

## **DELIVERABLE D2.3**



### **Work Package 2**

### **Launching and Research Design**

### **State of the Art Report**

#### **University of Münster (WWU)**

Anne Weiler, Sarah Schaufler, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral,  
Jan Peter Ganter de Otero & Franziska Wutzkowsky

#### **University of Glasgow (GU)**

Oscar Valiente

#### **University of Porto (UPORTO)**

Tiago Neves & Ana Bela Ribeiro

Project Coordinator:	Prof. Dr. Marcelo Parreira do Amaral (University of Münster)
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## 1. Introduction

The project YOUNG\_ADULLLT departs from the observation that most European Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies have different, often competing, objectives leading to intended and unintended effects on young adults' life course. This concerns the extent to which LLL policies impact at national level, but also how they are implemented and embedded in specific regional and local institutional frameworks, education/training and labour markets, and a landscape of informal initiatives – all of which determine to a substantial extent policies' ability to be effective. Especially against the background of the aim of most current European Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies to foster economic growth and, at the same time, guarantee social inclusion (EC 2010) it becomes essential to enquire into the interaction and complementarity of LLL policies and processes of policy-making in the regional/local context. Therefore, the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project identifies and analyses LLL policies for young adults in the interplay between economy, society, labour market and education and training systems at regional and local level, which also includes discussing issues of fragmentation and discrepancies, but also identifying sustainable policy solutions. The argument is that by looking into these specific regional and local contexts LLL policies are best understood and assessed.

Two underlying assumptions are of particular importance in discussing LLL policies for young adults as a constructed target group in the context of current policy strategies: *First*, that the target groups implied in LLL policies are neither natural nor static categories that can be simply used by policies to 'address' particular groups and social issues. Rather, policies significantly change and sometimes even construct the target group they address. *Second*, the project departs from the assumption that policies with different orientations and objectives will understand and construct their target groups in substantially different ways, raising questions to the mutual compatibility among the policies.

Against the background of the construction of young adults as a target group within LLL policies, and the observation of matches/mismatches of LLL policies on different levels, the project aims at analysing the interplay of the individual, structural and institutional policy levels. Linking this observation with the theoretical perspectives of Life Course Research (LCR), Governance Studies (GOV) and Cultural Political Economy (CPE), the research projects aims to identify and analyse their interrelations on the different levels regarding the interaction and complementarity between LLL policies and their match/mismatches for young adults' needs. Hence, as argued above, the effects of policies are best researched on the regional and local level, where policies

interact with local economy, labour market and education system as well as with young people themselves. From a methodological standpoint, the combination of different levels and theoretical perspectives is best incorporated and approached by multidimensional research questions: *First*, YOUNG\_ADULLLT studies how different LLL policies are compatible with each other in terms of their orientations and objectives and how each policy considers the needs of 'young adults'. *Second*, it analyses the intended and unintended effects of policies on young adults. In doing so, the project looks into relevant social developments such as life course de-standardisation processes and into an emerging new political economy of skills. *Third*, YOUNG\_ADULLLT generates new knowledge about regional and local policy-making, with particular attention to actors, dynamics, and trends. By focusing on their regional/local context, it aims at elucidating the interaction and complementarity of LLL policies with other sectors of society, thus contributing to a better understanding of current fragmentation and discrepancies, in order to set parameters for future intelligent decision-making support systems.

### **1.1 Objectives of this Report**

This State-of-the-Art report is part of Work Package 2 (Launching and Research Design) and aims at conceptualising the research along the adopted theoretical perspectives and at outlining methodological principles guiding the research of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. Furthermore, the purpose is to contextualise the empirical research sites within the theoretical assumptions as well as in the context of their territorial situatedness. Particularly, research carried out by a multi-disciplinary array of scholars requires a common understanding of theoretical key concepts and methodological tenets in order to ensure a coherent, original, sustainable and accessible research process, dissemination of results and expected impact (cf. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Quality Assurance Plan, D1.3).

In terms of its research objects, the project YOUNG\_ADULLLT focuses LLL policies that target young adults in their transition from schooling to work. These policies are constructed differently across Europe and are the outcome of a complex interplay of discourses, levels, actors and expectations, i.e., spanning from macro-structures to micro-issues. In order to identify these interrelations between the institutional, structural and individual level, the project sets out from three entry points: *LLL policies, regional and local landscapes, and young adults*. Since the interplay between these aspects varies across countries, this report attempts at systemizing the present contexts (i.e., national realities) along a common theoretical understanding.

This report presents and discusses the conceptual approach in developing a shared understanding of key terms within the research scope of the project as well as of the theoretical perspectives that form the lenses or prism that as entry points guiding the approaches towards the object of analysis within each Work Package.

Focusing on the policies, the *Cultural Political Economy* approach helps to address the discursive element of LLL policies and analyses their orientations, objectives, and construction of target group, thereby revealing their cultural constructedness. The questions guiding the research from this theoretical perspective are as follows:

- What are the different objectives of LLL policies?
- What impacts are LLL policies supposed to have on the national, regional, local level?
- What are the antecedent problems which should be addressed by these LLL policies?
- How do these LLL policies construct their target groups and what are their supposed (intended or unintended) effects?
- Which evaluation strategies are suggested in the documents (e.g. in press releases)?
- Are there any differences in LLL policies with regard to gender and the social, educational and migration status of the target groups?
- Which categories, meanings and narratives are used and reinforced in LLL policies, and which are omitted, in order to construct their target groups, objectives, strategies, and success criteria?

Focusing on the target group, *Life Course Research* allows insights into the social reality of the young adults and considers individual life courses and living conditions within the wider macro-social framing of education and training, labour market and welfare systems. It asks for questions that touch upon the life trajectories as well as the conditions influencing LLL policies targeting young adults:

- What are young people's life projects, their professional choices and trajectories in education and training and in the labour market?
- What are young adults' perceptions and expectations and how do they create subjective meaning and continuity along the different phases of their life courses?
- Do they think they learnt new skills?
- How do LLL policies take into account and respond to diverse living conditions of young adults in each national/regional context and all across Europe?
- How do LLL policies promote and/or allow for conciliation between young adults' different life spheres (work, leisure, family, community)?

- How do different LLL policies promote or allow for young adults' freedom and autonomy in their biographical decisions?
- Are LLL policies tailored to address and reduce life course uncertainty and insecurity within young adults?
- Are LLL offers sensitive to different individual life conditions (e.g., the need for childcare during lessons etc.)?

The interrelatedness and coordination of action between different levels and scales – the regional and local landscapes – comes into focus with the *Governance Perspective*, identifying relevant actors and sectors that are involved in the definition and implementation of LLL policies at the regional/local level. Questions guiding the research from this theoretical perspective focus on actor constellations and processes of decision-making:

- Which actors, policies and sectors are involved in the definition and implementation of LLL policies and what is their individual impact and leverage?
- How do state (e.g. training/skill providers) and private actors (e.g. enterprises) cooperate in terms of assessing what competences and skills are valued and defined as needed? What are emerging (new) patterns and networks of policy-making at regional and local levels?
- How are young adults engaged in LLL policies decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation?
- How do LLL policies assure accountability and to whom in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability?
- How do LLL policies contribute to respond to multijurisdictional and multilevel 'wicked problems' of young adults like NEET, ESL, youth unemployment and ethnic discrimination?

Observing the object of analysis (LLL policies) from this multi-angled view aims at ensuring a thorough and well-rounded consideration of the social realities of the different research locales on a micro-, meso- and macro-level. Moreover, this report sets the ground by systematizing the different national realities according to important and inherent dimensions of the theoretical perspectives. Thus, patterns can be identified (similarities and differences) between the countries that allow to form hypotheses relevant for the overall research process and its outcomes and impacts (cf. section 3. A-C; cf. Work Packages 8 – Comparative Analysis – and Work Package 9 – Policy Roundtables).

Given the assumption that LLL policies are constructed and implemented at local level, attention to locality plays a major role in our attempt to understand the specific networks, institutional frameworks and structural conditions with which policies interact. In order to capture the social



reality of this particular regional/local context, YOUNG\_ADULLLT has chosen the concept of *Functional Regions* (FR) rather than administrative regions as sampling units, to account for social and economic relations that shape the process of policy-making. With the integration of the different theoretical perspectives as well as applying a mixed-method approach this document illustrates how this complexity is duly accounted for. The quantitative and qualitative analyses allows to grasp the social living conditions and realities within each Functional Region as well as incorporate the stakeholders' viewpoints – in particular young adults and policy-makers – to capture the interplay of regional environments, local institutions and individual expectations. Moreover, this document contextualises the selected FRs, paying particular attention to the embeddedness of the local within the respective national and international context (section 2.3).

## **2. Developing Conceptual and Research Frameworks**

As mentioned above, YOUNG\_ADULLLT departs from the observation that LLL policies are located in a regional/local context unfolding and influencing the transition from school to work of young adults. Therefore, the living conditions of young adults are intertwined with the various LLL policies across Europe. The project analyses these different LLL policies regarding their potentially competing (and possibly ambivalent) orientations and objectives; also regarding their – intended and unintended – impact on young adults as we focus on policy-making at regional/local level across Europe. This emphasises the interlinkage of three aspects: LLL policies, their target groups and the different regional/local contexts.

The LLL policies represent constructed realities, including different actor constellations and processes of decision-making, which influence the life course of young adults on the local and regional levels. In other words, LLL policies are locally carried out, but constructed based on the interplay of the individual, structural, and institutional dimensions. As a result, the impact of the LLL policies come together in the local and regional context. In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, we use this prism to encompass the different strands of LLL policies, their target groups, and the different regional/local contexts.

Departing from this observation, it requires an overall research framework that captures the different perspectives to analyse the national LLL policies and their relation to labour market, youth and educational policies affecting young adults' life courses throughout the European landscape. It combines different theoretical, methodological and disciplinary traditions and approaches with-

in a multilevel analytical framework with the aim to conceptualise the research object appropriately.

The development of the research framework unfolds the conceptualisation of the research object in four steps. First, a *conceptualisation of terminology* to grasp the research object adequately is attempted in form of a *Glossary*, taking into account both, the interdisciplinarity of the research object and of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT researchers. By developing a glossary, a common conceptual understanding of the key elements of the project is ensured (section 2.1). Second, a *conceptualisation of the research units* that describes the Functional Regions as the sampling unit for empirical work on the local context, representing the focal point in which the effects of LLL policies come together (section 2.2). Third, a *conceptualisation of the theoretical perspectives* adopted to enable the integration of the different dimensions of the research focus and describing the theoretical perspectives as entry points (section 3.). This section is divided into three parts that describe each theoretical perspective – Cultural Political Economy (part A), Life Course Research (part B), Governance (part C) – in showing the current research state in each field and how the theoretical perspectives contribute to the project as well as their implication for shaping the research object. Finally, a *conceptualisation of the methodological approach* is developed which discusses the application strategy for the overall research project, which in turn will guide work in the different Work Packages (WPs) (section 4). This common framework is a necessary precondition and builds the basis for the possibility of a meaningful comparison of LLL policies to be carried out in Work Package 8. It is followed by a concluding summary presenting the research hypotheses (see section 5)

In the following section, the conceptual and research framework is described for the Glossary, the Functional Regions as research units and sites in their specific contexts.

## **2.1 Glossary**

In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, we combine different perspectives on the analysis of LLL policies for young adults. Careful consideration is essential in terms of the embeddedness of each research object regarding its global/national/regional/local cultural traditions and conceptions (see also D2.2). This emphasises the epistemological and social components of knowledge production in the research project. In particular, research carried out by multi-disciplinary scholars requires a common understanding of theoretical key concepts and methodological tenets in order to ensure a coherent, original, sustainable and accessible research process, dissemination of results and

expected impact. Therefore, a Glossary was developed, taking both, the interdisciplinary of the research object and thus of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT researcher into account, to ensure a common conceptual understanding of the key elements of the project.

The *Glossary* consists of key terms used in YOUNG\_ADULLLT to sharpen our common conceptual understanding of key ideas that are of central interest to the project. It supports the interdisciplinary approach of the project not by providing homogenized definitions, but rather by pointing out the different understandings and usages across national and cultural spaces and disciplinary traditions. The Glossary reflects the collaborative work process in YOUNG\_ADULLLT and helps us to ensure a coherent theoretical and methodological conceptualization of the research, thus allowing the construction of a strong and innovative international and comparative research design.

The *Glossary* was created by involving all partners in the projects through an iterative process: the participants suggested glossary entries on the key terms, drafted, read and commented on each entry of the project partners. Thus, the glossary serves as a base for the research knowledge production throughout the overall project as it brings together all key concepts and provides a terminological lens that is used across each Working Package. Using the shared conceptualisations prevents fragmentation of the theoretical key concepts. Therefore, it ensures a common approach in the process of knowledge production within the project.

The Glossary is accessible online on the YOUNG\_ADULLLT website<sup>1</sup>. In doing so, it fulfils two purposes: the dissemination of a common understanding within the project's research process and the public dissemination and communication of the project's tenets.

In short, the development of Glossary represents an attempt to approach the multidimensional research object both considering and doing justice to its different aspects and dimensions *and* to the different disciplinary traditions and conceptions of an interdisciplinary research team. It fulfils both the function to create a collectively understanding of the perspectives that is thoroughly communicated within the project and effectively disseminated to the public at large.

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<sup>1</sup> Glossary YOUNG\_ADULLLT accessible at <http://www.young-adulllt.eu/glossary/index.php>.

## 2.2 Functional Regions as Research Units

Most of our social reality – for instance, education, labour market or welfare statistical information – is organised as ‘national’ phenomena. For this reason, since the nineteenth century, nation states have been traditionally considered the ‘natural’ units of analysis throughout social sciences research. More recently, however, with changing realities, amongst others, brought about by internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation processes, static and absolute concepts such as that of the nation state have been challenged in their usefulness in explaining our social world. From a perspective that attempts to overcome this ‘methodological nationalism’, the national level has to be seen as one unit of analysis amongst many others, most notably the international/supranational and regional/local level. Analytically accounting for these different levels is a useful way to ensure an adequate and well-rounded conceptualisation and analysis of the research object (Dale & Robertson 2009).

In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, the assumption that the implementation of LLL policies is best studied at the regional/local level invited us to take a more differentiated glance than the national level allows for. Likewise, departing from the principle of subsidiarity in European policy-making, accounting for regional differences and variations becomes central as differences occur not only between locales within but also across countries. Thus, research needs to account for this high degree of complexity in its analyses in order to provide accurate information and useful results.

While administrative units at national level do provide statistical data on socio-economic aspects, welfare systems, labour markets, and education and training systems, they do not provide a very sharp picture of the social reality in which most young adults’ life courses unfold. For this reason, the national sub-units selected in YOUNG\_ADULLLT have not been chosen in purely geographic/administrative terms, but rather by being defined as a FR. In other words, they were defined as regions organised by functional relations as well as by spatial flows and interactions both within and across the borders of a particular territorial unit. As Klapka and colleagues argued (2013, p. 96), they can be defined

“as a region organised by functional relations that are maximised within the region (maximisation of intra-regional flows) and minimised across its borders (minimisation of inter-regional flows or interactions) so that the principles of internal cohesiveness and external separation regarding the intensities of spatial flows or interactions are met”

Functional Regions provide a useful concept to understand differences in the planning and implementation of education, labour market, and economic policies at regional/local. FRs provide a

way to map and examine the linkages and flows that create interdependence. By adopting the concept, YOUNG\_ADULLLT attempts to capture and examine the flows and interdependencies between people, institutions and economy in a given local context, thus increasing the significance and validity of the research results. One main advantage involved is to help identify areas with specific problems, such as mismatches between the education, social, and employment sectors, since it is here where policies and young adults meet (see also OECD 2014). FRs may take different shapes and display different internal patterns of interaction, since different kinds of spatial flows or interactions can organise a region. For example, in the case of an urban area, the functional flows or interactions could be oriented towards a single city or a town, for instance, as indicated by the number of people commuting daily from home to work. Similarly, a FR could have multiple cores and, in this case, the mapping and analysis regards particularly the relations and interactions between individual cores within one region.

The concept of FR indicates thus a sub-division of territories that results from the spatial differentiation and organisation of social and economic relations rather than to geographical and/or administrative boundaries. For this reason, using the concept also involves some challenges as FRs, though increasing the validity of research results by sampling different FRs, can present some incompatibilities with territorial and/or administrative regions, especially in terms of data/information available from different sources. Indeed, the availability of most statistical data on socio-economic and socio-demographic aspects, education and training, labour market and welfare are more often than not restricted to administrative units (countries, states, districts, provinces, or cities). Specifically, as we argued above, most research take the national level as the primary unit of analysis, which has been problematised more recently as it does not present a very sharp depiction of the reality. However, it is not simply a matter of choosing smaller units of analysis than the nation-state since all other sub-units will also provide a rather static picture of the different realities as they are equally based on administrative units. For instance, the European NUTS classification generally uses administrative units or aggregations of non-administrative units to collect and analyse information on the different European regions. NUTS is the French acronym for 'Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics' adopted by Eurostat. It represents a hierarchical subdivision of the territory of the European Union into 98 major socio-economic regions (NUTS 1), 276 basic regions (NUTS 2), and 1.342 small regions (NUTS 3) (cf. Eurostat 2015a). Framing the research sites at NUTS-3 level would come closest to our conceptual understanding in the project; however, already at this point in the project, it has become clear that data availability at NUTS-3 level is not exhaustive for all selected FRs. Moreover, be-

yond this more practical reason, adopting the concept of FR in YOUNG\_ADULLLT aims at conceptually taking into account not only their administrative aspects, but also their functional dynamics, their interrelations with other units as well as the interaction of their different sectoral policies. For this reason, research work will imply integrating data available for instance at one level and other data sources/types in order to sharpen our understanding of the chosen research sites. As will be detailed below, most functional regions selected in YOUNG\_ADULLLT encompass more than one NUTS-3 level unit, yet are also substantially smaller than NUTS-1 and many times even smaller than NUTS-2 level units. The pragmatic solution adopted is to complement NUTS-2 level quantitative data – for which availability is greater than for NUTS-3 level – with qualitative data for the respective functional regions collected in the different Work Packages in the project. In the course of the project, empirical fieldwork will recurrently involve developing the necessary adequate methodological and analytical steps to depict and analyse the different – sub-national – realities in terms of education and training, welfare, labour market, and policy-making in the functional regions studied. This task will be centrally be pursued in Work Package 7 (Regional and local cases studies).

Section 2.3 below provides an overview of the research sites chosen for the project.

### **2.3 Research Sites: Countries and Functional Regions in Context**

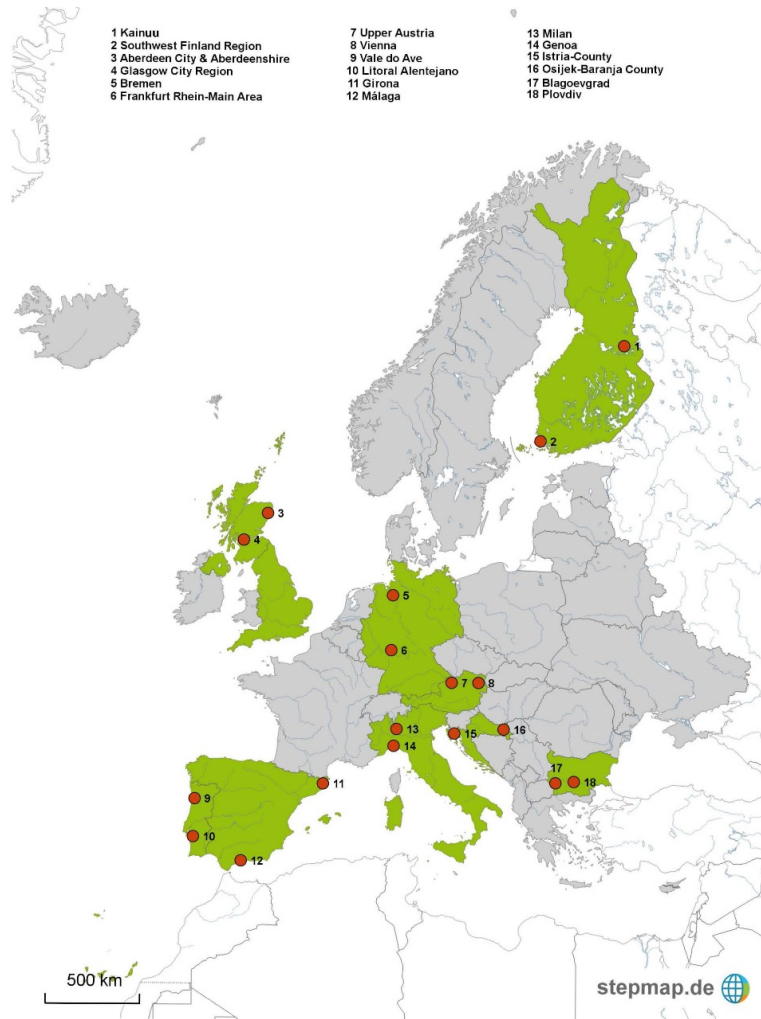
The following section present, *first*, the national realities, which provide the background in which LLL policies evolve and are implemented (section 2.3.1). The project comprises nine European member states, which are Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (see Figure 1 below). Each country is unique and represents different realities across Europe in terms of types of education and training systems, of labour market structures, of welfare arrangements, as well as in terms of patterns of policy-making. The aim of this section is to offer a glimpse of these realities by looking at selected indicators regarding welfare, labour market, and education and training in order to illustrate existing similarities and differences at national level. However, assuming that LLL policies are effective on the regional/local level, these national realities only provide a rough context for the analysis, but do not offer the suitable perspective for the collection of data.

Moving, therefore, *second*, to the regional/local level the following section (section 2.3.2) sharpens the analytical lens by focusing on smaller units. These smaller units on an administrative basis have the advantage that relevant data can be obtained (NUTS-2), however, prove to be

static entities that do not reflect social and economic realities. The YOUNG\_ADULLLT project, therefore, looks for a dynamic context that incorporates the spatial flows and interactions of, for instance, people and goods, taking into account social, economic and political linkages. The concept of the functional region includes the necessary dynamic element by incorporating, first, the local level, and, second, by reflecting social and economic relations beyond any given administrative unit. Still, the collection of data proves to be more complex. Since data at NUTS-3 level is not exhaustive, YOUNG\_ADULLLT incorporates data at NUTS-2 level, integrating several NUTS-2 level units that compose a functional region.

Focusing on functional (and thus dynamic) rather than administrative units as research sites has two advantages: *first*, differences and similarities regarding welfare, labour market, education and training and policy-making can be identified *within* and *across* national levels. *Second*, (mis-)matches within a given functional region can be detected, in particular a lack of integration between the policy sectors, e.g., education policy and labour market policy, which calls for a new approach of coordinated policy-making.

For the empirical fieldwork, two functional regions have been selected in each country. This means the research project does not seek to achieve representativeness in terms of European coverage, but rather focuses on different realities (i.e., 18 Functional Regions) across the continent with a particular emphasis on South and Southeast Europe. Figure 1 below provides an overview of all participating countries and selected FRs in the project.



**Figure 1. Overview of selected Functional Regions in YOUNG\_ADULLLT (designed with Stepmap)**

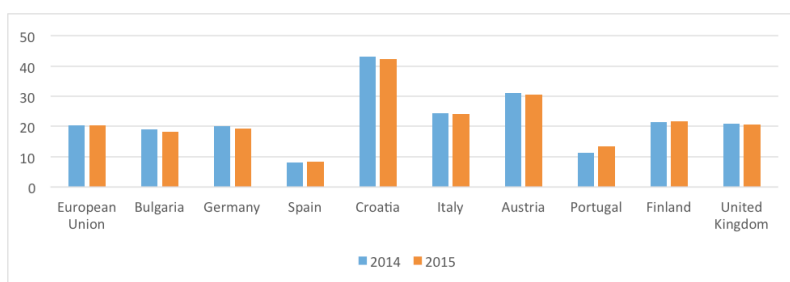
### **2.3.1 Countries in Context**

The YOUNG\_ADULLLT countries across the European continent differ greatly in terms of education and training systems, labour markets and the organisation of the social welfare system. These different realities have an effect on the how the political framework is structured and consequently on the kind of policy-making that is carried out in each of these countries. Looking at a few selected indicators the aim of this section is to identify similarities and differences regarding the education and training, labour market and social welfare related to young adults.

A general trend can be observed in terms of the extended time of schooling with only slight variations; what is different, however, is the kind of post-secondary education and training before the

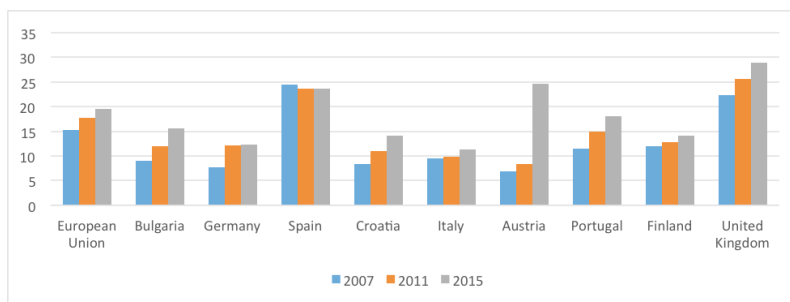


young adults' transition into the labour market. Participation rates vary between vocational education (VET) and training and tertiary education. The countries in YOUNG\_ADULLLT show three different patterns in terms of VET: while Portugal and Spain have a rather low number (8 % - 13.4 %), Croatia has the highest amount of graduates with over 40 %. The remaining countries range between 12 % with Bulgaria having 18.2% and Austria having 31% graduates (see graph 1).



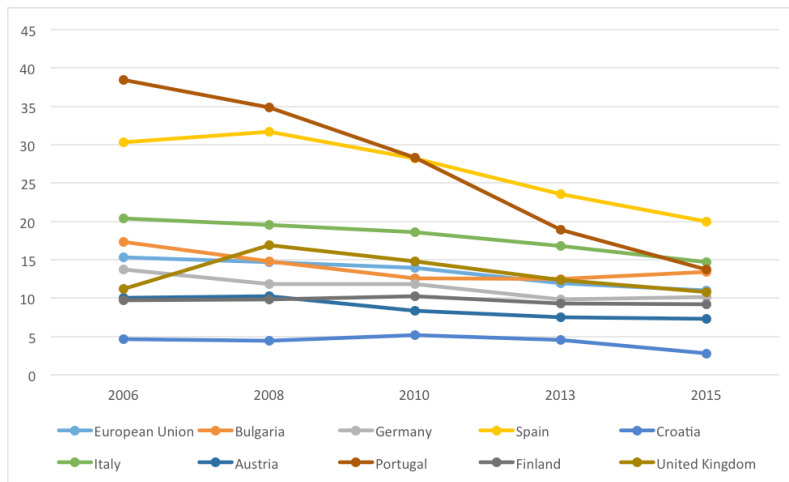
**Graph 1. Vocational education graduates by educational attainment level, sex, age and programme orientation, 15-24, by age group and country, %, 2014 – 2015, Source: Eurostat**

Comparing these numbers to the rates of educational attainment at tertiary level, the countries display an overall increasing trend that corresponds to the slightly decreasing numbers in VET. Especially in Spain a rather low participation rate in VET (8.4 % in 2015) matches a high participation rate in tertiary education (approx. 24 %). Moreover, Austria has a sharp increase in tertiary education participation by 15.6 % between 2013 and 2015 (see graph 2).



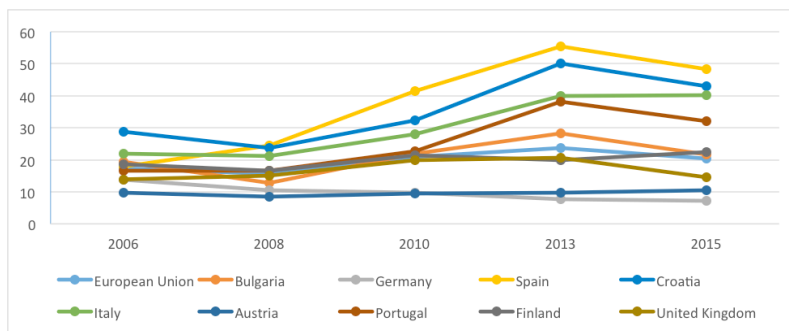
**Graph 2. Population by educational attainment in tertiary level, age group 15-29, from 2007 to 2015, by age and country, %, Source: Eurostat**

Shifting the focus from the young adults participating successfully in the education system to those who do not complete their schooling (ESL) or are not an education and training (NEET), an interesting trend can be observed. While the rate of ESLs has been declining steadily over the last 10 years in almost all countries (with the UK being the exception), the year 2008 seems to be a turning point, marking a noticeable decrease in all countries (see graph 3).



**Graph 3. Early school leavers from education and training, age group 18-24 and country, %, 2004-2015, Source: Eurostat**

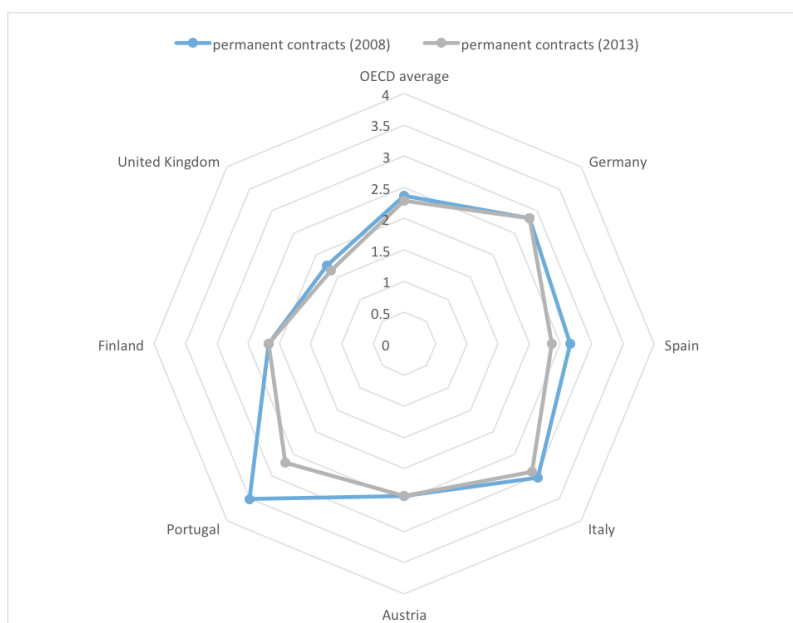
One explanation of this change can be obviously seen in the financial crisis of 2007-2008, inducing young adults to remain in the education system rather than entering unsuccessfully the labour market. Taking into account the numbers of unemployment rates of young adults (age group 15-24), this justification seems highly plausible (see graph 4).



**Graph 4. Unemployment rates, age from 15 to 24 years, by country, %, Source: Eurostat**

All countries show an increasing number of unemployment of young adults, in particular in the Southern European and Mediterranean countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Croatia) with a disproportionately growing rate as of 2008. With the countries reaching the peak in 2013, rates varying between 8 % (Germany) and 55 % (Spain), the numbers are currently slightly decreasing. One explanation being the implementation of severe policy measures, for instance the so-called austerity measures in Portugal, achieving a reduction of unemployment rates by cut backs of social benefits and increase of general fees for the public.

