

Editorial

We are glad to present you the sixth Newsletter of the project YOUNG_ADULLLT with which we want to keep you informed about current events and outcomes of our project.

Currently, many young adults face difficulties in their transition from schooling to working life and a large number of them leave formal education either too early or lacking the necessary and adequate qualifications and skills to enter the labour market successfully. Against this background, YOUNG_ADULLLT focuses on Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies across Europe as they are aimed at creating economic growth and social inclusion especially for those groups in vulnerable positions. In particular, the main objective of the project is to yield insights into their implications as well as intended and unintended effects on young adult life courses.



You can find more information about our consortium, work plan and progress, expected impact and current news at the project's website: www.young-adultt.eu.

Email: info@young-adulllt.eu
Website: www.young-adulllt.eu

1. Project News	3
Comparative analysis, reporting, and policy phase.....	3
Current activities	5
2. “Life Project Dreams” – Listening and hearing young peoples’ voices	6
3. Communicating Research – Planning, Challenges and Lessons from Policy Roundtables .	12
4. Next steps.....	16

1. Project News

Comparative analysis, reporting, and policy phase



With the project entering its final year this winter, the fieldwork has been completed and the comparative analysis, reporting, and policy phase has started (see Figure 1 below).

The project's third phase was completed by two sub-studies including a comparative analysis of findings from

previous Work Packages (WP 8) and the use of comparative data to prepare and implement Policy Roundtables on national and regional levels (WP 9).

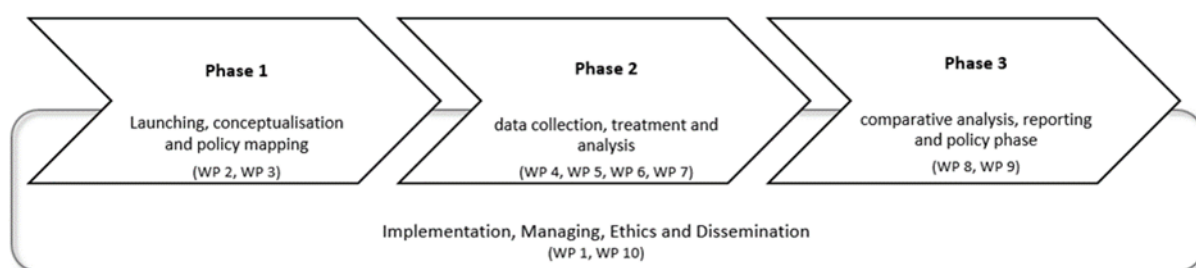


Figure 1. Phases of the research process in *YOUNG_ADULLLT*

In following, we want to inform you on the current work in the third phase of the projects and present you the preliminary results.

With regard to the Work Package 8, a considerable amount of work was devoted to completing the *Comparative Analysis Report*. In this Report we have compiled and analysed the information from previous sub-studies of the project and conducted cross-national and cross-case analyses that focused on the impact LLL policies have on the life courses of young adults. The aim was to analyse structural relationships, functional matching(s) and specific forms of embedding of LLL policies in regional and local contexts from three theoretical viewpoints – Life Course Research perspective, Governance perspective, and Cultural Political Economy perspective. From these viewpoints we have especially considered the role of young adults in designing and implementing LLL policies. At the same time, we have considered local and

regional contexts and their specificities and the embeddedness of LLL policies in these structural relationships. From a methodological standpoint, we have provided comparative analyses with a particular focus on comparing realities, visions and functionalities/relationships. Such contextualized comparison has yielded important knowledge on in the realm of local contexts. Comparing realities has offered us a thorough approach used to understand the local and regional conditions and settings of the participating countries. Comparing visions has helped us to contrast varying perspectives of actors involved in policymaking, such as policy implementers, businesses, young adults, and other stakeholders. Finally, comparing functionalities/relationships was a useful tool in studying the more complex relationships that traverse policymaking on site and develop over time in manifold forms.

With regard to the Work Package 9, the main activity was invested in organising Policy Roundtables across all Functional Regions and, subsequently, producing National policy briefs, which laid ground for the conclusive European policy brief. In this way we have continued our communication and dissemination tactics by actively engaging policy makers into the debate on lifelong learning policymaking and presenting them the comparative data collected in previous Work Packages.



