process for helping people learn new roles and develop new relationships.

Gert Biesta (2006: 169) further explored how this phenomenon affects the concept of citizenship and the individuals’ democratic ‘status’, and concluded that lifelong learning is increasingly considered and understood, in EU policy-making, “primarily in economic terms and far less in relation to the personal and the democratic function of lifelong learning”. This point, developed in more depth in the next paragraphs, indeed raises sensitive questions about adult education in relation to democratic citizenship, an intertwinement that has been explored in the scientific literature and considered crucial for the AEL sector.

4.3 Adult education and the challenge of a European citizenship

The TEU established the relationship between European and national citizenship. It stated, unequivocally, that “citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship”. This statement implies that it is first necessary to be a national citizen of an MS in order to enjoy ‘EU citizenship’, and that EU citizenship supplements (or complements) the legal rights conferred by national citizenship. The Amsterdam Treaty,

furthermore, included a new paragraph in the preamble of the EC Treaty that confirmed the commitment by the MS to the education of their peoples and established that each EU Member State will undertake “to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge [...] through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating”.⁵ However, as Milana (2007: 12–4) noted, “it was only in 1997 that democratic values and citizens’ rights were firmly tied to the European education project”, with democratic citizenship becoming a “central feature of supranational policies that addressed reforms of national education and training systems”; contextually, European citizenship too, “originally limited to a recognised legal status within the geographical borders of the Union”, acquired “a stronger social dimension when first linked to the broader European education project”. Ultimately, drawing on Gert Biesta’s analysis (2006), she argued that “despite the recent shift from education to learning for democratic citizenship in European educational discourse, to the emphasis on lifelong learning and the consequent equal recognition of both in-school and out-of-school learning activities for strengthening democratic competences among the population, most empirical research in the field remains primarily concerned with school-aged pupils and formal school education” (Milana, 2007: 7).

CITIZENSHIP AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

Citizenship has, in effect, been described by Commissioner Vassiliou as “one of the main pillars of every education system” (INT2). However, it is approached in schools in very ‘traditional’ ways, and much emphasis is still given to conceptual knowledge rather than the development of core competences enabling pupils and students to express active citizenship:

The problem is that citizenship is often understood as only one subject within the school curriculum. As a consequence, the emphasis tends to be on knowledge rather than on competences that will allow our students to understand the values, objectives and processes of European integration. Such competences will offer knowledge and skills to students that will help them appreciate the importance of getting to know Europe and how it affects their everyday lives. Thus, education has indeed a crucial role to play in cultivating attitudes and attributes that will lead to a better understanding of EU affairs and a more inclusive democracy at EU level.

The reason for this compartmentation is manifold. Because school education is a privileged medium to convey values of common citizenship and mutual understanding, it has been used to build a common culture and idea of nation. For example, it has been used, especially in the last decades, to express cultural cooperation or political ‘soft power’ in several occasions and with different endgames, even outside the sphere of the EU. One example is the multiplication of bilateral cultural agreements promoted by the

⁵ See http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/amsterdam_treaty/a12000_en.htm.

USA after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent increase of intercultural tensions with Islamic countries (Maniscalco, 2010c), in order to regain cultural credit and rebuild political consensus across the international landscape (Maniscalco, 2008a; 2008c; 2008d). Conversely, all (inevitable) attempts to dissociate citizenship from nationality in the framework of the EU education policy have determined caution or reluctance in the participation of the MS in centralised policy coordination (Dale, 1999a; Maniscalco, 2012). Resultantly, this has even restrained them from endorsing EU recommendations because of the indissoluble link existing between national sovereignty, citizenship and education as a “cardinal expression of statehood” (Jones, 2007: 327), and because, traditionally, the latter used to lay under the indisputable control of the European nation-states (Nóvoa & De Jong-Lambert, 2003; Coulby & Zambeta, 2012). The complexity (and the sensitivity) of policy areas where the EU holds no competences for policy-making regulatory activity – such as education – exposes the EU policy-making to the increased difficulty of finding agreements, as coordination in these sectors requires a high-level of consensus among the different actors involved.

The preoccupation of the EU in the respect of national diversity, multilingualism – upon which the EU relied, in the first instance, to induce an increased ‘global citizenship’ dimension (Maniscalco, 2008b; EC, 2005d: 5) – and in the scope of building of a pluralistic European society combined with a limited pooling of sovereignty realised thus far by the EU Member States, has produced a European citizenship calibrated on different needs and objectives. One goal that the European education systems have set and tried to keep in the last decades has been that of sustaining the levels of economic growth and prosperity that the market economy has guaranteed for centuries to the old continent, and thus to adapt to the changes of the knowledge economy and to meet the new labour market’s needs (i.e. investing in human capital: cf. Vinokur, 1976). In addition, another challenge has been to find the channels, modes and ways to express social participation (investing in social capital) and to allow people to enjoy true active citizenship and to promote personal development and well-being. Moreover, in order to gain a global competitive advantage, the EU has needed to create new learning trajectories throughout people’s lifespan, and to create opportunities for talent guidance and mentoring, and for people to be up-to-date with the necessary skill requirements at work and to be ready to adapt to a dynamic labour market. Unfortunately, the dislocation between *citizen* and *worker* that has taken place in the education policy in the knowledge societies now seems to produce a “new kind of citizen [...] in relation to new forms of government and governance – and a concomitant loss of *citizenship capacity*” (Ball, 2009: 214). Milana (2007: 108) also came to similar conclusions by noting that while ‘traditional’ adult education systems “embedded at their core the principles of education for democratic citizenship,

[...] when looking at recent forms taken by much adult education provision, the locus has moved from *enlightenment* to *employability*".

EUROPEAN, LIFELONG LEARNING CITIZENS

Witnessing the emergence of a 'new Europe' whose foundations unambiguously include E&T, Marek Kwiek (2009: 197; own emphasis) noted that "education, in the EU, and especially lifelong learning, becomes a new discursive space in which European dreams of common citizenship are currently being located"; besides which, "this new 'knowledge-based Europe' is becoming increasingly individualised [and] consists of individual European *learners* rather than *citizens*". In this perspective, EU citizens would correspond to individuals engaged in lifelong learning "seeking knowledge useful in the knowledge economy", as they would acquire this kind of citizenship delimited by a pan-European educational space "only through knowledge, skills and competences". Resultantly, the EU has been described as "a hybrid between a market and a bureaucracy", instead of a political entity "with visionary powers, either in terms of how to shape Europe as a group of states, or with regard to Europe's position in relation to other global regions" (Beck, 2005: 230).

The present transformations of the European education systems have been seen as originators of a negative impact on the ideal of a truly democratic European citizenship (Moutsios, 2007: 22–3):

Education systems in Europe are still of course deeply rooted in their national histories and conditions. However, they are being placed in the service of a common goal: the production of skilled individuals destined to feed the new transnational European economy and to survive the restructuring of the labour markets. Knowledge production and transmission are largely defined in terms of their economic returns and states emphasise this through their policy-making at both EU and national levels. They do so by engaging their policy makers, academics, statistical services, ministries, bureaucracies and private firms to the production of large amounts of data which measure failures and successes in reaching agreed targets and identify who/what is to be 'improved'. [...] But while Europe is reforming its education systems, based on anxious measurements in order to increase its competitiveness, European societies are facing a risk of political and socio-cultural disarticulation. European citizens, tend to distrust both their national and the EU political institutions. European citizenship is obfuscated, as the 'netocratic', decision making structures are hardly accessible by citizens. At the same time, the resurgence of nationalism (culture, ethnicity or language-based), the upsurge of political extremism, the various manifestations of prejudice, xenophobia and religious fundamentalism are threatening codes of communication across and within European societies.

The alarming tones with which Moutsios stressed the risk that Europe undergoes a democratic degeneration towards xenophobia or nationalism recall those used by other scholars such as Arjun Appadurai (2006), who correlated these phenomena with globalisation, seen as one of the factors that generate uncertainty in modern societies and anxi-

ety of incompleteness in individuals, eventually entailing a opposition of ethno-racial categories which would describe a new 'geography of anger' (p. 8–9):

Where the lines between 'us' and 'them' may have always, in human history, been blurred at the boundaries and unclear across large spaces and big numbers, globalization exacerbates these uncertainties and produces new incentives for cultural purification as more nations lose the illusion of national economic sovereignty or well-being. [...] Globalisation, as a specific way in which states, markets, and ideas about trade and governance have come to be organized, exacerbates the conditions of large-scale violence because it produces a potential collision course between the logics of uncertainty and incompleteness, each of which has its own form and force. As a broad fact about the world of 1990s, the forces of globalization produced conditions for an increase in large-scale social uncertainty and also in the friction of incompleteness, both of which emerged in the traffic between the categories of majority and minority. The anxiety of incompleteness (always latent in the project of complete national purity) and the sense of social uncertainty about large-scale ethnoracial categories can produce a runaway form of mutual stimulation, which is the road to genocide.

In relation to the European continent, *The Economist* (2012e) recalled in effect that "after the second world war the far-right was taboo in much of Europe", but, since then, "as memories of the war fade, Europe's far-right parties have adopted the welfare aspirations of the centre-left and flavoured them with protectionism and nationalism", and today "their increasing popularity suggests that this recipe will go down well, unless mainstream parties find ways to calm voters' pressing anxieties over culture, identity and Europe's way of life".

EUROPEAN UNION POLICY AGAINST RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

Article 13 of the TEU clearly states that "the European Union rejects violence and hatred and will never tolerate racism or xenophobia in whatever form or against whatever religion or ethnic group".⁶ Moreover, the Charter on Fundamental Rights of that the EU issued in 2000 proclaims that the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity and is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. Accordingly, the EU started, in the last years, a close monitoring of these phenomena growing in several areas of the European continent. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, Fundamental Rights Agency),⁷ for example, set up a *European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia* to provide expert advice to the institutions of the EU and to MS on a range of issues related to these two phenomena and to ensure that the fundamental rights of people living in the EU are protected (cf. the

⁶ Cf. also Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial and ethnic origin – OJ L 180, 19 July 2000, p. 22 – and Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation – OJ L 303, 2 December 2000, p. 303.

⁷ See <http://fra.europa.eu/en>.

Annual Reports EUMC, 2002; 2005; 2006). Even before the EUMC was established, the Council of Europe had launched similar initiatives, like the *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance* (ECRI),⁸ a ‘human rights body’ composed by independent experts, established on 9 October 1993 with the *Vienna Declaration* of the Heads of State and Government of the MS of the COE. The ECRI regularly monitors problems of racism, discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, citizenship, colour, religion and language, as well as xenophobia, anti-Semitism or intolerance, and prepares recommendations and reports for the attention of European governments.

In 2005, as a response to the terrorist attacks in London in July 2005, and Madrid in March 2004, the EC issued the Communication *Terrorist recruitment: addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation* (EC, 2005d), meant to be the initial contribution to a broader EU Strategy and a subsequent Action Plan that was adopted by the Council in December 2005 and updated in December 2006. Later on, the Portuguese Presidency prepared a joint seminar on 11 September 2007, the anniversary of the terrorist attacks in the USA, entitled ‘preventing and addressing the radicalisation of youth: the schools, the texts and the teachers’, while in October 2007, in order to integrate and support the work conducted by the FRA, the Commission set up an ‘Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation’ to advise on policy-making and a network in the field of education (albeit coordinated by the DG Justice, Freedom and Security) specifically exploring the ‘role of education in the prevention of violent radicalisation’ in the framework of the *Counter-Terrorism Contact Points’* activity. One task of this network was to reflect on and investigate how awareness of violent radicalisation could be streamlined into the teaching of other important life skills, and linked notions like tolerance and diversity and political democratic awareness.

The relationship between the development of social and civic competences and racism or violent radicalisations in general has been investigated by several scholars, also in relation to the promotion of citizenship values and democratic attitudes (Bron, et al., 1998; Bron Jr. & Field, 2001; Schemmann & Bron Jr., 2001), which brought to the fore the important role played by education in the definition (and, consequently, the prevention) of these phenomena (Lenz, 1998; Flecha, 1999). In the above-cited Communication on the factors contributing to violent radicalisations (EC, 2005d: 5), the Commission emphasised, for example, that “programmes targeted at youngsters in their most formative years and at an age in which they are most vulnerable to fall prey to violently radical ideas, can have very fruitful outcomes” and that “the promotion of cultural diversity and tolerance can help to stem the development of violently radical mind-sets”. It provided, as an example, the EU programmes such as *Youth, Culture, Socrates, Comenius* (cf. also INT1) as

⁸ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default_en.asp.

well as the *Grundtvig* programme for adult education administered by the DG Education and Culture: “the Commission is carrying out many projects under the *Socrates* Programme which deal with developing concepts of European citizenship and intercultural understanding that enable people coming from different backgrounds to share a common European identity that nonetheless respects and promotes cultural diversity [and] these activities are treated in more detail in the school and *adult education* actions of the programme” (p. 6; own emphasis). School and early childhood education have actually been, as mentioned, the main research interest for scholars who addressed the issue of the role of education for the prevention of racism and xenophobia, although a few studies (e.g. Osler & Starker, 2001) have also addressed the role that adult education can play in this regard.

INTOLERANCE, XENOPHOBIA AND RACISM IN ADULT POPULATIONS

Fear of diversity is actually not only the result of a prejudicial understanding of the socio-economic implications of immigrants’ presence in a local context (OECD, 2010). It has been shown, for example, that individual-specific psychological characteristics, such as a lower cognitive ability, can predict greater prejudice through right-wing ideology and lower inter-group contact (Hodson & Busseri, 2012). In more general terms of age cohorts and distribution, moreover, lower levels of plasticity that characterise the adult brain, ‘charge’ it with stronger cognitive constraints (cf. par. 3.3.2.1 Knowledge building, learning transfer and (adult) skill transferability), which may also engender reluctance and sometimes rejection towards cultural and behavioural diversity. In effect, crystallised perceptions and behaviours are a major limitation to the adaptation of individuals to novel environmental stimuli and dynamics, which is necessary for building an objective interpretation of the reality.

On the occasion of a campaign by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), created with the aim of promoting multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism by increasing awareness of issues related to non-discrimination of vulnerable groups of children and adolescents – such as those of foreign origins – a research institute⁹ was commissioned to carry out a survey intending to highlight people’s perceptions on such a subject, by comparing the opinions of an adult public to that of adolescents. The survey was conducted in Italy on different targets (400 adolescents from 14 to 17 years of age and 400 adults over 18), and analysed not only the perception of the concept of racism, but also the respondent’s life experiences, their main sources of knowledge, their values, and a first, general evaluation

⁹ Lorien Consulting. Cf. <http://www.lorienconsulting.it/en/News/Lorien-Consulting-presents-a-new-survey-on-racism-in-Italy.xhtml> (last retrieved on 12 November 2012).

of the Campaign itself. The study showed¹⁰ that while 35.9% of adults placed the blame of racism on actual wrongful behaviours of foreigners living in the country, 35.8% of adolescents instead placed the blame on the ignorance of Italians themselves. According to adolescents, in effect, equality was the most important value (for 35.3% of the sample), immediately following human rights (44.8%), while according to the adults' point of view, the rights to health (42.5%) and to a job (29.8%) were more important. Also in other EU countries with relatively recent and modest presence of immigrants, racist and xenophobic attitudes have been reported in adult behaviour more than in other age cohorts, even though adults are expected to have a higher civic sense, empathy and better manners, and thus to show higher multicultural understanding than youngsters. In this regard, an article recently published in the principal Finnish national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* emphasised this paradox and raised, at the same time, new burning questions to the attention of the northern country's public opinion (HS, 2012d; own translation):

My adoptive daughter is Zulu, she was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. When she was one year old, and had a pacifier in her mouth, we were waiting for our train in Helsinki's subway. An old lady, about 80 years old, walked directly in front of the baby and cried out: 'fucking nigger'. She looked around and waved her arms to show to other people what she had found: 'look, a fucking nigger kid!' The old lady was not mentally ill or drunk, just a 'normal' older person. About three times a month, someone like an ordinary Finn swore in front of my daughter, and some teenager at a tram stop could laugh about it: 'nigger, nigger!' On a Finnair flight to Paris, a 40-year-old Finnish couple approached my two-year-old daughter, who was standing in front of a luggage belt. I smiled, as I thought that they were going to say something nice to her. But the man approached my daughter and growled: 'fucking nigger, keep your hands off the bags!' When episodes like these happened again and again, I was not sure anymore how I would make my daughter believe that a human being is precious, and that she was really worth something.

In Italy, France, Greece and other Mediterranean countries, historically exposed to increasing pressure of North African immigrants, even stronger xenophobic attitudes and rhetoric have found consensus already since the early 1990s and then rapidly spread with the consistent establishment of parties such as the Northern League, the Front National and the Golden Dawn respectively. When anti-immigration and anti-EU arguments gained conspicuous shares of the parliament's seats in nordic countries as well (Economist, 2011) observer were "surprised by the growing appeal [of racist tones] in a region that is famous for tolerance" and respect for human rights (Economist, 2012e). Other far-right populist parties have been growing in many EU countries (DN, 2012b; FRA, 2012) like Austria, Sweden, Hungary, Slovakia, the Netherlands, and even in Germany, where a neo-nazi murder spree has reheated the debate on violent right-wing extremism in the

¹⁰ Full report available online at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/SubmissionsDGMigration/ItalianNatcom.pdf> (last retrieved on 12 November 2012).

country, to the point of considering whether to ban the far-right National Democratic Party (BBC, 2011a; Reuters, 2013b), showing that this phenomenon is spreading from southern (DM, 2010; Economist, 2012c; Espresso, 2013; HS, 2012b; Repubblica, 2013c; 2013d) to central (DN, 2012b; Le Monde, 2011; Reuters, 2011b; Spiegel, 2013a; 2013b; 2013c) and northern Europe (DN, 2012a, Economist, 2011; Gullestad, 2002; HS, 2011a; 2012c; 2012d; IS, 2011; Le Monde, 2006).

Addressing the role of the EU's education systems in fighting xenophobia, Audrey Osler and Hugh Starker (2001: 51) analysed the response of the European countries "in challenging racist attitudes and intolerance", such as the statements issued by the Council of Europe – in which racism is identified as "a key force serving to undermine democracy in Europe and one which therefore needs to be addressed" – and the *Vienna Declaration* (COE, 1993). The two scholars acknowledged that, while "education is a key means by which we can promote racial equality [...] in the education systems institutional and inter-personal racism continues to flourish" (Osler & Starker, 2001: 51). Filzmaier et al. (1999), moreover, listed the following primary areas that an 'adult civic education' should include (own translation):

- 1) explanation of social and economic contexts and contradictions to understand and influence social change;
- 2) action against violence in all forms and use of opportunities for democratic participation;
- 3) understanding processes of European integration, globalisation, modernisation and individualisation.

In this context, however, Moutsios (2007) illustrated the recent tendency to reform the EU education systems according to an increasingly dominant logic of "production of skilled individuals destined to feed the new transnational European economy", while Kjell Rubenson (2007: 48) referred to Bastow and Martin (2003) to emphasise that "the present promotion of adult education, with an emphasis on adult learning, signals a deconstruction of welfare through a reconstruction of citizenship as the responsibility an individual has to an economic agenda", drawing a new 'citizenship formation paradigm' that, again, identified *citizens* as lifelong *learners* and, ultimately, as lifelong *workers*: i.e. as lifelong contributors to economic growth.

5. Discussion

The analysis carried out in chapter 3 has provided evidence of the primacy, in the EU's decision-making, of the economic agenda over the social agenda in relation to the education field. In addition to that, a strong characterisation of adult education and lifelong learning in the EU policy in the sense of the human capital and work skills development has neatly emerged. Insights and additional reflections made in chapter 4 have further substantiated this evidence and correlated it with the widespread opinion, among scholars and policy observers, that policy initiatives such as the *Key Competences Recommendation* or the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, that could establish a way out from the vicious cycle of 'lifelong learning for lifelong earning', are undermined by most implementation tools devised by the EU, as they fundamentally privilege anyway the economic factor or skim and simplify policies to the point of determining their negligible impact (e.g. the case of the *Key Competences* and the Lisbon indicators for social and civic competences or active citizenship).

At the same time, while adult education was emptied of its 'social function', to gain a new 'economic function', European people seem to have lost their power to influence national and supranational public policy, and to defend local governance from independent objectives and manipulations of the globalised world hegemonic actors. In this light, it cannot be avoided to expand the frame of reference within which the analysis of this study has been conducted in order to draw more in-depth and better contextualised conclusions, and advance further reflections in relation with the role of adult education in the EU. In fact, this study was written in a complex and difficult conjuncture for the Union, resulting from the summation of several *global* challenges directly or indirectly related to the phenomenon of globalisation in the 'common' sense of the term: they were the global economic and financial crises, the climate change, and the tensions related to a rapidly evolving geopolitical order, marked by contrasts even within long-established strategic alliances. Hence, this chapter will put forward several considerations and interpretations in relation to this bottleneck, discuss future scenarios and possible solutions for this *cul-de-sac*. This exercise will require some inevitable digressions; nonetheless, they will allow for understanding final point presented in this dissertation to its full extent.

5.1 The Global Economic Crisis and the resurrection of nationalism

A major factor of complexity for the EU came from the so-called 'Global Financial Crisis' (GFC). What is often abbreviated to GFC includes "three distinct crises: the 2007–8

North Atlantic financial crisis, a 2008–9 global economic crisis and public finance crises which became increasingly focussed on the eurozone in 2010–12” (CASE, 2012: 3–5):

- 1) The North Atlantic financial crisis of 2007–8 hit the USA, UK and some small European economies (e.g. Iceland, Ireland, Latvia), but there was no general financial crisis in Latin America, Africa or Asia. The 2007–8 financial crisis was less global than the 1997–8 financial crisis which started in south-east Asia and spread to Korea, Russia, and South America as investors questioned the riskiness of emerging market debts, and reached the US financial system through the collapse of long-term capital management. Even countries closely linked to the American economy, notably Canada, did not suffer from financial contagion effects in 2007–8, and nor did countries such as Australia that experienced similar housing booms to those in the USA and UK. In Europe, the 2007–8 financial crisis had little impact on the financial sectors of major eurozone countries such as France, Germany and Italy. The GFC only seemed global when viewed from the media in the USA and London.
- 2) A global economic crisis followed in 2008–9 because recession in two of the world’s largest economies (the USA and the UK) affected global demand and world trade. However, the consequences of exogenous negative trade shocks are short-lived compared to the direct consequences of financial crises, and the global trade crisis was over before the end of 2009. Indeed, the US economic crisis was over by 2010, although recovery was slow as firms and households deleveraged and there were fears of a double-dip recession.
- 3) In 2010–12 public finance crises resulted from large bailout or stimulus packages, exacerbated by falling taxes due to recession (as in Ireland, USA, or the UK). If central banks are committed to low inflation, then increased budget deficits mean larger public debts and potential sovereign debt crises. However, at the time of writing governments of these countries appeared to be taking adequate measures to maintain sovereign creditworthiness. At the same time, and to some extent coincidentally, other sovereign debt crises occurred, most notably in Greece due to cumulating budget deficits fuelled by cheap debt since joining the euro. By 2011, the sovereign debt crisis was clearly a European crisis.

The Center for Social and Economic Research (CASE) also underlined that the ‘global financial crisis’ has ‘distracted’ EU political leaders from acknowledging the loss of competitive advantage in the wake of the impressive growth rates that Asian and South American emerging economies experienced in the same period (CASE, 2012: 3–5):

The relative weight of emerging market economies in the global economy, which had been increasing for several decades, grew even more rapidly in 2008–11 as the economies of the USA and Europe faltered, and other open economies recovered rapidly from the global economic crisis. This poses challenges for global economic governance, although there are constraints on Asia being a more assertive force. For the EU the greater dangers are, first, that if EU leaders see

their economies as victims of a GFC then they will fail to address their economies' own shortcomings, and, second, that preoccupation with internal crises will distract EU leaders from rising to the challenges and opportunities associated with the evolving multipolar global economy. [...] The post-2007 crises have exacerbated an already important redistribution of global economic power, as emerging market economies continued to enjoy economic growth while the established economies largely experienced economic stagnation. In particular, the three largest eurozone economies (Germany, France and Italy) grew at less than two-thirds of the speed of the world economy in the fifteen years before 2007; the gap widened further in 2007–10.

Moreover, according to CASE (2012: 24), “a description of the post-2007 financial crises as ‘global’ obscured the ongoing economic prosperity of countries such as China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Canada, Australia and many others outside Europe that did not suffer from a crisis other than the brief downturn in global trade in 2009”; resultantly, “the ‘global’ in GFC is a figment of the view of the world as seen from leading North Atlantic economies”.

As a matter of fact, soon after the deadline of the Lisbon agenda, the crisis of the eurozone public debts attracted much of the concern of the EU's and the world's political leaders, and is still challenging the eurozone countries to the point of putting into question the very survival of the Union (which was unthinkable when this research was started, in 2009). In this light, the stronger focus on economic growth and especially on employability as prerequisites for social cohesion appear more than congruous and fully plausible, thus ‘politically accountable’. Hence, the growth versus austerity controversy, often painted by observers with France vs. Germany colours in order to more easily catch the attention of public opinion, is nevertheless catching that of the EU policy debate. Reflecting on the eurozone crisis, *The Economist* (2012a) commented that “when people are prepared to pay the German government for the privilege of holding its two-year paper, and are willing to lend America's government funds for a decade for a nominal yield of less than 1.5%, they either expect years of stagnation and deflation or are terrified of imminent disaster”, and concluded that the undoubted mistakes in debtor countries “have been compounded over the past three years by errors in Europe's creditor countries: the overwhelming focus on austerity; the succession of half-baked rescue plans; the refusal to lay out a clear path for the fiscal and banking integration that is needed for the single currency to survive; these too are reasons why the euro is so close to catastrophe”.

In addition to the loss of competitive advantage with the parallel benefit of other geopolitical areas of the planet and the lowering of the European economic growth rates in the last years, an important responsibility of the sovereign debt crisis, in particular, that the eurozone is enduring today has, however, been somewhat determined by the EU legal basis, from the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. The Center for Social and Economic Research rightly pointed out that “Europe's self-centred view of an ongoing ‘global’ crisis is even more harmful because [...] the reason why the eurozone is still in crisis mode is

internal” (CASE, 2012: 24). In this regard, billionaire and philanthropist George Soros explained (NYR, 2012):

The Maastricht Treaty was fundamentally flawed. The architects of the euro recognized that it was an incomplete construct: it had a common central bank but it lacked a common treasury that could issue bonds that would be obligations of all the member states. Eurobonds are still resisted in Germany and other creditor countries. The architects believed, however, that when the need arose, the political will could be generated to take the necessary steps toward a political union. [...] The central role that sovereign credit was called upon to play revealed a flaw in the euro that had remained hidden until then and that has still not been properly recognized. By transferring what had previously been their right to print money to the European Central Bank, the member states exposed their sovereign credit to the risk of default. Developed countries that control their own currency have no reason to default; they can always print money. Their currency may depreciate in value, but the risk of default is practically nonexistent.

During the definition of the eurozone project, the German government put forward several concerns of the Bundesbank and expressly warned against inherent dangers related to the establishment of a single currency with the countries adopting its pooling sovereignty only in some policy areas, and retaining other features of the nation-state such as the fiscal autonomy. Hence, in the negotiations of the Treaty of Maastricht (i.e. the TFEU), the German position addressed three major problems (INT10):

- a) the European Central Bank (ECB) would not be committed to price stability to the same degree as the Bundesbank;
- b) MS’ lax budgetary and fiscal policies and resulting excessive deficits may in the long run threaten the stability of the common currency;
- c) German taxpayers could eventually assume liability for debts and deficits of other MS.

As a response to these preoccupations, the Treaty of Maastricht (and its successor consolidated treaties) provided safeguards through the following articles:

- Article 127 of the TFEU states that the primary objective of the ECB “shall be to maintain price stability”.
- Article 123 of the TFEU prevents the MS from borrowing from the ECB. In order to prevent the financing of government deficits by printing money, Art. 123 prohibits the granting of “overdraft or other types of credit facilities” by the ECB to the EU institutions or national, regional and local governments of the MS as well as “the purchase directly of government bonds by the ECB or national central banks”.
- Article 125 of the TFEU contains the so-called ‘no bailout’ clause, which states that EU institutions, including the ECB, must not assume liability for the debts of central, regional, or local governments of the countries of the Eurozone, nor must one MS assume liability for the debts of another.

- Article 126 of the TFEU also provides that “Member States shall avoid excessive government deficits”. As part of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) – a separate treaty to facilitate and maintain the stability of single currency which is based on Article 121 and Article 126 of the TFEU – MS agreed that their annual government budget deficit should not exceed 3% of their GDP and that the gross government debt should not exceed 60% of their GDP. These criteria are generally referred to as the ‘Maastricht convergence criteria’.

Many observers read these articles as the cornerstone for the financial degeneration that has affected the eurozone countries in the last years. First of all, they establish a very unique and anomalous situation in the world’s financial panorama, with a European Monetary Union managed by a European Central Bank which holds – differently than the Federal Reserve in the USA, the Bank of England, the Bank of China etc. – only certain functions (e.g. the control of inflation) but one of the most important for a central bank: that of lender of last resort, thus as a *government agent* (Tremonti, 2012: 108). Secondly, in tandem with this anomaly, Article 123 produces *de facto* the direct consequence for the EU Member States to finance their public debts only through auctions on the global financial markets, as they cannot print money anymore, nor can they borrow money from the ECB at discount rates. This statement has been seen as a gift to investment banks and financial speculators, which can influence, in many ways (see ‘Why should the EU bother?’ from page 343), the interest rates for the money they lend (the government bond yields¹ on the financial markets). This conjecture would be supported by the evidence that the ECB, similarly to the Federal Reserve’s enormous² rescue plan of 2007–10 (albeit on a much smaller scale), directly financed private banks – and not EU governments or the MS’ central banks – to face the latest financial disruptions in the Eurozone (Tremonti, 2012; Chi-

¹ “Governments borrow money by selling bonds to investors. In return for the investor’s cash, the government promises to pay a fixed rate of interest over a specific period – say 4% every year for 10 years. At the end of the period, the investor is repaid the cash they originally paid, cancelling that particular bit of government debt. Government bonds have traditionally been seen as ultra-safe long-term investments and are held by pension funds, insurance companies and banks, as well as private investors. They are a vital way for countries to raise funds. [...] The bond yield tells the investor what the return on their investment is, and can be calculated based on the current price of the bond in the market. If a 100-euro bond is paying 4% fixed interest – in other words, 4 euros per year – and the bond can be bought for 100 euros, then the yield is 4%. If the bond price falls to 90 euros, then the yield will rise. That’s because the investor is still getting paid 4 euros every year, and 100 euros at maturity, which is a much bigger return compared with the 90 euros they must put down to buy the bond” (BBC, 2012c).

² Officially consisting in 8 trillion dollars (CNN, 2009; NYT, 2011b), it has later been estimated in about 13 trillion dollars (Bloomberg, 2011a): “The Federal Reserve and the big banks fought for more than two years to keep details of the largest bailout in US history a secret. Now, the rest of the world can see what it was missing. The Fed didn’t tell anyone which banks were in trouble so deep they required a combined \$1.2 trillion on Dec. 5, 2008, their single neediest day. Bankers didn’t mention that they took tens of billions of dollars in emergency loans at the same time they were assuring investors their firms were healthy. And no one calculated until now that banks reaped an estimated \$13 billion of income by taking advantage of the Fed’s below-market rates”.

esa, 2013), for example with the EU's direct financing of Spanish *banks* at interest rates as low as between 0.5% and 1%, after Spain requested, 39.5 billion euros for their bailout in December 2012 (EA, 2012; cf. the ECB press release³ n. 3/2012 of 5 December 2012). The unconditioned and uncontested dependence of governments and international financial institutions from private banks that are considered 'too big to fail'⁴ and therefore worth to bail anytime with the taxpayers' monies (covering banks' capitalisation through increases in public debt: cf. Chiesa, 2013: 150, 187) is a phenomenon that Western political leaders should certainly address in a radical way (Tremonti, 2012: 32–3; own translation):

Five years ago the banks which had failed could have been nationalized and/or at least radically reorganized by providing, as a condition for their rescue, a drastic reduction in their size, so that they would no longer be 'systemic' banks just because they are too big, foreseeing the separation between *industrial activity* – collecting savings and capital to finance businesses, families, real investment – which is historically typical of banks, and speculative financial activity, which is something completely different. In short, the basic condition for their rescue could and should have been the fundamental separation between *productive economy* and *speculative economy*, by not offering support and government guarantee to speculation, and starting, on the contrary, to orderly proceed towards their bankruptcy, thus leaving only the speculators the risks and the costs generated by their gambling in past years. Indeed, little or nothing of this has been done. Instead, private debts were transplanted into public debts. Public funds were injected into banks almost without conditions, with the aim – or at least the end result – of allowing the system to continue as before: *business as usual*.

German journal *Der Spiegel*, in a special report on the crisis of the Eurozone, traced the various steps that led to the unrestrained growth of several MS' government debts, the consequent risk of bailout and the resurrection of national particularisms,⁵ identifying as a point of non-return the first "breach", in 2002, of the above-listed 'Maastricht criteria' and the constraints set by the SGP (Spiegel, 2011b):

In 2002, the German government had other things on its mind than examining Greece's public finances. It was having troubles of its own, with the European Commission threatening to send a warning to Berlin. Germany was expected to borrow more than had been forecast, thereby ex-

³ Available at

<http://www.esm.europa.eu/pdf/ESM%20press%20release%20ESM%20issues%20bonds%20for%20the%20recap%20of%20Spanish%20banks%2004122012.pdf> (last retrieved on 20 December 2012).

⁴ The biggest and most influential investment banks were described as "too big to fail, too big to be outlawed" by Chiesa (2013: 187), while Bloomberg (2011b) called them the 'Wall Street Aristocracy'. In an article published in the *New York Times* (NYT, 2010) the journal named nine banks holding a particularly strong power of lobbying and able to influence deeply Western governments' policies (cf. Repubblica, 2010 and Chiesa, 2013: 166).

⁵ Examples of this trend are the 'Finnish collateral' (CNN, 2011b; Guardian, 2011a; Bloomberg, 2012b; Tremonti, 2012: 127; Spiegel, 2012) or the reluctant response by the EU in relation to the growing immigration emergency in southern European countries (CDS, 2003; Stampa, 2011) – yet managed by these (Spain, Italy and Greece in particular) in a questionable way, e.g. characterizing the migrants as 'illegal' and later conceding that some might be candidates for political asylum (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002: 211; cf. the report published in the Italian journal *L'Espresso* of 10 December 2009 on pages 39–47) – with the re-imposition of border controls by Schengen states like Denmark (BBC, 2011b) and France (Guardian, 2012c).

ceeding the allowed 3 percent of GDP limit for its budget deficit. The result was not, however, an example of German fiscal discipline and exemplary adherence to European rules, but a two-year battle by the Schröder administration against the slap on the wrist from Brussels. Few within the European Commission openly criticized the loosening of the Maastricht rules. And the Germans, together with the French – both facing the threat of an excessive debt procedure – were too busy undermining the Maastricht Treaty. The two countries, determined not to submit to sanctions, managed to secure a majority in the EU's Council of Economic and Finance Ministers to cancel the European Commission's sanction procedure. It was a serious breach of the rules whose consequences would only become apparent later. The German-French initiative effectively did away with the Stability and Growth Pact, which the Germans had forced their partners to sign. The consequences were fatal. If the two biggest economies in the Eurozone weren't abiding by the rules, why should anyone else? The lapse was concealed behind political jargon. The violation of the pact was covered up with false affirmations of the pact. Its provisions were not formally abolished, but they were informally softened to such an extent that, in the future, they could be twisted at any time to benefit a government in financial trouble. The process also led to a not insignificant side effect: executive power in Europe, supposedly held by the European Commission, which is informally known as the 'guardian of the treaties', was de facto transferred to the European Council, which consists of the European Heads of State and government. Instead of bundling and concentrating the efforts of the Eurozone in Brussels, as intended, national interests began emerging once again in Berlin, Paris, Madrid and Rome.