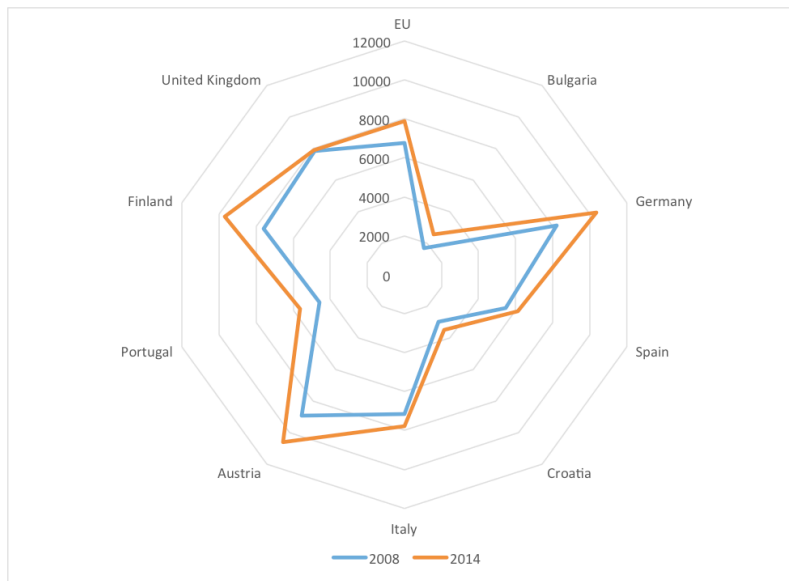
Another relevant indicator regarding the labour market is employment protection. Based on the procedures for dismissals regarding permanent and temporary employment (i.e., open-ended and fixed-term employment contracts), regulations can either be quite strict or rather loose (0 being very loose) (see graphs 5).



**Graph 5. Employment protection index permanent contracts, missing data for Bulgaria and Croatia, 2013, Source: OECD**

While the regulations on dismissals are quite consistent in all other YOUNG\_ADULLLT countries, Portugal and Spain display noticeable changes. In Portugal, employment protection for permanent contracts has been reduced considerably by almost 2 index points between the peak of the financial crisis in 2008 and 2013 (latest data available). Likewise, Spain reduced rate of employment protection slightly by 0.5 index points. What is interesting, however, is the highest rate of employment protection of all countries in the project with the regulations becoming even stricter after the crisis in 2008 (contrary to Germany).

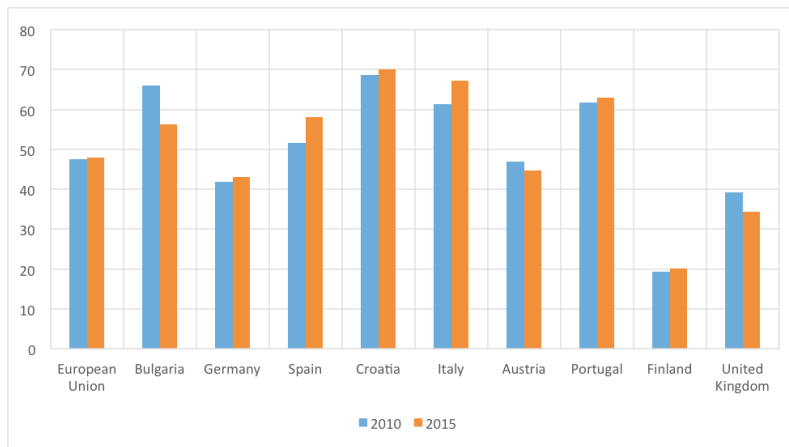
Obviously, the Southern European countries have been suffering high unemployment rates in particular for young adults as well as the severest changes in terms of employment protection of all countries in the project in the aftermath of the financial crisis. This being the case, taking into account the expenditure on social protection, as a means of social welfare, may complement the depiction of the overall development. As the following graph displays (see graph 6), the expenditure varies fundamentally in the YOUNG\_ADULLLT.



**Graph 6. Expenditure in social protection per inhabitant in Euro including social benefits, administration costs and other costs, 2008-2014, Source: Eurostat**

The major indentations show a significantly lower expenditure on social protection in Bulgaria, Croatia and Portugal, spending approx. 2.500 €, 3.500 € and 5.600 € respectively per inhabitant per year, compared to Germany, Austria and Finland, spending between 10.600 € and 9.600 € per inhabitant per year. Interestingly, all countries have increased the expenditure between 2008 and 2014 (i.e., after the financial crisis) except the UK, showing a consistent amount. One explanation of these developments may be implementation of policy measures regarding social welfare and labour market respectively, with the UK as liberal welfare and labour market regime not interfering.

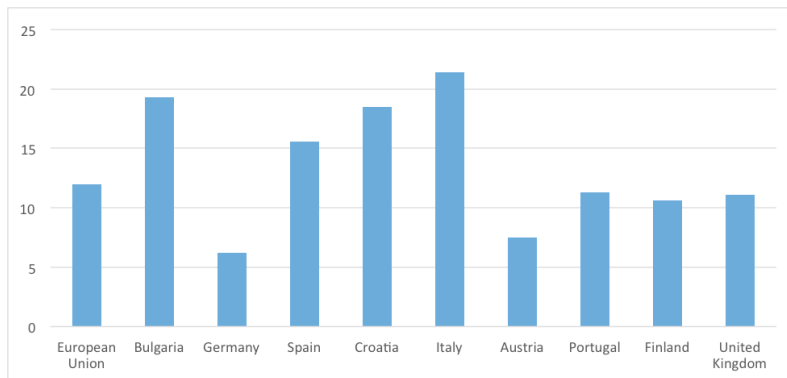
Policy-making is influenced by the living situation of the respective target groups. Thus, the existence or non-existence of policy measures for young adults is to some degree shaped by the perception of the group within society. One indicator of that may be the share of young adults living with their parents (see graph 7).



**Graph 7. Share of young adults aged 18-34 living with their parents, 2010-2015, %, by country, Source: EU-SILC**

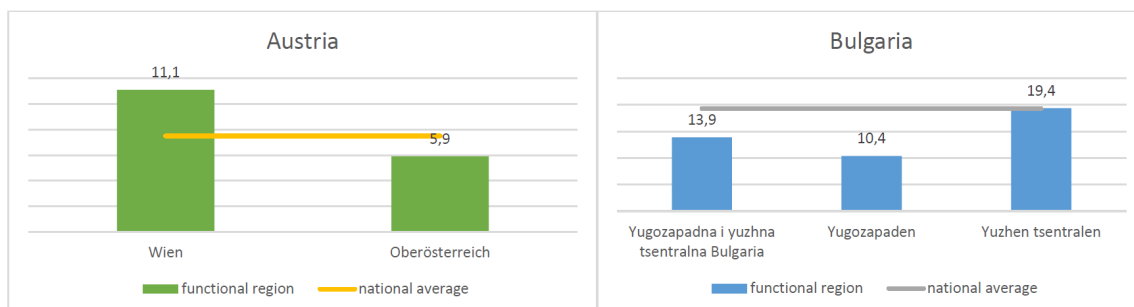
The YOUNG\_ADULLLT countries show three different patterns: more than 50 % of young people between the age of 18 and 34 live with their parents in Southern and Eastern Europe with Croatia displaying the highest rate of approx. 70 % and Bulgaria displaying the lowest rate of this cluster of approx. 57 %, also being the only country of this group with decreasing numbers. The German-speaking countries (around approx. 45 %) and the UK (approx. 35 %) present a second group, while Finland with a steady number of only 20 % of has by far the least amount of young adults living with their parents. Taking these different numbers into account raises the question where to look for (LLL) policy measures for young adults as these may be part of different policy sectors, for instance family policies in the countries with most of the young adults still living at home.

Taking the national realities into account provide a valuable and necessary background for the collection and interpretation of the data in order to be sensitive for differences between the countries. However, taking a closer look at the project's research sites, the Functional Regions based on NUTS-2 data, within each country, assessing and understanding the national realities prove to be necessary, but not sufficient in order to capture the dynamic and complex social realities adequately, as the example of young adults not in education and training (NEET) may illustrate (see graph 8).



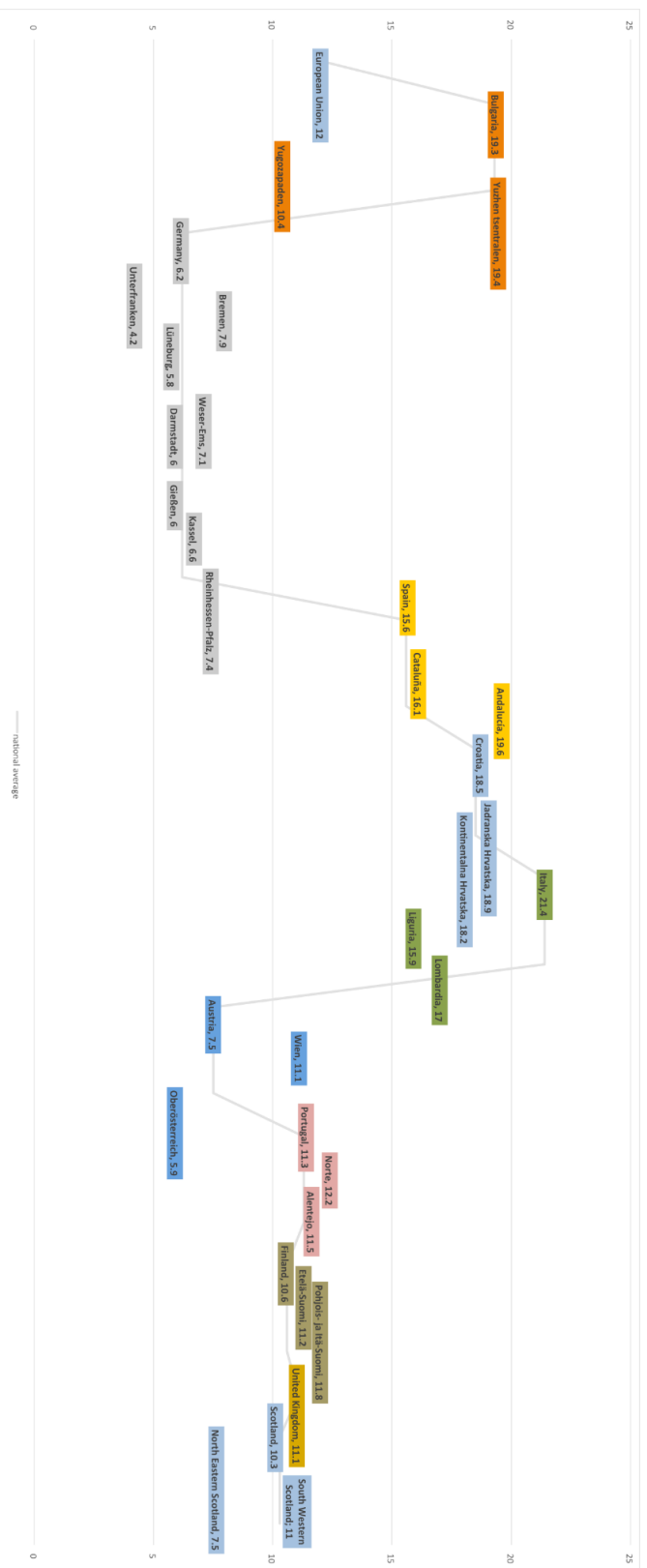
**Graph 8. Rates of NEETs, from 15-24 years, by country, 2015, %, Source: Eurostat**

Again, three different clusters among the YOUNG\_ADULLLT countries can be identified: Bulgaria, Croatia, Spain and Italy with numbers more than 15 %, Portugal, Finland and the UK with numbers slightly above 10 % and Austria and Germany with numbers above 5 %, but less than 10 %. However, looking at the data at NUTS-2 levels units that compose the FRs reveals not only differences and similarities across the countries, but also within the countries as the following two examples of Bulgaria and Austria illustrate (see graph 9).



**Graph 9. Rates of NEETs Bulgaria and Austria, from 15-24 years, by sex and by country, 2015, %, Source: Eurostat**

While one of the NUTS-2 level unit is identical with the national average (*Yuzhen tsentralen*), the other two NUTS units (*Yugozapadna i yuzhna tsentralna Bulgaria* and *Yugozapaden*) range among the average of the cluster of Portugal, Finland and the UK. Likewise, Austria's two NUTS-2 level units show strong differences. While Vienna with 11 % clearly outranges the national average and clusters with the national average of Portugal, Finland and the UK, Upper Austria stays below the with approx. 6 %. Clustering all national and all NUTS-2 level unit rates chosen in the project, five different patterns (marked in colors) can be identified, as illustrated in figure 2 below.



**Figure 2. Rates of NEETs, from 15-24 years, countries and NUTS-2 level data for selected FRs, 2015, %, Source: Eurostat**

### 2.3.2 Functional Regions in Context

The following section contextualizes the Functional Regions in their respective national context regarding welfare system, labour market, education and training and LLL policies based on national and regional/local data sets as well as international sources by the EU and OECD. Figure 1 above provided an overview of all selected FRs in the project.

#### Germany

In spite of the high level of federal decentralization in Germany's federal organization, it is possible to recognize several national patterns of welfare, education and training, and youth policies. *Welfare* has been characterized in Germany as exemplifying a Conservative Welfare Regime, in which state provision of support only starts where families fail to sustain a livelihood. Further, the distribution of social benefits is coupled to previous contribution, which directly and indirectly maintains the stratified status quo in terms of class and social status. Thus, participation in the *labour market* is essential to an adequate level of social security and inclusion. There is also a high level of coordination between the education and the employment sectors, as the former is required to provide industry and firm spe-

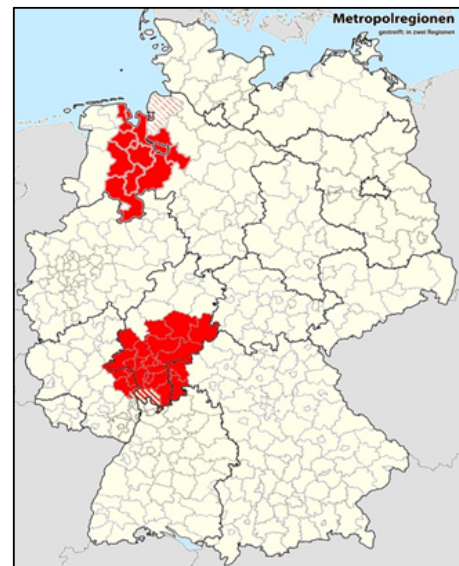


Figure 3. Germany and selected Functional Regions

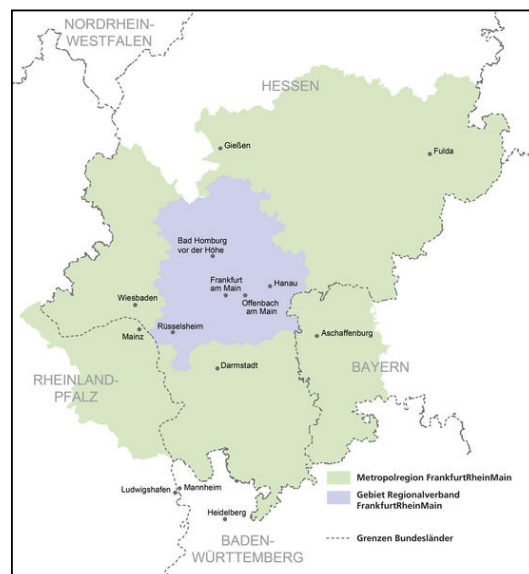
cific skills to safeguard access to the country's occupationally organised labour market, for which the workforce is qualified and trained based on a highly standardised *education and training system*. Generally speaking, young adults are expected to have a rather quick transition into economic independency through an institutionalized transition process into the labour market that includes ET systems with strong differentiation of tracks and high levels of stratification (continental education regime). This presents policy-making with high demands in terms of coordination among levels, sectors and actors, making Germany an interesting case to study different patterns of coordinating policy-making, relationships between different policies and forms of embedding them at the local/regional level. The two functional regions (FRs) selected for fieldwork are Rhein-Main and Bremen.

#### The FR Rhein-Main



The FR Rhein-Main covers an area of 14.755 km<sup>2</sup> between three different federal states with a population of 5.6 Million inhabitants. The core of the region is located in southern Hesse with the cities Frankfurt am Main, Wiesbaden (state capital), Darmstadt and Offenbach am Main. Other important cities are Mainz and Worms (Rhineland-Palatinate), and Aschaffenburg (Bavaria).

The region is constituted by an urban territory with high concentration of services and industry in its economy. The main economic branches are logistics, health and transport - the FR Rhein-Main is an international transport hub (Frankfurt Airport) – Frankfurt is a European and global finance centre. As a result, in 2014, the workforce in the tertiary sector was higher than 75 %, while 22.9 % worked in industry and only 0.4 % of workers were employed in the primary sector (Regionalverband FrankfurtRheinMain 2015, p. 19).



**Figure 4. Rhein-Main Functional Region**

With regard to education, the FR present a unique situation: each of the three Federal States – Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate and Bavaria – have its particular school system, with different conditions of access and objectives, especially in the upper secondary level. In 2015, in the city of Frankfurt, more than 22.000 students attended *Gymnasium* (schools with focus on academic learning and preparation to university), while less than 16.000 pupils were studying at other types of secondary schools, and more than 27.000 were in vocational schools (Statistisches Jahrbuch Frankfurt am Main 2016, p. xxii).

In terms of social welfare, despite the relatively low unemployment rate (6 %) in the FR and youth unemployment rate (7.7 %) in Frankfurt (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2017, p. 6), the region present significant differences between districts. For instance, while in 2015, the child poverty rate was 21.8 % within the region, in Offenbach the rate was 34.8 %. The inequality can also be seen in terms of GDP per inhabitant: where the average within the FR was 38.880 € in 2012, only in Frankfurt it was 80.000 €. (Regionalverband FrankfurtRheinMain 2015, p. 24).

In this context, the LLL policies present different objectives (access to vocational training and higher education, or solving individual problems as reconciling work and family life) and target

groups (unemployed young people with at least an intermediate school leaving certificate, young and single mothers). The funding mechanisms are also diversified (Jobcenter Frankfurt, Youth Welfare Office Frankfurt, Hessian Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, Federal State, and cooperating companies).

The FR Bremen comprises an area of 13.751 km<sup>2</sup> in the northwestern part of Germany with roughly 2.7 Million inhabitants. It consists of six cities (Bremen, Bremerhaven, Oldenburg, Wilhelmshaven, Delmenhorst, and Cuxhaven). Bremen, as the state capital, has a population of around 550.000 inhabitants and Bremerhaven is one of the most important German seaports with an opening to the North Sea.

**Figure 5. Bremen-Oldenburg Functional Region**

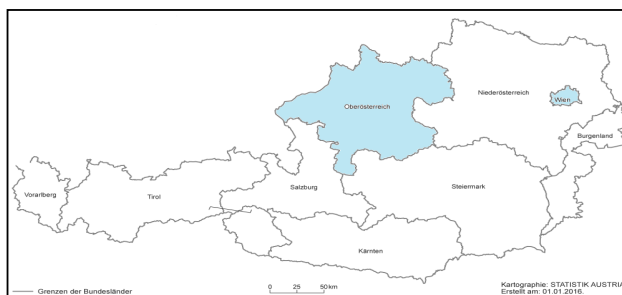
In terms of education, the functional regional also present a clear differentiation of tracks. While, within the city of Bremen in 2015, 10.454 pupils attended to Gymnasium, more than 22.000 pupils were studying in other types of secondary schools, and 15.188 attended *Berufsschulen* (vocational college) (Statistisches Landesamt Bremen 2016, p. 15).

9.6 %. The FR represent also deficiency in terms of life expectancy: both men and women are expected to live less than the average in the country (BBSR 2014).

Drawing from this background, the LLL policies within the FR Bremen are oriented to integrate regular schooling and vocational educational in order to reduce youth unemployment. The main target group are young adults who dropped out school in disadvantaged quarters and pupils seen in danger of not accomplishing regular school. The policies are generally co-funded by the state, the federal government and the ESF.

### Austria

Austria has a population of around 8.5 million inhabitants and is comprised of nine regional states (*Länder*). The relationship between the federal state (*Bund*) and the regional states is characterized by a weak federalism by constitution (e.g. legislative power) on the one hand, but a rather strong federalism in practice (e.g. implementation of federal policies, influence of regional sections of the parties etc.) on the other hand (Fallend 2006). The Austrian political system in general and the policy fields of labor market and education and training in particular, are characterized by a strong involvement of interest representatives into the political decision making process (Bodenhöfer 2006).



**Figure 6. Austria and selected Functional Regions**

Austria's *welfare state* has been classified as “conservative” and “strongly corporatist”. It is based on the idea that social entitlements are derived from employment (and not from citizenship or needs). As a consequence, the Austrian welfare state fosters status differentials and its redistributive function is limited (Unger & Heitzmann 2003).

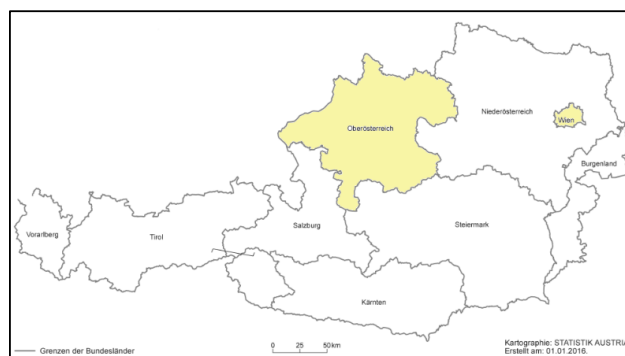
The Austrian *education system* is characterized by early selection mechanisms and a lack of social permeability. Selection takes place predominantly along the lines of social background. Especially the effects of the missing efforts to integrate the first and second generation of guest workers and refugees that arrived in the 1990s into the education system is still visible today (Biffl 2007).

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a significant role in the Austrian education system and in the transition from school to work. In the school year 2015/16 almost 70 % of all Austrian

pupils in their last compulsory school year attended a VET school. Approximately 40 % of young people of one age groups opt for conducting an apprenticeship training (Tritscher-Archan et al. 2012, p. 12). Due to the apprenticeship system and the VET sector, Austria has a higher employment rate in the age group from 15 to 24 years than the EU-28 average (51.3 % in comparison to 32.6 % in 2014.) (OECD Data 2014a). Anyway, the demand in apprenticeship positions exceeds the supply by large which is one of the reasons for the recent rise in youth unemployment. The shortage in apprenticeship positions is at the same time one of the main points of intervention for lifelong learning policies for young adults in Austria. The two (FRs) selected for fieldwork are Vienna and Upper Austria.

### **FR Vienna**

Vienna is situated in the northeast of Austria and surrounded by the regional state of Lower Austria (*Niederösterreich*), in a particularly short proximity to the Hungarian, Slovak and Czech boarder. Vienna has approximately 1.8 million inhabitants and is – speaking of population – the largest Austrian federal state. More than one fifth of the Austrian population lives in Vienna – supposed to grow



**Figure 7. Functional Region Vienna**

further. Currently 42 % of the Viennese population have a migration background and more than 25 % of the Viennese inhabitants are non-Austrians (Statistik Austria, A).

In 2013, Vienna's economy contributed for 26 % to the overall value creation in Austria (Stadt Wien 2015a, p. 196). 85 % of the Viennese gross product was made in the tertiary sector, and 15 % in the secondary sector (Stadt Wien 2015a, p. 204). In the Viennese economy structural changes during the last decades can be seen, reflected particularly in the growing amount of people employed in the service sector (25 %) (Eichmann & Nocker 2015, Stadt Wien 2015b). While the amount of jobs in production has been more or less stable over the last ten years, jobs in the trade and retail sector decreased strongly. Furthermore, a significant rise of jobs with a high qualification profile can be mentioned. Currently around 50 % of all employees work in high-qualified jobs (with at least A-level standards).

With regard to education, in 2013, the highest educational qualification of nearly 24 % of the Viennese population between 25 and 64 years was a certificate from a compulsory school, 23 % had completed an apprenticeship, around 30 % had finished a secondary school or secondary high school and 22 % held a university degree (Statistik Austria, B). Overall, the education profile of the population is characterized by the relative importance of secondary academic and academic education - especially in comparison to the other Austrian regional states – reflecting the educational offer and demand for highly-skilled jobs in Vienna.

The main challenge regarding the Viennese job market is and will be to provide sufficient jobs for Vienna's growing population. In 2015, Vienna was the federal state with the highest unemployment rate in Austria (13.5 % in Vienna, Austrian average: 9.1 %) (AMS Wien 2016, p. 8). 11.7 % of all unemployed in Vienna were between 15 and 24 years old (AMS Wien 2016, p. 17). Noticeable, is also the mismatch between the supply and demand for apprenticeship positions. In general, the mismatch between job vacancies and unemployed is quite high, with 27.4 job seekers per vacancy (AMS online). 8 % of the Viennese or 141.600 people received needs-orientated basic subsidies in 2014 (*Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung*, BMS) (Stadt Wien 2015b, p. 160). Summarizing a contradiction can be mentioned: High unemployment on the one hand and a growing job market on the other hand. Further challenges are missing apprenticeship opportunities for young people, and a probable gap between high skilled labour force demands as well as the educational of the Viennese population.

Vienna's lifelong learning strategy (*Vienna Qualifications Plan 2020*) focuses primarily on the reduction of young people without further education or training beyond compulsory education, the reduction of early school-leavers (ESL) and the recognition of informally attained skills (WAFF 2013). Fostering the chances of labor market participation for people with low formal education attainments is one of the main challenges for Vienna in this respect and can be read in regard to Viennas labour market demand highly-skilled jobs.

### **FR Upper Austria**

Upper Austria is located in the northern part of Austria and shares its national borders with Germany and the Czech Republic. It is the third largest Austrian regional state in terms of its population (1.43 mil-



**Figure 8. Functional Region Upper Austria**

lion - supposed to grow further) and the fourth largest in terms of size. The regional capital of Linz has a little less than 200.000 inhabitants and is the third largest city of Austria. In this Functional Region, 17.1 % of the population have a migration background, and 9.3 % have a citizenship other than Austrian (Statistik Austria, A).

Although Austria's regional economies show some heterogeneity, employment trends throughout the regional states are quite similar. The general Austrian trend points towards a decrease of jobs in agriculture, mining and manufacturing on the one hand and an increase of service jobs. However, Upper Austria is one of the centres of industrial production in Austria (25 % of the industrial production) – particularly in steel production and automotive supply. Against the national trend, the manufacturing sector in Upper Austria has developed and will develop positively in the next years. At the same time, structural changes in favour of the service economy are also visible in Upper Austria. In 2010, 5.5 % of the gross product of Upper Austria was made in the primary sector, 30.3 % in the secondary, and 64.3 % in the tertiary sector. Especially in Linz, the changes can be seen in numbers (tertiary sector close to 80 % of the gross product - Land Oberösterreich 2015). The main challenge policy makers face in the field of labour market policy are to guarantee the provision of skilled specialists in the field of production and an adequate reaction to the shift towards services.

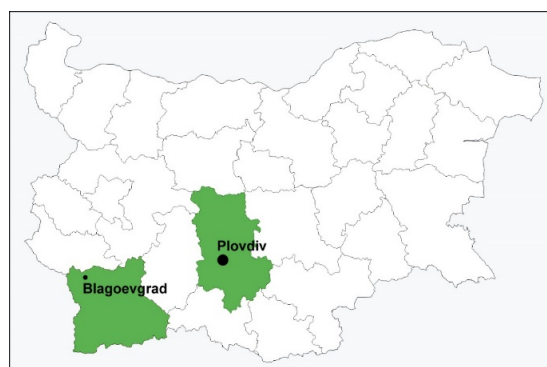
According to the education sector, the number of students enrolled in 2014 was approximately 30.000 (Land Oberösterreich 2015). In 2013, the highest educational qualification of 20 % of the population in Upper Austria between 25 and 64 years was compulsory school, almost 40 % had completed an apprenticeship, around 28 % had completed a secondary school or a secondary high school, and around 10 % held a university degree (Statistik Austria, B). In 2010, the distribution of pupils attending school beyond the 8<sup>th</sup> grade over different school types was as follows: 15 % of them attended a secondary academic school, 31 % a secondary technical and vocational high school, 16 % a secondary technical and vocational school (Lassnigg 2010, p. 29). The predominance of professions that require a medium skills level characterize the occupational structure in Upper Austria (Fink et al. 2014, p. 5-6), also reflected by Upper Austria having the highest share of apprentices in Austria (in 2015, 21.5 %, Land Oberösterreich 2016). The education profile of the population is characterized by the relative importance of the dual apprenticeship system, reflecting the importance of production in Upper Austria.

In general, the unemployment rate is in Upper Austria quite low (6.1 % in 2015, with 5,6 job seekers per vacancy), but the youth unemployment rate on the other hand, compared to the

general unemployment rate in the other federal states in Austria, is quite high (16.2 % of all unemployed were between 15 and 24 years old, (AMS online), whereas the rate of NEETs in the same age range is rather low with 5.8% (AK OÖ 2015). In 2015, 19.587 people in Upper Austria received needs-oriented basic subsidies, accounting for 6.9 % of all recipients in Austria (Statistik Austria, C). Upper Austria's lifelong learning strategy (*Strategy Upper Austria – Impulses and Goals for Adult Education*) puts a strong emphasis on the fostering of basic education, the acquisition of key competences and specialized professional trainings (Land Oberösterreich 2010).

## Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a country with a population of just over 7 million inhabitants situated in the South-east corner of Europe. Market economy was reintroduced after the collapse of the state socialist regime in 1989 and the country joined the EU in 2007. In the course of the social transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the system of LLL policies adopted some common European measures and programs while also keeping



**Figure 9. Bulgaria and selected Functional Regions**

some of its traditional characteristics. The functioning administrative-territorial division in the country is two-level – it consists of 28 administrative districts and 265 municipalities.

The liberalization reforms after 1989 created a mixed model of *welfare provision* characterized by a rapid decline in state support and a rise in the role of the family. Universal access to social benefits was strongly reduced becoming either means-tested (in the case of child benefits, education grants) or attached to previous contribution (in the case of unemployment benefits and paid parental leaves). The family is the main institution for ensuring assistance for young people's main life transitions (from school to work and from parental home to independent housing). As a whole, the welfare regime in the country is close to that of the Southern European 'Familistic' Welfare Regime (cf. D2.2).

After the onset of the global crisis in 2008, the *labour market* in Bulgaria is unbalanced, characterized with high rates of unemployment in general and long-term unemployment in particular as well as an inactive population. Particularly alarming is the trend among young people, aged between 15 and 29, as the country rate of NEETs is among the highest in the EU. The labour market is highly inflexible with a very low share of part-time work and rigid working schedules while

informal employment is still high, particularly among the first-time workers. The disparities in the labour market are growing simultaneously with reducing of the resources for their overcoming, e.g. for implementing the labour market policies.

The Bulgarian *education and training system* is well developed, but in recent years is facing serious challenges connected with: 1) Drastic decline in the quality of school and university education; 2) Discrepancy between labour market needs and education; 3) High share of tertiary graduates taking job placements below their qualification. Obviously, higher education produces more graduates than the labour market demands. It is necessary to apply the mechanisms of cooperation between LLL stakeholders at national, regional and local level, to improve the relationship between education and training, in order to comply with the requirements of the labour market, including by offering distance and e-learning, application of modern technologies in teaching and learning, providing various opportunities for students. The two selected Functional regions are Blagoevgrad and Region Plovdiv.

#### ***FR Blagoevgrad***

Blagoevgrad district is the sixth largest district in the country – with a total population of around 312.831 inhabitants to 2015 (Republic of Bulgaria 2015). The Blagoevgrad functional region corresponds to the Blagoevgrad district in the national administrative-territorial division. The FR size is 6.452,3 km<sup>2</sup> (Bulgaria has a total surface of 110.912 km<sup>2</sup>). Blagoevgrad region covers 14 municipalities, 96 city halls and 280 settlements (Regional administration Blagoevgrad 2017). It has a relatively good demographic structure. The urban population in the district is 59 % and it shares sixth place on the largest number of rural population (Alpha Research 2017).



