



Deliverable report for

YOUNG_ADULLLT

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Deliverable 5.1 National Qualitative Analysis Reports

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PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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1. Description of task

Task 5.1: Designing a framework of research (months 9-12):

The WP leader (UAB) and core partners (PU, ULisboa) design a framework for the research in WP5, which includes adapting the general theoretical perspective adopted in the project, and consists of identifying thematic fields, isolating samples at national and regional levels, designing a guide for the interviews-in-depth as well as proposing a strategy of analysis. When we study the impact of LLL policies on young adults' life courses, we will have aim to reach young people in vulnerable situations and examine their expectations towards learning, the barriers they meet in getting involved and the bridges that might be found in creating new opportunities. Concerning the sampling of experts' perspectives, the work package will follow the strategy of maximising diversity. Role of participants: The WP leader and core partners provide a research framework; national partners read, review and provide feedback to WP leader team.

Task 5.2: Developing procedures for national data collection (months 13-14):

The WP leader and core partners develop a common framework for interview schedules for research with young adults (N=150) and with experts (N=100), amongst other things based on insights and results from WP 3. A first on-line workshop among national partners is organised in order to share practical knowledge on work procedures related to transcribing, memoing, coding aided by a common software (e.g., Atlas.ti "hermeneutic units", RQDA "projects"); issues related to ethical issues pertaining data protection and privacy as well as quality standards. Role of participants: The WP leader and core partners provide a common framework for interview schedules; national partners read, review and provide feedback to WP leader team – also during the on-line workshop – and develop customized interview schedules and guidelines for their own country/region.

Task 5.3: Implementing fieldwork at national level (months 15-20):

National partners conduct interviews, produce interview transcripts and analyse data according to the common guidelines. Alongside a project meeting (month 18), partners convene to discuss the main issues concerning research task and results. National Reports on WP5 are produced, which include analyses of data from research with young adults and with experts. The interviews will be audio recorded and fully transcribed in national languages and one page summary in English will be provided for each case. These will go as an Annex to the national report, together with a description of the national sample. Role of participants: National partners implement fieldwork in their countries, conduct the analysis and produce a National Report on WP5.

2. Description of work & main achievements

All partners have satisfactorily submitted the national reports corresponding to the qualitative analyses of the YOUNG_ADULLLT project. These reports are the outcome of a series of preliminary workshops, which prepared and guided fieldwork in the eighteen sampled 'functional regions'. The reports meet a set of criteria, which underpin their quality. The partners also reported that, in their regions, the fieldwork and the analysis had complied with the basic requirements of research ethics. Finally, this deliverable draw on the executive summaries of the reports in order to present a brief outline of the findings.

2.1 WP5 workflow

As established by the Work Package 5 proposal, the qualitative analysis was designed along several preparatory online and in-house workshops, which also set up a follow-up system. Preparatory Workshop 1 developed the samples and the interview schedules. Profiles of experts and young adults were drafted, shared and discussed for each selected region. Simultaneously, two patterns of open interviews with experts and young adults were outlined and discussed by the whole Consortium. These activities accomplished Task 5.1.

Preparatory Workshop 2 dealt with the methodical procedures for national data collection. While a workshop on biographical interviews with young adults was hold immediately before the Second Consortium Meeting (Porto, November 2016), the Consortium also worked on the coordination of WP5

with WP3, WP4, WP6 and WP7.

Preparatory Workshop 3 consisted of an in-house meeting to carefully discuss, define and operationalize the coordination of WPs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (Barcelona, January 2017). All these WPs were aligned with data collection and analysis in WP 5. Preparatory Workshops 2 and 3 accomplished Task 5.2.

Preparatory Workshop 4 monitored the fieldwork and developed guidelines for coding and analysis. Between February and November 2017, an online forum was established in order to discuss emerging aspects of the fieldwork. Particularly, in July all the partners informed the core team of the number of interviews that have been conducted. In September, the WP 5 leader reported the completion of the fieldwork to the Steering Board. At that moment, more than 100 experts and 150 young adults had been interviewed. In October and November all these interviews were transcribed and analysed according to a common template, which was circulated, reviewed and re-written during the Third Consortium Meeting in Granada (June 2017).

Initial drafts of the national reports were shared on October 30, 2017. The WP 5 core team read the documents and provided feedback to the authors. Between November 30 and December 6, 2017, a final version of all reports was shared and assessed by the core team. Thus, both Preparatory Workshop 4 and the final round of reviews fulfilled Task 5.3.

In accordance with the framework of quality management established by the YOUNG_ADULLLT Quality Assurance Plan (Parreira do Amaral et al., 2016a), all national reports met the following criteria in order to guarantee that the research was credible.

- All partners knew how all the samples were designed. This common pool of knowledge ensured operational criteria to identify possible risks of bias during fieldwork as well as to how to eventually mitigate these risks.
- A common set of codes was discussed and circulated before the transcripts of the interviews were available and proper analysis could start.
- All reports summarised the main procedures adopted by the researchers in order to collect their data.

In order to comply with the main ethical requirements established by the Working Paper on Ethical Issues (Parreira do Amaral et al, 2016b), WP 5 proceeded in the following ways:

Identification and recruitment of participants

Institutions involved in fieldwork were previously informed and knew how the interviewees were contacted. However, the institutions only served as sites where invitations for participation were placed (e.g., poster, flyers, etc.) and were otherwise not active in order to avoid pressure on the young adults, such as a feel of obligation for participation. The interviewees were asked to contact the researchers directly in case of interest.

Authorisations and approvals

- A thorough research protocol was established in order to guarantee high ethical standards.
- All partners collected formal approval of their institution ethics committees before starting fieldwork. This ensured compliance with jurisdictional authorities as well as national legislations.

Informed consent

- No minors were included in the research.
- All participants signed forms of informed consent including guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity and appropriate protection of the resulting data. The interviewees received an information letter prior to the interview, outlining the aims of the research, its intended purposes, a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity, an explanation how data will be processed and stored, the duration and extent of involvement, an explanation regarding incidental findings, and the right to withdraw from the research at any time, even after being interviewed. The letter also included the contact details, where additional information or the deletion of the data could be requested.
- The letter of consent was read to the interviewees prior to the interview before they signed it, and, if necessary, further explained and elaborated upon specific passages.
- Each participant received a tear-off form acknowledging that they understand their rights and stating whether they give their informed consent for participation in the research.

- Each participant has the right to withdraw their consent at any stage, prior, during and after the interview without any negative implications.
- All copies of informational material, letters, and forms used for the collection of informed consent have been submitted to Research Executive Agency (REA) prior to start of the fieldwork research.

Incidental findings

- Due to the focus of the research, we envisaged no need for a policy on incidental findings; however, the findings are recurrently screened for their potential implications. Thus, we communicated clearly prior to starting interviews that we may disclose information pertaining serious illegal behaviour (dealing with drugs, sexual abuse, violence against persons, terrorism, etc.) to the relevant authorities. However, this was not the case in any interview.

Measures taken to prevent the risk of enhancing vulnerability

The following procedures were implemented so as not to enhance the risk of vulnerability to which many interviewees were exposed.

- As the interviews deal with potentially sensitive topics (e.g., problems in school and in the family), they could induce stress for the young adults. Thus, all interviewers received prior training on ethical conduct and good research practice as well as knowledge about national legislation in force.
- Each national report includes a description of the data collection and treatment procedures in order to ensure conduct of good research.
- Language was used carefully in order to avoid practices of othering, stereotyping, stigmatisation and the like.
- As the concept of vulnerability has been carefully implemented in YOUNG_ADULLLT, the used concept of the grounded theory approach allows the young people to build on their own narrative and feel free to highlight the themes that were important for them. This intended allow young adults to voice their interest in the interviews and only talk about experiences they want to voice. This was implemented in the interview schedules, as the interviewer only asked questions relating to issues that have been touched upon but where researchers expected more detail and potential. Thus, young adults themselves decided whether they answered to questions on skills and participation in the LLL policies.

Protection of personal data

All procedures comply both with national and European legislation in force. The protection included following steps:

- *Collection:* The interview transcripts/data and personal information were separated directly at collection. The data is stored securely and is not publicised. All researchers included in the fieldwork received a standardised procedure for the anonymisation of the transcripts ensuring that all personal identifiers are replaced or removed. For instance, codes were used instead of real names. This ensures that no individuals can be identified by using additional information from other sources.
- *Storage and protection:* The data is stored on secure servers at the partner universities and only authorised project users have access to it. All persons with data access are registered users with their own server I.D. and are briefed on work environment practice, such as no reference to documents on user's desktop (PC), etc.
- *Conservation and destruction:* After the end of the project, or at any time on request of a participant, all personal data no longer required will be permanently deleted, mobile data devices formatted and original data destroyed (shredded).

In order to ensure the protection of the interviewees' personal data all partners working on the project signed the Institutional Data Security Protocols, which ensures data confidentiality and diligence in data treatment of all employees. These obligations continue to exist even after the end of the employment.

2.2 Executive Summary

Theoretical Framework

The overall objective of WP 5 is to **analyse the Life Long Learning (LLL) policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults and experts in the Functional Regions (FR) under study.** As LLL policies become effective at the regional/local level, it explores the hidden

resources of young adults building their life resources, provides insights into learning histories and their competences acquired in the available informal and non-formal contexts. As LLL policies across Europe have been repeatedly described as highly fragmented and often conflicting in their objectives in relation to their target groups and means of implementation the embeddedness of the young adults life course comes to the fore. The young adults view on their specific living conditions and educational/ employment/ etc. possibilities on site provide an understanding how learning histories evolve in a specific and **gives young people a voice to express their needs and expectations**. Thus, the interlinkage of young adults' needs and possibilities with education/training offers provided by LLL policies is precondition for their successful implementation.

The framework of WP 5 starts from the interrelation of the projects three theoretical perspectives Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Life Course Research (LCR) and Governance (GOV): Firstly, the discourses that circulate through them influence the beliefs and decisions on the involved social agents (CPE). Secondly, young adults follow some pathways, which are moulded by both the prevailing institutional arrangements in their country and region, and the decisions they make at given moments of their life course (LCR). And, thirdly, the stakeholders that participate in the governance of lifelong learning policies establish some concrete linkages between them (GOV). These interrelations were translated in **a general hypothesis in this sub-study: That official discourses (CPE) and governance (GOV) contribute to shape life course pathways (LCR)**. However, we assume that life courses are not simply an outcome of official discourses and governance. On the contrary, it avails of the previous suggestions of these theories to explore systematically how this effect is enacted in the circumstances of young adults in nine European member states and eighteen functional regions within these states.

Departing from this theoretical conceptualisation, the following research question were developed:

Life Course Research:

- What are young people's life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects?
- What are young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course?
- How to LLL policies take into account the living conditions, family responsibilities and civil engagement of young adults?
- Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty?

Governance:

- Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making?
- What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand?
- Which actors are involved in LLL policies? How do these actors coordinate their activity?
- To whom are LLL policies accountable?
- How do LLL polices deal with multi-level "wicked problems"?

Cultural Political Economy:

- How do these policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?
- What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies?
- How do these policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?

The theoretical approaches and research questions guide the data collection, treatment and analysis process. At the same time, the sub-study keeps in mind that the results may open up new questions that were not previously asked. Departing from the approach of the „grounded theory“ (Glaser & Strauss, 2009), we interrogate the breadth and depth of those theories in order to inquire if new questions should be asked or new formulations should be elaborated. It highlights the **importance of new emerging themes and questions arising out of the given data**.

In this sub-study, the research object has been conceptualised along the **perception and learning histories of young adults**. As young adults are a heterogeneous group concerning their social realities, life projects, perspectives and needs, they are all differently affected by the regional/local unfolding of LLL policies. This requires focusing on the subjectivities and individual life courses along their biography, learning history, professional career aspirations, subjective life projects, living conditions, their support systems, resilience, experience with LLL policies as well as the expectations they are confronted with.

In order to capture the meaning of LLL policies in young people's life courses, we analyse how they **present and position themselves in general as well as with regard to education and training and the concrete measure of LLL**. This allows us to understand their learning biographies and their expectations towards learning – both crucial for creating opportunities in their life course. The young adults' subjective meaning is crucial for this sub-study as it allows to describe the individual life course along their learning histories as well as their meaning making of these along social, regional, gender and ethnic based inequalities; the life opportunities or obstacles created, which then manifest in educational and school-to-work transitions. Thus, we focus on distinguishing between the life stories of young adults, i.e. the themes young adults are talking about and how they talk about their life stories, i.e., how they present themselves and construct their life stories.

Thus, the aim of WP 5 is twofold: The National Reports *first*, provide a systematic overview of the young adults' life projects, their perceptions of LLL policies, the compatibility with personal interests and orientations and their possibilities on site to improve their learning effectiveness. *Second*, they explore to what extent and how living conditions of young adults mediate and influence lifelong learning policies, by means of analyses of interviews with experts, but also shed light on other themes that were not noticed before. This caution is particularly telling for a research that explores the ongoing transformations that affect people's life courses.

Below it follows a summary of each national report providing the main findings regarding the Life Long Learning (LLL) policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults and experts in the Functional Regions (FR) under study.

Tentative summary of initial findings

The following sub-sections briefly present initial findings from the research, which can also be found in the respective Executive Summaries of the national reports. These preliminary findings will be elaborated and analysed in more depth in the course of work in WP 8. The initial findings are presented along the views of the experts in lifelong learning policies and the young adults who 'use' these policies in the nine participating member states.

Experts interviewed clearly work within varying organisational and national cultures. Some of them are more aware of the synergies between these policies and the labour markets, while other ones are more directly concerned with educational pathways. Significantly, some experts also elaborated on the implications of lifelong learning for policies addressing social exclusion and mental health. Evaluation methods are an issue in a number of countries. Many experts regret the lack of effective evaluation. Some experts are also critical of evaluations, which are only focused on statistical targets.

Young people who participated in the research are actively looking for educational and professional opportunities. However, this search cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional endeavour to material stability and prosperity. Meaning and self-fulfilment are very widespread and relevant concerns. Their projects and expectations indicate how they distinguish their private lives from their vocational projects, and then try to bridge these two realms. Some international commonalities are striking. In many cases, the young adult interviewed did not realise how far contemporary life courses are from the standard references that set the pattern some decades ago. In addition, it is also remarkable that the young adult beneficiaries of lifelong learning policies are seldom invited to participate in designing and reviewing programmes. That is particularly significant if their everyday struggles with the meaning of their choices are taken into account.

Austria

In Austria, some of the most relevant results of the interviews conducted with young adults are:

- **Biographies and self-representation:** Biographies of young adults are diverse, including a diversity in young adults' countries of origin, family background and own families, experiences with school, training and work. However, almost all young adults depicted themselves as motivated and eager to fully participate in education, training or work although they have experienced minor or major set-backs and/or obstacles on their way.
- **School trajectories and level of education:** Young adults' school trajectories are characterized by school changes, repetitions and dropouts because of a broad variety of reasons. The level of education among young adults is also very diverse ranging from compulsory school to tertiary education.
- **Skills level:** Young adults also show different skills levels because of differences in age, learning abilities, school trajectories, the length of work experience, the engagement in leisure and social activities beyond work.

- Experiences with policy: The overall experiences of young adults with the respective policies were very positive. Smaller negative comments on LLL policies were made about course-based theoretical learning programs.
- Plans for the future: The specific plans differed according to age, professional experience and education trajectory. Some young adults had long terms plans, others only focused on the successful participation in the respective policy. Most common long term plans expressed related to building up a family, having a stable professional life and financial security and more broader to mental and physical well-being and fulfilment.

Some of the most relevant results of the interviews conducted with experts are:

- Policy objectives: To support the sustainable integration of young adults into the education and training system or the first labor market and to meet the labor force demands of employers.
- Policy approaches: Strong practical focus with additional theoretical courses, coaching and guidance. The importance of VET and the dual system within the Austrian education system is reflected in LLL policies.
- Target groups: Target groups are very diverse ranging from young adults without compulsory school certificate and major learning difficulties to young adults with upper secondary certificates and a lot of work experience.
- Implementation and challenges: Implementation in two cases was very successful, due to experience from antecedent policies or the good match between the policy's "service" and the demand. The main challenge for the other two cases was to attract the target group.
- Impact on young adults: Policies analyzed contribute to an increase in young adults' self-esteem and self-worth, because of the experience of self-efficacy and positive learning experiences. Policies contribute to the reduction of young adults' life course uncertainty as long as the conceptualized target group is attracted. Although stigmatizing effects may be the result in one case.
- Governance structure: All policies are based on a broad network of cooperating actors at local, regional and federal level. Actors are public organizations, social enterprises, education providers and private companies.
- Coordination and cooperation: Works well in general in all cases. Reported difficulties are due to larger political issues like the design of the Austrian school system, regional differences regarding the recognition of skills and the exclusion of asylum seekers from the labor market and LLL policies.

Bulgaria

LLL policies in Bulgaria do not have the longer traditions and the wider spread as the policies in Western European countries. However, it faces similar challenges in trying to support young adults' transitions into work and independent living. As to regional approaches, the analysis showed a common approach to the construction of the objectives, target groups and success criteria. Control and evaluation came from above – the Ministries in the capital Sofia which in turn followed the EU directives. The experts' discourse very often repeated the terms of those EU directives. Different from the official European discourse were only the constructions of the young in Bulgaria as low motivated, having an unrealistic self-esteem and a short-term vision.

The experts and young adults in the two regions in their interviews emphasized the importance of education as a factor for mobility in society. It is interesting that given the positive attitude to education in general, there is so little of LLL offers and even less take up. Experts and the young alike agreed that education in Bulgaria did not meet market requirements and should be practically oriented.

The programs studied represent a very good opportunity to include unemployed young people in the labour market as well as to gain practical experience through apprenticeship and internship programs. However, the real impact is not the intended one. After completing the internship, the organization or the company in which the traineeship is implemented very rarely employs any of the trainees. In addition, when selecting applicants for the internship, the decisions are taken by the organization in which the traineeship will take place, so the most needed are left outside. On their part, the experts in the LLLP do not employ an individualized approach to the young people that look for their services and give a preferential treatment to those who show the highest prospects of successfully finishing the program.

The evidence also unveils some disparities concerning ethnicity and gender. On the one hand, NGOs

seem to be the main provider who caters to the needs of the Roma minority. On the other hand, although the fieldwork included interviews with the beneficiaries of LLL programmes in private companies, in some cases it was not possible to find any woman who benefited these programmes.

Generally, the legal and political macro framework (e.g. strategies and laws) are focused on educational outcomes; but, there is a lack of internal coherence between different levels of the educational system: most of the educational institutions on a regional level remain passive observers. All this indicates that under Bulgarian conditions there are significant problems associated with the practical implementation of policies and programs adopted at national and regional level that relate to young adults. Most regional institutions have not yet created adequate organizational conditions for a widespread continuing education of adults due to lack of financing and long-term vision.

Croatia

The analysis has offered few main conclusions about expert interviews in both functional regions of Croatia:

- Most institutions have common antecedents, linked to the independence of Croatia and the democratization of the Croatian society;
- The common objectives of the analysed institutions are to increase young adults' employability with the improvement of their skills, qualification and access to information;
- Less attention is given to encouraging the changes in the society for the benefit of the youth activities, programmes and policies are fragmented (the system is highly centralised);
- Local authorities lack initiative and awareness of the need to create priorities and regional or local policies;
- There is no reliable evaluation of the effects of policies implementation (some statistical data are available, but are not used in planning future activities);
- The majority of the experts are focused on their work without getting deeper into its impact on the LLL policy in its whole.

While analysing young adults interviews it is obvious that good connection with members of their family as well as support from their family, young adults in Croatia see as a main point in facing their problems. During their education, most of young adults in Croatia were enrolled in different out-of-school activities, mostly in some types of sport or in the music schools. While presenting themselves, young adults are mostly focused on presenting their practical skills. They are oriented on the skills that they can use in their everyday-life situations and they are not so proactive in participating in activities that would lead to the community improvement. Generally, it could be concluded that young adults in Croatia are dissatisfied with life in Croatia. They are worried about their future, and most of them believe that they will not be able to find a job in profession, especially the job they love. Because of that they are unable to plan their future regarding any other life important question. Most of them have negative feelings towards situation at labour market. They recognize the labour market as centre of nepotism, where you are more competitive if you are member of a political party.