Parallel to the "loosening" of the economic constraints originally established as a necessary condition for the very survival of the Eurozone, and supported by Germany in the years of the inception of the common currency (cf. Appendix G – Eurozone economic crisis Chronology), uncontrolled public spending rose in eurozone countries with weaker economies, which benefited from the reduced interest rates granted to their government bonds by reason of the simple fact of being part of the "historic project" (Spiegel, 2011a; 2011b):

When the Eurozone became a reality, elephants like Germany and France came together with mice like Portugal, Ireland and Luxembourg. Stable, prosperous countries of the north shared their common currency with shaky, underdeveloped countries of the south, mature industrialized nations joined forces with what were hardly more than developing countries. Strict Protestants mixed with sensual Catholics. [But] the Europeans' new determination and palpable desire to make the historic project a success was rewarded. Banks, pension funds and major investors from around the world began to show an interest in this new Europe. Portuguese and Irish government bonds, coupled with French economic strength and German reliability, suddenly looked like low-risk, reasonable, future-oriented investments. It was at this time that the financial industry developed its new magic tricks. Sewage treatment plant operators in southern Germany, city governments in Spain, villages in Portugal and provincial banks in Ireland got involved with Wall Street bankers and London fund managers who promised profits by converting debt into tradable securities. And while central governments tried to cap their national budgets to comply with the Maastricht requirements, municipalities piled on debt that was not documented or recorded anywhere at the European level. Low-interest loans were available everywhere, and it was all too easy to postpone their repayment to a distant future and refinance or even expand government spending.

Moreover, as “more than a third of Germany’s GDP derives from exports (the most of any country in the world), with 60% of those exports going to its European neighbors”, Germany’s mercantilist economy “relies on these countries’ purchases of German goods” (Forbes, 2012). With sovereign debt denominated in euros and backed by the Eurozone’s overall credit, Greece, Portugal, and other MS were able to “borrow at interest rates far below what their own GDPs would have allowed”, and “with this cheap money and the worldwide credit surplus of the past decade, peripheral governments and citizens were able to gorge on imported Northern European goods”. Until southern MS realised that they could not anymore “devalue their currencies in order to make the cost of their goods and services more cost competitive” (*ibid.*). That was the beginning of the most difficult (not only economic) crisis the EU has faced.

EU EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FACING BANKRUPTCY

The education field, in the year when the EU celebrates the 25th anniversary of the launch of the famous *Erasmus* student exchange programme, witnessed the funding of the overarching *Lifelong Learning Programme* (of which *Erasmus* is part, together with the *Grundtvig* subprogramme for adult education) entering the EU political debate, in the shadow of the announcements by the EC that its flagship university mobility programme, along with various social welfare schemes, was nearly bankrupt after the cuts requested to the EU budget by austerity-driven MS. In effect, the European Social Fund (ESF) was not technically able to fund MS anymore (cf. El País, 2012a), even though the EU officially placed E&T at the heart of its economic strategy from Lisbon 2000 to the recent ‘EU 2020’, and despite the specific will of the EC to inscribe principles of citizenship education into the European education and training programmes in response to the negative results that stopped the constitutional treaty for the EU in 2005 (INT4):

Particularly in the wake of the negative referenda on the constitutional treaty in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the promotion of democracy, including of social and civic engagement and an involvement with Europe, has become an important feature of many European programmes in the education, culture and youth areas. These EU programmes to this extent serve as catalysts for ideas, methods and content of citizenship education, even where this term is not specifically used.

According to many observers,⁶ and also policy-makers (INT1; INT3), the *Erasmus* sectorial programme for student mobility, in particular, would be the most successful and impactful of all the EU’s cultural and educational initiatives ever implemented, especially in relation to its contribution to the construction of a European identity and citizenship. The former Commissioner for Education and Culture, Ján Figel’, for example, described its value as follows (INT3):

⁶ See the former vice-president of the EC Manuel Marín’s article in the Spanish newspaper *El País* (2012b).

This is an opportunity that our students jump at, one that is life-affirming, and that can be life-changing, for those who take part. It doesn't only enrich students' lives academically, but it is important for personal development, for intercultural skills, and self-reliance. In terms of how the program has developed over the years, we have had two decades of working together with universities and with governments to develop Erasmus from its rather modest beginnings in 1987 to the European success story it is today. Looking at the numbers, in 1987 around 3000 students took part in Erasmus. During the last academic year, we had almost 160,000 students. Today over 3,000 universities, in 31 countries in Europe, take part. In all, 1.7 million students have had an Erasmus experience; few, if any, European Union programs have had a similar impact on students and their families Europe-wide. Four out of five Erasmus students have been the first in their family to study abroad. Given the program's high satisfaction ratings, Erasmus has given 'Europe' real meaning in hundreds of thousands of families for whom it would otherwise have remained a vague and abstract concept. [...] But the benefits go much wider. Mobility strengthens Europe's competitiveness, building its knowledge-intensive society, and deepening our young people's sense of European identity and citizenship.

However, despite its recognised value, it has recently been struggling to survive under the pressure of fiscal and financial rectitude. As the negotiations over the EU long-term budget for the period 2014–2020 were entering their final stage, MS and the EP should agree on the *Multiannual Financial Framework* (MFF) which outlined the main policy areas to be financed until year 2020 and the ceilings (maximum amounts) that can be budgeted for each of them annually. The President of the EC, José Manuel Barroso, specified that “the reality is that the EU budget is small, only around 2% of total public expenditure in the EU and 1% of EU GNI” (Gross National Income)⁷ and, as explained in the EU press memo of 29 June 2011 (MEMO/11/459), “the EU budget was around 140 billion euros in 2011, which is very small compared to the sum of national budgets of all 27 EU Member States, which amount to more than 6,300 billion”. In other words, “the average EU citizen paid only 67 cents on average per day to finance the annual budget in 2010”. In effect, “the EU budget represents around 1% of EU-27 Gross Domestic Product – the total value of all goods and services produced in the EU – whereas Member States' budgets account for 44% of GDP on average”, while in the United States of America, for example, this quota rises up to 23% (EU, 2012a).⁸ Hence, the Commissioner for the EU financial programming and budget, Janusz Lewandowski, was due to ask the MS for additional monies by the end of 2012 in order to plug a deficit estimated to be about 9 billion euros, according to a press release⁹ issued by the EC. Likewise, President Barroso stated that the budget amendment was needed, following the joint statement of the Council and the EP inviting the EC to request an increase in national contributions in order to

⁷ Cf. press release SPEECH/12/857 of 23 November 2012, retrieved on 26 November 2012 from http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-857_en.htm.

⁸ See also http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-459_en.htm and http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-468_en.htm.

⁹ Press Release IP/12/1137 of 23 October 2012, retrieved on 28 October 2012 from http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1137_en.htm.

cover incoming bills, to respect contractual obligations, and “to provide uninterrupted funding to students under the *Erasmus* programme or to poorer regions through the Cohesion Funds” in areas considered as “essential to revive growth and create jobs throughout the EU” (cf. EC Press Release IP/12/1137 of 23 October 2012).

After Germany, France and Finland called for a five-billion-euro cut in spending for 2013, including 3.5 billion euros that were destined for economic growth, jobs, and competition policies, Lewandowski pointed out that proposing constant cuts in the EU budget created a “big problem”, by not allowing the EU to deliver on the agreed legal commitments towards the beneficiaries of European Union funds. This situation came to a standstill when seven MS refused sign up for the first Commission proposal to increase expenditure in the 2013 budget by 6.8%, or nine billion euros, to 138 billion euros, and three of the seven countries (Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) further opposed their veto to the EU budget approval in the following round (INT9), creating a bottleneck in the negotiations and clearly showing that austerity concerns had subordinated the policy debate to the economic arena and confined it within the sphere of national interests.

A DEEPLY DIVIDED EUROPEAN UNION

One direct consequence of the talks held up on the EU 2013 budget approval was, for example, the delays in the approval of the financial aid to help the Emilia Romagna Region recover from a series of earthquakes that struck badly this highly productive agricultural area and innovative industrial cluster in May 2012, in which 24 people died. In effect, the earthquake aid was taken “hostage” by those MS disagreeing with the EU budget increase in order to get more favourable deals from the negotiations. In a press conference, the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz commented on this impasse (EP press release of 12 November 2012):¹⁰

Playing political games with the possibility for people to recover from a terrible catastrophe is something the European Parliament cannot accept. The cynical hesitation from some Member States during the budget negotiations last Friday, which resulted in the blocking of solidarity funds for the earthquake in Italy, go against the direction of the fundamental values of the EU. They should feel ashamed of their position. From the very beginning of the negotiations on Friday, the European Parliament delegation insisted to treat the € 670 million for the recovery from the earthquake in Italy independently from the other open questions on the budget. Unfortunately this proposal was rejected by some Member States. They are now keeping this much needed aid as a hostage for the overall negotiations. This is deplorable.

¹⁰ Available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/press_release/2012/2012-november/press_release-2012-november-2.html (last retrieved on 30 January 2013).

In this respect, the *Time* commented on a “deeply divided European Union [...] hurtling toward a budgetary precipice of its own amid clashing views over the bloc’s future financing” (Time, 2012b). As already explained (see note 8), the EU budget is a small transfer mechanism (representing just 1% of the EU’s total GNI and GDP, i.e. one-fiftieth of all MS’ public spending) and negotiations are traditionally a zero-sum contest (cf. EU, 2012a: 102) between net contributor countries (receiving from the EU less monies than they provide), and net beneficiary countries (net recipients).¹¹ However, since the shortages of funds in the budget, which will most probably lead to the first budget reduction in EU’s history (Time, 2013), principally affect the fields of education, research, employment, regional development and ultimately economic growth (Guardian, 2013b), they fundamentally contradict the EU Lisbon statements that Europe needs to invest in knowledge, growth and jobs. After the failure of the EU summit of 23 November 2012 to agree on the next seven-year EU budget, and now failing new contributions, the EU faces – at the time this research is written – the deadlock of being unable to reimburse monies owed to different Member States to run, among others, EU education programmes. Every word devoted to illustrating the creation of a European education space, the re-launching of (adult) education policy by the EU, and the centrality of competitiveness and economic growth strategies in the EU policy agenda is at least put into question.

Whereas in 2007 the EU became the world’s largest economy (generating, together with the United States of America, more than 40% of the world’s total economic output), and held onto its premier position even despite the 2008 financial crisis and the Eurozone debt crisis until today (CIA, 2012), according to several economic observers, it would be now imploding. In the white paper on the reform of the *European Governance*, even the EC acknowledged (EC, 2001e):

European integration has delivered fifty years of stability, peace and economic prosperity. It has helped to raise standards of living, built an internal market and strengthened the Union’s voice in the world. It has achieved results which would not have been possible by individual Member States acting on their own. It has attracted a succession of applications for membership and in a few years time it will expand on a continental scale. It has also served as a model for regional integration across the world. These results have been achieved by democratic means. The Union is built on the rule of law; it can draw on the Charter of fundamental rights, and it has a double

¹¹ Net receipts or contributions vary over time, and there are various ways of calculating net contributions to the EU budget, depending, for example, on whether the MS’s administrative expenditure is included. The EU (2012a: 102) uses either absolute figures (which indicate that Germany, France and Italy are largest contributors in the 2000–2010 period, and in 2011 these three countries are still those who contribute the most to the EU budget) or the proportion of GNI (which shows that the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Denmark are, in the same period, the largest proportional contributors, while in 2011 Italy was the largest contributor, followed by Belgium and The Netherlands). See also *The Economist* (2012b): “In general the richer countries pay more, while poorer countries receive more. There are some outliers. By comparison with Portugal and Slovenia, Greece does particularly well from the EU budget. By contrast, Luxembourg does not appear to pay a share commensurate with its wealth”.

democratic mandate through a Parliament representing EU citizens and a Council representing the elected governments of the Member States. Yet, despite its achievements, many Europeans feel alienated from the Union's work.

According to the Norwegian Nobel committee, the EU instead deserved the Peace Prize for its relentless contribution to "the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe". In effect, Europe has never experienced such a long period of peace (over sixty years) since the Roman times,¹² although the people invested by this epochal conquest – the European citizens – are probably not fully aware of it. One reason for this could be that most of those who endured the two world wars are today dead, and the others only have knowledge of the horrors of the conflicts that ravaged Europe in the first half of the twentieth century through the 'special effects' of cinema or television. Instead, everyone knows that the economic crisis is today striking the 'old continent' and challenging European nations in terms of growth and even social cohesion; many have begun to grow an awareness of the rising inequalities, the mistrust in traditional parties and in the political class in general, as a result of a bad governance contagion and the spread of corruption in public institutions (cf. Chiesa, 2013: 74, 155–9, 197). The Nobel Prize to the European Union, which has absorbed some of these diseases, may appear, in this light, ironic. Furthermore, while the EU's contribution to global peace is debatable (p. 169), even considering it as a union of nation-states, which constitutes a political, economic, monetary and fiscal entity, as an eligible candidate for a Prize that should be granted to a person has been regarded a violation of Alfred Nobel's will.

THE CLASH OF THE EUROPEAN CIVILISATIONS

It is certain that the Nobel Prize controversially awarded to the EU has come at a time when its economic and social achievements in years of political stability are now being threatened by economic recession. As a matter of fact, the EU faces a stark choice between the Scylla of debauching the common currency – with all the dislocations that rapid and perhaps uncontrollable inflation entails – or the Charybdis of a strict financial austerity that may strangle the economies of those countries whose government plays a

¹² Cf. the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ, 2012): "The Norwegian Nobel Committee has awarded the prize to the EU at a time when many believe the European project is on the brink of failure. Much of the continent is mired in a severe recession; Greece faces a sixth year of economic contraction. With neo-Nazi thugs on the streets of Athens and violent demonstrations in Madrid, the crisis is reopening deep historical divisions. Solidarity appears to be breaking down, as northern European countries, enjoying record low interest rates, balk at the cost of supporting crisis countries, while southern European countries resent harsh austerity demanded as the price of assistance. These are turbulent times. Even so, the decision to award the prize to the EU was inspired. It is a reminder there is more to the EU than the euro and that its achievements over 60 years have been remarkable. The project was consciously conceived as a way to bring peace to a continent ravaged by centuries of war culminating in the horrors of the two world wars. The founders believed that by allowing trade to flourish across the continent, the EU would foster deep political, commercial and social links, making future wars unthinkable".

predominant role in the economy. According to the IMF, which, along with the ECB, is the Commission's partner in the *troika* overseeing Eurozone bailouts, the EC would have a high degree of responsibility in the failure of the latest political choices in relation to the EU public debt crisis (Economist, 2013d):

An IMF study on lessons from the first Greek bailout in 2010 concluded that the commission lacked experience of managing financial crises and fiscal-adjustment programmes; that its obsession with fiscal rules blinded it to the recessionary effect of austerity; and that, although the IMF fretted about the sustainability of Greek debt, the commission and Eurozone governments refused to restructure it. Delaying the inevitable imposed unnecessary pain, and allowed private creditors to dump Greek debt on official lenders.

Germany is today in a position of holding the steering power of the EU economic policy, and has a large deal of the responsibility for future of the Eurozone in its hands: "these days the danger for Europe lies not in too much German leadership, but too little – something even Poland's foreign minister has publicly pointed out" (Economist, 2013f). Notwithstanding, Germany appears reluctant to take the lead in the EU; in this sense, William Paterson of the Aston University in Birmingham has called Germany a "reluctant hegemon" (Economist, 2013e). One reason for this reluctance would lie in the opposition between an increasingly stronger German economy and the weaker countries' economic recession, which would be determining a considerably divergent understanding of the political responsibilities *vis-à-vis* the economic crisis and contributing at the same time to a growing feeling of disaffection in the European populations towards the EU politics (Economist, 2013f):

Across southern Europe austerity policies are associated with Mrs Merkel. Support for the EU is, as a result, crumbling: a recent Pew survey found that 60% of Spaniards, 75% of Italians, 78% of Greeks and even 77% of the French believe that European integration has harmed their economies. If the euro falls apart, Germany will be held responsible. [One] reason for Germany's reluctance to lead is the belief that the ultimate cause of the Eurozone crisis is the laziness of southern Europeans, and that if only they were as productive as Germans none of this would have happened. The solution, on this view, is for the rest of Europe to become as hard-working and fiscally prudent as Germany. [...] Yet this moralistic view is based on a selective reading of history. Germany is expecting southern Europe to reform at a time of austerity, but when Germany undertook its reforms in 2003 it broke the euro's budget-deficit rules. And Germany's recent success owes a lot to the cheapness of the euro, which has allowed its exports to boom. What is more, many of the loans that enabled the southern Europeans to spend extravagantly were made by German banks, which are among the main beneficiaries of German-financed bailouts.

The journal's observers noted that, if "Germans are deeply ambivalent about their growing role in Europe, and generally uncomfortable talking about leadership", another reason lies in the "historical echoes" the German vocabulary is fraught with (Economist, 2013e):

The German word for 'leader' is *Führer*, the title adopted by Adolf Hitler. Mention the word 'hegemon', and German politicians flinch. Mrs Merkel recently described the concept as "totally foreign to me". Strategic thinking is strikingly absent anywhere in government. Joschka Fischer, a former foreign minister, laments that "Germans have never had a serious conversation about the destiny of a reunited Germany in Europe".

Echoing Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*,¹³ these juxtapositions between northern and southern European MS (INT25), with a growing "resentment" of the former countries, enjoying more stable finances, towards the latter ones has somehow gained a central place in the debate on the crisis of the European public debts, and even used by EU politicians to orient considerably national electoral campaigns, for example in Finland (HS, 2011b; YLE, 2011) and in Germany (Spiegel, 2013b):

At first glance, the Alternative for Germany's (AfD) campaign ad seems about as threatening as a commercial for the local optician. It features outraged, but pleasant-seeming citizens – a father and his daughter, a newspaper-reading businesswoman and a cyclist – looking thoughtful while asking questions. "Why is all our money going to Greece, instead of being invested in damaged streets and bridges?", one person asks. "Why are pensioners left with an ever-smaller amount of money in their wallets? Who is paying for the debt that our politicians are accruing?", asks another. [...] One thing is clear, though: the political newcomer, which was founded in the spring, has a shady underbelly. One of its slogans, "immigration according to qualification, not into welfare" is reminiscent of a similar line used by the right-wing extremist NPD ("Immigration into welfare: we say no!"). The party is lining the streets with campaign posters stating that "the euro is ruining Europe". Some of its supporters have been posting islamophobic and racist content on websites including Facebook.

According to other observers (CDS, 2012), many Europeans would just believe that the spread between the government bond yields of the financially 'virtuous' countries and those of countries which called for the EU's financial support or aids (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain, addressed to as 'PIGS' with a distinct contemptuous reference to their dependence from an external 'feeding' support: cf. FT, 2010a; BBC, 2010), is the fruit of a 'Catholic sin': one example of this line of reasoning would be the article *Doch dafür haben die Griechen Geld!* published in the German review *Bild* (2010).¹⁴

Playing again with semantics, George Soros noted that the German word *schuld* means not only 'debt' but also 'guilt' or 'fault' or 'blame' (NYR, 2012). This nuance would

¹³ Huntington (1993: 22) argued that "the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations". Moreover, according to him, while "the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics", the main sources of conflict in the future will be related to the differences among nations and groups of in terms of language, tradition, history and, especially, religion (p. 22–5).

¹⁴ For a more insightful analysis see also the contributions by the German economist Thilo Sarrazin and Heinz-Cristian Strache (the Austrian leader of FPÖ) published in the *Limes* review of geopolitics of October 2012.

help to better understand the deeper cultural differences underlying the people's perception of the economic conjuncture. Hence, the "origin of the transformation of faults into debts by the Catholic countries" (with the debatable exception of the Orthodox Greece) would be correlated, according to this interpretation, to their "inability to emancipate Catholicism as a way of life even more than a faith, characterised by excessive tolerance that allowed, for example, the purchase of indulgences for sins to be forgiven" (CDS, 2012). In other views, their suggested passivity has been juxtaposed with a Lutheran individual proactive responsibility (IL, 2012) or more effective attitudes or strategies (Spiegel, 2011a) that would contribute to create a 'cultural model' which could induce countries like Germany to legitimate a dominant position in Europe (INT27):

There is a growing economic focus on international comparisons, and this does not mean that cultural factors are not part of it too. They are many times 'hidden dimensions' of the economic war, which is also based on the imposition of certain cultural models as well. We can see it with the German case: you clearly see that Germany tends to legitimate its position in Europe based on its excellent economic resources, but also on the idea that these excellent economic resources were made possible by a *cultural model* that makes people work in certain ways, do certain things, so it is also a much more 'general' way of looking at the world. The cultural dimension is 'embedded' in the economic factor, it is hidden in it, and is totally integrated into an economic mode of reasoning to legitimate it, while I think that in the past it was exactly the opposite.

Hence, the spread between government bond yields, which has been thus far one of the main reasons for the EU countries to recently accept the ECB's strengthened power, has been associated to a "supposed ethical superiority", more discriminatory than the budgets of the nations concerned, and to fundamental questions of values intertwined with governance, culture and religion, mixed with the ghosts of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation into the political debate. The rhetoric against MS in recession and, conversely, the germanophobic instances growing in these countries¹⁵ would consciously feed, in this interpretation, on cultural and religious stereotypes, with the risk of breaking up the compromise that has guaranteed social and political peace for decades.

Apart from these highly abstract suggestions and all speculations, what is certain is that when the EMU was created "it was assumed that the ensuing convergence of interest rates would also lead to economic convergence across Europe"; such a big expectation, however, did not eventually materialise, "with the countries of the Eurozone periphery¹⁶ now forced into implementing austerity measures" (LSE, 2012). In this respect, Aidan Regan, from the Department of Political and Social Science in the European University In-

¹⁵ Cf. Moutsios (2007) and the paragraph 4.3 Adult education and the challenge of a European citizenship. See also FT (2012), HS (2012b), DM (2012) and the article "Xenofobia e germanofobia appunti di un'estate greca" by Umberto Cini in the *Limes* geopolitical review of October 2012.

¹⁶ On the meaning of this term in the context of the Eurozone crisis, cf. page 332 (Core and periphery of the European Union).

stitute (EUI), argued that “these countries are paying the price for the ‘myth’ of convergence”, and that “the convergence of interest rates in the Eurozone has fuelled rather than removed economic divergences between the north and south” of Europe, as “the current ‘one size fits all’ market solution will only fuel further political discontent” (*ibid.*). One example of this ‘discontent’ is related to the recently established *European Stability Mechanism* (ESM), a EU rescue fund which allows the buying of the bonds of troubled Eurozone countries in order to ensure stability of the financial markets and protect them from the attacks of speculators attempting to profit from short term fluctuations in the value of their bonds (Repubblica, 2010; WSJ, 2010; Chiesa, 2013: 165). These purchases would only occur in the secondary markets, but would keep yields down. In fact, as *The Economist* (2013c) pointed out, “the ECB has not so far bought a single bond under this programme”, even though “its readiness to do so has calmed markets” and attained its goal with just the announcement of its operativity in July 2012, notably when the ECB’s president announced to be ready to do “whatever it takes” to save the euro (cf. Appendix G – Eurozone economic crisis Chronology).¹⁷ The meaning of this statement in economic terms was well explained by former Italian Minister of Finance Giulio Tremonti in a book published in 2012, which actually predicted Mario Draghi’s move (Tremonti, 2012: 109–10; own translation):

In a crisis of the kind now taking place, a real central bank should have the basic function to prevent cash flow problems from turning into *solvency* problems. This function is indeed vital, especially if it is not just a part of the banking system at risk, but one or more states. It should be noted, in particular, that almost always, in a crisis of liquidity-solvency, is not even necessary for a central bank to intervene at all. It is, in fact, generally sufficient to just announce an intervention of this type, or declare that there is a readiness to do something. This is usually enough to stop any speculative attack. The reason is that no private has an amount of money equal to that a central bank has or can create. Moreover, even if speculators could mobilize a sufficient (huge) amount of money, they would not use it against a central bank, because they immediately lose part of it, given that ‘printing money’ or do *quantitative easing* would carry the risk of inflation, and therefore the risk of loss for the investor who would buy 100 but, due to the loss of value of the currency caused first by inflation and then by public intervention, could soon own 100- x , where x is normally greater than the profit coming from the speculation.

¹⁷ As a matter of fact, the buying of bonds on the secondary markets – i.e. of bonds already sold by governments on a first round – is a much less ‘efficient’ protection strategy than that of buying bonds directly from the issuer (MS in question). According to Tremonti (2012: 247–8; own translation), “an intervention on the so-called ‘secondary’ market relates to ‘old’ titles already on the market, because they have already been issued by states, and this is why [this operation] is allowed by EU treaties. Given that the boundary between primary and secondary is operationally rather opaque, it should be noted that this technique produces more distorting than resolving effects: distorting because it does not stop, but on the contrary encourages speculators, since they know already *ex-ante* that there is a final buyer [and] ultimately not resolving because, as evidenced by the results of the last months of 2011, it produces some positive economic effects in the short term, but no definitive structural effect” (original emphasis).

However, being the Bundesbank the largest of all ECB's shareholders, the German constitutional court was recently called on to decide whether the ESM violates the ECB's mandate, in order to protect German taxpayers from eventual losses caused by possible defaults of other debtor countries, whose bonds were purchased in the framework of the ESM. According to *The Economist* (2013c) and in the light of the above described beneficial 'announcement effects' of the ESM 'bond protection' programme, "whatever the [German constitutional court's] final verdict, this case is causing uncertainty and making the task of saving the euro harder".

WINNERS AND LOSERS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Moreover, while central and northern European governments invariably stress the need to protect their taxpayers from the (hypothetical) risk of the prospected mutualisation of other EU countries' public debts – e.g. through the institution of eurobonds¹⁸ or Union bonds, first proposed in 1993 by former President Jacques Delors (Tremonti, 2012: 179) – and from (potential) economic losses which might arise from the default of any debtor MS, they do enjoy (real) benefits and financial gains (Repubblica, 2013b) coming from the decrease in their bonds interest rates (Reuters, 2013a; own italics):

Throughout Europe's debt crisis, northern European leaders have often said they will not stand for taxpayers having to fork out for other countries' problems, and the notion of "taxpayer-funded bailouts" has taken root. Yet despite three-and-a-half years of debt and banking turmoil, with bailouts totaling more than 400 billion euros, northern Eurozone taxpayers have not actually lost a cent. What is more, governments in Germany, Finland, Austria, the Netherlands and France have saved billions of euros thanks to a sharp fall in how much they pay to raise money in financial markets since their borrowing costs have dropped steeply. But that has not prevented the image taking root in voters' minds of hard working northern Europeans putting money on the line to rescue profligate, work-shy southerners, *fuelling resentment and undermining Europe's unity*. [...] The truth remains that German taxpayers, as well as those in Finland, the Netherlands and elsewhere, are no worse off at all, and their finance ministries have racked up savings.

As reported by Reuters (*ibid.*), the head of international and EU affairs at Finnish Ministry of Finance Martti Salmi admitted that as a consequence of the crisis, "Finland has benefited enormously" and "the same as for Germany very much holds for Finland". An example of this benefit has been provided by Broyer et al. (2012: 5, 10) in their study for the German-born international financial service company Allianz, who calculated that

¹⁸ A eurobond, which does not yet exist at present, "would operate in exactly the same way as a government bond, except that all 17 Member States of the Eurozone would collectively guarantee the debt rather than a single government". The idea of issuing bonds representing all the countries of the Eurozone has been "gathering momentum" and it would have "influential backers, including new French President Francois Hollande, Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti, and the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso" (BBC, 2012c).

“the German government is saving a hefty 10 billion euros in interest expenditure every year” and ultimately estimated:

The interest rate advantages for the budget that emerged between 2010 and 2012 as a result of the euro crisis will continue to have an effect for years to come in line with the debt maturity. If we add up the interest rate advantages gained in the period from 2010 to 2012 and those that Germany will benefit from in the years to come, we arrive at cumulative interest relief for Germany’s budget of an estimated 67 billion euros – enough to slash around 3 percentage points off Germany’s government debt ratio.

Analogously, Jens Boysen-Hogrefe of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy pointed out that the Eurozone economic crisis started in 2008–2009 determined a “huge volatility in the market for government bonds”, which would have had the effect for the heavily indebted countries on the Eurozone’s ‘periphery’ facing relatively high rates, but also that a country like “Germany has been seen as a ‘safe haven’ for those who wish to invest in government debt, leading to unusually low yields for government bonds” (LSE, 2013). Boysen-Hogrefe actually found that, as a result, this decrease would have “saved the German government over €80 billion in the past five years”, given the possibility to borrow money to finance its public spending with even *negative* interests (as illustrated in Figure 38).

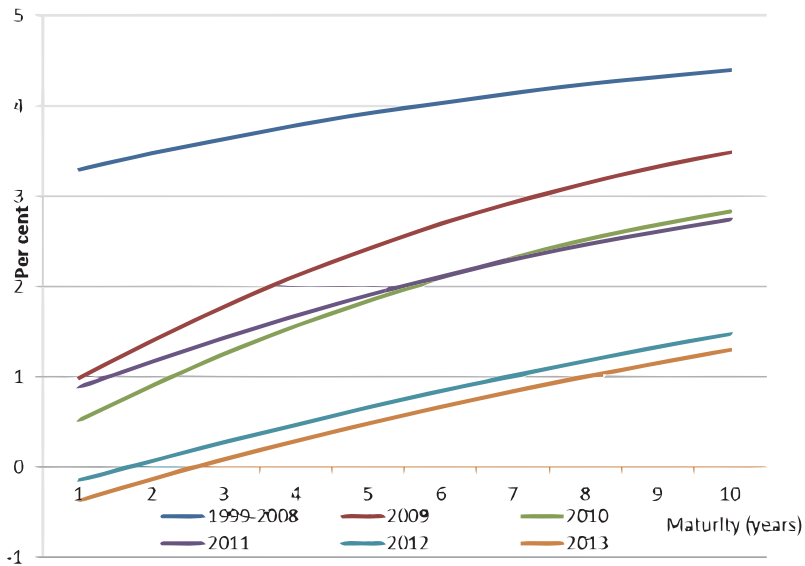


Figure 38: Yield Curve for German Federal Government Bonds. From LSE (2013, Figure 1), Source: Thomson Reuters datastream.

These gains, moreover, are relative to the budget of the federal government alone, which is “responsible for roughly one half of Germany’s public debt”. Actually, “other German public debtors, like the *länder* and communities, are benefiting from low yields, too”, making the overall economic benefit that the country has thus far enjoyed much higher than (albeit not double) 80 billion euros, and which “would presumably not exist if other countries were not in trouble” (LSE, 2013):

From a European perspective, it might be argued that these remarkable one-offs are benefits that the German government have experienced due to the debt crisis and that it would be reasonable to spend this amount for support of those countries in the euro area that are most affected by the debt crisis. However, one might also argue that only those benefits should be counted that are due to the ‘safe haven’ effect since countries like France are benefiting from effects that are due to the ECB policy as well.

Although a EU senior official in Brussels could easily comment that, like Germany, “northern European countries are making a considerable profit out of these operations and they are not even redistributing these direct and indirect benefits” (Reuters, 2013a), it was also noted how the heart of the misconception about taxpayers losses has not been addressed by many national politicians in truthful terms in public discourse. For example, by conveying the misleading idea that bailout monies are not – as they are – *lent* (and are therefore entirely paid back by the rescued countries with the due interests), but would instead be ‘given away’ and that the bill for their rescue would be charged to other countries’ taxpayers.¹⁹ Furthermore (Reuters, 2013a):

With anti-bailout sentiment so strong in much of northern Europe, there has been no willingness on the part of politicians to correct that misconception. The anti-EU True Finns party in Finland, for example, draws support from the belief that Finns are spending money on southern Europeans. The situation is quite different. While Finland may be providing lots of guarantees to the Eurozone’s bailout funds and has lent money to bailed out countries, the Finnish finance ministry has earned extra money from the crisis. Last year, the Finnish central bank contributed 227 million euros to the Finnish budget as a result of profits made on the Greek, Spanish and Portuguese government bonds it holds, 40 million euros more than it made in 2011. This year, the profit should rise to 360 million.

¹⁹ This misconception has been addressed even by the European Commission, which issued a specific clarifying document called *Questions and answers on financial assistance to euro-area Member States* on its official website (available at http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/focuson/crisis/q_and_a_en.htm), where it stated: “Monetary union has led to a strengthening of financial relations between euro-area Member States. As the recent financial crisis has demonstrated, this means that financial distress in one Member State can have a serious impact on the macro-financial stability of the euro- area as a whole. So helping to stabilise the finances of one Member State helps to stabilise the finances of other countries in the euro area as well. Financial assistance is provided as a last resort, to counter any risk of contagion and to safeguard financial stability in the euro-area. It should be underlined that the financial assistance provided to euro area Member States in distress is not a fiscal transfer, but a loan to be repaid fully with interest. Taxpayers will not pay anything. Furthermore, it comes with strict conditions and detailed and demanding policy programmes, which ensure that, while assistance is being provided, the proper fiscal and structural adjustments are being set in place to ensure solvency in the long run”.

It seems fundamental to decide, contextually, whether to approach the economic crisis of the Eurozone systemically or nationally. American economist James K. Galbraith from the University of Texas addressed what he called the 'ugly threat of disintegration' of the EU, exacerbated by an increasing 'mutual recrimination', and suggested that the old continent follows the federal model of the coalition of states after the United States of America. In relation with the arising social tensions in the EU, he further stressed that "hazards can become very serious, violence may rise quickly: this is already evident in Greece" (HS, 2012a; own translation), and that examples of progressive disintegration of geopolitical blocks in recent history, such as the ex-Yugoslavia, should warn EU leaders of the possible consequences of the erosion of the social state, the rise of unemployment and racism.

In 2012, George Soros pointed out that "the public in many eurozone countries is distressed, confused, and angry", and such feelings found expression "in xenophobia, anti-European attitudes, and extremist political movements" (NYR, 2012). Indeed, 2012 will be remembered as well as the year of anti-austerity anger spreading across Europe, with general strikes in Spain and Portugal, walkouts in Greece, grounded flights, closed public schools and interrupted public transport in Italy (Reuters, 2011a; Time, 2012a; UT, 2012), and the protests culminated in the *European Day of Action and Solidarity* in November 2012 (cf. Guardian, 2012a; WT, 2012).

THE ITALIAN CASE AND THE SHADY ROLE OF THE FINANCIAL LOBBIES

In the context of the public debt crisis, the case of Italy is emblematic. As the third biggest economy of the Eurozone after Germany and France, eleventh worldwide (CIA, 2012), Italy has been one of the three main net contributors to the EU budget during the last ten years, becoming in 2011 the first net contributor proportionally to the GNI (EU, 2012a: 102). In December 2012, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard commented on this country's economic outlook in *The Telegraph* (2012):

The nation is richer than Germany in per capita terms, with some € 9 trillion of private wealth. It has the biggest primary budget surplus in the G7 bloc. Its combined public and private debt is 265% of GDP, lower than in France, Holland, the UK, the US or Japan. It scores top of the International Monetary Fund's index for 'long-term debt sustainability' among key industrial nations, precisely because it reformed the pension structure long ago under Silvio Berlusconi. "They have a vibrant export sector, and a primary surplus. If there is any country in EMU that would benefit from leaving the euro and restoring competitiveness, it is obviously Italy", said Andrew Roberts from RBS. "The numbers are staring them in the face. We think the story of 2013 is not about countries being forced to leave EMU but whether they choose to leave". A 'game theory' study by Bank of America concluded that Italy would gain more than other EMU members from breaking free and restoring sovereign control over its policy levers. Its International Investment Position is near balance, in stark contrast to Spain and Portugal (both in deficit by more than 90% of GDP). Its primary surplus implies it can leave EMU at any moment it wishes without facing a funding crisis. A high savings rate means that any interest rate shock

after returning to the lira would mostly flow back into the economy through higher payments to Italian bondholders – and it is often forgotten that Italy’s ‘real’ rates were much lower under the Banca d’Italia.