The data from the last census in Bulgaria in 01.02.2011 compared with those of 2007 (provided by the National Statistical Institute) in each of the villages located in the Blagoevgrad district show that just in four years the population in the most villages decreased. Population decline is mainly in the Christian villages. Most villages with wholly or predominantly Muslim population display an increase in their number of inhabitants. The demographic picture is good only in the villages with Bulgarian Muslims and Roma population because of their cultural peculiarities, little migration and high birth rates (Stoykova 2015).



**Figure 10. Blagoevgrad Functional Region**

In terms of economy, Blagoevgrad functional region covers almost all sectors of the national economy (JUMP EU Project 2017). The industrial sector is, besides tourism and agriculture, an important branch, with 49.7 % of the total of achieved products employing 30.5 % citizens, especially for food and textile products. However, the High-tech industries and economic activities based on new knowledge are underdeveloped (Republikabzaga Series n.d.). The educational system of the Blagoevgrad FR is well developed with a strong accent of both the formal and non-formal education. Also, Blagoevgrad is a city of universities connected with significant presence of young adults in the region. Students can study at South-West University „Neofit Rilski” and American University in Bulgaria, which are increasingly imposed in the cultural and social life of the city. Besides, there are three high schools in Blagoevgrad: College of Tourism, College of Economics and Management and Medical College. The academic environment is favourable for the development and application of the LLL policies in the regional context. The level of education has a decisive influence on young adults’ chance of employment as those with university education have higher employment opportunities. At the same time, the FR Blagoevgrad continues to face a misbalance between the qualifications of graduates and the market demands both for low and highly skilled jobs. For example, the youth unemployment rate in the main city is 5.3 % for the age group of 15-24 and 22.8 % for the age group of 25-35. All of these characteristics of the FR suggest a wide range of diversity in the approaches towards young adults and the policies required for their inclusion in LLL.

#### **FR Plovdiv**

The district of Plovdiv is divided into 18 administrative-territorial units – municipalities, and the municipality of Plovdiv is the biggest among them. Plovdiv functional region comprises the municipality of Plovdiv and the neighbouring functional area, and its area is 101.98 km<sup>2</sup> (Republic of Bulgaria 2014). Plovdiv FR is unique in terms of administrative-territorial characteristics, e.g. Plovdiv Municipality is one of the three municipalities in Bulgaria (with Dobrich Municipality and Yambol Municipality) that overlaps the main city. As the biggest city in South Bulgaria, and the second largest by population in the country, Plovdiv is an important economic, educational and cultural centre, which plays a significant role not only for the region, but for the whole country as well.

Plovdiv FR is very important and interesting for research because, on the one hand, it is characterized as one of the most economically robust in the country, on the other hand it has a variety of socio-cultural segments, and different migration processes are taking place there as a basic determinant in the Life Long Learning policies.

Despite its economic growth, the FR suffers from a mismatch between economic demands and qualification skills of the young adults who are struggling to find their place in the labour market.

The population living in the FR is 341.567, as 52.673 of them are under working age, 218.046 – at working age, and 70.848 – over working age. The city attracts workforce from a region, where more than 1.3 million people live at a distance, which allows them to travel for a work in the city. The overall unemployment rate is 4.9 %, as the youth unemployment rate in the main city is 19.4 % (Republic of Bulgaria 2014).

Plovdiv functional region is a big *economic* and research centre, with a well-developed logistics network that has a big potential to attract local entrepreneurs and foreign investors, and it appears as an important characteristic on the supply side of the labour market. The local economy generates output of over 6 billion EUR annually: in manufacturing (3.1 billion €), construction (690 million €), transport and logistics (400 million €), business services and IT (310 million €).



Figure 11. Plovdiv Functional Region

Annually the city attracts around 600 million EUR investments. It has a very balanced mix of investments, which are allocated to different sectors of the economy. It is one of the fastest developing IT and outsourcing destination not only on a national, but on a global scale as well. Moreover, the innovations and creativity are of main importance to faster the economic and business development of the FR with its main centre (Investment Destination Plovdiv 2015).

The *educational system* in Plovdiv is well developed, ensuring a massive resource of educated and highly qualified specialists. The education system is trying to become more open, establishing different forms of cooperation with businesses. Plovdiv is positioned as a leading university area of national significance, second in Bulgaria, behind the capital city Sofia. There are 9 universities, with 39.260 students, and 87 primary, secondary and vocational schools with 8.351 pupils (Investment Destination Plovdiv 2015). There are also many scientific-research institutes on the territory of Plovdiv, with accent on those in the area of agriculture and food industry. Still graduates and employers complain of the insufficient practical training and few opportunities for working experience – situation that hinders R&D efforts of the local businesses.

## Croatia

Croatia is the youngest member of the European Union and has a relatively short history as an independent state. The entire territory of the Republic of Croatia is divided into 21 counties, including Zagreb, which is both town and county. Croatia is currently facing a 'triple transition': from war to peace; from a socialist system based on a planned economy and political monopoly to a free market economy, political pluralism, and a civil society; and from external humanitarian assistance to international support for sustainable development and institutional reform (Bošnjak et al. 2002).

Even though the *welfare system* is faced with a pressure to move to a regime marked by deregulation, pluralization of funding and provision, the nature of Croatia's welfare regime remains interventionist and, itself, contributes to national solidarities. Social welfare includes all interventions of public or private bodies aimed at alleviating the financial burden of households and individuals from a defined series of risks and needs, pro-



**Figure 12. Croatia and selected Functional Regions**

vided that there is no simultaneous reciprocal or individual counter-performance. Social welfare is connected with antecedent employment. Therefore, young persons with no work experience and those with occasional work experience do not have access to the benefits and the scope of coverage of financial benefits for young persons is limited. The connected high youth unemployment rate, related to the high number of unskilled young person, and high migration rate of young people are among biggest Croatian social problems in recent years (Bejaković 2010).

Limited employment opportunities for young people and the skills gap are related to: the inadequate educational attainment of the labour force; a *vocational education and training system* that does not cater for the needs of the labour market; and low, although increasing, tertiary education enrolment rates. A reason for the structural problems can be found in the constant structural mismatch between *labour supply and demand*. A strong association between poverty, education, employability and long-term unemployment, requires strong connection of different policies and institutions, at national and regional (county: unit of regional self-government that represents a natural, self-government unit) level. A further reason for the mentioned problematics is the regional policy, which still based on traditional instruments such as tax relief's and intergovernmental transfers, while a meaningful approach to supporting young adults through LLL and other regional policies are lacking. Among the most and the lowest developed counties, the *Istrian County* and the *Osijek-Baranja County* are chosen as two Croatian contrasting functional regions.

### **FR Istria County**

*Istria County* is situated in the north-west of the Adriatic Sea and includes a large part of the Istrian peninsula (2.820 km<sup>2</sup>). The County is surrounded by the sea, except for its northern borders that are close to two big towns, Trieste in Italy and Rijeka in Croatia. One third of the Istrian peninsula is covered with woods. Administratively, the Istria County consist of 41 territorial units of local self-government: 10 towns and 31 municipalities. Istria has 208.055 inhabitants (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2015).

The main part of inhabitants in Istria (70.7 %) live in the (10) cities; while the other 29.3 % live in the 31 municipalities. The county can be seen as a predominantly rural region, although rural areas are marked by extremely low population density, 33 inh/km<sup>2</sup>. Istria was not affected by the war, hence this FR did not face some of the problems almost all the other counties in Croatia have.

According to the economy, the leading activities are manufacturing industry, tourism, and trade. Other important economic sectors are construction, real estate and business services. The data of the 2011 Census showed the following distribution of employed people across the key sectors of the economy: 3.11 % work in agriculture/forestry/fishing, 28.64 % in industry-construction and energy/water related activities, 67.31 % were employed in the services sector.

With regard to education, in population aged 20-29 years (26.569), 0.23 % have no education, 0.08 % persons finished three grades of elementary education, and 0.39 % seven grades of elementary education. Elementary education have 5.05 % persons, while secondary education have 75.49 % persons. Higher level of education achieved 18.41 % of all young adults.

According to the labour market, youth in the 15-29 age range in Istria County make up 29.5 % (in 2012) to 27.2 % (in 2016) of all unemployed persons. Over the five-year period (2012-2016), the proportion of social welfare beneficiaries is relatively stable. The Istria County is a below-average proportion of social welfare beneficiaries with respect to the proportion in the overall Croatian population (0.6 % FR to 2.4 % national). The poverty rate in the Adriatic region (where Istria belongs) is 12.6 %.

#### ***FR Osijek-Baranja County***

*Osijek-Baranja County* is a continental county, located in the Pannonian valley in North eastern Croatia, expanded over an area of 4.152 km<sup>2</sup> (*Croatian Bureau of Statistics* 2015). The County territory is predominantly plain and favours agricultural development, which leads to intensive agricultural production, as well as an ecologically based one. Administratively, the Osijek-Baranja County consists of 42 territorial units of local self-government – 7 towns and 35 municipalities.

Osijek-Baranja County has 305.032 inhabitants. 63.59 % of the whole population live in the cities, while the rest (36.41 %) live in the municipalities (*Croatian Bureau of Statistics* 2015).

A transitional process started after the war have resulted in a dramatic backwardness of Eastern Croatia (including Osijek-Baranja County). The consequences are above-average unemployment in Osijek-Baranja County, high level of immigration rate, as well as low economic standard of the whole population (including young adults). A high level of dependence on the national government can be seen by the regional governments.

The County bases its economic development on agriculture and the food-processing industry, as well as on crafts and trades. Out of 23 industrial production activities within the County, the processing industry is the most represented one (18.47 % of all employees work in that sector).

According to education, young adults aged 20-29 years (40.762), 0.23 % have no education, 0.14% persons finished three grades of elementary education, and 0.67 % seven grades of elementary education. Elementary education have 6.1 % persons, while secondary education have 77.95 % persons. Higher level of education achieved 14.70 % of all young adults.

The number of youth (aged 15 to 29) unemployment make up 29.5 % (in 2016) of all unemployed persons while the five-year period (2012-2016), the proportion of social welfare beneficiaries is relatively stable.

The Osijek-Baranja County is an above-average proportion of social welfare beneficiaries with respect to the proportion in the overall Croatian population (4.7 % : 2.4 %). The poverty rate in the Continental region (where Osijek-Baranja County belongs) is 19.4 %. The population of the Osijek-Baranja County shows an emigration trend.

## Finland

Finland consists of 19 regions of which two contrasting regions were chosen for analysis: Southwest Finland, representing the urban and marine southwest, and Kainuu, which represents the rural northeast. In terms of policy planning and implementation hierarchy, regions can be placed between national and municipality-level government authorities.

The Finnish *welfare system* belongs to the Nordic welfare regime, and the universalistic system guarantees a minimum level of subsistence for everyone. Income differentials in Finland are smaller than the EU average despite their relatively rapid growth in the 1990s. 16 % of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Statistics Finland 2015).



**Figure 13. Finland and selected Functional Regions**

The Finnish *education system* is highly standardised with a low level of stratification. There are no dead-end tracks in the system, and tracking begins relatively late at the age of 16. The first choice all students have to make is whether to continue with academic or vocational studies for upper secondary education after the common comprehensive school. Differences between the vocational and academic track in terms of both attractiveness and opportunities for further education are relatively small.

With regard to the Finnish *labour market*, service industry provides significantly more employment opportunities than industry and construction sectors. The size of the country's working age population is decreasing due to an increasing retirement rate. At the same time, the number of immigrants is growing and careers are becoming longer (EURES 2016). With regard to Finnish policies related to young adults, despite increased de-standardisation of life-courses, the societal expectations related to standardised 'normal' life course are strongly present in Finnish transition policies. Facilitating smooth and linear transitions from compulsory education to further education and finally to working life is seen as a key policy priority concerning both educational and labour market policies.

As described below, there are several socio-economic and demographic factors that make Southwest Finland and Kainuu a good pair of contrasting cases of comparison for the purposes of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. There is also a clear difference in what is emphasised in the regional LLL policies. Given the state's strong role in LLL policies, analysing the LLL policies of these two functional regions enables us to scrutinise how national policies are interpreted and implemented at regional and local levels when the contexts, strengths and challenges differ significantly. In both regions, the policies are generally co-funded by the municipalities, the state and the ESF.

### ***FR Southwest Finland***

The FR Southwest Finland has a population of 474.000, which makes it the third largest region in Finland. Region's capital is Turku, which, with a total population of around 186.000 inhabitants, is the fifth biggest Finnish city. Southwest Finland covers an area of 10.663 km<sup>2</sup> and it consists of 27 municipalities. Located by the coast of the Archipelago Sea, it is known for its unique archipelago comprising over 20.000 islands. Its central location makes it an important international actor in the Baltic Sea area.

Southwest Finland encompasses mainly urban and marine areas. The main industries are marine industry and metal construction, which, together with the research and development in bio-

sciences and food industry, form the base of the economic life of the region. 15.1 % of the work force were working in industry in 2016. During the past few decades, the traditional industry has given room for the service sector (in 2014 almost 75 % of all jobs). (Regional Council of Southwest Finland, RCSF.)

Southwest Finland is a strong educational region. There are two universities and four universities of applied sciences in the region. Altogether, there are 75 post-compulsory educational institutions located throughout the region. Every year about 9.500 new students enrol in the universities, universities of applied sciences, and vocational institutions of Southwest Finland. (RCSF.) Nearly 30 % of the adult population has completed higher education (Statistics Finland).

The unemployment rate (10.2 %) is a little higher than the national average (9.4 %). In recent years, the youth unemployment rate has risen to 15.6 % being higher than the national average. Region's main challenges include a relatively slow development of employment as well as the large number of long-term unemployed. More people are retiring from working life than entering the workforce. (ELY Centre 2013.) The regional GDP was approximately 34.00 euros per inhabitant in 2014, which is close to the national average (Statistics Finland).

Generally, the aim of the LLL policies in Southwest Finland is to involve actors from various policy sectors and administrative bodies for cooperation. The projects are aiming to offer efficient and correctly timed guidance and flexible paths to education or employment. A large share of the projects focuses on youth who need educational support, qualifications and personal guidance in order to reach the labour market and become employable.

### ***FR Kainuu***

The FR Kainuu comprises an area of 20.197 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 75.000, which makes it the second smallest region in Finland. Kainuu consists of eight municipalities, which are primarily rural. The region is located in northern Finland and it borders the regions of Northern Ostrobothnia, North Karelia and Northern Savonia in Finland and the Republic of Karelia in Russia. Region's capital is Kajaani, which has 38.000 inhabitants (Regional Council of Kainuu 2016).

The strengths of the region are nature, space and natural resources, forests in particular. Previously paper industry was the most important employer in Kainuu, but there has been a shift in the wood industry to upgrading wood to final products. Even though the amount of jobs in forestry, mining and agriculture is still significant, the service sector is nowadays the most important employer. Nearly 35 % of the wage earners work for municipalities, around 8 % for the state,



and almost 60 % work in the private sector (Statistics Finland 2014). The regional GDP of the region was approximately 27.000 € per inhabitant in 2014 (Statistics Finland), which is considerably lower than the national average of 37.600 €.

Compared to Southwest Finland, there are much fewer post-compulsory educational opportunities in Kainuu. In the region, there are no universities and only one university of applied sciences, which is located in Kajaani, the capital city of the region. Altogether, there are 21 post-compulsory educational institutions in the region. 23 % of the population in Kainuu has completed higher education, when the share of higher education graduates is 32 % in the whole country (Statistics Finland 2014).

The unemployment rate in 2015 (14.9 %) was higher than the national average (9.4 %). In the previous year, the youth unemployment rate of the region was 23.7 % (national average 13.2 %). In Kainuu, the population growth rate is negative (–795 in 2015) and the dependency ratio is much higher than in Southwest Finland or in the whole country on average. (Statistics Finland 2016.) Because the demand for and supply of labour are unequal, there are some recruitment problems, particularly for roles that require specialist knowledge (EURES 2016).

The LLL policies within the functional region Kainuu are dominated by policies leaning towards the social and youth policy sector, which can be explained by the urgent need for these types of projects and interventions considering the poorer health and lower level of wellbeing and life management skills of the youth and young adults in Kainuu when compared to the country as a whole. The main target groups are young people who are not in education, employment or training and who are, thus, under the threat of social exclusion.

## **Italy**

From a political point of view, Italy may be considered as a ‘relatively’ decentralized country. In fact, almost 29 % of the public expenditures is spending made by the subnational Governments, placing Italy 19<sup>th</sup> in terms of decentralization in the OECD countries (OECD 2017).

In recent years, the Italian Government has accelerated the reform process, adopting and implementing long-needed structural changes, in particular in financial and fiscal sectors (Ministero dell’Economia e delle Finanze – MEF 2016).

The Italian *Welfare System* is based on three main pillars, and it is considered to be a conservative-corporatist system focused mainly on health care, social care and pensions.

To slightly counter this, the recent welfare reforms aim to build a clearer, simpler and more efficient labour market, which is also more equitable and inclusive, especially favouring the employment of young people, supporting working parents and accompanying unemployed workers in their job search, through a national Agency for Active Labour Market Policies, developing specific actions regarding the labour market.

As for *education and training system issues*, the main goal of the latest reform was to ensure to all young people the possibility to achieve basic skills, improving their matching with the labour market needs.

In this context, the *LLL policies* present particularly interest in NEETs, encouraging and supporting people in resuming their studies, also providing a partial recognition of non-formal and informal learning and tailored training plans.

From an economic point of view, the driver is the Metropolitan Cities that represent just 5 % of the total land surface of the country, involved 1.328 Municipalities containing over 4 % of the national population, and producing over 40 % of national Added Value. They are also distinguished for attractiveness, especially on an international level, for being logistical hubs for people and goods, and research innovator points. However, the future of Italy depends also on the non-metropolitan areas, that offer a diversified picture (6.719 municipalities and a population of nearly 64 % of the total one) (OECD 2015a).

For these reasons, synergies between metropolitan and non-metropolitan Italy represent a crucial factor for the Country's economic and social development. Moreover, the education and training system represents a scope in which regional and national rules coexist, while vocational training is a matter of regional rules. The two functional regions (FRs) selected for fieldwork are Milan and Genoa.



**Figure 14. Italy and selected Functional Regions**

### ***The FR Milan***

The biggest urban area in the Lombardy Region is located around the city of Milan. The Milan Metropolitan Area is selected as one of Functional Regions as it obviously is a prototype of a polycentric metropolitan area. This polycentric area is dominated by a large city, Milan, the driver not only in terms of population, but also of economic issues, cultural facilities and administrative institutions.



**Figure 15. Milan Functional Region**

The metropolitan area is characterized by a high institutional fragmentation. The area includes in total 134 Municipalities of 1.576 km<sup>2</sup> with a of 3.208.509 inhabitants in January 2016 (ISTAT 2016). The Municipalities are small in size and large in numbers, which creates a patchwork of relative autonomous areas. They are relatively autonomous to define their own plans, policies and land use.

The economic structure of the territorial system is quite complex due to the high number of sectors and of supply chains for each sector. In the recent years, this area has been characterized by different vulnerability aspects (more specifically, territorial disparity, inequalities in gender and education, social and spatial marginality) which nowadays are stressed due to the economic crisis effects. It has also been affected by a de-industrialization process. The Metropolitan City of Milan has over 296.000 active enterprises, the majority of which operate in the tertiary sector, particularly in services, where there are over 146.000 units (49.6 % of the total) and 1.032.000 employees (55 %). The manufacturing sector covers 18.8 % of employees, with 10.5 % of the enterprises. It is a system in good health, which, despite the economic recession, has seen an increase in the number of enterprises of 3.4 % in the last 5 years, with an overall positive annual change and particularly in Milan (4.6 %) (Assolombarda 2016).

Today the productive model is based on a dense network of small and very small enterprises, complemented by a limited number of medium to large size companies. Most of the activity is concentrated in the service sector and the tertiary sector (69 %), especially those most qualified and of the highest added value. The hi-tech industry counts 15 % of companies active in Italy and as many as 31 % of employees, while one of the drivers of the development is the creative economy: registered design, fashion, patents, copyrights and trademarks; productions that play a leading role, even for traditional activities.

In terms of education, the Functional Region also presents a clear differentiation of roadways. The main division is between college-track lyceum, which provides a more academic training, and work-track institute, where more practical and technical disciplines are taught. Technical and vocational schools have responded to Italy's fast-growing economy by offering an ever-widening range of courses tailored to the needs of employers. Within the metropolitan area, in the scholastic year 2015/16, 118.255 pupils attended secondary schools: 51.5 % of pupils were studying at lyceum (schools with focus on academic learning and preparation to university), 30.1 % at technical institutes, and 18.3 % at professional institutes, and 2.2 % attended vocational schools (Metropolitan area of Milan 2017). Moreover, in Lombard, in spite of the difficulties that led to a strong growth of young people seeking work abroad (especially among the educated and skilled one), the trend in employment among high education degree holders is in decline (Unioncamerelombardia-IRS 2016).

Regarding the labour market, the employment rate was 65.1 % in 2015 (+ 0,2 points respect to 2004). The young people's unemployment rates remain critical in 2015 (28.7 %), compared with a 1 percentage point increase on an annual basis, up by 15 points higher than in the pre-crisis year of 2008. The number of NEETs represents 19.4 % of Lombard Region young people in this age group (275.000 young people), although, for the first time since the beginning of the crisis, there is a reduction on an annual basis (-3.3 %) but it remains at much higher levels than the rates in 2008 (+ 70 %) (Camera di Commercio di Milano 2016). Moreover, in Lombard, in spite of the difficulties that led to a strong growth of young people seeking work abroad (especially among the educated and skilled one), the trend in employment among higher-educated is in decline (Unioncamerelombardia-IRS 2016).

In the field of social welfare and labour markets, there is coordination between the different Municipalities and there are several administrative procedures that allow Municipalities to bypass differing policies or regulations and coordinate public and private activities in complex decision making processes. This form of coordination is obliged by law, and hence does not reflect proactive initiatives for inter-municipal cooperation.

Concerning the LLL policies, the Milan FR presents different integrated policies which are oriented to solve different problems, such as reducing the early school leaving, reconciling work and family life, helping disadvantaged pupils. The main target group are the youths who dropped out school, disadvantaged pupils and young mothers. The policies are generally co-funded both at national, regional and local level.

## **FR Genoa**

The FR is characterized by a dynamic and specialized port especially with regard to container traffic and its nodal position with logistic corridors trans-European and Mediterranean. Genoa has a high level of tertiary education, but the labour market is unable to absorb all those who have university degrees. In the city of Genoa most part of the activities is related to trade, tourism, harbour and other tertiary activities. The region has a high rate of youth unemployment in particular, the long-term unemployed and it has an industrial fabric polarized between small companies and large enterprises (in crisis).

The topography of the area, the altitude of the mountains and the presence of the sea make the metropolitan area of Genoa unique in the Italian territory. The city of Genoa is one of 15 Italian metropolitan cities and the FR Genoa is made up of 67 municipalities in an area of 1.833 km<sup>2</sup>. It is a part of the so called “industrial triangle Milan-Turin-Genoa”. The FR Genoa is characterized by a dynamic and specialized port especially with regard to container traffic and its nodal position with logistic trans-European and Mediterranean corridors. The Port of Genoa features an uninterrupted 22-kilometre coastline, and covers a total surface area of 6 million m<sup>2</sup> of land and 14.5 million m<sup>2</sup> of seawater. Today Genoa ranks as the premier port in Italy in terms of total throughput (52 million tons), and amongst the top Mediterranean gateway container ports (2.172.944 TEU) (Genoa port authority Authority 2016).

In spite of an increase in births and a decrease in deaths, over the past year the birth/death ratio remains negative, even though there is a slight improvement trend. In line with demographic trends, the structure of the resident population has aged considerably. For these reasons, the *welfare system* invested more in pensions and in passive labour policies than in active policy programmes or in unemployment protection interventions.

With regard to labour market, the Functional Region presents a relatively delicate situation. While the unemployment rate that in 2016 (9.9 %) was lower than the national average (15.6 %), the unemployment rate of 15-29-year-olds was definitely higher ranking 26.29 % (OECD 2017). It confirmed the trend that emerged during the last years of a consolidation of the elderly component of regional society and, therefore, the progressive aging of the workers.

In terms of education, in the scholastic year 2016/17, 60.642 pupils attended secondary schools: 53.1 % of pupils will study at lyceum (schools with focus on academic learning and preparation to university), 30.4 % at technical institute, and 16.5 % at professional institute (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca – MIUR 2016). It is important to note that the Gen-

oa Functional Region has a high level of tertiary education, but the labour market is unable to absorb all those who have university degrees.

With regards to LLL strategies, the Genoa FR's current policies are oriented to integrate regular schooling and vocational education and training in order to improve youth basic skills, to support support youth in the transition from school to work, and to replace the early school leavers back in education. The main target group are unemployed young people and low-skilled people who have lost their job. The policies are generally co-funded both at national, regional and local level.

## Portugal

Portugal is a highly centralized country. Education, training, labour market and youth policies are conceived at the national level, by the government and implemented at regional and local levels. According to Ferrera (1996), Portugal belongs to the Southern Model of Welfare State. This model is characterized by "a highly fragmented and 'corporatist' income maintenance system, displaying a marked internal polarization", based on high pensions, gaps of protection, a health system based on universalistic principles, a low degree of state penetration of the welfare sphere and a highly collusive mix between public and non public actors and institutions and the consistence for a selective distribution of cash subsidies. (Ferrera 1996, p. 17).



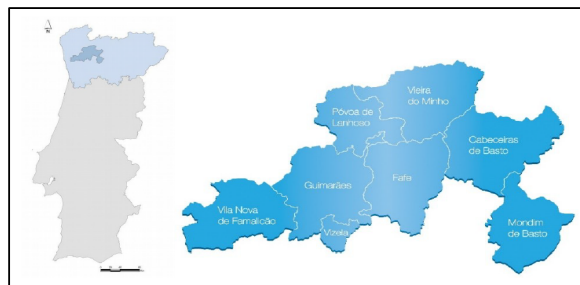
**Figure 16. Portugal and selected Functional Regions**

From an educational viewpoint, Portugal still has large sectors of the population with low qualifications when compared with other EU countries and only recently VET path became an alternative in upper secondary education. According to Allmendinger's educational systems typology (1989), Portuguese educational system is characterized by a high standardization (the provision of equal educational standards nationwide) and a high stratification (the selection procedures within the systems). During the last decade, transition to work became more difficult to young adults. A quick and linear transition from education to work has been replaced by long and non-linear pathways, mainly for those with low educational qualifications. Temporary jobs and unemployment became common events for large sectors of young adults due to the flexibilization of the labour market legislation and the lack of jobs. As Velden and Wolbers (2003, p. 208) state, the

high rates of youth unemployment in the southern countries can mainly be explained by the unfavourable labour market situation in these countries. In order to cope with the youth unemployment and the early school leaving several top-down policies were implemented. This kind of policy-making is based on a strong role played by the state and a weak intervention of others social actors such as regional and local public services, employers' associations, trade unions, and NGOs. Therefore, Portugal is an interesting case to analyze how national policies are implemented at the regional and local levels, the patterns of coordination and the relationships among the different policies and actors. The two functional regions selected for fieldwork are Vale do Ave and Alentejo Litoral.

### **FR Vale do Ave**

The Intermunicipal Community of Vale do Ave encompasses an area of 1.541 km<sup>2</sup>, with a total population of 419.119 inhabitants (PORDATA 2015), which corresponds to a density of about 275 inh./km<sup>2</sup>, one of the highest in the country. The Vale do Ave is one of the largest and oldest industrial re-



**Figure 17. Vale do Ave Functional Region**

gions of the country. Manufacturing is the main economic activity in 5 of the 8 municipalities of Vale do Ave and in the others three municipalities, agriculture is the main economic activity. Although the region has historically been one of the most prominent economic hubs in the country, it has also been one of the most dramatically affected by the recent economic crisis, as it was already facing a prolonged economic recession and a rise in unemployment.

According to the largest and oldest industrial regions of the country, located in Vale do Ave, up to 2011 the population employed was mainly concentrated in the industrial sector, but in recent years there has been an increase of the employed population in the service industries. It is noteworthy the fact that the employed population in the primary sector has been decreasing, representing nowadays 1.96 % of the total employed population. The most of the companies of the region are in the tertiary sector and mostly focused on textile production (Alves 2002) and very much export oriented. Manufacturing is the main economic activity in five of the eight municipalities of Vale do Ave (Silva, 2014), while Agriculture is the main economic activity in the other three municipalities.

According to the INE - Statistics Portugal, in 2016 the youth unemployment rate was 28.6 % in

Portugal, higher than the general unemployment rate of 10.5 %. In 2015, in Vale do Ave region, the youth unemployment rate (between 15 and 24 years old) was 27.9 % and in Portugal there were 110.041 young people (between 25 and 34 years old) unemployed (INE). Even though we have no specific numbers for Vale do Ave region, in Portugal, the rate of NEET's was 13.9 % in the first semester of 2016, for young people between 15 and 34 years old.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science (DGEEC, 2015) most families have a low education level (64.3 % studied until 9<sup>th</sup> grade), moreover the number of early school leavers can be explained by the desire for economic independence (2 %).

In Vale do Ave region LLL policies are oriented to lower unemployment rates, especially among young people, and school dropouts, aiming the achievement of compulsory education for all students. VET offer in Vale do Ave is mainly funded by the state and responds to the labour market context needs. The main goal is that the training is adapted to the actual needs of the region, in order to avoid more unemployment. VET offer has a structural role in Vale do Ave region, once, as we have seen before, the main activity sectors are the secondary and tertiary.

### ***FR Alentejano Litoral***

Alentejano Litoral is an administrative region situated near the Atlantic sea in the southern part of Portugal. It covers an area of 5.309,4 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 95.410 inhabitants in 2016. In this area urban territory is combined with rural and sea-cost geography. Located in one of the less developed regions in Portugal (Alentejo), the FR shows since 1995 until 2010 a trajectory of economic growth. In economic terms, Sines and Odemira are the most important municipalities and they constitute the two cores of the region. Sines city has one of the biggest deep-water harbours in Europe and a very dynamic industrial and logistic zone where many national and international firms are located. Agriculture is the main economic activity in Odemira where many national and international firms using innovating technics are producing agriculture products to export. Another important economic activity is tourism. In recent years, several high quality tourism enterprises had been created representing an important sector for youth employment.



**Figure 18. Alentejo Litoral Functional Region**

Located in one of the less developed regions in Portugal (Alentejo), the FR shows since 1995



until 2010 a trajectory of economic growth. Between 2000 and 2010, the region presented a variation of GDP per capita of 46 % against 30.5 % in whole country, mainly due to economic specialization and employment attractiveness (CCDRAlentejo 2015, p. 7). In economic terms, Sines and Odemira are the most important municipalities and they constitute the two cores of the region. Sines city has one of the biggest deep-water harbours in Europe and a very dynamic industrial and logistic zone where many national and international firms are located. Agriculture is the main economic activity in Odemira where many national and international firms using innovating technics are producing agriculture products to export. Another important economic activity is tourism. In recent years, several high quality tourism enterprises had been created representing an important sector for youth employment. In 2011, 61.5 % of the workforce in Alentejo Litoral was concentrated in the tertiary sector, 24.8 % was employed in the secondary sector and 11.7 % in the primary sector.