According to those conclusions, some challenges of LLL policies in Croatia were identified. There is a lack of implementation of national policies at the regional and local level. At the same time different stakeholders in the community are competitive and educational, social welfare and labour market policies are fragmented. This leaves NEET youth, but also youth in general in a hard position. While talking about LLL policies, in general, young people in Osijek-Baranja and in Istria Functional Region are not included in creating LLL policies. Most of them are not informed about their opportunities and they do not expect anything from the Croatian Employment Service. If young adults want to get retraining or training, they usually need to pay it for themselves. Therefore, LLL policies are not recognizing different social categories.

Finally, the conclusion of this analysis is that there are many institutions on local and regional level that have as a goal raising quality of life of young adults through raising their employment. The main problem that cause failure of the programs is lack of coordination between different stakeholders and between three main systems: educational, social welfare and employment. Besides that, the institutions are choosing to deal with few measures on local level, based on their particular interest. At the same time there are no evaluation of measures implementation, so there is no feedback if actions and programs do help young adults in improving their life-quality. Lack of coordination and lack of evaluation are creating skills mismatch at local and regional level that is visible to all actors included. All this leaves young adults in an unpleasant situation: unemployed, without any financial stability, living with their parents and unable to plan their future life. This situation, according with high level of nepotism in employment, makes young adults dissatisfied with their life in Croatia and makes them willing to leave Croatia. The main thing that both experts and young adults from both regions claim is

that LLL policies should be changed and improved in order to answer to the special needs of young adults' transition to labour market.

Finland

The report presents and analyses the expert and young adult interviews conducted in two functional regions in Finland, Southwest Finland and Kainuu. The aim was to, firstly, assess the interaction that LLL policies, young adults' living conditions, as well as both country and region specific contexts have in promoting growth and social inclusion, and, secondly, explore young adults' perceptions of the social expectations that underlie the policies and initiatives, competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings, as well as the complementarity of policies, local contexts, living conditions, and individual life projects and styles. The regional differences in the opportunity structures are evident when looking at the functional regions of this study. Life opportunities available to young people are more versatile in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu, where youth unemployment rates are higher and the level of overall well-being of young people is lower than in Finland on average. There are also much fewer educational opportunities available for compulsory school graduates in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland. Furthermore, the labour market in Southwest Finland is larger and more versatile than the labour market in Kainuu, and it is more likely for young people to find employment in the open market in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu. Hence, young adults residing in these two regions live in quite different realities when it comes to their future prospects.

According to the interviewed regional experts, the objectives of the LLL policies include reducing youth unemployment, tackling social exclusion of young adults, increasing the rate of VET completion and reducing the number of drop-outs. It is noteworthy that tackling social exclusion of young adults was mentioned explicitly as a key objective of the policy measures only in the interviews with the experts in the functional region Kainuu. The clear difference highlights the discrepancies in the socio-economic structures and living conditions of youth and young adults in the two contrasting functional regions. However, all the experts from each of the regional policy measures and both of the functional regions emphasised the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. The logic behind this kind of an approach was that young adults have to reach a certain level of functional abilities, skills, and wellbeing in order to be a situation where the main goal of the policy measure, such as successfully completing VET or entering the labour market, can be reached. Strengthening young adults' self-confidence, autonomy, and agency, as well as reducing their biographical uncertainty were also among the main goals of the LLL policies.

The experts found cooperation with other relevant institutions and policy actors to be of utmost importance. They attributed the successfulness of network cooperation to well-functioning collaboration networks, low level of bureaucracy, shared understanding between the cooperation partners of the roles, expectations, goals, and credit of success, as well as long-lasting, positive relationships with the individual members of the network. Collaboration was one of the ways in which so-called wicked problems were tackled. By working together with experts from several different fields it was seen possible to address the multilevel wicked problems in a way that would not be possible for a single policy measure or actor.

The most dominant themes of the young adult interviews were the challenges included in the life stories, such as learning and neuropsychological disorders, mental and physical illnesses, circadian rhythm problems, major problems in family, and having been bullied at school, as well as the (lack of) support from family, friends, and school. For many, the problems related to learning at school were still reflected on the way they perceived themselves as learners and also more generally, and vocational education and training was typically the self-evident choice after compulsory education as attending general upper secondary education was seen something that would have been outside their abilities and as they saw themselves as learning-by-doing kind of people. Two thirds of the interviewed young adults had been or still were suffering from some form of mental illness. The onset of a physical and/or mental illness had significant effects on the life courses and educational paths as well as the future prospects of the young adults. In many cases they had to drop out of education or at least put their studies on hold for a considerable amount of time. Nearly half of the interviewed young adults were bullied at school, and many of them found that it had had severe effects on their life courses and self-perceptions. For the majority the consequences were drastic, such as onset of mental illness, dropping out of education, or loss of self-confidence and feelings of hopelessness.

Three general life course patterns were identified from the life stories of the young adults. The first pattern was characterised by a fairly stable life course that was interrupted by, for example, an onset of a mental illness or being severely bullied at school. However, these young adults were able to

'return to route' and continue to pursue their typically rather clear and realistic future aspirations. The second life course pattern is much more fragmented than the first one; problems start earlier or are more severe, and this pattern is characterized by dropping out of education at least once, but often more times. Future aspirations are unclear or not very realistic with regard to their abilities or available resources. The third life course pattern is less common in the sample than the two previous ones. Characteristic for this pattern is that the starting point for life is very good. Relationships with family and friend are close, there is lot of available support, learning is enjoyable and achievement high. Further study aspirations after general upper secondary school are very ambitious, but despite several attempts they do not get accepted to the desired study programme. Failing to gain access to education despite previous success at school together with other taxing circumstances leads to an onset of severe mental health problems and to a more drastic interruption in the life course. These life course patterns of the young adults in vulnerable situations show that they come from many different backgrounds and have many different types of challenges, which implies that they all do not necessarily benefit from same types of support.

With regard to their life projects and future expectations, especially in relation to education and work, roughly half of the interviewed young adults had rather clear and realistic goals while the other half was more or less struggling with trying to figure out what it is that they would like and be able to do in the future. For most of the young adults, things like employability after graduation or the typical wage level in the occupational field were of very little relevance. Occupational aspirations were typically based on hopes of having a meaningful and personally fulfilling job that would be nice to go to every day. Despite their already fragmented life courses, the majority of young adults interviewed in this study were planning their future based on the culturally constructed model of 'the normal life course'. They had rather normative and conventional understanding of adulthood despite the accumulating challenges and the vulnerable situations they were living in. Typically, their view of their life in ten years time included having a meaningful and steady job, an apartment or house of their own, and a spouse – perhaps children as well. One important finding was that the regional opportunity structures were not really reflected on the young adults' perceived and planned life projects, even though the polarisation of regional opportunity structures was very much highlighted by the interviewed national level experts. Generally speaking, despite the different living conditions, young adults in both functional regions had a rather positive and confident outlook on life.

Germany

Evidence from Germany suggests significant variation of policy approaches and youth experiences. The point is not only that Germany is a Federal country but also that diverging socio-economic transformations affect different Länder, cities and 'functional regions' (FR). Thus, policies are similar insofar as they are framed by the similar approaches to schooling, TVET and active labour market policies. Nevertheless, some differences are noticeable:

In the FR Rhein-Main, experts report on a diversity of policies that cater to different social needs. The programmes widen their informal room for encouraging some target groups to join. All experts are quite concerned with the autonomy of young adults but do not focus on the same aspects. In contrast, in the FR Bremen the last impulse of lifelong learning policies was much homogeneous, since the bulk of them was designed as a response to economic decay. In this vein, the experts share a much stronger interest in helping the beneficiaries to escape from social exclusion. The autonomy of the beneficiaries is mentioned too, but it often is associated with getting a job.

In both regions, the function of the policy measures and the young adults' view of their life and vocational projects clearly fitted. In the FR Rhein-Main they were quite well informed and some proved to have become relatively assertive on their future challenges. However, in the FR Bremen the young adults who were interviewed basically complied with the official goals of the programmes.

Participation significantly differs. While in the FR Rhein-Main some programmes allow their beneficiaries to set the agenda of discussions and decision-making, in the FR Bremen no interviewee made reference to these options. The expectations of experts and young adults are coherent in both regions. In the FR Rhein-Main institutional diversity offer programmes for heterogeneous types of beneficiaries. In Bremen, the views of both experts and young adults mostly coincide on the issue of employability.

In both regions, young adults find strong networks of programmes and service providers that cooperate in many ways. Although single providers are unable to fulfil a great variety of demands, the whole system normally meets the expectations of the beneficiaries. In Bremen, not only public policies focus on employment but also firms are quite active in providing internships.

Italy

In Italy, the analysis of the interviews with experts produced the following findings:

- There is a strong difficulty to translate EU policies at local level and in particular when policies try to include disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
- The distance from upper level experts and young people seems to be high: the rhetoric of laziness is very strong even if it is clear that NEETs are a inhomogeneous target group with great differences on qualifications, social capital, economic and social conditions.
- There is an important trend to individualistic policies as Dote Unica: traditional labour market policies, as well as professional training initiatives seems to be not fit for a world that changes so fast and for youngsters so differentiated and disoriented.

All the interviewed young adults might be labelled as 'vulnerable' respondents, albeit with some variations. Indeed, none of the interviewed Milanese young adults have completed the upper secondary school and most of them had experiences of long-term unemployment, in addition to a general condition of limited economic and cultural resources. On the contrary, the Genoese young adults achieved higher level of education (mostly university degree) but they experienced many short-term and/or unstable jobs, living the precariousness of the local labour market (which is much less dynamic if compared to the one of the Milan Functional Region). This condition often led them to perform unqualified jobs, despite their high educational qualification. Thus, in the case of the Milanese young adults it is proper to consider a "structural vulnerability", while for the Genoese young adults the concept of vulnerability applies especially to their professional profiles.

The analysis of these interviews produced the following findings:

- the structural vulnerability also implies a significant distance from the local institutions, which entails problems in the engagement process of these youths. Thus, the impact of measures aiming at supporting lower educational and professional profiles is limited by the same social features of the targets;
- at a national level, the relevance of formal qualification is still very high, at least at a cultural level. Even though high degrees of education do not necessarily guarantee good performances on the labour market (as the case of the Genoese youths clearly shows), the qualification lack shortens very strongly the range of achievable opportunities, even in the market of low-skilled jobs. Furthermore, this condition affects not only the coping tactics applied by the young adults in the present, but it also shapes their future planning, which gets even more blurred in absence of a formal qualification to lean on;
- given the recognized high relevance of the formal qualification, a few unqualified youths proved to be able to resist to the potential self-stigmatization, declaring a certain confidence in their own actual skills. Consequently, the possibility to access to a process of formal recognition of informal e non formal skills (which is currently not available at Italian level) would reduce inequalities on the labour market;
- in low-dynamic labour markets like the one of Genoa, the low competitiveness of high educational degrees might be tackled by youths by further specialization, which on the one hand it contributes to maintain high levels of activation, while on the other hand it threatens to lead to over-specialization, indefinitely postponing the actual integration in the market, and the achieving of independence.

A further section of the report explores the interaction of experts and young adults in the context of lifelong learning policies. The analysis of this interaction yields the following conclusions:

- the interactions between operators and young adults are therefore mostly governed by the CPE embedded in the policies and in the operators's behaviour, and they are accepted or suffered by young adults. Young adults can be classified in different groups, on the basis of the degree of awareness and acceptance of the goals of the policies and of the means that the policies themselves put at their disposal.
- So we met retreatists, that do not share the CPE embedded in policies but are unable to look at a different one and unaware of its feature, young adults that accept the CPE for instrumental reasons or because they share the presuppositions on which it's based, innovators, that try to bend policies to their needs, also if they don't share the embedded CPE.
- There are cases of positive interaction when young adults really fit with this CPE, more for objective than subjective reasons; that is, while on the subjective plane you are fought between hearing you failed and not having the strength to design your future, on the objective plane the measure recognizes both your resources and your shortcomings and therefore supports you in a project that is not imposed on you but that constitutes to a certain extent the

natural development of your life project: a good example is constituted by the IFTS or by the apprenticeship well done. There are also cases where young people are strong enough in terms of cultural and social capital to be able to consider measures as opportunities within their own life strategy and therefore can "govern" the embedded CPE using it for the part that is useful for their project.

Portugal

In Portugal, the interaction between experts and young adults raises a number of very important effects. These are the main findings of the report.

- Young adults and experts reveal an apparent coincidence of views regarding the objectives of the LLL policies analysed. In turn, young adults do not neglect the contribution of these LLL policies to the learning of a profession. However, for them it is more important to obtain a school certification. The conclusion of the 12th year is the common goal of the majority of young adults interviewed, even for those who are attending lower secondary education.
- For some young adults, LLL is the opportunity to realize a vocation (*Berufung*) that in some cases expresses itself very early in their life course and that in others reveals itself, as unsatisfactory professional experiences are occurring. In these cases, the choice of vocational education and training course is intentional and is at the service of a defined professional project, where personal and professional fulfilment takes a prominent place. The strategies they develop to materialize their professional project are endowed with strategic rationality and reveal their ability to take advantage of the existing opportunities structure.
- For other young adults, learning a profession is a *non-choice*. It was either the only one available or the least bad choice, given their academic qualifications. The mismatch between the desired profession and that offered by the skills formation system creates in young adults a sense of frustration about the present and uncertainty about the future. No one admits to coming to practice the profession for which it is being trained. The younger ones aspire to attend a new course that allows them the professional certification they want. The older ones, for whom the need for independence is more pressing, want a job whatsoever that assures them a salary that allows them to become independent.
- The vast majority of young adults belong to non-traditional families where divorce has been a widespread event with diverse impacts on their life course: changes of residence, changes in school, changes in country, change of family context where parents are replaced by grandparents or other relatives. They are also mostly from working class or lower middle class backgrounds, with low economic resources. Although only one young person reports dropping out of school because he had to go to work to contribute to the family budget, there are several references to the indirect costs of education (transportation, food, school supplies). Situations of postponement of vocational education and training courses attendance were also reported. These courses being only offered by private institutions, presented unbearable costs for family budgets.
- At school, all interviewees failed at least once. The reasons for school failure are based on two distinct orders of factors: reduced school performance associated with learning difficulties and absence from classes. The interviews show the existence of a vicious circle, widely documented in the literature, where the first retentions due to learning difficulties are followed by retentions due to absences from classes and, finally, by drop out. The young adults' educational stories show how accumulating retentions leads to loss of interest and disinvestment in schooling. Missing the classes are, in this context, the symptom of a process of school disaffiliation that ends up leading to school drop out and for attributing to many of these young people the ELS label. Young adults whose school paths are marked by this vicious circle deeply regret the past behaviour they attribute to immaturity and bad company, and believe that if this had not happened, their lives would be totally different.
- The trajectories of some interviewees show their successive attempts to find the vocational education and training provision that corresponds to their expectations. In a process similar to that of trial and error some young adults have been experimenting different vocational and training provisions until they find the one that, even though it is not ideal, presents itself as the one that satisfies them most.
- For the experts, the impact of LLL policies on the autonomy of young people was confined to the exclusively professional dimension and expressed in the idea of producing workers with autonomy in the exercise of the future profession. For the young adults interviewed the role played by these policies in fostering their autonomy has a much broader meaning. They hope that their involvement in these policies will enable them to access a job or set up a business that will provide them with the necessary income for their financial and housing independence.

- The experts interviewed very rarely discussed whether lifelong learning policies contributed to reduce biographical uncertainty. The few who referred to it were to account for the inevitable character of uncertainty, associated with the characteristics of the labour market, where seasonality prevails, and the characteristics of labour relations where fixed-term contracts are becoming dominant. However, the naturalization of uncertainty is strongly contested by the young people interviewed. They yearn for a 'durable' job or for owning a business that allows them the security they need to realize their life projects. Thus, while some are willing to take the risk presented by various opinion makers and policy makers as one of the conditions of contemporary times, everyone rejects insecurity as a long-term way of life.

Spain

In Spain, the analysis of the interviews with experts produced the following findings:

- A number of disruptive problems defer the implementation of a common qualifications framework at the local level. In fact, the split of powers between the departments of education and employment as well as an underground competition between private providers generate an intricate institutional system. This is a further challenge for young adults who want to look for training and can hardly rely on the skills they have previously acquired.
- Active labour market policies have become the prevailing approach to lifelong learning in both Girona and Málaga. Programmes are evaluated on the grounds of how many beneficiaries find a job. Professionals mostly focus on the employability of beneficiaries.
- Local governments have become a very weak but crucial component of the institutional structure of lifelong learning policies in Spain. They are weak for many reasons, but these policies may also exacerbate their weakness. The point is that the central ministry established how the Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS) would be finally understood in Spain. Regional governments adopt this design with some variations. For instance, in Catalonia management is more decentralised than in Andalusia. However, local governments are responsible for catering to the needs of their population. Central, regional and local governments pay the wage of the street-level professionals who work at this local level. Significantly, although coordination is hard to find at the upper levels of management, the interviews detected some relevant and very helpful local networks of informal coordination among these street-level professionals.

Most young adult interviewees came from a working-class background. Some of them had also had a previous experience with international migration. A larger number of males were contacted and interviewed in lifelong learning policies in these two regions. This sample integrated a number of 'vulnerable' respondents for two reasons. Firstly, many of them had left school but had not achieved the accreditation of compulsory secondary education. Secondly, many of them also had experiences of long-term unemployment, or at least reiterative spells of unemployment.

The analysis of these interviews produced the following findings:

- In Spain, 'vulnerable' young adults struggle to define their life project. They use lifelong learning programmes for this endeavour. Most of them notice the pedagogic approach of these programmes is friendly insofar as trainers, tutors and counsellors are responsive to their particular needs.
- Defining a life project is a demanding challenge for some 'vulnerable' young adults. It is hard for them to figure out a reliable life course out of education and employment. These youth are quite attentive to the potential of counselling and personalised active labour market policies to respond to their needs.
- Vocational training opens two types of opportunities to 'vulnerable' young adults. On the one hand, training is a good occasion to review their experience with schooling, and if necessary, to take academic education seriously. This is a widespread dilemma. On the other hand, some training programmes also give them official qualifications on the grounds of practical skills. Many of them had not realised this opportunity in advance.
- Middle- level vocational education also opens interesting opportunities for them. In fact, all the interviewees who mentioned academic education had this possibility in mind. However, it is worrying that some respondents reported they could not afford the vocational education programmes they wished.
- Although this report can hardly posit general conclusions with regard to gender, it clearly indicates that both further research and policy evaluations should look at the different experiences of men and women. Males are more exposed to 'vulnerable' social positions as far as early school leaving and unemployment are concerned. However, it is plausible to

conclude that professional stereotypes and the difficulty to simultaneously cope with motherhood and training also affect the opportunities of women.

A further section of the report explores the interaction of experts and young adults in the context of lifelong learning policies. Remarkably, these two types of social agents continuously meet, make decisions, experience new situations and elaborate their discourses in a variety of interfaces. Diverse social agents are involved in designing programmes, training people, counselling 'vulnerable' young adults, coordinating the stakeholders of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, formulating one's personal biography in the midst of current policies, and making decisions on either further education or employment. Nevertheless, all these activities are clearly interactive.

In this report, the analysis of this interaction yields the following conclusions:

- The expectations of professionals are often aligned with the experiences of young adults. The former think the beneficiaries of lifelong learning programmes need to compensate for their shortcomings in both education and the labour market. Many of the latter feel they made the wrong choices during their adolescence and have to correct the course of their life. These two views strongly contribute to set a 'social norm' whereby lifelong learning policies are the appropriate resource to cater to the needs of those young adults who failed to reach both middle- vocational and tertiary education.
- Three approaches to vocational training were detected. In Girona, TP24 articulates counselling with training on the grounds of a systematic tutelage of young early school-leavers. In the same region, the youth workers of a municipality have developed a community-based approach of TP12 that reaches young adults in the midst of their personal social networks and keeps a long-term ongoing conversation with some of them. Both in Girona and Málaga the training programmes that award an official qualification are an appealing alternative for low-skilled people who frame their professional strategy within an explicit life project. Although in Girona these programmes were not included in the sample (because the experts estimated that most students were older than 30), the bulk of the young adults who were interviewed in Málaga were taking these courses.
- Neither in Girona nor in Málaga young adults participate at all in the design of lifelong learning policies. Although the Young Guarantee Scheme particularly stresses participation and partnership, the current programmes which are implemented in these two 'functional regions' do not meet this requirement.