In this project's phase we have prepared and conducted 20 Policy Roundtables. Among the nine member countries, each of the 18 participating Functional Regions held one Policy Roundtable meeting (except for Girona and Granada where two meetings were held). The Policy Roundtables took place between May and July 2018. In average, each meeting lasted between two and four and a half hours.

Policy Roundtables have been attended by diverse participants with varying backgrounds, ranging from student council members through teachers and practitioners to policy makers. Out of the 414 guests and organisations invited, there was a total of 206 participants who attended the Policy Roundtables, thus resulting in a 50% turnout rate. After conducting the Policy

Roundtables, each national team completed a respective National policy brief that has documented the contents of the meetings and the main messages put across during the debates.

Current activities

The European Policy Roundtable and the Fifth Consortium Meeting of YOUNG_ADULLLT took place in Brussels, Belgium on June 13-15, 2018.

During the European Policy Roundtable, the YOUNG_ADULLLT and ENLIVEN projects have presented and discussed key concepts and research perspectives regarding lifelong learning policies. This European Policy Roundtable meeting focused on two main questions: What kind of LLL/adult education policies are available to young adults across Europe, especially to those in vulnerable positions? What can be said about the participation of young adults in those policies? These questions were in turn discussed with renowned European stakeholders and decision-makers.



In answering these question, the YOUNG_ADULLLT project's participants have informed about the central findings from the mapping, review and analysis phase of LLL policies across Europe. The ENLIVEN project's discussants have in turn presented overviews about the available education and training provisions for young adults on the researched sites. Afterwards, a discussion was held concerning the active participation and involvement of young adults in the LLL policies' design and implementation. Since these policies have an impact on the daily lives on young adults, the discussion was steered towards the discrepancies between LLL policies' construction of target groups and the expectations and possibilities of young adults.

During the Fifth Consortium Meeting of YOUNG_ADULLLT, the members of the Consortium have assessed the current state of affairs and progress of the project. In this respect, every Lead Partner has presented the preliminary results of their Work Packages as well as current and upcoming dissemination and publication activities. Much attention was paid to the completion of the project's eight Work Package and the results that the sub-studies have provided for the final comparative analyses. Adding to this, the Consortium members have reflected on the arrangement and organisation of the Final Conference to be held next year in Lisbon, Portugal.

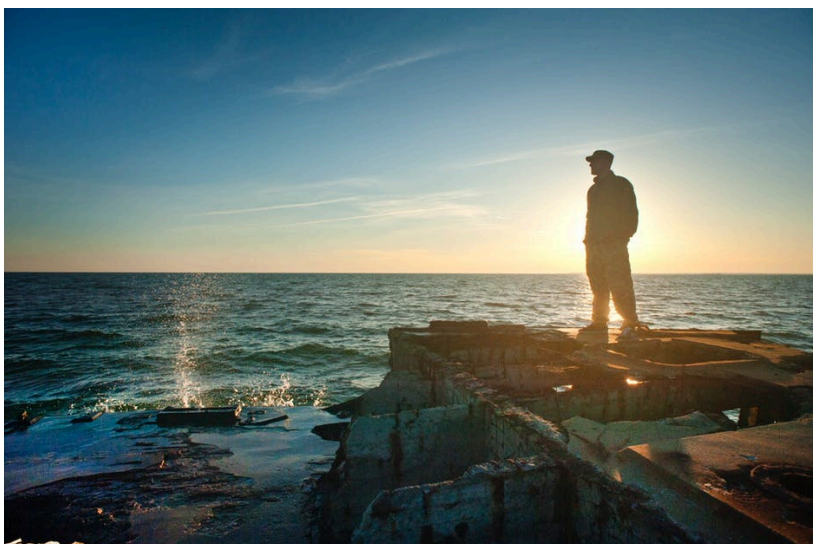
The project's homepage has been upgraded by adding a new feature entitled "Policy Mapping".

This feature provides exclusive information from the policy mapping, review and analysis phase. Here, the visitors have the possibility to find detailed description of selected LLL policies, which show manifold ways of dealing with similar issues across European regions. These policy profiles provide condensed and concise descriptions of the policies examined on each site and are structured along four main sections, presenting, *first*, the goals of the YOUNG_ADULLLT project, portraying, *second*, the particular regional and national challenges and the main targeted groups (What is the policy about?), *third*, giving account of the overall objectives of the policies (What is it aiming at?), and, *fourth*, describing their modes of working (How does it work?).