In what concerns education, the FR presents a differentiation of tracks, mainly in the upper secondary education. In the school year 2014/15, 57.5 % of the students attended regular education (education based on academic learning, preparing to tertiary education) while 44.3 % were attending VET courses (DGEEC, DSEE & DEEBS, 2016).

With regard to social welfare, the region presents a fragile situation. The unemployment rate is higher than the national average, standing at 13.3 % in 2015. Young people are particularly affected by unemployment in this region: about 41.9 % of young people under the age of 35 were unemployed. Furthermore, only 62.6 % of the unemployed registered at the employment centres receive unemployment benefit. In spite of the high rate of unemployment, the GDP per inhabitant in 2014 was the second highest in the country, reaching 20.200 € while the national average was 16.600 €.

In this context, the LLL policies in Alentejo Litoral aim at fighting against youth unemployment through the accomplishment of the compulsory education (upper secondary education). VET courses are presented as the best education provision to fulfil this aim. The main target groups are the young adults who dropped out from school and are unemployed and students at risk of dropping out without accomplishing upper secondary education. These policies are co-funded by the state and the ESF.

## **Spain**

Spain is composed of seventeen regional governments (comunidades autónomas, CA) and fifty-one provinces. *Girona*, the first functional region, is one of the four provinces of the Catalonia CA (a more prosperous region), while *Málaga*, the second one, is one of the eight provinces of the Andalusia CA. All regional governments are committed to develop different competencies within the same framework laws. The main differences between the two functional regions do not arise from policy-making but from long-lasting



**Figure 19. Spain and selected Functional Regions**

socio-economic disparities. For the last century at least, Madrid and the North Eastern CAs have been more affluent than the Southern ones. Both FRs stage a large hospitality economic sector. To current political problems, dramatic changes of political priorities and views of multi-level governments, as well as significant disparities between official requirements and actual practices can be mentioned.

*Welfare and labour policies* posit a clear illustration. According to the Mediterranean pattern, the welfare system is inspired on Conservative regimes as far as social security is concerned, but the level of social spending is significantly much lower. Formally, the labour market fits with the features of an occupational type. However, neither employers nor governments invest a lot on new entrants in the labour market. Spain is also well-known for its huge unemployment rate, particularly among the youth, but only a fraction of the unemployed population receives a social benefit. Since 2010, the central government has reduced severance packages, has narrowed down the validity of collective agreements, and has limited the growth of the minimum wage.

With regard to education, a high rate of repetition and the widespread implementation of single-ability grouping in many lower secondary schools introduce informal forms of early tracking. In 2013, the Education (framework) Act on Quality created a track for low-performing students within the officially lower-secondary comprehensive education. Since that track was labelled as “basic vocational education”, the main debate on vocational education has focused on fifteen- and sixteen- year- olds. Nevertheless, a growing number of adult (and young adult) students enrol in middle and tertiary vocational education programs. On the other hand, vocational training has been traditionally isolated from the school system, but recent reforms allow for experimental initiatives that integrate these two kinds of programs.

## **FR Girona**

Girona is a very visible territory from an international stance. Since it lays at the very border between France and Spain, it conveys key international connections of infrastructures. Through the coast of Girona popular tourist resorts, presented as the Costa Brava are part of the region. However, the region is basically shaped by other functional factors regarding transport and education. An important pole is representing by the University of Girona as a public service for the surrounding area.

The population of this region amounts to 753.054 inhabitants. Since the eighties, the number of foreign-born residents has significantly increased. The bulk of this population comes from Morocco and Subsaharan Africa, but some local communities also come from Latin American and Eastern European countries. Industry, hospitality and services are the main economic sectors, but the regional economy is compounded by a variety of activities ranging from agriculture to some high- tech firms.

Concerning to the high number of foreigners, Girona has been a pioneer in debates on the integration of immigrant students in schools, and posits many intriguing questions on the impact of lifelong learning policies on this socio-demographic group.

## **FR Málaga**

Malaga configures both an unitary labour market and a housing area, which eventually imprint a metropolitan feature on the city and influence its fluxes of population. Although many people leave the city of Malaga to live in a suburb, they keep their job and relations in the city. For example, between 2010 and 2014 about 71 % of those who moved within the province settled in other municipalities located in the same functional region such as El Rincón de la Victoria, Torremolinos and Benalmádena (IECA 2015). Foreign immigration, the main part coming from the European Union, North Africa (Morocco) and Latin America, underpins the geographical relevance of this region. For the last decades, the proportion of immigrants achieved 10 % in city of Málaga (IECA 2014).

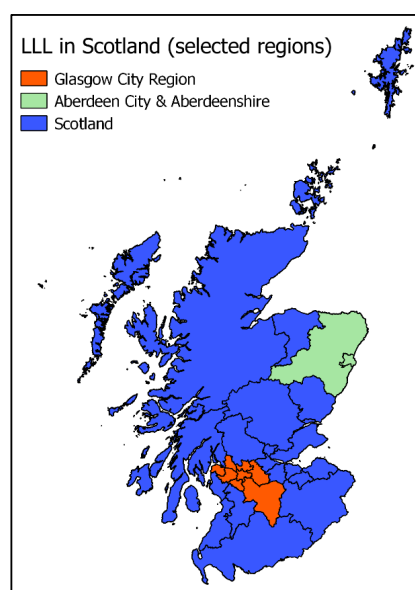
The hospitality and the transportation sectors lead the regional economy. Tourism has transformed the international airport into one of the most important hubs in Spain. The well-known surrounding tourist destinations are commonly known as the Costa del Sol, where mass facilities are available altogether with many high-standing resorts. At the same time, the local transportation network structures the region by facilitating mobility. Despite these thriving economy, the

average income ranks among the lower positions in Spain. Moreover, the distribution of this income is clearly uneven, not least because about 40% leave with an income level below the poverty threshold. So far, there are no established vocational education and vocational training in Málaga and a lack of information. Nevertheless, the Job Placement Shuttles attempts to make a difference in the local understanding and responses to unemployment. Led by the business community, the trade chambers and the central and regional governments started a program, bringing people together to work on their skills.

### UK (Scotland)

Scotland is distinct across Wales and Northern Ireland in the UK in the fact it has a Parliament with a significant range of devolved powers. These include health, housing, social care, education, local government and civil law. Powers reserved for the UK government include social security and nearly all taxation. The Scottish Parliament has the role of a civil service devising and implementing social policy. The Scottish welfare, health, education and training, and youth policies are closely aligned to one another reflecting the principles set out in the Christie report on the Future Delivery of Public Services (2011). This reform of Scottish public policy placed an emphasis on partnership working between sectors and services to build public services “around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience” (Scottish Government 2011a, p.23). This holistic approach attempts to enhance policy articulation for greater coherence impact and more effective use of resources.

In Scotland, *schools* are either state-run or private, with the system divided between primary school and secondary school (or high school). Primary School covers Primary 1 to Primary 7, and caters to children between 4 and 11 years old. High school, (also called Secondary School or Academy), runs from S1 (or First Year) to S6 (or Sixth Year/Form) 12-18 year olds, where students generally graduate at 18 years old. There are fifteen universities in Scotland and three other institutions of higher education which have the authority to award academic degrees.



**Figure 20. Scotland and selected Functional Regions**

There are 20 Colleges across Scotland that offer courses for people over the age of sixteen, including school-level qualifications as well as work-based learning. Higher education colleges offer degree-level courses, such as diplomas. Scottish colleges are funded primarily by the Scottish Funding Council, with tuition fees paid by individual students or their sponsors.

The *welfare system* in Scotland and the wider UK can be seen as an 'institutional' model of welfare with focus on social protection, and the provision of welfare services on the basis of right. This attempts to guarantee of minimum standards, including a minimum income and provide some level of social protection against insecurity (Briggs 1961). It is arguable that these ideals are not matched in reality. From April 2016, control over 11 separate government benefits including aspects of welfare moved from the UK Government to the Scottish Parliament. There are particularly close links between Health, Welfare and Employability policies and services.

Participation in the *labour market* is seen at UK and Scottish policy level as fundamental to economic performance and social equity wellbeing. Indeed, in Scotland there is a distinct emphasis on participation in the labour market for social equity. There has been an increasing alignment of, and coordination between, the education and the employment sectors in Scotland, particularly following the economic crisis of 2007/08 and the political drive to promote skills to tackle youth unemployment. Increasingly, systems to promote skills and employability are adopting an individualised focus with partners services and providers developing bespoke actions suited to individuals' needs and circumstances.

*Policy* enactment in Scotland adopts the so-called Concordat approach. This means that regional and local policies are localised reflections of National policies with National government devolving fiscal decisions and strategy prioritisation to local authorities. This is intended to allow a level of autonomy for adaption to suit local priorities and circumstances while still tackling National strategic objectives. This system is supported by national and local labour market intelligence and monitoring. Like some of the other countries involved in the Project, this approach presents challenges for policy-making and implementation regarding coordination and coherence among levels, sectors and actors. This makes Scotland an interesting case study to understand how national policies are enacted at local/regional level and whether the approaches work as intended.

The two functional regions (FRs) selected for fieldwork are Glasgow City Region and Aberdeen /Aberdeenshire City Region.

#### ***FR Glasgow City***

The Glasgow City Region (previously Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Region, is an urbanised city region in the western central belt of Scotland in the Clyde Valley and consisting of eight councils.

Glasgow City, the City Region's urban core, is Scotland's largest city with a wide sphere of influence and with a population of around 600.000 people. Twelve per cent of Glasgow's population is from an ethnic minority. Glasgow City is the main employment and service centre, the main retail centre, the main centre of further and higher education, as well as the main centre of cultural, leisure and entertainment activities for western central Scotland. The wider City Region plays a significant role in Scotland's economy and culture. It is largely urban, but much of this area is open countryside that accommodates numerous farming communities and several large country parks.

The GCR has no single municipal government, however, following the agreement of the City Deal with the UK Government, the eight constituent authorities established a joint Cabinet in 2015 to support governance of the Plan. In addition to its economic objectives, the City Region has a series of strategic social and health targets, including tackling social inequity. It also seeks to enhance the Region's international profile and influence. Across the GCR, there are a number of regeneration and infrastructure projects.

The main economic sectors in the by employment in the Glasgow City region are: Public administration, education and health (34 %); Distribution, hotel and restaurants (15 %); Manufacturing (15 %); banking and finance (15 %) and transport/ communications (8 %). The proportion employed in professional occupations is well above the Scotland average. However, despite this, Glasgow's employment levels still remain below those of 2009 levels, whereas the rest of Scotland and wider UK have seen recovery above the 2009 levels. It is estimated that the greatest gaps in the GCR are "in skilled trades and customer services and replacement demand is greatest in social care, tourism and in construction, which will continue to have an impact on FE provision in particular" (Skills Development Scotland 2016, p.18).

Regarding the education and training the GCR, Glasgow is a major centre of higher education and academic research, with four universities in the City centre (three colleges in the city, three Higher education colleges, twenty-nine secondary schools, 149 primary schools and three specialist schools, as well as a number of Independent schools). Across the other partnership local authorities that make up the GCR their education services operate state run primary, secondary and colleges. Further Education leavers in the wider Glasgow region were deemed less work-

ready by employers than the Scotland average, although this was the reverse for school leavers. The number of Modern apprenticeship starts in the Region increased slightly in 2013/14 from the previous year, with business and administration, hospitality, social services (children and young people), retail, and freight logistics being some of the most popular.

In terms of welfare, the average household earnings in Glasgow City are lower than for Scotland, although a higher proportion than average in East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire have incomes £30,000+. There are some 80,500 workless households in the region, concentrated in Glasgow City. The proportion of school pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than Scotland. Almost half (47.3 %) of Glasgow's population (283,000 people) live in the 20 % of most deprived areas in Scotland. Despite these figures, the level of relative deprivation in Glasgow has been reducing over recent years. In 2014/2015 almost 90,000 in the GCR were 'work-limited' through disability. While the extent of deprivation has fallen in the Region there are still large numbers of disadvantaged in the labour market.

The GCR LLL/ Skills policies closely reflect National policies but are refined to meet regional and local priorities and objectives. Not surprisingly, these have a strong focus on tackling disadvantage and unemployment. The GCR is working collaboratively with the Scottish Government, the UK's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and other partners to develop a tailored employment service to promote employment amongst the more deprived members of the community. In addition, the Scottish Government's Delivering Young Workforce policy is a key policy as is a Regional guarantee that provides every applicable young person 16-24 years old with a job, training or an apprenticeship. Across the GCR, most of the interventions to tackle skills development of those furthest removed from learning opportunities for a variety of reasons but including disadvantage, are addressed by Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) that involve a range of public, private and third sector partners, employers with links to regional boards. The CPP and their partners work to address the objectives set out for them in Single Outcome.

Funding for the Functional Region's LLL/ Skills programmes comes from Scottish Government, UK government with the partner local authorities contributing and also sometimes borrowing to support their policies and actions. Other sources, mainly European funding also feature.

### ***FR Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire***

Covering urban, coastal and rural geographies, the Aberdeen / Aberdeenshire City Region (A/ACR) area had a population in 2014 of 489,490 and accounted for 9.2 % of Scotland's total population. Aberdeen covers 185.7 km<sup>2</sup> and Aberdeenshire covers 6,313 km<sup>2</sup> – 8 % of Scot-

land's overall territory. Aberdeen is Scotland's third-largest city and the regional centre for employment, retail, culture, health and higher education as well as being the region's transport hub. Aberdeenshire is a mainly rural area in the north east of Scotland. Traditionally, it has been economically dependent upon the agriculture, fishing, and forestry and related processing industries but over the last 40 years, the development of the oil and gas industry and associated service sector has broadened Aberdeenshire's economic base, and contributed to a rapid population growth of 50 % since 1975. There is a functional interdependency between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City.

Regarding the main economic sectors by employment around 10 % of the A/ACR's workforce is directly employed in the energy sector compared to just 1.7 % UK wide. However, the recent downturn in the global energy market is likely to impact on this and have implications for employment and skills in this sector. Life sciences, food and drink and tourism also feature in the economic landscape of the Region. Traditional industries of farming and fishing are seen as an important focus for development while promoting a more diverse local economy with developments in the field of renewable energy. Support from local universities and research organisations is seen as important here.

Regarding the education and training, there are currently 12 secondary schools in Aberdeen and 17 in Aberdeenshire and 54 primary schools in Aberdeen City and 152 in Aberdeenshire run by the city council, a number of private schools. There are two universities; University of Aberdeen and The Robert Gordon University. North East Scotland College. According to Skills Development Scotland data, FE/HE leavers in the Functional Region are deemed more work-ready by employers than the national average, although this is the reverse for school leavers.

In terms of welfare, the A/ACR currently has above-average incomes and low unemployment. The average household earnings throughout the region are higher than those nationally. However, there are still some 20.000 workless households in the region. The proportion of school pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than Scotland, particularly so in Aberdeenshire. The relatively recent changes in the global oil economy and more locally, differences in wealth and opportunity between some of the region's communities are seen as significant challenges. There are plans to tackle these and other challenges by 2035, with A/ACR enhancing the Region as a place to live, visit and do business and actively including communities, public-sector organisations and private businesses in this process. While much lower than the Scotland and UK averages, there remain a significant number of those work limited through disability in the area, and



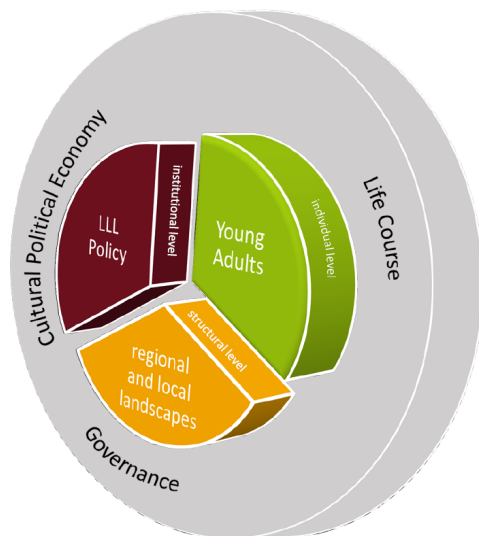
concentrations of employment deprivation (SDS 2016b, p. 18). The latest figures released by the Scottish Housing Condition Survey show that 42 % of people in Aberdeenshire are living in fuel poverty. The figure is considerably higher than the Scottish average which is 27 %. In Aberdeen, 22 % of the population struggle to heat their homes.

In terms of Regional LLL/Skills policies, the SDS Regional Skills Assessment for the A/ACR stresses that local enactment of existing National strategies and policies remain important for this Functional Region including the 2010 Skills Strategy (Scottish Government 2010) and the 2014 Developing the Young Workforce-Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy (Scottish Government 2014). The Functional Region's LLL / skills policies are closely tied to promoting regional economic performance and resilience. The A/ACR's Plan and localised actions seeks to retain appropriately skilled people in the Region but also to promote skills that will support the economic develop vision that will "contribute to the Region's international competitiveness and sustainability". (Aberdeen City Regional Economic Strategy. 2015, p. 6). At the Functional Region level a key strategy and associated actions stand out. This is the Aberdeen Guarantees programme. This involves a commitment to providing all young people 14-25 years old with opportunities to participate in learning, training and work including access to modern apprenticeships and enhanced information for students, parents and teachers about the job market and skills required across the Region. This articulates with the £2.2m ESF Employability Pipeline Project that aims to increase economic activity through training and work experience placements. There is also an Expanded Council programme of apprenticeships and placements. This refines national Modern Apprenticeship measures with local partnerships to support young people into employment. As with the Glasgow City Region the funding for the Region's LLL/ Skills programmes comes from the City Plan agreement with Scottish Government, UK government contributing. In addition, the two partner local authorities will also contribute and sometimes borrow to support their policies and actions. Other sources, mainly European funding also feature.

### **3. Theoretical Perspectives as Entry Points**

The theoretical perspectives furnish the lens with which the research object of YOUNG\_ADULLLT – LLL policies that frame young adults' transition from schooling to work – are focused on and conceptualised. This tripartite approach underscores the intertwining of LLL policies and young adults in different living conditions throughout European landscapes. The project analyses different types of LLL policies regarding their probably competing – and possibly contradicting – objectives on young adults. In addition, the intended and unintended impact

of LLL policies on young adults on the regional/local European level comes into attention. By framing the research object in this manner, three entry points come to the fore: LLL policies, their target groups and the different regional/local contexts. Departing from this conceptualisation of the research object requires a research strategy that combines different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches in a comparative multi-level analysis (see section 4 on methodology). With regard to the *conceptualisation of the theoretical perspectives*, the different entry points referred to above represent different analytical dimensions (institutional, individual, structural) of the research object. YOUNG\_ADULLLT adopted three different theoretical perspectives with view to adequately accounting for the various thematic and analytical dimensions of the research object. Figure 20 below illustrates the integration of thematic, analytical and theoretical elements in the project.



**Figure 21. YOUNG\_ADULLLT's thematic entry points and respective theoretical perspectives**

While capturing LLL policies being effective/ineffective for young adults' needs in constructing a meaningful life course is best analysed by using *Life Course Research* (hereafter LCR), the coordination of different actions and agents partaking in these LLL policies – and probably influencing young adults with their decision-making processes – is best analysed with the help of *Governance* research (hereafter GOV). *Cultural Political Economy* (hereafter CPE) is best used to describe the different objectives of LLL policies and in particular the intended impact of LLL policies at national, regional, local levels. Therefore, the understanding of the research objectives is

based upon a set of assumptions provided by LCR, GOV and CPE to guide the research questions and interpret the results accordingly.

The theoretical perspectives can be described as the lens guiding our focus regarding the research object. They can be viewed as a framework, allowing us to decide to whether include or exclude specific information, subjects, material, phenomenon etc. that come in focus. Therefore, the relevance of the theoretical perspectives is twofold: *First*, they organise thoughts and ideas for approaching the research object and, *second*, the perspectives contain assumptions viewed as pertinent to the current state of research in the respective research field. In other words, the perspectives guide the research by framing the individual, structural, and institutional levels respectively as well as by providing insights for data collection and interpretation. Therefore, defining and discussing the theoretical perspectives sharpens the common understanding of the research object itself and increases our awareness in dealing with the different research questions in the projects.

The remaining of this section is divided in three parts that together explain how the theoretical perspectives contribute to the project and discuss the resulting implications for their empirical research. By distinguishing central dimensions within each perspective, they provide the focus for identifying national peculiarities and cross-national patterns that form the background for the interpretation of the collected data and therefore are an important part in the project's research results. Thus, the following parts provide the state of the art of national particularities along central dimensions of the theoretical perspectives. These dimensions guided as a theoretically informed choice the selection of documents analysed provided in the online database of the project (cf. D2.2).

### **A. Cultural Political Economy**

The first objective of YOUNG\_ADULLLT is to understand the relationship and fit of LLL policies in terms of orientations and objectives to their specific target groups, making it possible to assess the compatibility and potentials of LLL policies that aim both at creating and improving economic growth and, at the same time, at guaranteeing social inclusion for young adults as expressed in current European policy strategies. In order to achieve this objective, YOUNG\_ADULLLT reviews and maps LLL programmes and policies in the countries involved; analyses their compatibility of orientations and objectives; and, inquiries into the specific meanings of the target group 'young adults' put forward by each policy.

In Europe, a vast number of LLL policies for young adults have been designed and implemented in the framework of overall strategies to meeting the challenges of creating and improving economic growth and at the same time guaranteeing social inclusion. Among the policies and initiatives targeting young adults at secondary, post-secondary, and tertiary education levels there are substantial differences in scope, approach, orientation, and objectives. Further, there is much variation in the way they understand and construct their target groups, namely young adults. Two underlying assumptions are of particular importance in discussing LLL policies for young adults in the context of current strategies: *First*, that the target groups implied in LLL policies are neither natural nor static categories that can be simply used by policies to 'address' particular groups and social issues. Rather, policies significantly change and sometimes even construct the target group they address. *Second*, YOUNG\_ADULLLT departs from the assumption that policies with different orientations and objectives will understand and construct their target groups in substantially different ways, raising questions as to the mutual compatibility among the policies and their potential effects for young adults – and to their direct or indirect side effects.

YOUNG\_ADULLLT adopts the Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach as one of its main theoretical perspectives for the critical interrogation of the policy orientation of LLL policies in Europe, their construction of their target groups and their potential desirable and undesirable effects on young adults. Some of the questions that the CPE approach incorporates to the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project are:

- What are the different orientations and objectives of LLL policies?
- Since LLL policies differ in terms of sectorial focus and approach, are their objectives and orientations mutually compatible?
- How do these LLL policies construct their target groups? With what (intended or unintended) effects?
- What are the specific contexts and conditions for LLL policies to succeed?
- Are there any differences in LLL policies with regard to gender and migration status of the target groups?

### **Theoretical roots and aims**

CPE is a recent analytical approach that attempts to combine contributions from the critical political economy and the critical analysis of discourse to the field of policy studies (Jessop 2004a; Sum & Jessop 2013). Jessop defines CPE as

“an emerging post-disciplinary approach that highlights the contribution of the cultural turn to the analysis of the articulation between the economic and the political and their embedding in broader sets of social relations” (Jessop 2010, p. 337).

The critical political economy tradition in social research is an amalgam of competing perspectives that study how the relationships between individuals and society, and between markets and the state, affect the production, distribution and consumption of resources, by paying specific attention to power asymmetries and using a diverse set of concepts and methods drawn from different social sciences, mainly economics, political science and sociology. In its application to the education field, the critical political economy approach is interested in the interplay between the politics of education and education politics. In other words, it is interested in investigating the rules of the game, the paradigmatic settings that set the limits to what is considered possible and desirable from education (for instance, the understanding of the role of education in economic neoliberalism) and how these rules of the game shape the who and the how of policy-making in education.

On the other hand, critical discourse analysis brings the critical tradition in social analysis into language studies, and contributes to the critical social analysis of discourse, and relations between discourse and other social elements (power, ideologies, institutions, social identities, etc.). Critical discourse analysis recognizes the importance to transcend the division between discursive and textual analysis of policy (Fairclough 2013, p. 178). Thus, text analysis is an essential part of discourse analysis, but discourse analysis is not merely the linguistic analysis of texts. Critical discourse analysis oscillates between the focus on specific texts and the focus on what Fairclough (2003, pp. 2-3) calls the ‘orders of discourse’, i.e., the relatively durable social structuring of language which is itself one element of the relatively durable structuring and networking of social practices.

By integrating both approaches, CPE intends to go beyond the analysis of particular events/interactions/texts and extrapolate them to the analysis of the production, reproduction, contestation and transformation of hegemonies in current capitalist societies. CPE tries to integrate analysis of concrete interactional realities (through critical discourse analysis) with the analysis of underlying political economy trends, their translation into hegemonic strategies and projects, and their institutionalization into specific structures and practices. Although CPE is mainly applied in the field of political economy, its general propositions and the heuristic that it informs can also be applied to fields like Education Policy Analysis by combining the same semiotic analysis with concepts appropriate to educational institutions, processes and practices.

## **Cultural turn**

The CPE approach highlights the importance of the cultural dimension – understood as semiosis or meaning making – in the interpretation and explanation of the complexity of social formations such as policies. CPE is interested in the study of policy discourses, economic and political imaginaries, their translation into hegemonic strategies and projects, and their institutionalization into specific structures and practices. While it encompasses different types of cultural turns (thematic, methodological, or ontological), its focus is primarily on an ontological turn. By doing so, it argues that “culture” is foundational to the social world. In this way, CPE understands semiosis as causally efficacious as well as meaningful. It suggests that meaning making serves not only to interpret the world but also to contribute to its explanation. Thus, CPE does not seek to add “culture” to economics and politics or to apply “cultural theory” in policy analysis, because the political and the economic are already semiotically construed.

CPE distinguishes itself from theoretical approaches previous to the cultural turn in the social sciences (namely orthodox political economy and structuralism). Contrary to what orthodox political economy does, CPE avoids the reification of the economic and the political as objective realities out of the control subjects and changes in social relations. They are categories socially constructed, historically specific, more or less embedded in social relations and institutional ensembles and in continuing social repair for their reproduction. In addition, in contrast to structuralist approaches, CPE avoids the reduction of actors and actions (agency) to passive bearers of self-reproducing/self-transforming social structures.

CPE shares with other theoretical traditions that adopted the cultural turn (namely social constructivism and poststructuralism) the opposition against positivism and the alignment with interpretivist-hermeneutic stands to the analysis of policies. However, there are certain differences between CPE and these approaches. In contrast to social constructivism, CPE avoids the reduction of social reality to the meanings and understandings of the world by the actors. Structures affect the action of individuals, changing these structures is the object of many actions, and the actions generate emergent properties that are un/misrecognised by the actors. Also, while post-structuralism tends to attribute all the explanatory power of social reality to the discursive aspects of social phenomena (no matter if they are practices, actions, objects or languages), CPE emphasizes that explanations of social reality need to focus on the dialectic relationship between the discursive and material elements of social life rather than just on its discursive aspects.

## **Complexity reduction**

The concepts of hyper-complexity, complexity reduction, and imaginaries play an important role in CPE's approach. The concept of hyper-complexity maintains that it is impossible to observe and explain the natural and social worlds in real time. CPE distinguishes the actually existing economy as the chaotic sum of all economic activities from "economy" as an imaginatively narrated, more or less coherent subset of these activities (Jessop & Oosterlynck 2008). *Complexity reduction* is a condition for "going on" in the world. Because it has both semiotic and structural aspects, complexity reduction turns meaningless and unstructured complexity (hyper-complexity) into meaningful complexity (social construal) and structured complexity (social construction). Hence, as Jessop puts it: "CPE offers a 'third way' between a structuralist and a constructivist stands. It aims to explore the dialectic of the emergent extra-semiotic features of social relations and the constitutive role of semiosis." (Jessop 2010, p. 340).

The product of complexity reduction processes are imaginaries (social, political, economic). An *imaginary* is a semiotic system that gives meaning and shape to the social and natural world, working as a theoretical representation, and as a powerful strategic policy model in several fields of social practice. It includes a specific set of genres, discourses, and styles that constitute the semiotic moment of a network of social practices in a given social field, institutional order, or wider social formation (Fairclough 2003).

It is important to highlight the idea of technologies as "social practices that are mediated through specific instruments of classification, registration, calculation, and so on, that may discipline social action" (Jessop 2010, p. 339). For CPE, technology is not concerned to the productive forces involved in the appropriation and transformation of nature (as it is understood by orthodox political economy), but to the mechanisms involved in the governance of conduct. In this way, it understands that technology (in this case, policies, policy decision techniques, policy instruments, and policy evaluation) are important instruments deployed by agents within the process of selection and retention of policies discourses. As follows, CPE approach is connected to the idea of governance (or governmentality as proposed by Foucault), and combining it with Gramscian concepts such as hegemony and domination, it addresses questions as to how techniques of government are strategically used across different policy discourses to produce hegemony.

### **Contribution to education policy analysis**

The main contribution of the CPE approach to education policy analysis is the need to take seriously the importance of the mobilisation of policy ideas, and the perceptions of political actors, in the explanation of education policy dynamics and policy outcomes. We need to pay specific at-

tention to the role of policy advisers, policy entrepreneurs, knowledge-brokers, think tanks, amongst others, and to their mechanisms of persuasion and construction of meaning (soft power).

Policy makers are thrown to the world in its complexity and need to selectively attribute meaning to some aspects of the world rather than others. They encounter different pre-interpretations of the world and must engage with some of them in order to make sense of the environment where they make policy decisions, and they end up relying on existing meaning systems (policy discourses, political and economic imaginaries).

These acts of meaning making (construals) may also contribute to the constitution of the social world insofar as they guide a critical mass of self-confirming actions premised on their validity. In this sense, complexity reduction has on the one hand semiotic or cultural aspects (such as distinct discursive formations) and on the other hand structural aspects (such as institutional logics, dilemmas and contradictions) that operate behind the backs of these policymakers and may not correspond to their meaning-making efforts. In this sense, the adoption of policy ideas and frameworks by policy actors, their effective realization, is at the same time open to opportunities for change and a necessary condition for the reproduction of social structures.

This attribution of meaning to the social problems and the policy solutions opens the window for infinite policy variation and innovation, but we know that not all the policy innovations have the same opportunities to be selected, retained and institutionalised. There is space for the emergence of new policy discourses but some policy discourses are structurally and strategically more powerful than others, which explains in part the reproduction of hegemonic imaginaries and practices.

The critical nature of CPE serves the de-naturalization and re-politicization of LLL policies as taken-for-granted discourses and practices. Therefore, CPE approach not only help us raising questions on how LLL policies reflect selective interpretations, explanations, and solutions of social, economic and political problems that are formulated by specific groups of actors. Nevertheless, it also throws light on how LLL policies are being legitimated, or “sedimented” within the social structures.

As it has been said before, there is no straightforward operationalization of the theoretical premises of CPE to education policy analysis. However, Bob Jessop (see for instance 2010, 2004a) has offered some conceptual tools to use in our task. According to Jessop, all institutional transformations can be explained by the iterative interaction of material and semiotic factors through



the evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection and retention. These three mechanisms can help us to explain why and how some policy reforms emerge, are selected and get embodied in individual agents or routinized in organizational operations, are facilitated or hindered by specific social technologies, and become embedded in specific social structures ranging from routine interactions via institutional orders to large-scale social formations. By applying the CPE approach to the analysis of LLL policies in Europe, we will look at how the evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention shape the social dynamic of adoption, recontextualization and implementation of global policy ideas in different national contexts. In the following sections, we summarise some comparative evidence on how these mechanisms have operated for the participating countries in the study.