United Kingdom (Scotland)

In Scotland, the analysis led to these findings:

- All the young adults spoke enthusiastically about the support they received on employability programmes and through apprenticeships, to help them learn new skills. This corroborated with the policy and programme intentions as expressed by the experts, particularly the practitioners who had experience of working directly with the young adults.
- In contrast, whilst some young adults received good careers advice and guidance in school towards a vocational pathway, others were very critical about the lack of support they received and has also experienced pressure, even if only through lack of alternatives, to take an academic path when they had decided against this.
- The young adults interviewed had left school before Developing the Young Workforce, with one of its aims to promote vocational, alongside academic, pathways, had been fully introduced. Their experiences did, however, underline the need for the policy.
- Young adults reported that when they left school they spent time trying out different vocational options but often without success although other employability programmes (not part of this study) had helped. Those who had been contacted post-school by the Skills Development Scotland careers service, they assumed as a result of referral by their school careers officer, had found that very helpful. This suggests a well-connected school/post-school careers service, albeit not consistently so.
- For young adults, family was still a very important factor for their past, present and future plans and aspirations.
- It seems that the policies under consideration assume three main groups: those who will take an academic pathway with ease; those for whom post-school support is needed for training and employment, and those who require more tailored one-to-one employability support, for example to build confidence and help overcome a variety social, economic, learning and health barriers.
- No evidence came to light where young adults were involved in lifelong learning, employability

or training policy-making.

- Where young people are in training and employment with aspirations for the future they clearly feel they have a stake and talked knowledgeably about the industry they were engaged in, which suggested that they might be willing to participate in policy-making if that was meaningful rather than superficial and box-ticking.
- The term 'lifelong learning' is seldom used by practitioners or young people though practitioners occasionally refer to 'life skills'.
- There are insufficient opportunities for young adults over the age of 18 with a seemingly 'black hole' of support and provision for young people in their 20s who had to survive the 2008 downturn. There was evidence that this has recently been acknowledged with a new and more inclusive approach from DYW being introduced.
- A condition for contractors carrying out work for the public sector is that they add community benefit clauses (CBC) for example to recruit young workers/apprentices from the locality. The contracts are often shorter than the length of an apprenticeship and there is no provision to help the apprentices to complete their training. Furthermore, subcontractors are not necessarily bound by the clauses. This means young adults' routes into work can be blighted although this had not affected any of those in the Project.
- There is a gender imbalance between training and job types which needs to be addressed with more males in e.g., construction and more females in city office work.
- There is a great deal of public funding for training. It is not clear from the enactment of the policies where the responsibilities of employers lie. The UK Apprenticeship Levy on employers which is now in place offers the opportunity for a clearer message to employers to engage in more training and sustainable positions for young people.
- Actual policies can sometimes be confused with re-badging or re-labelling or re-arranging of existing measures. Whereas Opportunities for All referred to a policy for vulnerable young people, Aberdeen Guarantees was regarded as a drawing together of available opportunities, including Opportunities for All, under the one banner and visible on the AG website.
- Partnership was often mentioned as key to effective delivery of services to young adults.
- Despite this, there were examples given of a proliferation of measures, or changes, of which experts had had little or no advance notice or consultation, causing some confusion and resentment.
- There was some evidence from the very small sample in this study that careers advice and guidance within- and post-school, has been more amenable to vocational pathways in Aberdeen probably because of the existence of manufacturing and related industries, but also because the downturn had meant a more pro-active response was required than in Glasgow, where the pressure to go to university seems to be stronger. Family pressure for university remains strong, however.

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3. Deviations from the Work plan

The delivery of the national reports was slightly delayed. Reason for the deferral was that more time was needed for careful analysis that complied with both the highly contextualised research settings as well as the thorough research ethics guidelines. Each type of data had particularities that needed to be taken into account. While analyses of data from interviews with experts was less intricate and could be completed by late October 2017, interpreting and analysing the biographical interview material of our young adult interviewees was a more challenging task and required careful treatment and sensitive deliberation. Despite the delay, the research could be accomplished according to the proposal.

4. Performance of the partners

All partners fulfilled their tasks in satisfactory time and quality.

5. Conclusions

The Steering Board deems this deliverable to be fulfilled satisfactory.

6. Annex – all national reports



Work Package 5

Qualitative Analysis

National Reports - Overview

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Work Package 5
Qualitative Analysis
National Report – Austria

University of Vienna (UNIVIE)
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Project Coordinator:	Prof. Dr. Marcelo Parreira do Amaral (University of Münster)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, we present the results of the analysis of qualitative interviews conducted with young adults and experts in Vienna and Upper Austria. Seventeen biographical-narrative interviews with young adults have been conducted to learn more about their biographies, life projects, educational trajectories, skills demands and experience with the respective policy. Ten semi-structured interviews conducted with experts involved in the design, management and street-level work of selected LLL policies have been conducted to find out more about the policies' objectives, approaches, target groups, influence on young adults and governance structures. The analysis was guided by three sets of research questions that have been developed in accordance with the three theoretical perspectives applied in the YOUNG ADULLLT project: cultural political economy, the life course perspective and multi-level governance theory.

Some of the most relevant results of the interviews conducted with young adult are:

- **Biographies and self-representation:** Biographies of young adults are diverse, including a diversity in young adults' countries of origin, family background and own families, experiences with school, training and work. But almost all young adults depicted themselves as motivated and eager to fully participate in education, training or work although they have experienced minor or major set-backs and/or obstacles on their way.
- **School trajectories and level of education:** Young adults' school trajectories are characterized by school changes, repetitions and dropouts because of a broad variety of reasons. The level of education among young adults is also very diverse ranging from compulsory school to tertiary education.
- **Skills level:** Young adults also show different skills levels because of differences in age, learning abilities, school trajectories, the length of work experience, the engagement in leisure and social activities beyond work.
- **Experiences with policy:** The overall experiences of young adults with the respective policies were very positive. Smaller negative comments on LLL policies were made about course-based theoretical learning programs.
- **Plans for the future:** The specific plans differed according to age, professional experience and education trajectory. Some young adults had long terms plans, others only focused on the successful participation in the respective policy. Most common long term plans expressed related to building up a family, having a stable professional life and financial security and more broader to mental and physical well-being and fulfillment.

Some of the most relevant results of the interviews conducted with experts are:

- **Policy objectives:** To support the sustainable integration of young adults into the education and training system or the first labor market and to meet the labor force demands of employers.
- **Policy approaches:** Strong practical focus with additional theoretical courses, coaching and guidance. The importance of VET and the dual system within the Austrian education system is reflected in LLL policies.

- Target groups: Target groups are very diverse ranging from young adults without compulsory school certificate and major learning difficulties to young adults with upper secondary certificates and a lot of work experience.
- Implementation and challenges: Implementation in two cases was very successful, due to experience from antecedent policies or the good match between the policy's "service" and the demand. The main challenge for the other two cases was to attract the target group.
- Impact on young adults: Policies analyzed contribute to an increase in young adults' self-esteem and self-worth, because of the experience of self-efficacy and positive learning experiences. Policies contribute to the reduction of young adults' life course uncertainty as long as the conceptualized target group is attracted. Although stigmatizing effects may be the result in one case.
- Governance structure: All policies are based on a broad network of cooperating actors at local, regional and federal level. Actors are public organizations, social enterprises, education providers and private companies.
- Coordination and cooperation: Works well in general in all cases. Reported difficulties are due to larger political issues like the design of the Austrian school system, regional differences regarding the recognition of skills and the exclusion of asylum seekers from the labor market and LLL policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this WP 5 is to conduct qualitative research on young adults participating and policy makers, managers and street-level experts affiliated with selected LLL policies in Vienna and Upper Austria (see figure 1). In this report we present the results of the qualitative research and analysis conducted. We are interested in young adults' and experts opinions and perceptions about LLL policies.

In terms of content, WP 5 is in particular connected to WP 3, WP 4, WP 6 and WP 7 of the YOUNG ADULLLT project. The selection of the sample analyzed in WP 5 is based on the work that has been conducted for WP 3. WP 4 has provided valuable insights into young adults' living conditions in Austria and the two regions of Vienna and Upper Austria. Some of the results of the quantitative analysis of WP 4 have been included into this introduction. In WP 6, we analyzed the skills systems in the two Austrian regions. The results of WP 6 partly overlap with the results of WP 5. However, the unit of analysis for WP 6 was the region, while it is policies for WP 5. Finally, the work on the case studies for WP 7 has informed the analysis for WP 5 and vice versa.

Figure 1: The two Austrian regions of Vienna and Upper Austria



This report is structured as follows: In the remainder of this introductory section we present contextual information on the living conditions of young adults in Vienna and Upper Austria and a short description of the policies selected for in-depth analysis within WP 5. The information presented in this section is relevant for understanding the research results of the qualitative analysis conducted and presented in the sections 3 to 5. In section 2, we present our research questions and explain the criteria and strategies applied for sampling and give insights into how we prepared and conducted fieldwork, particularly the data collection. Finally, we explain how the data collected was treated and analyzed¹. In the sections 3 to 5 we present the results of our analysis. Section 3 contains the results of the analysis of biographical-narrative interviews conducted with young adults. In section 4, we present the analysis of semi-structured

¹ The data collection, the transcription of interviews as well as an initial data analysis was carried out in a working group of which also the following students were part: Sarah Alam El Din, Georg Bayerl, Paul Marius Benjes, Johanna Fuchs, Nina Görgen, Philipp Gschnitzer, Paul Kassnig, Alesja Kicaj, Hannes Kofler, Maya Luger, Maria Lyutakova, Manoel Manach, Philipp Molitor, Tatjana Neuhuber, Dina Ogrizovic, Niklas Lucca Pernhaupt.

interviews conducted with policy managers. In section 5, we look at the matches and mismatches between young adults' and policy managers' experiences and perceptions of LLL policies.

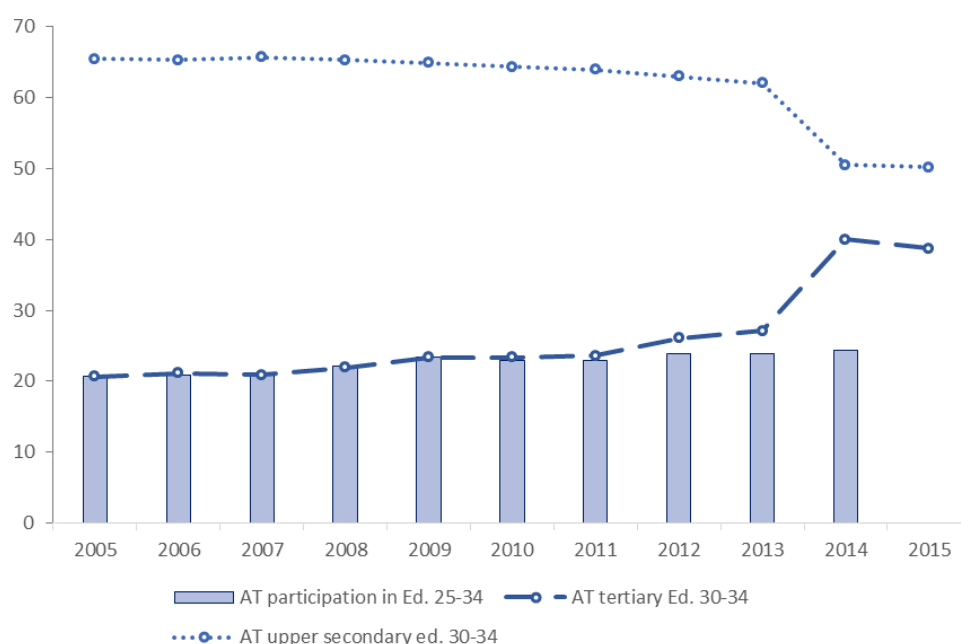
1.1 Young Adults in Austria

In this section we provide background information on young adults' living conditions in the two regions of Vienna and Upper Austria, considering in particular participation in education and the labor market. We draw on quantitative data collected for WP 4. Eurostat online databases at aggregated national and regional level and micro data from different surveys (LFS, EU-SILC, PISA, PIAAC) were used as sources. The main corpus of data was complemented by data collected at the regional level, coming from different sources and made available by *Statistik Austria*.

Likewise Germany, the Austrian education system is characterized by the early tracking of students. The first division into tracks takes place after grade four, at the beginning of lower secondary education. At the beginning of upper secondary education, the system is made up of four tracks. Roughly 80 % of youth per cohort, after completing lower secondary education, enters a vocational education and training (VET) course, 37 % in dual apprenticeship and 43 % in a vocational school (BMS) or college (BHS) (Bliem et al., 2016). The VET system is characterized by the competition between apprenticeship and school-based vocational courses (Lassnigg, 2011). However, it is highly diverse with many different programs and institutions offering access to different social groups, and with a range of options for students to access higher education.

Looking at the different stages of the education system, participation in upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3-4) is comparatively high, especially in Upper Austria. This is connected to the regional structure of the labor market and to the job demand based on a strong industrial production. In 2012, the participation rate of individuals 15 to 24 years old was equal to 42.9 %, 4 points above the EU-27 average. In Vienna, the percentage of students in upper-secondary education and post-secondary non-tertiary education of the population dropped from 44.7 % in 2005 to 39.8 % in 2012. In Upper Austria, the same indicator remained quite stable (45.9% in 2012). Moreover, young people in Upper Austria tend to enroll more in vocational programs (76.2 % of all the pupils in upper secondary education), while in Vienna only 58.4 % of pupils enroll in vocational programs.

Figure 2: Educational attainment (30-34, %) and participation in education and training (25-34, %), Austria, 2005-2015



Source: Eurostat Education and training database, LFS microdata

Looking at education attainments of young people, i.e. at the level and type of the qualifications obtained, the main trend in Austria is the upgrading of qualifications. The data show a drop in the share of low-educated (from 16.5 % in 2005 to 13.2 % in 2016) and upper-secondary educated (from 63.1 % to 44.8 %), and a steady increase of tertiary educated (from 20.4 % to 42 %)². In the Vienna region, due to tertiarization and developments in the service sectors of the economy, upper-secondary non-tertiary degree as maximum qualification went down to 37.2 %, being more common for women (37.9 %). Higher education is way more widespread in Vienna, with no gender difference (48.8 % for males and females). This is coherent with the data on participation, confirming the strength of higher education in the Vienna region.

Looking at lifelong learning and education at a later age, after having usually completed initial education, young Austrians show relevant commitment in education and training: all in all, 24.6 % of young people aged 25 to 34 stated that they participated in some forms of education and training activities in 2016 (the EU28 average is 17.4 %).

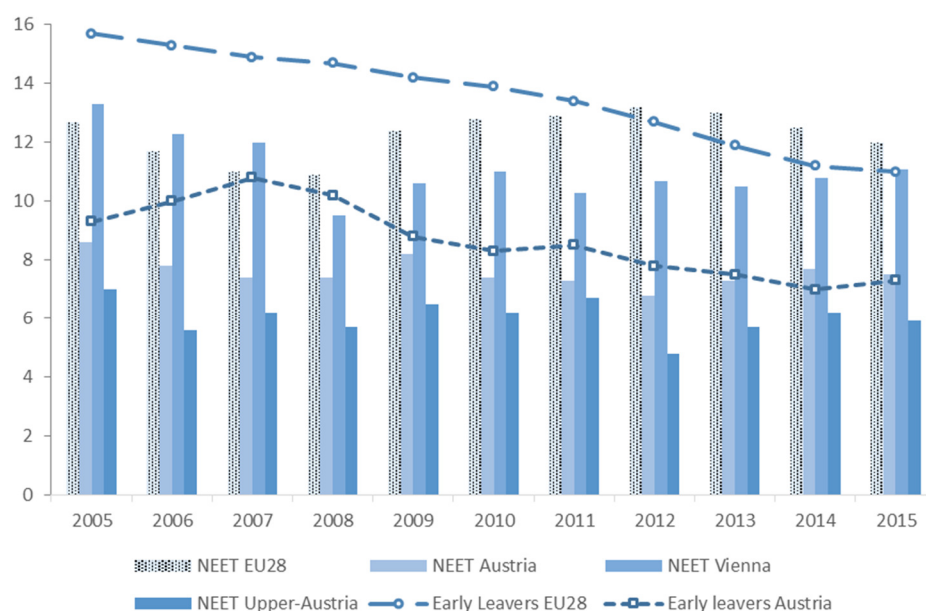
Education results in Austria are still in the middle of the range compared to other countries, but weaknesses in some basic skills (like reading) were confirmed by their low performance in the last 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, collected on 15 years old pupils at the beginning of upper secondary education. The results point to persisting differences in educational achievements according to gender and social background. Parents' socioeconomic status and their eventual migrant background continue to have a major influence on their children's education results. In 2015, first generation immigrant students were three times more likely than native born students to leave school early before completing upper

² The drop in participation in upper secondary education and the jump in participation in tertiary education after 2013 is mainly related to a change in the classification of Austrian qualifications, according to the ISCED 2011 standards: in detail, qualifications attained after 4 and 5 years in BHS or vocational colleges, have been classified as short-cycle tertiary education², thus accounting for the strong shifts in participation rates.

secondary education (European Commission, 2017). Looking at skills of young people aged 20 to 30 (PIAAC data), the advantage of young Austrian adults with respect to their European peers increases: in numeracy and literacy a good level of skill attainment together with a relatively even skill distribution among young people exists.

The link between education system and the labor market still appears to be stronger in Austria if compared to other European countries, even if slightly weakening after 2012: only a limited share of young people is excluded both from working and training activities, going together with the aforementioned on average or above-average attainment rates. The Austrian NEET rate, measuring the percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 out of education and not employed, was 7.5 % in 2015, increasing after 2012 (EU28: 12 %) (see figure 3). However, the rate of young people out of education and work is higher in the Vienna region (11.1 % in 2015), while extremely low in Upper Austria (5.9 % in 2015).

Figure 3: NEET rate (15-24, %) and early school leaving rate (18-24, %), Austria, Upper Austria and Vienna, 2005-2015



Source: Eurostat Education and training database, LFS microdata

At NUTS2 level, the Austrian labor market is characterized by a clear disparity between Vienna and Upper Austria. Looking at the youth population, the employment rate of 15 to 24 year olds decreased in the last five years but is still much higher than the EU average (51.3 % against 33.1 % in 2015), especially in Upper Austria (57.3 %), while in Vienna is equal to 42 %. Moreover, if at the national level and in Upper Austria young men are more employed than young women (54 % against 48.7 % in Austria, 61.6 % against 52.8 % in Upper Austria), in Vienna young women are slightly advantaged (42.5 % against 41.4 % in 2015). Accordingly, the unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 24 is much lower than the EU average (10.6 % against 20.4 % in 2015), being slightly higher for males (11.1 %) than females (10 %). However, after 2011, it has been continuously increasing, coming closer to the levels of 2009. Once again, the situation is worst in Vienna, where the unemployment rate peaked up to 19.4 % in 2012 and is equal to 18 % in 2015: young males in Vienna appear to be particularly at risk, as their unemployment rate is 21.9 %, above the EU27 average of 21 % after 2012. Conversely, after a

peak of 18 % in 2012, the share of young women unemployed has decreased during the last three years.

Upper Austria confirms to be in a more favorable situation in terms of youth unemployment with respect to the overall Austrian situation, as the share of 15 to 24 years old actively searching for a job was equal to 9 % in 2015, 9.5 % for men and 8.5 % for women. The youth unemployment ratio, measuring the share of unemployed young people among the whole youth population, also supports our view related to the comparatively good conditions of the young population on the Austrian labor market. The Austrian share of youth unemployed on the overall unemployed population is lower than the EU27 average: 6.1 % for 15 to 24 and 7.4 % for 20 to 29 in 2015 against 8.4 % for 15 to 24 and 11.8 % for 20 to 29. Nevertheless, while the average European trend is improving after 2012/2013 (it was equal to 9.9 % in 2013), the Austrian ratio was equal to 5.3 % in 2011. This confirms how in Austria the youth labor market conditions, even if still comparatively better than many European countries, have been slightly deteriorating during the last three to five years.