As the British economist Anatole Kaletsky explained (Reuters, 2012), because of its excessive public spending, but also to fulfil the ‘Maastricht convergence criterion’ of no more than 1.5 percent above the average inflation rate of the three EU countries with the most stable prices (designed in the early 1990s to bring ‘high-inflation’ MS in line with ‘low-inflation’ ones prior to joining the EMU and then the euro), Italy grew the highest public debt of the EU-27 economic area. As a matter of fact, a consistent part of the Italian public debt was created even before the Maastricht criteria and the Stability and Growth Pact (Chiesa, 2013: 196; own translation):

The [Italian] public debt became 10 times bigger between 1980 and 1996, even before the euro, raising from the equivalent of 114 to 1,213 billion euros. Analysing figures more closely, we find that this increase of the primary interests is responsible for approximately 1,000 billions, while only 140 billions are due to the fact that the primary expenditure was higher than the gross public income. The cause of these high interest rates, between 12% and 20%, [...] was the interest rates imposed by Ronald Reagan attract huge capital flows to the United States of America [...] in order to finance the American imperial politics, the *american way of life*, and the arms race that brought down the Soviet Union and finally destroyed it.

Indeed, this unprecedented increase of the public debt was indeed not effectively counterbalanced by the Italian political leaders with targeted policies aimed to reduce the high levels of corruptions and the country’s still widespread tax evasion (p. 197), so that the cutting of the public spending has finally been the main strategy to counterbalance the financial crisis and the contextual poor economic growth. Paradoxically, other factors undermined the attempts, however tardy, made by the Italian government to restructure the state budget. Figure 39 below shows the Italian bond yields curve in the last five years of the economic crisis: the peak of September 2011 and January-June 2012 correspond to the coordinated downgradings operated by Standard & Poor’s (S&P) and Moody’s credit rating agencies which determined *de facto* the interest rates of the Italian public debt.²⁰

²⁰ In September 2011, Italy’s legislature ultimately approved a 54 billion euro amended austerity package with the intention of wiping out the Italian budget deficit by 2013. In spite of these measures, Standard & Poor’s downgraded Italy’s credit rating from A+ to A and characterised the outlook for the Eurozone’s third largest economy as negative. Italy promptly criticized Standard & Poor’s for downgrading its credit rating, saying the decision seemed politically motivated and out of touch with reality at a time when the government was working to boost growth and reduce its debts (CNN, 2011a; Forbes, 2011a). In February 2012, after the credit rating agency reduced the nation’s grade one month earlier, Standard & Poor’s affirmed the downgrading of 15 of Italy’s biggest banks, while in May 2012 Moody’s Investors Service cut the long-time credit ratings of 26 Italian banks one to four percentage points, underlining the banking woes in both the country and the Eurozone. After the downgrades, the ratings for Italian banks now are among the lowest within advanced European countries (Bloomberg, 2012a). In July 2012, Moody’s cut Italy’s credit rating by two percentage points – to Baa2, just two notches above junk status – just hours before Italy held a bond auction (Guardian, 2012b).



Figure 39: Bond yields (5 years maturity). From LSE (2013, Figure 2), Source: Thomson Reuters datastream.

Even without considering the possible links existing between financial speculators and credit rating agencies, private brokers – operating in the global markets: New York, Geneva or Hong Kong – gained, from the Italian bond yields fluctuations, several billion euros (Tremonti, 2012), whose price was then paid by Italian taxpayers through increases in the country’s government debt interests (Chiesa, 2013: 150, 198). This vicious circle has been highlighted by the ECB (2012: 55–6; own emphasis) in recent times:

As recent developments in the euro area have shown, this negative spiral accelerates further if unfavourable debt sustainability²¹ assessments, for example by *credit rating agencies*, have a negative impact on banks’ balance sheets. And result in higher deleveraging needs to meet core capital requirements. And this is compounded by higher sovereign bond yields feeding through to banks’ funding conditions and private sector borrowing costs, which in turn weigh on private investment and economic growth.

Bond yield curves are supposed to depend on a country’s fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic variables such as the prospects for economic growth (ECB, 2012: 57; see Borgy et al., 2011), whose assessment ‘traditionally’ relies on the above-mentioned rating agencies, such as Fitch Group, Moody’s Corporation and Standard & Poor’s (known as the ‘Big Three credit rating agencies’; cf. ECB, 2012: 58, note 2). The independence and impartiality of these agencies has been strongly questioned since their shareholders are

²¹ Public debt sustainability is defined by the ECB as “a country’s ability to service all accumulated government debt at any point in time” (ECB, 2012: 55; cf. also par. 3 on pages 59–63).

not governments – representing citizens – but *private* banks and financial corporations, e.g. the Hearst Corporation, Fimalac, McGraw-Hill Financial Inc. (Tremonti, 2012: 233–5; own translation):

The conflict of interest between agency and issuer is certainly self-evident, but it is not the only one. Companies applying for and funding the study that leads to the elaboration of the rating may indeed expect that this will not be published. In this way, an asymmetry of information is created on the market, which can give rise to cases of *insider trading* and encourage speculative behavior. Quite simply, the delay in the dissemination of information can in effect allow the purchase or sale of bonds, before the issue of its rating will produce a positive or negative effect. Moreover, another danger factor lays in the strongly oligopolistic structure of the industry of credit rating. It is enough to say that, according to the latest estimates, the so-called ‘Big Three’ control about 90% of the market and produce more than 2 billion dollars of profit every year. A situation that favors indeed non-transparent behavior.

In 2011, a report²² by the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission established by the USA government to clarify “the causes of the financial and economic crisis in the United States” stated that “bad information created by credit rating agencies was an essential cause of the crisis” (FCIC, 2011: 439, note 7), as they “assigned overly optimistic ratings” (p. 426). For these reasons, rating agencies have been criticised and accused of holding a potentially dangerous role in the financial markets, and “in a \$5 billion suit, the USA government has accused S&P, owned by McGraw Hill Financial Inc., of issuing inflated ratings on faulty products to drum up business before the 2008 financial crisis, despite assurances that its judgments were objective” (CT, 2013).²³ Further suspicions arose after “Standard & Poor’s downgraded the US long-term debt from AAA to AA+ on 5 August 2011 and cautioned that further downgrades may follow if the US government debt trajectory rises above the rating agency’s current baseline” (ECB, 2012: 58, note 1), in the light of an unprecedented volatility in the market and because of the hazardous fluctuations in the days that followed the downgrade, with a peak reached on 9 August 2011, when the USA market gained more points from its low than it lost on Monday 5th, the day of the downgrade. In this regard, Paul Krugman, of the *New York Times*, wrote (NYT, 2011a):

It’s hard to think of anyone less qualified to pass judgment on America than the rating agencies. The people who rated subprime-backed securities are now declaring that they are the judges of fiscal policy? Really? Just to make it perfect, it turns out that S&P got the math wrong by \$ 2 trillion, and after much discussion conceded the point – then went ahead with the downgrade. More than that, everything I’ve heard about S&P’s demands suggests that it’s talking nonsense about the US fiscal situation. The agency has suggested that the downgrade depended on the

²² Available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-FCIC/pdf/GPO-FCIC.pdf> (last retrieved on 30 December 2012).

²³ Full complaint file available at <http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/849201325104924250796.pdf> (last retrieved on 6 June 2013). See also WSJ (2013).

size of agreed deficit reduction over the next decade, with \$ 4 trillion apparently the magic number. Yet US solvency depends hardly at all on what happens in the near or even medium term: an extra trillion in debt adds only a fraction of a percent of GDP to future interest costs, so a couple of trillion more or less barely signifies in the long term. What matters is the longer-term prospect, which in turn mainly depends on health care costs. So what was S&P even talking about? Presumably, they had some theory that restraint now is an indicator of the future – but there's no good reason to believe that theory, and for sure S&P has no authority to make that kind of vague political judgment. In short, S&P is just making stuff up – and after the mortgage debacle, they really don't have that right.

In this light, and as a result of the anomalous fluctuations in the Italian bond yields consequent Moody's and Standard & Poor's downgradings, the Italian government filed two different complaints, "one against Moody's after it published a report in May 2010 about the risk of contagion for Italian banks from the Greek crisis", whereas a second complaint was filed in May 2011 and "targeted Standard & Poor's after it threatened to downgrade Italy's credit rating because of its huge public debt" (Reuters, 2011c):

The prosecutors are also investigating whether any crimes were committed during a sell-off in Italian assets on July 8 and July 11 as fears spread that the Eurozone's third largest economy is being sucked into the widening debt crisis. One of the consumer groups behind the complaints said the probe was aimed at finding out whether the market's sharp drop was due to a "precise scheme by hedge funds and other unidentified players that could be linked to the negative comments about Italian public finances by the rating agencies". Consob last month summoned Moody's and S&P for meetings and urged them not to release their statements during market hours.

In 2012, even the Finance Ministers of the G20 expressed their willingness "to curb the influence of the ratings agencies", since "Fitch, Standard and Poor's, and Moody's have all been criticised over the year for their unregulated power", and through G20's Financial Stability Board they issued a recommendation to change the global financial system and look "at ways to reduce the weight ratings agencies have on investment decisions" (RT, 2012). Lastly, the Italian government has recently announced a proposal to be discussed at the forthcoming G20 meeting for the banning of privately held rating agencies to be replaced by 'public' rating agencies established and regulated by international organisations such as the OECD or the Bank for International Settlements (Repubblica, 2013h).

IMPACTS OF THE FINANCIAL INSTABILITY ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Translating figures into public policies, the consequence of the excessive increases in the public debt, paid by citizens (Chiesa, 2013: 198; own translation), can be measured "both in terms of wage reductions and worsening of people's quality of life: less schools, less hospitals, less public transportation, less kindergartens, less assistance". Moreover, higher interest rates paid on the Italian public debt (above 3 percentage points of financial

returns, as visible in Figure 39), although temporary, was an intensive spending review operated by the government in charge to avoid the inability to reimburse the expiring state bonds (which could have determined the country's default), through significant spending cuts in the public budget allocated to education and research as an effect of decree n. 95 of July 2012 and the following measures, plus other 'side effects' determined by the recession, including budget reductions in private education and HE institutions, as well as in private providers of non-formal AEL.

In line with this analysis, a Eurydice report, published by EACEA (2013), on the impact of the economic crisis on the education field in the EU showed in effect that Italy had cut over 5% of its public education budget, especially between 2011 and 2012, with "teacher numbers declined by 8.5 percent" (p. 12), an decrease of public expenditure on "continuing professional development for teachers" (p. 57) and their salaries not adjusted to the cost of living according to inflation rates (p. 54). Through press release IP/13/261 of 21 March 2013 the EC acknowledged:

Investment in education fell in eight out of 25 Member States assessed as part of a European Commission study on the impact of the crisis on education budgets since 2010. Cuts of more than 5% were imposed in Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Portugal, while Estonia, Poland, Spain and the UK (Scotland) saw decreases of 1 to 5%. However, five Member States increased education spending by more than 1%: Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden, as well as the German speaking area of Belgium. Germany and the Netherlands did not provide data for the period since 2010.

According to the Eurydice study, moreover, Italy and six other countries reported "that the financial and economic crisis is also among the main reasons for the merger and closure of educational institutions" (EACEA, 2013: 13). The paradox of European citizens paying for international investors and stock market speculators because of loose financial rules or for reason of the inability of the EU governments to join forces and get equipped with adequate systems to protect their economies from the of 'attacks' perpetrated in the financial markets (WSJ, 2010; Repubblica, 2010) – in particular, the attacks that targeted the EU bond market, as also reported by the president of the ECB who explicitly referred to a financial speculation "that aimed at the disintegration of the Eurozone" (Chiesa, 2013: 165) – is one of the reasons for the warning issued by a report by the EC (2009d) which will be further discussed below under the title 'Why should the EU bother?'

As the graph in Figure 39 well illustrates, the attacks on EU bonds continued until July 2012, when the ECB's president declared that he was "prepared²⁴ to move forcefully into bond markets in tandem with Europe's rescue funds, and would concentrate on buying shorter-term debt" since "high yields faced by southern European governments are

²⁴ Although, as noted above, "the ECB has not so far bought a single bond under this programme" (Economist, 2013c).

not only the product of a higher credit risk, but also the result of markets' unfounded fear that the euro would break up" (Economist, 2012f), which in effect resulted in Italian bond interest rates suddenly falling to levels which reflected more closely the country's economic fundamentals. Quite strangely, these variations occurred in spite of constant decreases of the Italian GDP (Repubblica, 2012c) and constant *increases* of the public debt (Re-pubblica, 2012b) and unemployment rates (Repubblica, 2013e) throughout the years 2008–2013, to which the above graph refers.

In addition to the negative effects of the interests paid on the government debt and independently from more or less artificial bond yields' fluctuations, the present level of the Italian net contributions to the EU still determines, paradoxically, an additional 3% to 5% of public debt increase every year that the country must pay back, and which was estimated as an excessive, 'undue' burden by former PM Mario Monti, who emphasised that Italy "has increasingly paid more than was justifiable by its relative wealth, to the point that, in 2011, become the first net contributor²⁵ to the EU's budget" (Repubblica, 2013a; own translation).

CORE AND PERIPHERY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Even before the EU formally complained to the IMF for unduly using, in an official report, words like *core* and *periphery* as standard terms to describe 'winners' and 'losers' in the euro crisis (Repubblica, 2013g), Anatole Kaletsky (Reuters, 2012) remarked: "core and periphery are not geographic or historical descriptions, but euphemisms designed to legitimize permanent economic and political inequalities among the nations of Europe", in particular among those who have been "enriched and empowered" and those who have lost political autonomy. Hence, he argued that "by creating conditions in which the interest rates paid in Italy, Spain and the other Mediterranean countries are much higher than they are in Germany and its northern allies, Europe has imposed a large and permanent economic handicap not only on the governments of southern Europe but also on their private businesses and households" since "even the most profitable Italian businesses and the most solvent Italian homeowners are forced to pay double or even triple the interest rates of their German or Dutch counterparts". Similarly, George Soros stated (NYR, 2012):

The creditors are in effect shifting the whole burden of adjustment onto the debtor countries and avoiding their own responsibility for the imbalances. Interestingly, the terms 'center' or 'core' and 'periphery' have crept into usage almost unnoticed, although it is obviously inappropriate to describe Italy and Spain as 'periphery' countries. In effect, however, the introduction of the euro relegated some Member States to the status of less developed countries without either the

²⁵ Cf. note 11 on page 317.

European authorities or the member countries realizing it. In retrospect, that is the root cause of the euro crisis.

Moreover, Kaletsky outlined that when Italy had a separate currency, this interest inequality did not play the crucial role it plays today because the *lira* was periodically devalued, thereby reducing the real cost of debt. With the common currency, instead, this solution needed to be abandoned, determining that today's "widening disparity in financing costs provides continuous subsidies for German companies, while stunting the competitiveness of Italian and Spanish businesses with terrible implications for job creation and economic growth" (Reuters, 2012). From Kaletsky's point of view, there would have been "surprisingly little protest in the peripheral countries against this manifest injustice" which would be evinced by the fact, for instance, "that Italy's tax revenues are strong, it has run bigger primary surpluses than Germany for most of the past 15 years, health and pension liabilities are now among the lowest in Europe, employment costs are lower than in France or Germany, trade deficits are negligible, and personal savings are higher per head in Italy than in Germany, the US or Japan". In brief, provided that Italy "did as well or better than Germany, in terms of economic growth, wealth per head and industrial production, from the early 1950s until 1999, when Italy made the fateful decision to join the euro", that decision "is now seen as a mistake by a plurality of 44 percent, against 30 percent of Italian voters who are starting to suspect that EU reform demands, far from making their country more competitive, are designed to reduce it to a position of permanent vassalage to Germany". What has appeared more evident for countries such as Portugal, Spain and Greece – for whom the euro crisis has brought social tensions that led to strong public expression of dissent, or even riots and severe disorders – is that euroscepticism has been growing even in several founding MS of the EU such as France, Germany or Italy, which has favoured the project of a European unification, and actively contributed to it, since the writing of the *Ventotene Manifesto* of 1941. In this regard, Mario Monti – who acquired, while he was in charge as Prime Minister, the role of mediator, in particular in the negotiations between France and Germany (Reuters, 2012) – expressed his apprehension for a growing feeling of "discomfort for a European Union seen as overpowering" (Repubblica, 2012a), which could lead to a massive rise in anti-EU parties in Italy as in other countries.

The call by British PM David Cameron for the repatriation of a series of powers from the European Union to the United Kingdom and a referendum by the end of 2017 to decide whether to exit or to stay in the EU (BBC, 2013; Guardian, 2013a) further shows the underlying tensions that risk to tear the Union apart (FT, 2013). With all this evidence, the new contrasts in the EU between nations and coalesced blocks of nations, the rise of euroscepticism (FA, 2013; Guardian, 2013a), radicalisation of intolerance and xenophobia crystallising in many European nations (Betz, 1993; Baimbridge et al., 1994; Stolcke, 1995;

Baumgartl & Favell, 1995; Flecha, 1999; EUMC, 2002; 2005; 2006; Coenders et al., 2003; Wiewiorka, 2010) tell, intelligibly, how solidarity²⁶ – not in terms of money transfer, but in the very etymological sense of the word: unity or agreement of feelings and action among individuals sharing a common interest, civic awareness and engagement; this is one of the ‘genetically anchored’ distinctive traits of the human species that characterised and even favoured its evolution, as advanced by Konrad Lorenz (cf. paragraph 3.3.2.2 *The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning Recommendation*) – should play a central, pivotal role in the present socio-political conjuncture (FT, 2010b).

THE DIFFICULT STEP FORWARD (OR BACKWARD) AND THE RISKS OF IMMOBILITY

For those observers who indicated a way out of the economic crisis for the EU in the aspiration to a less inter-governmental and more coalesced Union, closer to citizens and more democratically represented, the Conclusions of the European Council of 13–14 December 2012 could represent the start of a more pregnant phase for the building of a more coalesced Community based on increased fiscal, economic and political integration. For those others who already see in this project a risk of the contagion of European bad governance practices in national economies, these agreements are simply the last scene of an already disaggregated geopolitical area. Indeed, all argument in favour of a re-writing of the EU economic and financial regulations, including those underlying the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), must be preceded by a radical polishing of bad governance practices and attitudes in several Member States which are consistently far from fulfilling the ‘Maastricht criteria’ (the SGP’s constraints), recognising their part of responsibility in the situation that has now crystallised in the Eurozone.

The lack of legitimacy of which the EU suffers – both as a polity and a policy actor – cannot be solved through the simple increase of the number of stakeholders involved in the decision-making and the involvement of the civil society. As Borrás and Radaelli (2010: 66–7) put it:

It is common to argue that the OMC needs a vibrant civil society. We observe that this cannot be reduced to direct participation, since classic liberal-democratic values of representation and commitment to European integration are equally important. The OMC cannot possibly generate a civil society that does not exist. It cannot raise the European commitment of governments torn between the attacks on the Eurozone and hesitation about moving towards a more effective co-ordination. Indeed this particular OMC deficit is yet another reason to increase the pressure on the governments of the Member States to take credible European commitments. It is reason to

²⁶ Kenneth Wain (2009: 349) remarked that in knowledge societies determined by ‘market criteria’ like, as shown in the present dissertation, the EU countries, “the discourse of solidarity and equity is out of place” as “the only subsidies that are that are likely to be available for those in need are those that make a good economic return on the investment”. Even if considered in this perspective, however, what is argued here is that a prospected synergic unity of the European states would determine substantial increases also in terms of economic growth and overall competitiveness in the long term.

rekindle the movement for the key liberal-democratic values that informed the vision of the *Venototene Manifesto*, written 70 years ago by Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli. We refer particularly to the commitment to integration associated with the rights of citizens against the abuse of economic and political power by their own governments – an abuse that takes the forms of large public deficits as well as severe limitations of citizens' rights and the progressive narrowing down of the public sphere.

The European elections of June 2014 will be a privileged occasion for a democratic and transparent confrontation to take place among the different political forces on the future of the EU. In this framework, it could also be an important step forward to give the next European Parliament a constitutional mandate, regardless of whether the way for integration that the European countries choose will be a federation of states or not. Most important seems to be the clear and net refusal of populisms and intolerance, in order to overcome nationalistic assumptions and prejudices, and fighting against xenophobia and social discrimination will certainly be the main task that European leaders – as a Union or individually – will need to face. A solution might be a European *New Deal* similar to the one conceived in the United States of America by Roosevelt to face the crisis of the 1930s by increasing federal contributions (cf. note 8 on page 315), by investing substantially in culture, education, welfare, and fighting against poverty and inequality. The condition for such a synergy to deploy should be the considerable reduction of the high levels of corruption and tax evasion in southern European countries like Portugal, Italy, Spain and especially in Greece (CNN, 2011c; Guardian, 2011b; McKinsey, 2012) – where public budget has been undermined, in addition to the above-mentioned bond yield increases, because of a mix of these two phenomena, and tax evasion has been presented by Greek officials as Greece's "national sport": Economist, 2012g) – in order to support the reforms initiated and to put in place and recover economic competitiveness, European people's consensus, and international credibility. In such a way, shared commitment to a common endgame would allow for dealing with the crisis of the euro and of the whole European identity, while avoiding as much as possible any populist distortions or demagogic manipulations that could derive from the lack of understanding of the stake (Betz, 1993; Beck, 2005), considering that the political panorama of the years to come will be designed by the European citizen's votes of today, and it will reflect their willingness to be part of the EU project or not. Solid social and civic competences (not merely 'skills for jobs'), acquired through education, mobility focusing on citizens and not only 'future workers' and active participation in the collective and political life of the European Union space, may immunise people from the rhetoric of nationalism, and the attractiveness of 'better-off', isolated, self-sufficient and therefore well-protected nation-states as a reason venti-

lated to reject the EU cooperation in response to the challenges brought about by globalisation.²⁷

In the recent debate on Europe's new fiscal treaty, EU governments recriminated that its ratification would undermine their sovereignty. However, by denying the self-evident fact that the European integration and the Eurozone's viability both hinge on substantial restrictions on national sovereignty, European leaders are simply misleading their voters, delaying the Europeanization of democratic politics, and raising the political and economic costs of the ultimate step. The Eurozone aspires to an increased political integration. If its future is now in doubt, it is because sovereignty stands in the way. In a true economic union, underpinned by union-wide political institutions, the troubles of Greece, Cyprus, Spain and other EU countries in recession would not have exploded to their current proportions, threatening the existence of the union itself. Very few Germans, for example, would question today the restructuring that allowed Germany to become the strongest economy in Europe also thanks to massive investments and capital fluxes towards East Germany²⁸ after 1989. Similarly, no American politician would really keep track of one single state's deficit: in the event that this state government went bankrupt, banks would continue to operate normally, simply because they are under federal rather than state jurisdiction. In case banks collapsed, instead, state finances would be insulated, as its banks are under the responsibility of federal institutions. Moreover, in case workers became unemployed, they would receive unemployment allowances from Washington, DC. In addition, whenever local voters became disenchanted about the state's economy, they would not riot outside the state's capital; they would instead put pressure on their representatives in the Congress to ask for changes in federal policies. And no one would ever argue that the single states composing the USA have an abundance of sovereignty.

In this regard, and with reference to the real conjuncture of the present economic crisis, Giulio Tremonti set forth (Tremonti, 2012: 83; own translation):

Indeed, the USA are a federation of states, they have a federal government, federal money, a real central bank. For this reason they could (and did) intervene on their banking crisis instantly and powerfully: imposing in *one* day, with *one* act, *one* political choice, which was the decision to increase the federal debt and print federal money. When the financial crisis exploded, in fact, the public hand suddenly became visible and instantly replaced the market's invisible hand. All this

²⁷ Cf. the above cited *Limes* review of October 2012 entitled 'North against south, the wall of Europe' of and, in particular, the contributions by Hans Kundnani, Albert Salon, Vesa Vihriälä, José Manuel Freire Nogueira and Diego Marani.

²⁸ The German Democratic Republic (GDR), informally known as East Germany, was a socialist state established by the Soviet Union in 1949 out of the Soviet zone of occupied Germany, including East Berlin of the allied-occupied capital city. After that, in 1989, a non-violent revolution called for the end of the East German communist government, the great economic and socio-political inequalities between the former 'Germanies' required considerable government subsidy for the full integration of East Germany to the Federal German Republic.

was possible precisely because in the USA not only the public hand was there, but it was *one*. In Europe, everything is different: Europe is indeed a geographical continent, has a single market, a single currency, but it is not a federation of states, does not have a federal budget, does not have a federal central bank.

Economy restructuring supported by 'internal' financial subsidiarity has been thus far possible because of a single sovereignty and thanks to an undisputed governance, accorded through the vote of the citizens and guaranteed by a representative democracy. As a matter of fact, the relationship between sovereignty and democracy can easily be misunderstood: not all restrictions on the exercise of sovereign power are undemocratic. The 'democratic delegation' of monetary policy to the ECB is the archetypal example: in the service of price stability, daily management of monetary policy is subtracted from politics. Yet, even though selective limitations on sovereignty may enhance democratic performance, there it is not straightforward that all limitations required by the market integration would work well. In domestic politics, delegation is carefully calibrated and restricted to a few areas where issues tend to be highly technical and partisan differences are not large. A globalisation able to enhance democracy would respect these boundaries, imposing only those limits that are consistent with democratic delegation, possibly with a limited number of procedural norms (for example representativeness, transparency and accountability), which may enhance democratic deliberation within national borders. As the American example illustrates, it is possible to pool sovereignty – as Texas, California and the other states in the USA have done – without giving up on democracy. However, the combination of market integration with democracy requires the creation of supranational institutions that are politically representative and accountable. Hence, conflicts between democratic sovereignty and globalisation (Kwiek, 2009; Dale, 2009b) become acute when domestic articulations of policy preferences are restricted without a compensating expansion of democracy at the regional and global level. From this point of view, the EU already appears on the wrong side of this boundary, as the political and social unrest in Spain and Greece indicates (Guardian, 2012a; Reuters, 2011a; Time, 2012a; UT, 2012; WT, 2012).

In order to maintain the present levels of democracy, European leaders might thus be called to explicitly renounce to economic sovereignty or actively put it to use for the benefit of their citizens. The first choice would entail building a democratic space above the level of the nation-state, whereas the second would mean renouncing the monetary union in order to be able to deploy national monetary and fiscal policies in the service of longer-term recovery. The longer this choice is postponed, the greater both the economic and the social cost that the EU countries will ultimately have to pay: this has been largely shown and substantiated with econometric projections by independent observers and analysts, and has ultimately been acknowledged by the European political leadership in its

latest decision-making. Already in October 2011, the German review *Der Spiegel* wrote (Spiegel, 2011c):

Merkel can't avoid the key decision much longer: either the Eurozone will be converted into a close fiscal union with financial transfers and commonly issued Eurobonds, or Europe's most indebted nations will have to leave the currency union – with unforeseeable consequences for the remaining members. The longer the Western debt crises smolder on, the darker the outlook for the global economy. Because the US economy is collapsing, American consumers are buying fewer goods from China and India. And because investors are piling out of euro and dollar investments, supposed islands of stability are starting to look shaky as well.

According to a very accurate 'cost-benefit' estimation carried out by the *Economist* (2012d), the prospected exit of Greece alone from the Eurozone would determine much higher costs (an estimated 323 billion euros) for the other European countries than losing the total bailout tranches that have been provided "by ECB, IMF and the European Commission [which] have pledged a total of 240 billion euros in rescue loans, of which Greece has received around 150 billion euros" (BBC, 2012b; cf. also BBC, 2012a), even for the economically stronger countries like Germany (which would ultimately pay a 'bill' ranging from 110 billion up to nearly 120 billion euros, or 4.5% of the German GDP) or more reluctant countries like Finland.²⁹

PROCRASTINATION AS MEANS FOR A 'HEGEMONIC CONTROL'

Procrastination has been seen as instrumental to the establishment of a claimed 'hegemonic control' of Germany over weaker European economies and ultimately to the consolidation of its national competitive advantage. In a recent interview, Ulrich Beck described this political attitude as a "new style of power" based on what he called the 'Merkiavellian' principle: to put it simply, that thanks to the "postponement of decisions by Angela Merkel, Germany has developed a remarkable political dominance in Europe" (FA, 2013; own translation). Likewise, Beck argued that Germany would be now "the big winner of the crisis" since it holds firmly the position of the largest financier of the 'borrowing countries', which provides it with "a special power" and an "economic dominance" when coupled with the dependency of debtor countries from the German-driven EU political "tendency to non-action" or to "not-yet-action-action". Moreover, this 'political dominance' has been seen as instrumental also to justify or establish *ex novo* a social model, also in the perspective of imposing them, for example, in the cultural sphere (INT27):

²⁹ As acknowledged by Martti Salmi, from the Finnish Ministry of Finance, who recently explained that "if we end up forgiving a loan of 1 billion euros to Greece sometime in the next 10 years, that's nothing compared to what we would have faced if we had a meltdown of the Eurozone, it would be completely insignificant compared to that" (Reuters, 2013a).

There is a growing economic focus on international comparisons, and this does not mean that cultural factors are not part of it too. They are many times 'hidden dimensions' of the economic war, which is also based on the imposition of certain cultural models as well. We can see it with the German case: you clearly see that Germany tends to legitimate its position in Europe based on its excellent economic resources, but also on the idea that these excellent economic resources were made possible by a *cultural model* that makes people work in certain ways, do certain things, so it is also a much more 'general' way of looking at the world. The cultural dimension is 'embedded' in the economic factor, it is hidden in it, and is totally integrated into an economic mode of reasoning to legitimate it, while I think that in the past it was exactly the opposite.

Conversely, other observers investigated the influence that Germany has exerted on the monetary policy of the European area since the Second World War and the leading role in the board of the ECB it has occupied since the inception of the euro, and identified in the country's DNA an aversion to any 'loose' monetary policy and fiscal policy and the invariable request for keeping levels of economic austerity high in all of the Eurozone. Chang, for example, correlated German preoccupations to the historical precedent of the hyperinflation of the mark as a consequence of the reparation payments demanded by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War – and in particular after the occupation of the Ruhr region (very rich in coal and steel) by the French and the Belgians – for which the German inflation "got completely out of control" with prices rising by over 10 billion times (Chang, 2010: 52–3):

The German hyperinflation has left big and long-lasting marks on the evolution of German, and world, history. Some claim, with justification, that the experience of hyperinflation laid the grounds for the rise of the Nazis by discrediting the liberal institution of the Weimar Republic. Those who take this view are then implicitly saying that the 1920s German hyperinflation was one of the main causes of the Second World War. The German trauma from the hyperinflation was such that the Bundesbank, the West German central bank after the Second World War, was famous for its excessive aversion to loose monetary policy. Even after the birth of the European single currency, the euro, and the consequent *de facto* abolition of national central banks in the Eurozone countries, Germany's influence has made the European Central Bank (ECB) stick to tight monetary policy even in the face of persistently high unemployment.

Likewise, *The Economist* (2013e) commented that the German "obsession with price stability has become a stereotype, but it is true nonetheless":

A recent study showed that Germans are more worried about inflation than about contracting a life-threatening disease such as cancer. They attach huge importance to rules and institutions that promote stability and keep politicians in check. A uniquely German branch of economics that emphasises rules, called *Ordnungspolitik*, sets the intellectual tone. Guardians of stability, from the Constitutional Court to the central bank, wield great influence.

It must be acknowledged that Angela Merkel has dealt with novel difficulties and challenges in both internal in foreign policy, while the euro crisis "is problematic for German politicians because it brings these powerful historical forces – reluctance to lead, de-

sire for European integration and fear of instability – into conflict” (*ibid.*). Hence, Ulrich Beck emphasised that, “in recent years, the German population has become more euro-sceptic”, despite the strong emphasis given to civic and democratic components in the post-war political debate and a successful tradition of adult education in this country, including the “involvement with the European Union [which] has also in the meantime become a solid component of citizenship education in Germany” (INT4). Analogously, George Soros addressed the misconceptions and mismatch existing between the German voters’ perception of the causes and dynamics of the Eurozone crisis and the real stake, which leads to further tensions, both in terms of internal politics and international relations (NYR, 2012):

The German public finds it extremely difficult to understand that Germany is foisting the wrong policy on Europe. The German economy is not in crisis. Indeed, until now Germany has actually benefited from the euro crisis, which has kept down the exchange rate and helped exports. More recently, Germany enjoyed extremely low interest rates, and capital flight from the debtor countries has flooded Germany with capital, at the same time as the ‘periphery’ has had to pay hefty risk premiums for access to funds. This is not the result of some evil plot but an unintended consequence of an unplanned course of events. German politicians, however, have started to figure out the advantages it has conferred on Germany and this has begun to influence their policy decisions. Germany has been thrust into a position where its attitude determines European policy. So the primary responsibility for a policy of austerity pushing Europe into depression lies with Germany. As time passes, there are increasing grounds for blaming Germany for the policies it is imposing on Europe, while the German public is feeling unjustly blamed. This is truly a tragedy of historic significance. As in ancient Greek tragedies, misconceptions and the sheer lack of understanding have unintended but fateful consequences.

In his lucid analysis of the debt crisis that is presently un-dermining the EU, Soros also claimed that as political leaders – Angela Merkel *in primis* – only do the *minimum* necessary to hold the euro and the Union together, the crisis just worsens, and “the current situation is like a nightmare that can be escaped only by waking up Germany and making it aware of the misconceptions that are currently guiding its policies” (*ibid.*):

Under current policies debtor countries pay substantial risk premiums for financing their government debt, and this is reflected in the cost of financing in general. This has pushed the debtor countries into depression and put them at a substantial competitive disadvantage that threatens to become permanent. This is the result not of a deliberate plan but of a series of policy mistakes that started when the euro was introduced. It was general knowledge that the euro was an incomplete currency – it had a central bank but did not have a treasury. But member countries did not realize that by giving up the right to print their own money they exposed themselves to the risk of default. Financial markets realized it only at the onset of the Greek crisis. The financial authorities did not understand the problem, let alone see a solution. So they tried to buy time. But instead of improving, the situation deteriorated. This was entirely due to the lack of understanding and the lack of unity. The course of events could have been arrested and reversed at almost any time but that would have required an agreed-upon plan and ample financial resources to implement it. Germany, as the largest creditor country, was in charge but

was reluctant to take on any additional liabilities; as a result, every opportunity to resolve the crisis was missed. The crisis spread from Greece to other deficit countries and eventually the very survival of the euro came into question. Since breakup of the euro would cause immense damage to all member countries and particularly to Germany, Germany will continue to do the minimum necessary to hold the euro together. The policies pursued under German leadership will likely hold the euro together for an indefinite period, but not forever. The permanent division of the European Union into creditor and debtor countries with the creditors dictating terms is politically unacceptable for many Europeans. If and when the euro eventually breaks up it will destroy the common market and the European Union. Europe will be worse off than it was when the effort to unite it began, because the breakup will leave a legacy of mutual mistrust and hostility. The later it happens, the worse the ultimate outcome. That is such a dismal prospect that it is time to consider alternatives that would have been inconceivable until recently. [...] Imperial power can bring great benefits but it must be earned by looking after those who live under its aegis. The United States emerged as the leader of the free world after the end of World War II. The Bretton Woods system made it the first among equals, but the United States was a benevolent hegemon that earned the lasting gratitude of Europe by engaging in the Marshall Plan. That is the historic opportunity that Germany is missing by holding the heavily indebted countries to their *Schuld*. It is worth recalling that the reparations payments demanded of Germany after World War I were among the factors giving rise to National Socialism. And Germany had its own *Schuld* reduced on three separate occasions: the Dawes Plan in 1924, the Young Plan in 1929 – too late to prevent the rise of Hitler – and the London Debt Agreement in 1953. Today Germany does not have imperial ambitions. Paradoxically, the desire to avoid dominating Europe is part of the reason why Germany has failed to rise to the occasion and behave as a benevolent hegemon.