### **Variation**

*Variation* starts when dominant policy discourses and practices need to be revisited because of the emergence of new narratives that problematize educational processes. The possible causes of variation can be of very different nature. We can classify these causes among those internal and those external to the education field. Typical external triggers of variation tend to emerge from the economic domain. The perception of persistent/severe economic problems like economic crisis can potentially be very powerful reasons to question the aims and the functioning of education and training systems. Economic crises tend to disorient policymakers that will seek alternative policy ideas that could explain the failure of the previous ones. Many of the explanations (narratives) of the economic crisis bring education as part of the problem or the solution (youth unemployment, low skills, skills mismatch, unemployed activation). However, not all triggers of variation are external to the educational field. Sometimes the perception of educational problems, often as the result of international comparisons and rankings, is the main driving force to question the existing state of arts in the educational sector. International organizations and global governance tools like PISA are very powerful creators of policy problems for national policy makers, although sometimes these national actors refer to these global rankings as the perfect excuse to mobilize their own reform agendas. All these elements and circumstances would put pressure on policy-makers to introduce substantive changes into their education systems. Some of the questions that we need to answer about the variation of LLL policies are:

- Which are the external/internal international/national triggers of variation/innovation in LLL policies in the countries under study?

- How different triggers and narratives of variation define in different terms the social and educational problems to be addressed?
- What political and economic imaginaries guide the problematisation of educational issues and to what extent this exercise makes possible the emergence, reformulation or recovery of old/new imaginaries?

The global financial crisis is presented as the main external trigger of LLL policy reforms in European countries in the post-recession scenario. The effects on unemployment, and specifically on youth unemployment, are seen as the main cause for policy variation and the need to revisit previous LLL strategies. The paradox here is that while the cause for the raise in youth unemployment is mainly economic (sharp reduction of economic activity), the solution adopted by governments and international organisations is mainly educational (more work oriented education and training). The literature on the countries more affected by the economic crisis provides good examples of this paradox. In countries like Portugal, Italy, Spain Croatia and Bulgaria there are macro- and micro-economic factors that explain the high levels of youth unemployment. Insufficient aggregate economic demand is the main factor explaining the sharp increase of youth unemployment in the country but, instead of trying to expand the demand for goods and services, austerity policies are exacerbating the demand insufficiency and the lack of capacity of the country to create jobs for young people (Pastore 2015). Instead of reverting these austerity policies and tackle the macro-economic factors, the EC and the national governments have decided to intervene only on the micro-economic factors that influence youth unemployment (labour market flexibility, employability agenda). The logic behind this selective definition of the policy problem and its causes is that the governments have decided that they are not able to act upon the macroeconomic factors that produced this large amount of youth unemployment, so they will reform the education system to improve its responsiveness to the labour market demands (see for instance Croatian Youth Network 2014) and wait for the promised economic recovery that will create more job opportunities for these young people.

The transformation of the economic crisis into educational problems goes together with the individualisation of these social problems and the creation of target groups for LLL policies. In Bulgaria, for example, early school leaving is increasingly seen as a pressing issue by policy-makers given its alleged negative impact on the country socio-economic development. The goal for reducing the share of early school leavers by 2020 is supposed to be aligned with the objective of the 'Strategic Framework of the National Program for Development of the Republic of

Bulgaria: Bulgaria 2020' to improve living standards through competitive education and training, the creation of conditions for quality employment and through social inclusion (ICF 2013). While presented as problem of access to education and training for certain individuals, early school leaving is stripped from its educational and social justice dimension (Boyadjieva et al. 2012). In other countries, like Italy, NEET is the social category that allows policy discourses to turn youth unemployment into an individual and educational problem. EU indicators and comparative rankings show the higher incidence of NEETs in Italy as compared to other countries, suggesting that something is wrong in the country and in its education and training system. This internalisation of the problem leads to the blaming of young adult Italians themselves for their passive dependency on their families of origin (Alfieri et al. 2015), and of the educational institutions and professionals for their lack of connection with employers and the world of work (Grimaldi & Barzano 2014).

But the political management of the economic crisis not only has an effect on LLL policies through the exacerbation of the social problems to be addressed by the education and training system; it also has an effect through the reduction of public resources available for education and training and the austerity measures imposed on the sector. The contradiction between larger needs and less resources to address these needs (Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2016) is creating a legitimisation problem for LLL policies because of their incapacity to reconcile the economic growth imperative and the social cohesion mandate of the system. Even in Nordic countries like Finland, the government accepts the inevitability of austerity measures although it is perfectly aware of the pervasive consequences that these cuts in the public sector will have on the future of children and young people and their social unsustainability in the long run (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). Another indirect impact of the political management of the economic crisis is the displacement of priorities within LLL policies. In countries like Scotland, the new context of increased youth unemployment and public sector austerity has implied the discontinuation of some of the most ambitious plans to upgrade its productivity through higher and better skills utilization (Warhurst & Findlay 2012). In the post-recession scenario, the long-term objectives of LLL policies seem to vanish in front of the short-term emergency-control type of interventions.

These cases contrast very much with the continental countries with better economic performance and low youth unemployment rates. In the case of Germany, the austerity measures and the cuts on unemployment benefits and social insurance schemes were previous to the global financial crisis, and they were legitimised as an institutional necessity in order to become a com-

petitive economy in the global market (Seeleib-Kaiser 2016). The problems of deterioration of overall employment quality are seen as inevitable and the difficulties of individuals to benefit from current educational and labour market opportunities are explained by the academic, social and cultural deficits of these individuals and groups. Young migrants and refugees become one of the key categories to understand the contradiction of LLL policies between the necessity to attract a young workforce to the country due to its demographic decline (Weber 2015) and, at the same time, its incapacity to deal with the specific needs of this population. As in Germany, in Finland and in Austria one of the main challenges for the authorities is the integration of young people with immigrant backgrounds into the vocational training and employment system (BMWFJ 2013) and into the labour market (Halvorsen & Hvinden 2014). This construction of migrants as a target group of LLL policies that need public support in order to benefit from the opportunities available to anyone, it leads again to the individualization of the social problem and does not recognize the educational and labour market structural factors that affect the trajectories of these individuals (Lassnigg & Vogtenhuber 2015).

In short, the discussion in this section has showed at the variation in the definition of problems to be addressed by policies. It has also hinted at some dominant views of the problems in current policy-making, which leads us to the question as to how these are selected among the great variation of possible definitions.

### **Selection**

*Selection* implies the identification of the most suitable interpretations of existing problems, as well as the most complementary policy solutions. These solutions tend to vary from country to country due their different political economy structures and the pre-eminence of particular ideological coalitions. We can classify the factors that explain differences in the selection of policy solutions between those of an institutional and those of an ideational nature. Among the *institutional* factors, we can name different educational models, unequal institutional capacities, and contrasting labour market regulations. Among the *ideological* factors, we should consider the dominant cognitive frames in the field, policy paradigms, ideologies and public sentiments. Although some of the factors can seem more material or more ideational, they share a relative high level of structuration, indicating that the repertoire of policy solutions that are thinkable, reasonable and possible are not equally distributed across countries. Some of the questions that we need to answer about the selection of LLL policies are:

- To what extent the proposed solutions respond to a particular definition and interpretation of the causes of the alleged problems/challenges?
- What is the theory of change underlying this policy intervention? How is it going to achieve its goals?
- What is the rationale behind the selection of these policy solutions over alternative courses of action? (Technical superiority, ideological orientation, democratic consultation, cultural/institutional fit, installed capacity/convenience, inevitability) What evidence base (sources of knowledge) are used and cited?
- To what extent the observed differences among countries respond to institutional path-dependencies (inertia) or to different ideological frameworks and coalitions?
- How is defined what is possible and feasible in a particular national and sectorial context and how the changes in the state and in society transform these horizons?

Globalisation studies have shown how the apparent global convergence of education policy solutions entails complex processes and mechanisms of mutual influence between the global and the national, and how this does not affect all countries in the same way and sometimes this convergence is more apparent than real. LLL policies in Europe provide an excellent opportunity to test some of these premises. The first idea that seems very clear is that the EC and multilateral organisations have gained power and capacity to influence policy decisions in some of the European countries, particularly those that have been hit harder by the global crisis and those in which public finances were under more strain. The influence of EC can be seen in the kind of policy solutions to youth unemployment problems that have proliferated. The clearest example of these travelling policies are the *Youth Guarantee Programmes*, but these are not the only ones.

What is more interesting about the influence of the EC is that the mechanisms of influence vary very much, from its softer to its harder versions. If we take scientific evidence as one of the possible soft mechanisms to convince countries of the adoption of LLL reforms, it is necessary to say that the evidence provided by the EC to legitimise the adoption of Youth Guarantees in different countries is in general quite weak (Domović & Vidović 2015). Instead of providing solid and sound impact evaluation studies, the EC prefers to use its system of comparative indicators and benchmarks to identify education areas that need to be reformed in the different countries. This is the case, for example, of early school leaving in Bulgaria (ICF 2013) or work based learning and work experience in Italy (Alfieri et al. 2015) and Croatia (Croatian Youth Network 2014).

There are however harder mechanisms of influence that the EC can use in the case of countries with high financial dependency on the European Central Bank. Spain changed its social policies dramatically in order to comply with EC recommendations on fiscal consolidation (Moreno & Serano, p. 201; Pavolini et al. 2015). A very good example of this openness to the policy predicated by the EC has been the introduction in 2012 of the Germanic model of dual VET by the Spanish Ministry of Education (OECD 2015b). There are some pilot experiences, but „dual VET“ normally means that vocational education students stay in a firm for some weeks. On-the-firm mentors are uncommon. This pattern can be found in some vocational training courses, but heterogeneity is huge in this area. The case more extreme of this direct influence of EC in the participation countries in YOUNG\_ADULLLT is Portugal. The Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality (MoU) concluded in May 2011 between the Portuguese Government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Commission (EC) and European Central Bank (ECB) set the basis for most of the impositions in terms of policy reforms (Ramalho 2013). The European bodies not only influenced the priorities of LLL policies in the country, e.g., early school leaving (CIES 2015), they also shaped the policy orientation of the system towards the privatization and commercialization of LLL provision (Antunes 2016), and promoted the adoption of specific policy reforms like the Germanic model of dual VET.

Other countries, not so stretched by the discipline of the EC, have explored the possibility of developing alternative policy frameworks to the dominant international orthodoxy. However, it is well recognised that the knowledge economy imaginary produces a convergent policy agenda with an emphasis on competitiveness, skill development and employability, so that scope for ‘national’ distinctiveness may be limited (Arnott & Ozga 2010). This has been one of the problems of the Scottish national dreams of positioning itself internationally as a social democratic country. Despite these limitations, it is also worth mentioning the intents to frame most of the LLL policy solutions adopted in Scotland within a social justice discourse, although in many cases this equity jargon has not translated in distinctive policy agendas and reforms. In the case of Austria, it is interesting to see that a well-established system of initial VET clearly geared towards the world of work (Musset et al. 2013) coexist with a long and pronounced tradition of voluntary work (BMWFJ 2013). It would be worth exploring to what extent, in a context of high youth unemployment and precarious experiences of employment, voluntary work and non-productivist forms of LLL can be an alternative to the dominant policy paradigms in most European countries.

## **Retention**

*Retention* of new LLL policies means their institutionalisation and inclusion into the regulatory framework, and into the network of educational technologies and practices of a system. Retention is the most potentially contentious of all the mechanisms. This is due to the fact that it represents the materialisation of a policy change and, as such, policy retention is also often the crystallisation point of conflicts and oppositional movements. Retention represents a final and necessary step for the realisation of a policy change. There are many policies that are selected by decision-makers, but they end up not being finally retained in their particular local and institutional settings. Once a government announces its education reform plans, political actors and key stakeholders of a different nature tend to strategically position themselves in relation to the new proposals and, according to their level of (dis)agreement with them, they articulate strategies of opposition or support. The consequent negotiation and conflict may result in the transformation, or partial or total ‘displacement’ of government plans. Some of the questions that we need to answer about the retention of LLL policies are:

- Which are the main actors involved in the final decision of retention and re-shaping of policy solutions and its implementation?
- What is the level and the nature of the power that they exercise? Which are their interests and strategies and how selective contexts make their strategies more probable and effective?
- At what scales and time horizons they operate and to what extent this multiscale governance of LLL shapes the re-contextualisation, implementation and enactment of policy reforms?
- What governance technologies are put in place to govern the subjects (beneficiaries, target groups, practitioners) and what new subjectivities, identities and inequalities emerge as a result of that?

Contrary to what would happen if you look at the processes of LLL policy retention in a particular country, when you take a wider comparative perspective you will notice some common trends and commonalities that are more interesting than the differences. One of these common trends is the intent of national governments to coordinate LLL policies through horizontal national strategies and the control of their implementation through monitoring and indicators-based accountability measures. The different areas in government only have the ability to pay attention to a small proportion of public service activity. Related to this, there is also a tendency for problems to be processed in government silos. For these reasons, there will be little potential for policy-

makers, in different departments or levels of government, to understand and address the policy problem in very different ways; and there is also a high level of 'complexity', which suggests that policy outcomes often 'emerge' from local action in the absence of central control.

All these problems are very present in Scotland, where the government tries to address these challenges with national strategies based on overarching policy goals and targets, the use of accountability and performance measures, and the encouragement of cooperation and learning between public and private stakeholders (Cairney et al. 2016). In Austria, the government has struggled to set a coherent vision and strategy for LLL policies in the country (Lassnigg 2011) although existing National Action Plans and Strategies in Austria makes clear that the concerns of young people are understood theoretically to be an important horizontal issue (BMWfJ 2013). Furthermore, the architects of these plans and strategies are so numerous and varied that coordination is difficult. Active cooperation with the provincial governments is understood to be a decisive factor in the success of the Youth Strategy in a federally structured country like Austria. In fact, the inescapable tension and trade-off between a desire to harmonize national LLL policies and to encourage local discretion is a constant across many of the countries taking part in the study. As it is very well explained in the case of Croatia, national governments set very ambitious expectations and goals upon practitioners and local bodies and passes the responsibility of achieving these goals to them, too often without the necessary conditions to carry out the task successfully (Domović & Vidović 2015).

Data plays a very important role as a governance technology in the implementation of policy reforms. Indicators aim to operate as a guiding principle of the activity of the different stakeholders in the supply of education and training at the same time that they measure the achievement of the objectives within the impact areas (Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2016). The use of data for coordination and monitoring purposes do not imply its use for evaluation purposes, in fact most of these LLL policies are rarely the object of impact evaluations. The little evidence available suggests that the impact of these initiatives is uneven and very limited. For example, the Youth Guarantee Programme introduced in Finland in 2005 shows no signs of improving the labour market prospects of young uneducated people and only a modest impact on those with vocational education (Hämäläinen et al. 2014).

One of the aspects that will need more attention from international research is the effect of these policies on the young adult themselves and their life prospects. Many of the intents to capture the views of young adults are still quite rigid and limited in scope (Albert et al. 2015) but it is in-



interesting to see that young adults' preferences and the expansion of their freedom is an important component of some of the national LLL policies (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). This individual level cannot be reduced to the individual characteristics of the subjects because the opportunities to articulate and deploy their life plans will be highly shaped by their immediate local contexts. LLL policies that aim to develop human capital isolate individuals from context and make them responsible regardless of their situation (Lynch 2008). It will be important to explore to what extent national strategies for LLL take a much wider perspective, where environment, social networks, and individual and community values are taken into consideration.

### **Summary**

We have suggested that the three evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention offer a productive operationalisation of the CPE approach to the analysis of LLL policies for young adults in European countries. These three mechanisms can help us to explain why and how some LLL policy reforms emerge, are selected and become embodied in different ways in different national and local contexts. The literature reviewed in the previous sections sheds some light on the potential of this framework for the objectives of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. There are some limitations of this exercise that need to be stressed here. The first one is that only a very limited number of the reviewed papers were comparative studies. The second one is that most of the documents covered by this review had a national focus and paid little consideration to the local/regional level of analysis. Taking into account these limitations, there are some insights from this literature review exercise that it is worth highlighting here.

*First*, the global financial crisis and its social consequences on youth unemployment are presented as the main external trigger of variation of LLL policies in most countries. The dominant economic imaginary privileges the explanation of the high levels of youth unemployment as a problem of lack of relevance of the education and training provision and the inadequacy of the attitudes, knowledge and skills of individual young adults. As a result of this process of transforming economic and structural problems into educational and individual ones, LLL policies in each country define target groups as populations with some kind of educational or social deficit that do not allow them to benefit from the opportunities offered by the education system and the labour market.

*Second*, the EC has gained political influence to select the preferred policy solutions precisely in those countries with higher levels of youth unemployment and public debt. While in most coun-

tries the EC utilize soft mechanisms to influence the policy orientation of LLL reforms, in the case of highly indebted countries the EC can impose more directly its preferred policy solutions (namely: activation, employability and entrepreneurship).

*Third*, governments try to articulate horizontal national strategies in order to coordinate the action of different areas and levels of government, as well as the activity of non-governmental stakeholders, in the retention of LLL policies. Indicators based accountabilities is the preferred method for monitoring policy interventions but little systemic evidence is produced on the impact of these policies. An apparent tension exists between the intents of national strategic coordination and steering and the diverse range of needs and capacities of local governments, individuals and communities.

While this literature review offers interesting insights on the current state of LLL policies in Europe, there are still certain research gaps that emerge and that will need to be addressed by future research, including the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. First, the lack of comparative studies about the processes of LLL policy formation that emerge as a response to the global economic crisis in Europe, their differences and similarities, and the semiotic and extra semiotic factors that explain them. Second, the need to go beyond the global/national divide in the analysis of LLL policy reforms and interrogate how global and national authorities try to coordinate/monitor/control the recontextualisation and enactment of LLL policies at the regional and local levels. Finally, the absence of critical studies that interrogate policy orientations and the construction of target groups from the perspective of the beneficiaries, their agency freedom and the contexts where they elaborate and deploy their life plans.

## **B. Life Course**

The thematic entry point concerned with young adults as target groups of LLL policies is conceptualised with the help of *Life Course Research*. Life course is colloquially understood as the documentation of the stages through which individuals pass along their lives, especially institutionalized stages such as school, training, military/civil service, work etc. Sociological life course research analogously defines life course “as a social institution [...] in the sense of a rule system that orders a central realm or a central dimension of life” (Kohli 1985, p. 1, own translation). The concept of life course may be contrasted with that of biography; whereas life course points to an institutionalised construction of (culturally defined) patterns of ‘female’ or ‘male’ (normal) lives, biography can be regarded as the “narrated life”, i.e., a subjective meaning-making with regard to one’s individual life course.

The life course consists of “age-graded trajectories” (Elder 1994, p. 5), formed by one’s individuality and skill sets as well as perceptions constructed by institutional regulations and policies. The concept describes the construction of the developmental process of growing older into society, and with that, the view of a ‘normal life’ as it is constructed by the contextual structure it is embedded in. As a lifelong process, it encompasses multi-levelled spheres of life “ranging from structured pathways through social institutions and organizations to the social trajectories of individuals and their developmental pathways” (Elder 1994, p. 5). This process of institutionalization combines the social perception of normative, legal or organizational rules defining the social and temporal organization of human lives. In that sense, the life course is also an outcome of institutional regulations and policies. These perceptions can become universal expectations, as a standardization of life courses, in which life events appear in a uniform timing, e.g. indicated by regulated events like school entry age (Brückner & Mayer 2004, p. 32). Therefore, the life course is closely linked to a given society’s expectations as it constructs aims and goals for different life stages and age roles. The life course approach is time-dependent, which means that time offers a sequence of life phases and transitions, as ageing builds its own life narrative, based on individual decisions and investments (Heinz et al. 2009). Hence, life course is premised on human agency and documents the effect of time on the “external sequencing of life”, as well as the meaning of age and generation for an individual’s self-definitions and life plans. Its key concepts include: transition, trajectory, duration, cohorts, life stage, ageing (Elder 1994).

In contrast to the concept of life cycle, it is based on the assumption that development is non-linear and fragmented, that it does not follow normative age-related stages in the developmental process, emphasizing the interlink between one’s individual biography and the institutional contexts throughout the life course. Linearity is a rather uniform concept, neglecting individuals’ choice as well as their interrelation with structure and agency (cf. Walther 2006, p. 120). However, the concept of life course emphasizes individual agency and the individual’s role in the active construction of her/his own biography in the interplay with the social context she/he are embedded in, but also the openness due to fragmentation and de-standardisation of life course (cf. Schröder et al. 2013, p. 11; Walther 2006, p. 120). Modernization favoured an accelerated process of individualization, liberating life opportunities from communal bounds and promoting a loosening of traditional age and gender roles and life transitions. Complementarily, it stimulated the development of specialized institutions tailored to all segments and sequences of the life course, making the welfare state the main responsible for its normative regulation. Finally, declining birth rates and increasing longevity led to major shifts in population growth and age struc-

ture. Consequently, life courses are becoming more discontinuous and disordered – de-standardized. There is an increasing age variability of occupational and private transitions, as social pathways become ever more diversified and uncertain due to labour markets' volatility. In this context, responsibility for failure in life transitions is increasingly individualized (Heinz et al. 2009).

These processes of fragmentation result in de-standardisation of life courses as the transition points of life-trajectories change. The socially constructed time points do not only postpone but also vary in length, altering the subsequent life courses. Whereas transitions from school to the labour market and retirement unfold over a rather distinct life span, transitions into different work careers and family pathways are not necessarily finalized at a special point in time but rather unfold as a more open and unresolved process over lifespan (Elder 1994, p. 5). As a consequence, the life course is characterized by a high reversibility and insomuch uncertainty – changes and transitions can be reversed both by individual's decisions or external influences; the so called yo-yo transitions in between different life spheres (cf. Walther 2006, p. 121). For example, new forms of flexibility within work biographies arise: lifelong working in the same job, in the same company, is no longer the so-called 'normal' life course. Different phases of vocational training, labour, unemployment, adulthood and re-entry into the labour market are alternating. 'Normal paths' of biographies are no longer certain and fixed, and therefore are no longer models for everyone.

The de-standardisation of the life course is embedded in the broader context of social change due to processes of globalization. The social construction of the life course also constructs a vision of normal life patterns, supported by policies. Due to social changes, those conceptions are constantly undermined. Against the background of globalisation and the so-called 'reflexive modernization' (cf. Beck et al. 1994), life courses are increasingly pluralised and characterised by risk and uncertainty (cf. Field 2013, p. 384). Reflexive modernisation questions and undermines the taken-for-granted premises of society, especially every notion of the national state – such as the welfare state, the legal system etc. – as well as the social institutions – such as the normal family, the normal life history and the normal career (cf. Beck et al. 2003, p. 3f). Institutional differentiations, on the one hand, and emerging plurality in life courses on the other hand, lead to new possibilities in shaping one's own life course. In this sense, the life course is embedded in a field of tensions as competing options of possible ways of living. Yet, at the same time, the possibilities are restricted by structural conditions.

According to Heinz et al. (2009), “life course is a configuration of social and individual components which develops over time” (p. 16). It articulates three kinds of interdependences:

1. Past, present and future (learning from the past, social relationships and obligations, anticipation and planning);
2. Different spheres of action / multi-dimensionality of the life course (family, education, work, leisure, retirement – combination and/or competition for resources and time between spheres); and
3. Individual action and socio-historic contexts (political, economic, institutional and cultural changes modify opportunities, create risks, and influence biographies, but they are also the consequence of the aggregate results of individual choices and actions during the life course).

Through the confluence of these three principles of interdependence, hypotheses about life course dynamics can be formulated. This enables comparing life course patterns between different political, institutional, social and cultural settings, as well as insights about the impact of life course policies on social integration and quality of life.

Life course policies provide institutional support for the conduct of individualised lives through the distribution of public good and entitlements (education, training, family support, health care, social assistance and old age provisions), thus compensating for the volatility of the markets. This way, life course policies shape transitions, sequences and whole trajectories over the life span. These policies are mostly nation-state based (based on liberal principles and welfare institutions), but greatly influenced by supra-national institutions and obligations (Heinz et al. 2009). Life course trajectories are also developed within a complex of “linked lives” (couple and inter-generational commitments), implying a constant negotiation of diverse engagements in different spheres of the life course, as well as adaptation strategies to changing opportunity structures (Heinz et al. 2009).

LCR focus on individual choice within institutional resources and constraints, analysing personality factors and individual skills that are important for self-regulation, decision-making (the ability to match short-term decisions with long-term planning) and identity construction, thus compensating for the declining stability of life course patterns. However, this theoretical perspective avoids reducing life course explanations to personal motives and skills. In order to connect the micro and the macro-level analyses, it integrates life course sociology with development and life

span psychology, favouring notions like “agency within structures” and “bounded agency”. These allow for a better understanding of how subjects develop meaningful and coherent biographies within contingent life courses, actively negotiating contributions, investments, returns and benefits between life domains. For that purpose, it is essential to map the structural and institutional conditions that contextualize biographical decisions and outcomes (Heinz et al. 2009).

LCR helps to understand the processes and mechanisms that translate social change into individuals’ action space, as well as the ways in which individual life courses affect societal phenomena and the life course itself, taken as a social structure. To these ends, three theoretical guides are relevant:

- 1) *Time horizons* refers to institutional and macro-economic and political structures, which form the infrastructure of modern life course, have different time horizons. These conflate in biographical turning points, when individuals face the challenge of synchronisation of different personal and structural time horizons; relevance of outlining the social mechanisms that facilitate or restrict individuals’ agency for shaping their biographies);
- 2) *Decision-making* relates understanding how individuals take decisions that shape their life courses. It places the focus on subjective well-being, social advantages, expected outcomes and “instrumental goals” and considers interdependency, complementarity and/or competition between life domains; self-reflexivity, investment and individual agency; and
- 3) *Institutions* – concern the collective limitation of the scope of freedom of individual actors by establishing cultural appropriateness of action and reducing transaction costs. They define the scope of legitimate decision-making and facilitating calculable risk, especially for long-term decisions and create collective goods as a result of the aggregation of individual decision making, thus providing a basis for rational life course planning and reducing uncertainty – stable platforms for decision making (Heinz et al. 2009).

In contemporary times, the life course can no longer be taken for granted, especially for young adults. The later are in a transition phase between childhood and adulthood, as “an ‘in between’ category” (Walther 2006, p. 121), especially affected by social changes. The phase between childhood and adulthood focuses on themes such as education, work, poverty and exclusion, family and housing, identity. It builds on terms of sex and gender and transitions according to specific life styles, as well as peers and starting a family (Stauber & Walther 2016), which can all be affected by social changes as they do not follow linear transitions anymore and the bounda-

ries between life stages and life spheres are increasingly blurred (Cavalli & Galland 1993; Walther 2002). Young adults are especially facing societal expectations as their life phase is perceived as a deficit condition containing crucial transition points for growing into adulthood as a 'final condition' point (Jones 2009). Lifelong learning is of particular important for the life course, as "learning can help cause transitions" (Field 2013, p. 385). Against the background of society facing social changes as well as proposing visions of successful transitions into adulthood, the concept of lifelong learning can also be understood as a political program, led by the assumption that knowledge is closely linked to successful economies (cf. Field 2013, p. 378f.).

As a result, young adults have to face societal needs and demands while they build their own life projects along various transitions points and institutional fragmentations. Young adults in vulnerable positions are most affected – for example by physical (e.g., sickness, disability), emotional/psychological (e.g., mental illness, immaturity, dependence), material (e.g. poverty, homelessness, health care, education), and social reasons (lack of support by family or peer group, absence of guidance in difficult situations, and immediate risks from the environment) circumstances (UNDP 2014).

Based on the LCR theoretical perspective, research questions were elaborated that take into account the main objectives of the project. Therefore, and through the perspective of the young adults, the professionals and the policy makers, we intend to know:

- What are young people's life projects, their professional choices and trajectories in education and training and in the labour market?
- What are young adults' perceptions and expectations and how do they create subjective meaning and continuity along the different phases of their life courses?
- Do they think they/ you learnt new skills?
- How do LLL policies take into account and respond to diverse living conditions of young adults in each national/regional context and all across Europe?
- How do LLL policies promote and/or allow for conciliation between young adults' different life spheres (work, leisure, family, community)?
- How do different LLL policies promote or allow for young adults' freedom and autonomy in their biographical decisions?
- Are LLL policies tailored to address and reduce life course uncertainty and insecurity within young adults?

- Are LLL offers sensitive to different individual life conditions (e.g. the need for child care during lessons etc.)

### **Contribution to education research**

Three common approaches to LCR can be distinguished: the contextualization approach, the biographical approach, and the comparative approach (cf. Elder et al. 2003). Against this background, a holistic comparative approach to the life course may be suggested, taking all stages of life course into account and embedding those into historical, demographic, and social changes along diverse living conditions. Life course research emphasises the connection of individual lives to the historical and socioeconomic context in which they are located (Walther 2011; Heinz et al. 2009; Elder et al. 2003, p. 4; Schröer et al. 2013, p. 12). Therefore, it is inherently multidisciplinary, referring to different theoretical and methodological approaches (cf. Field 2013, p. 381).

Life Course research refers to policies, especially education and training policies, as they represent public interventions that intend to induce preferred visions of personal and social development. This approach shows in what ways individual biographies (micro-level) are embedded in institutional societal framings of life course (macro-level) such as the labour market, welfare and education/training programs, as well as more transient framings like social inequality (Walther 2011; Heinz et al. 2009). This approach is used across several disciplines and areas of research, and this has generated a growing and at the same time complex research field (Schröer et al. 2016, p. 11). The beginning of life course research can be situated in the interactional studies of rituals and status passages within generational orders (cf. Turner 1969; Glaser & Strauss 1971; van Gennep 1981). In the 1960s, the interest of life course research shifted more towards describing human lives within a changing society, contextualizing life courses in their living structures (cf. Schröer et al. 2016, Meyer 2009, p. 415). As result, changing research paradigms no longer focused solely on socialization. Since the early 1970s, institutional aspects of the emerging differentiation of the educational system in shaping life courses came into focus. The discussions were no longer only led by age differentiation but also by stratification, emphasizing the role of inequality as well as the distribution of resources and power (cf. Meyer 2009, p. 415). Transitions in-between came more and more into focus, although mainly focused on the (re)production of social injustice and subsequent adjustments through the welfare system (Schröer et al. 2013, p. 12). Institutional patterns and their effect on the life course, as well as biography as a subjective narrative, came into focus (cf. Meyer 2009, p. 415). This research fo-



cus on transitions from the educational system into the labour market intensified during the 1980s (cf. Kohli 1985), whilst other research strains focused on the interplay of the life course and the welfare state (cf. Mayer & Müller 1986). Newer approaches focus on thick descriptions of patterns of life course in the interplay of historical and societal circumstances (cf. Meyer 2009, p. 415).

Whereas young adults' biographies are well researched (e.g., Domene et al. 2012) and youth transitions are widely in focus of policy and research, transitions in adult life course are only slowly coming into focus (Field 2013, p. 378). Few examples are available, focused mainly on the early life stages of young adults, for instance on the transition from the education system to the labour market. Kleinert and Jacob (2013), for example, analysed the transition patterns of school-leavers to post-school education in a long-term study in Germany. They show that success in pre-school education and the influence of market fluctuation and structural changes is closely intertwined with the school-leavers attainment: whereas low and medium attainment is highly affected by contextual changes, transitions of school-leavers from upper secondary schools are hardly affected by the same circumstances (ibid.). Or, posing the question as to how structural conditions and policy facilitate transitions leading to unemployment, and vice versa, as it is researched in the connection of adult learning in employment for analysing paths and patterns of workforce within labour market shaped by globalization and mobility (for example Blossfeld et al. 2014; Dütsch & Struck 2014). The vast majority of studies focus on young adults as vulnerable groups such as immigrants in risk of unemployment (e.g., for Sweden Hammarén 2014) and psychiatric disorders (e.g., Reissner et. al. 2011). In addition, although Life Course research is a well-established theoretical framework, its methodological focus is in quantitative research with cohort data (cf. Meyer 2009).