1.2 Selected lifelong learning policies

Based on the data gathered and analyzed in WP 3, we have opted to conduct the qualitative in-depth analysis on the following four policies: for Vienna we analyze “Back to the Future” (BTTF) and “JUST Integration” (JI), for Upper Austria we look at “Du kannst was!” (DKW) and “Produktionsschulen” (PS). We provide a short description of these four policies in the following.

The main objective of the policy *Back to the Future* is to diminish the number of young adults between 18 and 24 years dependent on needs-orientated basic subsidies by integrating them into the first labor market via temporary transitional employment. 200 transitional work places in socio-economic employment projects have been funded and made available from December 2016 onwards. The target group of the initiative are young adults between 18 and 24 years who receive needs-orientated basic subsidies. Participation in the policy is possible for the maximum duration of two years. The first eight weeks serve as preparation phase. This phase serves to find out more about the young adult’s individual needs, skills, work experience, and obstacles in finding long-term employment. After completing the preparation phase, participants take up transitional employment and take over individually suited tasks, differing in difficulty. Individual assignment is supposed to encourage the employment and improvement of already existing skills, support the acquisition of new skills and prepare the participants for higher qualified tasks. Coaching and – if necessary – the engagement in additional basic skills course is supposed to contribute to a stable working environment and prevent dropout. During participation young adults benefit from regular social security standards and receive payment according to the sector specific collective agreements. Young adults are employed on a part-time basis. This allows them also to engage in further education and job-seeking activities besides. Employment is set up in a two-step model. Participants start with low skilled task and reduced working hours but have the possibility of taking over higher skilled tasks and increase their working hours, both contributing to an increase in salary. The limited duration of their

contract should function as an incentive to search for employment on the first labor market. The ESF, the Viennese PES and Vienna Municipal Department for Social Affairs cover the funding for BTTF. Further institutional partners are the Municipal Department for Health Planning, the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund and the Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs.

JUST Integration is an in-placement foundation that assists adults between 18 and 30 years in finding training positions and subsequently employment and helps companies to fill vacant positions. The two target groups of JI are young adults (18 to 30 years) who have been granted asylum or who face difficulties entering the labor market due to overlapping disadvantages. The policy combines shortened apprenticeship training with professional guidance and support. The intended period of participation is half the length (1.5-2 years) of a regular apprenticeship. After completing the apprenticeship, participants are supposed to take up a regular position in the training company. The objective of the foundation is twofold. First, to help young adults to attain a VET qualification by means of shortened apprenticeships and subsequently, to foster their integration into the labor market. Second, to support private companies in filling job vacancies they are not able to fill otherwise. Benefits for young adults are the possibility to complete a shortened apprenticeship, receive continuous support and coaching during the time of training and the coverage of subsistence needs by the PES. The most important advantage for participating training companies is foremost the omission of wage costs as the PES covers the subsistence costs of participating young adults³. Besides, the organizations implementing the program conduct a pre-selection of possible candidates and cover all other administrative and organizational aspects. An association set up by the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce is responsible for the management of the program. On the public institutional level, this associations cooperates with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the PES and the regional public authorities. The policy is implemented by private education and counseling providers and funded by the PES, the regional authorities (the WAFF for Vienna), and the Insolvency Contingency Fund.

Du kannst was! was implemented to facilitate the formal recognition of informally and non-formally acquired professional skills. Its target group are young adults of 22 years or older, who are employed and have acquired the skills of the respective occupational profile but do not hold an apprenticeship certificate for that profession. The policy is also intended for immigrants whose educational attainments have not been formally recognized in Austria. The policy applies to 17 professions in which the share of unskilled workers and employees is particular high. In a first step, participants' skill are practically assessed. To acquire missing skills and knowledge, participants are requested to participate in targeted training courses or acquire these by means of self-study. Subsequently, participants' skills are evaluated again and if they meet the specific requirements of an occupational profile, participants are issued an apprenticeship certificate. The objective underlying the policy is to reduce labor market vulnerability for unskilled workers. By formally recognizing existing skills, participants' chances on the labor market increase. At the same time, the action was launched with the argument to counteract the shortage in specialized workers on the Upper Austrian labor market. *Du kannst was!* is funded by the

³ In regular apprenticeships apprentices receive a monthly compensation (Lehrlingsentschädigung) paid by the training company. The amount depends on the occupational profile and the experience of the apprentices but ranges between approximately 500 and 1.500 Euros (WKO NÖ 2016).

regional state of Upper Austria. An association, set up by the Chamber of Labor and the Chamber of Commerce, initiated the policy.

Production schools target young people who have completed compulsory school but have to compensate a backlog regarding basic skills or social competences, and need assistance before further engagement in the education and training system. Production schools serve as support for further decision making regarding training or employment. Young people between 15 and 21 (respectively 24 years if they are disabled) are eligible for participating in a production school if they want to engage in vocational training or a vocational school and if they have a clear career wish. Participation in production schools is possible for a period between three months up to one year. The curriculum of production schools consist of four different modules. Within the training modules, the focus is on activation, exercise, skills specialization, and career guidance. During knowledge workshops, participants enhance their basic skills and media competences. As production schools follow an integral approach, physical activities and coaching during the entire period of participation complement the skills modules. Throughout all modules production schools focus specifically on conduct at the work place, conduct with others and career choice maturity. Young people conclude their participation in production schools with a recommendation from a coach pertaining to the subsequent engagement in education, training, or work. The objective behind production schools is the reduction of the dropout rate in vocational training and vocational schools due to demands young people cannot live up to. Productions schools are therefore an important pillar in assisting school-to-work transition in Austria. Production Schools are one of the five measures coordinated by NEBA (Network for Professional Assistance). All five measures coordinated by NEBA are concerned with labor market integration and are partly entwined but focus on different target groups and stages of the integration process. The measure are funded by the ESF and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

In this section we present the research questions guiding the analysis of the qualitative interviews conducted with young adults and policy managers (2.1), we explain on which rationales we based the sampling of functional regions, policy measures and interviewees (2.2), we account for how we conducted the field work, in particular the data collection (2.3) and we clarify, how the data collected was treaded and analyzed (2.4).

2.1. Research questions

The questions underlying the research conducted within WP 5 are based on the three theoretical approaches applied in the YOUNG ADULLLT project: cultural political economy (CPE), life course research (LCR) and the multi-level governance perspective (GOV). WP 5 and this report have three objectives: First, to explore young adults' life projects and how participation in LLL policies is embedded within them as well as how young adults perceive of the policies they

participate in. Second, to assess policy managers' perspectives on the respective policies. In particular on the policies' objectives, their impact on the young adults' lives and cooperation and coordination activities with other actors involved in policy making, design or implementation. Third, to assess matches and mismatches regarding expectations and experiences between young adults and policy managers. This report is structured according to these three objectives. For the first two parts, there are two distinct sets of questions that have guided our analysis of interviews with young adults (see table 1) and policy makers (see table 2). These sets of questions, respectively, have been developed according to the three theoretical perspectives and their specific foci on the topic. Part three consists of a comparison of the results presented in the first and second part.

Table 1: Research questions guiding the analysis of interviews with young adults

THEORY	QUESTIONS
LCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are young adults' life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects? What are young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course?
CPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do LLL policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognize social categories? What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand?
GOV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making?

Table 2: Research questions guiding the analysis of interviews with policy managers

THEORY	QUESTIONS
CPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies? How do these policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?
LCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to LLL policies take into account the living conditions, family responsibilities and civil engagement of young adults? Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty?

GOV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which actors are involved in LLL policies? How do these actors coordinate their activity? ▪ To whom are LLL policies accountable? ▪ How do LLL policies deal with multi-level “wicked problems”?

2.2 Sampling

Sampling of functional regions

Within the WP 3 national report, we have argued for the sampling of the two Austrian regions of Vienna and Upper Austria in more detail. We opted to have a closer look at the regions of Vienna and Upper Austria for a variety of reasons. We chose for the region of Vienna because of its relevance within Austria. Vienna is the largest city in Austria; policies implemented in Vienna have an effect on around 20 % of the Austrian population. Although Vienna covers a large share of the Austrian population it is at the same time an exception in many ways. There are no cities of comparable size in Austria, and no other urban areas is growing as fast as Vienna and faces the challenges that come with growth in this dimension. Geographically speaking, Upper Austria on the other hand is comprised of medium and small cities as well as rural areas. The main reason for opting for Upper Austria is its importance as an industrial region. Even though the manufacturing sector is still growing, structural economic change towards an increasing importance of the service sector is also visible in Upper Austria. Therefore, Upper Austria might face different challenges than other Austrian regions where structural changes might be less severe, due to the relative small importance of their secondary sector.

It is especially interesting for us, that the two regions share some similarities (education and labor market policies, size of population, ...) but are quite different in most of the parameters addressed (economic structure and labor market, political tradition, educational structure, unemployment, ...). By investigating two quite different regions, we aspire to grasp the various nuances of the Austrian characteristics in the field of lifelong learning policies for young adults. Besides, we expect that through our selection we might gain insights if and – if so – in which ways and to which extent factors like the regional economic structure influence the specific “design” of lifelong learning policies for young adults.

Sampling of LLL policies

In WP 3 we conducted a mapping of the existing LLL policies for young adults in Austria and the two Austrian regions of Vienna and Upper Austria. In a second step we selected three LLL policies for each region, which we described more detailed. These three policies were selected, because they represent the policy measures in the area of LLL in Austria. For the qualitative analysis conducted within WP 5 we opted for an in-depth analysis of two LLL policies for each of the two Austrian regions. This decision was based on the amount of interviews we planned to conduct. We opted for the in-depth analysis of two policies (and not the in WP 3

selected three policies) because we wanted to conduct more interviewees per policy to increase our understanding of the respective policies. By reducing the amount of policies we were able to provide a ‘thicker’ and more comprehensive description and analysis.

The policies selected for analysis in WP 5 are *Back to the Future* (BTTF), *JUST Integration* (JI) (for Vienna), *Du kannst was!* (DKW) and *Production Schools* (PS) (for Upper Austria). We selected these four policies for three main reasons. First, all the policies selected have a strong vocational focus. This focus is representative for the Austrian school and education system and is reflected in most LLL policies. Second, even though all four policies are based on VET, their specific focus differs. In particular the definitions of the specific target groups shed light on the policies’ focus and their underlying problem definition. The different target groups point to different problems the selected policies aim to tackle: reducing the number of young basic income subsidies recipients, labor market integration of young adults with asylum status, recognition of informally and non-formally acquired skills, and the lack in basic skills of youth after finishing compulsory school. We selected the four policies because they represent four of the most debated issues in the policy field of LLL in Austria. The third reason for the selection of policies is their scale of implementation. For each region, one of the policies is implemented at regional (BTTF, DKW) and the other at federal level (JI, PS). We consider it interesting to see, whether the level of implementation influences policies managers’ assessment of coordination and cooperation activities with other actors.

Sampling of interviewees

Our sample of interviewees is based on the sample of policies. We have interviewed young adults who are participating or have participated in one of the four policy measures. The same is the case for the policy managers we interviewed. The research framework for WP 5 envisaged a sample for 15-20 young adults and around 10 policy managers for each country. We had planned to interview the same amount of young adults and policy managers for each region and policy. The sampling criteria for young adults were: participation in the selected policy, age (between 18 and 29 years of age), gender, and migration background (not given/given). We planned on interviewing four young adults per policy: two females and two males, one with and one without migration background respectively.

As policy managers were easier to contact, interviews with them took place before the interviews with young adults. We used the contacts established with policy managers to schedule interviews with young adults. In all cases except DKW, we had no contact to the young adult interview partners before the interview. Instead, information material on the project and the interview was handed over to policy managers, who asked young adults if they wanted to participate. For young adults, we did not meet all the sampling criteria established beforehand (see table 3). This was mainly because we had difficulties reaching the envisioned number of interviews. Young adults participating in the policies were or reluctant to talk to us or did not match the age limits set. In the case of DKW, contact details for young adults were provided by policy managers, but a lot of people contacted were older than 29 years. In the case of PS it was the other way round, many participants were not 18 years old yet. Apart from age, it took very long to find young adults willing to talk to us. Therefore, after some time, we decided to

give up on the criteria of gender and migration background to meet the number of interviews planned.

Table 3: Sample of young adult interviewees

	Back to the Future	JUST Integration	Du kannst was!	Production Schools	total	total f/m
f / mb	-	2	-	1	3	5
f / nmb	1	-	-	1	2	
m / mb	1	3	1	-	5	12
m / nmb	3	-	3	1	7	
total	5	5	4	3	17	17

(f = female, m = male, mb = migrant background, nmb = no migrant background)

The actual sample of young adult interviewees consisted of 17 people, 5 females and 12 males. 8 interviewees had a migrant background (3 females, 5 males), meaning that they themselves or their parents are borne in another country than Austria. 10 young adults were interviewed for policies analyzed for Vienna and 7 for policies in Upper Austria. In all policies, more males than females participated, still, young females are underrepresented in our sample and in particular for the policies DKW and BTTF.

We conducted 10 interviews with policy managers, 5 in each region. Within the WP 5 research proposal a distinction was made between policy makers, policy managers and street-level professionals. We planned to conduct interviews with experts in all of these functions for each policy. Most interview partners, however, had overlapping functions. In table 4 we have classified our interviewees according to this differentiation. However, in the remainder of this report we subsume these three categories under the term policy managers, because we did not encounter any relevant differences regarding the experts' assessment of the policies according to their specific function within them.

Table 4: Experts interviewed and their function within the policies

	Interviewee	Policy making	Policy management	Street-level implementation
Back to the Future	E_AT_V_1			
	E_AT_V_3			
	E_AT_V_5			
JUST Integration	E_AT_V_2			
	E_AT_V_4			
Du kannst was!	E_AT_UA_1			
	E_AT_UA_5			
Produktionsschule	E_AT_UA_2			
	E_AT_UA_3			
	E_AT_UA_4			

Possible interviewees were defined by desk research and contacted by e-mail and phone subsequently. Regarding the three function of policy design, management and implementation, our focus for sampling was on policy management. For all policies, we managed to conduct interviews with the most relevant people involved in policy management. Subsequently, policy managers and street-level experts played a crucial role in setting up interviews with young adults.

2.3 Fieldwork and data collection

Standardized interview schedules for semi-structured interviewing of policy managers and biographical narrative interviews with young adults were elaborated by the WP 5 core team. A German translation was provided by the project team of the University of Frankfurt. We only made minor changes regarding the structure of the interview guidelines. All interviews were conducted by two experienced interviewers. The interviewers exchanged experiences on the interviews on a regular basis and slightly adapted the wording of some of the questions after the first few interviews, as it seemed that they were not entirely clear to the interviewees.

All interviewees were informed about the topic of the interview and the YOUNG ADULLLT project at the time of establishing contact and directly before the interview. Each interviewee agreed on conducting an interview with us by signed a letter of informed consent. Besides, all interviewees received a flyer with information on the project and were able to ask whatever question on the project or the interview before its start. All interviews were recorded and transcribed subsequently.

The fieldwork for Austria was conducted in cooperation with students at Bachelor level who attended the research lab on comparative social policy in the summer term of 2017 at the Department of Sociology at the University of Vienna. Students were informed about the YOUNG ADULLLT project and the basics of qualitative interviewing (prior knowledge about data collection and analysis was a precondition for course participation) were repeated. Students attended the interviews with policy managers as observers. Their task was to take notes about the interview situation and the interview's content. Afterwards they had to write a memo about the interview.

2.4 Data treatment and analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed by students participating in the research lab. Data was also gathered in form of interview memos, mainly consisting of notes on the interviewees, the interview situation and atmosphere. Memos were partly written by observing students, partly by interviewers. The data analyzed was mainly interview data. The memos were used for contextualizing interview data.

Interview data was analyzed according to the analysis framework provided by the WP 5 core team. The codes used for analysis corresponded with the codes listed in the framework. We did

not add any new codes. However, not all codes listed were useful of the analysis of the interviews for the Austrian cases. Interviews were analyzed using the software MAXQDA.

3. ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH YOUNG ADULTS

3.1 Presentation of biographies

Y_AT_V_1

The interviewee is a 25 year old man who was born in Syria, who came to Austria two and a half years ago. In Syria, he was living with his family in Homs and studying Economics. He studied Economics for two years and opted for this subject because he liked it very much and learning was always easy for him. He also has knowledge about accounting but never worked in this field. His family had two transport companies where he was working during summer. The interviewee described his parents as wealthy and supportive. It was important for them that their children go to university. The young man came via Lebanon and Turkey to Austria with his two brothers. He was working six month as a waiter but did not like it very much. Via the PES he participated in a German language course at A2 level, but he was denied participation in further courses, even though he wanted to do so. Currently he is conducting vocational training via JI in a supermarket and participating in a German language course again. He wants to attain a vocational training certificate because this will increase his job opportunities. His professional aim is to become a self-employed wholesaler. However, he said he was open to whatever professional opportunity opening up. It is important to him to advance professionally, which he is intending to do step by step. Participation in JI is the current step.

Y_AT_V_2

The interviewee is a young man from Damascus (Syria), who came to Austria in 2014. Before arriving in Vienna he was living in Iraq and Egypt and had undertaken a flight by boat and foot on the Mediterranean and subsequently from Malta, via Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary to Austria. He went to school in Syria for nine years but did not attain a school leaving certificate and said that he never was the 'learning type'. Rather, he acquired a lot of work experience in a variety of jobs: as an employee in a supermarket, as a tailor, as an office clerk, as a baker and as an electrician. After arriving to Austria he was living in Wiener Neustadt (small town close to Vienna) with friends for three month. He moved do Vienna when he got his residence permit. There, he did a four month adult education course in basic skills (German, Math, English) and attended five German language courses. His parents and his two sisters and one brother also came to Austria last year. Currently, the interviewee is participating in JI and training as a retail salesman in bakery shop of a supermarket. In his spare time he likes to play soccer and to travel.

Y_AT_V_3

The interviewee is a 26 year old young woman who was born in Serbia but has been living in Vienna since 2004. Is living together with her mother and her sister; her father died some time ago. When still living in Serbia the interviewee's family moved often which she found hard, because of the friends she had to leave behind every time again. The young woman went to school in Serbia for six years. In Austria, she attended the last two classes of lower secondary school. Because she did not knew German at that time she had to redo one class. To complete compulsory training the interviewee went to a pre-vocational school. She had good memories about that year, in particular the students supporting each other. For the subsequent five years the interviewee was not able to find a job and was registered at the PES. When she started an apprenticeship in retail trade, she quite after sometime, because she wanted to have a proper job and earn more money. Again, for the following three years she was unemployed. During her unemployment she attended a lot of PES courses and wrote a lot of applications but was not able to find a job. During that time she also often travel to Serbia where she still has a lot of friends. The young woman stated a traineeship in a supermarket via JI in March 2017. She considered participation in JI as her 'last chance' and stated that she had 'grown up' since she started to participate.

Y_AT_V_4

The interviewee is a women, born in 1988 in Rumania. At the age of 13 she moved to foster parents, with whom she has a very good relationship and who always supported her. Also at the age of 13 she had a religious experience which had a huge influence on her life since then. The interviewee went to school and attained her university entrance certificate in Rumania. She wanted to study at university but refused financial help from her foster parents and instead decided to work in Austria for one year and make some money to finance her studies in Rumania herself. In 2009, she came to Vienna. For around five years she had various illicit low-pay jobs. During this time she was not able to make any substantial savings and got severe health problems due to overworking. For the following two years the interviewee was unemployed. During these two years she participated in German language course and other course provided by the PES. Since December 2016, the interviewee is participating in JI, conducting an apprenticeship as a retailer in a store for beekeeping products. Although she does not make a lot of money she is very satisfied working there and gets along with her boss and her colleagues very well. The interviewee will complete her apprenticeship in June 2018. The young woman is currently living with a friend. Her boyfriend from Rumania, is planning to move to Vienna as soon as he will find a decent job here. Her plans for the future are to finish training, finding decent work, getting married and having kids.