‘MORE OF THE SAME WILL JUST PRODUCE MORE OF THE SAME’

Regardless of the conclusions to which it was meant to lead (more or less EU, or no EU at all), the point advanced by British PM David Cameron in his recent speech³⁰ on the in–out referendum on the United Kingdom’s EU membership (BBC, 2013) describes a widely-shared position of European leaders towards the scenario of a deadlock that the EU should avoid – in the writer’s opinion – with all means, to overcome the risk of much deeper economic and political recessions due to incapacity to find an ideological inspiration and build democratic consensus in order to drive the proactivity necessary to reform the EU Treaties:

The biggest danger to the European Union comes not from those who advocate change, but from those who denounce new thinking as heresy. In its long history, Europe has experience of heretics who turned out to have a point. And my point is this. More of the same will not secure a long-term future for the Eurozone. More of the same will not see the European Union keeping pace with the new powerhouse economies. More of the same will not bring the European Union any closer to its citizens. More of the same will just produce more of the same – less competitiveness, less growth, fewer jobs. And that will make our countries weaker, not stronger. That is why we need fundamental, far-reaching change.

³⁰ Cf. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/eu-speech-at-bloomberg/>.

The author's interpretation of the possible course of events in the future of the EU certainly upholds a reflection made by Marianne Horsdal (2007: 41), who claimed that "a development of a learning society in a broader sense including the objectives of learning for personal development, learning to be a decent human being and a democratic citizen, and learning for a creative display of various human resources may very well [be] a better way to achieve the goals of sustainable growth and social cohesion", as those endorsed by the EU at the Lisbon summit of 2000. If the European Union wants to leave behind, or avoid completely, the ventilated hybrid nature 'between a market and a bureaucracy' that labels its current functioning, it should certainly engage in more liberal-progressive policy-making, promoting investment in social and cultural capital, as well as the development of humanistic adult education paths to build an active, participative, fully democratic European citizenship through what Carl Bereiter (2002b: 12) suggested as a 'liberal understanding' of education, which would promote *cosmopolitan enculturation* and transcend the particularities of social and ethnic backgrounds and national borders. With similar a comprehension to the idea of 'cosmopolitanism' that Bereiter advanced (see p. 91), MP Doris Pack synthetically focused on European *mobility* in order to address the necessity for EU citizens to open themselves to systematically meeting other cultures, and thus overcoming fears and stereotypes, often setting resilient barriers to intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding (Maniscalco, 2008b: 10) as a necessary condition to build a common project (INT1):

We need well-educated people, who are not thinking only in a nationalistic manner, but are open-minded. Therefore, they should cross the borders, meet each other, speak to each other. Everybody has its own history, but if I know how my neighbour is looking on the same history I can understand where the balance of the different visions is.

The primacy of the European economic dimension, which has been regarded thus far as a limit for the EU, has nonetheless driven the European engines since the creation of the first Communities. It could now be transformed into a unique opportunity to step forward considerably, and lead the process of the creation of a multi-faced but more strongly integrated model of the European Union as a better place to live. After all, that was the vision of its founding fathers. Philip Stephens correlated the difficulties of the MS to challenge the globalised markets and the recent economic turmoil as a pretext for them to reclaim power from the EU (FT, 2010b; partially quoted in Borrás & Radaelli, 2010: 67):

The crisis of the euro is a crisis of Europe. The continent is slipping into a new nationalism. This is not a rerun of the expansive chauvinism of old – the marching of armies across frontiers that left such grievous scars during the first half of the 20th century. What we are seeing now is the pinched nationalism of a Europe that has lost confidence in its future. [...] National sovereignty was previously a standard held aloft mainly by British eurosceptics. Now it is being invoked across the continent. *Solidarity*, set by the European Union's founding fathers as the cornerstone of Europe's future, is an idea fallen into disrepair. [...] What has been lost is the sense of mutual

interest on which the Union was built. Sharing sovereignty was not so long ago seen as a multiplier of power and influence. Now the Union is treated as a zero-sum game. As they are forced to surrender power to globalisation and a rising Asia, politicians imagine they can somehow reclaim it from Brussels.

The alternative of stepping backwards to nation-states' self-government could be seen as a solution to recover freedom, retrieve full sovereignty, and as an ideal strategy to respond more closely to local instances and intrinsic needs of the differentiated European populations. Nonetheless, this would also expose them to the risks of nationalistic drifts that such division would entail, especially in time in history when Western countries are losing much of their power (and wealth) within the global geopolitical landscape (Chiesa, 2013: 159–60; own translation):

The most probable effect of a national regression would be disastrous. Only those who ignore the magnitude of the hurricane that is approaching may think that a return to the national dimension would be a sign of peace, freedom and social justice in every country. Especially those who claim the non-existence of a 'European people' should draw the logical consequences of such a choice: in fact, there would be – if this was true – no space for solidarity and justice. There would be, on the contrary, an explosion of violent rivalries, territorial claims and national or regional irresponsible selfishness determined by interests and calculations of ignorant and cynical politicians.

In this respect, Tremonti claimed that “not just by historical rhetoric, the present situation in Europe is comparable to that of August 1914, when not a single governmental act was in itself decisive in determining the outbreak of the Great War, but also no single act of government was decisive in stopping it” (2012: 132; own translation). In any case, from the author's point of view, extending the present procrastination would just mean to deny the evidence that history has left the responsibility of making a radical choice to this generation. It is up to the actual EU political class to put some 'key competences' – leadership, responsiveness to change, a sense of initiative, the capacity to be part of a team, and maybe learning to learn from our history – into practice.

WHY SHOULD THE EU BOTHER?

The strong focus on investments in human capital and the efforts put by the EU in the workforce's skill development and the matching with the labour market's needs was also estimated to be insufficient in order to address the economic crisis by the European Commission in a report released immediately after the first economic crisis of 2008–2009 (EC, 2009d), as investments in infrastructure, in R&D to foster innovation, in measures to fight unemployment and in policy initiatives in the field of E&T were all considered to be subordinated to the establishment of a new equilibrium in the stock market by re-writing the rules of the world's finance and the restructuring of the European banking system,

which has shown in the present conjuncture its weaknesses and the dangers it carries for the economic systems' stability (p. 84):

As recovery takes hold, emphasis needs to shift clearly from fiscal to structural policies. [...] It is therefore important to decisively restore the longer-term viability of the banking sector so as to maximise its contribution to growth in the real economy and sustain, if not step up, the pace of broader structural reform so as to boost productivity and potential growth. Without it, potential growth is likely to stall, which, as noted, would make the fiscal burden heavier, the exit strategy for fiscal and monetary policy more painful and make the distress in the financial system more persistent. Structural reforms should be directed to enhancing the economy's infrastructure capital, employing idle or underutilised labour resources and improving the use and development of new technologies. This requires government initiatives in the pursuit of investment in infrastructure (public or private), the development of skills, greater labour mobility (geographical or across industries and occupations) and innovation (including the development of low-carbon technologies). [However,] the core of all crisis resolution policies remains the repair of the financial system. Without it a vicious circle of weak growth, more financial sector distress and ever stiffer credit constraints would be harder to break. Banks cannot escape the need to adjust their balance sheets as a return to pre-crisis high-leveraged banking models is not an option. In a rapid recovery scenario governments may hope that the financial system will 'grow out of the problem' and the exit from banking support would be relatively smooth. But, as long as the quality of the assets on banks' balance sheets is still not fully disclosed, uncertainty remains as to the adequacy of the measures taken. In this context, the reluctance of many banks to reveal the true state of their balance sheets risks aggravating the situation. This may jeopardise the recovery. Therefore the immediate priority now is to fix the banking sector.

According to many economists and observers (Chiesa, 2013: 130), the origins of the banking sector and financial system crises date back to the second half of the 20th century, when the direct convertibility of the dollar to gold was unilaterally canceled by former president of the USA Richard Nixon in 1971, because of a negative balance of payments, growing public debt incurred by the Vietnam War and monetary inflation by the Federal Reserve caused the dollar to become increasingly overvalued in the 1960s. In fact, as Germany and Japan recovered from the Second World War the 1950s and the 1960s, the American share of the world's economic output dropped significantly, from 35% to 27% (Frum, 2008: 295–8). And, when the international community (especially British and the French, who lended money to the USA to finance the American war to Vietnam) wanted to be paid back in gold, Nixon chose to abolish the 'gold standard'. This choice, however, helped the end of the existing Bretton Woods system of international financial exchange agreed in 1944, thus ushering in the era of freely floating currencies that remains to the present day. Later, however, in the name of the free market, the global financial system further freed itself of the constraints traditionally imposed by governments, which have now lost control of what would become, in recent decades, a stronger power of the states themselves (Chiesa, 2013: 133; own translation):

Governments gave banks the right to print money, and banks lent the money they have created to states. Then, banks bankrupted – all Western ones at once – and, being the strongest, they imposed governments to save them. They bankrupted because, in their limitless greed, they had created so much money (i.e. debt) that it was no longer collectible simply because it was ‘too much’. Thus, states got indebted again to save them. And, indeed, they are now bankrupting themselves, unless they request aid to banks, which will further strangle them increasing their debt.

Several proposals have been advanced to tackle the ‘tricks’ imposed to the EU by financial lobbies and multinational banks of investment, which could provide European nations with instruments to overcome the current political impasse that characterises the European Union at present. They may include (cf. Tremonti, 2012: 166, 169; Chiesa, 2013: 153, 179, 207):

- The re-introduction of specific laws (similar to the Glass-Steagall act of 1933) in order to keep separate *economy* from *finance*, by setting strict regulations to control financial speculations.
- The cleaning of the European stock markets from ‘toxic’ assets (cf. notes 41 and 42 on page 357) and the establishment of measures to contrast effectively *offshore* banking and financial transactions ‘off the counter’ (not reported in certified budgets: cf. Chiesa, 2013: 147), making them outlawed by legislation.
- The nationalisation of the national central banks in the EU and, resultantly, of the ECB (whose ‘shareholders’ are the MS’ central banks, today mainly held by *private* companies and corporations).
- The nationalisation of the major investment banks operating in EU markets (this is not impossible to realise although it appears rather difficult even to propose in a largely dominant neo-liberal landscape).
- The consolidation of the public debt of EU countries in a crisis of liquidity through eurobonds (e.g. in parallel with project bonds), involving the partial pooling of MS’ public debts – e.g. below a certain threshold percentage – to neutralise speculative attacks of financial markets, avoiding the relative costs, and to revive the real economy, overcoming the constraints of austerity that suffocate it (Tremonti, 2012: 181). In this regard, the Juncker-Tremonti proposal of 2010 (FT, 2010d) of keeping this threshold below 60% of the MS’s gross public debt (limit already fixed by the ‘Maastricht criteria’ and the SGP’s constraints) would make eurobonds “perfectly compatible with the EU Treaty in force” and would not require any modification to the EU legal basis or additional intergovernmental agreements (*ibid.*).
- The rewriting of the EU treaties, namely the clauses required by Art. 123 – which provides for the impossibility of using the ECB as lender of last resort for European governments (cf. Tremonti, 2012: 108): in a nutshell, the EU could move towards a real economic and financial federalism. In this scenario, if nation-states would no

longer hold monetary sovereignty, which would enable them to print currency to finance, and at least they could rely on a European Central Bank under public law, which could finance them at the discount rate, eliminating the need, in this way, to resort to international financial markets, subject to inevitable speculations. George Soros rightly noted that, because “the words of the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties were treated as if they were cast in stone, including for example Article 123, which forbids the European Central Bank to lend money to governments”, this attitude “has pushed a great many of those who consider the status quo unsustainable or intolerable to adopt anti-European attitudes: such is the political dynamic that has made the disintegration of the European Union” (NYR, 2012).

- Serious and strict regulations on the media and mass communication: free market cannot be applied to all goods of public interest and of strategic importance to a nation. Television and the management of the network infrastructure (the internet, satellites, etc.) could be nationalised in order to save them from the oligopoly in which they are sealed. As statistics by Eurostat invariably say that about half of adult learning takes place in informal settings, television holds an even bigger role in the formation of ideas, values, knowledge and attitude cognitive of individuals in industrialized countries (Apple, 1982; Althusser; 1971; cf. chapter 2. Background, aims, methodology and data). It is not possible to ignore this fact if EU countries want to restore acceptable levels of democracy (even before promoting policies for active citizenship).

What is certain is that, under the present circumstances, the flaws in the EU’s (and world’s) financial and banking systems are deeply affecting education systems in several ways. As a matter of fact, until the vicious circles and the obstacles described thus far are tackled and removed, the discussion around *any* European policy appears to be flawed and vain. In this context, education and training should play the ultimate role to contrast nationalism and to contribute to the creation of the political grounds for the building of a stronger European governance and healthier European economy and society by fostering the social and civic participation of citizens.

5.2 The environmental emergency and the Lisbon call for sustainability

The Lisbon mainstream goal established in 2000 included a specific reference to a greater “respect for the environment” (EU, 2000) in the EU policy and objectives, opening the field for further development of specific policies on environmental sustainability. The ecological dimension within the Lisbon Strategy was further developed in Gothenburg in 2001, when the Council of the EU agreed on the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS).

The SDS aimed to strike a good balance between a sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection.

CALAMITOUS SCENARIOS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

This policy area was brought to the fore by several statistics and empirical studies, which suggested how unstable the environment had become in the last decades, and how blindly civilizations were heading towards catastrophic scenarios (Meadows et al., 1972; 2004). Human health and prosperity has always depended, first of all, on a favourable climate. Western energy-intensive lifestyles, largely dependent on fossil fuel, have led to a dramatic growth in gas emissions. This has resulted in global temperatures rising faster than ever recorded in human history. The planet has already warmed by almost 1°C since 1900 (Chiesa, 2013: 43–4). If action is not taken in order to cut current global greenhouse gas emissions within 20 years, carbon dioxide concentration levels in the atmosphere will cause the earth to warm a further 2°C to 6°C by 2050 (cf. Table 16 below). In 2007, Giulio Tremonti (2008: 22–23; own translation) highlighted:

With the present stable development, already in 2030 (i.e. tomorrow), and for the majority of the current world population (a population that is, in fact, living longer and longer), we will have on the planet – and all together at the same time – effects of enormous importance. By 2030, the global demand of energy will be 50% higher than today, and 80% of this demand will be related to fossil fuels. In 2030, in particular, the world's energy needs will result in the equivalent of 17.721 million tons of oil, that is 55% more than in 2005. [...] At the same time Asian economies, which in 1990 reached a share of 18%, will increase their weight reaching 36% of global energy demand in 2030. [...] By that time, the average price of oil will remain at least above the \$60 per barrel, and the biggest part of the production of oil and gas will take place in unstable regions of the planet. The emissions of carbon dioxide will increase by about 60% and, if the situation will remain unchanged, carbon dioxide emissions will increase by 57% by 2030 (compared to 2005), rising from 27 gigatons to 42 gigatons.

Table 16: Three possible scenarios for global energy use and carbon emissions. From PwC (2013: 15, Table 3), Source: PwC analysis (last two rows are approximate estimates only based on IPCC AR4 report ranges).

Average global growth rates (% per annum: 2012-50)	Business as usual scenario	Gradual greening scenario	Green growth scenario
1. GDP	3.1	3.1	3.1
2. Energy intensity	-0.8	-1.4	-2.5
3. Primary energy consumption (= 1 +2)	2.3	1.7	0.6
4. Greener fuel mix effect	0.0	-1.2	-2.0
5. Carbon emissions without CCS (= 3+4)	2.3	0.5	-1.4
6. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) effect	0.0	-0.3	-0.6
7. Carbon emissions with CCS (=5+6)	2.3	0.2	-2.0
8. Implied decarbonisation rate (=1-7)	0.8	2.9	5.1
Atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases (CO ₂ e parts per million, projected in 2100)	c.1200 ppm	c.700 ppm	c.450 ppm
Long term temperature rise (degrees centigrade)	c.6°C	c. 4°C	c. 2°C

The EC validated these projections and the related risks for world's civilisations when introduced the above-mentioned package of policy measures of 'Climate Action':³¹

Global temperatures have risen by some 0.75°C over the past 100 years. The average global temperature is projected to increase further by anywhere between 1.1°C and up to 6.4°C over the course of this century unless the world takes action to limit the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. An increase of 2°C above the temperature in pre-industrial times (around 1.2°C above today's level) is seen by scientists as the threshold beyond which there is a much higher risk that dangerous and possibly catastrophic changes in the global environment will occur.

The climate is actually changing fast, and the global warmth is inevitably going to affect profoundly mankind and could even cause, by the end of the 21st century, "average increases of temperatures up to 4°C and ocean levels rising by 60 centimeters, with prolonged devastating consequences on ecosystems, water supplies and on human settlements" (Tremonti, 2008: 23; own translation).

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE IN THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY DEBATE

The environmental challenge was indeed not new within the international policy debate. In 1983, to address the growing concerns on the deterioration of the environment

³¹ Available at http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/brief/consequences/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

and natural resources, the UN established a 'World Commission on Environment and Development' chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Four years later, the Brundtland Commission published a report³² called *Our Common Future*, which defined sustainable development as a "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN, 1987: 24). The report urged (par. 10.58) humanity as a whole "to respond effectively to the consequences of changes human activity has induced – the build-up of atmospheric carbon dioxide, depletion of stratospheric ozone, acid precipitation, and tropical forest destruction", and stressed (par. 10.9):

The world's environmental problems are greater than the sum of those in each country. Certainly, they can no longer be dealt with purely on a nation-state basis. [...] The challenge ahead is for us to transcend the self-interests of our respective nation-states so as to embrace a broader self-interest – the survival of the human species in a threatened world.

In the early 1990s, the UN issued its main policy document on SD, the *Agenda 21* (UN, 1992), a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally and nationally by the organisations of the UN, national governments, and relevant stakeholders in every area in which human impacts on the environment. The *Agenda 21* and the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* were eventually adopted by more than 178 Governments at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, on 3–14 June 1992. Moreover, the United Nations created the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, to monitor and report on the implementation of the agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels. The full implementation of *Agenda 21*, the *Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21* and the Commitments to the Rio principles, were strongly reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002.³³

EU POLICIES TO ADDRESS THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Indeed, the alarm bell rang for the EU decision-makers too, and the EU launched, in the last years, a series of policy initiatives grouped under the label 'Climate Action' or 'Climate mainstreaming',³⁴ including the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP), aimed to identify and develop all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol.³⁵ Under the Kyoto Protocol, in fact, the EU-15 (the 15 EU Members

³² Available at <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>.

³³ Cf. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&nr=23&type=400&menu=35> (last retrieved on 12 December 2012).

³⁴ See http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/brief/eu/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

³⁵ See http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eccp/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

States before 2004) were all committed to reducing collective emissions to 8% below 1990 levels by the years 2008–2012. Most countries that have joined the EU since 2004 have ‘inherited’ the Kyoto reduction targets of 6% or 8% (5% in Croatia’s case). The Kyoto Protocol, nonetheless, has been invalidated by the deadlock determined in the above-mentioned UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (Chiesa, 2013: 44–5; own translation):

For over twenty years – since the most honest sectors of the world scientific community have identified and reported the problem – there has been an irresponsible pantomime that has led, from international conference to world conference, to the meeting in Rio de Janeiro of summer 2012, in which no agreement has been reached. As the minimal declaration of intents of Kyoto expired in 2012, today there is no binding measure, no global commitment that may force the main actors of the disaster, primarily the United States of America, to stop the collective march towards suicide.

The EU has however committed to cutting its emissions to 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 as one of the headline targets of the ‘Europe 2020’ growth strategy (EC, 2010c) – in addition to the increasing the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 20% and the moving towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency – to be implemented through a package of binding legislation,³⁶ which includes the reduction of 30% of carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 (albeit on the condition³⁷ that the other major emitting countries in the developed and developing worlds committing to undertake their part of global emissions reduction efforts) and a specific Directive (EU, 2009e) creating a legal framework for the environmentally safe use of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies. Furthermore, EU leaders have endorsed the objective of reducing, by 2050, Europe’s greenhouse gas emissions by 80–95% compared to 1990 levels as part of efforts by developed countries as a group to reduce their emissions by a similar degree. For this purpose, the European Commission established, with Communication of 8 March 2011, a Roadmap (EC, 2011e) for building the low-carbon economy that Europe will require. The Roadmap is a long-term policy plan put forward under the Resource Efficient Europe flagship initiative, and intended to put the EU on course to using resources in a sustainable way. The Roadmap suggests that, by 2050, the EU should cut its emissions to 80% below 1990 levels through domestic reductions alone. It sets out milestones which form a cost-effective pathway to this goal – reductions of the order of 40% by 2030 and 60% by 2040.³⁸

³⁶ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/package/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

³⁷ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/priorities/sustainable-growth/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

³⁸ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/roadmap/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE CHANGE

Giulietto Chiesa, journalist and former MEP, commented the above commitments of the EU to tackle the environmental challenge in rather sceptical terms, as their actual realisation would require a consistent change in national policies, massive investments in order to implement these policies, and – most of all – a cultural shift and a radical change in Western (including European) lifestyles that should precede this change (Chiesa, 2013: 45–6; own translation):

A new, vast global movement of millions of individuals as well as the vast majority of scientists and research institutes cries out, as essential first step, for a 20% cut in carbon dioxide emissions. A measure that all industrialised countries should achieve by 2020. The European Union, for example, has declared this intention. These figures are considered the minimum to maintain the hope of limiting the increase in global temperature to below 2°C. In the meantime, more radical actions should be taken. Yet, the international community is paralysed. The explanation for this absurd deadlock is tremendously clear. To cut emissions of carbon dioxide simply means to change our economic and social systems. The economic system in which we live is entirely aimed at growth, driven by increasing consumption and development based on energy waste. Thus far, everything has gone ahead ignoring the limits of the environment and the *physical* quantities actually available in nature. Facing the future with this system of priorities is to go towards disaster. And to change priorities means to introduce – as soon as possible – new ways of life, production and consumption. These changes require an abrupt ‘change of gear’, and a sharp brake on growth the way we have experienced it until now. Changes would also involve billions of individuals, whose perception of the world should be modified. However, these billions of people should be informed in advance of the reasons for such changes. In other words, for people to accept them and not just to rebel against them they should be involved, convinced, and made actors of these changes. In turn, all this would require a drastic change of management in our information and communication systems, given that the current ones are entirely in the hands of those who wish not to reveal but to hide, not to involve people but exclude them, not to make them more informed but keep them in a state of awe, fear and subordination.

In fact, more than 10 years after the launch of the Lisbon agenda and the SDS, EU law and international protocols aimed at reducing polluting agents, mainly related to the industrial and ‘post-industrial’ society built in the last two centuries, evidently fail to provide adequate responses to address this problem. According to the most recent report *World in 2050* by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC, 2013), the industrial growth of emerging national economies such as the Chinese and the missing endorsement of international agreements on pollution reduction (Chiesa, 2012: 44) will considerably compromise the EU Climate Action and the Kyoto Protocol goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (PwC, 2013: 15):

The first ‘business as usual’ scenario projects forward the experience of the 2000-11 period when total global decarbonisation averaged just 0.8% per annum. This was largely due to energy intensity improvements with little progress on a greener fuel mix (and no CCS). This is a pessimistic scenario but could put the world on the path to catastrophic climate change by the end of the century, or possibly earlier given the probable rise in the frequency of extreme weather

events associated with global warming. Our third 'green growth' scenario in the final column of Table 3 is what would be required to keep to the UN target of limiting global warming to around 2°C – this now requires decarbonisation of over 5% per annum up to 2050, which strains credibility given the lack of progress since 2000 and the generally disappointing outcome of global climate change talks since 2009. A somewhat more realistic, but still challenging, case is our 'gradual greening' scenario. This assumes energy intensity improvements at around twice the average rate seen since 2000, significant progress on shifting from coal to gas in China and India and, in the longer run, to renewable fuels across the world by 2050, as well as a gradual phasing in of CCS from 2020 onwards. Past studies suggest that this kind of programme, if phased in gradually, should not reduce global GDP in 2050 by more than around 2-3% of GDP, but it does require much greater commitment from all major economies around the world to achieve such an outcome than we have seen in recent years. Even in this case, we might see an eventual rise of global temperatures by around 4°C, which could have major economic, social and environmental impacts, but would at least stop short of the more catastrophic long-term outcomes that become increasingly likely in the business as usual scenario. The alternative to decarbonisation would be much slower GDP growth, but the long run price of this would be much higher.

The main implication of the above projections is that the principal assumption of the Western economies based on capitalism – that of constant increase in GDP and, most of all, limitless economic growth – are, at the present stage of the development of human civilisation, a trap. In any of the above scenarios, the earth's climate will then seriously affect water and food availability. There will certainly be increased risks of flooding, of extreme weather conditions and coastal inundation, while entire geographical areas like Africa, Australia and Central America will not only become drier and warmer, but they will experience significant disturbances of their ecosystems and increase desertification. Higher global temperatures will also create a 'feedback loop' – they will speed up glacial melt, ocean acidity and the release of natural stocks of carbon from soil or permafrost while reducing the natural absorption capacities of our glaciers, soils and oceans. This will further increase atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases, which in turn intensifies climate change effects. In the end, entire populations will most probably need to migrate across the globe, as wide areas of the planet will no longer offer acceptable conditions for the survival of human life, and Europe will need to absorb the massive pressure of this immigration, especially coming from the African continent.

UNITY OF RESPONSE TO AVOID DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENTS

The commitment of the European Union *alone* through specific regulations and the introduction of environmental constraints and standards has however been considered, in this context, insufficient – if not counterproductive – to meet the global environmental emergency (Tremonti, 2008: 23–25; own translation):

The impact of global warming will be more dramatic in arid or semi-arid areas of Africa and Asia. [However,] observing the environmental effects of marketism, we see that it will not only

affect Africa and the poorest countries, but also Europe. And the same fate will befall the entire planet. The solution is certainly not that typically 'European' response programmed in the European Council held in Brussels on 21 and 22 June 2007, a solution based on the 'unilateral' application – i.e. endorsed *only* by Europe – of new and very strict environmental rules in the 'far-sighted' hope to be emulated, in turn, by Asia, following this enlightened model. This is not the correct solution, for the simple reason that it will cause, outside Europe, an effect opposite than that desired: an increase in the production of pollution in Asia, driven by additional and artificial competitive advantage offered to Asian industry by this choice. [...] The total efficient solution does not rely even in the so-called *green economy*, that is the plan of global investment in clean energy, low-intensity emission of carbon dioxide. A plan that should not be limited only to the US and to Europe, but also extended to Asia. And that should (could) be financed mainly by developed countries. This plan is certainly necessary, but it is not sufficient by itself. The reason is that it is necessary to act jointly on the causes and not just on the effects. In parallel, it is necessary to stop marketism, an ideology driven by the frantic development driven by the sole and absolute strength of the market.

Likewise, while the actual expenditure in the EU budget related to climate change is integrated into the various policy areas such as energy, agriculture or transport, the EC emphasised that mainstreaming climate issues primarily in major spending categories, in order to create a low-carbon and climate resilient society, should need to take place at a larger scale and involve much wider areas of the planet.³⁹ Giulio Tremonti put forward a further reflection in relation to the legitimacy of the proposal to reverse the actual trend of wild and limitless development of the free market and the potential availability of Asian countries to follow it, and drawing a radical macroeconomic conclusion (Tremonti, 2008: 25–6; own translation):

Why penalize developing countries *now*? Why the reasons of environmentalism should apply only *now*, with the entry of Asia in the global market? For a very simple reason, and not just for political astuteness or Western or European selfishness. Because it is not possible to 'remake' history, to just look back: one can only look forward. The hypothesis that, for example, 200 or 300 million Chinese will have their (polluting) car over the next few years terrifies the Chinese authorities in the first instance. There is one single response anyway. In the interest of all people, marketism should be stopped everywhere.

Tremonti expanded this concept in a more recent book published in 2012, where he outlined causes and effects of the financial markets on the globalised economies and the crises they are facing nowadays, warning about the advancement of a financial oligarchy and a new technocracy substituting democratically elected governments, which applied in particular to countries that were requested to apply austerity measures by the *troika* like Italy and Greece (Tremonti, 2012: 13–4):

When, manipulating financial markets and spreads, the power acts through the leverage of fear, the fear of losing everything, from work to savings; when, facing the crisis, the *liberal* power

³⁹ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/brief/mainstreaming/index_en.htm (last retrieved on 30 April 2013).

constituted in the name of the free market calls – for danger and needs – for a ‘state of exception’ to be declared; when, in order to preserve its interests, finance arrives at the last stage, and starts governing directly by using technocrats, who are completely different from the people, and yet who claim to know what is good for the people; when the IMF intervenes to reduce national sovereignty; when it is obvious that this process, being based on the same mechanisms that have caused the crisis, does not interrupt it but, on the contrary, extends it and worsens it; when, despite all its faults, those who are elected do not matter, and non-elected matter *precisely* because they are not elected; when the people’s right to vote is supposed to be replaced with the draw, in order to constitute the ‘perfect’ Parliament; when the roots of democracy are cut for reasons of *aut-aut* terms, e.g. requiring that public debts are treated with corresponding doses of democratic deficit; with all these conditions, it is clear that it is then difficult to stop or to avoid social conflict, it is clear that it is then difficult, as is popularly said, put the toothpaste back in the tube. When the crackle of spreads shakes confidence in ourselves and in the spirit of the EU, the risk that the first signs of a new type of fascism – a *financial* fascism, a *white* fascism – clearly emerges, starting precisely from the ‘civilized’ Europe.

Apart from the discourse about the financial responsibility in the present economic downturn, it is manifest that the ‘ET 2020’ strategy – the education and training *volet* of the ‘Europe 2020’ – did not include, since its inception, any tool for implementing SD or environmental education (EE) policies: *none* of the benchmarks listed in the Conclusions of the Council (EU, 2009a: Annex I) really refers to these aspects, even though it is widespread opinion that EE plays a fundamental role in tackling the environmental challenge by creating a culture of sustainability and helping in reaching the objectives set in this framework. Instead, other fields are listed at the end of the policy document as additional benchmarking priorities, e.g. mobility, employability and language learning. UNESCO’s *Tbilisi Declaration* of 1978, for example, stressed the importance of EE properly because it increases people’s knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action.

Paradoxically – or perhaps symptomatically – it is more in the third sector and in civil society that responses for a smooth transition towards more sustainable and resilient ways of living are being organised: local communities begin to address system changes such as implementing locally owned renewable energy cooperations, increasingly large scale food production and even local currencies. Examples of these kinds of initiatives are the ‘Community Transformation Model’ and the ‘Energy Descent Action Plan’ advanced by the *Transition Movement* organised in the *Transition network* of NGOs⁴⁰ (VO, 2012):

The Transition Movement aims to create resilient communities that have the adaptive capacity to respond to the challenges of peak oil, climate change and global economic instability. Simply

⁴⁰ Official website available at <http://www.transitionnetwork.org> and <http://transitionprincerupert.com> (last retrieved on 20 April 2013).

put, it is about entering into a process of transitioning off the dependency of fossil fuels. Through a series of phases that build upon each other, it is a procedural framework that invites communities to take a journey into the unknown future. Grounded in permaculture design, proper community facilitation and effective group process – the intention is to ‘unlock the collective genius of a community’ by creating spaces for conversations to occur around topics of sustainability and local resilience. Community members collectively design an *Energy Descent Action Plan* which seeks to create a timeline into the future people truly wish to live in.

5.3 *Non-linearity of the incoming geopolitical (dis)order*

In past centuries, for millennia, human communities (as well as the nature and the environment in which they lived) changed slowly such as to appear to the members that composed it, immutable. According to Giulietto Chiesa, this would be “one of the reasons why the ruling classes of every human community have always tried – successfully – to instill in dominated people the idea that human relations were immutable and eternal” (Chiesa, 2013: 81). Despite the financial crisis is beginning to strangle Western economies one after the other – starting from the most financially exposed, with higher public debt – individuals still have a sense of political stability, which coincides with the conviction of the alternation of economic cycles, the sinusoid of the ‘downturn’ – the term itself indicating limited periods of time followed by resumed periods of economic growth (Tremonti, 2012: 26–8; own translation):

The word ‘crisis’ is derived from the old Greek and means discontinuity, interruption or change of paradigm. However, by mental inertia, for various conveniences, people have continued to think, to hope, to pretend that, less radically, it was just an economic cycle. As a result of this exchange – between words and mental patterns, between ordinary and extraordinary – caused by both the superficiality of the analysis and the powerful interests involved, the illusion that the crisis could be *manageable*, without bothering to understand where it came from and why it happened. [...] In this way, staying mentally, politically *out* of the spirit of this time, long-term problems were managed with short-range tools, and extraordinary problems were handled by ordinary means.

The current economic and financial crises, as well as the demographic, energetic and environmental crises, in addition to the current crisis of ‘traditional’ political parties, will certainly not have a linear development: according to the predictions of political and economic observers, these crises will most certainly worsen exponentially and they will soon reach a breaking point, which would make a recovery of previous economic growth rates impossible not only in Western countries (Chiesa: 2013: 144). The consequences of a recession of this kind of magnitude would include the overpowering of lobbies over the weak, the rise of nationalism and intolerance, and the risk of war between peoples (p. 34–5; own translation):

We normally think in linear terms, which makes us believe that changes are slow, sometimes imperceptible, in many cases not even measurable within a few generations. Therefore we think that empires can also fall, but only over a period of centuries. This belief is strengthened when we see the ruins of ancient civilizations that have survived the millennia, and the basic stability of the things we observe in our ecosystem – the world in which we live, the planet we live on – appears even more extensive to us. Everything seems constant. If something changes – and we know, theoretically, that things change – it does change over a period of centuries, millennia, or millions of years. This is our custom, which curiously assigns the prerogative to make turns, even sharp, only to contemporaries. But we think that they will all converge and merge in a big and slow river. Precisely, it is in this retro-thought that the limit of our ability to understand the current crisis is hiding. It is our shortsighted, linear vision that requires us to imagine the bridge that will connect us to the future generations as a simple continuation of the present life. Yet, much of what is happening today is telling us that the whole conceptual paradigm we rely on is completely unsuitable to face the present situation. [...] We are facing the *breaking point*, which characterizes the accumulation of tension and produces abrupt breaks.

Political analysts and economists pose at the base of a daunting ‘point of no return’ to which the Western capitalist system would come (Chiesa, 2013: 144) the explosion of the financial bubble on a global scale and the growing geopolitical imbalances resulting from the emergence and fast development of new areas of the planet at the expense of traditionally stronger countries, which – because of their economic and military power – have dominated the international scene in the last decades (Tremonti, 2008: 27–28; own translation):

At present, China is growing and investing in its internal security. Then, ‘time for the outside’ will come. A time already foretold by the massive investments in the Persian Gulf, Africa, Latin America. [...] In 2050, China’s GDP (48 trillion dollars) will be greater than that of the USA (37 trillion) and more than double the European (18 trillion). Certainly, these are just estimates and indeed the GDP is not the sole criterion for assessing the degree of development of a country. However, it is most likely that the GDP’s growth corresponds symmetrically to the development of science and technology, services and armaments. In any case, China has a strategic ambition: to replace the West in leading the next industrial revolution, which will not be a revolution of machines or computers, but the revolution of genetics applied to agricultural products and to man. Luckily for China, a decisive factor in the success of this strategy should be the fact that, unlike Western countries, China does not have in this field moral or legal restraints, hesitancy or limitations of any kind. When development will end China’s financial dependence from the West, when the technology will allow China to break the domination of the US Navy maritime routes – as land masses can be controlled from the sea and not vice versa – then the geopolitical scenario will be much different and more complex. In fact, the axis of power never shifts without a conflict or trauma.