2. "Life Project Dreams" – Listening and hearing young peoples' voices

Borislava Petkova, University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

In present day European societies, it is very difficult for a young person to get access to the labor market. In the context of a deep and persistent economic crisis, an open labor market, increasingly frequent political and social collisions, massive higher education, unsustainable and often changing educational policies in different countries, increased market competition, the invasion of more and more emigration flows workers, agreeing to a lower pay for labor, divergence in demand and supply of specialists from the education market in the labor market, an inconsistent or broken biography and professional line result in young people who are in a situation of constant, or at least more frequent, retraining in attempts to match the ever-changing needs of the labor market. This constant necessity to be alert is not only exhausting in an emotional sense, but also forcing young people to often change their plans for the future.



European Union (EU) Life Long Learning policies (LLL) policies target young people up to 29 years of age in order to facilitate the transition from formal education to employment. The program provides participants the opportunity not only to acquire new

knowledge and skills, it also becomes a key event in their life course from which individuals rethink their life time, his/her personal position and career prospects in a particular area. In this sense, inclusion in training programs is not a mechanical process because the programs offered, affect a majority of young peoples' lives.

The beginning of a young person's professional career path is often accompanied by: (a) the awareness of the real economic (and political) situation in the country; and (b) the awareness of practical knowledge and skills acquired during formal education. The intersection of these two lines represent the exit from school/university and the entrance to the labor market. Sometimes young people start working with confidence in their knowledge. When young people exert confidence in the skill sets they possess, it results in being noticed and appreciated by their employer:

"Well, at the moment, I wanted to work and I wanted to show how good lawyer I can be, and I started with the attitude of being the top lawyer from the first second of the first day I go to work and how everything will come from the first time." (Y_BG_P_4)¹

However, the real situation in the workplace is quickly dawned on them as they realize skills are accumulated in practice, and professionalism is not guaranteed by the diploma:

"And I also have my own shortcomings, but over time and with the acquisition of practical experience, I will fill the gaps in the theory of law first, the theoretical knowledge will be even stronger because I will go to a certain sphere and I will learn it

¹ Young Adult (Y), Bulgaria (BG), Functional Region Plovdiv (P)

even more in detail, and secondly, I will acquire practical knowledge in this area because the university, as many professors have told us, gives the foundation, and from now on you can not become the best lawyer when you graduate." (Y_BG_P_3)

Analyses of the interviews with young people from nine EU countries² clearly show that the majority of young people have a clear idea of their future, relying on the knowledge acquired during their training, their personal qualities, but also the skills, which will be acquired in the future. Another



group of young people do not have a specific plan for their future endeavors, leaving the moment to "here and now". The first group of young adults, those with a clear vision of the future, rely on the guidance and help from friends and relatives, as well as mentors from LLL programs. Young peoples' plans can be divided into **short** and **long-term strategies for the future**.

The short-term plans are related to acquiring a qualification from the relevant LLL program, starting a new job, validating in the working environment, and above all – by (self)improving.

"as soon as I finish my apprenticeship I go to [city] for six months to do a certified course as jewellery and stone setter (...) This is a separate profession and it is quite good and there you earn a bit more money as a goldsmith." (Y_GER_B_1)

"I'm going to apply to a university of applied sciences to study [a subject]. (...) I think the employment prospects are good here, I haven't really looked that up, it's just something I'm interested in." (Y_FI_K_4)

"In general everything I know is thanks to the internet and some videos and stuff, it's all self-learning." (Y_BG_P_1)

² Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Scotland and Spain.

“especially you have to develop yourself and give yourself everything, to be useful both to yourself and to the employer.” (Y_BG_P_1)

Some young people also build **long-term plans (about 10 years and more)** for their future, primarily related to the creation of a family and the establishment of a normal social standard, including home and secure work that brings satisfaction.