Y_AT_V_5

The interviewee is a young man born in Afghanistan in 1993, who fled with his parents to Iran at the age of five. He has been living in Austria for five years. His parents are still living in Iran, but his younger brother also made it to Austria and now they are living together. His brother is training via JI as a confectioner. The interviewee left Iran because the situation against refugees

was hostile there. Before moving to Vienna the interviewee was living in Lower Austria. When he received his residence permit he moved to Vienna. During the first four years in Austria he was mainly attending German language courses. At the beginning he had a hard time in Austria because he did not speak German and therefore he had no friends. But he continued learning and things are getting better and better for him. He also did an adult education course and attained a lower secondary school leaving certificate. Subsequently, the interviewee started an apprenticeship in a supermarket, however dropped out after three months because he did not like the work he had to do there and it was physically exhausting. From a colleague in a PES course he participated in he heard from JI. After applying, he was suggested to start a traineeship as optician which he is doing now. Twice a week he goes to vocational school and the other days of the week he works at the training company. He is very happy he found a traineeship in a profession with a better reputation than a supermarket retailer, because it is important to him to do something, of which he can be proud of. His plans for the future are to do the examination for the master craftsman's certificate and to have an own store one day. In some years everything will be good because this girlfriend and he will both have finished school, they will both have jobs that make them happy and where they can make a good living for themselves.

Y_AT_V_6

The interviewee was a young man, born in Vienna in 1992. He grew up with his mother, with whom he has a good relationship, but he did not receive much parental support regarding learning and school from her. She just trusted in his abilities to take care of himself, and in financial terms, was not able to support him. The interviewee went to academic secondary school but did not pass the final examination in two subjects. He was able to pass one of the two remaining subjects after taking the exam for the second time but again did not pass Math. This was an interruption in his life. He had already had planned to study Social Work after finishing school but was not able to do so because of the remaining subject to pass. His plan is still to take the Math exam, but this is already a very "charged" topic for him. For the following three years after school the young man was working occasionally as a security guard and additionally received social benefits. During these three years he applied for many jobs but was not able to find employment. Also he participated in courses offered by the PES but they were not of much use for him in finding work. Via the PES, he entered BTTF and he was happy about this opportunity. It is likely that he will find employment in one of the companies BTTF has a cooperation with. In the interviewee's opinion this is the best he could achieve for now. His dream, however, is still to study Social Work or to work as a teacher.

Y_AT_V_7

The interviewee is a young man from Syria who came to Austria in 2015. He used to live together with his three sisters and his parents but moved recently and is now living by himself. He finished upper secondary school in Damascus and wanted to start studying Biology at university. Because of the war, he however was not able to do so. At one point of the interview the young man said that the war made him grow up. He said had an easygoing life before and never had to take much of an effort. When the war started and the family lost their family business, he had to earn money to support them. In Damascus the interviewee worked as a

fitness trainer in a fitness center. After arriving in Austria we was living for six month on the country side, waiting for his residence permit. When he received it he moved to Vienna, where he attended two German language courses via the PES. Last year in October he started to participate in BTTF. The interviewee likes to spend his free time working out. His plans are to improve his German, take the Austrian university entrance exams and study Biology or find a good job, which he defined as a job, in which he would be challenged and can learn constantly.

Y_AT_V_8

The interviewee is a young man who has spent his entire life in Vienna. Since he is 18 he has been living on his own. He has a good relationship with his parents, who let him always take his own decisions and were supportive. The interviewee portrayed himself as practical learner, in contrast to his brother, who never had difficulties at school and with theoretical learning. Soccer plays a very important role in the young man's life. He has played himself for many years and since 2013 works as a soccer trainer for kids. His whole family, in particular his father and grandfather – with whom he had a very special relationship – have also a huge interest in soccer. After primary school the interviewee went to academic school (lower cycle) like his brother, but after repeating once, he changed to general secondary school. Upon completion he started a college for higher technical vocational education but dropped out after a year. After a short internship at an insurance company he completed an apprenticeship as a clerk and insurance salesman with that company. The interviewee worked in insurance for four month, but did not like the company he was working for and quit. Until December 2015 he did the compulsory civilian service. Currently he participates in BTTF and is looking for a job in insurance. His goal, however, is to become a soccer trainer for older kids and adults.

Y_AT_V_9

The interviewee is a 23 year old young man. He grew up on the country side, living with his parents. In primary and lower secondary school he was very shy and had problems of being accepted as an introvert person. Because some of this friends went to a higher technical college after lower secondary school he decided to do the same, but dropped out after two years. After considering to do an apprenticeship he decided to go to another vocational school, this time for gastronomy and social occupations. This school was a private school. He attended this school for four years and had good memories about that time. However, he dropped out in year four (out of five) because his parents divorced and could not afford to pay the school fees anymore. After completing his civilian service the young man was looking for employment. A friend of his was already participating in BTTF and told him about it. Via the PES he then also entered the policy. Additionally, is engaging in evening school and plans to attain a university entrance certificate. His dream for his professional life is to study Psychology, Psychotherapy or to work in Human Resources.

Y_AT_V_10

The interviewee is a 22 year old woman who grew up in Vienna. After primary school she went to secondary academic school (lower cycle) and did an apprenticeship in a bank afterwards. At

the end of her apprenticeship she got pregnant. Having given birth two weeks before she took the final apprenticeship certificate and succeeded very well. After one year of parental leave she started to work part time in a bank but quit because of idealistic reasons. In her subsequent job she was dismissed when her son had to go to hospital for some weeks. Subsequently she was looking for employment for three month and started participating in May 2017 in BTTF. The day we interviewed her was her last day in BTTF as she had found employment in an insurance company. The young woman's plans for the future are to attain the university entrance certificate and to find stable long term employment. In terms of skills, besides her apprenticeship and her work experience she had also participated in three further education courses in accounting and web design. The young woman portrayed herself as someone who never had problems learning, very independent and proud of what she had already achieved in life.

Y_AT_UA_1

The interviewee is a young man, born in 1996 in Upper Austria. In his first years of school, he has been diagnosed with learning disability and was sent to frequent meetings with an expert. The interviewee described his years in the schools as hard time, especially concerning the grades and keeping up with the content. He attended elementary school and the lower secondary school in his hometown, followed by one year in pre-vocational school. After the schooling, the interview started an apprenticeship in a building supplies store in his hometown. After one year he quit his apprenticeship due to mobbing and "unmet" expectations, even though he enjoyed the vocational school a lot. There the interviewee was one of the better students and keen to learn. During this difficult phase, he started to retreat in the world of computer games up to the point where his parents advised him to seek professional help. For 2 month, he attended therapy in a psychiatric ambulance in his hometown. Before entering PS the interviewee had already in two other programs, aiming at stabilisation and preparation for labor market/education system participation of participants. The interviewee described finding new friends as his main goal besides finding a new apprenticeship position. Concerning his family the young adult stated that he has a younger sister with Down-Syndrome. This brings nice but also very exhausting times for him and his family. He considers the relationship to his parents as very good even though there has been a lot of fighting going on in the past years.

Y_AT_UA_2

The interviewee is a young women born in 1997 in Upper Austria. The interviewee started her story by telling about the domestic violence she experienced. Her father would abuse herself and her sister physically and mentally while her mother would not say or do anything against that. Also at school, she experienced violence in form of bullying, without teachers stepping in. The experiences she made in her childhood still dominate her life. When she was 12 she has been diagnosed a variety of mental diseases and subsequently engaged in psychotherapy and spent a lot of time in clinics and rehabilitation facilities as she also attempted to commit suicide four times. Still she managed to finish compulsory school and started with upper secondary school, but had to stop because of her health issues in grade 11. Currently, she is participating in PS, which she entered via a youth coach she found herself. In PS she is working in video

production and graphic design. Her dream is to find work where she can use her creativity. She also trains dogs and would like to work as a dog trainer. The young woman just moved into her own flat. What stresses her most at the moment is that she does not have a clear idea of what she wants to do in her professional life. Also she is anxious about not finding a job, she is capable of doing. Her current plans are to establish a stable life and to attain a university entrance certificate.

Y_AT_UA_3

The interviewee was a young women, born in 1999 in Upper Austria. Her parents are from Kosovo; she lives together with them and five of her six sisters. The young woman went to primary school and lower secondary school. From early on she had difficulties learning and she was diagnosed with a learning disability. She also had a problem speaking without stuttering, which made her avoid to talk to people she did not know. While still in school she had a counseling session about her further engagement in education and training. Her counselor recommended her to go to PS. After a few days trial she decided to do so and participated in PS for one year. PS usually have different workshops; she attended the sewing workshop where the participants would sew bags and alike and sell it on a market. Besides, she participated in German and Math classes and other activities offered by the PS. Subsequently, via the PS, she entered another program that supports young adults who conduct a vocational training in care. She entered the program and at the same time started a training course as nurse for the elderly. She successfully completed the training courses and since one year conducts an internship in a care facility. At the same time she is looking for a permanent position, which she hopes to find soon.

Y_AT_UA_4

The interviewee was a young man, born in 1989 in Upper Austria. After lower secondary school he did a pre-vocational year and subsequently started an apprenticeship as an electrician. He chose this job profile because his grandfather also was an electrician and he could not think of anything else to do. The interviewee was very critical about his time as an apprentice. The people at his training company did not care about him and he did not learn a lot during that time. Because of the lack of practical training he also had difficulties in vocational school. Still, he continued, but in the final apprenticeship examination he only succeeded in the practical test, and not did not pass the theoretical part. When he tried again some month later he failed again. After his apprenticeship the interviewee did his military service and was then immediately employed as electrician in an agency for temporary work. Over the last ten years he has worked in a number of such companies. He was very positive about his working experience and also it was never a problem that he had never attained an apprenticeship certificate. He also earned as much as he would have earned with a certificate. However, when his girlfriend was pregnant for the first time, he decided to redo the exam again. From his mother, who works at the Chamber of Labor he heard about DKW. After years of practical working experience he had no difficulties passing the apprenticeship exam. Besides work, the interviewee is a member of the voluntary fire brigade since he is 12 and currently head of the local fire brigade team.

Y_AT_UA_5

The interviewee is a young man born in 1991 in Austria. The young man is the youngest of five children. Because his parents could not have afforded to financially support him engaging in higher education, he opted to do an apprenticeship in a small bakery. After finishing his apprenticeship, he did the civilian service. The unpleasant worktimes in the bakery were the reason for him to look for another job. He decided to continue working as baker but in a supermarket's day bakery, where he still is working at the moment. As his new boss supported him to continue with training and he did the Master apprentice training. Also during this time he has participated in a multistep training program offered by the supermarket concern. His professional goal is to become a store manager. The internal trainings he conducted were in the field of retail sale but as they are not formally recognized, the interviewee decided to participate in DKW. He heard of the policy from a colleague who had participated before. The next step he has planned is to attain the university entrance certificate. The young adult presents himself as an eager and hard working person, who takes opportunities once they present themselves.

Y_AT_UA_6

The interviewee is a young man from Syria born in 1990. In Syria had been studying project management for two years. In 2011 he left his country of origin because of the civil war and moved to his brother in Dubai where he had worked for eight month in IT. The interviewee had to leave Dubai because he did not get a residence permit. He then decided to move to Linz in Upper Austria, where two of his sisters have been already living for ten years. For two years he was studying Business Informatics. He stopped because he could not follow the lecturers talking in Upper Austrian dialect. Subsequently the young man worked for a parcel service for some month but quit because the job was physically too demanding. After some time he found an apprenticeship position in a small company working in communication technology. However, the little pay he received was not enough to make a living for him and his wife. Besides, he had a lot of knowledge in his field and did not wanted to be treated like an apprentice. Also in vocational school he felt out of place because of his age and this already existing knowledge. He decided to end the apprenticeship contract but kept working at the same company as an unskilled worker. Online he found out about DKW. He passed the apprenticeship examination without engaging in any further courses. Currently he is still working at this former training company but with a higher salary than before. The interviewee has a one and a half year old son. His plan for the future is to one day go back to university and finish his studies.

Y_AT_UA_7

The interviewee was a young man, born in 1991 in Upper Austria. After completing nine years of compulsory school he did a one year training to become a sports and health trainer, but never worked in this profession. Instead, for six years (between 17 and 23) he was a professional basketball player. For several reasons, mainly because he did not wanted to move abroad, he decided to quit with professional basketball. The interviewee started to work in retail sale sports goods store. After some time he changed job and started to work for a VW car dealer. This job, however, was more of springboard to enter the premium segment in car retail. Before starting

to work for BMW in January 2016 he participated in DKW. He himself never really cared about not having an apprenticeship certificate but his girlfriend raised his awareness about this topic. Now he thinks that one should at least have reached the minimum level of education, an apprenticeship certificate. He engaged in four courses on the theoretical basics of retail sale and had no difficulties passing the exam as he had already a lot of knowledge from his work experiences. The interviewee's plan is definitely to attain a university entrance certificate. Afterwards he might enter university to study business administration or management. He depicted himself as very career minded and told that the discipline he had acquired through his sports career helps him to reach his goals.

3.2 Young adults' socio-structural characteristics

We interviewed 17 young adults participating in four different LLL policies. The interviewees were between 18 and 28 years old. The age of the interviewees differed according to the policy they were participating in and the policies' objectives. The interviews for DKW were the oldest and the ones for PS were the youngest. 12 of our interviewees were male and 5 were female. From expert interviews and grey literature we know that men are overrepresented in all of the policies. This is partly connected to the design of the policies, i. e. their strong focus on vocational training, in particular dual training. Eight of our interviewees themselves or their parents were born in another country than Austria. While in JI all young adults interviewed were born outside Austria, in other policies for the other policies it was only one respectively. Again, this is connected to the design of the policy. The level of education among the young adults differed, some had already commenced studying at university while others had compulsory school as their highest educational attainments.

Just Integration

The young adults we interviewed, participating in JI, were three men and two women between 24 and 28 years old. All of them were born outside Austria. The young men interviewed came to Austria as refugees, two were from Syria and one from Afghanistan. They all came to Austria not longer than five years ago. In all the interviews the wars in the young men's countries of origin and the flight to Austria played an important role. Two of them talked more extensively about their 'former life' and all of them mentioned how the war had affected their families and their own lives. The two young women were 'regular' migrants. One of them was from Romania, coming to Austria after completing upper secondary school with the aim to earn some money and make some savings for her studies; the other one moving to Vienna (from Serbia) at the thirteen with her family. The educational level of the participants differed. One of the young men had already studied Economics in Syria for two years and the woman from Rumania had completed upper secondary school. The three other interviewees had completed lower secondary school, two of them in Vienna. At the time the interview took place all interviewees were still participating in JI.

Back to the Future

The young adults interviewed participating in BTTF were four young man and one young woman, between 22 and 24 years old. One of the young man was a refugee from Syria; all other

interviewees were born in Austria. The highest educational attainments of the interviewees was compulsory school (for 3) or an apprenticeship (for 2). At the time the interview took place all interviewees were still participating in BTTF, however, for one interviewee it was the last day.

Du kannst was!

For DKW we interviewed four young adults, all male and born between 1989 and 1991. Three of them were born and have grown up in Upper Austria; one of them was born and grew up in Syria. The young man from Syria left his home country in 2011, first moving to his brother in Dubai and after eight months leaving for Austria, where two of his sisters have been already living for ten years. At the time of interviewing, none of the young men was still participating in DKW. All of them had completed participation successfully. As the objective of DKW is to attain an apprenticeship certificate, all interviewees' level of education was that they had an apprenticeship certificate. One of the interviewees, however, even had two apprenticeship certificates for two different professions and in one of them he has also completed master apprenticeship training.

Produktionsschule

For PS we interviewed three young adults. The two young women and one young man were all born in Upper Austria. However, the parents of one interviewee were from Kosovo. The interviewee told that she would go to Kosovo twice a year and that even though she was born in Austria, feels like a stranger in both places. The interviewees were born between 1996 and 1999. They all had completed compulsory school. One interviewee had started an apprenticeship afterwards but dropped out after one year. Another one had commenced upper secondary school but stopped because of health issues. The third interviewee has conducted a training course in elderly care after compulsory school.

3.3 Young adult's life stories

The stories told by the young adults about their own lives differed very much according to their current phases in life and the policy they were or are participating in. A communality between most of them, however, was, that they were very eager in achieving their goals. Even though some of them have experienced tough situations at home, at school, at work or in their countries of origin, none of them portrayed herself or himself as a "victim". In some cases they were very critical about people, who have played an important role in their private, educational or school life. Or they were critical about social norms and societal conceptions of normality. However, they all gave the impression that they know, that they are also responsible for their own lives and that they want to make the best out of it.

Just Integration

For all the young adults participating in JI, their life story was to a large extent constructed around the fact that they have left the places where they have grown up and that they had to find their way into a new social context and build up a new life. Four of the interviewees, except from the young woman who grew up in Serbia, told the story about their lives in a similar

manner: Some time back everything was going well, they were in school, studying or working, had a regular life as well as idea and plans for the future. Then there was an interruption. This interruption in the cases of the young men was war or having to leave a country where they had fled to before but where the living conditions for refugees were hostile. In these cases, the interruption was exogenous. In the case of the Rumanian woman, the interruption was endogenic as she decided to work abroad and then it turned out to be very different than expected. They all had to struggle when arriving to Vienna: to learn a new language, to build up social relationships, to find employment. They all stated that life was hard sometimes, but were also convinced that you get what you really want if you try hard enough. All of them presented themselves as being very proactive, not giving up, adapting fast and being pragmatic in their decisions.

“I am sure that if you want something, you can get it, and I want that, I want to be like my father, I want that... And if I won’t get rich, the most important thing is that I am healthy.” (Y_AT_V_1)

The story of the young woman from Serbia differed from the other four interviewees’. On the one hand she presented herself as having been treated unfairly for a long time and not been given any opportunities to proof her abilities. On the other hand she repeated that she did not seize the opportunities that opened up. In her story participating in JI was depicted as a turning point in her life and “the last chance” she got.

“But still, I am somehow different since I have this job [i. e. the traineeship]. Somehow, I also don’t know how, but somehow different. (...) I somehow have grown up. (...) Because now I have a job, I have to get up early (...) I really have to be careful with these machines. I’m somehow grown-up (laughing), yes.” (Y_AT_V_3)

Back to the Future

The life stories told by the young adults participating in BTTF were diverse but coherent in the point that they all had a positive attitude, although they had experienced setbacks in achieving their goals. All interviewees also talked about the process of finding their own way in life, about finding out about their priorities and personal strengths. All of them talked positively about something they had left behind: the expectations of meaningful others, choices based on the choices of meaningful others, societal expectations, a career driven mind-set, etc.

“I just needed time for myself. Everything fell down on me, that for years I have followed the decisions my parents made. I mean decisions in terms of schooling have actually always been taken by my parents, also private ones. I have always let them mind my business and I wanted to stop that completely. I have also moved to Vienna then and yes, now I am in this phase, where I slowly begin to build up everything anew.” (Y_AT_V_9)

„I could not imagine any other way (...) like everyone does it, a-levels, university, just the way you know it from society (...). That’s the only way I saw back then and then it was difficult, but when I reflected a lot about that with my mother, this one thing got

clear, there is more than, than just this one way. There are more possibilities. I just have to, I just have to find these possibilities myself.” (Y_AT_V_6)

V_6's story unfolded around the fact that he did not pass the final Math exam at the end of upper secondary school. This event was a rupture in his life and is still a big issue for the interviewee, even though he told that it was not that dramatic for him anymore. His own trajectory, its path dependency and his feeling of lower worth due to not following the standard trajectory made him critical about standard social norms of how to live one's life. He also reflected upon the label of “unemployed young adult” that was put on him:

“Well it is a social, a social descent, if you're just not part of, of the norm-society, I would call it. But that you're one of those, that, you hear and read of them, yes, the Austrian unemployed youth. That's the box, in which you are put automatically. At the beginning, as said before, that didn't make it easy. By now I am over that, I am above that now.” (Y_AT_V_6)

V_7, the young man from Syria, told that experiencing war had made him grow up and take responsibility, whereas before he had been a “spoiled child” never taking an effort. He was convinced that you can advance in life if you just try hard enough but was also very much aware of chance and how quickly everything can change. Therefore, he also refused to make long-term plans and focused on concrete next steps. V_8's story was characterized by the passion and importance of his side job as a soccer trainer for kids. To describe the most other steps in his school and training life so far he repeatedly used the phrase “It was not really my thing.” V_9's life story centered on him finding his own way in life. Before he had based his choices on the choices of others (parents and friends), which left him unsuccessful and unsatisfied. Although he is thankful for the personal growth connected to these experiences, he currently listens more to what he himself really wants. One of the dominant topics in the interview with V_10, the young woman, was her change of mind regarding the importance of career advancement. Since the birth of her child she places much more importance on general well-being of herself and her son.