The risk for Western countries of marginalization in a near future, where financial rules could be rewritten on a global scale and new balances found, for example moving to a new Bretton-Woods and much more likely to new trans-national trade agreements in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) system – within which the European Commission would act as an “aggressive negotiator [...] in pursuing the liberalisa-

tion of education services in the various round of trade talks” (Robertson, 2009a: 76) – and in other international trade agreements of the World Trade Organization (WTO), was clearly outlined by CASE (2012: Chapter 6). In this respect, an analysis “focussing on relations between the EU and Asia” was introduced in an earlier version of the above-mentioned report and presented at the Groupe d’Économie Mondiale at SciencesPo in Paris (cf. CASE, 2012). This study highlighted (p. 23):

Meanwhile the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) convenes every two years (2010 in Brussels and 2012 in Vientiane), to little purpose. The number of participants is large for meaningful negotiation, and the ‘three pillars’ of ASEM (political dialog, security and the economy, and education and culture) represent a vague mandate, with economic matters reduced to half a pillar. [...] The current state-of-play resembles something from the first decade of the twenty-first century. EU absence from the major negotiating tables could affect the design of trade facilitation measures in ways inimical to European best interests. It is in striking contrast to the origins of the GATT/WTO system where seven of the twenty-three GATT signatories in 1947 were European.

Despite the recognition of the clearly damaging effects generated by derivatives⁴¹ on the financial markets (Ekaterina & Ufuk, 2011; Grima, 2012), five years after the first subprime⁴² crisis of 2008–9 the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) estimated that the notional value of the *over-the-counter* derivatives (i.e. representing the financial bubble generated in the deregulated markets: Tremonti, 2012: 37, note 8) reached, in 2011, the enormous amount of 707.569 billion dollars, which alone corresponds to 1124% of all world’s nations total GDP (Tremonti, 2012: 50–4; own translation), as illustrated below:

⁴¹ A *derivative* is a financial instrument having a value deriving from an underlying variable asset (Oxford dictionary of English).

⁴² *Subprimes* are credit or loan arrangements for borrowers with a poor credit history, typically having unfavourable conditions such as high interest rates (Oxford dictionary of English).

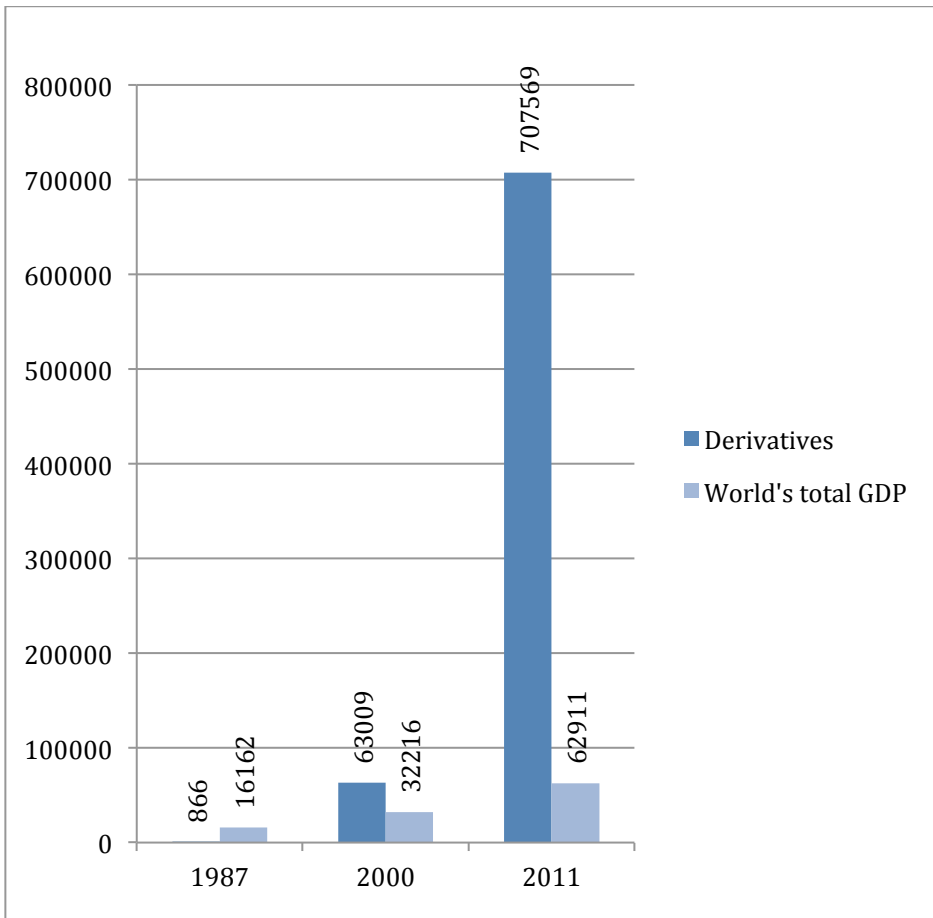


Figure 40: Derivatives and world's GDP (in billion dollars). From Tremonti (2012: 51, figure 2; own translation). Sources: ISDA and BIS.

Trends show not only that there has been a massive growth in the world's financial mass, but also that this has occurred and developed just after and a result of globalization. [...] Today, it is clear that the increasing and strategically most important factor in the world's economy is precisely the *enormous* and *abnormal* financial mass, [...] a new form of capital that in just twenty years has developed independently by sequences of numbers and abstract signs, independently from the underlying material reality, independently from the exchange of goods and therefore potentially capable of multiplying indefinitely. Thus, it is strong enough to dominate everything else: means of production, labor force, states, our lives. [...] The new financial mass is made of a type of 'money' that is no longer printed by the states, nor bears the 'sovereign' signature, but is printed by finance itself, for its own use. Monies that the finance forms in its own way: first by creating debt, then shifting this debt to other subjects. It is in this way that states have lost their sovereignty and finance has made it its own.

In addition to this ‘financial mass’ of money created artificially by banks, the four biggest Western central banks (the Federal Reserve, the ECB, the Bank of England and the Bank of Japan) have produced an unprecedented flood of liquidity: from the moment in which the current crisis began, the Federal Reserve has increased the printing of money by 237%, the Bank of England by 264% and the ECB by 170% (Chiesa, 2013: 181).

Finally, the EU policy as a whole is suggesting the narrative that, since capitalism cannot and will not fail, EU economies will overcome the crisis and continue a limitless growth, that the financial bubble will not explode, that the European labour market – as CEDEFOP forecasts invariably show (cf. paragraph 3.3.2.4 Adult skills upgrading and the ‘skill matching challenge’) – will undergo a radical transformation and offer jobs in which people will not need to use their arms and legs very much, but their brains and fingers to type on a keyboard or a touch-screen.

5.3.1 A new world’s demography and the question of sustainability

An ageing European population implies not only the obvious need to train adults throughout their lifecycle to prevent deterioration or obsolescence of their skills, it also means that the European continent will soon represent a much smaller fraction of the world population (from 26% – when Europe started its process of integration – to 4% by 2100; cf. UN, 2013 and par. 5.3.2 Overpopulation and overexploitation), and “any forecast about its future role not taking into account this phenomenon will certainly be wrong” (Chiesa, 2013: 66; own translation). Discussing the hypothesis of a German leadership and a stronger role of Germany in the Eurozone, *The Economist* (2013g) emphasised:

If Mrs Merkel’s vision is pragmatic, so too is her plan for implementing it. It can be boiled down to three statistics, a few charts and some facts on an A4 sheet of paper. The three figures are 7%, 25% and 50%. Mrs Merkel never tires of saying that Europe has 7% of the world’s population, 25% of its GDP and 50% of its social spending. If the region is to prosper in competition with emerging countries, it cannot continue to be so generous.

In this light, another challenge for European countries is largely economic. Even considering a scenario in which the EU has successfully dealt with and solved the present financial turmoil (portrayed in par. 5.1 The Global Economic Crisis and the resurrection of nationalism), the European continent will anyway face the risk of a decline that will be very difficult to avoid. In all probability, with the present growth rates, the Chinese economy will actually increase its need for energetic resources to supply such a fast-paced developing industry, and will quite certainly have enough money and economic power to absorb most of the available resources of the Asian continent and an increasing

amount of the world's. In the above-cited report, PricewaterhouseCoopers illustrated the prospects of the world economy by 2050 (PwC, 2013: 1, 14):

The world economy is projected to grow at an average rate of just over 3% per annum from 2011 to 2050, doubling in size by 2032 and nearly doubling again by 2050. China is projected to overtake the US as the largest economy by 2017 in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms and by 2027 in market exchange rate terms. India should become the third 'global economic giant' by 2050, a long way ahead of Brazil, which we expect to move up to 4th place ahead of Japan. [...] The growth projections outlined above assume no major global catastrophes and that countries continue to follow broadly growth-friendly policies. Clearly, however, there are many uncertainties surrounding such long-term projections and many challenges that need to be overcome to achieve sustainable global growth at the 3%+ average trend rates indicated by our model.

By 2050, as anticipated, China will be much richer and much more populated, and Chinese people will ask for new houses in which to live, better infrastructures, new schools to be built, more highways to connect wider cities and cities with industries, multiplying at a pace of one new every week even now. Chinese people will indeed drink and eat, and most certainly will have enough money to buy a car, which will increase exponentially demand for oil (Tremonti, 2008: 25–6), to the point of determining a raise in its price that is difficult to estimate, but will possibly cause the Western countries to severely reduce its import. Similar reflections can be made for India and other developing economies. Exploitation of natural resources⁴³ and consumption of food will reach unprecedentedly high levels, and the co-existence of Western economies together with the Asian ones – in particular the Chinese and the Indian, with their impressive growth rates – will probably become unsustainable (it is enough to recall that about 95% of the world's production of goods is directly or indirectly related to the production and the consumption of oil: Chiesa, 2013: 37), even in a scenario in which Western countries will undergo a severe recession.

5.3.2 Overpopulation and overexploitation of resources

The United Nations recently published the report *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* (UN, 2013), illustrating updated world demographic trends and projections.

⁴³ The problem of the excessive exploitation of natural resources has been raised, among others, by Paolo Cacciari (Manifesto, 2012; own translation) in an article in which he claimed that "the Planet, given the state of the technologies available today and in the next twenty years, is unable to provide sufficient raw materials to cope with the impact of population increase and the increase in consumption. The problem is not just peak oil, but the peak of everything else, to use an expression of the financial analyst Jeremy Grantham. The trade war between China and the United States on 'rare earth' elements, necessary to produce alternative energy sources and the technologies needed for the green economy, seems to confirm this diagnosis. It will not be sufficient to even increase by a factor of 10 the efficiency in the use of raw materials to face a crisis by depletion of natural resources on a planet that has exhausted 95% of the known reserves of mercury, 80% of lead, silver, gold, 70% of arsenic, cadmium, zinc, 60% of tin, selenium, lithium, and 50% of copper".

According to the UN, the world population is expected to reach nearly 11 billion people by 2100, which is about 800 million more than the previous 2010 revised projection of 10.1 billion (UN, 2011). The revised estimate is mostly due to a slower decline of birth rates in Africa than expected in the previous projections. However, the current African continent population of about 1.1 billion is still expected to reach 4.2 billion by the end of the century (UN press release⁴⁴ of 13 June 2013: 1–3):

The current world population of 7.2 billion is projected to increase by almost one billion people within the next twelve years, reaching 8.1 billion in 2025 and 9.6 billion in 2050. [...] Most of the population growth will occur in developing regions, which are projected to increase from 5.9 billion in 2013 to 8.2 billion in 2050. During the same period, the population of developed regions will remain largely unchanged at around 1.3 billion people. [...] The new projections include some notable findings at the country level. For example, the population of India is expected to surpass that of China around 2028, when both countries will have populations of around 1.45 billion. Thereafter, India's population will continue to grow for several decades to around 1.6 billion. [...] Nigeria's population is expected to surpass that of the United States before the middle of the century. By the end of the century, Nigeria could start to rival China as the second most populous country in the world. By 2100 there could be several other countries with populations over 200 million, namely Indonesia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda and Niger. [...] More than half of global population growth between now and 2050 is expected to occur in Africa. According to the UN's medium-variant projection, the population of Africa could more than double by mid-century, increasing from 1.1 billion today to 2.4 billion in 2050, and potentially reaching 4.2 billion by 2100. [...] Beyond Africa, the population of the rest of the world is expected to grow by just over 10 per cent between 2013 and 2100, with Europe's population projected to decline by 14 per cent. Fertility in almost all European countries is now below the level required for full replacement of the population in the long run (around 2.1 children per woman on average).

From an economic point of view, about half of the world's population earns less than 2 dollars per day, and 1.2 billion people with less than 1.2 dollars (Chiesa, 2013: 50). Furthermore, according to Chiesa, "the average income in the 20 richest industrialised countries is 37 to 40 times higher than in the poorest" (own translation). In this light, the Italian journal *La Repubblica* (2013f; own translation) commented on the above-cited UN report in the following words:

The report only considers the figures of demography. Just combining them with those of global warming, produces an explosive mixture. At the end of the century – according to the latest data – the temperature may increase by four or five degrees Celsius. But this is a global average. In the tropics, temperatures will increase more. Six or seven billion people would live in largely desertified countries, with a destroyed agriculture. Migration, at this point, would just be an understatement. The right word would probably be exodus. Millions of people on the march, with nothing behind them: on a global scale. Humanity has probably never faced a tougher test.

⁴⁴ Available at http://esa.un.org/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2012_Press_Release.pdf (last retrieved on 30 June 2013). Full report *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* available at <http://esa.un.org/wpp/>, key findings report at http://esa.un.org/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2012_%20KEY%20FINDINGS.pdf.

The bad thing is that, even striving to be optimistic, one would not get very far. Let us imagine, in fact, that the greenhouse effect will be instead defeated and a widespread well-being will clear up the anxiety to migrate. A serene world inhabited by the middle classes. What do you think that they will eat? It was enough that wealthy Chinese began to express interest in steaks and milk to blow up the global food balance. There are not enough cows and enough space to put them. By the way, there are not enough cereals to give a beer to every Chinese. Sooner or later, we must also make calculations on available resources. It will not be an easy century.

The difficulty for Western countries to accept their decline consequent an increased competition for natural resources (food, energy) and the definitive loss of their historical economic supremacy may cause violent disruptions in our societies: political leaders will then face the alternative choice of re-establishing a 'favourable geo-political order' through large-scale military actions (Spiegel, 2010), which do not appear anymore as far fetched as they did in the past (Chiesa, 2013: 58–9; own translation):

The limits to growth will require not only political and diplomatic victories on paper concerning spheres of influence. To get rid of the competitors in the use of available resources, increasingly scarce, will also be necessary. [...] This hypothesis entails that hundreds of millions of people will die. And it will no longer be matter of armed individuals alone. It will be matter of non-combatant, defenseless civilians, possibly unaware of the threat which overshadows them. This eventuality will be achieved through climate weapons – e.g. the ability to manipulate existing electrical conditions in the upper atmosphere and their relationship with the electromagnetic conditions of the Earth's crust (i.e., in essence, to stimulate earthquakes) – but also biological weapons, the ability to affect the internal political stability of a country through currency crises, interruption of food and energy supplies. It is an impressive list, and certainly incomplete.

Even in the most pessimistic war scenarios, in fact, nuclear wars are not even taken into account, since it has long been a widespread opinion that “a nuclear war cannot be won” (UN, 1987: 11.19–20):

The likely consequences of nuclear war make other threats, to the environment pale into insignificance. Nuclear weapons represent a qualitatively new step in the development of warfare. One thermo-nuclear bomb can have an explosive power greater than that of all the explosives Used in wars since the invention of gunpowder. In addition to the destructive effects of blast and heat, immensely magnified by these weapons, they introduce a new lethal agent – ionizing radiation – that extends lethal effects over both space and time. In recent years, scientists have in addition called our attention to the prospect of 'nuclear winter'. It has been most authoritatively explored by some 300 scientists from the United States, the USSR, and more than 30 other countries – working on a collaborative basis in some cases across ideological divides.⁴⁵ The theory contends that the smoke and dust ejected into the atmosphere by a nuclear war could absorb enough solar radiation to remain aloft for some time, preventing sunlight from reaching the surface of the earth, causing a widespread and prolonged cooling of land areas. There would be se-

⁴⁵ Cf. SCOPE (1985). Some of the other [early] major studies on the nuclear winter scenario are Turco et al. (1983), Ehrlich et al. (1984), Hartwell and Hutchinson (1985), NRC (1985), Ginsberg et al. (1985), Pittock et al. (1986), Thompson and Schneider (1986). The effects of nuclear war are explored in Chazor et al. (1982); Glasstone and Dolan (1977), NAS (1975), OTA (1980), UN (1980); WHO (1984).

vere repercussions for plant life generally and for agriculture in particular, disrupting the production of food to sustain survivors of the war. Great uncertainties remain about the scale and linkages determining environmental effects, but large-scale environmental perturbations are considered probable. A nuclear war cannot be won, and must never be fought. In the aftermath, there would be no difference between so called victor and vanquished. The nuclear-weapon states must spare no effort to conclude a verifiable agreement on banning all nuclear weapon tests.

The US *Future Combat Systems programme*, for example, involving technologies such as microwaves, lasers to neutralise satellites, nano-technology and biological warfare,⁴⁶ indeed only partially related to the 'global war on terrorism', the intelligence and military campaign that former president George W. Bush inaugurated after the attacks of 11 September 2001. As previously noted, the principal concern in this framework for European nations is related to energy resources (Maniscalco, 2010c: 221; own translation):

September, 11th has only radicalized positions that were built along the 1990s, a period in which the concept of military threat itself was joined, if not replaced, by the economic and social risk, and by the concept of cultural and religious tensions. In fact, European governments are not really concerned by dangers coming from the outside in terms of armed aggression to a certain territory, but in terms of migration, criminal trafficking, terrorism, demographic imbalances, the destabilization of neighboring markets' cracks, ecological crisis and difficulties in gaining access to energy resources. The latter come, in effect, mainly from the Mediterranean: 65% of oil and natural gas is imported through submarines ducts or on board of about 3,000 ships that sail this sea every day. 20% of Europe's oil comes from North Africa.

If the EU will fail to coalesce and affirm a common military autonomy⁴⁷ (the recent *New Deal for European Defence*⁴⁸ promoted by the EC interprets this concern), MS might all lose their 'naturally' privileged strategic relationships with Northern African and Middle East nations (*ibid.*) or even be involved in war – with the other NATO member countries –

⁴⁶ "Biological warfare could release new agents of disease that would prove difficult to control. Recent advances in biotechnology multiply the potentially lethal applications of such weapons. Likewise, the deliberate manipulation of the environment (for example, through artificial earthquakes and floods) would have consequences far beyond the borders of those involved in a conflict, were they ever used" (UN, 1987: 11.22).

⁴⁷ Already in 2007, the EC emphasised the importance of a "strong defence technological and industrial base" (DTIB) in Europe as a "fundamental underpinning of the European Security and Defence Policy" (ESDP), designed to "provide the EU with the capacity for autonomous action in order to respond to international crises, without prejudice to actions by NATO" (EC, 2007e: 2).

⁴⁸ Recent EU meetings for a common security and defence coordination have led to the Communication from the Commission entitled *Towards a More Competitive and Efficient Defence and Security Sector* of July 2013 (EC, 2013), aimed to support the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In the foreword to the Communication, the Vice-President of the EC stressed: "We need to maximise the synergies between European civil and military programmes to ensure the most efficient use of resources. Member States are fully aware of this and, in December 2013, the European Council will meet to discuss ways of strengthening European defence co-operation, military capabilities and Europe's defence industry. In preparation for this meeting the Commission, on 24th July, adopted a Communication which sets out a blueprint for substantive and long-term contribution from the Commission in support of Europe's defence and security sector".

as soon as the balance between the biggest debtor country in the world (the USA) and its creditor country (China) is compromised (Chiesa, 2013: 72–6; own translation):

The United States are in obvious and unstoppable decline, and have already lost their imperial position. Most of all, Larry Summers acknowledged this when he was asked (by Barack Obama) to return to the government: “How long can the largest debtor in the world still remain the greatest power in the world?” [...] All tells us that the United States move [...] to impose their supremacy, even in spite of their decline. As long as the American élite will not question Reagan’s axiom – “the standard of living of the American people is not negotiable” – that country will remain prisoner of the ruinous (for all) temptation to use the immense military force at its disposal. [...] All Europe can become an appendage of the United States. And, in this case, it will be dragged into war on their side. Otherwise, Europe can choose the path of autonomy and sovereignty.

In effect, in the UN webpage dedicated to the documentation of the demographic projection report,⁴⁹ one of the two UN experts’ presentations about the implications of the *World Population Prospects* is actually stressing the risks for imminent conflicts worldwide: Gerhard Heilig actually emphasised the strategic implications of demographic change in Asia, and in the very beginning of his analysis⁵⁰ he argued:

Demography might affect security because population growth leads to environmental degradation, land-shortage, or hunger, which triggers conflict over scarce resources excess of boys over girls (‘Asia’s male preference’) creates male gangs who are more willing to go to war young populations have more conflicts: ‘youthful hormones’ trigger aggression; ageing populations are more ‘peaceful’; fertility decline reduces ‘surplus sons’ that could be more easily acceptable (conflict reduction of China’s ‘single child policy’) population decline in rich societies invites aggression and creates ‘undefended wealth’.

Drawing on these premises, Heilig advanced a three-layers model, which provides a better understanding of the relationship between *population* and *conflict*:

a) Ultimate drivers (inner circles in previous slide):

- desire to gain or preserve a position of power / dominance
- desire to gain or preserve an economic advantage
- desire to gain dominance with, or preserve, particular ideas (political or economic ideology, ethnic identity, religious belief)

b) Principal types of response:

- *Adaptation*: Diplomacy, contain conflict by adjusting to the situation
- *Goal Attainment*: Wage war (only chose, when sure to win!); eliminate threat
- *Integration*: ‘Institutionalize’ adverse relationship (Example: ‘Cold War’)

⁴⁹ Cf. <http://esa.un.org/wpp/Documentation/publications.htm> (last retrieved on 30 June 2013).

⁵⁰ Cf. http://esa.un.org/wpp/ppt/Naval-War-College/WPP_2010_Naval-War-College_4.pdf (last retrieved on 30 June 2013).

- *Latency*: Infiltrate culture of adversary; fight 'from within'; win 'cold war' with 'blue jeans and rock music', convince adversary that your values are better

c) Context factors:

- *Population*: Size, (global) distribution, concentration (urbanization), (age) structure
- *Geography/Natural Environment*: Location/topography/climate/natural resources
- *Economic System*: Market, command & control, mixed, integration into global economy
- *Political System*: Democracy/gerontocracy/dictatorship; stable/vulnerable

In such context, according to Heilig, very large populations (hundreds of millions of people) would have a higher potential for economic, political and military supremacy: "population-rich countries can become economic, political or military super-powers with the right economic, political and military development strategy", while "small countries will never become major political, economic or military players, no matter what they do". In the above light, "Nigeria, Brazil or Pakistan could become major (economic and military) powers in the future". Moreover, "information gathering will likely be modified for very populous adversaries: intelligence will be more technology-oriented, needs better raster and better analytics to avoid information overload", whilst "conflict strategy will likely be more diversity-conscious: large populations are usually much less homogenous than small nations".

As a matter of fact, already in the above-mentioned UN report *Our Common Future* of 1987, a whole chapter discussed the implications of the progressive deterioration of the natural resource base and its capacity to support the population, showing how "poverty, injustice, environmental degradation, and conflict interact in complex and potent ways" (11.6), and the inextricable intertwinement between "peace, security, development and the environment" (UN, 1987: chapter 11). In conclusion, it warned all the world's nations of the social and political tensions they will face as a result of the environmental crisis (11.1- 4):

Among the dangers facing the environment, the possibility of nuclear war, or military conflict of a lesser scale involving weapons of mass destruction, is undoubtedly the gravest. Certain aspects of the issues of peace and security bear directly upon the concept of sustainable development. Indeed, they are central to it. Environmental stress is both a cause and an effect of political tension and military conflict.⁵¹ Nations have often fought to assert or resist control over raw materials, energy supplies, land, river basins, sea passages, and other key environmental resources. Such conflicts are likely to increase as these resources become scarcer and competition

⁵¹ For some preliminary analyses along these lines, see Timberlake and Tinker (1964), Myers (1986), Ullman (1983), and Westing (1986).

for them increases. The environmental consequences of armed conflict would be most devastating in the case of thermo-nuclear war. But there are damaging effects too from conventional, biological, and chemical weapons, as well as from the disruption of economic production and social organization in the wake of warfare and mass migration of refugees. But even where war is prevented, and where conflict is contained, a state of 'peace' might well entail the diversion into armament production of vast resources that could, at least in part, be used to promote sustainable forms of development. A number of factors affect the connection between environmental stress, poverty, and security, such as inadequate development policies, adverse trends in the international economy, inequities in multi-racial and multi-ethnic societies, and pressures of population growth. These linkages among environment, development, and conflict are complex and, in many cases, poorly understood. But a comprehensive approach to international and national security must transcend the traditional emphasis on military power and armed competition. The real sources of insecurity also encompass unsustainable development, and its effects can become intertwined with traditional forms of conflict in a manner that can extend and deepen the latter.

In fact, contemporary European policy seems to implicitly assume that economies growing as much – and as fast – as the Chinese will *not* entail an excessive depletion of natural resources available worldwide, which will *not* fatally affect our environment, and that this impoverishment, combined with the pollution caused by this fast-pace growth, will *not* determine irreversible global warmth, with all possible destructive consequences, which will include, just to give one example, the desertification of the African continent. Resulting from this desertification, they assume that huge masses of people from Africa – which will soon represent about 35.3% (from the current 9.1%) of the world population (UN, 2011) – will *not* move to temperate areas of the planet with milder temperatures like Europe (whose population will instead decrease from 21.6% to 6.7% by the end of the century), and even if they will do so, they will *not* bring the European welfare systems to collapse. In spite of the abundance of evidence-based studies picturing immense tensions between richer and poorer geopolitical areas, most EU policy documents invariably tell the narrative that Europe will continue to live in peace, that xenophobia and racism will not seed the germ of internal conflicts between EU Member States or harsh fights against immigrants, nor it will ever be necessary for the NATO countries to try to stop China or India before the point of no return in which Western civilisations will need to share the resources and wealth they have monopolised for centuries with the rest of the world's population. Moreover, EU policy documents state, between the lines, that if EU nations will ever go to war, wars will not take place in its territory, as the EU will just need to ensure internal security and border controls to stop migration pressure or – in the worst cases – contribute to peacekeeping actions in areas far away from the continent in order to maintain democracy in remote corners of the earth.

5.4 Filtered information and informal mediated learning

The accumulation of wealth dates back to primitive civilizations: it is possible to find examples of extreme greed through historical eras in testimonies of pharaohs, kings and emperors, until the accumulation of *capital* became intrinsic to all Western societies.⁵² Despite this phenomenon is now a fundament of Western civilisations, Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler (2009: i) noted:

Conventional theories of capitalism are mired in a deep crisis: after centuries of debate, they are still unable to tell us what capital is. Liberals and Marxists both think of capital as an ‘economic’ entity that they count in universal units of ‘utils’ or ‘abstract labour’, respectively. But these units are totally fictitious. Nobody has ever been able to observe or measure them, and for a good reason: they don’t exist. Since liberalism and Marxism depend on these non-existing units, their theories hang in suspension. They cannot explain the process that matters most – the accumulation of capital.

Accordingly, they proposed a new notion of *capital as power*, in which ‘capital’ is not understood as a “narrow economic entity, but a symbolic quantification of power”, and represents the organized power used by “dominant capital groups” to reshape society (*ibid.*). In this context, the peculiarity of capital accumulation in the last decades is the all-encompassing aspect of these aspirations. This specificity has sought, over time, increasingly effective ways to make possible massive accumulation of money (and, therefore, of *power*) and to justify this possibility to the masses by creating a system of values – a real collective ethics – that could establish a principle of inequality without provoking rebellions. As mentioned (cf. par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning), already in the early 20th century, Antonio Gramsci (1947; 1972) advanced that the dominance of the ruling class is exercised through ideological hegemony. Few years later, in a time when the television did not yet exist and advertising was still at a primitive stage of development, Albert Einstein (1949; quoted in Chiesa, 2013: 93) wrote:

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the

⁵² Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler (2009) proposed a new interpretation of the notion of *capital as power*, in which ‘capital’ is not understood as a “narrow economic entity, but a symbolic quantification of power” and represents the organized power of dominant capital groups to reshape their society (p. i).

main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

Today there is a widespread perception among the citizens of Western countries that frustrations of life originate on a 'higher' level, that the decisions that affect them and their lives are taken somewhere else than the local community: not by the mayor or by the politicians that they have elected into Parliament. In fact, globalization has introduced strategies that were almost unknown before: the lack of knowledge of the (very few) real players in the game is one of the tools created by the oligarchy of financial capitalism to protect themselves from the responsibility of holding a power exercised to the detriment of many. Today there are no faces or names to which to direct dissatisfactions and anger: there are acronyms, inconsistent entities, and often it is not even possible to trace the source of the financial degeneration. This process of 'dematerialisation' of the actors involved contributes to the acceptance of the idea of a superior, untouchable hegemonic order which cannot be questioned. At the same time, the privatisation of television has meant putting a collective good – information and mass communication – into the hands of few individuals, corporations, and power structures linked in various ways to the political classes. For obvious reasons, the main interest for these actors is not to provide truthful information, but to shape people's minds through an artificially constructed reality, primarily to support their profits (e.g. by increasing the consumption of their products through widespread and increasingly effective marketing and invasive advertising) and especially to support the legitimacy of the system on which these profits are governed (cf. Apple, 1982; Althusser; 1971; see also page 55): the capitalist system, the free market and the global banking and financial systems especially built to increase their revenue by multiplying *capital*.

TELEVISION OF 'MASS DISTRACTION'

Indeed, television is normally considered instrumental to the production of wealth: corporations which own television channels are successful thanks to the *power* that this medium provides. However, the invisible mechanisms of manipulation and censorship determine what appears on the small screen (Iyengar, 1994; Barry, 1997; Bourdieu, 1996), heavily relying on the most 'sensual' primal instincts of individuals (Chiesa, 2013: 102–3). In addition to the 'direct' limiting and distorting effect of television on journalism and the world of ideas, including politics (Bourdieu, 1996), 'latent' forms of hegemonic control of some nations over others have also been perpetrated through media, by infiltrating the culture of adversary and fighting 'from within'. This strategy allowed, for example, the USA to win the Cold War with 'blue jeans and rock music', convincing the adversary (the USSR) of the 'qualitative' supremacy of American values by insinuating the consumerist

appetite for goods and finally through aesthetics and cultural attractiveness (Carter Broach Jr. et al., 1995) of a liberal lifestyle which could break through the Iron Curtain thanks to cinema and television (cf. par. 5.3.2 Overpopulation and overexploitation). Furthermore, as television conveys ideas, concepts, and values not just through news, documentaries or cultural programmes, it includes these, even more consistently, in entertainment and advertising (p. 113; own translation):

It is enough to watch any television programming to verify that information only represents a small part, not more than 10%, of the total communication. What is instead the rest, an abundant 90% of stimuli that comes to people's eyes? Entertainment and advertising. Both products are considered much more important, and therefore more expensive than information. Activating counter information – for example through the internet – means, in fact, apart from speaking to those who already know, to touch barely 10% of the total mass communication, leaving free to flow [the] remaining 90% without hindrance: entertainment as a vehicle of standardization, which degrades human and civil values, and advertising as a pure lie and as a system for the construction of a collective paradigm to support compulsive consumption.

In fact, broadcasting is increasingly becoming the privileged instrument for the intellectual development of the masses and the formation of both an *aesthetic* and an *ethics* rooted in a culture of reference. Information and communication technologies, *in primis* the television – in all its present forms, which include internet streaming, digital cable TV or satellite broadcasting – exerts today a greater influence than public schools or family on peoples' minds, on their tastes, ideals and values (Apple, 1982; Althusser; 1971; cf. also chapter 2. Background, aims, methodology and data), and creates artificial consumption needs as well as political consensus, changing the very perception of individuals (Chiesa, 2013: 108–9, 136–7; own translation):

Family, school, and oratory were dislodged from their foundations. The education of the masses – an expression that we were taught to execrate when it referred to the socialist systems, which exercised it in elementary, direct, and even naive forms, in their simplicity – was taken over by television. And television is everywhere in the hands of private companies [...] and acts in their interest and against the interest of its spectators: the masses. Unless that television works in a far more pervasive more powerful, and more subtle way. This type of 'education' is accomplished through manipulation. And manipulation is perpetrated through eye-catching, fun, challenging, enjoyable shapes, tending to maximise views. [...] Information and communication systems are today almost entirely under the control of the corporations that investment in them. These kinds of proprietary concentrations determine the cost of a minute in television in each country. It is in this way that artificial needs have been created and hundreds of millions of consumers have been induced to buying useless products. Even worse, contexts for consumption and for the use of leisure time – the time of thinking – were created, which has changed the habits of families and shaped the psychology of the younger generation around a scale of values centered on consumption. The massive machine of collective conditioning has been wisely built to penetrate different human communities in many ways, combining large global campaigns with extensive articulation of different messages in such a way that they can be introduced in different cultures and traditions. Cinema and television have been crucial vehicles for this project. [By controlling]

newspapers, networks and television platforms of all kinds, political parties, governments, businesses have worked in unison with banks, with the purpose of determining more debt for society, more profits for the banks, more control of banks on society. [...] The TV (understood as motion picture,⁵³ regardless of the platform on which it is brought to the general public) shapes individuals and defines the psychological, intellectual, moral state of entire populations. The whole communication system should neither be at the service of the few nor out of the democratic control of the many. As a matter of fact, all this corresponds to the application of a 'modern principle' adopted by all civil societies: compulsory education for all. No one – at least not thus far – has ever considered the duty, enshrined in criminal law, to send children to school as a violation of personal or family freedom. Therefore, when another major actor adopts the function of general 'trainer/educator', it should be obvious to anyone that this function should not be entrusted to private hands; otherwise the collective interest would be subordinated to that of 'irresponsible' subjects.

Hence, the means of mass communication are firmly anchored in the hands of lobbies, which need to hide the operation of the oligarchic system of the global finance that takes advantage of individual consciousness' annihilation in the name of capitalism. Reduced to subjection, however, individuals feel as a unique opportunity to participate in the 'miracle' of technological progress and unbridled economic growth, a genuine system of "mass distraction" (Chiesa: 2013: 102).

THE INTERNET, SEARCH ENGINES AND THE SOCIAL NETWORKS

The increasing use of the 'World Wide Web' and the internet for various purposes, from professional communication to advertising, to social networking (information still holds a marginal role if compared with 'traditional' media as printed press and especially television and broadcasting: cf. Chiesa, 2013: 112–3) is even more problematic in terms of the filters it sets on communication and the high risks of manipulation. First of all, the idea of the free spreading of 'independent' information throughout the web is flawed by the inherent difficulty of assembling and correlating the enormous amount data through this technology (Hindon, 2009; Chiesa, 2013: 119–21), especially without the indisputable intermediation of search engines like Google which prioritise instead results according to criteria other than website content quality (e.g. the webpages popularity and according to private advertising contracts such as AdWords⁵⁴ or Google Plus one⁵⁵ clicks). Without search engines, in effect, websites are totally invisible, thus available only through cross-linking or direct URL query. Secondly, in the internet it is much harder to distinguish reliable sources of information from fake or 'improvised' ones, in particular when they spread within social networks like Twitter or Facebook (Morozov; 2011; 2013).