„Now I have a child. I see myself with two children and a mortgage. I am struggling to get a mortgage. (...) Now I have my payroll, my income. I have to look for a mortgage.“ (Y_SP_G_10)

“I hope at least I have a baby after 10 years, on the other front to develop – in the family. I have no desire to do more in the profession. I've changed enough jobs, I'm tired of everything.” (Y_BG_P_5)

“Personally, I want to have a family already established. Otherwise, in a professional position - some more stationary, more secure, because this position is not very positioned for me, I want it to be more settled already. To be better, everyone always wants to be better.” (Y_BG_P_7)

„I hope I work and have a house [Do you always answer the same?] Yes, that's what I want.“ (Y_SP_G_12)

“And I firmly stand behind the fact that in order to work a job, she must be pleasant to you, to work it with desire. Do not just come that way.“ (Y_BG_P_3)

Young people make serious efforts to establish themselves as professionals at their workplace:

„Anyway, reaching the high school diploma is my thing, because it's something I do want... I have nothing to prove to anybody, but I do want to prove it to myself, I want to be sure that the skills I have are formally recognized by my graduation.“ (Y_IT_M_2)

A particular group of young people are those who plan to apply the learning and acquired skills for themselves by developing their own business:

“(I want) to have 50, 60, 70 acres and my business to go. That's what I call myself a boss, right? I want to develop my business and grab some serious traders, something to do with contracts, buy everything by contract (...) (I plan) to make a warehouse, to have everything I need.” (Y_BG_P_11)

“In ten years’ time I want to build a couple. If I complete my current training, I want to start a business. I want to open a multicultural restaurant. I wish. Let’s see if I can achieve it.” (Y_SP_G_11)

“I very much hope things get up and I can stay for some longer. In the long run, I hope someday I can do it and I am a company.” (Y_BG_P_1)

“I managed to learn organizationally how the specific office works and one day, if I own a law firm, I have some idea how a successful law firm.” (Y_BG_P_4)

Some young people make plans to go abroad to look for ways to make a career:

“My task in 10 years is to bring my mother and my sister together with me and move to USA, where my friends are waiting for me, also assuring me a job, this is my task!” (Y_IT_M_4)

“I gave Croatia a deadline. If I won’t be able to find a job in Croatia until the end of the year, I will move abroad. My years are passing by, and I am unable to plan anything in my life.” (Y_CRO_OB_4)

Young people whose lives go **without a clear vision of the future** feel separated from social reality, underestimated by relatives and colleagues, show signs of distrust of the economic and social system and of the community to which they belong. Many of them also express a fear of their current position on the labor market. This anxiety is the result of unsuccessful participation in the education system or in various LLL programs:

“Well it is a social, a social descent, if you’re just not part of, of the norm-society, I would call it. But that you’re one of those, that, you hear and read of them, yes, the Austrian unemployed youth. That’s the box, in which you are put automatically.” (Y_AT_V_6)

“Now I am a little bit ashamed to submit my CV because it has been torn, torn, torn with these (LLL) programs ... (...) I did not imagine my career like this or at least I did not want it. It's like a history, I can not hide it.” (Y_BG_P_5)

“Nothing, I am looking for job. I can only sit and cry.” (Y_CRO_OB_3)

Undoubtedly, such anxiety leads to an emotional footprint that accompanies young people in applying for work and realizing the labor market.

The LLL programs and implementation policies must in no case be mechanical. It is necessary to take into account not only the individual knowledge and skills of the young person, but also his/her plans for the future (s)he is trying to follow. Planning the different phases of life depends largely on self-motivation and the progression of personal career development strategies. On the other hand, however, an important factor in the construction of the life line also depends on the (sometimes complicated) economic and social situation in the country. In this sense, we cannot infer general criteria to be imposed on young people from the nine EU countries - the set of signs underlying personal motivation vary according to the economic context. However, all young people are aware of the difficulty of transitioning from the formal education system to the workplace. In such situations of uncertainty, the only way out is to develop one's own potential through constant self-improvement.

References and further readings:

Siyka Kovacheva & Borislava Petkova. (2018). Young adults' needs and experiences from LLL programs, paper presented at the *XXVIII Conference of CESE "Identities and Education: Comparative Perspectives in an Age of Crisis"*, **Nicosia, Cyprus**.

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Siyka Kovacheva, Judith Jacovkis, Sonia Startari & Anna Siri (under print), Chapter 9. 'Are LLL policies working for youth? Young people's voices', In: Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Xavier Rambla & Siyka Kovacheva (Eds.) *Lifelong Learning Policies for Young Adults in Europe. Navigating between Knowledge and Economy*. Policy Press.