Du kannst was!

Three of the four young men who have participated in DKW, depicted attaining educational certificates as “door openers” and “springboard” for reaching their professional and life goals. These three men presented themselves as eager and hardworking persons who want to advance professionally. UA_5 presented himself as special among his friends, because he was the only one who was not studying at university.

“I am always a bit like a unicorn when I am out with my friends. And you really feel, that you have to proof yourself, if did not went to university.” (Y_AT_UA_5)

This young man was highly motivated and told enthusiastically about all the courses and trainings he has attended and completed so far. He presented himself as being very happy about working in an environment where he could acquire new skills via in-company trainings. His motivation seems to partly stem from his feeling of having to proof himself in his social setting.

The young man from Syria told that he wanted to continue studying in Austria as he had already studied for two years in Syria. However, he was surprised to find out about the specificities of the Austrian education system and that little people in Austria attend university. His story was centered on the topic of finding his way of how to deal with the Austrian education system and labor market. In particular, finding a way to combine attaining an education certificate, earning enough money and finding employment according to his skills. He has tried out several options and achieved to find a good solution for him for the moment. The interviewee portrayed himself as persistent in finding a job that matches his expectations and taking an effort to reach the best possible solution.

“When I was an apprentice, it was not nice for me to be an apprentice. (...) How shall I explain that, I believed that I can do more than that. (...) How can I say that (...) I thought I can do better than that. (...) I have always believed I can do better. (...) And I proofed that I can.” (Y_AT_UA_6)

Another former participant in DKW, the young man who was a professional basketball player before, depicted himself as very disciplined. The discipline he had acquired during his sports career now helps him to pursue his professional goals. The decision to end his sports career was a break in his life, a point of reorientation and connected to the wish of building up a “normal” life.

“Back then sport was somehow always my priority. (...) To enter the sports profession and to try in that field how far I can get, if I will make it, yes. In hindsight I think it would have been better if I would have done it the other way round. To first take care of my education first and then enter sports or combination somehow. But I think at that age you don’t know how the future will be. Or you imagine it to be different. And yes, I was happy, that I could do that. That I could live the dream of being a professional sportsman for some years. But now I am also happy that I have regular life, in which nothing can happen to me.” (Y_AT_UA_7)

The young man has put high demands on himself in terms of career advancement and works hard to achieve his goals. Education and training plays an important role for him. He repeatedly mentioned that it was the minimum for him to have attained an apprenticeship certificate and had rather specific ideas about how he wants to continue with his professional life.

Only for one of the interviewees for DKW participation in the policy and in further education and training in general was not of particular importance for this professional life. The interviewee has made very bad experiences during his apprenticeship and defined himself as not being into learning. About his working experience after ending his apprenticeship he was mainly speaking positively. In general, he depicted himself and his life as “normal”, without much occurrences. Attaining the apprenticeship certificate has had a psychological impact on him, but not in terms of salary level or acquiring a taste for learning and professional advancement.

Produktionsschule

The young adults participating in PS had in common that they all had a difficult time at school and in establishing social contacts. In the past they had all suffered from not being like their

school mates. In two cases this was connected to a learning disability and in the other case to the abusive situation in her family. All three interviewees told that they were very reclusive or shy in school. For all of them it was still an issue how to deal with other people and how to establish meaningful relationships with others.

The young man experienced him dropping out of his apprenticeship as a break in his life. When he did so he generally started to withdraw. He felt embarrassed that he quit and does not have a “normal life” and did not want to talk about this with friends or family.

„I somehow was quite good in concealing, that I had quit my apprenticeship. They [his former friends] are from Linz and not from my home town so they could not really check if I am at work or not or something. But at a certain point they found out that that was really an awkward situation for me. Then I did less and less with them.“ (Y_AT_UA_1)

For the young woman who had already completed PS and had conducted a training course as nurse for the elderly it was a topic that her parents are from Kosovo and she does not know where she belongs. She told that she feels a stranger in both countries, in Kosovo and in Austria. Besides, she expressed surprise about her own life and how everything went until now. She was surprised, that even though she had huge difficulties learning, that she was able to manage her education and training quite well until now. She seemed happy about her current life and kept repeating that she likes to help others, which as a nurse she could do now.

The third interviewee had gone through a lot in her childhood and youth. She experienced physical and psychic abuse in her family. She did not receive any help and additionally had a difficult time with her class mates at school. Because of these traumatic experiences in her early life she has developed a mental disorder. Since she is twelve her life is dominated by psychotherapy and stays in clinics and rehabilitation facilities. However, she had a strong will in changing her life and stated that she does not want to continue living like this and she was taking a huge effort to build up a stable life.

3.4 Young adult's education and training trajectories

The young adults' education and training trajectories are predominantly characterized by interruptions and breaks. The reasons for these interruptions are however very diverse. Obviously, for the young adults who have migrated or who fled to Austria, the interruption of their educational career was connected to the fact that they left their countries of origin and had to build up a new life. For some others, the breaks were connected to learning disabilities and mental health problems. Having problems to build up a social network at school or at the apprenticeship company was a reason for some as well. Some young adults have not completed their schooling or training because they failed in final examinations. Some of the young adults interviewed regretted the choices they had made regarding education and training. However, most of them were positive about their future in general or their future engagement in education and training. For all of the interviewees participation in the respective policy had a positive impact. The impact was or psychologically, that young adults had attained more self-esteem and self-worth by attaining a certificate or just by being able to employ their skills. For others

participation in the respective policies had helped them to get “back on track”. For these young adults participation was another chance to find their way into the standard education and training system or the labor market.

Just Integration

The participants in JI all have started school in another country than Austria. Within the policy they all engaged in non-standard apprenticeship training at the time of interviewing. Two of the interviewees finished upper secondary school in their countries of origin and attained university entrance certificates. One of them – a young man from Syria – had already entered university and studied for two years. He told he never had difficulties learning and that his parents always supported him.

Also the young women from Rumania told that her foster parents would care very much about her academic performance; equaling care about her school performance with care about her as a person. A third interviewee went to school in Syria for nine years. He told that he always was a lazy person regarding learning and that he has experienced (also physical) punishment from teachers. However, during the interview he made a strong statement on how important language learning was for newcomers and that he “wanted to learn, to have a beautiful future” (Y_AT_V_2). These three interviewees did not engage further in the formal school system in Austria. However, they all attended language courses and other courses, mainly via the PES. The other two interviewees completed lower secondary school in Austria, one via formal schooling, the other one via an adult education measure for refugees. The young woman from Serbia did not care about school very much (“like any other teenager”) and had to repeat a grade in lower secondary school because of her missing German language skills. She was more positive about the one year of pre-vocational school she attended, explaining that the students would support very much. These two interviewees both have commenced an apprenticeship in retail trade but dropped out after some month. In the case of the Serbian woman because she wanted to have a proper job and earn more money and in the case of the man from Afghanistan because he wanted to train for something with more prestige and less physically exhausting.

Back to the Future

The four young men participating in BTTF went to upper secondary school but did not complete it. The reasons for this were: not passing the final examination, continuation not possible because of war, continuation not possible because parents could no longer afford school fees, and too demanding requirements. One of the four young men started and completed an apprenticeship after leaving upper secondary school; the others have not completed secondary education. The young woman started and completed an apprenticeship immediately after finishing lower secondary school. Two of the interviewees told that they had made bad experience (at least in some phases) with the classmates, which influenced their academic achievements. In one case, the interviewee was bullied because of a chronic skin disease and in the other case the interviewee told that as a child he was very shy and always busy with himself and dealing with the social dynamics in class he could not focus on content. A recurrent topic regarding learning experiences and “negative” academic performance at school was the interviewees’ explanation that they are better with practical learning, instead of theoretical

learning which dominated at school. Three of the interviewees' memories about learning and school were quite positive. They stated that they did not have general difficulties learning, and if they had, it was only for a certain period or related to single subjects. The interviewees did not tell much about their teachers at school. If they did so, however, they were mainly critical about teachers that did not care about the students' academic advancement or were not able to care, because of large classes. The degree and type of support received by their parents differed among the interviewees. Two interviewees received strong support and backing from their families. The young woman told that her mother believed very much in her abilities, which gave her a lot of self-esteem. One of the young man also told that his mother trusted in his abilities, but that was the reason she did not care too much about his academic performance. V_9 told that it was important for his parents that he would receive a good education, but on a day-to-day level, they did not show much interest. Three of the interviewees told that they took private lessons during school. Two of them told, that they had a very bad conscience because of that, as their parents did not earn that much money. It increased the pressure to perform well for them, which in the end had a negative impact on their performance. Regarding extra-curricular activities, two of the interviewees reported about their strong involvement in community activities; in one case, the interviewee volunteered for an NGO working with children with difficult family backgrounds and in the other case, the interviewee was a soccer trainer for kids.

Du kannst was!

Two of the interviewees who had participated in DKW completed primary and lower secondary school and the pre-vocational year afterwards. Subsequently they commenced an apprenticeship. The both conducted the entire apprenticeship, but one of them did not pass the final examination. When he tried for the second time he failed again. He explained that he did not learn anything during his apprenticeship because no one in his training company felt responsible for teaching him anything and he only was allowed to do easy tasks no one else wanted to do. Because of this he also had difficulties in vocational school.

“Then I was also in vocational school, I mean meanwhile, I was in vocational school during my apprenticeship. And I of course had difficulties in vocational school as well, because if you don't have practical experience, vocational school is incredible hard.”
(Y_AT_UA_4)

The other interviewee who had already attained an apprenticeship certificate, started to work in a supermarket bakery after completing it. There he was working as baker but also was responsible for tasks connected to retail sale. During this time on the one hand he did the master apprenticeship training as a baker and on the other hand, engaged in an in-company training program. In this program he learned more about retail sale and then decided that he wanted these skills also to be formally recognized. That was the reason he took part in DKW.

The young man from Syria attained a university entrance certificate in Syria. He redid it, because he did not pass at the first time but after succeeding enrolled at university to study

project management. Before starting an apprenticeship and entering the labor market in Upper Austria he also studied in Linz for two years. However, he had to stop because he could not understand the lecturers speaking in Upper Austrian dialect. Subsequently he also ended his apprenticeship because of two reasons: the low pay he received and the low level of skills conveyed. The young man who was a professional basketball player before, attended compulsory school and did a one year training as sports and health trainer after school and before starting his professional sports career. He was happy he could be a professional sportsman for some years but reflected critically upon his parents' role when he decided for sports instead of upper secondary education or training.

“As said before, my parents were quite permissive. (...) Yes. I was lucky. But maybe it was also a bit of a disadvantage, that they did not really show me the right way, but that they approved of my youthful carelessness maybe too much back then. But I would never blame them for this. I am thankful, that I could make these experiences. I have definitely learned a lot through this and I would do it differently with my own kids. Definitely.” (Y_AT_UA_7)

Produktionsschule

Two of the young adults interviewed for PS have been diagnosed with learning disability in primary school. They both reported about difficulties learning and that school was hard for them. One of the two interviewees told that he does not really think about school anymore and that he also tries to avoid to do so because his memories about school are not so good. During compulsory school he felt much under pressure because of his difficulty to learn and his teachers not being responsive to his situation. Even though he quit the apprenticeship he started after a pre-vocational year he was positive about the experiences he had made with vocational school during that time. The subjects were of interest to him and he had good grades. He regrets that he has quit his apprenticeship in retail trade but he did so because he found out it was not for him and he was not accepted by his colleagues.

“I did not really have a good look at it [the apprenticeship] first. It was with ironware and hardware, with gardening tools in retail sale and so on. And in the course of the apprenticeship I found out that it's really not for me and I also have made some experience with bullying from my colleagues and that was really not so good for me to continue and then I unfortunately quit after one year.” (Y_AT_UA_1)

The second interviewee with a learning disability had finished primary and lower secondary school, did one year of PS afterwards and then engaged in a training course for care. She was very much surprised, that everything went so fast for her, even though she had major difficulties learning. With the support she got via PS and subsequently another program supporting her during her course she was capable of completing her training without any interruptions and repetitions.

The third interviewee never really had difficulties learning at school, but also experienced bullying in primary and lower secondary school. For her it was traumatic that her teachers never

stepped in even though they knew that she was bullied. Because of the negative experiences made in school and at home she was very reclusive in school. Therefore her teachers thought she would not make it in academic school.

“And yes, I wanted to go to academic school in any case. And everyone, no one believed in me, that, the teachers said, no, she is so dreamy, she will not make it. But XY [her mother, whom she calls by her first name] still let me go, because I said I want that in any case. And then I was actually really good. I actually had very good grades. No, not very good, but good I would say.” (Y_AT_UA_2)

In her later school career, however, she had teachers who were very accommodating and supportive, considering her situation and the severe mental health problems she had at that time.

3.5 Young adult's policy experience

All young adults interviewed were very positive about the policies they have participated in or are currently participating in. Most of them expressed the feeling that participation had helped them or will help them to achieve their professional goals. Even if this did not apply to them they valued it that they could “do something useful”, instead of just attending a theoretical course or being at home. In particular, they valued the practice based approach all policies are based on. Independently of their current life stage the young adults stated that participation in the policies had increased their feelings of self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy. In the cases where coaching is part of participation, most young adults were also very positive about the help and guidance they received. They received guidance in job and training related issues but beyond that with other with other issues like solving problems at work or general guidance about their future engagement in education, training and work.

Just Integration

The young adult interviewees for JI all got in contact with the policy via the PES; or via their counselor who suggested them to apply, or via a colleague in a PES course the interviewee was participating in. All interviewees were positive about the experiences they had made with the policy. They stressed that the policy managers and street-level workers were nice, very helpful and solution oriented. The young woman from Serbia was thankful about her counselor at JI did not allow her to drop out of the policy after her traineeship application was declined for the first time:

“And yes, it did not went that well [her first interview]. And then I wanted to give up and my counselor said, that I will not give up, that I shall talk to *Merkur* [another supermarket chain she was applying for] first. And I didn't want to. I absolutely wanted to leave. But she did not allow it. She said: stay and do that.” (Y_AT_V_3)

As part of participation in the policy all interviewees engage in vocational training currently. They all valued it very much to have been provided with the opportunity to train for a profession. For some young adults engaging in training is a pragmatic step to achieve their life plans. In particular for one young woman, participation in the policy is more “charged” as a

turning point and a last attempt to find her way into regular working life. Four out of the five interviewees train for retail trade, one trains as an optician. Three of the interviewees had some years of working experience before entering the policy, which also helped them for their vocational training, in particular skills to learn quickly and to adapt to a new working situation. The skills the interviewee's acquire during participation mainly relate to the specific vocation they are training for. One young woman however stated, that she had acquired more general life skills through participation. Regarding their future, participants valued participation in the policy mainly because of the apprenticeship certificate they would attain upon completion and their increased job opportunities as holders of an apprenticeship certificate.

Back to the Future

The young adults interviewed for BTTF had all started upper secondary school and partly had completed an apprenticeship. They all had acquired working experience before entering BTTF. Regarding participation in the policy and the related acquisition of skills, they mainly referred to soft skills. Participation had given their daily lives more structure. The specific tasks young adults have to fulfil within the policy, led to an increase in self-esteem, as they directly see the relevance and value of their own work. One interviewee also told that participation had helped her to handle stressful situations. Participants are assigned to the policy via the PES. Four interviewees got to know about the policy by their PES counselor and one heard about the policy from a friend who was already participating and actively asked about the possibility to participate himself. All interviewees have made good experiences with the policy and were happy about the opportunity to participate. In particular, the interviewees appreciated that they had a regular day-to-day structure and could do "real work" for which they receive acknowledgement.

"But I thought, yes, instead of just sitting at home and doing nothing and doing whatever, I come here. Because, first because of getting up early, that's great. Because if I find a job, I will already be in that rhythm." (Y_AT_V_8)

Also they stated that being employed via BTTF would raise the likelihood of finding a job, as it is much easier to find a job while in employment.

"I have noticed that during the last years, if I was at home, searching for a job was quite hard. And as soon as I was employed somewhere, all of a sudden I received a lot of acceptances. It's really a huge difference, if you're at home or you go to work and look for a job along the way." (Y_AT_V_10)

Although all interviewees were very positive about their participation in BTTF, one of them was critical about the information he received about the policy beforehand and that the information provided about the project deviated strongly from his actual experiences.

"We were sort of surprised, among the employees, yes. We were wondering a lot, that we actually have been lied at quite boldly, that, that at the beginning, that they said, that the people will take care of us, will help us, really help us, to find something else. But in the end it feels more like they are happy, that they have a cheap workforce now." (Y_AT_V_6)

Du kannst was!

All interviewees for DKW had a lot of work experience before participating in the policy. In this sense, they matched with the conceptualized target group of the policy. In all cases participation was mainly about the formal recognition of vocational skills the young men had acquired through their job experience. Only two of them attended additional courses via the DKW. One of them considered this course not very helpful as he knew about the things taught already. However, they both had to engage in self-learning but both had not difficulties with that. The other two did not attend any additional courses. For all participants participation in DKW was mainly about the formal recognition of their skills and not about acquiring new skills and knowledge.

One of the interviewees had heard about DKW from his mother who is working at the Upper Austrian Chamber of Commerce (one of the initiators of the policy), another one heard about it from a colleague who had also participated. The other two found information about the policy online. For three of the interviewees the motivation to take part in DKW was related to their wish to advance professionally and reduce their labor market vulnerability. For one of them, however, it was his girlfriend who raised his awareness about the importance of attaining a certificate. For one of the young man professional advancement did not play a role. He had no plans of changing job, getting a better position and did not have the wish to earn more, as he was already paid quite well before. For him the moment he decided to attain an apprenticeship certificate was when his girlfriend got pregnant.

“And then, when I knew that I will become a father, I said to myself, that I don’t, that I want to be able to say to my child some day, your dad also succeeded in something. He’s not totally stupid.” (Y_AT_UA_4)

For all participants, attaining an apprenticeship certificate via DKW boosted their self-esteem and self-worth. In the sense that they proofed to themselves or their significant others that they are able to succeed. Two of the young man also mentioned that it increased their sense of freedom. The young man from Syria, who was working as an unskilled worker in his former training company told that as an unskilled worker he was very dependent but that through attaining the certificate he has left “the cage” he was in. He, however, also had a strange experience with his two bosses when he told them that he had attained the apprenticeship certificate. First, they considered it a problem, because with a certificate they had to pay him more. They also doubted, that he really had attained the apprenticeship certificate and accused him of fraud. In the end, however, they apologized and raised the interviewee’s wage to collective agreement standards.

Produktionsschule

The three young adults who are participating or have participated in PS were very positive about the policy. They valued very much that in PS they had the freedom to choose in which of the workshops they wanted to work and they could work on things that suited them, e. g. in graphic design or the sewing workshop. They also valued that had individual tasks for which they were responsible.

“It is really much better now, because I got a task to fulfil. Because I think that a task is just, everyone needs a task and for me it is, it just is, I also got a rhythm. (...) I would say it is really good that I am here, because the people just support you. They talk stuff through with you. Also personal stuff. (...) I think it helps. But I think you have to engage in it. (...) I think you can get really far, but you have to engage, to engage with the people, with the coaches.“ (Y_AT_UA_2)

Besides, they considered the help offered from the social workers as very important, i. e. the support they received for writing applications and general support in terms of finding out for themselves how they want to continue with education, training and work.

3.6 Young adult's plans for the future

Young adults' plans for the near future and their long-term plans were quite similar, even though the young adults interviewed partly were in very different stages of their lives. If they were still participating in the policies, their main goal was to complete participation successfully. The young adults who have dropped-out from school or training all mentioned that they again want to try it again. The ones who commenced, but did not end upper secondary school all wanted to attain a university entrance certificate. The ones who did already go to university, wanted to take up their studies again and the ones who dropped-out from an apprenticeship wanted to find new apprenticeship positions. Those who had completed participation in the respective policies were divided into two groups regarding their future plans regarding their involvement in further education and training or professional advancement. Some had acquired a taste for learning and wanted to further engage in education, i. e. had the plan to start studying at university. Also some had plans for climbing up the career ladder in their current professions. The second group was very happy about having attained a certificate via or besides participation in the policy but did not have any plans regarding their further engagement in education and training. They were happy about their professional lives and did not see any need to make changes to it. Regarding their private lives and plans for the future, the young adults mainly referred to moving out from their parents' places and finding a partner.