Against this background, the comparative approach selected in YOUNG\_ADULLLT uses the case study logic of comparisons on the basis of qualitative research, using a thick description of a small number of cases with interactions between many variables: countries (transitions regimes), localities (different economic, educational, social contexts), and interviewees (variations in life course patterns). The aim is the matching and contrasting of cases (similarities and differences).

In the following pages, we summarise some comparative evidence that are organised along the four dimensions that have emerged from the theoretical discussion above: *Time, transitions, de-standardisation, and individual choices*.

## Time

Time is the central dimension in life course research. It gives sequence to life trajectories and gives meaning to the events. Life course reflects a history, a narrative that makes sense through time. To be sure, time can also apply to contexts and policies and take on an important role in shaping LLL policies, for instance by determining the time horizons of the interventions for tackling/solving a policy problem (short-, medium, or long-term).

As we can see, throughout time, policies show us developments that have occurred and changes that have been made. In Austria, for example, people have been taking higher academic qualifications, and this has stimulated the labour market to adjust to this demand:

“Due to the rise in education since the 1970s, the group of people with low formal qualifications can be described as “ageing”. Therefore, the available workforce whose highest educational attainment is compulsory school will decline. But also demand on the labour market is decreasing for structural reasons (relocation of work-intensive manufacturing to countries with lower wages, production automation), therefore measures to enhance the integration of the target group on the labour market are necessary.” (Vogtenhuber et al. 2009, p. 61)

In Croatia, time emerges from the policy documents with the decreasing number of adults participating in education and training, especially when compared to the European average:

“Adult education in Croatia suffers from weak governance. In 2014, only 2.5% of Croatian adults participated in education and training, compared to the EU average of 10.7%, and the percentage has been decreasing for the last two years. Incentives for employers to offer training have been increased in 2014.” (EC 2015a, p. 9)

The financial crisis has accentuated the youth unemployment in several countries, but the time dimension stands out in the discourses of the policies documents from Finland, Germany and Italy:

“Finland has a long history of high youth unemployment. A severe banking crisis, together with the collapse of Soviet trade in the early 1990s, raised the overall unemployment rate from around 3% to nearly 17% in just three years. [...] The youth unemployment rate, however, remained at a much higher level than the EU15 (and EU28) average until the 2009 financial crisis.” (Hämäläinen, Hämäläinen & Tuomala 2014, p. 2)

“Germany’s labour market development stands in sharp contrast to repercussions of the recent economic crises both in the US and Europe. Since the 1970s Germany witnessed long-lived trends of labour market slack. These trends could be reversed in the last decade, unemployment fell rapidly. In the following, the Great Recession went by without causing substantial harm to employment. While many European countries suffered a second recession wave with the upcoming European debt crisis, strong job growth in Germany continued until the recent past.” (Weber 2015, p. 462)

“Regarding the structure of the time effects after the crisis, there are significantly positive effects observable from 2008 onwards, at the latest. Information regarding the timing of the effects complements previous studies that only compared matching productivity before or during the reform years and after the reform years” (Stops 2016, p. 14)

“Under the negative impact of the economic crisis, the average number of employees in Italy has dropped to 22.9 million and the employment rate to 56.9 % (2011). In particular, in 2011 the employment rate was 56.9 %, the unemployment rate 8.4 % (unchanged since the previous year) and the activity rate had fallen from 63 % in 2008 to 62.2 %. Although the unemployment rate was still lower than the European Union average (9.7 %), concerns arose about the gap between the North and the South of the country, as well as about groups such as women, young people and migrants.” (Pitoni et al. 2012, p. 6)

In Portugal, the dimension of time points to a quite positive fact, as the country presents increasing rates of attendance in education and training:

“In spite of the figures presented, Portugal has shown a strong improvement on the rate of early leavers from Education and Training from 43.6% in 2000 to 20.8% in 2012. However this important effort, the value achieved is still the second highest in the EU (average 12.8%).” (DGERT CEDEFOP 2015, p. 2)

In the Spanish policies, the dimension of time emerges in a double sense: either with a focus on a longitudinal perspective and or by pointing to concepts such as temporary and permanent employment:

“Viewed from a longitudinal perspective, these individuals follow a labour trajectory that is permanently precarious and characterized by a very low frequency of transitions from temporary to permanent employment, and even by a high frequency of transitions from temporary employment to inactivity or unemployment rather than to an open-ended contract” (Lopez-Andreu & Verd 2016, p. 6)

## **Transitions**

Transitions are landmarks along the life course. They mark specific events that are significant for the individual's life trajectory. They usually reflect a break on the life sequence and the start of a new one. In the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project, the focus is on transitions from education and training into the labour market (employment).

As we can learn from the exploration of the countries' policies documents, they suggest the existence of a strong relationship between education and employment. As a response to early school leaving and youth unemployment, VET policies have come to the rescue in order to bridge failures:

“Empirically there is some coincidence between established ‘apprenticeship systems’ and (relatively) low youth unemployment.” (Heikkinen & Lassnigg 2015, p. 8)

“Access to apprenticeship is a key political issue, and the market is continuously monitored. If imbalances occur, political measures are set in place to reduce unemployment.” (Heikkinen & Lassnigg 2015, p. 14)

“The institutional embeddedness of apprenticeship into formal employment, and the related labour market policy interventions are the most important factors influencing youth unemployment.” (Heikkinen & Lassnigg 2015, p. 15)

“Attendees of VET schools can continue in special add-on courses which lead to VET college degrees and also offer access to tertiary education.” (MUSset et al. 2013, p. 13)

“Most indicators suggest that overall the transition from school to work in Austria is relatively smooth. Unemployment rates for persons with upper secondary or tertiary education level were 4% or lower in 2009 (OECD, 2011a, Table A7.2a). Youth unemployment is low by international standards. Less than 5% of those aged 15-29 were not in education and unemployed (OECD, 2011a, Table C.4.3).” (MUSset et al. 2013, p. 19)

The rate of school dropouts is quite significant in some countries, such as Bulgaria, and policies are thus adjusted to fit these needs:

“Most young people pass through the system of formal education and make a transition to either further education or employment. One in every eight Bulgarian nationals leaves the educational system without acquiring secondary education. In 2012 the share of early school leavers (ESL’s) aged 18-24 for Bulgaria is 12.5%. This value is slightly below the average level for the EU countries.” (Ministry of Education and Science 2014, p. 6)

Some countries, like Croatia, experience a rather high success in the VET system:

“The main strengths of Croatia’s education and training system are a low early school leaving rate and a high proportion of secondary vocational school graduates going onto higher education.” (EC 2015a, p. 3)

“The level of participation in VET at upper secondary level in Croatia is one of the highest in the EU (71.1%, compared to the EU average of 48.9% in 2013). However, the employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates is significantly below the EU average (47.3% in 2014, compared to the EU average of 70.8%).” (EC 2015, p. 9)

And others, like Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK, experience significant gaps in the transitions between education and training and the labour market, and that stands out in the countries’ policies documents. These gaps are the policies’ main target, in order to facilitate transitions:

“Results from investment in education can be evaluated in terms of ability to access and maintain one’s employment, job quality and profitability. The results, both in

terms of probability of employment and wage differentials, show the existence of an Italian problem which explains the position of our country towards the bottom of a hypothetical ranking of the European countries. In Italy the share of people aged 25 - 64 that have acquired at least a secondary education diploma is about 17.5 percentage points lower than the EU27 average (56% in Italy and 73.4% in the EU27). The gap is still significant for the 25 - 64 age group with university degrees (14.9% in Italy, 26.8% EU27 average) and is even wider for the 25 - 34 age group (21.0% in Italy, 34.2% EU27 average)." (Pitoni et al. 2012, p. 9)

"The traditional gap between education and training is in the process of being bridged since 2000. In 2007, Decree-Law 396/2007, 31 December established the National Qualification System (SNQ) which constitutes a milestone in tackling the longstanding low level of qualification of the Portuguese population, the high dropout rate of school and early school - leaving as well as the improvement of VET. The overall policy goal for setting up this system was, therefore, to improve the competences and raise the qualifications of the population with the purpose of improving the capacity of Portugal to adapt to the ongoing economic restructuring in a sustained way." (DGERT CEDEFOP 2015, p. 6)

"Spanish youth is being built in a framework of income polarization between professional and technical groups and very poorly placed groups who attempt to keep increasingly precarious jobs. In the second group there is a connection between unemployment and flexible employment and young people must adapt their desires for employment stability to the flexibility requirements of companies." (Lopez-Andreu & Verd 2016, p. 6)

"An individual without upper secondary education in the United Kingdom earns 70% of what someone with upper secondary education does – one of the largest differences in earnings between these two levels of education across OECD countries." (OECD 2014c, p. 1)

### **De-standardisation**

This dimension is a consequence of modernity, and reflects the greater variety and unpredictability in life transitions. Modernisation has increased the process of individualisation, imprinting new challenges and new arrangements in life courses. The de-standardisation of transitions, and the extension of transitions themselves, are a reflection of modern life course events such as higher levels of education and labour market flexibilisation. Life transitions happen not only by individual choice, but also as a consequence, of social events such as unemployment.

This dimension is perhaps the one most visible in the documents, in all countries. In Austria, for example, many factors are pointed out for the de-standardization of transitions in the life of young adults:

“Analyses by education levels reveal that declining returns to education by the mid-1990s are mainly due to declining returns to higher education levels.” (Brandstetter et al. 2009, p. 4)

In Austria 36% of workers hold jobs in areas that are unrelated to their field of study.” (Musset et al. 2013, p. 71)

“Both the unemployment rate and the duration of unemployment is on average clearly lower for apprenticeship graduates than for people without any qualification and lower than for people with other upper secondary qualifications.” (BMS, AHS) (Vogtenhuber 2009, p. 11)

“Major factors for early school dropouts include living in cities, the parents’ labour market status and education level, as well as origin. Consequences of early dropout from education that are becoming relevant are mainly lower participation opportunities associated with unemployment and social exclusion.” (Vogtenhuber 2009, p.63)

“Apprenticeship training additionally offers good conditions for entrepreneurship: According to the 2013 Labour Force Survey, 35% of all self-employed in Austria have an apprenticeship certificate as their highest qualification.” (Dornmayr 2014)

We can find many reasons for de-standardization in Bulgaria as well, even though early school dropout represents, once again, a rather significant aspect of this dimension:

“The early school leaving rate reached 12.9% in 2014 and has been slowly increasing since 2012. This is in contrast with previous years, when the rate had been on the decrease. There are substantial regional differences in Bulgaria’s early school leaving rate.” (EC 2015b, p. 3)

“Amid conditions of high unemployment, the enterprises experience an ever increasing deficit of workers having the necessary qualifications, which, in parallel with the aging population and slow pace of the reforms in education, is seen as a significant impediment to economic growth and attraction of new investments into Bulgaria.” (Ministry of Education and Science 2014, p. 2)

“The participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training (VET) is somewhat above the EU average (52.4% in 2013, compared to the EU average of 48.9%). However, Bulgaria has one of the highest proportions of young people aged 15 - 24 not in employment, education nor training (20.2% in 2014). The employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates is also well below the EU average. Adult participation in lifelong learning is the second lowest in the EU (Figure 3), with a significant gap compared to the EU average (1.8% in 2014, compared to the EU average of 10.7%).” (EC 2015b, p. 9)

On the other hand, Finland and Germany present positive aspects that challenge the dimension of de-standardization. Although these countries may also feel the effects of de-standardization, they present positive solutions for young people’s transition from school to work:

“The Finnish education system has no dead-ends. Learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education, whatever choices they make in between. The practice of recognition of prior learning has been developed in order to avoid unnecessary overlapping of studies.” (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013, p. 9)

“The results complement studies that find that the German reforms had positive effects on the labour market. It can be stated that a more efficient job matching contributes to a more successful realisation of companies’ activity plans and, therefore, this higher efficiency should boost—rather than weaken—the standing of firms in their relevant markets.” (Stops 2016, p. 14)

“Employment protection legislation could have played a role for the performance of the German labour market in the crisis. Regulations are rather strict in an international comparison, which might have prevented or at least postponed layoffs.” (Weber 2015, p. 465)

Italy, Portugal and Spain clearly struggle with youth unemployment, and the de-standardization dimension seems to be quite present in the policies’ documents of the three countries:

“The outcomes in the labour market confirm that in Italy university degree does not reduce the risk of unemployment to the same extent as in other European countries; the unemployment rate among those with tertiary education is 5.5% and that of people holding a diploma is 7.3% (EU 27 averages were 5.6% and 8.4% in 2011). More specifically, the employment rate of people who have a university degree is 77.0% and that of people who obtained a diploma is 65.2%, while the EU27 average is 82.0% and 68.4% respectively. Moreover, the highly skilled jobs in Italy account for 34.5% of the total, compared to a 39.2% EU 27 average, and of these, only 41.5% are held by people with tertiary education (in the EU 27 the share was on average 60.1% in 2011). The competitive advantage determined by a degree in Italy is not very significant even when comparing the pay gap between upper secondary school and university graduates. A finding that, in a context of limited capacity and level of public spending on higher education, if we consider as an approximation of the quality of higher education, explains people’s limited inclination to invest in education as well as the increasing number of youth who leave their studies to enter the world of work.” (Pitoni et al. 2012, p. 8)

“In 2012, youth unemployment (under 25 years old) reached a rate of 37.7% – with a ratio of 14.3%, the third highest rate level in the UE 27 MS that increased considerably compared to the pre-crisis period. This situation needs a strong answer by all stakeholders both from the education and training sector and from the labour market, considering the increase of the ratio of young unemployed (8.2% in 2010 compared to 14.3% in 2012), and the contrasting increase of the level of their qualifications.” (DGERT CEDEFOP 2015, p. 9)

“Young adults (16-24 years-olds) have higher proficiency levels in skills than the average for adults, but they perform below the average of their peers in other countries. Spain has also one of the highest percentages (16.8%) of over-skilled workers (in relation to the work they do) among the countries participating in the Survey of Adult

Skills. Unemployment in Spain has sharply increased with the economic crisis. Those with below upper secondary education and younger age groups were the hardest hit: 26.4% of 25-64 year-olds without upper secondary education were unemployed in 2011, compared to 11.6% of the same age group with a tertiary degree. Between 2008 and 2011, unemployment for 25-34 year-olds without upper secondary qualification increased by nearly four times the OECD average (16 percentage points compared to 4.5 percentage points on average). At 24.4%, the share of Spanish 15-29 year-olds who are neither employed, nor in education or training (NEET) was one of the highest among OECD countries in 2011, much above the OECD average (Figure 4). Continuing to improve the quality of upper secondary education and vocational training can ensure completion and enhance individuals' skills and labour market outcomes." (OECD 2014b, p. 8)

"Spanish labour market is characterized by great contractual flexibility, which has generated large segments of the labour market that are particularly sensitive to the economic cycle (Banyuls et al. 2009). This increase in flexibility has been linked to an increase in instability among persons entering the labour market." (Lopez-Andreu & Verd 2016, p. 5)

The UK focuses this dimension on the NEET. Even though early school dropout is decreasing, it still exists. Together with youth unemployment, it turns young people into a vulnerable group. This perspective is rather interesting for the de-standardization dimension, once young people were once the main working force and the more active group:

"The use of an all-encompassing concept like NEET helped maintain the focus of policy makers and researchers on patterns of vulnerability at a time when youth unemployment, the traditional measure of vulnerability, was declining. Low rates of unemployment can reduce the political pressure for action and may lead people to assume that young people without jobs are either workshy or unemployable. Although unemployment in the UK is relatively low, the recording of levels of NEET in official statistics reminds us that many young people still occupy vulnerable positions." (Furlong 2006, p. 554)

"The early school leaving rate in the UK fell from 14.9% in 2011 to 11.8% in 2014, which is close to the EU average of 11.1%. Unlike in other EU countries, the instances of early school leaving are less prevalent among students born outside the UK (9.4%) than those born in the UK (12.2%) with rates among males and females closer than on average across the EU (12.8% and 10.7% respectively)." (EC 2015c, p. 4)

### **Individual choices**

This dimension gives meaning to the collective and, at the same time, to the methodological choices of the project. The individual is constructed upon the collective and the collective has influence on the individual. Individual choices, which we get to know through biographical narratives, are the reflection of the collective, and thus enable the development of a sociological perspective.



Individual choices may be more visible in discourses than in policies. Nevertheless, some policies were identified that address this dimension. Austria, Germany and Portugal have policies with an emphasis on the individual and on the personal choices that young adults make throughout their lives, concerning their own education and employment. School dropouts are the main focus of the policies in this dimension:

“Returns to education are confounded with other effects, such as with unobserved individual characteristics. If e.g. a person with more abilities opts for learning more, the income earned by him or her is not only due to the acquisition of higher qualifications but also to his or her higher-level abilities, i.e. this person would also have attained a higher income than a person with less abilities if he or she had not completed the additional programme (“ability bias”).” (Brandstetter et al. 2009, p. 4)

“Better career guidance to support students in their individual choices could help to reduce the existing discrepancies in the supply and demand of workers by field of study.” (Musset et al. 2013, p. 78)

“Since 2008, the number of school-leavers with general higher education entrance qualifications has been growing while the number of those without secondary general school leaving certificate is falling. About one in two young people in an age bracket takes up studies.” (Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2015, p. 28)

“The diagnosis of the causes of dropout as reasons mentioned by most students to not continue to study points out: 1) the will itself, 2) already be tired of studying, 3) be time to try the independence, 4) be difficult to get into higher education and 5) financial difficulties, which reveals, according to the informants, dropping out of school due to little interest in education, economic causes and access to further education difficulty perception.” (DGERT CEDEFOP 2015, p. 9)

## **Summary**

We have suggested that the four dimensions presented above (time, transitions, de-standardisation and individual choices) are instrumental in making sense of young adults' life courses. The combination of these four analytical dimensions provides an operational framework for describing and assessing life courses in their relationship with the broader contexts in which they progress. While the literature reviewed above does enlighten how this framework relates to and may further the overall goals of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project, it is nonetheless necessary to make clear that there are limitations to this endeavour. To begin with, due to the scarcity of literature on transitions in adult life course, we may find a lacking background to inspire methodological options and, at a later stage, against which to contrast the data to be collected. Moreover, while at first sight the fact that most studies on transitions to the labour market focus on vulnerable young adults – the very same focus of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project – may appear as beneficial to our research, it may generate an obscuring bias in the sense that we may be led to

believe that some characteristics of the life courses of vulnerable young adults are specific to them, while in fact they may be more widespread, affecting an entire generation. To be sure, this is a potential political problem in the sense that solutions may be advanced for the most vulnerable, those considered in deficit, while disregarding major, pervasive societal changes that concern much larger sectors of the population. Finally, when developing a line of inquiry that takes individuals as the main unit of analysis – such as the LCR –, it is necessary to avoid the potential pitfall of putting all the responsibility for individual problems on the shoulders of individuals, neglecting the role of the social organization in which they are rooted.

In conclusion, it is necessary to address the challenge of placing life courses in a range of wider contexts, from the regional to the European levels, and through the national level. This is particularly challenging considering the comparative approach of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project, together with the multidimensionality, uncertainty and de-standardisation of contemporary life courses.

### **C. Governance**

In order to support young adults in their precarious situations and often difficult transitions from schooling into the labour market, a great number of LLL-policies, programmes and initiatives have been set up across different administrative levels, from the local to the European. These policies, however, have been subject to review and recurrent criticism in policy debates as to their fragmentation and ineffectiveness, stating that one reason is the lack of coordination between them. The interrelations relevant for the policies to be most effective include actors, i.e. relevant stakeholders, system levels, modes of coordination as well as the cooperation between different policy sectors (e.g., education policies, social youth policies and labour market policies). The degree of interrelation is complex and multi-layered revealing the need of effective and efficient coordination between the policies as it has great impact on their intended effects of economic growth and social inclusion. In particular enabling their target groups, that is the young adults, to enter the labour market successfully.

YOUNG\_ADULLLT uses the *Governance* perspective to account for the interrelation and coordination of different levels or scales of policy-making as well as the numerous actors involved therein. In accounting for the interplay of these various levels and actors, it calls attention to the opportunity structures in education, labour market and welfare at regional/local level. Addressing and understanding this interrelation becomes central to devising and planning coordinated policy-making as necessary requirement for successful LLL-policies. The aim is to identify existing –

matching and/or mismatching – policy arrangements and to devise new forms of coordinated policy-making that do not perpetuate prevailing inequalities.

In short, in YOUNG\_ADULLLT governance is understood as an approach that helps to address issues of actor constellations that act in creating or closing opportunity structures for young adults, modes of governance, entailing modes of coordination between those actors and actor networks, multilevel systems regarding policy and actor networks and their decision making processes as well as meta-governance, asking for the rationale behind the means of coordination ('governing the governing') among the different agents and networks. Thus, research questions the Governance approach incorporates in the project are:

- Which actors, policies and sectors are involved in the definition and implementation of LLL policies and what is their individual impact and leverage?
- How do state (e.g. training/skill providers) and private actors (e.g. enterprises) cooperate in terms of assessing what competences and skills are valued and defined as needed? What are emerging (new) patterns and networks of policy-making at regional and local levels?
- How are young adults engaged in LLL policies decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation?
- How do LLL policies assure accountability and to whom in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability?
- How do LLL policies contribute to respond to multijurisdictional and multilevel 'wicked problems' of young adults like NEET, ESL, youth unemployment and ethnic discrimination?

In the following, *first*, the analytical model GOV will be conceptualised, which allows, *second*, to identify key aspects of the concept relevant for YOUNG\_ADULLLT research. These aspects enable, *third*, to earmark important issues within a theoretically informed literature review.

### **Governance as theory, or as an analytical concept?**

Governance is best understood as an analytical concept, rather than as a theory. Although, no consensual definition exists, the concept is used to point to important changes in the political field, changing the perspective from an actor-centred to an institution-centred point of view, focusing on the actions within its framing forms of steering and regulation (Benz 2004; Schuppert 2011). This change means addressing these issues as 'government', 'management', 'coordination' and 'regulation' among the various stakeholders, sectors and levels involved in non-hierarchical and network-like structures (Benz et al. 2007; Ball & Junemann 2012). Therefore, the governance perspective allows a well-rounded view on LLL-policies, as it is able to account

for sector intersections, policy field crossings, and different modes of governance (Schuppert 2011).

As the transformations alluded to above have important impact on political, economic, and social life, the term governance has been taken up and debated in various scientific disciplines. In social science disciplines, for instance, governance is understood as an interdisciplinary “bridging concept” (cf. Schuppert 2006, p. 373), thus linking the various academic discussions on forms of collective decision-making and implementation in political, legal and administrative sciences, in sociology, and more recently also in education science. GOV indicates a significant shift in emphasis relevant to all disciplines, “namely from actor-centeredness to an emphasis on regulatory structures” (Schuppert 2006, p. 374, own translation). Renate Mayntz refers to governance as comprising all forms in which public and private actors, separately or jointly, aim to produce common goods and services and solve collective problems. For her,

“Governance means the sum of all concurrent forms of collective regulation of social issues: from the institutionalized self-regulation of the civil society, through the diverse forms of cooperation among state and private actors, up to the action of sovereign state agents.” (Mayntz 2004, p. 66, own translation).

Different research foci may be distinguished regarding governance. For instance, some authors in political science research focus more on comparative research on the welfare state and the transformations of the state. Others, in particular those in education research have focused primarily on socially-accepted forms of coordination of social actions and its effects (Schrader et al. 2015). Bob Jessop, on the other hand, approaches governance from a more normative perspective and defines the concept as “mechanisms and strategies of coordination adopted in the face of complex reciprocal interdependence among operationally autonomous actors, organizations, and functional systems” (2004b, p. 52). The heterogeneous usages of governance as a concept with practical, normative, melioristic, etc. connotations become evident in these two definitions (Pierre & Peters 2000): one research strand understanding governance as an analytical model (German), the other research strand depicting governance also as a normative concept (Anglo-American). Both strands consider governance not as a theory, yet rather as a heuristic research tool that allows to capture changes and processes of transformation in steering and regulation from actor-centeredness to regulatory structures along different theories and methodologies within the respective context.

In contrast to the Anglo-American research strand, the *German strand* is comparatively new and focuses strongly on governance as an analytical model. It was first taken up by political and so-

cial sciences, in particular, by the Cologne School including Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf, and after the so-called 'PISA Shock' in Germany increasingly incorporated by educational research as an analytical concept aimed at designing educational reforms (Schimank 2009). Departing from issues such as steering, steering capacity and governability, Mayntz and Scharpf focus on actor-centred institutionalism, meaning the "how the interaction between micro- and meso-level actors and institutional factors shapes the possibilities of effective governance" (Jesop 2011, p. 111). These ideas are a response to a changing understanding of statehood that in turn implies a change in forms of coordination of social actions and structures. Affected by these transformations is not only the coordination between different actors and sectors, but also within organisations. Consequently as an analytical concept, governance puts the focus on structures and processes of regulation (Mayntz 2004; Schuppert 2011).

This being the case, the processual character of governance in terms of changing actor constellations, institutional arrangements, regulatory structures and boundaries becomes evident in new forms of legitimisation which go beyond the nation state. Moreover, it entails the question of accountability regarding the interrelation and coordination between levels, in particular above or below the national level (Schuppert 2011). The German governance research strand has thus extended the Governance Paradigm by the supranational (especially European) level. This includes the "effect of European policy upon domestic sectoral structures", the "European level of policy-making" and the "political input process on European and national level" (Schuppert 2001, p. 23).

In contrast to the extension of the Governance Paradigm by political and social sciences, educational research adapted the concept to work on issues on national and local level and lack the systematic incorporation of the international level. In the aftermath of the first PISA studies, expectations in and pressure on education policy to provide quick and effective solutions, have fostered the adoption of the governance concept in order to understand and theoretically reflect on current changes in the education system in a nationally oriented way (Maag Merki & Altrichter 2015). German educational research has therefore focused strongly on the empirically founded multi-perspective understanding of the formation and the performance of schooling. Thus, as Altrichter (2010, p. 151) put it, this approach "aims at empirically founded multi-perspective of the formation and the performance of schooling", including major themes such as innovation in German school systems, processes of school development or performance (e.g., school autonomy, funding, etc.) and experiences of students. In particular, Herbert Altrichter and Katharina Maag Merki have discussed these issues regarding a new form of steering within the public

school systems and developed systematic theoretical approaches for educational governance as an independent research perspective (cf. Altricher & Maag Merki 2016; Maag Merki et al. 2014).

Given the variety of foci within the German-speaking governance studies, YOUNG\_ADULLLT concentrates on the three core dimensions of this research strand: *first*, multi-level system, *second*, actors and actor constellations and, *third*, modes of governance. These dimensions allow addressing the project's research questions appropriately regarding the local/regional landscapes of coordinated policy-making.

### **Multi-level Governance**

Multi-level governance is the vertical (multiple levels) and horizontal (multiple actors) dispersion of central government authority (Bache & Flinders 2004) and refers to both, political structures and decision-making processes (Schäfer 2010). While governance refers to the "growing interdependence between governments and non-governmental actors at various territorial levels" (Bache & Flinders 2004b, p. 3) the concept of multi-level governance adds the dimension of scale. Besides the interdependence of various actors, an increasing interdependence between governments of different territorial levels can be witnessed (Bache and Flinders 2004). These interdependencies are characterised by "typical constellations of actors", which have a different logic and a different constellation at the various levels (Altricher 2010). Regarding the diversification of levels, both supra-national and sub-national levels became more relevant (Kazepov 2010). These processes were set in motion by the decentralisation within states and increasing transnational cooperation between them, reflecting two dimensions of the transformation of the state (Schäfer 2010). Consequently, in YOUNG\_ADULLLT the locus of authority in terms of scales (regional/local, national, supranational), sectors (public, private, market) and functions (funding and provision) in the participating countries is important.

Focusing on the aspect of scales, it is not surprising to find a common trend among all countries concerning the national level being the most important in terms of regulation and maintaining education and training. With the rise of *national* education systems along the formation of the nation state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, education became a publicly administered provision by each national government as it is still today (Mitter 2006). With the rise of mass schooling, the national public education system became the worldwide model of schooling and training (Adick 2002). Thus, in all countries in the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project the education and training sector is based on national legal frameworks, relegating the supranational scale (i.e., the European Union) to mere advisory status due to the principle of subsidiarity (Hörner et al. 2015; Eurydice

2016a). While the national level sets the constitutional legal basis for provision of education and training, the countries display differences in the autonomy of regional administrations with Austria and Germany being federal political systems and Portugal, Italy and Spain having autonomous regions with a strong devolution of power, while overall maintaining a centralistic system (Eder & Thonhauser 2015; Döbert 2015; Sousa & Fino 2015; Blöchle 2015; Usarralde 2015). Likewise, Scotland's national policy on education and training is laid down by the Scottish Government (Eurydice 2016e).

The constitutional framework and legal organisation of the provision of education and training is an important aspect regarding private education and the involvement of market structures. While private schools in the education systems are very often subsidised by national and regional education authorities, in tertiary education, not being part of compulsory education, private offerings currently form an integral aspect (OECD 2016, p. 210; Hörner et al. 2015). Likewise, funding of adult education (here ISCED 4) is characterised by a degree of private expenditure, which varies substantially between the countries participating in YOUNG\_ADULLLT: Austria and Germany are characterised by almost half public and half private funding (Austria 54 % public and 46 % private; Germany 49 % public and 51 % private); in Portugal and Spain the amount of public funding clearly outweighs the private investment (Portugal 85 % public and 15 % private; Spain 95 % public and 5 % private); Finland and Italy have virtually 100 % or public expenditure (OECD 2016, p. 217). However, Italy is experiencing a trend towards commercialisation of adult education as new private providers increase offerings in an underdeveloped public system (Blöchle 2015). Education free of charge is the tenet of the Finnish education and training system, which implies a high degree of public funding at all levels, regardless of the provider. Therefore, public expenditure extends to almost 100 % (Aro; Järvinen & Rinne 2010; OECD 2016). Somewhat less, but still more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the entire expenditure for ISCED 4 educational programmes in Scotland are provided by public funds (OECD 2016; Eurydice 2016e). Likewise public expenditure on education and training in Croatia and Bulgaria amounts to about 80 % to 90 % (Bachmaier 2015; Palekčić; Radeka & Zekanovic 2015).

### **Actor and actor constellations**

Actors and actor constellations can be distinguished between individual (e.g., teachers, students, parents, policy-makers) and organised (collective and corporative) actors. Collective actors depend on the preferences of its members (e.g., trade unions) and corporative actors are characterized by leadership that act independently from the interests of their members (e.g.,

education administration). While governance research discerns between individual and organized actors, the unit of analysis is the actor constellation: i.e., the interaction of actors. That means not one single dominant actor acts, but that several actors are involved in, for example, the formation of a system in terms of national education systems (Altrichter 2010). Thus, "the constellation acts, not the actor". It is also important to recognize that specific actor constellations influence the expectations and options for action of single actors, thereby displaying a different degree of formalisation and institutionalisation. To single out the actors involved on an individual level (policy-makers, education providers, target groups/young adults), organized level (education authorities, trade unions, employers' associations) as well as to identify relevant actor constellations (notably within national education systems) within the respective countries is therefore important for the YOUNG\_ADULLLT research.