Borislava Petkova holds a PhD in Anthropology. She is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Plovdiv University, Bulgaria, and has expertise in biographical interviews, young people's identity formation and agency.

3. Communicating Research – Planning, Challenges and Lessons from Policy Roundtables

Tiago Neves, Ana Bela Ribeiro and Mariana Rodrigues, University of Porto, Portugal

The main goal of WP 9 – the final WP in YOUNG_ADULLLT – is to wrap up the knowledge produced in the previous Work Packages and deliver it to relevant stakeholders and decision-makers. Therefore, it is very much focused on one of the four features that Mårtensson and colleagues identify as a ‘quality model’ of research: the fact that it is *communicable* (Mårtensson *et al.*, 2016). That is to say, research outputs need to be consumable, accessible and searchable.



In order to achieve this goal, Policy Roundtables were implemented in each participating country (one per functional region). Policy Roundtables were instrumental for the production of national policy briefs, which will later inform the drafting of a European policy brief. As such,

the greatest challenge of WP 9 is to provide policy briefs that highlight the most relevant or pressing matters in each country, and present them in clear, informative manners that aid policy-makers in deciding over future courses of action. To do so, a fine balance between structure and flexibility was achieved through the organisation of the Roundtables. Organization of these Roundtables required structure to ensure comparability through a common framework and flexibility to accommodate regional and national specificities. We sought to strike this balance by acknowledging the cumulative nature of the process of data gathering and interpretation along the project's timeline and geographical layering (regional, national, European levels).

A strategy paper was elaborated to assist all partners in planning the Policy Roundtables. This strategy paper, while theoretically-informed, followed a pragmatically-oriented approach and defined guidelines for organising, scheduling, implementing, recording and documenting the roundtables. Yet, it is well-advised to recall Bardach's (2012, p. xvii) cautionary statement that "Policy analysis is more art than science. It draws on intuition as much as on method". Therefore, it would be unrealistic to expect that a tight and thorough grid for the preparation, implementation and documenting of the policy roundtables would be the optimal approach; that is why the strategy paper offered guidelines, not a straitjacket. These guidelines provided partners with a framework that enabled them to outline the main findings of the project and deliver them to an audience of stakeholders and decision-makers, encouraging them to reflect on the ways in which lifelong learning policies are being implemented, as well as to enunciate what would be necessary for things to work out well in each functional region, rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions or best practices. In a way, the policy roundtables also played the role in the final moment of data collection or, at least, provided a moment to ponder on the findings with the assistance of relevant agents.

Two rationales informed the invitations of such agents. The first was previous contact with YOUNG_ADULLLT, as this enabled furthering the relationship and developing a sense of continuity in the analysis. Therefore, invitations were sent to people/organisations who had previously been involved in the project (namely by having been interviewed for WP5 and WP6) as well as to members of the National Advisory Boards. The second rationale was broadening the scope of the stakeholders involved. Thus, we invited a wide range of stakeholders, including public and private institutions providing professional education, training and employment; universities; students' councils; local trade unions; companies; business associations; governmental agencies; municipal and inter-municipal agencies; local development agencies; commerce chambers; youth organisations; experts (academic, high- and street-level) in lifelong learning, labour market, education and migration; and, finally, policy makers in the three sectors of lifelong learning that were included in the project: educational, employment and social/youth policies. Not all those who were invited actually attended: the success rate of the invitations was 50%, and ensuring that people will come inevitably poses some challenges. Planning well in advance, offering potential participants clear guidelines for the session and materials for preparation, and following email contacts with phone contacts are important strategies for achieving an adequate success rate. Ultimately, given that a total of 206 participants from a broad range of organisations attended the 20 Policy Roundtables that were held (average of

10,3 per meeting), the final result was very satisfactory. Indeed, hopefully this wide range of participants has enabled a more thorough understanding of the issues at stake, namely regarding debates that are stimulated during the Roundtables. During the debates, participants had the opportunity not only to express their views but also to both agree and express disagreement with the views of others. It should be pointed that the diversity of participants involved in the Roundtables may sometimes pose specific challenges, such as monopolisation of the debate by one or a couple of more ‘powerful’ participants, or moments of heated discussion between antagonists. While professional facilitators may be hired for moderating events like these Roundtables, all YOUNG_ADULLLT teams opted for doing the moderation themselves: in retrospect, this seems a sensible choice, given the previous acquaintance of team members with some of the participants and the practice in managing interpersonal relationships that social scientists almost inevitably possess because of their research and teaching experience.