Just Integration

The concrete next steps for all participants in JI was to finish their traineeship. Regarding their life plans, only one of the young adults stated that she had no further plans, as she just wanted focus on finishing the traineeship. She was also the one for whom participation in the policy seemed to “mean the most”, in the sense that she was most desperate about her own situation. The others, on the contrary, were happy that they could participate but gave the impression that they would have also found their way otherwise. Two of the four interviewees with life plans mentioned marriage as one of their plans. The focus in the participants' plans was, however, on professional advancement and reaching a situation of financial security and stability. One of the interviewees stated that he wanted to do the examination for the master craftsman's certificate in some years. Two of them wanted to have their own business in some years.

Back to the Future

Four of the interviewees from BTTF stated that they want to attain a university entrance certificate in the near future. Three had of them told about their plans of studying at university. The other priority all interviewees had was to find a stable job. Some stated that they just wanted to find whatever job. While three of them said – partly based on their previous work experience – that it was more important to them to find a meaningful job and they valued “a good life” much more than earning a lot of money.

“Of course I want to be able to afford stuff, but I rather want a job where I like to go to, instead of job, I do not really like but just go there because of the money. That’s not really my ideal of, of, of life (...) I like that better, than just be stressed and not able to enjoy anything and then to end up with a burnout” (Y_AT_V_9).

The two interviewees who had completed an apprenticeship wanted to continue working in their professions as insurance sales man and bank or employee and had more specific ideas about their future jobs (The young woman who had worked in a bank before had already found a job at the time the interview took place at an insurance company.) The other three interviewees had plans to start working in social work or as teacher (V_6), in psychology, psychotherapy or human resources (V_9) or biology (V_7).

Du kannst was!

One of the interviewees for DKW did not have a particular plan for his future life that would differ much from his current life and therefore he also could not mention any concrete plans for the near future. He had already a quite settled life, has already a family and is happy with his current job as an electrician. He told that he sometimes thinks of changing his job but he does not know what to do otherwise and he also does not want to retrain. The three other interviewees had more or less specific plans for their future life. The young man from Syria for now wants to stay in his current job as well, because he feels obliged to do so. He was very thankful for the work opportunity he got from his current boss. However, at some point he wants to go to university again. He said that it was embarrassing and painful for him, that he never had completed his studies. The other two interviewees both want to attain a university entrance certificate and get a management position in the companies they currently work for.

“Now a-levels, with which I will hopefully start soon, than a manager position and with extra-occupational studies besides. In the company in each case, BMW, I would really like that.” (Y_AT_UA_7)

Produktionsschule

In comparison to the other interviewees, the young adults from PS had the least specific plans for their future. This, however, is connected to their rather young age and the aim of the policy, to help young adults to find out how they want to continue with education, training and work. Two of the interviewees were still participating in PS at the time the interview took place, the third interviewee had already finished PS. For her, the plan was to find regular long-term employment as nurse for the elderly. She had completed a training course in care and was currently conducting an internship in a care facility. However, she did not have any long-term

plans. One of the other two interviewees, who was still participating, wanted to find an apprenticeship position, attain a driving license and also wanted to get to know new people again. During the last years, since he quit his apprenticeship, he had lost a lot of friends. He imagined that in ten years he would have a job, a girlfriend, an own flat and a car. The third interviewee plans to retake her final exam in upper secondary academic school but did not feel ready for this step yet. At the moment we spoke to her she tried to find back into a stable and regular daily life after a series of stays in clinics and rehabilitation facilities. For her professional future she could imagine to produce videos, being a dog trainer or working as a part-time confectioner. However, she did not have a concrete plan and told that that preoccupied her the most at the moment.

„What stresses me extremely at the moment is, that I do not have a plan for my future at all. XY [her coach at PS] and I we are actually thinking all the time about what I should do with my future.” (Y_AT_UA_2)

3.7 Summary

We interviewed 17 young adults participating in four different LLL policies. The interviewees were between 18 and 28 years old. The age of the interviewees differed according to the policy they were participating in and the policies' objectives. The interviews for DKW were the oldest and the ones for PS were the youngest. 12 of our interviewees were male and 5 were female. Eight of our interviewees themselves or their parents were born in another country than Austria. The level of education among the young adults differed, some had already commenced studying at university while others had compulsory school as their highest educational attainments.

The stories told by the young adults about their own lives differed very much according to their current phases in life and the policy they were or are participating in. A communality between most of them, however was, that they were very eager in achieving their goals. Even though some of them have experienced tough situations at home, at school, at work or in their countries of origin, none of them portrayed herself or himself as a “victim”. In some cases they were very critical about people, who have played an important role in their private, educational or school life. Or they were critical about social norms and societal conceptions of normality. However, they all gave the impression that they know, that they are also responsible for their own lives and that they want to make the best out of it.

The young adults' education and training trajectories are predominantly characterized by interruptions and breaks. The reasons for these interruptions are however very diverse. Obviously, for the young adults who have migrated or who fled to Austria, the interruption of their educational career was connected to the fact that they left their countries of origin and had to build up a new life. For some others, the breaks were connected to learning disabilities and mental health problems. Having problems to build up a social network at school or at the apprenticeship company was a reason for some as well. Some young adults have not completed their schooling or training because they failed in final examinations. Some of the young adults interviewed regretted the choices they had made regarding education and training. However, most of them were positive about their future in general or their future engagement in education

and training. For all of the interviewees participation in the respective policy had a positive impact. The impact was or psychologically, that young adults had attained more self-esteem and self-worth by attaining a certificate or just by being able to employ their skills. For others participation in the respective policies had helped them to get “back on track”. For these young adults participation was another chance to find their way into the standard education and training system or the labor market.

All young adults interviewed were very positive about the policies they have participated in or are currently participating in. Most of them expressed the feeling that participation had helped them or will help them to achieve their professional goals. Even if this did not apply to them they valued it that they could “do something useful”, instead of just attending a theoretical course or being at home. In particular, they valued the practice based approach all policies are based on. Independently of their current life stage the young adults stated that participation in the policies had increased their feelings of self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy. In the cases where coaching is part of participation, most young adults were also very positive about the help and guidance they received. They received guidance in job and training related issues but beyond that with other with other issues like solving problems at work or general guidance about their future engagement in education, training and work.

Young adults’ plans for the near future and their long-term plans were quite similar, even though the young adults interviewed partly were in very different stages of their lives. If they were still participating the policies, their main goal was to complete participation successfully. The young adults who have dropped-out from school or training all mentioned that they again want to try it again. The ones who commenced, but did not end upper secondary school all wanted to attain a university entrance certificate. The ones who did already went to university, wanted to take up their studies again and the ones who dropped-out from an apprenticeship wanted to find new apprenticeship positions. Those who had completed participation in the respective policies were divided into two groups regarding their future plans regarding their involvement in further education and training or professional advancement. Some had acquired a taste for learning and wanted to further engage in education, i. e. had the plan to start studying at university. Also some had plans for climbing up the career ladder in their current professions. The second group was very happy about having attained a certificate via or besides participation in the policy but did not have any plans regarding their further engagement in education and training. They were happy about their professional lives and did not see any need to make changes to it. Regarding their private lives and plans for the future, the young adults mainly referred to moving out from their parents’ places and finding a partner.

4. ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH EXPERTS

In this section we present the results of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with policy managers. This section is divided into three parts. These three parts correspond with the three theoretical perspectives applied in the YOUNG ADULLLT project and the analytical codes we derived from these theoretical perspectives. The first part deals with topics relevant for the CPE perspective and deals predominantly with the “design” of the policies analyzed.

This section is divided into six subsections. The six subsections deal with the following topics: antecedents of current LLL policies, objectives and expected impact, approaches, target groups, implementation and challenges and policy evaluations. The second part of this chapter deals with the impact of LLL policies on young adults' lives from the experts' point of view and corresponds to the LCR perspective. This part is divided into three subsections on how far policies take into account young adults' life circumstances, their influence on young adults' autonomy and their influence on decreasing young adults' life course uncertainty. The topic of the last part of this section is the governance of LLL policies and corresponds to the GOV perspective. This part again is divided into three subsections dealing with actors involved and levels of policy making, coordination among actors and challenges in cooperation and coordination. At the end of section 4 we provide a short summary.

4.1. Selected lifelong learning policies for young adults

4.1.1 Antecedents of current LLL policies

For all the four policies analyzed, there have been previous versions of the policy or at least similar attempts to approach the same “problem”. However, the policies selected for analysis all had some specific features that made them innovative and “new”.

For BTTF, a similar project had existed before, but on much smaller scale (the project “Arbeitsraum”, implemented in 2014), functioning also as a sort of trial for BTTF, that proofed to be successful. In general, however, the “hands-on” BTTF approach is rather a new one in comparison to “classical” LLL policies, relying on standard course formats and mainly focusing on theoretical learning. Experts engaged in the management of BTTF stated: “Often the approach of these policies for reaching their objectives, namely labor market integration, was questionable” (E_AT_V_3). And: “The participants see those courses that they have partly been forced to attend, not as something that helps them in anyway. (...) They are a lot about attending in a passive way.” (E_AT_V_5)

A similar project existed (and still exists) also prior to JI. In this case, it is the other way round; JI is the small-scale version of “JUST Jugendstiftung”, a project predominantly targeting young adults without employment and vocational training in general, while JI focuses on young adults who came to Vienna as refugees. Policy managers could fall back on expertise based on experience during the conceptualization and implementation phase of JI. JI is also an example of trying to prevent mistakes that have been made in the past, when no serious attempts to integrate refugees into mainstream society were made.

“The Ministry for Social Affairs was very clear that they want to implement some serious measures, to prevent mistakes from the past. We see for example (...) that there are many people from Russia, Chechnya who have been granted asylum, who are not able to integrate into the labor market.” (E_AT_V_2)

In the case of DKW, the objective and a legal framework for the policy have already existed for some time; however, a comprehensive implementation and a low-threshold approach to

reach these objectives was missing. This impeded the attraction of the target group and the accomplishment of these objectives. A policy manager stated that the DKW approach was based on successful Swiss policies for formal skills recognition.

For PS, similar projects existed before. However, the scattered PS landscape was unified and centralized from 2015 on. This process of standardization led to “reduced” PS versions, as the earlier existing well-equipped PS could not be financially sustained on a broad scale.

Looking at the relation between former and current versions of LLL policies, we see that current versions have been implemented because of successful LLL “experiments” (own ones or by others), as results of negative experiences from the past (unsuccessful approach or missing policies), because former versions were too expensive to sustain or because of federal unification of policies.

4.1.2 Objectives and expected impact

The specific objectives of the single policies analyzed are all related to a sustainable integration of young adults in to the labor market or the education and training system. For two of the policies, JI and DKW, directly meeting labor market demands are also part of the policies’ objectives. However, the single policies’ more specific objectives differ; these include reducing the number of basic income subsidies recipients, decreasing young adults’ precarious labor market situation and providing a structure – outside the formal education system and the labor market – where young adults get some additional time for orientation and maturing.

The objectives of BTTF are to get young adults used to regular employment, to the working life and to trigger a “change of face” regarding young adults’ relation to work. This should lead to young adults’ integration into the first labor market or into the education and training system. The initial motivation behind the policy was to reduce the number of basic income subsidy recipients.

“...to convey to them, what is about to get totally lost with youth, what is work, why do I need work and how does employment work, yes. (...) And then just, yes, to develop an incentive to enter this system and to stay in it. Thus, also to demonstrate the worth of work and to really get them into employment.” (E_AT_V_1)

“It’s really about working on their mindset. That they just start working and to get them active in this direction. Because they just don’t know this constellation, yes.” (E_AT_V_3)

These objectives are based on a conceptualization of the target group, which upon implementation proofed to be at least partly inadequate. The formulation of these objectives are based on the assumption that young adults receiving basic income subsidies just do not want to work or engage in education, whereas in many cases it turned out that they were not able to find long-term employment from which they can make a decent living, because of a lack in jobs. A policy manager for BTTF stressed another objective, namely to conduct a pre-selection of

possible workers for employers, as recruiting of unskilled workers apparently poses a challenge to employers, because of the high level unreliability among unskilled workers.

The objectives of JI are to provide young adults the opportunity to attain a vocational training certificate and acquire the therefore necessary practical experience working in companies. At the same time the policy's objective is to meet companies staff demands that these companies are not able to cover otherwise. The policy allows for young adults receiving regular employment at the respective training company upon completion of their training. The policy's concept assumes that the approach adopted creates a win-win situation for both sides, the young adults and the companies. The policy's target is that 70 % of participants attain a vocational training certificate (dual apprenticeship training or other) and that 60 % of participants subsequently are employed by the training companies. The actual success rate was around 60 % attaining a training certificate and around 50 % finding subsequent employment at the training companies. Even though targets are not met, policy managers were very positive about the policy's impact and also reported that companies in most cases are satisfied.

The objective of DKW is to help unskilled workers and employees to attain an apprenticeship certificate. The program's approach is to acknowledge non-formally and informally acquired vocational skills, to focus on the already existing skills as well as on individual strengths and to offer customized additional training if and where necessary. The regional Chamber of Labor and the Chamber of Commerce have developed and implemented the program. The reasons for implementation were twofold: first, decreasing the risk of unemployment by means of upskilling and higher educational attainments. Second, counteracting a shortage in specialized workers and fostering the economy by increasing the skills-level of the population.

„But the basic idea, the history of origins of the project is, that on the one hand the Chamber of Commerce has complained about the so called shortage in skilled workers and we, from the department of education at the Chamber of Labor, we have tried for some time, to increase the accessibility of further education for unskilled workers.”
(E_AT_UA_5)

From an individual point of view, people with apprenticeship certificate fall in a higher wage category in collective agreements than unskilled people and have other job related rights unskilled employers do not have. However, reasons for unskilled workers and employees to participate in the program are more complex and mainly not related to a rise in pay. Companies mainly want their employees to attain apprenticeship certificates because the principle for calls of bids has been changes from “cheapest provider” to “best provider”, the latter including trained employees and investment in them.

Expected impacts are to reduce the individual risk and social costs of unemployment. Besides, professional skills assessment, readjusted participants often negative perception about their own abilities and increases their self-confidence. Also, as unskilled workers and employees often have made negative learning experiences, positive learning experiences via practice-based and adult learning approaches have proven to readjust their image of learning. For some participants this has led to further engagement in formal education, up to university graduation.

The most important success criterion for DKW is the number of participants attaining their apprenticeship certificate. Currently, the ratio of successful participants is between 70 and 80 %, corresponding with the success rate of standard final apprenticeship tests. The policy has been classified by policy managers as very successful and has been transferred to other Austrian regions, although as “reduced versions”. Its success seems to be related to Upper Austria’s economic structure, particularly the strong industrial sector. The labor market demand for skilled workers and employees is high, large companies tend to invest more in the upskilling of their workforce and work councils have a strong mandate, demanding vocational protection and risk reduction for their clientele.

The objective of PS are to provide up to one year of additional time for young adults who need some time for orientation and to catch up in terms of skills.

„We hear from different sources, from companies but also from teachers or school inspectors for upper secondary schools, that the skills level of youth coming from compulsory school, is not sufficient to directly enter the labor market. Deficits have been expressed like a lack in knowledge about basic arithmetical operations; receptive reading skills are missing. Yes. But what is also often criticized, so to say, are missing social competences.” (E_AT_UA_3)

PS’ aim is to prepare young adults to start an apprenticeship or engage in upper secondary education after participation in PS. In this time, young adults should get an idea of what they want to continue with, have a feeling about their strengths, and have acquired an acceptable level of basic and social skills necessary for upper secondary training and education. The objective is to prevent that these young adults end up in precarious employment and to impede their future dependence on social subsidies. PS is a policy that tries to increase young adults’ social inclusion by preparing them to engage in upper secondary training.

“They are young people, who should be part of the system in some way and not just somehow. They currently have, maybe they have some constraints, maybe they had some experiences or more experiences that were not really helpful. But that does not mean, that they are somewhere outside, that they are not part of this. (...) I think as long as we have a system like this (...) that everyone wants to be part of it somehow. And we have to support this in different ways, and among others with production schools.” (E_AT_UA_4)

4.1.3 Approaches

On the one hand, the approaches applied in the policies analyzed differ according to the definition of the policies’ objectives and their target groups. On the other hand, common ground of all policies analyzed is their strong practical focus. For all policies, managers stated that the approach adopted implied a move away from course based theoretical learning. Except for

DKW, the policies try to integrate participants in employment or employment-like working environments.

Policy managers for BTTF and DKW, explicitly stated that course based approaches applied in the past had not yielded the expected results and partly failed to meet the policies' objectives. As a result from these past experiences, policies based on hands-on approaches were implemented.

“We moved away from the concept to just place people, or young people, in the usual courses organized by the AMS [the Austrian PES]. Thus away from the theoretical. Because that does not work at all, to take the seventeenth AMS course. But to place people concretely in employment, yes.” (E_AT_V_1)

This policy manager also explained that BTTF was the result of the paradigm shift from passive to active labor market policies, comprising a higher conditionality in receiving minimum income subsidies. In BTTF, young adults are employed by the implementing organizations. They receive a contract for 24 hours per week after completing the initial eight week orientation phase. Subsequently, if they want and they are capable, they have the opportunity to increase their working hours. In the case of BTTF, there are two implementing social enterprises. In the one, young adults work in agriculture, in gastronomy or a wood workshop. In the other, they mainly take over simple manual tasks, like packing, requested by companies the implementing organization has established cooperation with.

As the main objective of BTTF is to integrate young adults sustainably into the first labor market, BTTF aims at getting young adults used to a regular working life. Policy managers underlined that they do not see the policy as a social policy and that it was not about making young adults feel comfortable. Instead, they stressed, that BTTF is about confronting the target group with the unpleasant reality of work and in particular to raise young adults' awareness of what their future will look like if they do not engage in further training or education.

“It's really close to reality, because it almost is, I don't know, a brutal way of showing young adults quite plainly: I am now, I don't know, 20 years old, I did not train for anything, I have never worked before, I have not attended any proper school and these are my possibilities on the labor market right now and this is actually shit, yes. I was thinking yesterday (...) There is a cooperation with the company 'Easy', they produce cream machines. A machine cannot assemble them. This means that the single parts are delivered and then they are assembled manually. And that's what they [young adults] are doing there. You have to imagine that, at the age of 20.” (E_AT_V_1)

In this sense, BTTF is not only about labor market integration, but also about raising young adults' awareness of the importance education and training. Besides, another policy manager pointed to the fact, that this form of employment would show young adults the direct effectiveness of their work, increasing their feeling of self-worth and showing them on a small scale that their contribution makes a difference. Besides employment in one of the social enterprises, young adults receive application and general career coaching. In necessary, they also have the opportunity to engage in additional courses, like German language courses. After

participation in BTTF, they receive assistance for three months to smoothen the transition into training or into the labor market.

The approach applied in JI is similar to standard dual apprenticeship training and based on cooperation with private companies. Young adults engage in a traineeship (officially not dual apprenticeship training) for one and a half years. This training time then is recognized if they want to take an extraordinary apprenticeship exam. Parallel, young adults receive regular general assistance during the entire time of training, receive career coaching and engage in additional courses if needed. This approach is also very attractive for companies, as young adults' costs of living and administrative issues (like application procedures etc.) are covered by the managing organization and the PES. As contrary to BTTF, JI policy managers explained that there are strict rules in JI, but that it was part of their approach to take care of young adults and to make them feel at ease, to prevent young adults dropping-out of the policy.

In DKW, young adults and adults in employment but without apprenticeship certificate have their professional skills tested and subsequently acquire the missing skills necessary for attaining an apprenticeship certificate. Before participation, young adults have to take a counseling session, where their eligibility for participation is checked. One interviewee stressed, that the age group of 20-30 year olds would have a particular demand for professional coaching, as they often lack a proper assessment of their skills and strengths and therefore find themselves without orientation or a plan for their professional life.