⁵³ A series of still images which, when shown on a screen, creates the illusion of moving images

⁵⁴ Google AdWords is Google's main advertising product and main source of revenue. In 2012, Google's total advertising revenues were 43,686 billion dollars (cf. <http://investor.google.com/financial/tables.html>, last retrieved on 20 June 2013).

⁵⁵ See <http://www.google.com/+learnmore/> (last retrieved on 20 June 2013).

In addition to that, privacy concerns for citizens have been brought to the fore in the last months. Born in the Pentagon as an American military infrastructure within the US Department of Defense, Arpanet is progenitor of what was to become today's global Internet. The Internet is a system of interconnected computer networks that serve several billion users worldwide, and consists of millions private and public networks, linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless and optical networking technologies composing various communication channels and distribution nodes that governments, universities and companies around the world try to keep under control in many ways (FT, 2010c). With the complicity of major corporations operating in the computer industry, including Google, Yahoo, Facebook and Twitter, in addition to Microsoft (which owns also Skype and Hotmail) and Apple, intelligence agencies listen to permanent and mobile channels and sorting hubs by monitoring data packets travelling on the physical infrastructure of the network (Forbes, 2013; Guardian, 2013c; 2013d; Repubblica, 2013m; RT, 2013), and even have the possibility to 'enter' cellular smartphones such as the Blackberry or the iPhone and other devices running the Google Android operating system in order to "to tap most sensitive data held on these smart phones, including contact lists, SMS traffic, notes and location information about where a user has been" (Spiegel, 2013d):

The United States' National Security Agency (NSA) intelligence-gathering operation is capable of accessing user data from smart phones from all leading manufacturers. Top-secret NSA documents that *Der Spiegel* has seen explicitly note that the NSA can tap into such information on Apple iPhones, BlackBerry devices and Google's Android mobile operating system. The documents state that it is possible for the NSA to tap most sensitive data held on these smart phones, including contact lists, SMS traffic, notes and location information about where a user has been. The documents also indicate that the NSA has set up specific working groups to deal with each operating system, with the goal of gaining secret access to the data held on the phones. In the internal documents, experts boast about successful access to iPhone data in instances where the NSA is able to infiltrate the computer a person uses to synchronize their iPhone. Mini-programs, so-called 'scripts', then enable additional access to at least 38 iPhone features.

On a daily basis, thousands of specialized companies acquire and analyze data related to all information that is exchanged between billions of people around the globe (for example, Facebook is the largest continent in the world by population), often aggregated thanks to semantic algorithms and other kinds of criteria, and then resell⁵⁶ them in the form of highly detailed profiles of public and private entities to governments, intelligence agencies, political parties and different lobbies of power. Social networks, in particular, make it possible and extremely easy to identify (through 'likes' or 'hashtags' for example)

⁵⁶ Or provide data on request, or in exchange for favors (being *power* of the most valuable object of bargaining). Sometimes, in fact, this data is used for purposes of political blackmail: "there are data that ends up being 'more sensitive than others', because politics and the black market of blackmail are hungry of that kind of data" (Repubblica, 2013i; own translation).

consumption habits, political orientations, personal aspirations, voting intentions, and even predict social tensions, and eventually to draw macroeconomic projections accordingly, for example the propensity to purchase, increases or decreases in aggregate demand or by productive sector, and thus forth. (Repubblica, 2013l; 2013n). These intelligence providers are actually able to get to know even if a country is entering recession or whether social classes are more or less likely to go on a general strike much longer in advance than governments, political parties or financial investors. As Giulietto Chiesa put forward (Chiesa, 2013: 117–8; own translation):

[Social networks] offer the illusion of participating in something collective, of voting for something useful, but exhaust their function in the fatal moment of the click, in which everyone feels sovereign. After all, why would social networks want that anyone gets up from the computer to perform any action? Their purpose – they have been created for this reason – is to keep all of us hooked to the computer as long as possible. This results in huge profits for those who own the network and its secrets. It is for Zuckerberg that we work in our spare time, while we believe that we are communicating between us and with the vast world of the Net. If television is the modern poison, [...] the ‘social’ Web is even subtler. It collects the diverse wishes of individual affirmation, distorts them and uses them for profit, sales of goods, to convey ideas useful to power or simply functional to the creation of disorder, where the disorder becomes useful to power. In an increasingly inhumane world, the primary need for communication is instead used instrumentally, giving everyone the impression of being able to communicate not only to himself, but to do so in the public square, *coram populo*. With Andy Warhol, who anticipated Facebook and Twitter, “everyone can be world-famous for 15 minutes”. It does not matter that no one or a hundred thousand people see you, which is exactly the same thing. With this magic tool in your cheap computer, surfing in broadband that you can now buy at a good price, you will have the illusion of being a star every night, at every hour of the day, all the time. A time that you think is ‘free’, but is actually no longer such when you offer it to the employment of a search engine.

In conclusion, the internet is not necessarily providing people with more freedom (Edward Snowden *docet*), conversely to what was announced since its inception, but it represents instead an incredibly powerful tool to understand how people think and what needs and expectations they have, and even predict or orientate their behaviour: a really dangerous weapon available to a small handful of private multinational companies and lobbies (Chiesa, 2013: 106). It appears necessary, in this perspective, to restore a public information service that should exclude or limit the participation of private corporations in the management mass media. Moreover, citizens should be protected from improper mediation of non-formal and informal learning, as it may allow manipulations or exert direct or indirect influence. Consequently, a regulation of the adult learning sector should include the systematic training of adult age cohorts of the population in addition to pre-school and school education, in order to develop critical thinking skills, social and civic competences.

5.5 Educating adults for the challenges of the new millennium

The challenges described thus far will create explosive situations that only a fully aware collective response from European citizens and their leaders will allow society as they know it to overcome. In fact, society will change considerably in the next years, and only a deeper understanding of global dynamics will prepare people to face the difficult times ahead. Because difficult times *will* come. Surging acceleration towards the breaking point does not allow to postpone to the next generation the emergency management: in this sense, adult education will have to play a key role to preserve democracy, for social cohesion, for the amalgam of social classes, winners and losers, but also for building a strong awareness to realize as quickly as possible not only in the EU, but all around the world through the *active participation* of all population cohorts. As anticipated above, Hal Beder (1990: 40) noted that true democracy requires the active participation on the part of *all* citizens and, “since the electorate are adults, it is the purpose of adult education to assist in informing and developing critical skills [...] although an informed, critical thinking citizenry is necessary for democracy, it is not sufficient: participation is also required, and this too was considered to be a purpose of adult education”. Likewise, Sheats, Jayne and Spence (1953: 21, quoted in Beder, 1990: 40) stated:

If democracy means government by the governed, we cannot delegate citizenship! Every individual component to pull his own load must reserve a spot in his life for direct participation in the management of his political and economic affairs, and it should be a major objective of adult education to assist adults to manage these affairs with competence.

The non-linearity of the current emergency, in fact, makes Europeans even more unprepared, accustomed to managing events marked by much longer and more dilated time, sometimes taking place through historical eras, in the course of centuries or millennia. The current crises have the unusual character of *exponentiality* and *non-linearity* (cf. par. 5.3 Non-linearity of the incoming geopolitical (dis)order). Today more than ever, adult and lifelong education has the chief responsibility to avoid disruptions that may undermine the very fundamentals of our society and lead to its disarticulation (Lindeman, 1926; Baker, 1936; Sheats et al., 1953; Elias & Merriam, 1980; Brookfield, 1984; 1987; 1990). The above-mentioned UN policy document *Agenda 21*, for example, dedicated a whole chapter to the promotion of education, public awareness and training (UN, 1992: Chapter 36) and emphasised the fundamental role that formal and non-formal education should play in this context (par. 36.3):

Education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. While basic education provides the underpinning for any

environmental and development education, the latter needs to be incorporated as an essential part of learning. Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making. To be effective, environment and development education should deal with the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic environment and human (which may include spiritual) development, should be integrated in all disciplines, and should employ formal and non-formal methods and effective means of communication.

In this sense, failing to acknowledge that the large majority of adults (and people in general) principally acquire knowledge in informal environments – and with different learning strategies than politicians, intellectuals or academics – would correspond to a fundamental distortion of the reality and of all measures meant to address it, including social and educational policy. The role of education cannot be that of creating cognitive filters, of changing the individuals' perception to the point of allowing those who control the media to create a 'virtual reality' in which they passively and unconditionally accept the laws of the international market and even contribute to its survival. In Marxian terms, and in line with Foucault's theorisation on the reproduction of power structures (strategic power, in his view, is exercised throughout the social body), according to Gramsci (1947), hegemony corresponds to the very base of the false consciousness in weaker social classes, which enables power actors and lobbies to exert political, cultural, and economic influence over weaker social classes (Rubenson, 1990: 56–7; own emphasis):

While Gramsci's writings refer to the schooling of children, the key to his theory of counterhegemonic education lies in the education of *adults*, especially workers; that is, Gramsci saw counterhegemonic education primarily as something imbricated with the political education of adults. It is with this realization that the distinctive nature of some forms of adult education starts to appear, and a base in social theory can be found to justify claims for the *uniqueness of adult education*.

The ultimate goal of adult education should be perhaps that of understanding, of putting together different levels of individual and collective knowledge: education and, more in general, culture (art, music, literature) should not be considered as a 'safe haven', something beautiful that people can draw on in order to avoid seeing the ugliness of the world. Properly, it should be education and culture that allow people to control – in the sense outlined by Konrad Lorenz (cf. paragraph 3.3.2.2 *The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* Recommendation) – primeval instincts, those that would make man incapable of living in society. The transparency of the modern, interconnected world of Facebook and the social networks, where people must "choose what they think is the best of themselves and present this to others as if it was the essence of what they are" (Chiesa, 2013: 119; own translation), like in a shop window or on television, does not allow individuals to express their weakness and limitation, but instead represses any sense of inadequacy to-

wards the increasingly complex societies in which they live. This may lead to the accumulation first and then the explosion of repressed instincts, even with the monstrous violence that is increasingly reported in the newspapers. Education and culture should serve not only as an escape, for people to take refuge in the past of novels or in the future of cinema, but also provide a way to confront those dark elements, to face the unconscious, and to deal with the extreme complexity of the reality of 21st century.

Adult education in the European Union – as much as in other areas of the planet – should ultimately insist on *transferable* skills and embrace life skills in its broader sense of the term, in order to tackle the unprecedented complexity of the globalised world. Above all, it should aim to create a strong awareness of the weak economic, financial, cultural and environmental system in which we live, and which is dangerously approaching the point of implosion: therefore, it is fundamental to preserve the basic structures of society by fostering the education system, and in particular:

- 1) an environmental-oriented cosmopolitan adult education system for a sustainable democratic citizenship, impregnated with the values of inclusiveness and ideals of a global citizenship (Maniscalco, 2003; 2008b);
- 2) the development of critical thinking skills at all ages, in order to understand the present challenges and get equipped to defend from the attacks of power lobbies and the ‘soft weapons’ they have devised, e.g. mass media and ICTs *in primis*;
- 3) formal and non-formal education systems aiming to develop *transferable* sets of skills and competences, as the ‘transferability potential’ should be taken into account at all the interconnected levels of policy implementation, evaluation and benchmarking, in order to *operationalise* learning and, consequently, maximise outcomes and policy impact;
- 4) informal adult learning paths, that should encompass a nationalised, inclusive, democratically mediated mass communication system of public utility to support the formation of knowledge as well as ideas, political opinions and values;
- 5) creativity, as an extension of lateral thinking, to elicit alternatives to the present crises (above discussed), but also to make innovation serve the purpose of contributing to progress, wealth and well-being while respecting the physical limits of the environment, imposed by sustainability, and the ethic limits of a healthy financial system on a global scale;
- 6) volunteering, inter-generational learning and other forms of NVAE, e.g. those related to active citizenship, social and civic participation, possibly with the involvement of the third sector.

As anticipated in paragraph 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning (p. 28), the *philosophies* of adult education are not just points of view that would be opportune to consider when devising adult education policies, but the “general principles

that *guide practice*" (Beder, 1990: 37). In this sense, there is little separation between an abstract and a concrete level, between an interpretation and its implications; on the contrary, having a clear idea of the philosophy underlying EU adult education policy is crucial in order not to just disperse resources, efforts and time by 'selling' the AE field in a perpetual 'policy auction' (with the economic policy agenda normally ruling it). In this respect, Apps (1985; cited in Beder, 1990: 37) argued that it is philosophy that should guide practice and demonstrated "how the application of philosophical inquiry could improve practice". Unfortunately, if the (ideologically infinite) economic growth of the European Union, its increasing competitiveness and the employability and productivity of its people represents the real philosophy guiding the adult education policies, practice will continue improving knowledge, skills and competences of European *workers* instead of *citizens* as such.

6. Conclusions

This doctoral dissertation has offered an analysis on how EU policy makers have re-oriented the policy – and the very notion – of adult education, from its originally more comprehensive paradigms (that included¹ liberal and popular education), established in the early EU policy discourse and documents of the first half of the Lisbon process (years 2000–2005), towards vocational learning (2007–2008), and skill/competence development (2008–2010). Like a comet, adult education (officially) entered the EU policy skyscape in 2006, first establishing itself as a distinct policy area from the galaxy of the dominant lifelong learning discourse; by the end of the full decade, however, it already disappeared within the key competence upgrading and ‘new skills for new jobs’ policy measures. In effect, applying a post-ontological approach (Radaelli, 2000; 2001) to analyse the Lisbon Strategy as a ‘governance architecture’ (Borrás & Radaelli, 2011a; 2011b), the EU policy on adult education and learning has shown to be preoccupied with the quest for (scientific) legitimacy in order to support the mainstream goal of the *economic growth through human capital development*, thus entailing a re-definition, re-orientation and transformation of this sector and policy area in Europe towards *vocational adult learning* (VAL) and work skills upgrading. This rhetoric falls uncontroversibly under the umbrella of the latest EU policy initiatives such as the *Key competences for lifelong learning* (2006), the *New Skills for New Jobs* strategy (since 2007), the *skills matching challenge* and *skills upgrading* for the workforce (formally, since 2009), with CEDEFOP’s key role as an epistemic source.

When investigating this new ‘skill strategy’ of the EU (perfectly in line with that of other IOs such as the OECD, which presents itself as a ‘stronger’ epistemic community than the EU agencies, relying on a larger number of MS and being able to provide policy answers to the new challenges brought about by globalisation), several limitations have been found in the *Key Competences* Recommendation and in other skill policy initiatives devised in order to attain the objectives set: first and foremost, they appear to pertain to the sphere of those policy statements preparing the ground for other actions, but not meant for direct implementation (see The non-legislative and post-regulatory nature of the OMC on page 64), as they are totally deprived of any implementing guidelines and evaluation tools, which are present, for example, in the EQF (cf. paragraph 3.3.2.2 The *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* Recommendation). The EU policy actions following the launch of the ‘key competences’ have stressed, in fact, the vocational dimension of E&T,

¹ At first, liberal and popular adult education traditions of the nordic countries, for example, were taken as a reference model by the EU and contributed considerably to boost the Lisbon objectives and targets (the 5th Lisbon benchmark on the participation of adults in lifelong learning paths; cf. Rubenson, 2007: 51–5; Rinne et al., 2007 and paragraphs 3.1.1 Statistical insights: *adult learner vs. older worker* and 3.1.3 From *adult education to vocational adult learning*).

including adult education, and focused on the formation of the 'new skills for new jobs' (NSNJ), the skills upgrading and competence development for the knowledge economy, applying a special emphasis on the contrasting of skill imbalances. In this sense, the 'information society' and the 'knowledge economy' theorisations have influenced considerably the selection of viable policy initiatives in the adult education sector.

Hence, the core objective of fostering the participation of adults in lifelong learning paths set by the mainstream policy of the Lisbon agenda radically (and rapidly) mutated, reflecting an underlying transformation of new policies that started since the Lisbon Council of the EU in 2000. Hence, the target population of the EU adult education policy appears to have shifted from *citizens* to *workers*, while the *competence development* model, borrowed from the human resources and corporate sector, has been firmly established as a compass for the new policy road maps. Contextually, the EU policy makers have polarised the concept of 'adult learner' with an increasingly dominant work-related meaning, also in response to the instances and needs of the stakeholders (Member States, IOs, partially the third sector). As a result, in the later EU (and OECD) policy outputs (years 2007–2010), the expression 'adult *learner*' overlaps or even, sometimes, coincides with that of 'adult *worker*'. Throughout chapters 3 and 4, this 'semantic diversion' has been explored using content analysis, and closer verification of this argument has been researched. Two aspects – one ethical and one more philosophical – related to this issue deserve, however, further reflection.

The first is related to the democratic grounds of such a connotation in the whole European educational policy: the benchmarking systems and QAE tools devised through the OMC reflect, ultimately, a top-down pressure by the EU upon national governments in order to gather participation and push adults (in addition to youngsters) into lifelong learning paths which are designed around the ideals and paradigms described in the above chapters. In other words, whereas the Lisbon policy positively connoted people of all ages involved in lifelong learning, according to the precepts of the 'ET 2010' and 'ET 2020' strategies, it simultaneously negatively connoted individuals who were outside those lifelong learning paths, with all the implications that might be recognised in this choice in terms of representation of the policy object and policy subject compelling. In the words of Kjell Rubenson (2007: 48), it could be affirmed that the latest developments in the EU adult education policy represent a step backwards from the ideals set by the first phase of lifelong education, which proposed personal development goals to be achieved by encouraging andragogical principles of *self-directed* learning for informed and advised people to 'make themselves' by critically building independent knowledge in place of a 'totalitarian' guidance for work skills development. Nowadays, all evidence shows a tendency to focus on manipulable adult learners who are, on the contrary, exhorted to learn throughout life, however 'being made' through the competences IOs and national gov-

ernments have devised for them, and with the participation requirements they have established for them (see par. 3.1.4 The evolution of the 'lifelong education and learning' concept in the policy debate). The role of *critical and lateral thinking*, fundamental requisite to develop an active citizenship, is not enough manifest even in the *Recommendation for the Key Competences* and in the future EU's 'skill strategy' (cf. Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map), as it is not accompanied by a learning approach truly centred on individuals, which means respectful of diversity and oriented to a *disruptively* creative potential. Most of all, in order to realise an educational system based on this principle, Western education systems should be reformed according to these paradigm, which is certainly not compatible with the homologation determined by an invasive standardisation of learning outcomes and intensive binary (true or false) forms of testing. Proposing a dichotomised lecture of the world in black *or* white is, in fact, an attempt to deny the extraordinary complexity of modernity, which should, on the contrary, be understood in its full amplitude and nuances, including reasons, ideals, causes and implications of the choices people make in increasingly interconnected systems that impact (and affect) each other with unprecedented rapidity and extent.

Another leitmotif that emerged throughout the analysis carried out in this study is, in effect, the establishment of the chief *learning* principle in the EU educational policy replacing, in the adult learning sector in particular, that of *education*. The new paradigm for adult learning contains, nevertheless, the illusionary paradox of the EU ventilating a low-level steering epistemology where individuals are placed in the centre of the E&T policy (EU, 2011), choosing each time the appropriate learning for their own interests, careers, personal development and well-being, while in reality the learning promoted through increased awareness of the need for this learning is narrowed between the precepts of the globalised knowledge economy and that that which is centrally targeted, administered and wisely orchestrated by means of soft governance. Consequently, if the EU devises a competence upgrading system for its citizens to get equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes considered to be necessary in order to face the challenges of the knowledge economy in which they live, and to adapt to the needs of the labour market, this *modus operandi* appears far from the signing of a 'learning contract' (Knowles, 1991) between people and policy-makers, who have different educational backgrounds, styles and paces of learning, and levels of preparation, as well as specific educational goals and needs, which is the meaning of Knowles' andragogical learning theory of 'learning becoming individualised' and learner-centred, especially if learners are adults, as this age cohort is particularly affected by these characteristics (see par. 1.2 Andragogy, adult education and lifelong learning). The gap between the new AEL policy orientations adopted by the EU and the non-vocational popular and liberal education traditions, which have witnessed the highest participation rates in the last decades, even before the launch of common Eu-

ropean policies in this sector, is in fact particularly evident in the nordic countries (Rinne et al., 2007; Rubenson, 2007; Heikkinen, 2007).

It has been shown that the premises that led the EU to increase the attention on the adult education field and strengthen the sector have evolved following the logic of the economic growth, subordinating to it doped employability strategies through the rhetoric of the NSNJ and ultimately putting the cosmopolitan education and 'humanistically' self-directed nature of adult learning (Elias & Merriam, 1980; Knowles, 1980) in a marginal place. A causal chain of this AE policy re-orientation by the EU has emerged throughout chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation: in effect, as a response to the ageing of European workforce and inspired by theories such as the human capital (Becker, 1964), the 'post-industrial' age (Bell, 1976), the 'information age' or 'society' (Bell, 1979; Castells, 1996; 1997; 1998; Stehr, 2001) and the 'knowledge society' (Stehr, 1994), the contents, purposes and provision modes in the adult education sector have been re-oriented in the EU policy since year 2005–2006, with the consequence of diverging its original and consolidated liberal and popular tradition towards more functional, work-driven forms of vocational adult learning in order to serve the growth and competitiveness of the EU economies, which are (and still largely are) considered to be knowledge-based. However, this latter assumption has been approached as a 'myth' that has been subsequently busted by several scholars (Falk, 1999; Brown et al., 2008; Chang, 2010), who argue that Europe is *not* a post-industrial knowledge-based economy: albeit productive processes are increasingly algorithm- and automation-based (which certainly includes the 'standardisation' of knowledge of the 'digital Taylorism') and more efficient thanks to technological advancements, the *manufacturing* industry is still the main source of GDP of European and Western countries in general. Globalisation is determining the increasing internationalisation of goods manufacturing, which involves an inevitable de-localisation towards better cost-effective economic areas, which determines a reduction of the jobs available in the EU (Lauder & Brown, 2012).

Moreover, all jobs that can be automated or replaced by technology are possibly disappearing from the labour market. Although the marginal productivity of European workers – apart from very few highly skilled (and highly paid) executives and managing directors – is not necessarily higher than that of non-European countries' (e.g. in the so-called 'BRICS': Brasil, Russia, India, China and South Africa): their significantly higher wages mostly depends, in effect, on labour market protectionism put in place by several governments in the EU (Chang, 2010: 30) through immigration control (from outside the EU), residence constraints and economic reliability requirements (in the case of mobility within the Schengen area), and by private employers (VALOA, 2012: 70), even regardless of the requirement of speaking the local language for the actual job (cf. paragraph 4.1 The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing?). Crucially, labour

market exclusivity inevitably determines higher costs for EU companies, corporations, governments and economies in general, which affects their overall competitiveness on a global scale. For this reason, if not for its fundamental importance from the point of view of the inter-cultural understanding and the building of a 'European citizenship' (Andreotti et al., 2012) even the growing importance granted in the EU policy initiatives to the mobility of learners promoted in the perspective of improving language skills, the full mobility of EU workers as means of production in a neo-liberal vision of the Union's free market (to which scholars such as Ha-Joon Chang, for example, oppose a lucid criticism showing how countries apply various forms of protectionism in trade and work market; cf. Chang, 2010: chapters 1, 3, 9 and 17) would appear decidedly disproportioned.

Furthermore, raising diploma inflation in Western societies is creating persistent situations of the overeducation, overskilling and overqualification of EU workers, which is not only supporting the paradox of the higher wages granted to the EU populations than those which should be awarded on the basis of the actual qualifications necessary to carry out the jobs they are going to have access to in the above-described labour market, but also entails side-effects such as lower productivity (with a resulting loss of economic output at the macro level), and the higher risk of deterioration of skills and competences due to the decline of underused cognitive abilities. The transformation of the EU policy on adult education in the sense of the skills and competence development for the new 'knowledge-based economy' jobs could just be a flaw, and it is creating false expectations in the individuals: only few people accessing the labour market will be able to use a full range of the KSC predicated as the minimum requirement for all workers in modern economies (Brown et al., 2001; Lauder & Brown, 2012: 164–5), still largely depending on and benefiting from infrastructures capitalised in time through "collective actions taken over generations" (Chang, 2010: 30) thus on more solid 'classic' economic fundamentals than most developing economies. It is not by chance that the EU countries with healthier economies like the German, the British and the Dutch have extraordinarily good public administration capacities (that reflects as well on the company's potential for 'accounting adaptation') and effective fiscal systems, comprised in a study by Bloomberg² in a 20% of factors influencing the success of a business start-up (Bloomberg, 2013). These qualities, especially if combined with political stability, rule of law (and, consequently, low levels of corruption and tax evasion) and low inflation rates, are providing strong support for economic businesses and inoculation against the economic downturns that are, on the contrary, affecting most of the other Western economies (cf. paragraph 4.1 The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing?).

² Full ranking available at http://images.businessweek.com/images/images/lede/12/sr/best_countries_for_business.pdf

The intensive monitoring and forecasting of skill imbalances in the European work market (overskilling, skill shortages or underutilisation and skill gaps or mismatches), is not taking into account important parameters of evaluation such as the *transferability* potential of the skills and competences across jobs and social spheres (as in the case of the social and civic competences: cf. par. 4.3 Adult education and the challenge of a European citizenship). Moreover, the discourse on the skill mismatches appears to be able to play only a marginal role in the employability challenge that the EU is facing in the context of the current economic downturn, where job *disappear* much more than change, also threatening European social cohesion. The restructuring and improvement of the EU economies should lie on the *creation* of new jobs, since the Eurozone suffers, first of all, of job losses due to the closing of enterprises because of the persistent reduction of domestic aggregate demand of goods and services (consequent to the crisis,³ in a vicious circle), but also because of the internationalisation of EU companies and the consequent transfer of productive processes to non-EU economic areas with lower cost of labour, the decreasing attractiveness to foreign businesses determined by the political, fiscal and administrative instability of several EU countries (not to mention additional costs of corruption and for the excessive bureaucracy), insufficient opportunities for corporations to invest in well-structured, highly productive and competitive economic clusters. The interconnectedness of the skill imbalances as a background for the adult education and training policy with a ventilated 'post-industrial' globalised economic policy of the 21st century has also been emphasised by Richard Desjardins and Kjell Rubenson in the above-mentioned OECD working document on the skill mismatch (OECD, 2011:5–6):

Even if some projections suggest that the supply of skills may outpace demand over the next decade leading to higher rates of overskilling, policy concerns now include an emphasis on the need for tackling the negative consequences of skill underutilization rather than just advocating for a need to scale back the supply of educated adults. Concerns about overeducation remain but are balanced by views that high levels of education are needed to meet the long run needs of the labour market and safeguard against rapid technical biased change and competition in the 21st century. A key concern is to ensure that work and organisational practices change in ways that make effective use of higher educated workers' skills so as to limit skill atrophy and wasted opportunities to increase productivity.

Education is a multi-faceted concept, a field of practice and a policy area, deeply rooted into science, pedagogical principles and cultural archetypes and values; yet, it also

³ In a report on the *Causes, Consequences and Responses of the Economic Crisis in Europe* (EC, 2009d: 36), the European Commission explained that while "in the early phases of the crisis, the bulk of job losses were concentrated in just a handful of Member States, largely as a result of pre-existing weaknesses as well as a larger exposure to the direct consequences of the shocks (e.g. adjustments in the financial sector and housing markets, relative exposure to international trade), [...] as the crisis subsequently put a widespread brake on domestic demand across the whole of the EU, at a time when external demand was already fading, employment has been falling in all Member States since the first quarter of 2008".

relies enormously on economic resources, administrative capacity and legal constraints, regulations and guidelines. The necessity to consider education *and* training, increasingly competing with or channeled in non-formal and informal learning paths, in a broader and fully interconnected system corresponds to the opportunity to be able to manage societal transformations avoiding the paradox of determining inconsistent patterns where efforts put in building good policies are undermined by the negative effects resulting from the neglecting or the omission of policy considered as low-priority because they appear too 'soft' or abstract therefore inefficacious. Indeed, solutions for governing modern nation-states are increasingly difficult to identify and to implement. In this context, the democratic horizon which seemed to be deep-rooted and ineradicable from Western societies and from their history is today degrading into oligarchies, and becoming preying ground for close groups of various natures and origins. Prompt and efficacious actions aimed to reform, as above discussed, the world's financial system and especially reform the EU's banking system (cf. par. 4.1 The artefact of a European knowledge economy: much ado about nothing?) should be the cornerstone and one of the priorities of the EU mainstream policy. Their failure of these reforms would affect the European economies, labour markets and even educational systems, which would experience further spending cuts and a considerable decrease in economic resources, compromising even the best policies in the field of E&T or AEL that might be adopted.

The economic crisis has shown the limits of modern capitalism based on exponential consumption of goods and fruition of services, and especially its incapability to generate healthy mechanisms of global regulation. Even economics has failed to understand and analyse qualitative aspects of human life and behaviour – people's passions, feelings, desperation, hope and fears – and the downturn that is affecting EU societies is largely related to this failure. Human progress has also been defined and dealt with in terms of constant technological advancement and limitless economic growth, and these parameters have been considered measurable through indicators such as GDP, unemployment rates and wage levels. Hence, non-economically measurable activities like volunteering and leisure have not been included in this count, with some revealing exceptions such as social networks: this 'free part' of human life has attracted the interest of economists, but for marketing purposes. The internet, email mapping, the semantic algorithms used in Google searches, the social networks created through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other IT tools become the most powerful source of industrial intelligence for the marketing of material and immaterial products, from goods to services, from information to values and ideals, and offered governments and private corporations a free tool for controlling the masses through intensive well-targeted means of persuasion which enable them to first understand the needs, wishes, moods and expectations of the

individuals on a global scale, in order to later manipulate them with an unprecedented precision.

It is necessary to clarify that this study does not represent a blind attempt to put forward the ideal of a simplistic ‘humanisation’ of the European adult skill formation and upgrading policy, setting skills for personal fulfilment and well-being first and, only subsidiarily, work skills second. Conversely, having provided evidence supporting Nick Adnett’s argument that “the emergence of new production technologies, the growth of the knowledge-driven economy and globalisation [...] have fundamentally changed the trade-off between the EU’s economic and social objectives” (Adnett, 2001: 355), it is the author’s belief that a broadened conceptualisation of *life skills*, understood as a comprehensive skill paradigm covering both *professional* and *personal* development, should lead the way of national and supranational educational policy for adult learners and lifelong learners in general, and – in line with the above mentioned declarations of the Council of Europe – peace, security and justice should be clearly set and promoted as preconditions for both economic and social development. The reason for such primacy is manifold, and the analysis conducted in this dissertation represents an effort to illustrate such multifaceted dimensions, including the arguments advanced on the returns of the investments in citizenship education and in the development of critical thinking skills combined with strong social and civic competence from both an economic point of view (as explained by Chang, 2010: chapter 5; see also par. 3.3.2.2 The *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* Recommendation), but also in the longer term, because of the benefits this kind of wide-range individual development can produce at the collective level, in a better represented – thus better governed – society, and consequently in a more efficient socio-economic system (cf. par. 5.1 The Global Economic Crisis and the resurrection of nationalism). Most of all, the development *life skills* – in the strict sense of the term – must be associated to an idea of acculturation that goes far beyond the promotion of ‘culture’ as privileged domain where to express a liberal, leisure time evasion, an idyllic place in which to escape and hide from the despicable reality and from the world’s horrors, or a perfumed flower basket to cover the bad smell of the wretched reality around. Culture should not be treated as an excuse, an utopia available to an élite in order to compensate for the inconsistencies of a life committed and loyal to the accumulation of capital and climb of the social ladder. Culture should instead provide people with instruments to understand the constraints and false needs that societies impose on them, to eventually get free from artificial struggles and leave other people’s crusades in order to engage in their authentic, own-life project.

Drawing on these premises, many observers have stressed the correlation existing between the promotion of a flawed idea of culture, as a distraction from the problems of societies and governance, the recent degeneration of community values and the rise of

radicalisations. There is indeed a link between the inter-dependence of nation-states in a globalised world and their ethnic closure. Globalisation entails not only economic unification and technological standardisation, but also socio-cultural homologation, which puts ethnic diversity and national unique identity at risk. The return to nation-states, to ethnocentric instances, to religion and to individuality is a direct consequence of this need to fight this abstraction, which is not compatible with the affirmation of the individual self and the right to its unicity. This should call for responsible choices to be made by the European populations on the basis of an increased understanding of the stake, their role in the wider picture, and the drive that striving for individual fulfilment and collective well-being can provide, which lie at the heart of a real and democratic citizenship. The lack of a coalesced and factual leadership in the European Union, the actual resurrection of national interests on the common goals and counterproductive hesitation showed by the MS in dealing with the economic crisis and in setting not only common goals but also widely shared strategies to attain them are all signs of an inadequate level of political maturity which *cannot* be understood without considering the political class as the result of European people's perceptions, expressed through their vote. Politics, however, cannot be approached independently from economy, but neither can it be approached regardless of demography, culture, the environment, or the protection of natural resources. There is a strong need for politicians and – *before* them – for people who choose their political class to apply a new way of thinking, a *networked* thinking first of all, as well as a *critical* thinking, allowing for the enablement the self-directedness that Knowles (1975) considered to be crucial in relation to adult learning. The specialisation and division of knowledge into disciplines, and the prioritisation of skills and competences have made people unable to seize global, fundamentally multidimensional problems, typical of a networked society as the current one. And the more problems become multidimensional, the more is difficult to deal with them. Likewise, as crises advance – environmental, economic, demographic – and become more complex, individuals (including political leaders) have less instruments to comprehend them, to decipher the dynamics that cause them (Morin & Ceruti, 2013). People will increasingly need to apply a *global* way of thinking, to connect the various elements of the modern complexity, and to understand the links and the intertwinements that can transform knowledge from a useless series of compartmentalised boxes to a full picture of information and truths to be interpreted.

In this kind of 'cognitive democracy', education can play a fundamental role, as it can contribute both to individuals' and to collective development, although it is still influenced, at the same time, by politics and its manifestations, often filtered and altered by the media. Political and ecological awareness developed through an *environmental, inclusive, cosmopolitan* education for a *sustainable* democratic citizenship is crucial for European

populations to tackle the global challenges in the short and in the long run, and EU countries should deploy not only the widest range and the highest quality of their education and training capacity. Education – *adult* education in particular – does not take place, however, only in formal environments: the new epistemologies that increasingly characterise the modern age are establishing alternative sources of information and for knowledge formation that include internet resources and social networking, integrating more traditional media such as newspapers and television. As opinions are created in much larger quantity and rapidly modified – voluntarily manipulated in the worst cases – with higher paces, political consensus is consequently becoming volatile. Education should no longer be considered as static as it was only a few decades ago and, most of all, cannot be split from the wider and more complex policy and political systems. Education policy targets can be set accurately and wisely; however, even when they are not influenced by other policy areas’ stronger interests (as the economic one, which encompasses crucial policy areas such as employability), they just risk to be nullified because of an excessive focus on conjunctural challenges.