A major challenge faced in the planning and implementing of the roundtables was their scheduling. If contact is established ahead of time with parties involved, there are good chances of finding a suitable date to hold the meeting. The actual duration of the Roundtable proved to be an unsurmountable challenge. Indeed, while it would have been ideal to have a full-day for debate, the participants’ busy agendas rendered this impossible. The Roundtables lasted between 2 and 4 and a half hours, which nonetheless provided room for lively and enlightening debate throughout the 20 Roundtables.

At the moment of writing this piece, the national Policy Briefs have not yet been elaborated. A preliminary analysis of the summaries regarding the 20 Roundtables has revealed that they contain promising data regarding the main messages put across, emerging topics and leads for future research. Let’s wait (that is, *work*), and see!

References and further readings:

Bardach, E. (2012). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 4th ed. London: Sage & CQ Press.

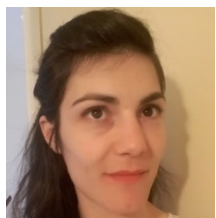
Mårtensson, P., Fors, U., Wallin, S.-B., Zander, U. & Nilsson, G.H. (2016). Evaluating research: A multidisciplinary approach to assessing research practice and quality. *Research Policy*, 45(3), pp. 593–603.



Tiago Neves holds a PhD in Education Sciences from the University of Porto, where he is Associate Professor in the areas of research methods, conflict management and social and educational inequalities. He has coordinated research and intervention on conflict mediation and on fighting poverty and social exclusion, and been a member of the research team in a number of national and international projects.



Ana Bela Ribeiro holds a PhD in Education Sciences. She has been involved in research on civic and political participation, education and community intervention, citizenship education, NGO, lifelong learning, and education policies. She has experience with mixed and collaborative research methodologies. Also, as a teacher she has worked on adult literacy.



Mariana Rodrigues is in the final stretch of her PhD in Education Sciences from the University of Porto, where she is exploring the impact of youths' participation in scouting on their social and psychopolitical development. She has been involved in research on citizenship education in formal and non-formal educational settings; forms and contexts of online/offline participation and the quality of these participation experiences. She has experience in qualitative, quantitative, and collaborative research methodologies.

4. Next steps

The final phase of the project has begun with the completion of Work Packages eight and nine. In preparation for the dissemination of the projects results, we are currently planning the Policy Seminar & Final Conference, which will take place in Lisbon, Portugal on February 11, 2019, and for which the Calouste Gulbekian Foundation has kindly ceded meeting space. The conference will begin at 10:00 and end at 17:30.

The Conference starts with an opening key note by António Nóvoa from University of Lisbon on the theme: ‘How much long life is there in lifelong learning?’ Following this, we will present the project’s design and its main findings. In the afternoon panel sessions, we will deliberate on three central themes of the project:



first, the meaning of lifelong learning in young adults’ life courses: the extension of youth, lifelong learning, and vulnerability; *second*, lifelong learning policies tackling vulnerability in the Europe’s regions; and *third*, coordinated policy-making in LLL: Dilemmas of articulation and fragmentation at the regional level.

After the Conference, the Consortium members will meet in order to discuss process of project’s completion and to start reporting how the project has met the overall goals and objectives, what difficulties have been overcome during its whole duration, and what is the financial balance at the end of the project.

In the next day, young researchers will meet in the Early Career Researchers Meeting to focus on further dissemination activities and post-project cooperation.

Save the date!

young adults

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02
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Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation,
Avenida de Berna, 45A,
1067-001 Lisbon, Portugal

Policy Seminar & Final Conference
10:00 – 17:30

Lifelong Education Policies Supporting
Young Adults in Europe:
Reframing Vulnerabilities

Keynote by
Prof. Dr. António Nóvoa,
University of Lisbon
“How much long life is
there in lifelong learning?”



The YOUNG_ADULLLT Research Consortium