Doing so the close link between the constellation and coordination of actors and other governance dimensions, in particular modes of governance, becomes evident. Specific forms of structures like decentralisation and marketisation of education and training, imply a different set of actors, yet certain patterns of actor constellations can be seen in all participating countries of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. In view of Wolfgang Mitter's (2006) observations on the persistence of the national education systems, the governmental authorities (national as well as regional/local) are the prime actors in terms of compulsory schooling in all countries (Eurydice 2016a). Even though other actors, as for instance business and non-profit organisations, are increasingly forming partnerships with schools, their involvement is merely a non-essential add-on (Eder & Thonhauser 2015; Aro; Järvinen & Rinne 2010).

This is different, however, in vocational education and training (VET) as well as further adult education. Even though the national and regional governmental authorities provide the legal and strategic framework according to whose regulations all education providers come together, the authorities are only one actor among many. While all countries share the variety of actors involved in adult education – private educational institutions and centres, non-profit organisations and business, employers and unions – the degree of involvement and coordination between them and the participation of the target groups are different. The education and training systems of Finland and Scotland are characterised by a long tradition and high participation rates as well as a high share of public funding. The aim is to promote adult education and enable everyone to participate in order to adapt and meet working requirements as well as to gain personally and contribute to society. Thus, all actors involved, in particular on the local level, are part of a well-formed constellation of actors, each being assigned particular responsibilities, for instance local



employability partnerships including among local authorities job centres, local colleges and non-profit organisations (Antikainen 2006; Eurydice 2016e).

Similar attempts at structuring the constellation of actors in adult education can be observed in Austria and Portugal. Establishing umbrella networks like *the Ländernetzwerk Weiter.Bildung* and *Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional* are designed to systemise the various activities in order to work in a collaborative effort and overcome existing divides between the various actors. The aim being to strengthen the political weight, but also to provide guidance for young adults concerning adult education (Lassnig 2011; Eurydice 2016c).

Contrarily, in Bulgaria, Italy and Croatia a less concerted effort can be observed. With the current political structures only being about 25 years old, the education and training system in Bulgaria is characterised by a "bricolage" of "inherited 'old rigid institutions' and newly established 'flexible' ones", meaning traditional educational institutions established before the revolution of 1989 and new mainly non-governmental institutions that provide training for the trainer (Bojadjeva et al. 2012). While adult education activities, in particular regarding Lifelong Learning strategies, are taking place in Bulgaria, though without a systematic effort of the actors involved, the sector seems to be underdeveloped in Italy and Croatia. In Italy, having one of the lowest participations rates of all OECD countries (1 % of school leaver with lower level secondary schooling and 12 % of graduates), increasing political investment and initiatives have taken place only recently creating for instance community education centres (Blöchle 2015). Thus, adult education in Italy shows a strong trend towards commercialisation with costly courses and programmes. Likewise, the adult education sector is still being developed in Croatia. Having had a strong institutional set-up of adult education facilities, it had to be rebuilt after the Homeland war. Today, offers exist in particular by public evening schools, the sector is to be further developed taking into account labour market requirements by national public authorities (Palekčić; Radeka & Zekanovic 2015; Eurydice 2016b).

### **Modes of Governance**

There are different basic mechanisms or modes of governance as constellations of action coordination. At the micro level, these are observation, influence and negotiation. At the macro level, these modes of governance include bureaucracy (or hierarchy), market, community and networks. Lange & Schimank (2004, p. 20) distinguish three basic governance mechanisms, which may be used to analyse modes of coordination on a micro-level: There are constellations of observation, in which coordination of social action is achieved by unilateral or mutual adaptation to

what has been observed of the others' action. In constellations of influence coordination is achieved by targeted use of means of potential influence, such as power, money, knowledge, emotions, moral authority, etc. 'Observation' is a precondition for 'influence'. In constellations of negotiation, social coordination is based on bilaterally elaborating arrangements, which may display their binding effects also without the exercise of power. 'Observation' and 'influence' are preconditions for 'negotiation' (Altrichter, 2010). In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, we differentiate these modes of governance as processes of structuring/frameworks (e.g., bureaucracy/hierarchy, market, community, networks) and techniques (e.g., observation, influence, negotiation) that frame and shape the interrelation of actor/actor constellations in a multi-level environment.

The issues of decentralisation and marketisation as well as influence as relevant techniques, can be observed in the countries participating in the YOUNG\_ADULLLT research. Although the predominant locale of authority may vary across the countries according to a federal or central political system including autonomous regions (see above), the process of decentralisation is prominent on all levels in the respective systems of education and training. With the rise of neo-liberal New Public Management reforms all over Europe and in the wake of large-scale assessments – most notably PISA and PIAAC studies – based on key indicators and parameters, new forms of governance regarding the effectiveness of education and training took hold in all countries. Thus, decentralisation can be observed particularly with regard to autonomy of educational institutions, gaining responsibility in terms of hiring and firing personnel and financial budgeting (Eurydice 2016a; Hörner et al. 2015).

With this individual financial responsibility in place, many education facilities extend their community reach out in terms of marketisation and establish partnerships with private business enterprises for the enhancement and mutual benefit of financial and human resources. In Scotland public-private-partnerships (PPPs) work as business sponsorships for which the private sector generates financial capital to build an adequate infrastructure (Harris & Gorard 2015). Austrian school administrations adapted business quality assurance models for self-evaluation along key parameters for effectiveness; likewise, the adult education provision is described as "market-driven" in private hands (Eder & Thonhauser 2015; Lassnig 2011, p. 40). Similarly, in Bulgaria and Croatia attempts are being made to link the educational and training system more closely to the needs of the labour market, revealing the notion of human capital in these efforts (Bachmaier 2015; Palekčić; Radeka & Zekanovic 2015). Even in Finland, traditionally a country with a strong belief in national solidarity, the perception of the instrumental value of education as a commodity

and vehicle to promote and improve economic competitiveness has gained weight (Aro; Järvinen & Rinne 2010).

In the *Anglo-American research strand*, the term governance has been used in political science research since the 1980s with the rise of neoliberal forms of regulation, e.g. New Public Management, in the United Kingdom and the United States of America with the Thatcher government and the Reagan administration. It has been established as an independent research field ever since. In particular, Stephen Ball and Bob Jessop have played a major role in forming governance as a normative concept fostering ideological critique at these forms of regulation (Altrichter, 2010). Thus, Ball argues for a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories, in order to study policies in their right (ideological) context (Ball, 2006). Based on this assumption Jessop (2004b, 2011) as well as Bache and Flinders (2004) argue for a multilevel system and different modes of governance in order to capture the entirety of the multiplicity of levels and actors involved in the dispersion of central authority. These authorities in view of a transformation in statehood, however, are not randomly dispersed, but rather are governed by a certain notion of regulation which, on the basis of normative critical understanding of governance studies, asks for forms of reflexive meta-steering of state development, thus a meta-governance (Jessop 2004b). The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) by the European Union identifies Jessop as a site “that involves a plurality of state and non-state actors on different levels who attempt to coordinate activities around a series of functional problems” and displays a particular neoliberal form of multilevel meta-governance (Jessop 2004b, p. 57).

Like the European Union, many actors on the international level have a growing influence in (educational) governance. In particular, international organisations, such as the UNESCO, international non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations, take on an active role in designing (education) policies by exercising this influence through ideas instead of money and authority. The ‘power of ideas’ and institutions shape the discourses and contents through various instruments, most notably norms, agenda setting, funding and coordination of activities (Parreira do Amaral 2016). Doing so these international actors can launch specific topics, fund certain activities and can step into national or local politics and policies generating push-and-pull movements. While many of these actors are large single actors, e.g., the EU and the UNESCO, most of them are part of certain actor constellations and networks (Parreira do Amaral 2016). Rhodes states that these are “networks of organizations which resist central direction” (Rhodes 1997, p. 3). These networks are “self-organizing, interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the

state” fostering the blurring distinction between state and civil society (Rhodes 1997, p. 15). Mark Bevir takes up these changing understanding of statehood by understanding governance as “theories and issues of social coordination and the nature of all patterns of rule” (Bevir 2011, p. 1). With that he detects dilemmas of “managing and reforming hybrid patterns of rule that combine aspects of market, network, and hierarchy”, meaning as the world changes, patterns of regulation and governance – and thus statehood – change, too, and pose problems for older theories and practices (Bevir 2011, p. 3).

Given the foci within the Anglo-American governance studies, the aspect of ideology critique and the critical analysis and questioning of hegemonic structures – i.e. meta-governance – allows YOUNG\_ADULLLT to address the project’s research questions appropriately especially concerning issues of coordinated policy-making on the local/regional level. Specific power relations shape every process and mechanism of governance as it is itself governed and represented by certain norms and structures. For example, the OMC is a particular (neoliberal) form of *meta-governance* that shapes the dispersion of authority among the state and non-state actors within the European Union. Jessop defines this process of “governing of governing” as “the organization of self-organization, the regulation of self-regulation, the steering of steel-steering, the structuring of the game-like interaction within governance networks, and interaction among actors to influence parameter changes to the overall system” (Jessop 2011, p. 106). At this point, the normative aspect of the governance research questioning what kind of discourses and grand narratives are shaping the activities of regulation and governing becomes obvious.; and this turns our attention to meta-governance.

### **Meta-governance**

Kooiman distinguishes different orders of governance, designating meta-governance as third and highest order as “efforts to change the broad principles that affect how governance occurs and to give it a clear normative rationality” (cited in Jessop 2011, p. 110). Thus, meta-governance comprises reflexive social practices that are concerned with the ideologies and hegemonic structures that shape the educational discourse in the respective countries of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. These include a governing by numbers (or inductive bottom-up process) as opposed to a governing by theories/theoretical deliberations (or deductive top-down-process) (Jessop 2011; Innerarity 2013). Obviously, this aspect of governance research has a different characteristic than the dimensions analysed above (multi-level system, actor/actor constellations and modes of governance) and displays a strong normative rather than analytical

element. For YOUNG\_ADULLLT the inclusion of meta-governance provides the link to the perspective of a Cultural Political Economy and thus the analytical integration of the theoretical foundations of the project.

As meta-governance can be understood the 'governing of governing', it displays the driving force, meaning the hegemonic ideological ideas and norms, behind all the above mentioned processes regarding scales, sectors, actors and modes of governance. With the rise of large scale assessment studies – foremost the OECD's PISA and PIAAC studies – at the beginning of the new millennium, most countries world-wide have paid much attention to the respective outcomes in terms of education and training and their ranking on the international scale. With Finland being at the very top for several years, the succeeding influence of these assessments on steering the direction of policy-making did not only affect the top ranks, but paved the way for new ways of evaluation in many countries (Aro; Järvinen & Rinne 2010). External evaluation based on key performance indicators, spurred by a management philosophy, led in most European countries to a shift in the educational paradigm away from governing by discourse and theoretical debate to governing by numbers and quantifiable outcomes (Eder & Thonhauser 2015).

This trend can be observed as a general development in all countries participating in the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project and has led to extensive educational reforms as for instance in Germany reducing the time of schooling passing the *Abitur* to attend university from 13 to 12 years thus conforming to international standard (Döbert 2015). With the Finnish education and training system displaying already in the 1990s a process of decentralisation, determining key indicators, albeit vague and inchoate, for quality assurance evaluation became an important aspect in educational restructuring. Accompanied by critical voices and initial scepticism of the international input, this development has been legitimised by the current trend (Kauko & Varjo 2008; Antikainen 2006). Likewise, Scotland has a long tradition of indicator based quality assurance with the 'HM Inspectorate of Education' recently joint with other a number of other evaluation agencies to 'Education Scotland' focusing on a set of indicators and questions addressed by educational facilities in the self-evaluation process (Eurydice 2016e).

Processes of self-evaluation and external quality management have come as new developments to most other European countries. In particular the German-speaking countries, were affected by the low achievement rates in the OECD's large scale assessments – for instance the so called 'PISA Shock' in Germany – triggering discussions on school effectiveness and monitoring as

well as quality development measures across all education and training sectors. The ensuing measures of indicator based quality assurance induced a paradigm shift towards output orientation (Eder & Thonhauser 2015; BMBF 2015b). So did the development in Southern European countries. Grimaldi and Barzanò (2014) describe the reaction in Italy to these new processes of evaluation as 'new merit turn', meaning a discourse on accountability, performance, improvement and innovation based on the introduction of New Public Management and a "neoliberal imaginary" (p. 42). Similarly, Redondo (2016) observes a development in Portugal turning the perception and understanding of educational institutions into managed organisations rather than administered organisations, displaying the neoliberal tone of the governing pattern.

A third form of development regarding the worldwide trend of 'governing by numbers' can be observed in Southeast and Eastern European countries. With an independent political status of only about 25 years, the education and training systems of Croatia and Bulgaria underwent major reforms in terms of structure, funding and educational discourse. Thus, Domović and Vidović (2015) observe a "bricolage of 'something old, something new'" of policy interventions in Croatia without a coherent approach mainly due to changing political structures (p. 35). One aspect of the 'something new' is the European orientation of the education and training system, which includes the adoption of the general trends steering the system as a whole as for instance the external evaluation based on key performance indicators, yet with the institutional organisation and form of assessment still developing (Palekčić; Radeka & Zekanovic 2015). With Bulgaria joining the European Union in 2007 a similar trend towards adopting European discourses and structures can be observed, introducing quality assurance agencies for the tertiary education sector as early as 1996 however not without problems (Bachmaier 2015, Eurydice 2016b). However, the country seems to be in between old rigid structures – as old as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – and new flexible structures – created after the revolution of 1989 (Boyadjieva et al. 2012).

## **Summary**

What can be observed from the discussion of the literature is the complex reality across all countries in terms of organisation and provision of adult education in general and LLL policies in particular. Taking the legal, structural and financial ways of organisation into account, in terms of a multi-level governance, the similarities between all countries of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project in terms of the national level providing the constitutional framework become obvious. Differences, however, can be observed regarding the degree of involvement of the regional/local level: with Austria and Germany being federally organised countries, most aspects regarding administration

of education and training lies in the hand of the regional governments (*Länder*). Likewise, Scotland enjoys an autonomous status within the United Kingdom being responsible for its own administration and funding of the education system. Even though devolving administration rights regarding education and training to specific autonomous regions, Spain, Portugal and Italy are inherently centrally organised leaving the main authority regarding education and training with the national government, as it is the case in Finland, Croatia and Bulgaria.

Drawing on these different systemic set-ups of actors and actor constellations different contextual patterns can be observed: it is evident that similar actors are involved in education and training, and particularly in adult education. These include, besides governmental authorities and policy-makers, individual actors such as businesses or private schools as well as organized actors such as large non-profit organisations, unions and employers' associations. What seems to be different, however, is the constellation of these actors. The kind of constellation that acts can range from systematic and strategically coordinated activities in which each single actors complements the other, to still rather loosely organised networks in order to achieve a basic coordination among the actors, to a bricolage of actors lacking communication and consensus in a low developed or still developing adult education sector. For the YOUNG\_ADULLLT research regarding LLL policies these implies a heterogeneous collection of research sites with very unique contextual factors (Work Packages 4 to 6) that need to be taken into account as a challenge concerning the case study construction and comparative analysis (Work Packages 7 and 8).

Considering the modes of governance common trends are being coordinated and transmitted between the various levels and actor constellations between the countries as well as within each country, the mechanism of influence by means of money (PPPs), knowledge (evaluation) and moral authority (adjustments to labour market in the sense of employment opportunities) seems to be a major technique. Taking into account these processes of coordination and decentralisation in all countries in the project, the most prominent aspect regarding the basic mechanisms or modes of governance is to identify who is in charge and in power to decide and what kind of LLL measures are implemented, i.e., where these ideas come from.

Analysing the implementation of these ideas, distinct developments concerning 'governing by numbers' becomes evident. In comparison to national or regional educational authorities, the supranational (EU) and international (OECD) actors obviously have a stronger influence with regard to norms and agenda setting in policy-making, and thus are hegemonic in the educational discourse. Differences can be observed with regard to the national motivation to comply with

these internationally negotiated standards. While reputation might be one reason, economic survival in the international competition for human resources and the attachment of funds might be another. In terms of education policy-making it reveals the strong interrelatedness between the various levels (international, national, regional/local), but reveals at the same time the very core of it in terms of analysing current developments in Europe. These are non-mutually exclusive indicators and situational factors that shape the process of policy-making – as shown in this literature review, but rather a multiple, complex and dense network of levels, actors and techniques of governance coming together.

In the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project, the assumption is to identify and promote coordinated (LLL) policy-making that includes the integration of the labour market, social inclusion as well as individual life courses. With this aim in mind, the research focuses on the local governance of the policy-making process and comprises the perception of the recipients side – i.e., the young adults, thus going beyond the simple ascription of responsibilities, but also inquiring into the who, the how and the why of the policy-making process (Work Packages 5, 6 and 7). While YOUNG\_ADULLLT breaks new ground focusing on Functional Regions as locale of implementation and functioning, the literature review reveals a lack of research that foregrounds the regional/local level. Especially from a governance perspective, the critical analysis in terms scales, actor constellations and modes of governance or techniques is crucial to avoid strategies of LLL policies that imply fragmentation and exacerbate existing inequalities.

### **3.1 Summary**

In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, we combine different perspectives to analyse LLL policies for young adults focusing on the interlinkages of their living conditions with the various policy sectors across the European landscape. As the LLL policies are locally constructed, the interplay of the individual, structural, and institutional dimensions in the local and regional contexts come to the fore. Therefore, in YOUNG\_ADULLLT we developed a conceptual approach and research framework to combine the different theoretical and disciplinary traditions in a multilevel analytical framework with the aim to conceptualise appropriately the research object.

In order to do so, our common research framework takes differences and variations along three perspectives of conceptualisation into account: First, a *terminological conceptualisation* in form of the glossary, second *research unit conceptualisation* describing the Functional Regions and



third *theoretical conceptualisation* describing our three theoretical perspectives CPE, LCR and GOV.

Starting from the *terminological conceptualisation*, we have shown that the creation of a Glossary providing key concepts fosters the common understanding in the project. The Glossary facilitates the multi-disciplinary knowledge production as it creates a common baseline to be used along the project duration. Using a set of key concepts prevents terminological fragmentation and thus ensures a common research approach. Therefore, it is sharpening the lens for the integration of different research traditions and conceptions along a common research objective.

Second, the *research unit conceptualisation* allows us to focus on regional differences and variations of our research unit. Departing from the common assumption of national states as 'natural units' we argued that due to processes of internationalization and globalization these conceptualisation no longer sufficiently captures the intricacies of contemporary policy-making processes. Instead, LLL policies are implemented on different levels –the national being one amongst other levels. Therefore, in YOUNG\_ADULLLT, we adopted Functional Regions as research units assuming that differences may occur between locales within countries rather than across countries. This approach sharpens the lens for the local context in which the effects of LLL policies come to the fore.

Third, *theoretical conceptualisation* allowed us to construct of a global theoretical perspective, enabling the integration of the different dimensions of the research focus. Building from the conceptualisation of the research object required the combination of the three different theoretical perspectives: *Life Course Research* with focus on young people allowing insights into their social realities and individual life courses; *Cultural Political Economy* with focus on LLL policies analysing orientations, objectives and construction of target groups; and *Governance* focusing on the interrelation of sectors, actors and levels in the definition, coordination and implementation of policy.

The following section presents the adopted design and discusses the methodological requirements and decisions taken.

#### **4. Design and Methodology**

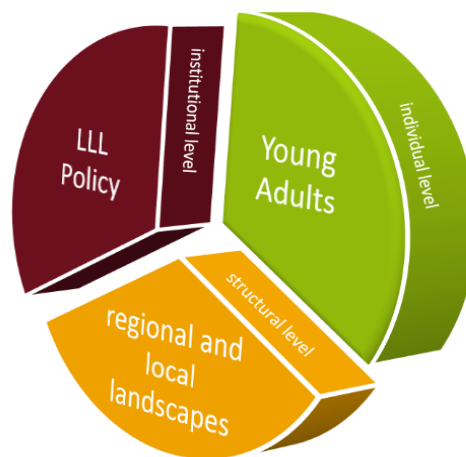
In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, the different conceptual and theoretical perspectives of the research object are bundled within a multilevel analytical framework and translated into a methodological perspective and strategy for the overall research project. The aim is to guide the work in the dif-

ferent WPs and ensure a comprehensive common research approach. The design of the research project aims at answering the research questions by using a set of combined methods and procedures for collecting and analysing data.

In the following section, we describe the research strategy of the project as a multi-method and multi-level approach and explain the implications for the methodology and the analysis, including its implementation in each Working Package (section 4.1). The contextualisation of each object of research in global/national/regional/local cultural traditions and conceptions is taken into account in our international comparative research approach that aims at assessing the possibilities and limitations of comparing different research sites within the European landscapes.

#### 4.1 Research Design: Multi-level and Multi-method Comparative Analysis

The focus of the project YOUNG\_ADULLLT brings to attention the interrelation of LLL policies and young adults in the different realities across Europe. The project looks into different types of LLL policies analysing their potentially competing (and possibly ambivalent) orientations and objectives; it also asks questions as to their impacts – intended and unintended – on young adults by focusing on policy-making at regional/local level across Europe. By framing the research object in



**Figure 22. YOUNG\_ADULLLT's thematic entry points and analytical dimensions**

this manner, three aspects of the issue come to the fore: LLL policies, their target groups and the different regional/local contexts. Departing from such complex conceptualisation of the issues requires a research strategy that combines different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches in a comparative multi-level analysis. In terms of theoretical conceptualisation, the different entry points illustrated above represent different analytical dimensions of the research object, as discussed in section 3 above.

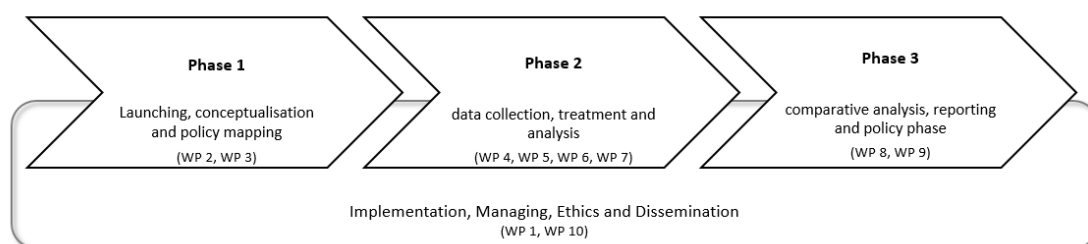
In terms of methodology, adequately taking into account the various dimensions of the research object implied discerning different analytical levels – individual, structural, and institutional – which in turn entails using different – qualitative and quantitative – methods to address the different research questions. For example, capturing the young adults' perception of underlying

social expectations of LLL policies is best achieved by means of qualitative methods such as biographical narrative interviewing. Accounting for the diverse living conditions of young people in their specific regional/local living conditions is most adequately realised by means of quantitative data analyses. Figure 21 illustrates these different thematic entry points and relates them to the different analytical dimensions of the research object at hand.

This section describes the application of a multi-method and multi-level approach and explains its ensuing methodological and analytical implications. Methodological issues are in the focus, including the research design and its implementation in each Working Package, followed by methods applied on each level. The embeddedness of the research object in its global/national/regional/local cultural traditions and conceptions is taken into account in the international comparative research approach, providing a methodological reflection of the comparative approach (cf. also D2.2 and D1.3).

The project's multi-method approach is described according to the three phases of the research process. In doing so, we start from the multi-method approach, by, *first*, outlining its implementation in the project, *second*, explaining the characteristics and advantages of the multi-method approach, and, *third*, specify implementation of the methods in the different Work Packages. *Finally*, we describe how the multi-level approach draws together the different phases of the project.

The implementation of the research design in YOUNG\_ADULLLT is adapted into three different phases within the different Work Packages, using different methods and data, encompassed by the projects structural features and its interrelation to public utilization of its results. In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, the multi-level and mixed-method approach is translated in the following phases within the project and implemented in the Work Packages:



**Figure 23. Phases of the research process in YOUNG\_ADULLLT**

First, a *launching, conceptualisation and policy mapping phase* of the project's objectives, by designing a common research framework, assuring its compliance of ethical standards and

codes of good conduct. The mapping and analysing of the LLL policy field on a national and international level provides sensible indicators for the analysis of national and regional strategies of LLL policies. Second, a *data collection, treatment and analysis phase* comprising a quantitative analysis of young adults living conditions, a qualitative research with young adults and a comparative analysis of demand and supply of skills in conjunction with the labour market. These are followed by regional/local case studies, analysing and bringing together policies and policy-making including data and results from the previous empirical phase. Third, a *comparative analysis, reporting and policy phase* which draws together the empirical results from the previous phases for a comparative cross-case and cross-national analyses as well as for preparing and implementing Policy Roundtables in each participating country in order to produce European/national/regional/local briefing papers and disseminating the project's findings with a thorough communication and publication strategy.

These phases of the research process are implemented in a specific use of methods, data collection and their analysis. As the discussion on methods is central for the scope of the research object, the subsequent paragraphs discuss the applied mixed-methods approach in depth, followed by its implementation in each Work Package of YOUNG\_ADULLLT.

Mixed methods combine different types of methods and different types of data (Brannen 2005, p. 4) and is defined as a procedure of data collection and analysis by combining or "mixing" quantitative as well as qualitative data in one single study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009; Johnson et. al 2005). The combination of different forms of data within one study bases on the assumption, that singling out one method is not sufficient in answering the specific research question. Hence, an integration of methods is required when the research question itself is rather complex in regards of the different kind of data is needed in answering it (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 29). Using methods in combination, both quantitative and qualitative, complement mutually one another as combining their strengths leads to a rather robust analysis.

Mixed methods offer a practical alternative and a logic of approach that encompasses the various strengths of qualitative and quantitative research methods for a 'needs-based' or 'problem solving' approach (cf. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 17). Promoted as an alternative 'third wave' or the 'third research movement' (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 3; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 17) this approach goes beyond the traditionally discussions of choosing research

methods for designing and conducting research, as those mostly focus on the duality between the poles of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

To show the possibilities *and* advantages of methods combination for approaching the object of analyses, the premises behind the proposed shift – from an incompatibility to a compatibility of research methods – are briefly touched upon.<sup>2</sup> The debates follow a logic of research along a continuum with two mutually exclusive poles represented by the purist forms of positivism and constructivism. Both are viewed as the ideal form of research and endorse the incompatibility theses, premising that these qualitative and quantitative paradigms, and their specific methods, cannot or should not be mixed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 14). The differences between both approaches are in focus of these debates, not only recurrently represented as insurmountable for their realization in research, but also shaping opposing research cultures, preferring either thick description based on observations or hard generalizable data in their research (ibid.; see also Morgan 2007, pp. 53ff).<sup>3</sup> As a result, specific methodologies are associated with one research tradition: the latter with quantitative research, the former with qualitative research.

However, as both approaches have strengths, mixing and combining their advantages for capturing phenomena on a more comprehensive way is the aim of the mixed methods approach to bridge the schism between qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 15). Mixed methods are rooted in the tenets of pragmatism lead by the question how well the methodology works in solving given problems (ibid, p. 18). The focus on the more practical side of research emphasizes the idea of finding workable solutions and the practical consequences that result out of approaching rather complex research questions with a combination of methods (ibid, p. 15ff). This ‘practical enquiry’ as an outcome of mixed-method research allows “to address the needs of research stakeholders and users” (Brannen 2005, p.4) in elucidating in

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<sup>2</sup> This is often described as “paradigm wars” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 17), these discussions draw on the incompatibility thesis between qualitative and quantitative approaches. The underlying assumption of incompatible differences between research methods is fundamental for understanding the reasoning behind mixed methods as an alternative ‘third way’ in elaborating and clarifying research results. For extensive description of the paradigm discussion and its methodological implications on mixed methods see Morgan (2007) and Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, pp. 20-39).

<sup>3</sup> The focus of the schism between research approaches is based on the assumption of an indissoluble unity of epistemology and methodology, in stating that the logic of justification determines the research methods resulting in a link between paradigm and method (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 15; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, pp. 15ff). As a result, concerns of the primacy of either verification or generation of theory are leading those discussions (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 17).

match/mismatches of policy strategies and their implementation on a regional/ local level and provide examples of best practices.

Instead of focusing on the predominant position of *one* method – and therefore on a paradigm linked to a specific research culture<sup>4</sup> –, Glaser & Strauss emphasize the ineluctable link between the methods *and* the researched questions: “Primacy depends only on the circumstances of research, on the interests and training of the researcher, and on the kinds of material he needs for his theory.” (ibid, p. 18). As a consequence from these rather complex interrelations of contrary paradigms, methods and research cultures, pragmatism offers a middle position between the opposing poles in combining confirmatory and explanatory questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 26) and thus a way beyond research dogmatism. It provides a practical research approach by mixing methods and focus on the “values and desired ends” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, pp. 17) resulting out of research. This logic of approach stresses the importance of combining multiple approaches for answering research questions in a comprehensive manner (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 17).

Taken those methodological implications into account, the combination of the different types of methods and data is subsequently described for each Work Package in YOUNG\_ADULLLT. By combining methods to mutually complementing each other, the integration across the Work Packages comes into attention and is implemented as follows:

- WP 1: Work Package 1 contains the *implementation of the research project*. The aim is the coordination of the research in terms of cost- and time-efficient financial and administrative project management. Therefore, management structures and the decision-making procedures are established to ensure a successful implementation of the project’s infrastructure.
- WP 2: Work Package 2 contains the *launching and research design*. This phase conceptualizes the theoretical and methodological basis by laying the groundwork for designing a common research framework. The development of an overarching research hypothesis as well as the identification of relevant contextual information guides the systematic

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<sup>4</sup> In this context, Brannen (2005) refers to the rather complex interlinkages of requirements in scientific communities to use distinct methodological approaches in research for publishing in prestigious journals, which often lean to a specific type of methodology (ibid, p. 59). Hence, using mixed-methods - or more precisely: not using mixed methods – is often determinate by the requirements of their scientific communities and counteracts with the requirements of approaching a phenomenon with a holistic view.

methodological approach as it sharpens the common conceptual understanding. This helps not only to understand our research objective within their various regional/local contexts, but is also the basis for the fruitful construction of a global theoretical perspective and the multidimensional approach of the research focus – based on the three major theoretical perspectives Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Life Course Research (LCR) and Governance Studies (GOV). The integration of these theoretical approaches in addition to the relevant contextual information results in the conception of the multi-level mixed methods approach of YOUNG\_ADULLLT.

- WP 3: Work Package 3 contains the *policy mapping, review and analysis* within the nine participating countries and the 18 Functional Regions, providing the groundwork for analysing the ‘landscape’ of LLL policies for young adults in vulnerable situations on a national as well as on an international comparative level. These reports provide contextual information at national, regional and local levels with reference to different actors and stakeholders involved allowing for the later comparison of the national findings in the participating countries. They were produced based on documentary analyses of given policies in two contrasting Functional Regions per participating country. This is particularly useful in describing the complex relationships of lifelong learning policies for young adults along the different dimensions of the construction of target groups, processes of the de-standardization and re-standardization of youth life courses, the political economy of skills, and the macro-structural institutional framework. This phase includes the production of national as well as international reports. The findings of this first phase also serve to prepare the second phase – the data collection, treatment and analysis phase - by identifying relevant individuals and collective actors for further work in WP 4 and 5 as well as the comparative analyses of skill demand and supply and the regional/ local case studies in WP 6 and 7.
- WP 4: Work Package 4 conducts *quantitative analysis of young adults’ social and living conditions*, by analysing socio-economic data on different dimensions of labour market and education/training in participating countries. The analysis focuses on the interplay between LLL policies, young peoples’ living conditions and country and region specific contexts in promoting (or deterring) growth and social inclusion. In doing so, WP 4 conducts secondary analyses of structural data on the specific living conditions of young adults in regional contexts based on international and national/regional sources using statistical data. Also, based on the findings in WP 3, it gathers data which are relevant for

all Functional Regions, as far as they are available. As a result, WP 4 provides risk profiles of young adults in their specific contexts and gathers contextual data for embedding the context specific information of the qualitative data collection approaches in WP 5 and 6.