The research methodology used in this study was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, with the purpose of identifying two reference concepts able to illustrate the hypothesised VAE vs. NVAE polarisation in the EU education policy, and interrelating them synchronically (thus creating a ‘sectorial’ coherent terminology, illustrated through concept maps) and diachronically (to show the concept formation and meaning evolution of the key terms). Contextually, an attempt was made to verify, through process tracing, in what ways and with which consequences the EU policy on adult education has shifted from a ‘humanistic’ dimension (in the sense described by Elias & Merriam, 1980) to a ‘capitalistic’, economic growth-driven paradigm in the reference timeframe, for example as a response to globalisation, to the ‘knowledge society’ discourse or to the pressure on MS. Moreover, while the term *education* has been shown to be often associated with the formal educational provision, comprising educational structures, nations, institutions and even physical places such as the classroom, the shift from *education* to *learning* in the recent adult education policy has provided not only a broadened conception of the adult learning environment, but also a more comprehensive understanding of the space in which policy-making takes place, intelligibly removing barriers and constraints typical of the national structures of education.

In addition, an evident need to increase and affirm the conceptual validity of the scientific and empirical data gathered by the European Union, and of the indicators used to monitor and orientate national policies, to provide legitimacy to the European policy-making, has appeared. The EU has resultantly been entrenched in a peculiar dimension, that of a ‘decentralised’ epistemic community. By displacing the quest for firstly *scientific*, and then *empirical*, legitimisation of its education policy to in-house bodies and agencies,

but also to external research contractors, or linking the policy's empirical backgrounds to other epistemic sources such as the OECD or UNESCO, the EU outsourced *de facto* the most sensitive and critical steps of the policy-making process as the problematisation of the agenda setting, subject to the MS's scrutiny and bargaining, presenting evidence to support policy issues as ineluctable developments of more 'objective' knowledge, and bypassing some obstacles set by the principle of subsidiarity. This encompassed, indeed, the infusion of this knowledge in the liturgy of the OMC and its policy tools, from peer learning activities including thematic conferences, working groups, clusters, restricted and focus groups of experts, and committees' agendas.

Europeanisation in the context of subsidiarity (which applies to the EU education policy), has been defined as a "process of domestic assimilation of EU policy and politics" (Radaelli, 2001: 110-1), hence in terms of *institutional isomorphism* – a 'tendency to become alike' – driven by the mimetic channels of the OMC, in quite a different understanding than common interpretations of this phenomenon as policy *convergence*, implementing *harmonisation* or even as an example of political *integration* (cf. paragraph 3.2 Limits and limitations of the EU's soft governance, the OMC and the Europeanisation of the AEL sector). Within the EU education policy area, in particular, Europeanisation can actually be triggered by the 'soft governance mechanism' of the OMC. This mode of governance has been described as governing 'by numbers' (Rose, 1991), governing 'by persuasion' (Noaksson & Jacobsson, 2003) or 'by blueprints' (Borrás & Radaelli, 2011b) and is denoted by combined phenomena of 'policy learning' and 'policy borrowing', otherwise policy 'emulation', based on "conscious copying, lesson-drawing or adaptation" (Bennett, 1991: 220). Nonetheless, other analogies as the 'policy contagion' and 'policy epidemic' coined by Benjamin Levin (1998) or the 'policy pandemic' of neo-liberal forms of accountability in education (theorised by Lesley Vidovich, 2009: 548-9), which would 'infect' education across the globe, have also been put forward, and express the criticisms on these framing mechanisms, since they would be reflecting the emergence of NPM practices.

Furthermore, it has been illustrated how the various actors involved in the OMC and in the EU's governance architecture have complementary but not equipollent roles, with the Council of the EU providing the *political* impulse to the policy-making process, adopting the Reports on the Lisbon objectives set through benchmarking, establishing Recommendations, Resolutions, Conclusions, Decisions and similar Community Method-like policy⁴ statements in E&T, also in tandem with the EP, which however keeps a rather marginal role. The EC, on the contrary, detains the steering power of the OMC: far from being a simple administrative executor of the EU policy, the EC is uncontroversially the

⁴ The Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union do not exclude the possibility to use policy outputs such as Directives and Recommendations in the field of E&T but, as they are deprived of their binding character, they cannot be considered as serving the Community Method.

principal holder of the 'drafting power' (policy initiative) in the areas where the EU holds exclusive policy competence, while in a subsidiarity regime it gathers the knowledge base for the policy-making to be legitimately initiated, coordinates the agenda-setting, and controls *de facto* much of the soft policy in E&T and AEL, including its legitimation and funding management that seeks to harmonise among the different DGs. Such an increased influence of the EU in policy areas that traditionally belonged to the national sovereignty through the OMC has produced a different kind of European convergence than the 'traditional' integration through the transfer of policy competences from the MS, which has shown to have far-reaching consequences. The first of which is that MS have developed reluctant attitudes towards QAE systems, indicators, benchmarking and especially rankings promoted and operated by the EU (so-called 'naming and shaming'), within or even outside the exercise of the OMC. This phenomenon is actually not isolated from the growing scepticism towards the EU institutions that coincided with the severe financial crisis that started in 2008, which first transmuted into the public debt crisis, and then started to strongly affect the EU economies. Moutsios noted that "policy-making, territoriality and sovereignty have been the most prominent features of the European nation-state [...] but they should not be considered eternal nor should the nation-state be regarded as a self-evident form of political organisation". EU countries have indeed "lost their exclusive authority to making and implementing policies within their national, bordered territories" since "the majority of European nation-states are now parts of a historically unprecedented political form of shared sovereignty, of a unique, complex, transnational entity, with a single economy, and with a set of powerful decision making institutions" (Moutsios, 2007: 15).

In this context, whilst the behavioural approach considering adult and continuing education as "essentially a human endeavour, a social practice of human interaction that depends significantly upon its practitioners' assumptions, values and experiences to shape practical actions" (Wilson & Hayes, 2000: 17) has lead the way for recent academic research, many reflections made in this dissertation allow an emphasis of what can be called the *zeitgeist* of the analysis of the EU policy for AEL (and in many other policy areas as well), a red thread that is also corroborated by the interviews carried out in this study: very often, the improvements of existing policy can be researched in former approaches and practices. One reason for this 'recurrent amnesia' and re-formulation of concepts often already stated elsewhere, at another time or almost simultaneously by other policy actors, is the objective difficulty of managing the increasing amount of capitalising data and information to serve as a knowledge base for the EU policy-making, combined with increased turnover of the people responsible for the strategic decisions (an underestimated 'side effect' of the job flexibility), not to mention the fragmentation of a typical panorama of multiple stakeholders. In this light, it is worth quoting, at some length, the

opening chapter of the book *The Meaning of Adult Education* written in 1926 by Eduard C. Lindeman (1926: 4–7):

From many quarters comes the call to a new kind of education with its initial assumption affirming that education is life – not merely preparation for an unknown kind of future living. Consequently all static concepts of education which relegate the learning process to the period of youth are abandoned. The whole of life is learning, therefore education can have no endings. This new venture is called adult education not because it is confined to adults but because adulthood, maturity, defines its limits. Secondly, education conceived as a process coterminous with life revolves about non-vocational ideals. In this world of specialists every one will of necessity learn to do his work, and if education of any variety can assist in this and in the further end of helping the worker to see the meaning of his labor, it will be education of a high order. But adult education more accurately defined begins where vocational education leaves off. Its purpose is to put meaning into the whole of life. [...] The resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience. If education is life, then life is also education. Too much of learning consists of vicarious substitution of someone else's experience and knowledge. Psychology is teaching us, however, that we learn what we do, and that therefore all genuine education will keep doing and thinking together. Authoritative teaching, examinations which preclude original thinking, rigid pedagogical formulae – all of these have no place in adult education.

It seems that most of the actual policy debate in the area of adult education were already present in Lindeman's work, where he stressed, nonetheless, the importance of the human dimension in non-vocational and liberal adult learning, the valorisation of tacit knowledge and informal learning, the focus on critical thinking skills and creativity instead of static and propositional knowledge, and criticised, at the same time, the 'life-long vocational learning' approach. Merricks (2001: 4–5) underlined this polarisation of the current discourse on adult education and learning around the two concepts of a liberal adult education and VET (own emphasis):

The extent to which adult education can be split in two illustrates one of the fundamental questions about adult education, and its history. Simply and crudely: what is its purpose? [...] Liberal adult education is related to education for citizenship. It is seen primarily as a way of learning how society works and how the individual fits that society. Its benefits tend not, *at least immediately*, to be economic and are to *both* the individual and the society. In contrast, vocational education, or training as it is usually described, is directly related to economic improvement, seen by the student as primarily for individual gain, although companies and the wider society can see more general benefits.

Two questions that should be further researched are: firstly, how much has adult education kept the 'independent' status – as both a policy area and field of practice – which it gained distinctly in the last century, and whether the evolution of the policy discourse reveals a cyclical regeneration due to contingency more than progression; secondly, how much time and effort has been made to advance and step forward in the AEL policy in the new millennium as a *response* (not just as a *reaction*) to the challenges

that are shaping a new world. Whereas adult education has traditionally been considered a 'minor sector' of the wider sphere of education policy and practice, demographic trends indicate that adults will shortly represent the biggest cohort of the European population. Consequently, the ways in which adult education and learning will be shaped by policy-makers will indeed enormously influence the EU citizens' responses to global challenges: namely, the environmental challenge, the economic challenge, and the political challenge.

The mirage of an unlimited economic growth resulted in the birth of the concept of the 'knowledge-based economy', which can only be achieved through the constant and possibly exponential – albeit purely ideological (i.e. neither theoretical⁵ nor practical) – development of ICTs. This 'policy buzz', which has dominated the scene of the decision-making over the past 10-20 years, hides enormous implications, but also prevents citizens and policy-makers from recognizing a necessity, as clear as it is urgent for the entire planet, to channel as much as possible the efforts of modern societies towards a truly *sustainable* growth. An alternative for Europe to prosper in a re-framed, sustainable socio-economic model does exist, provided that European citizens – young and adults, workers and unemployed – get equipped with *all* possible instruments to understand what future they face, what are the forces that are currently tearing the European continent apart and act consequently, on the basis of this new awareness that 'new skills for the new jobs' of the knowledge economy alone could certainly not provide. All evidence shows that non-formal, workplace learning provided by companies and informal learning (the dominant forms of adult learning in the EU) cannot guarantee, without government's mediation and coordination, the citizens' rights to receive impartial and objective information and acceptable conditions for an aware and democratic participation in society. Governments are strongly required to take the lead, and they *cannot* avoid such responsibility; policy-makers must protect citizens from the lack of business-driven, non-mediated information sources (e.g. implementing specific laws and regulations aimed to ensure the quality of the media provision and the citizens' privacy when using the internet) if they really want to avoid otherwise inevitable degenerations because strong power lobbies – even stronger than governments, like those supporting banks, but not stronger than politics – rule people to annihilation. Education must again find its fundamental and strategic role in defining a *sustainable* evolution for mankind.

The examinations presented in this dissertation offer a broad starting point for future research. It is grounded in the punctual examination of academic literature and a wide number of empirical studies combined with first-hand empirical data specifically collected for the structural content analysis. Moreover, the process tracing conducted of-

⁵ The laws of physics deny limitless growth in a finite system of resources (VO, 2012), which entails that nothing can be created (e.g. raw materials, energy resources and food) and nothing can be destroyed (e.g. production waste, from plastics – artificially created by man and not found in nature – to nuclear waste).

fers critical insights on the interrelationships between various stakeholders involved in the EU adult education policy-making. This indeed represents a novel, mixed approach that has thus far held a marginal role in the research on adult education and learning in Europe. This also calls for future research aimed to support the validity of this analytical framework. The terminological conceptualisation and the contextualisation of the factors influencing the EU adult education policy-making process proposed in this research have also – hopefully – paved the way for such studies. In the author’s opinion, the idea put forward by the EAEA in 2006 that “there is a gap in research on adult learning” because “the focus of research of relevant international institutes (as for example CEDEFOP, OECD, World Bank) is on job-related training” is still valid, and more emphasis on the importance of the intertwinement between adult education, active citizenship and social cohesion could be given.

Finally, apart from research focusing on the role of experts and research institutes which contribute to the EU policy-making, there seems to be a scarcity of specific studies on the phenomenon observed and partially described in the previous chapters, of the divergence between the EU policy outputs on adult education and the scientific evidence gathered by the EC during the legitimisation phase preceding or accompanying the policy-making process in this sector. In tandem with timely investigations of the reasons why scientific research is not directly translated into public policy, principally conducted in relation to early childhood education (Gormley, 2011), special education and curriculum implementation (Shavelson & Towne, 2002), comprehensive studies on the criteria used by the European Commission to select external sources of scientific knowledge and data – that Lawn and Segerholm (2011: 44) eloquently called the “new synapses” of an emerging European education “infrastructure” – could be another fruitful area for future research, and could lead to important insights for strengthening the connection between science and policy.

Appendix A – Abbreviations and Acronyms

AE	Adult Education
AET	Adult Education and Training
AEL	Adult Education and Learning
AL	Adult Learning
ALE	Adult and Lifelong Education
ALL	Adult and Lifelong Learning
ALWG	Adult Learning Working Group
APAL	Action Plan on Adult Learning
ALL	Adult Literacy and Life skills Survey
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
BIC	Bank for International Settlements
CCAL	Council Conclusions on Adult Learning
CEDEFOP	Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle
CEPS	Centre for European Policy Studies
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
CM	Community Method
COE	Council of Europe
CONFINTEA	Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
DG	Directorate-General
DTIB	Defence, Technological and Industrial Base
E&T	Education and Training
EAC	Directorate-General for Education and Culture
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ECCP	European Climate Change Programme
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECs	European Communities
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ECVET	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
EDF	European Development Fund
EE	Environmental Education
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EENEE	European Expert Network on the Economics of Education
EEP	European Education Policy
EES	European Education Space
EETA	European education and training area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EFSF	European Financial Stability Facility
EGAS	Expert Group on Adult Skills
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERF	European Research Forum
ESC	Economic and Social Committee
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESF	European Social Fund
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
ET or E&T	Education and training
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUI	European University Institute
EUMC	European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Communities
EWCS	European Working Conditions Survey
FACEPA	Federation of Cultural and Adult Education Association
FAFA	Financial Assistance Facility Agreement
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis

GNI	Gross National Income
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resources Development
IA	Impact Assessment
IAB	Impact Assessment Board
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
ICAE	International Council for Adult Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGA	Inter-governmental Agreement
IGC	Inter-governmental Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	International Organisation
IRDAC	Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISDA	International Swaps and Derivatives Association
IT	Information Technology
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KSA	Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
KSC	Knowledge, Skills and Competences
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LLP	Lifelong Learning Programme
LSE	London School of Economics
MEP	Member of the Parliament
MI	Multiple Intelligences
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NESSE	Network of Experts on Social Sciences in Education
NGO	Non-Governmental organisation
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NPM	New Public Management
NVAE	Non-vocational adult education
NVAL	Non-vocational adult learning
OMC	Open Method of Coordination

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
PIAAC	Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PM	Prime Minister
QA	Quality Assurance
QAE	Quality Assurance and Evaluation
R&D	Research and Development
RACE	Research and Development in Advanced Communication Technology for Europe
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
ROI	Return of Investment
SD	Sustainable Development
SCE	Second Chance Education
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategy
SEA	Single European Act
SEM	Single European Market
SGP	Stability and Growth Pact
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMPP	Secondary Market Purchase Program
SPP	Strategic Planning and Programming
PLA	Peer Learning Activity
PM	Prime Minister
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TEEC	Treaty establishing the European Economic Community
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TF	Task Force
TOI	Transfer of Innovation
TRAL	Thematic Review on Adult Learning
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education & Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (former United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
US	United States

USA	United States of America
VAE	Vocational adult education
VAL	Vocational adult learning
VET	Vocational education and training
WG	Working Group
WGIA	Working Group for the Impact Assessment of the LLL
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis

The corpus of documents that has been used for the content analysis – notably in section 3.1 Formation and transformation of key AE concepts in core EU education policy – comprises the following statements (in chronological order):

European Commission (including Eurostat)

- 1) Commission Staff Working Paper *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. SEC(2000)1832, 30 October 2000.
- 2) Report from the Commission *The concrete future objectives of education systems*. COM(2001)59 final, 31 January 2001.
- 3) Communication from the Commission *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*. COM(2001)678 final, 21 November 2001.
- 4) Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.
- 5) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004–2006*. COM(2003)449 final, 24 July 2003.
- 6) Interim evaluation report from the Commission on the results achieved and on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education *Socrates*. COM(2004)153 final, 8 March 2004.
- 7) Communication from the Commission – Green Paper *Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations*. COM(2005)94 final, 16 March 2005.
- 8) Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning presented by the Commission. COM(2005)548 final, 10 November 2005.
- 9) Commission Staff Working document *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in Education and Training*. Report 2006 based on indicators and benchmarks. SEC(2006)639, 16 May 2006.
- 10) Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament *Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems*. COM(2006)481 final, 8 September 2006.
- 11) Communication from the Commission on Adult learning *It is never too late to learn*. COM(2006)614 final, 23 October 2006.

- 12) Report from Eurostat: How skilled are Europeans in using computers and the Internet? *Statistics in focus*. 17, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006.
- 13) Communication from the Commission *A coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training*. COM(2007)61 final, 21 February 2007.
- 14) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: more and better jobs through flexibility and security*. COM(2007)359 final, 27 June 2007.
- 15) Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions *It is always a good time to learn: Action Plan on Adult learning*. COM(2007) 558 final, 27 September 2007.
- 16) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*. COM(2008)868 final, 16 December 2008.
- 17) Commission Staff Working document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*. SEC(2008)3058, 16 December 2008.
- 18) Report from Eurostat: Significant country differences in adult learning. *Statistics in focus: Population and Social Conditions*. 44, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009.
- 19) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment*. COM(2010)682 final, 23 November 2010.

European Parliament and Council of the EU

- 20) Decision N. 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 January 2000 establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education *Socrates*.
- 21) Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000.
- 22) Presidency Conclusions of the Göteborg European Council of 15 and 16 June 2001.
- 23) Presidency Conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002.
- 24) Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and training systems in Europe. 2002/C 142/01, 14 June 2002.

- 25) Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning. 2002/C 163/01, 9 July 2002.
- 26) Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 on *The promotion of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training*. 2003/C 13/02, 18 January 2003.
- 27) Directive N. 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information.
- 28) Decision N. 2317/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 December 2003 establishing a programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) – 2004 to 2008.
- 29) Decision N. 791/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 establishing a Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level and support specific activities in the field of education and training.
- 30) Decision N. 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass).
- 31) Draft Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe. 9286/04, 18 May 2004.
- 32) Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. 9600/04, 18 May 2004.
- 33) Directive N. 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.
- 34) Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion. 7294/06, 13 March 2006.
- 35) Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission *Modernising Education and Training: a Vital Contribution to Prosperity and Social Cohesion in Europe* on progress under the Education and Training 2010 work programme. 2006/C 79/01, 1 April 2006.
- 36) Decision N. 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning.
- 37) Recommendation N. 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.
- 38) Recommendation N. 2008/C 111/01 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
- 39) Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning. 2008/C 140/09.

- 40) Council Conclusions of 9 March 2009 on *on New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*. 2009/C 119/02.
- 41) Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on *A strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training 'ET 2020'*. 2009/C 119/02.
- 42) Recommendation N. 2009/C 155/02 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).
- 43) Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the *Education and Training 2010 work programme – Adoption of the report*. 5394/10, 18 January 2010.
- 44) Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on *Integration as a Driver for Development and Social Cohesion*. 9248/10, 4 May 2010.
- 45) Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the *Education and Training 2010 work programme*. 2010/C 117/01, 6 May 2010.

EU agencies (EACEA, CEDEFOP) and Eurydice

- 46) *Lifelong learning: citizens' views in close-up Findings from a dedicated Eurobarometer survey*. CEDEFOP, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.
- 47) *Continuity, consolidation and change. Towards a European era of vocational education and training*. CEDEFOP, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009.
- 48) *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*. CEDEFOP, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009.
- 49) *The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe*. Working Paper n. 8, CEDEFOP, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.
- 50) *New Skills for New Jobs. Policy initiatives in the field of education: Short overview of the current situation in Europe*. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), 2010. [Eurydice Network Series]
- 51) *The right skills for silver workers. An empirical analysis*. Research Paper n. 8, CEDEFOP, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.

Appendix C – Tables of data used for content analysis

Data table for the graph in Figure 8: Frequency distribution of two reference terms in core EU policy statements on AE.¹

Table 17: Frequency distribution of two reference terms in core EU policy statements on AE.

year	m. of relevant EU documents for AE	n. of instances of 'adult(s)'	n. of instances of 'worker(s)'
2000	3	35	9
2001	3	32	12
2002	5	10	9
2003	3	10	2
2004	6	51	22
2005	3	32	18
2006	8	156	23
2007	3	88	120
2008	4	46	80
2009	6	165	68
2010	7	100	352

Data table for Figure 10: Frequency distribution of the 'adult(s) learn(er/ers/ing)' concept's disaggregated indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

Table 18: Frequency distribution of the 'adult(s) learn(er/ers/ing)' concept's indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

year	adult(s) (learner/ers/ing)	andragog(y/ic)	life (long/wide)	citizen (s/ship)	liberal/popular education	second chance	social/ socio-
2000	35	0	213	39	0	0	115
2001	32	0	234	67	0	1	122
2002	10	0	100	38	0	0	125
2003	10	0	12	34	0	0	15
2004	51	0	382	212	0	1	155
2005	32	0	99	23	0	0	96
2006	156	0	333	59	0	2	281
2007	88	0	88	20	0	1	143
2008	46	0	59	15	0	2	89
2009	165	0	242	56	0	2	226
2010	100	0	190	51	1	3	303

¹ See Appendix B – Documents used for content analysis.

Data table for Figure 12: Frequency distribution of the '(older) worker(s)' concept's disaggregated indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

Table 19: Frequency distribution of the '(older) worker(s)' concept's indicator items in core EU policy documents on AE.

year	(older) worker(s)	job(s)	salar(y/ies) /wage(s)	(un)employ (ment/ability)	profession (s/al/als)	econom (y/ic/ics)	vocational education/VET
2000	9	27	1	139	24	102	19
2001	12	13	0	105	13	78	23
2002	9	23	8	92	19	119	74
2003	2	3	0	5	9	15	7
2004	22	126	2	136	58	58	44
2005	18	13	2	83	564	33	92
2006	23	25	5	145	42	111	114
2007	120	171	7	278	20	58	24
2008	80	243	41	334	41	141	64
2009	68	197	11	354	119	115	1102
2010	352	321	30	400	20	159	590

Data table for the Figure 9, Figure 11 and Figure 13: Contrastive superposition of the two reference concepts' aggregated indicator items frequency distribution in core EU policy documents on AE.

Table 20: Reference concepts' aggregated descriptor items frequency distribution in core EU policy documents on AE.

year	adult(s) learn(er/ers/ing) CM	(older) worker(s) CM
2000	402	321
2001	456	244
2002	273	344
2003	71	41
2004	801	446
2005	250	805
2006	831	465
2007	340	678
2008	211	944
2009	691	1966
2010	648	1872

Data table for the graph in Figure 14: Frequency distribution of combined indicator items related to ‘adult learner(s)’ vs. ‘older worker(s)’ in core EU policy documents on AE.

Table 21: Frequency distribution of combined indicator terms related to ‘adult learner(s)’ and to ‘older worker(s)’ in core EU policy documents on AE.

year	adult learner(s)	older worker(s)
2000	6	3
2001	0	4
2002	1	4
2003	0	0
2004	0	2
2005	2	9
2006	13	15
2007	5	17
2008	4	8
2009	4	18
2010	1	15

Data table for graph in Figure 15: Frequency distribution of indicator items related to the ‘adult education/learning’ definition in core EU policy documents on AE.

Table 22: Frequency distribution of indicator items related to the ‘adult education/learning’ definition in core EU policy documents on AE.

year	adult (education /learning)	second chance (education)	popular/liberal (education)	lifelong (education/learning)	vocational (education)/VET
2000	35	0	0	150	19
2001	32	1	0	204	23
2002	10	0	0	71	74
2003	10	0	0	4	7
2004	51	1	0	219	44
2005	32	0	0	40	92
2006	156	2	0	279	114
2007	88	1	0	73	24
2008	46	2	0	46	64
2009	165	2	0	209	1102
2010	100	3	1	148	590

Appendix D – List of interviews

European Parliament

INT1. Ms. Doris Pack, Member of the European Parliament.*

European Commission

INT2. Ms. Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.†

INT3. Mr. Ján Figel', former European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.‡

INT4. Mr. Johannes Laitenberger, Head of the Cabinet of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission.§

INT5. Ms. Marta Ferreira-Lourenco, former Head of Adult Education & Grundtvig Unit, DG Education and Culture.**

INT6. Mr. Alan Smith, former Grundtvig Coordinator and Deputy Head of Unit Adult Education & Grundtvig, DG Education and Culture.††

INT7. Civil servant, DG Education and Culture.

INT8. Civil servant, DG Education and Culture.

INT9. Project manager, DG Education and Culture.

INT10. Civil servant, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

CEDEFOP

INT11. Ms. Aviana Bulgarelli, former Director.‡‡

Eurofound

INT12. Mr. Juan Menéndez-Valdés, Director.§§

OECD

INT13. Mr. Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director and Special Advisor on Education.***

INT14. Dr. Barbara Ischinger, Director for Education.†††

INT15. Team leader, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI).

UNESCO

INT16. Mr. Adama Ouane, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).‡‡‡

INT17. Ms. Helen Keogh, consultant to UNESCO and the EU in the field of adult education.§§§§

INT18. Project manager, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).

EAEA

INT19. Ms. Gina Ebner, Secretary General.****

ICAE

INT20. Mr. Alan Tuckett, President of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).††††

Universities

INT21. Professor Martin Lawn, Centre of Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh.

INT22. Professor Howard Gardner, Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

INT23. Professor Karen Evans, Chair in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.

INT24. Professor Dušan Savićević, Member of the Serbian Academy of Education.##

INT25. Professor Hugh Lauder, Professor of Education and Political Economy at the University of Bath.

INT26. Professor Jennifer Ozga, Professor of the Sociology of Education at the University of Oxford.

INT27. Professor Agnès van Zanten, Director of research at Sciences Po/OSC, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris.

INT28. Dr. Sotiria Grek, Lecturer in Social Policy at the School of Social and Political Science of the University of Edinburgh.

* Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdL02YssGqA>.

† Cf. <http://www.europolitics.info/dossiers/eu-affairs-training/diversity-in-eu-studies-programmes-an-asset-not-a-problem-art292512-98.html>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeMiQAzcJ7I>, [408](http://we-mean-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

business.europa.eu/sites/default/files/we_mean_business_interview_online.pdf,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfkP8IE8_bw, and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjX6aS3hLWI>.

† Cf. http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/novdec08_voices.pdf, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/4419.aspx>.

§ Cf. <http://www.infonet-ae.eu/en/interviews/adult-learning-is-something-for-everybody-1167>.

** Available at <http://web28.aksb1.proadnet.de/content/view/98/>.

†† Cf. <http://www.infonet-ae.eu/en/interviews/lline-interview-with-mr-grundtvig-alan-smith-a-highly-successful-programme-1120>.

†† Cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vm17WzWQ_pU, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7h5M1Q5HDdE>,
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/articles/16741.aspx>, <http://www.eaea.org/news.php?k=-3&aid=15478&d=0>,
<http://www.infonet-ae.eu/en/interviews/cedefop-to-focus-more-on-adult-education-0427>.

§§ Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giw239cqsSQ>.

*** Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZPCIVGsn5o>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPUKWZuRSN0>,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60WB1nLQLpU>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04vghY8GzrA>.

††† Available at
http://www.dpu.dk/fileadmin/www.dpu.dk/educationalliancequarterly/vol2leadership/udgivelses_quarterly_2_0081208171531_education_alliance_quarterly_vol-2_p5-7.pdf.

††† Available at http://www.sdc-education.net/fr/Home/News/media/Adama_Ouane.pdf and
http://www.unesco.org/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_3F83CD008EEA02C00911E3BD2D61281E9B5F0000/filename/co_nfinteavi_interview_ouane_en.pdf.

§§§ Cf. <http://www.emya-mentoring.eu/component/flexicontent/items/item/144-questions-on-adult-education-in-europe-interview-to-helen-keogh.html>.

**** Cf. <http://www.infonet-ae.eu/en/interviews/interview-with-gina-ebner-eaea-secretary-general-1157>.

†††† Available at <http://www.infonet-ae.eu/en/interviews/adult-education-in-a-tuckett-way-make-an-escalator-going-the-right-way-1210>.

†††† Cf. *LLinE*, 4/2009.

Appendix E – Studies and reports on adult learning

Official list of internal and external studies and reports on adult learning¹

Internal studies and reports (Eurydice, ALWG, Eurostat, CEDEFOP):

- 2011: Final Report of the Adult Learning Working Group *Action Plan on Adult Learning 2007–2010*.
- 2011: Staff Working Paper SEC 2011(271) *Action Plan on Adult Learning: Achievements and results 2008–10*.
- 2010: Country reports on the Action Plan on Adult Learning
- 2010: Pre-study on the role of higher education institutions as providers of continuous professional learning and adult education. [DG EAC]
- 2009: Report on the *Basic Skills Provision for Adults* PLA.
- 2009: Report on the *Validation of non-formal and informal learning* PLA.
- 2009: Report on the *One Step Up* PLA.
- 2009: Report on the *Monitoring adult learning sector* PLA.
- 2008: Report on the *Adult literacy* PLA

External studies and reports (independent contractors):

- 2012: Final Report *Prison Education and Training in Europe*. [GHK]
- 2011: Final Report *Assessment of the impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on adult learning*. [Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI)]
- 2010: Full Report *Basic Skills Provision for Adults: Policy and Practice Guidelines*. [GHK]
- 2010: Final report *Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector*. [NRDC]
- 2010: Full Report *Key competences for adult learning professionals*. [Research voor Beleid]
- 2010: Enabling the low skilled to take their qualifications ‘one step up’ [Università degli Studi di Firenze]
- 2008: Full Report *ALPINE – Adult Learning Professions in Europe*. [Research voor Beleid]

¹ Last retrieved on 8 December 2012 from http://ec.europa.eu/education/adult/studies_en.htm.

Appendix F – EU skills policy Road Map

ROADMAP	
TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Rethinking Skills in Europe
TYPE OF INITIATIVE	CWP • Non-CWP • Implementing act/Delegated act
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	EAC A2; EMPL C.2
EXPECTED DATE OF ADOPTION	4 th quarter 2012
VERSION OF ROADMAP	No: 4 Last modification: Month/Year: Nov. 2011

This indicative roadmap is provided for information purposes only and is subject to change. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content and structure.

A. Context, problem definition
<p>(i) What is the political context of the initiative? (ii) How does it relate to past and possible future initiatives, and to other EU policies? (iii) What ex-post analysis of the existing policy has been carried out and what results are relevant for this initiative?</p>
<p>Skills issues and policies are major features in the Europe 2020 policy vision. The 'Agenda for new skills and jobs'¹ and 'Youth on the move' initiatives², as well as 'Innovation Union'³ and 'A Digital Agenda for Europe'⁴, underline the importance of skills and announce a series of actions related to that dimension. Coherently with this policy context, and building upon the actions already implemented, this Initiative will propose policy objectives and specific instruments addressing several challenges related to skills: raise the level of basic skills, promote transversal competences such as entrepreneurship, digital literacy and multilingual skills, and improve skills management and forecasting, also in connection with qualifications policies.</p> <p>Low levels of basic skills are a bottleneck for smart and inclusive growth, two of the priorities of Europe 2020. An adequate level of skills is a prerequisite to the further updating of skills, which is both an economic necessity, as low skilled occupations increasingly require additional competences for performing demanding, non-routine jobs, and an equity imperative, in order to counter increasing income polarisation on the labour market. Improving the level of basic skills is also a necessity for reaching the Europe 2020 education headline target of reducing early school leaving below 10% and increasing tertiary attainment over 40% by 2020.</p> <p>The importance of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy is not declining, on the contrary. The massive and growing impact of digital media in professional and daily life increases the importance of reading and writing, and starts to change their nature. However, they are not enough. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) stresses the importance of transversal competences such as entrepreneurship, digital competence and multilingualism.</p> <p>ET2020 specifically emphasises the importance of achieving the Barcelona objective to enable citizens to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue from a very early age and invites the Commission to develop proposals for a benchmark on language skills.</p> <p>The Europe 2020 flagship 'An Agenda for new skills and jobs (NSaJ): a European contribution towards full employment'⁵ proposes specific actions at EU level on better anticipating and matching of skills and labour market needs to be carried out in partnership with Member States, social partners, labour market and education institutions. The proposals set out in the Agenda include an EU Skills Panorama aiming to develop the responsiveness of education and training systems to labour market demands and to improve transparency and mobility on the labour market. It should be the starting point for a more coordinated effort to reduce skills gaps and shortages. It should feed into existing networks and working groups at European level to analyse shared challenges and potential common solutions.</p> <p>The Communication will deal with each challenge with a coherent perspective. Complementary staff working documents will be produced on the different issues.</p>

¹ COM(2010) 682 final
² COM(2010) 477 final
³ COM(2010) 546 final
⁴ COM(2010) 245 final/2
⁵ COM(2010) 682/3

What are the main problems which this initiative will address?

Insufficient progress in improving the provision of basic skills and in tackling inequalities

Low levels of **basic skills** have important individual costs, leading to forgone income over the lifetime of the individual, low self-esteem and stymied aspirations. At the same time, low levels of basic skills are a considerable hurdle to future learning. Low skilled Europeans are currently 7 times less likely to engage in learning than the rest of the population. Unfortunately, education systems in the EU Member States make slow and uneven progress in improving the provision of basic skills to students. By current trends the EU is not on track to reach the 2020 benchmark on basic skills reducing the share of 15-years olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science to less than 15% across Europe. Last decade some indicators follow even a negative trend, for ex. the share of low-achievers in reading increased from 21.3% in 2000 to 24.1% in 2006, while for mathematics the share rose from 20.2% to 24% (PISA surveys).

There is evidence of insufficient policy and pedagogical focus within Member States on the group of low achievers in basic skills. Teacher education and continuing professional development on the acquisition of basic skills is inadequate and insufficient, both at primary and at secondary level, as well as an insufficient focus on achieving an adequate level of basic skills for all across all levels of schooling. The coverage of basic skills programmes for adults is also inadequate, as is their attractiveness and accessibility, namely with insufficient recognition of prior learning and a lack of adult training on basic skills, particularly among the low skilled.

Fragmented implementation of entrepreneurship education

The development and implementation of **entrepreneurship education** across Europe is highly uneven, as shown by the 2008 survey on entrepreneurship in higher education and confirmed in the 2011 Budapest high level symposium on entrepreneurship education. Students' access to entrepreneurship education varies and is often determined at institution level. Although teachers and educators are important multipliers, there is among them a lack of understanding of what entrepreneurship education entails and how it can be taught.

Improving digital literacy

While access to **information and communication technology (ICT)** is improving considerably, the effective usage of ICT is still a major problem and the gap between unconfident and proficient ICT users is widening. Education has a unique role to combat it but is lagging behind, teachers and trainers are not trained in how to teach ICT and most of the ICT based learning happens in informal learning environments.

Educational systems are not open enough to innovative teaching through ICT

ICT has the potential to modernise learning and teaching as it allows supporting personalised tutoring, more collaborative learning and knowledge sharing, as well as it can contribute to acquire other competences such as learning-to-learn, initiative taking and creativity. However, ICT teacher education and professional development schemes have not been successful enough to ensure effective use by teachers.

Increasing demand for ICT professionals

Recent forecasts indicate the EU labour market will face a shortage of up to 384,000 IT practitioners by 2015. This gap is not only for the ICT sector in terms of highly advanced **ICT professionals** but for all sectors. Surveys and studies have shown that there is an 85% correlation between the level of e-skilled employees and the degree of competitiveness. A huge gap between supply and demand for ICT skilled practitioners not only in the pure ICT sector but in 90% of all the other sectors has been observed in the last few years. It is therefore important to take actions to improve the e-skills of its children, youngsters, teachers, practitioners, etc.

Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages among EU citizens:

The Barcelona objective – to enable citizens to communicate in two **languages** in addition to their mother tongue from a very early age – is far from being reached in the Member States despite the efforts deployed.

Considerable discrepancies exist between the range of languages and competences taught in the formal education systems, including in vocational education and training, and those that are requested today and will be requested in the future by the labour market.

Need to improve skills forecasting and matching

There is growing evidence on **skills mismatches** and labour market imbalances in Europe: increasing unemployment rates, unfulfilled job vacancies, and inadequate use of skills at work. Last research available (see in particular the report on Progress towards the Common European objectives in education and training) underlines that skill mismatch is a widespread phenomenon in Europe, with over-education incidence averaging around 30 % and with - at the same time - a substantial share of the population undereducated. Companies are facing more and more difficulties to recruit people with the right skills and imbalances on the labour market could be more serious in the future. Skill mismatch has negative consequences in terms of less satisfied workers, lower productivity at the enterprise level and may lead to a loss of competitiveness in general.

A strategic vision

Skill related challenges concern all Member States to varying degrees and national authorities have put in place national strategies and tools to try remedy this gap. At European level, a number of actions and instruments have been put in place. There is however at the moment, not a clear and shared vision on how these instruments interact with one another and how they contribute to the same goal, along with the national initiatives.

There is the need to provide a coherent narrative, preliminary to a **strategic and integrated governance** model, showing how the different European instruments in the field of education and employment fit within this model in particular: the European taxonomy on skills, competences and occupations (ESCO), the European Qualification Framework (EQF), Eures - European Job Mobility portal, Europass and its skills passport, and the EU Skills Panorama (under development and to be launched about when the Communication is released).

Who will be affected by it?

This initiative is intended to make the results of good practice and research evidence readily available to Member States on a comparable and transferable basis as well as to provide guidance and recommendations supporting policy making, therefore it will be addressed primarily to ministries responsible for education, training and employment and other relevant authorities. It will also significantly affect a wide range of stakeholders such as educational institutions, including vocational education and training, teacher education institutions, public employment services, employers, guidance centres, education and training providers as well as non-formal learning providers (NGO's, youth centres, etc.) and the industry (language industry, creative and cultural industry, ICT industry, publishing, etc.).

Students/trainees, workers and those seeking a job will benefit from improved matching between education and labour market policies which enable to find more easily a job and to adapt more rapidly to new working environments. Companies should also benefit from a more skilled labour force in tune with their needs

Finally, all citizens are potentially affected as transversal competences should be acquired by young people at the end of compulsory education, equipping them for adult life, particularly for working life, whilst forming a basis for further learning. Equally, these competences should also be acquired by adults throughout their lives, through a process of developing and updating skills. In particular, better competences in foreign languages allow citizens to take full advantage of living in the multicultural and multilingual European society and can improve employability and mobility on the labour market.

- (i) Is EU action justified on grounds of subsidiarity?
- (ii) Why can Member States not achieve the objectives of the proposed action sufficiently by themselves?
(Necessity Test)
- (iii) Can the EU achieve the objectives better? (Test of EU Value Added)

In education and training the EU has only supporting competences as defined by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Member States are responsible for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education systems. In employment, the EU has essentially the role of promoting collaboration between Member States and coordination between their employment policies towards the guidelines defined by the Council and the Member States. In particular, article 145 of the TFEU, says that "Member States and the Union shall [...] work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce and labour markets responsive to economic change [...]."

The challenges faced by Member States are often similar and many are in the process of designing or implementing policy measures to address them. No Member State is in a position to have a comprehensive overview of such measures, nor to investigate under which conditions they are effective and what elements may be transferable to other contexts. To seek to do so on a bilateral basis would be so inefficient as to be wholly impractical. Member States have therefore themselves asserted their need for closer working through the Open

Method of Coordination to develop more effective policy responses to these issues, and have asked for input from the Commission. The European Parliament and the Council adopted in 2006 a Recommendation on Key Competences. As for basic skills, new efforts are necessary in the context of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The purpose of the initiative will be to make the results of good practice and research evidence more readily available to Member States on a comparable and transferable basis, but it will not infringe their exclusive competence for the structure and content of their systems.

The initiative will address explicitly one of the most salient issues in skills policy, and will set out the main and most effective policy levers for achieving the ET 2020 objectives, based on experience across all Member States.

The EU can also add value by providing insights into how the EU and its Member States can respond to the challenges of skills mismatch and labour market policies. It can also facilitate mutual learning between countries on how to develop and implement such policies. Through instruments and actions such as the EU Skills Panorama, Europass, Eures, the European Qualifications Framework, the revision of the Directive on Professional qualifications, the Commission increases transparency on EU labour market and supports the mobility of workers and students. These actions take their full sense at European level as it refers to the European labour market as a whole. Similar actions could be/are done on a national level but by adding the European dimension, some of the skills gaps observed at national level could be solved by having a more fluid and mobile European labour market. The success of Europass and Eures show that common tools are used by citizens themselves. Specific issues need to be treated at European level to be effective. This is the case for example of migration policies and its potential support to meet skilled shortages.

The initiative will therefore provide an adequate response to the demand of the Member States to the Commission to intensify policy cooperation on skills and will provide focal points for further cooperation and policy development.

B. Objectives of the initiative

What are the main policy objectives?

To respond to the problems identified the following policy objectives are proposed:

For basic skills:

- To improve the level of basic skills across all age ranges in Europe and in particular to help Member States achieve the benchmark on basic skills (reducing the proportion of low achievers at the age of 15 from 20% to 15%).
- To help Member States in developing effective and efficient policies supporting higher achievement levels in basic skills. To support them in defining the main elements of a policy framework, outlines the most effective policies across Europe and provides political support for reform initiatives.
- To broaden the cooperation and exchange of experiences between Member States at an operational level.

For entrepreneurship, e-literacy and multilingualism:

- To support Member States in their efforts to accelerate the promotion and implementation of entrepreneurship education at all levels of education and training in a lifelong learning perspective.
- To foster Member States' exchanges of experience and good practices for entrepreneurship education at an operational level.
- To propose an European-wide approach and instruments supporting Member States in the integration of ICT and digital literacy into lifelong learning policies.
- To support Member States mainstreaming eLearning in national policies for the modernisation of education and training, including curricula development, assessment of learning outcomes and the professional development of teachers and trainers.
- To support developing of better targeted language education in order to reduce the barriers to mobility.

- To achieve a better match between the skills acquired through language teaching and the needs of the labour market.
- To propose a European language benchmark based on the results of the European Survey on Language Competence, so as to achieve the "mother tongue + 2" Barcelona objective, as requested by the Council.

For skills anticipation and management:

- To help citizens to record their skills through the EU Skills passport.
- To improve skills forecasting by establishing the EU Skills Panorama.
- To encourage collaboration and exchange of information on skills anticipation and matching.
- To improve transparency and mobility of workers in the Union.

Towards an integrated governance:

- To improve governance, communication and dissemination between the various stakeholders and partners stemming from the lack of communication between the worlds of education and work.
- To create stronger synergies between the various European instruments and tools.

Do the objectives imply developing EU policy in new areas?

No.

C. Options

- (i) What are the policy options being considered?
- (ii) What legislative or 'soft law' instruments could be considered?
- (iii) How do the options respect the proportionality principle?

The options outlined below reflect the possible quasi-legislative or soft-law instruments available in the field of education and training. All options have in common that they must respect the principle subsidiarity and so focus on informing and convincing Member States of the effectiveness and efficiency of particular policy approaches.

Option 1 (baseline option): Continue to cooperate with Member States within the existing OMC. Priorities have already been set under the Education and Training 2020 programme and the employment guidelines provide the objectives Member States should aim at when defining their employment policies. This allows for continuing cooperation with Member States within the existing OMC through the existing mutual learning programme, working groups, expert groups or organising seminars and conferences. Cooperation can be pursued separately on literacy and on mathematics and science, as well as on adult education issues, entrepreneurship, digital e-literacy, media literacy and multilingualism. There is no common synthesis or political endorsement of the policy messages at the level of the Commission. The language benchmark can be negotiated with the Council independently.

Option 2: Commission Communication and accompanying Staff Working Documents (SWD). This format allows key messages to be conveyed concisely for each of the main domains covered: basic skills, transversal competences and skills management and forecasting, while the main outcomes of the expert exchanges in different groups are summarised in three detailed supporting Staff Working Documents, one for each domain, which may be complemented by specific Policy Handbooks.

The Communication would (1) synthesise the main messages on how to improve the levels of basic skills across the skills areas (literacy, mathematics, sciences), identifying key factors common to all basic skills and thus strengthening the potential beneficial impact and (2) propose a set of new concrete actions to support Member States promoting the integration of ICT and digital literacy into lifelong learning policies (e.g. Creative Classrooms), the development of entrepreneurship education at all levels of education, and the definition of a new language benchmark based on the results of the European Survey on Language Competences, (3) provide new impetus to the implementation and further development of instruments and policy cooperation in skills management and forecast, such as the EU Skills Panorama, paving the way for an integrated governance at European level, (4) provide a basis for further collaboration and guides also policy development in Member States, including the better use of existing possibilities to support initiatives within EU funding programmes.

Option 3: Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation. In addition to the measures outlined in the baseline scenario and the greater authority conferred by Option 2, this option would add a more prescriptive dimension, including specific actions addressed by and to Member States, and a more formal reporting mechanism. Ideally, a Council Recommendation in this field would set out a unified policy framework, to be adopted by all Member States. However, wide existing differences in the situation and provision and even definition of skills across Member States would make a unified policy framework very complex. It would also require a higher level of detail, which could infringe on the exclusive prerogatives of Member States in the area of education and training.

D. Initial assessment of impacts

What are the benefits and costs of each of the policy options?

Option 1, the baseline option, has limited benefits. Without the support of a more powerful formal political instrument, the outcomes of expert work within the OMC would not receive the level of dissemination, nor have the same authority conferred by a legislative document. Moreover, the synergies between the existing processes at expert level would not be exploited adequately. This could create the risk of a lost investment in the OMC processes, without a clear political follow-up. The results of the experts work within the OMC would only be disseminated to a more limited audience, consisting of technical experts and decision-makers in national ministries, as well as key stakeholders.

A Commission Communication with SWD (**option 2**) is a cost-effective way to make the results of good practice and research evidence readily available to Member States on a comparable and transferable basis. The Communication will contribute to focusing national debate more closely on skills and offering a range of measures to tackle the issue that have proven both effective and transferable. It will bring forward a range of evidence-based policy mechanisms which can improve policy effectiveness and coherence at national or regional level. This option allows taking stock of expert work, allow the analysis to go a step further and propose policy objectives as regards:

- low achievement in basic skills;
- teaching and learning opportunities that foster entrepreneurship, e-literacy and multilingualism;
- the development of a strategic and integrated skill governance building on factual information and analyses .

Option 3 has the same advantages over the baseline scenario as those for option B, clearly being a more effective option than continuing the OMC processes as such. However, from an efficiency point of view it has relatively higher administrative costs, particularly if a reporting exercise is included beyond the data collection already planned, and is more likely to be challenged on subsidiarity grounds depending on the level of prescribed detail it would need to contain, while the benefits would not be higher than those provided by option 2. Option 3 presents the risk of going beyond what is needed to achieve the objectives set satisfactorily, by articulating an inevitably complex framework which is difficult to apply at national and regional level.

From the perspective of the principle of proportionality, option 2 appears to be the most appropriate. It provides a stronger dissemination than option A of key conclusions from the Open Method of Coordination and Expert Groups, without imposing further costs neither on the Union nor at national or regional/local level. It also provides a concrete answer to the explicit demands of the Council of Ministers. Compared to option 3, a Communication is also the simplest instrument possible, allowing the greatest scope to national decisions on how to reach the objectives enumerated above.

Could any or all of the options have significant impacts on (i) simplification, (ii) administrative burden and (iii) on relations with other countries, (iv) implementation arrangements? And (v) could any be difficult to transpose for certain Member States?

The policy objectives proposed can only be achieved through action by the Member States. However, in many cases it will be more a matter of reorganising and pooling the use of resources rather than allocating additional resources, as Member States have already engaged in relevant action. No specific transposition is needed.

As an example, the EU skills Panorama will imply a permanent collaboration between the European Commission and Member States to have access to their national forecasts and foresights. This should however be done in such a way that it will require limited burden for MS. Improving coordination and governance at European level could imply for Member States to appoint national representatives to take part in a limited number of meetings on an annual basis. No specific transposition is needed.

By bringing more coherence and synergies between the different instruments related to education and skills matching, it should simplify and clarify action in this field.
(i) Will an IA be carried out for this initiative and/or possible follow-up initiatives? (ii) When will the IA work start? (iii) When will you set up the IA Steering Group and how often will it meet? (iv) What DGs will be invited?
An impact assessment is not foreseen. This initiative reflects ongoing policies. Possible new actions proposed in the Communication do not require further impact assessment as they will be predominantly of non-legislative, consultative nature or related to the development of cooperation within existing OMC/other frameworks. Initiatives that might be included in the new "Erasmus for all" programme will have their impact evaluated within the relevant procedure foreseen for the entire programme. However, there is a need to involve several DGs in the preparation of this initiative as it has strong links with initiatives under their responsibility (EMPL, ENTR, INFSO, JUST, MARKT, etc). The involvement of those DGs may take place in the context of an inter-service group.
(i) Is any of options likely to have impacts on the EU budget above €5m? (ii) If so, will this IA serve also as an ex-ante evaluation, as required by the Financial regulation? If not, provide information about the timing of the ex-ante evaluation.
No impact on the budget above €5m

E. Evidence base, planning of further work and consultation

(i) What information and data are already available? Will existing impact assessment and evaluation work be used? (ii) What further information needs to be gathered, how will this be done (e.g. internally or by an external contractor), and by when? (iii) What is the timing for the procurement process & the contract for any external contracts that you are planning (e.g. for analytical studies, information gathering, etc.)? (iv) Is any particular communication or information activity foreseen? If so, what, and by when?
<i>Basic skills</i> Very rich and reliable cross-national data is already available on basic skills. The main data sources are large-scale international education surveys. In the area of basic skills, four such surveys are carried out regularly: The OECD PISA tests take place every 3 years and cover basic skills of 15 year olds in literacy, mathematics and science; the latest available data is from PISA 2009, which was published in late 2010. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement organises regularly the PIRLS and TIMSS cross-national surveys, covering the literacy competences of students in the 4th grade and the mathematics and science competences of students in the 4th and 8th grades. The latest data in both surveys is from 2006 and a new set of data from 2011 will be published in September 2012. Available cross-national adult skills surveys include the International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey. The latest data available dates from 1998. In 2011 the new PIAAC survey will be administered in a large number of EU Member States and the results will be published in 2013. Complementing the studies, data and reports mentioned in this section, the main information source will come from the work of the High Level Group of experts in the field of literacy, which is planned to deliver its report in mid-2012 and from the work of the Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, Science and Technology, which will finish its activities by mid-2012. Most of the current and future information gathering is therefore take place internally, with the help of national experts. A study on family literacy has been contracted by DG EAC in 2009 and has been finished in May 2011. A study on policy and practice guidelines on delivering basic skills for adults was published in November 2010. The Eurydice network has already completed in April 2011 a study on Teaching of reading in Europe. A Eurydice study on the teaching of mathematics in Europe will be completed in 2012.
<i>Transversal competences</i> The currently available data on the use and impact of ICT in education is focusing most on primary and secondary education. The available data on language competences are limited to input data (e.g. Eurydice information about language teaching in schools) and to public opinion survey results (Eurobarometer). The same applies for entrepreneurship education, where the current available information and data is quite comprehensive, but it is primarily focusing on input data in addition to being qualitative in nature. Furthermore, there is a lack of evaluation studies and ex-post impact assessments of entrepreneurship education policies. Overall, the data does not give a complete picture of the state of these transversal competences in the EU, but points to the need for action at European level and by the Member States.

European-wide data on the use of ICT at all levels of education and training as well as on the impact on the learning and teaching needs to be gathered. An upcoming EC survey across all MS will be finalised by mid 2012. EURYDICE is completing a study on the use of ICT in formal education systems and, internationally, some large scale surveys are underway which can back up these studies. A study on the identification of the descriptors relative to being digitally competent will be completed in 2012 by DG JRC (Institute for Prospective Technological Studies- IPTS). Other studies by IPTS which could provide valuable input: Learning 2.0 for learning communities; Creative learning and innovative teaching in the Member States; The future of learning with ICT; Assessment practices through ICT.

A DG EAC study under the GHK framework contract is being finalised that maps how ten Member States are measuring the impact of entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, EURYDICE will as part of the Question and Answer Forum for Member States this year include a number of questions on entrepreneurship education.

Accurate and up-to-date data on the outcomes of foreign language teaching systems are gathered through the first European Survey on Language Competences. The results of the survey will be available at the beginning of 2012.

The launch of a second round of the European Survey on Language Competences to be carried out in 2015-2016 will be presented by the Commission to the Council by the end of 2012. Results of the first round survey, as well as the Commission Communication, will be accompanied by visibility actions in the media.

Skills management

The 2008 Communication " New Skills for New Jobs" (NSNJ) has presented the situation on labour markets and the challenges Europe was facing in terms of skills imbalances and future needs. Several actions announced in the 2008 Communication have already been implemented They include studies or reports (Labour market monitor, green jobs), cooperation (mutual learning, international) and development of tools (ESCO). The expert group on NSNJ nominated by the Commission following the adoption of the NSNJ Communication submitted its independent recommendations to the Commission end of 2009. Based on this work the 2010 Communication "An agenda for new skills and jobs" outlined political priorities regarding the skills agenda with the objective to equip people with the right skills for employment.

Existing evaluation work will be used where available. This is the case for example for the feasibility to setup European sector councils on employment and skills and for the development of ESCO, based on a stakeholders' consultation (end 2010).

Assessment of existing instruments will be based on internal information.

The communication will also be based on an external evaluation, reviewing the results of the implementation, analyse the relevance of Europass in the new policy context (in particular the EQF and national qualifications frameworks, the proposal for a Recommendation on validation, the European skills, competence and occupations classification ESCO, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), and propose developments. It will among other analyse the reasons to develop the European skills passport. The evaluation of Europass and feasibility study of the Skills Passport will be available by 2012.

Concerning the EU Skills Panorama, the gathering of information will be performed by an external contractor between September 2011 and October 2012.

The analysis of information on skills needs and skills mismatches from various sources, including the national level, will be done by an external contractor (through a framework contract). The order form should be sent in September 2011 and first options for the Skills Panorama should be discussed beginning 2012. A first inter-service group meeting took place already on 10 May 2011 and two other meetings are foreseen in 2012. As part of the development of the EU Skills Panorama, a network of national anticipation bodies will be setup. A joint letter will be sent in September 2011 to the EMCO and Education Committees asking them to designate experts in anticipation of skills to participate in this network. It shall serve the purpose of exchange good practices on labour market tools to anticipate as well as form a advisory panel for the development of the EU Skills Panorama. . A first meeting of this network is foreseen by the end of 2011 and a second one in 2012, where interim results from the development of the Skills Panorama will be presented.

The Communication will be made public at the same time as the launch of the EU Skills Panorama and the Skills Passport.

Which stakeholders & experts have been or will be consulted, how, and at what stage?

Basic skills

The Communication will build on the final report of the High Level Group of experts in the field of literacy on the work carried out within the Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, Science and Technology and on the work of the Working Group on Adult Learning, all ongoing under the Education and Training 2020 programme. It will also build on previous work under the Education and Training 2010 programme in the Working Group on adult

learning and in the Cluster on mathematics, science and technology, as well as on the 2006 report of the Rocard Group, "Science Education Now". Besides relying on the expertise of the top experts members of the Group, the independent High Level Group on Literacy has decided to contact several other relevant experts and stakeholders in order to give their views on the literacy issue. Among these experts and stakeholders are pan-European foundations and networks of academic and policy experts, organisations representing the social aspects of literacy and the disadvantaged, key business stakeholders including media and publishers and social partners.

A number of consultations with national authorities will also feed into the drafting of the Communication: During the Belgian Presidency in 2010 a Ministerial seminar was organised on the theme of basic skills. A ministerial debate on how to increase the results of low achieving students is planned by the Polish Presidency in 2011. A consultation on basic skills with the Directors General on schools from the national ministries of education is planned for 2012. A stakeholders' meeting on schools education is planned in 2012, including a consultation on the topic of basic skills.

A pan-European conference on literacy is planned by the Cypriot Presidency in September 2012, which will feed in directly in the process of drafting the Communication.

Transversal competences

Cooperation with the Member States is pursued through the open method of coordination (OMC) within ET2020 strategic framework. Four thematic working groups, respectively on early language learning, on languages for employability, on entrepreneurship education and on 'ICT and education' will deliver reports with policy recommendations in 2011/2012.

A structured dialogue on multilingualism with civil society covering the Member States is ongoing through two stakeholder platforms: the civil society platform with educational and cultural organisations and the media and the business platform with social partners. Both platforms will deliver reports with policy recommendations in 2011.

The actions currently taken in the field of digital competence, entrepreneurship and multilingualism by the various Commission services are being mapped out and will be put together in a staff working paper that will constitute a framework for the new policy approach.

Skills management

Existing bodies and stakeholder groups will be consulted, in particular

- the Education Committee and EMCO
- Skillsnet experts and the new network of observatories on skills needs and mismatches
- ESCO Governing Board
- the network of the Heads of Public Employment Services
- Europass National Centres

Appendix G – Eurozone economic crisis Chronology

Following is a timeline of the European countries' public debt crisis since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty proposed by Bloomberg.¹

1991

Dec. 10: Maastricht Treaty agreed, setting up an 'irrevocable' monetary union without a central finance ministry or a mechanism to leave the euro.

1992

16 Sept: Europe's Exchange Rate Mechanism blown into disarray when the UK is forced to exit the currency regime, a precursor to monetary union. Billionaire George Soros reportedly makes \$1 billion selling the pound. Italy later exits and the Spanish peseta, Portuguese escudo and Irish punt are devalued.

1996

Dec. 13: In the absence of a euro finance ministry, EU leaders consent to a German-inspired 'Stability Pact' designed to impose financial penalties on countries that overstep deficit limits.

1998

March 14: Greece enters the ERM.

1999

Jan. 1: Euro established with 11 founding members.

2001

Jan. 1: Greece enters euro region. Greek 10-year bonds yield 5.36 percent, Spanish 10-year bonds 5.09 percent and Italian 10-year bonds 5.16 percent. Germany's 10-year bund yields 4.85 percent.

2003

Nov. 24–25: Germany and France override EU budget rules after saying they expect to exceed the EU's 3 percent deficit limit for a third year. Spain, Netherlands, Finland and Austria object.

2005

March 20: EU finance ministers bow to German pressure to relax deficit rules.

2008

Sept. 15: Lehman Brothers files for bankruptcy, triggering worldwide market panic.

¹ Available at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-09-05/greek-crisis-timeline-from-maastricht-treaty-to-ecb-bond-buying.html> (retrieved on 30 January 2013).

Sept. 30: Ireland guarantees all deposits and most debt liabilities of its banks. Irish 10-year bonds yields 4.590 percent.

2009

Jan 14: S&P cuts Greece to A- from A. The rating company cites the country's weakening finances as the global economy slowed. Greek 10-year bond yields rise to 5.43 percent the next day.

Oct. 4: George Papandreou leads Socialist Pasok Party to landslide victory in Greek elections, beating New Democracy by the widest margin since 1981 on pledges to boost spending and wages.

Oct. 20: New Greek Finance Minister Papaconstantinou says deficit will balloon to 12.5 percent of GDP in 2009, more than double the previous government's forecast. Yield on Greek 10-year bond 4.58 percent.

Oct. 26: Former head of Greek National Statistics Service says his body "holds no responsibility" for the revision of deficit figures since 2008.

Nov. 5: Papandreou announces first budget. The plan aims to trim the deficit to 9.4 percent GDP in 2010.

Dec. 16: S&P Cuts Greece to BBB+ from A-, three steps above junk.

2010

Jan. 14: Greece adopts three-year plan to bring the European Union's biggest budget deficit within the EU limit in 2012. The same day, ECB president Jean-Claude Trichet said Greece will not win any special treatment from the central bank.

Jan. 21: Papaconstantinou says Greece won't need a rescue package. The yield on Greece's 10-year bond reaches 6.248 percent, a euro-era high.

Jan. 29: EU Commissioner Joaquin Almunia says in Davos there is no 'Plan B' for Greece: "Greece will not default. In the euro area, default does not exist".

Feb. 2: Greek government announces austerity package to get deficit to 3 percent of GDP in 2012.

Feb. 11: EU leaders hold first emergency summit on Greece. EU agrees to take "determined and coordinated action" to protect financial stability of euro area, without giving further details.

Feb. 15: Papaconstantinou says "we are basically trying to change the course of the Titanic. People think we are in a terrible mess. And we are".

March 16: Euro-region finance ministers lay groundwork for making emergency loans available to aid Greece. S&P affirms Greece BBB+ rating and takes it off Creditwatch negative. Papaconstantinou says the EU needs a “loaded gun” to fend off speculators.

March 18: Papandreou calls on EU partners to come up with specific aid measures within a week to help Greece, hints he might seek support from IMF if EU partners don't act.

March 26: Head of Greek debt agency says rescue deal “wipes out the risk of default”.

April 8: Greece's 10-year bond yield reaches 7.4 percent, pushing the spread on German bunds to a euro-era high of 442 basis points.

April 12: Euro-area finance ministers agree to provide up to 30 billion euros of loans to Greece over the next year with the IMF agreeing to put up another 15 billion euros in funds.

April 21: Greece, facing 8.5 billion euros in bond redemptions the following month, begins talks with the EU, the ECB and the IMF on conditions tied to 45 billion-euro in aid.

April 22: The EU revises Greece's 2009 budget deficit to 13.6 percent of GDP, higher than the government's previous forecast of 12.9 percent. Ireland overtakes Greece as the EU nation with the largest deficit with its shortfall revised to 14.3 percent. Moody's cuts Greece one level to A3.

April 23: Papandreou asks EU for a 45 billion-euro bailout from the EU and IMF, calling it “a new Odyssey for Greece... but we know the road to Ithaca and have charted the waters”, he added, referring to the return of mythological hero Ulysses to his island home.

April 27: S&P becomes first rating company to cut Greece to junk, downgrades Portugal to A-.

May 2: Euro-region agrees on a 110 billion-euro rescue package for Greece. Greece agrees to 30 billion euros in austerity cuts over the next three years in exchange for the aid.

May 3: The ECB says it will indefinitely accept Greek collateral regardless of the country's credit rating.

May 5: Protests in Athens against the government's austerity plans turn violent and three people are killed when they become trapped in a bank set ablaze by demonstrators.

May 6: Greek Parliament approves deficit cuts. Greek 10-year yields reach 12 percent the next day.

May 7-8: European leaders agreed to set up an emergency fund to stem the sovereign crisis and said the workings of the financial backstop will be hammered out before the markets open May 10.

May 9-10: EU finance chiefs, in a 14-hour overnight session in Brussels, agree to set up a 750 billion-euro rescue mechanism for countries facing financial distress and the ECB said it will buy government and private debt in the biggest attempt yet to end the sovereign-debt crisis. The meeting gives birth to the European Financial Stability Facility, the region's temporary bailout mechanism, with initial capital of 440 billion euros.

May 18: Greece receives its first bailout loan for 14.5 billion euros, one day before 8.5 billion euros in bonds come due.

June 23: Greek 10-year bond yield closes above 10 percent for first time in euro's history.

June 14: Moody's cuts Greece to junk.

July 13: Greece returns to bond markets for first time since bailout, selling 1.62 billion euros of six-month bills.

Oct. 4: Greece announce draft budget plan to cut the deficit to 7 percent of GDP in 2011.

Nov. 28: EU agrees to a 85 billion-euro bailout for Ireland.

2011

Jan. 14: Fitch follows S&P and Moody's in cutting Greece to junk.

March 11: EU summit agrees to expand powers of EFSF to allow it to buy debt in primary markets and tap its full 440 billion euros in firepower. EU also reaches preliminary agreement to cut the rates on emergency loans to Greece by 100 basis points for first three years and extend maturities of the loans to 7.5 years.

April 6: Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates requests EU bailout.

April 15: Papandreou announces 76 billion euros of austerity measures, later increased to 78 billion euros, running through the end of 2015. The program pledged to raise 50 billion euros from state asset sales and aims to cut the budget deficit to 1 percent of GDP in 2015.

May 6: Finance ministers from Spain, France, Germany and Italy hold unannounced meeting in Luxembourg that prompt press reports that Greece will leave the euro. Trichet walks out, refusing to attend any meeting that discusses Greek haircuts. Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, who chairs finance ministers' meetings, says possible further aid for Greece was discussed.

May 9: S&P cuts Greece two levels to B from BB-, threatens further cuts.

May 13: EU publishes new debt and deficit forecasts and predicts that Ireland, Portugal, Greece will all have debt of more than their total GDP in 2011.

May 16: EU approves a 78 billion-euro bailout for Portugal.

May 17: European finance ministers for the first time float the idea of talks with bondholders to extend Greece's debt-repayment schedule.

May 24: Greece announces details on additional 6 billion euros of 2011 budget cuts and a plan to speed asset sales. ECB governing council member Christian Noyer says Greek restructuring would be "horror story".

May 27: Greek Cabinet passes another 6 billion euros in austerity measures and gives some details on planned assets sales.

June 7: EU Monetary Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn says June may be the "beginning of the end" of the crisis.

June 13: S&P Cuts Greece to CCC, the lowest rating for any country it reviews in the world.

June 15: Papandreou announces Cabinet reshuffle and confidence vote.

June 17: Papandreou appoints Defense Minister Evangelos Venizelos to replace Papaconstantinou as finance minister.

June 22: Papandreou survives confidence vote in his government.

June 30: Greek lawmakers approve the 78 billion-euro austerity plan after two votes in two days marred by violent protests outside parliament.

July 21: EU summit passes second bailout package for Greece and agrees to expand the powers of the EFSF. Bankers agree to take losses of 21 percent on the net present value of their Greek bond holdings.

Aug. 16: Finland and Greece strike agreement on collateral to guarantee bailout contributions. The agreement was opposed by other euro members such as Austria and the Netherlands and had to be re-negotiated.

Sept. 2: Inspectors from the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund suspend Greece's fifth review after finding delays in the implementation of the medium-term fiscal plan and structural economic reforms. Spain adds budget-discipline amendment to constitution, the second change in its 30-year history.

Sept. 11: Papandreou approves new emergency measures to plug a gap in the budget for 2011.

Oct. 2: Greece's government approves the draft budget for 2012, which targets a deficit of 8.5 percent of gross domestic product, and announces it will miss revised deficit target for 2011.

Oct. 11: Troika releases statement on fifth review of Greek economy and suggests the sixth tranche of the bailout payments worth 8 billion-euro will be paid.

Oct. 21: Papandreou wins parliamentary approval of latest austerity bill, which includes wage and pension cuts and plans to lay-off 30,000 state workers. His majority falls by one lawmaker to 153 after he expels Louka Katseli for voting against one of the articles. EU, ECB, IMF issue a draft sustainability report on Greece saying debt dynamics remain “worrying”.

Oct. 23: European leaders say a summit on the euro crisis will not produce decisions and set another meeting for Oct. 26. Greek 10-year yields trade at 25 percent.

Oct. 26-27: EU leaders hold 14th crisis summit in 21 months. After more than 10 hours of talks, leaders agreed to leverage the EU’s temporary bailout fund to boost its firepower to 1 trillion euros, force private investors to accept a 50 percent haircut on Greek bonds, push European banks to raise 106 billion euros in new capital, and extend a new aid package worth 130 billion euros for Greece.

Oct. 31: Papandreou stuns EU politicians and Greek lawmakers by calling a referendum on the second bailout agreement. MF Global Holdings Inc. declares bankruptcy after bets on sovereign debt backfire.

Nov. 1: Stocks and bonds plunged worldwide on concern an unsuccessful referendum will push Greece into a disorderly default. The yield on Greece’s two-year bond rises to a record 84.7 percent. Mario Draghi succeeds Trichet as ECB president.

Nov. 2: European leaders cut off aid payments to Greece and say Greece must decide soon whether it wants to stay in the euro. The ultimatum is at odds with the Maastricht Treaty’s assertion that monetary union is ‘irrevocable’

Nov. 3: Papandreou backs down on euro referendum.

Nov. 6: Papandreou agrees to step aside to make way for a government of national unity.

Nov. 11: Lucas Papademos, a former ECB vice president is sworn in as prime minister of a Greek unity government.

Dec. 5: S&P puts Germany, France and 13 other euro-area nations on review for a downgrade.

Dec. 8: The ECB cuts its benchmark rate back to a record low of 1 percent and offers banks unlimited cash for three years. It also eases collateral rules.

Dec. 9: Leaders complete all-night talks in Brussels on a ‘fiscal compact’, sparking a split with the UK. Euro governments add 200 billion euros to their crisis-fighting war chest,

tighten rules to curb future debts and speed the start of a 500 billion-euro permanent rescue fund to next year. Draghi welcomes the decisions, without signaling any willingness to step up bond purchases. Greek 10-year bond yield at 32 percent. Italian 10-year bond yield at 6.47 percent. Spanish 10-year bond yield at 5.77 percent. German 10-year bond yield at 2.07 percent.

2012

Feb. 17: The ECB swaps Greek bonds purchased under the SMP for new ones to ensure it isn't forced to take losses in a debt restructuring.

Feb. 21: Euro-area finance ministers reached agreement on a second bailout package for Greece. The deal includes a 53.5 percent writedown for investors in Greek bonds.

Feb. 25: Greece formally asked investors to exchange their holdings of government debt for new securities in the biggest sovereign restructuring in history. The bonds subject to the invitation had a total face value of about 206 billion euros.

Feb. 27: Greek credit rating cut to "selective default" by Standard & Poor's.

March 1: Greece's parliament completes vote on cuts needed for bailout.

March 2: EU leaders declare end of financial crisis, turn attention to growth.

March 9: Greece reaches target in debt restructuring with 95.7 percent participation rate among investors.

April 23: Dutch government falls on disagreements over austerity measures within ruling coalition.

May 2: Standard & Poor's removes selective default, rates Greece CCC.

May 6: Greece holds elections with anti-bailout party Syriza finishing a surprise second to New Democracy's Antonis Samaras. Francois Hollande elected as French president.

May 10: Spain partly nationalizes Bankia SA.

May 15: Greek coalition talks fail, leading to new elections.

June 9: Spain requests 100 billion euros of EU loans to prop up its ailing banks.

June 17: New Democracy party led by Antonis Samaras wins Greek elections, falling short of majority in parliament.

June 20: Samaras forms coalition government with opposition Pasok party, sworn in as prime minister.

June 25: Cyprus requests EU bailout.

June 28-29: EU leaders agree to ease terms of Spanish bank loans and pave the way for bond buying by the region's rescue funds.

July 4: Hollande announces budget plan that includes 7.2 billion euros of tax increases.

July 5: Ireland sells Treasury bills for first time in almost 22 months.

July 26: Draghi says ECB will do "whatever it takes" to protect the euro, triggering a rally in stocks and bonds. Ireland returns to bond market for first time in 22 months.

Aug. 2: Draghi signals ECB prepared to move forcefully into bond markets in tandem with Europe's rescue funds and would concentrate on buying shorter-term debt.

Aug. 3: Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy says he may request EU bond buying if it is in Spain's interests.

Sept. 1: Spain's bank rescue fund to inject as much as 5 billion euros into Bankia group after nationalized bank reports 4.5 billion-euro first-half loss.

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