- WP 5: Work Package 5 accomplishes the *qualitative analysis with young adults* through interviews-in-depth with young adults (n=150) and experts from policy, employment and training/providers (n=100). The interviews are chosen within the 18 Functional Regions and policies mapped in WP3. The aim of WP 5 is twofold: the interviews with young adults focus on their perceptions of social expectations underlying policies and initiatives, of the complementarity between policies, local contexts and living conditions and individual life projects and styles as well as on young adults' competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts and their perception of needs and potentials thereof. The interviews with experts focus on the interaction of LLL policies, young people's living conditions and country or region specific contexts (for instance migration/mobility) in promoting (or hindering) growth and social inclusion. Also, the method of data collection differs along these two aims, while both data sets are analysed by the grounded theory. The data collection of young adults' perception and experience with LLL policies is conducted with biographical narrative interviews. This approach allows capturing the specific living conditions of young adults as well as their learning histories. The data collection of the experts is conducted as guided expert interviews to gather data on the young adults' experience with LLL policies in their given regional context as well on the skill sets. Especially the latter information will be used in WP 6 for the comparative analysis for skills supply and demand.
- WP 6: Work Package 6 conducts the *comparative analysis for skills supply and demand*. The aim of WP 6 is describing and understanding the governance of the supply and demand of skills within and across the Functional Regions. In order to do so, WP 6 uses data collected within the previous WPs 3-5 as well as conducts semi-structured experts interviews (n=54). The approach unfolds along four steps: 1) mapping the relevant actors and intuitions involved in the system, 2) identifying their policy orientations, 3) identifying their levels and forms of coordination, and 4) identifying the types of (mis)match at the local/regional level. As a result, WP 6 produces a synthetic comparative report, identifying differences and commonalities among the Functional Regions.



- WP 7: Work Packages 7 conducts *regional/local case studies* in selected sites of the participating countries. Based on the selection in WP 3, LLL policies and programs are selected for an in-depth analysis to identify policy-making networks that include all social actors involved in shaping, formulating, and implementing LLL policies for young adults. The objective is to analyse the intersections between the social and the economic dimensions aiming at recognizing strengths (and best practices) and weaknesses (overlapping, fragmented or unfocused policies and projects). Thus, different patterns of LLL policy-making can be identified at regional level and their integration with the labour market, education and other social policies but also their impact on the target groups. As a basis, WP 7 integrates results from the previous WP 3-6 in order to provide a regional review of policies and programs, networks of actors and individual life projects of young adults for an ideal-typical modelling.
- WP 8: Work Package 8, the *comparative analysis and reporting*, draws together the empirical results from the previous WPs and conducts a comparative cross-case and cross-national analysis. In doing so, it contributes new scientific knowledge regarding the impact of LLL policies on young adults' life courses, particularly for those that are more vulnerable. In addition, the analyses will contribute to a better understanding of the structural relationships, functional matching(s), and specific forms of embedding of LLL policies in the regional economy, the labour market and individual life projects of young adults. Furthermore, the project will contribute with a thorough regional review of policies and programmes in the countries studied, thus yielding new knowledge on regional and local policy-making (networks) related to LLL, with particular attention to actors, dynamics, trends, mismatches and overlaps. Doing so, the project aims at identifying the necessary parameters for better-coordinated policy-making and a more effective delivery of LLL policies in European countries and regions. A further aim of WP 8 is to coordinate final reporting in terms of producing a report geared to the relevant audiences in research, policy, and practice.
- WP 9: Work Package 9, the *Policy Roundtables*, implements the results of the previous Work Packages in Policy Roundtables in each participating country in order to produce European/national/regional/local briefing papers. In form of public communication and policy information, the project results are widely spread in engaging with policy makers and relevant actors.

- WP 10: Work Package 10 *Ethics and Dissemination* is a fundamental part in the research process is the assurance and compliance of ethical standards and codes of good conduct. As a critical part of research excellence, it is in the permanent attention during the whole project. Therefore, the project produces early on a Working Paper on Ethical Issues (D10.1) and the Ethics Document (D10.5) to ensure its thorough implementation. Additionally, a second important part of this WP is the dissemination of its results in a systematic manner. Thus, in the early stages of the project a Publication Plan (D10.2) was drafted to ensure the effective and intensive dissemination of YOUNG\_ADULLLT project results.

Departing from this mixed-method approach and its implementation in the different WPs of the project requires not only a design that encompasses different analytical levels (individual, structural, and institutional) and their respective preferred different methods. It also entails conceptualising them as multi-level. A multi-level approach allows us to recognise and account for “naturally occurring nested, or hierarchical, structures” (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 156). In YOUNG\_ADULLLT, the entry points on different levels are nested into another level, for instance, analysing processes of de-standardization of young adults (micro level) is framed by socio-economic and political conditions (macro level). Therefore, from a methodological perspective, this multilevel approach aims at accounting for the interplay of macro-structures, regional environments, local institutions and individual expectations, life plans, and informal competences of the addressees of the policies.

As a result, YOUNG\_ADULLLT uses different methods on different levels to capture the complexity of the multidimensional approach with qualitative as well as quantitative data collection and analysis. It reveals the perspectives of different stakeholders and needs of young adults by means of interviewing with experts from policy, employment and training as well as young adults themselves (collecting qualitative data). Moreover, this data is embedded by context specific information on the macro- and micro-level of the participating countries, such as socio-economic conditions and specific living conditions of young adults (analysing secondary quantitative data). The applied mixed-method approaches prioritizes qualitative methods, which are supplemented with quantitative data. In this respect, YOUNG\_ADULLLT adopted a qualitative-driven design, collecting qualitative and quantitative data complementarily.

The incorporation of the different methods in a complementary approach by using data from the different methods results in a juxtaposition, which generates paired insights enhancing each

other (Brannen 2005, p. 12). In contrast, the often referred triangulation for mixing methods aims to validate or corroborate each other in terms of understanding the same phenomenon from different points of view (ibid.). In contrast, in YOUNG\_ADULLLT, the different entry points are used to understand different phenomena interwoven with our research object by approaching them from different point of views. In order to do so, the incorporation of the mixed methods on the different levels occur at two specific moments during the integration of the approach: at the experiential (methodological/analytical) stage and at the inferential stage (cf. Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009, p. 145f).

According to the multi-level mixed method approach, two stages of data integration are implemented in YOUNG\_ADULLLT: *First*, an integration of different data as an exchanging process between the WP 3-6 at the *experiential stage*. At this stage, complementary data that was collected and analysed separately in the WPs 3-6 are exchanged with the aim to ensure the different dimensions of the research object were captured. *Second*, the integration of results in the case studies and comparative analysis in WP 7 and 8 at the inferential stage. Here, the integration is implemented to show the interlinkages of the results yielded in the previous research steps. Both the case studies in WP 7 and comparative analyses WP 8 aim at providing more abstract and generalizable explanations in a theory generating approach – the former by analysing policy patterns in selected cases, the latter by analysing the structural relationships, functional matching(s) and specific forms of embedding of LLL policies in regional context.

In sum, the multi-level mixed-method approach adopted in YOUNG\_ADULLLT allows us to explore the impact of LLL policies on young people in the participating countries, analysing the embedding of these policies in the local and regional frameworks of education, training and the labour markets with particular attention to actors and networks, dynamics, trends, (mis)matches and redundancies.

## **5. Summary and Conclusions**

The YOUNG\_ADULLLT project is complex regarding its research object and its research contexts requires a systematic conceptual framework in order to provide a coherent, innovative and feasible research process, thus yielding sustainable results and impact.

The aim of this State-of-the-Art report has been to develop such a framework by disentangling and systemizing the elements of this venture. In doing so, this document aimed at conceptualising the research along the adopted theoretical perspectives, at contextualising the research ob-

ject in terms of the different research contexts in which YOUNG\_ADULLLT is conducted, and at outlining and deliberating on methodological principles guiding the research project.

In terms of the *conceptualisation the research*, one main achievement has been the development of a *Glossary* of key terms used to sharpen our common conceptual understanding of key ideas that are of central interest. As a research tool for the terminological conceptualisation of the research, it has three main functions: 1) To ensure a coherent common conceptual understanding of the key elements of the project, thus supporting its interdisciplinary approach not by providing homogenized definitions, but rather by making visible the different understandings and usages across national and cultural spaces. 2) It helps us reflect on our own bases of knowledge production by allowing for careful consideration of the embeddedness of each research object in different disciplinary academic cultures and conceptual traditions. This seems essential for the treatment of such a multidisciplinary research object in an interdisciplinary research team as in YOUNG\_ADULLLT. 3) It facilitates the public communication and dissemination of the project's topics and results among the different stakeholders.

In terms of the *contextualisation of research sites* in which the project is implemented, the report has shown that vast differences exist in the participating countries in terms of education and training, labour market, and welfare structures as well as policy-making patterns (see also D2.2). One important insight here concerns the level and unit of analysis. Research on policy in education and training has traditionally used the nation-state as its primary unit of analysis, distinguishing different national institutional specificities, cultures, traditions, and structures in education/training, labour market organisation, economy/industry–education/training relations, etc. The project goes beyond analysis at national level, attempting to come closest to the realities at regional/local level by framing its research sites as functional regions. Rather than selecting administrative subunits, the adoption of the concept of functional regions aims at capturing the flows and interdependencies between people, institutions and the economy in the selected research sites. It allows us to investigate not only their administrative aspects, but also their functional dynamics, their interrelations with other units as well as the interactions of different policy sectors (education, labour, welfare).

In terms of a common *theoretical conceptualisation*, this document presented and discussed three theoretical perspectives that allowed us to focus and conceptualise the different dimensions of the research object by distinct providing entry points to the topic and generating different sets of questions. While *Life Course Research* (LVR) helped us focus on young people, *Cultural*

*Political Economy* (CPE) allowed us to address semiotic and material elements and aspects of LLL policies; finally, *Governance* (GOV) research helped us conceptually frame the interrelation of sectors, actors and levels of policy coordination. The comparative review of evidence along the CPE perspective offered a productive operationalisation of the approach along the three evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention. This offered interesting insights in terms of a) the role of the global financial crisis as the main trigger of variation of LLL policies in most countries; b) the role of the European Commission in promoting solutions in line with the dominant economic imaginary; and c) the difficulties national governments encounter in articulating horizontal strategies. The literature review based on LCR also yielded useful theory-informed observations. The document suggested that the dimensions of time, transitions, de-standardisation, and individual choices are instrumental in making sense of young adults' life courses. It observed a strong emphasis on so-called 'vulnerable groups', which, although comprehensible from the perspective of policy priorities, has created an obscuring bias, resulting in a glossing over of more widespread issues that seems to affect entire populations. Further, it warned against the individualisation tendency of many policy debates across the participating countries. The third theoretical lens, *Governance*, also generated useful insights by pointing to the complex reality across all YOUNG\_ADULLLT countries in terms of organisation and provision of adult education in general and LLL policies in particular, as visible in the wide range of actor constellations involved in LLL policy-making in the research sites selected. Also, in terms of the modes of governance common trends appeared that need to be investigated further. Multi-level governance will have to be at the centre of attention, if we are to understand the different patterns of LLL policy-making in contemporary Europe.

A further result from this conceptualisation of the theoretical bases of the project have been the development of specific research questions that were elaborated for each Work Package of the project (see section 5.1 below). In sum, the conceptualisation allows for a multi-angled view that is crucial to capture and analyse the object of analysis, LLL policies, in its due complexity.

In terms of a *conceptualisation of the methodological approach*, this document paved the ground for a common approach and understanding in terms of methodological principles. It elaborated on a mixed methods approach and the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, procedures for collecting and analysing on data LLL policies, living conditions of young adults, individual perspectives of young adults and policy-makers.

Based on the common conceptual, theoretical, and methodological framework as well as on the insights drawn from the contextualisation data, the following last section of this document will present overarching research hypotheses that guide the subsequent research phases of the project. They serve as a kind of heuristics, anchoring the single research activities and orienting them towards the reaching of the main objectives of YOUNG\_ADULLLT.

### **5.1 Research Hypotheses**

YOUNG\_ADULLLT has chosen three entry points to investigate LLL policies for young adults. At the individual level, it enquires into how policies' fit and potentials account for young adults' perceptions and expectations, their informal/non-formal competences, thus enabling them to create subjective meaning and continuity along their life courses. At the structural level, the project investigates the socio-economic and political conditions of the most effective policies and initiatives related to LLL, youth unemployment, and education/training for young people. Finally, at the institutional level, it analyses the embedding of policies in the local and regional frameworks of education, training and the labour markets with particular attention to actors and networks, dynamics, trends, (mis)matches and redundancies.

*A Life Course perspective* on LLL policies targeting young adults invites us to analyse LLL policies in terms of young adults' needs as well as their potential for successfully recognising and mobilising the hidden resources of young adults for their life projects.

*Lifelong learning policies* go beyond the field of education and encompass other related policy sectors such as labour market, social, and youth policies. Due to these different orientations, they tackle similar but logically distinct sectorial problems (e.g., reducing unemployment among specific groups, preventing or reducing levels of young people leaving schools with low certifications (ESL), preventing social exclusion more broadly, etc.). These distinct orientations, in turn, are capable to different extents to recognise issues relevant to young people themselves, which may cause or worsen problems if policies tackle institutional or structural issues by means of interventions at the individual level. Crisis management, however, seem to have dominated policy-making in recent years, overshadowing policy aims and orientations that are more encompassing of the needs and expectations of the populations under scrutiny in YOUNG\_ADULLLT. This has prompted a deficit-oriented view on young adults, many times further alienating many and stigmatising others.

Related to this, there are questions concerning the relationship between qualifications and integration in the labour market. Typically, higher educational qualifications have entailed better payment and more stable jobs. However, more recently this relationship has shown severe signs of weakening in several countries, most visibly in Spain. Beyond the question, whether this an effect of a prevalent educational inflation, i.e., a devaluation of qualifications, because of structural changes in the labour market, there is need to enquire into the perception of young adults of this relationship as this influences heavily their individual choices, strategies and aspirations. Undoubtedly, if proven true that the belief in the power of education in guaranteeing social inclusion and economic participation is fading, the ability of policies to resonate with young people, especially those in vulnerable positions, will decrease dramatically.

A relevant *research hypothesis* is whether LLL policies have been ‘colonised’ by an instrumental perspective focused primarily on short-term labour market needs, undermining the contribution of more holistic and long-term educational objectives. Related to this, are LLL policies able to resonate with young peoples’ personal desires, educational and professional aspirations, thus fitting their life projects, or are they rather perceived as social and economic impositions and pressure?

From the *governance perspective*, YOUNG\_ADULLLT investigates LLL policies in their embeddedness in regional economies, labour markets and individual life projects of young adults, with aim to identify best practices and patterns of coordinating policy-making at local and regional levels.

The significant social transformations of the last decades have changed dramatically the way policy-making unfolds, which refers in particular the horizontal and vertical division of labour across the different levels of governance. At the same time, the effects of crucial decisions taken at the European, national and local levels in the past remain influential. Governments have to take their (new) decisions in a path-dependent institutional contexts that derive from the (old) ‘social pacts’. The ensuing contradictions between European social policies and fiscal consolidation – put in other terms, closely linking economic growth and social inclusion – put more pressure on governments at all levels, further exacerbating tensions. Moreover, the emergence, inter alia, of global cities, regional systems of innovation and global tourist resorts has diversified local spaces with regard to the simultaneous cases of, inter alia, de-industrialisation, urban peripheralisation and rural decadence. All these processes produce very complex interactions that directly affect policy-making.

A relevant *research hypothesis* relates the question whether the long observed and well documented fragmentation and inefficiency of LLL policies are less direct and linear results of the lack of coordination of actors and policy sectors (the mismatch assumption), and more result from the tensions and asynchronities across the different levels of policy-making, possibly being exacerbated by more recent global trends that are diversifying the regional and local levels.

From the *perspective Cultural Political Economy*, are to understand the relationship and complementarity between LLL policies and young people's social conditions and assessing their potential implications and intended/unintended effects on young adults' life courses.

The impact of the European level on LLL policy-making has increased to some extent by means of its funding power (e.g., through the European Social Fund or the Youth Guarantee Initiative), but it is arguably through the reliance on soft mechanisms such as norms and agenda setting that it is able to exert influence most pervasively. Policy initiatives across Europe have been aligned under the common dominant economic imaginary of creating knowledge-based economies and this has served as justifications for reforming national education and training systems, labour market arrangements and policy frameworks. As discussed throughout this report, we observe tensions between the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of policy-making, with the top-down approach taking the lead. This makes investigating the links, gaps and conflicts in understanding the needs, designing the measures, and ensuring the cross-cooperation between the levels ever-more important.

A *relevant research hypothesis* is whether LLL policy decisions are being more or less directly framed by the dominant economic priorities, rather than including a contextualised assessment of the needs and taking into account the highly diverse life projects and aspirations of young adults as well as tapping their individual resources.

These overarching research hypotheses have served as heuristic devices in the development of operationalisable research questions to be addressed in the different Work Packages of YOUNG\_ADULLLT. The table below presents these questions along the theoretical perspectives of the project.



**Table 1. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Research Questions**

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
<b>WP2</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the different objectives of LLL policies?</li> <li>• What impacts are LLL policies supposed to have on the national, regional, local level?</li> <li>• What are the antecedent problems which should be addressed by these LLL policies?</li> <li>• How do these LLL policies construct their target groups and what are their supposed (intended or unintended) effects?</li> <li>• Which evaluation strategies are suggested in the documents (e.g. in press releases)?</li> <li>• Are there any differences in LLL policies with regard to gender and the social, educational and migration status of the target groups?</li> <li>• Which categories, meanings and narratives are used and reinforced in LLL policies, and which are omitted, in order to construct their target groups, objectives, strategies, and success criteria?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are young people's life projects, their professional choices and trajectories in education and training and in the labour market?</li> <li>• What are young adults' perceptions and expectations and how do they create subjective meaning and continuity along the different phases of their life courses?</li> <li>• Do they think they/you learnt new skills?</li> <li>• How do LLL policies take into account and respond to diverse living conditions of young adults in each national/regional context and all across Europe?</li> <li>• How do LLL policies promote and/or allow for conciliation between young adults' different life spheres (work, leisure, family, community)?</li> <li>• How do different LLL policies promote or allow for young adults' freedom and autonomy in their biographical decisions?</li> <li>• Are LLL policies tailored to address and reduce life course uncertainty and insecurity within young adults?</li> <li>• Are LLL offers sensitive to different individual life conditions (e.g. the need for child care during lessons etc.)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which actors, policies and sectors are involved in the definition and implementation of LLL policies and what is their individual impact and leverage?</li> <li>• How do state (e.g. training/skill providers) and private actors (e.g., enterprises) cooperate in terms of assessing what competences and skills are valued and defined as needed? What are emerging (new) patterns and networks of policy-making at regional and local levels?</li> <li>• How are young adults engaged in LLL policies decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation?</li> <li>• How do LLL policies assure accountability and to whom in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability?</li> <li>• How do LLL policies contribute to responding to multijurisdictional and multilevel 'wicked problems' of young adults like NEET, ESL, youth unemployment and ethnic discrimination?</li> </ul>
<b>WP3</b>			
<b>These questions will be dealt</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the different objectives of LLL policies?</li> <li>2. How do these LLL policies construct their target groups and what are their supposed (intended or unintended)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do LLL policies take into account and respond to diverse living conditions of young adults in each national/regional context and all across Europe?</li> <li>2. Are LLL offers sensitive to different indi-</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which actors, policies and sectors are involved in the definition and implementation of LLL policies and what is their individual impact and leverage?</li> <li>2. How do state (e.g. training/skill provid-</li> </ol>

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
with in WP3	<p>effects?</p> <p>3. Are there any differences in LLL policies with regard to gender and the social, educational and migration status of the target groups?</p> <p>4. How are the risk groups/target groups constructed and what kind of pre-suppositions are behind these constructions?</p>	<p>vidual life conditions (e.g. the need for child care during lessons etc.)?</p> <p>3. How do the de-standardisation and individualisation of young adults' life courses are taken into account in European LLL – policies?</p> <p>4. How do European LLL policies take into account and respond to diverse living conditions, and increasing polarisation and inequalities among youths and young adults?</p>	<p>ers) and private actors (e.g. enterprises) cooperate in terms of assessing what competences and skills are valued and defined as needed?</p> <p>3. How are de-regulation and de-centralisation reflected on the LLL policies directed at European young adults?</p> <p>4. How is the de-centralisation of power reflected on the governance of NEETs and other young adults in high-risk situations?</p> <p>5. What is the division of labour in the governance of LL policies across the different levels (local, regional, national, European)?</p>
These questions will be dealt with in WP5		<p>5. What are young people's life projects, their professional choices and trajectories in education and training and in the labour market?</p> <p>6. What are young adults' perceptions and expectations and how do they create subjective meaning and continuity along the different phases of their life courses?</p> <p>7. How do different LLL policies promote or allow for young adults' freedom and autonomy in their biographical decisions?</p> <p>8. Are LLL policies tailored to address and reduce life course uncertainty and insecurity within young adults?</p>	<p>6. How are young adults engaged in LLL policies decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation?</p>

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
These questions will be dealt with in WP6	5. Which evaluation strategies are suggested in the documents (e.g. in press releases)?		7. What are emerging (new) patterns and networks of policy-making at regional and local levels? 8. How do LLL policies assure accountability and to whom in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability? 9. How do LLL policies contribute to respond to multi-jurisdictional and multi-level 'wicked problems' of young adults like NEET, ESL, youth unemployment and ethnic discrimination? 10. How are the actions of new expert networks perceived in the evaluation of implementation of LLL policies? What are the ways in which these networks promote (in)equality of life opportunities at both local and national levels?
These questions will be dealt with in WP7	6. What impacts are LLL policies supposed to have on the national, regional, local level? 7. What are the antecedent problems which should be addressed by these LLL policies? 8. Which categories, meanings and narratives are used and reinforced in LLL policies, and which are omitted, in order to construct their target groups, objectives, strategies, and success criteria?	9. How do LLL policies promote and/or allow for conciliation between young adults' different life spheres (work, leisure, family, community)? 10. How do the de-standardisation and individualisation of young adults' life courses are taken into account in European LLL – policies? 11. How do European LLL policies enable, shape and restrict young people's biographical life projects?	11. How are young adults engaged in LLL policies decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation?
WP4			
These questions will be dealt with in WP4	1. What kind of data sources about young adults compiled by international organizations are available? And which are the gaps or missing in-	1. How are people's life projects measured at national and regional level? 2. How are social, regional and gender and ethnic-based inequalities in life op-	1. How closely to the local level is data collected by the EU? Are there recurrent topic and themes on which data is collected beside the national level?

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
with in WP 4	<p>formation?</p> <p>2. Which context-specific set of indicators is used for taking into account national/regional context for measuring diverse living conditions of young adults?</p> <p>3. What are the most used indicators at the functional regions level? How are those objectives measured?</p>	<p>portunities manifested in educational and school-to-work transitions of European youths and young adults?</p> <p>3. What skills and formal/ non-formal qualifications do young adults have in the selected regional contexts? Which is the correspondence of education qualification in terms of some proxy of direct measure of skills? Which is the effect of education qualification on quality of the job?</p> <p>4. How are transitions in young adults pathways are displayed in EU data gathering?</p>	<p>2. Are the data sets needed in the project (regarding level and categories) are available through the existing data sources? Reveals the main emphasis of EU data collection on the national level a special mode of 'governing by data'?</p>
Demands for WP3, 5 & 6	<p>4. How do the statistics themselves produce "realities"?</p> <p>5. How indicators show what is seen as important (what is measured, how things are categorized and how classifications are constructed and re-constructed etc.)?</p> <p>6. How do these LLL policies construct their target groups and what are their supposed (intended or unintended) effects? How are certain groups of young adults targeted by LLL measures and initiatives?</p>		
Demands for WP5		<p>5. Are people's life projects taken into account? How? And how are they measured at national and regional level?</p> <p>6. How are target group for every specific policy constructed?</p> <p>7. What are young adults' perceptions and expectations and how do they create subjective meaning and continuity along</p>	

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
WP4 sup- plies WP3, 5 & 6		the different phases of their life courses?	3. How do the statistics themselves produce "governance by numbers" (what is measured, how things are categorised and how classifications are constructed and re-constructed etc.)?
WP5		8. What skill and demand structures are displayed in the labour market? Which is the effect of education qualification on employment? 9. What kind of labour supply structures are displayed in the selected regions? Which are the education qualifications required at regional level? (Questions from WP 5 & 6 in the WP4 proposal)	3. How do the statistics themselves produce "governance by numbers" (what is measured, how things are categorised and how classifications are constructed and re-constructed etc.)?
WP5 sup- plies WP6 & 7 (Interviews young adults)	1. How do these policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?	1. What are young people's life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects? 2. What are young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course?	1. Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making? 2. What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand?
WP5 sup- plies WP6 & 7 (Interviews experts)	2. What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies? 3. How do these policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?	3. How to LLL policies take into account the living conditions, family responsibilities and civil engagement of young adults? 4. Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty?	3. Which actors are involved in LLL policies? How do these actors coordinate their activity? 4. To whom are LLL policies accountable? 5. How do LLL policies deal with multi-level "wicked problems"?
WP6			
Demands for WP5	1. What is the perception of actors of the main economic and social challenges of the region? 2. How do they think LLL policies can contribute to solve these challenges? 3. How actors decide on the developmental priorities? Which evidence do they see valuable to use for taking	1. What level and type of skill formation services are most demanded by young adults? 2. Which individual characteristics can help us differentiate employed and unemployed youth? 3. How are young adults affected by the (mis)matches taking place in the skills	1. How do actors communicate/coordinate at the local level? 2. Which is the relationship between the local and national authorities regarding LLL and skills activities? 3. Which actors have an influence in what is taught in LLL courses? 4. Which actors influence the decision of

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
	<p>these decisions?</p> <p>4. How do actors think the coordination among actors should work? What is different from reality?</p> <p>5. Which are the actors' assumptions about the criteria for assessing the success/failure of LLL policies?</p>	<p>formation and skills use markets?</p>	<p>which skills are considered as relevant/needed at the local level?</p>
<b>Demands for WP4</b>	<p>6. What level and type of skill formation services are most demanded/offered by LLL policies?</p> <p>7. What level and type of skills to be used are most demanded/offered in the functional region?</p>	<p>4. Which individual characteristics can help us differentiate employed and unemployed youth?</p> <p>5. What level and type of skill formation services are most demanded by young adults?</p> <p>6. What level and type of skills formation services are most demanded by employers?</p> <p>7. What level and type of skills formation services are most supplied by employers?</p> <p>8. What level and type of skills are most demanded by employers?</p> <p>9. What level and type of skills are available at the local level?</p> <p>10. Is the functional region attracting or retaining young adults?</p> <p>11. Do employers find difficulties in filling vacancies?</p>	<p>5. Which is the degree of public commitment to skills development for young adults?</p> <p>6. Are employers committed to skills formation for young adults?</p> <p>7. Which is the relationship in skills formation strategy and activities between</p> <p>8. Which is the relationship in skills formation strategy and activities between public and private institutions?</p>
<b>Demands for WP3</b>	<p>8. Which is the relationship between public and private actors regarding LLL policies?</p>		<p>9. Which institutions (local and national) and persons are involved in the local skills formation?</p> <p>10. Which institutions (local and national) and persons are involved in the local skills use?</p> <p>11. Which institutions (local and national) and persons are involved in the governance of the local/regional skills ecology?</p>

	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
<b>Demands for WP5</b>		12. How do young adults perceive the education and labour market opportunities available to them? How do the perception of these opportunities shape their decisions in LLL participation? 13. How do young adults negotiate/deal with the expectations generated by the policies towards them? 14. Which are young adults' perceptions in the relevance of their skills in achieving their objectives in the labour market? Which are the most relevant ones?	12. Who pays for skills formation of young adults? 13. What is the role of the state and the private actors in governing the skills market at the local level? 14. Are there any formal spaces (e.g. boards, meetings, workshops) to gather together actors from skills formation and skills use sides?
<b>WP7</b>			
<b>Supplied by WP3, 5 &amp; 6</b>	1. Which outcomes did the action/intervention provide? 2. Which are the main distinctive features of this action/intervention? 3. Which different classifications of LLL policies (de-commodified LLL regimes: academic, corporatist, and universal as well as LLL market regimes: market competition and organised market, Verdier, 2012) can be observed and how do they shape normalization in the research regions? 4. What are the pre-suppositions be-		

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	hind the different policy programmes (contents, goals, target groups etc.) aimed at young adults in challenging situations?		
<b>Supplied by WP5 &amp; 6</b>	5. Which mechanism worked well and in which context? 6. Which is the criterion of success for the policy/action? Does it correspond to the 'official' one? If not, why? 7. Which cause-effect sequences make the policy/action successful? 8. Which are the (plausible) general conditions that make the policy/action successful? 9. Which is the ideal-typical target (in terms of age, gender, level of education, qualification and so on...) of the policy/action? At what extent the actual addressees' profiles differ from the ideal-typical one?	1. Which effects are produced by the policy/action on the life courses of the addressees? 2. Which are the reasons why the addressees attended to the policy/action? Did the policy/action correspond to their initial expectations?	1. Which actors operate and by which decision-making model (cooperation, conflict, passivity), both in decision and implementation phase? 2. How different actions and agents are coordinated within the state, the economy, labour market, civil society and the young adults? 3. Have the different stakeholders' interests and needs been equally represented in the process of definition of the policy/action? If not, which interests and needs prevailed over the others? Which significant stakeholders' needs and interests have been excluded? 4. Have there been significant conflicts within the network which implemented the policy/action? If so, which are the most critical ones? And how do they have been managed and/or solved? "Where" did these conflicts and/or negotiations occur (i.e. formal or informal situations)? 5. Did the policy/action allow policy-makers and implementers to fit with the 'local' needs? Or, on the contrary, the possibility for 'local' adjustments was limited?
<b>Supplied by WP5</b>		3. How the action/intervention integrates in the addressees' life courses? 4. And to what extent they modify their	



	CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY	LIFE COURSE RESEARCH	GOVERNANCE
		<p>aspirations according to the underlying CPE of the action/intervention?</p> <p>5. How effective/ ineffective are LLL policies for young adults and do their need shape LLL policies?</p> <p>6. Which are the reasons why they attended to the policy/action? Did the policy/action correspond to their initial expectations?</p> <p>7. Which effects are produced by the policy/action on their life courses?</p> <p>8. Which are their representations of the mechanisms implemented by the professionals?</p> <p>9. Which are the reasons why policy-makers invested in the policy/action they attended to?</p> <p>10. How are the living conditions and local opportunity structures related to young adults' life opportunities, as well inequalities related to them taken into account in shaping, formulating and implementing local LLL-policies?</p> <p>11. How do these policies promote and reduce the equal life-opportunities of young people and young adults?</p>	
Supplied by WP6			6. At what governmental level and by whom/by which interest groups are the "road map" of policy programmes decided on, constructed and implemented?

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