Upon participation, one of the first steps is to engage in biography work. This means to recap what one has already done – in professional terms and beyond – during the course of her or his life. Interview partners considered this step very important, as this “zooming out” and looking at one's own life from a bird's eye view let most people realized what they had already achieved. This already has often led to a change in sense of self and an increase in participant's self-esteem as most participants would underestimate their own knowledge and skills. The program focusses strongly on participants' strengths. Besides, biography work is an important step in setting up an individualized training plan for each participant. This individualized approach is one of the pillars of the program: Participants should only have to learn, what they do not know yet. This implies that their already existing knowledge and skills are seen, valued and taken serious. According to our interviewees this approach has contributed to participants' motivation and the overall success of the program.

The individualization of learning matters and the prevention of overburdening or underchallenging has contributed to participants' motivation to learn and has largely led to learning success. This again, is of particular relevance for a target group with predominantly negative learning experiences and a resultant reluctance towards learning, often in combination with exam nerves. To prevent drop out due to exam nerves, test situations are avoided and have been replaced by conversation-style knowledge assessments. Learning success has increased participants' feeling of self-worth and partly re-defined their relation towards learning which subsequently led to further engagement in education and training.

PS is based on the idea that youth and young adults get the opportunity “to catch up” if they need some more time after compulsory school and before they engage in upper secondary training or education and to find some time for orientation. In PS, young adults mainly engage

in workshops, according to their interests. Because participants often have made bad experiences during schooling, the PS approach is also strongly practice based. PS is about learning by doing, not by talking, as one of the policy managers put it. In workshops young adults are involved in all steps of production, from to conceptualization to realization. Working in these workshops serves young adults to find out about their strengths and weaknesses and should help young adults in taking deciding for an occupation they want to train for. Besides, young adults in PS take part in basic skills classes, sports activities, excursions to companies, and receive coaching for the entire time of participation. Policy managers are eager to create and foster social bonds among participants and between participants and social workers. Because, what young adults in PS often lack are meaningful relationships and personal support.

“And a really important thing for us is actually this relationship work. That everyone gets to know each other, I mean the coaches or trainers that they get to know the young adults. (...) If they are working together (...) they talk to each other. There you talk more or you tell more about yourself, than in a counseling session. If I say: You should get some counseling. That’s much more formal. Thus, this relationship work, that helps.” (E_AT_UA_4)

4.1.4 Target groups

All policies analyzed have defined target groups. For all policies, however, the actual group of participants is more heterogeneous than envisioned in the policies’ concepts. This means, that a matching with the conceptualized target group is only given for a part of participants. Besides, experts gave the impression, that upon implementation of the policies they realized that the target groups’ issues are often much more complex than they had thought. In terms of gender, in all policies, men are overrepresented and women are underrepresented.

The target group for BTTF are young adults between 18 and 24 years old living in Vienna who receive minimum income subsidies. A policy manager explained that the composition of people receiving income subsidies has totally changed over the last 20 years. While two decades ago it were mainly long term unemployed and more “classically poor” people who received subsidies, nowadays everyone is a potential recipient. The group of recipients cover all age groups, educational level, professional backgrounds, countries of origin and so on. According to our interviewee this is because of the changes on the labor market. Or people’s job profiles do not exist (anymore), or they are employed but earn too little to make a living. The participants in BTTF represent the diversity of basic subsidy recipients.

“We got feedback from the implementing organizations, and we all were rather surprised. That partly, really young adults come, who just did their university entrance exams, who have finished HTL [5-year vocational college for technical occupations]. Thus, they are apparently not really low educated or without school leaving certificates.” (E_AT_V_1)

In the case of BTTF, policy makers designed the policy assuming that the target group would be low educated, school drop-outs, long-term unemployed and on-off employment. Participants partly match this profile. However, BTTF seems to be the result of an inconsistency: Policy makers and managers know that the reasons for receiving basic income

subsidies are mainly related to current labor market characteristics – the structural level. Still, they implement policies that are based on the assumed deficits of young adults – the individual level. The two other policy managers for BTTF stressed the extreme heterogeneity of participants in terms of educational background and “job readiness”. However, 75 % of participants are males, most of them second or third generation migrants or refugees.

For JI, the target group are young adults between 18 and 30 years with asylum status or young adults with multiple problems, having difficulties entering the labor market.

“We have long-term unemployment, we often have health issues, blows related to relationships, related to the family. I don’t know. We have homelessness. And then we say, okay, we set up some funding and try to solve as many of these issues. Try to create some stability again.” (E_AT_V_2)

For the group of young adults with multiple problems it is a particular challenge for policy implementers to contribute to this personal and social stability of young adults’ and connected to this to the stability in young adult’s training engagement and professional careers. A policy manager described the target group as being on-off training and employment, mainly because of a low frustration tolerance and a lack in stamina, which she explained with the low self-esteem of young adults.

Although for JI, the actual group of participants is also very diverse. Particular regarding motivation, however, strong differences are mainly visible between refugees and young adults with multiple problems. The former often have a much stronger aspiration to achieve something. Until now, 75 % participants were young asylum seekers and 15 % young adults with multiple problems. A mismatch between conceptualized and actual target group for JI was less visible than for BTTF. However, it is questionable, if the policy fits for young adults from other countries, who already have attained vocational education and training certificates or have relevant work experience, but have to engage in training again, because of the non-recognition of these skills and attainments.

Regarding the gender of participants, also in JI, more men than women participate. According to policy managers this is partly because of the higher number of male unemployed persons. But, for the target group of refugees, policy managers also stated, that the underrepresentation of women was because of strong and problematic ideas about the role of women. Women themselves and male family members would often be skeptical about women’s participation in JI. Mainly because education, training and employment are often not considered as important for women than for men, strong existing stereotypes about suitable occupations for women and them being uncomfortable with women working alone or together with many men.

For DKW, the target group are unskilled workers and employees without apprenticeship certificate but with work experience and with a minimum age of 22 years. In terms of occupational profiles, the program currently covers 20 different ones. These include mainly industrial, retail and craftsmen occupations. The selection was based on the high number of unskilled workers and employees in these occupations and the labour market demand for skilled workers in specific branches.

One of the interviewees draw a clear distinction between “his” target group and other young adults in vulnerable situations. Whereas he classified the target group of DKW as motivated and taking an effort, young adults receiving minimum-based income subsidies were labeled as being indifferent and living at society’s expense.

Since 2008, almost 600 people have successfully participated in the program. Around two thirds of the participants are males and one-third women. However, the interview partners stated, that within the target group and in comparison to men, women seem to be more open to engage in further education. This is the reason, why females are slightly better represented in the program than in regular apprenticeship training. The gender division on the labor market and within the different occupational profiles offered within the program does also play a role regarding the number of female and male participants. Around 40 % of participants are migrants or with migration background. A side effect of the program, as stated by both interviewees, is the project’s contribution to the social integration of migrants. Bringing together native-born Austrians and migrants confronts them with their own prejudices against the respective others, leading in most cases to the awareness of similarities rather than differences, as all participants have a common goal.

For PS, the target group are youth and young adults between 15 and 24 years old, who have completed compulsory school but are not considered “ready” for upper secondary education or training. Policy managers for PS also described participants as heterogeneous group. As characteristics they named poor basic skills (illiteracy, innumeracy), in need of orientation and some time “to catch up”, school drop-out and mental issues. Policy managers on the one hand also pointed to young adults’ lack in realistic positive ideas and dreams for their future, leaving them unmotivated and uncommitted. In the case of PS, partly a rather big mismatch between conceptualized and actual target group exists. For a part of participants PS is too demanding, but the engage, because of a lack in lower threshold policies. Around 60 % of participants are male and 40 % are female.

4.1.5 Implementation and challenges

Challenges regarding the implementation of selected LLL policies have been expressed by policy managers for BTTF and PS. In both cases, this was related to an “unrealistic” assessment of the policy’s target group.

For BTTF, a policy manager stated that it took some time to get the policy started properly, because of the difficulty to get the target group interested in participation. “The problem is that we are dealing with a target group who does not even react to our offer.” (E_AT_V_5) Possible participants get assigned to the policy by the PES. Out of the around 600 young adults assigned, far less than 50 % show up at the first appointment, which serves as an informative meeting. Drop-out continues with each following step, leaving a very limited number of full participants who follow the program as conceptualized. Subsequently, policy managers decided to “overbook” the policy to ensure a decent number of participants.

For PS, a policy manager explained that it was very hard to attract the target group as defined in the concept.

“It is very hard to get the target group for which PS actually has been conceptualized for to participate. And at the same time to provide an offer for those, who do not match the conceptualized target group. I can of course only talk for my location but we actually just have youth with incredible deficits (...). But fact is, we have these youth and we have to prepare them to make them ready to engage in vocational training.” (E_AT_UA_3)

The actual target group has more skills deficits than the conceptualized target group. This makes also different approaches necessary than the ones included in the concept and in general makes questions the accomplishment of the policy’s objectives. Working with very heterogeneous groups – including young adults from the conceptualized target group as well as young adults with more basic needs in terms of training – poses an additional challenge for PS employees.

In the case of PS the policy’s implementation differs from the policy’s conceptualization, while in the case of BTTF, the concept has been implemented as planned but “recruitment strategies” had to be adopted to the target group’s behavior.

4.1.6 Policy evaluations

Evaluation strategies for the policies analyzed differ according to policies’ objectives. For BTTF and JI, both aiming at young adults’ integration into the first labor market, the PES conducts a one-time monitoring three month after participation in the respective project has ended. The information retrieved is, if former participants are in employment with full social security coverage. A longer-term evaluation for both policies is not intended. Even though it is likely that effects are not represented by a one-time assessment shortly after the end of participation. To the question, of what he thinks about the assessment of the policy, a manager for BTTF replied: “I am sure it is not assessable during the project’s life span. The project is actually just funded for one year. It will only be possible after two and a half or three years to somehow make a reasonable assessment. That’s my feeling.” (E_AT_V_5) For PS, participants are evaluated by themselves and by social workers about their skills and competences at the beginning and the end of participating in PS. A before/after comparison points to increases in all skills assessed. Yearly published reports on PS also include number of participants and numbers about for how many participants which recommendations for further training and education opportunities have been made. The expert interviews do not contain information if a monitoring on where young adults actually end up after participation is conducted. The expert interviews also do not contain information about policy evaluations among participants, although it is very likely that those are conducted for all the policies analyzed.

4.2 LLL policies and young adults' lives

4.2.1 Young adults' life circumstances

Analyzing the expert interviews, we found that policies partly take into account the life circumstances of their target group. Only in one case, DKW, this explicitly was related to family related care and reproductive activities. In the other cases, young adults' life circumstances are taken into account by providing them time and support for finding employment or a training position for after participation in the policy. This, however, is directly related to the policies' objectives.

In the case of DKW, policy managers explained that earlier employed approaches aiming at the formal qualification of unskilled workers and employees did not appeal to the target group. On the one hand because these policies focused on the learning of theoretical subjects in typical course settings, not taking into account the target groups' existing practical knowledge and their earlier made (often negative) learning experiences. On the other hand, earlier policies would be very time consuming, as participants had to engage in the entire courses, independently of what they already knew. Attending an extra-occupational time consuming course after work made this option not too appealing. In particular, for participants with families. In the case of DKW, participants still engage in the policy besides work. However, they are more flexible in terms of time, as they are not obliged to attend any courses. If they have knowledge or skills gaps regarding the occupation they work in, they have to acquire the respective knowledge. The big difference, however, is, that they can do this in whatever way they want, also via self-study, if course schedules do not fit their working hours and other obligations.

For JI, a policy manager explained, that one of her main tasks currently was to explain to young adults with other cultural backgrounds, the implicit and explicit rules of the Austrian world of work.

“Why can't I eat, when I'm hungry? Why can't I, and this is a really important thing (...) When my mom calls, when my dad calls, because my brother has to go to hospital, my little brother, and they don't speak German that well, I just leave work. No, you can't just leave work. There are a lot of situations like this. How do we work? How do we communicate? (...) And then it's the whole day: why, why, why? (...) That's integration work.“ (E_AT_V_4)

In the context of this policy, young adults learn that the priorities regarding work and family are different in Austria than they are in the young adults' countries of origin and are encouraged to readjust their own priorities according to the Austrian cultural norms. For refugees and migrants, both, JI and BTTF managers stated, that many young adults are disappointed, because their imagination about the Austrian labor market diverges from reality. A crucial thing in this respect is young adults' wish to financially support their families back home. With the money they earn by participating in the policies, this is not possible in most cases.

4.2.2 Young adults' autonomy

For all policies analyzed, interviewees reported that young adults' participation leads in most cases to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth. This is mainly related to the experience of self-efficacy or positive learning experiences made during participation. Precondition for these experiences, however, seems to be young adults' commitment to participation. Very often, a first step is to trigger young adults' motivation. Interviewees for BTTF, PS and partly JI (mainly referring to participants who have grown up in Austria), explained that young adults demotivation would be the result of their lack of any plan or desire what they want for their future.

“They just don't have any idea about what they should do, what they could do, what is there, what isn't there. It is really (...) there is a complete absence of ideas, I would say. I mean, there is nothing and we have to carry out an incredible lot of work to motivate and lay the ground.” (E_AT_V_3)

This would leave them in a situation where they do not realize that an effort is necessary to achieve certain things and they are not being willing to make this effort. Besides, without a goal, young adults' frustration tolerance is rather low, increasing the risk of dropping out as soon as they encounter minor obstacles. A policy manager for JI draw a direct connection between “having a plan” and young adults' autonomy.

“It's good to have a certain plan. Not to be aimless. Not always letting the others decide. (...) I see some meaning and I can decide for myself and not my counselor it the one putting me in some course, or my parents deciding whatever for me. I am not other-directed anymore. I can decide for myself now. (...) That's an important step. Away from dependence, towards self-determination. That can only be healthy. To become responsible. And to question things (...) And to dare things.” (E_AT_V_4)

On the one hand, interviewees defined their task as “bringing to light” and supporting the goals of young adults. On the other hand, for the same policies, they stressed that their task was to disillusion young adults as they would have strong ideals but lack realistic ideas of the world of work and would overestimate their own capabilities.

For BTTF and PS, policy managers pointed out, that participation in the policy would provide young adults with some additional time to think about how they want to continue with their education, training or professional career. In addition, through having a regular occupation and tasks to fulfil, young adults are in a more stable situation, making it easier for them to deal with negative incidents in their search for a job or an apprenticeship.

“They have these ten month to think about how can I find my way on the first labor market but without this constant pressure that unemployment entails (...) But instead they can apply for jobs or look for education and training opportunities from a situation of employment and be more self-confident during this process. It is something different if I am employed, I apply and I get rejected then if I would be unemployed and I get rejected.” (E_AT_V_5)

The financial stability (at least given for some time) also has a positive effect on young adults, releasing them from worries about their livelihood and creating the opportunity to engage in community life.

“...and for integration. They start to participate in the social life of the community. That’s really a big difference, if you know that your costs of living are covered for a certain amount of time, and, that’s, it does really a lot with the people.” (E_AT_V_2)

For all policies, interviewees stressed that participation in the single policies had led to an increase in young adults’ self-esteem. Because of the policies’ strong practical focus, young adults would directly experience what they already know, that they have valuable skills and competences, receive the acknowledgement to be of worth, and in general would get a stronger feeling of self-efficacy.

For DKW, policy managers explained that many participants have a difficult relationship to learning at the beginning of participation. The self-esteem built up during participation is often related to a re-definition of participants’ relationship to learning, based on a practice-based approach that starts from their already existing knowledge and takes on from there. Re-defining their relationship to learning opens up new possibilities for participants.

“Since ‚Du kannst was!’ I know, that I can learn. No one had expected this from me, that I know something. But now, I proofed it, the feeling of self-esteem has increased. (...) We have one guy, who trained for two occupations via ‘Du kannst was!’ and he’s studying law now, because he also did his university entrances exam. people often experience during the participation in ‘Du kannst was!’ that learning does not have to be painful. And for me, the final exam is not that important. The almost most important thing is that people start learning. Because then they acquire a taste for it.” (E_AT_UA_1)

The main motivation for participation in DKW, according to policy managers, are not financial reasons or reasons directly related to participants’ professional life but rather the acknowledgement participants receive from their co-workers or family once they attain an apprenticeship certificate. In particular, for young men, there is a tendency that they start DKW when they become fathers or their children start to go to school. Their motivation to participate is often more related to the symbolic value of an apprenticeship certificate rather than its financial rewards.

Even though the target groups of the policies analyzed differ, common ground among the policies is that they increase young adults’ autonomy by increasing their feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. However, a policy manager for PS stressed, that some young adults first need binding obligations and less individual choices, if the aim is full social integration into the education system or labor market and if they should obtain sustainable autonomy in the long run.

“I think that young adults should not be allowed to take certain decisions independently. If we want to continue with the system we live in, we have to demand certain things from youth. It’s like that. (...) And they can decide if they want to participate in production school, or if they want to participate in youth coaching, or in whatever. And

they can decide to do nothing, even though we have an education and training obligation. That's their decision, yes. I think, if we continue to live in this system, to continue to live in our system, then they should not be allowed to decide. Then they should not be allowed to take certain decisions. They should not have a right to say. In my opinion.” (E_AT_UA_3)

Another critical point was made by policy managers for BTTF and JI, referring to refugees opportunities on the Austrian labor market. In both policies a critical share of participants are young refugees. The reasons for their participation is often that their education, training or work experience is not recognized in Austria. In particular, for the ones who have relevant working experience or attained educational certificates, this is often very frustrating, as they have to start all over again. In this case, participation in the policy also increases young adults autonomy, but only because their autonomy has been very much restricted by other policies.

“And a lot of them are disappointed, because a lot of what they have done till now does not get recognized. They start all over. The same with the two students, construction engineering. They went to university and now they do an apprenticeship. The fact that nothing gets recognized, is depressing, anyhow. At home they were middle or upper class people, I don't know, well-to-do in any case, rather advanced in their studies in any case. And also in terms of social prestige. Like here when you study and are quite advanced. And then they come here and start an apprenticeship with very little pay.” (E_AT_V_2)

4.2.3 Young adults' life course certainty

For the policies analyzed, we found that they overall reduce young adults' professional life course uncertainty, at least from the experts' point of view. The objective of all policies analyzed is to foster young adults' sustainable integration into the education and training system or the labor market. The most important precondition for the policy's objective to be met is a match between the target groups as defined in the policy's concept and the actual participants.

For two of the policies analyzed, BTTF and PS, interviewees indicated that partly a mismatch between conceptualized and actual target group exists. In the case of PS, the actual participants partly have stronger skills deficits but participate because of a lack in other policies that would meet their needs better. In the case of BTTF, participants are partly overqualified for the policy but participate because they were not able to find regular employment. For both cases it is questionable if participation in the policies reduces young adults' life course uncertainty. Participation in not perfectly suitable policies might be better than no participation at all. However, in particular for overqualified BTTF participants, as they participate not to make up for missing skills but because they were not able to find a job due to a difficult labor market situation, they would probably benefit more from participation in more demanding policies.

Besides the partly existing target group mismatch, interviewees for all policies analyzed were positive about their policies contribution to reducing young adult's life course uncertainties. Mainly because they gain professional experience during participation, attain formal education

or training certificates and show their willingness to engage in further education and training – valuable advantages on the labor market, from the experts' point of view.

For BTTF, a policy manager differentiated between motivated and unmotivated participants' future prospects, indicating that the effects a policy has on an individual life course, depends on the attitudes of the young adults participating.

“I think that the people who participate motivated in such a project have quite good future prospects. Why? Because this is just the stuff that helps you advance in your professional life. It's not just about education and training. It's also about how you present yourself. It's also about, does someone seize an opportunity or not? The future prospects of the people here who just participate without some sort of intrinsic motivation, I don't think that their prospects are particularly good.” (E_AT_V_5)

The policy managers for JI were quite sure, that young adults participating in the policy would have good opportunities on the labor market upon completion of the program. Good opportunities got get regular employment in their training companies as well as in other companies. Not only because of the attainment of a training certificate but also because of additional participation in German language classes (for refugees) and the implementation of awareness measures with the objective of increasing the acceptance of employers to hire young adults with a different cultural background. Attaining a formal training certificate not only increases young adults' opportunities on the labor market but also their opportunities to engage in further education and training and increases. Besides, the attainment of a formal certificate increases their social prestige.

“The ones who complete, there you see that they progress. With some you see it very quickly. There are many (...) who have become managers or branch managers or who have chosen a totally different path.” (E_AT_V_4)

“It just opens up much more opportunities that one has when working as an unskilled worker. Not only regarding the stability of one's job but also regarding income. Regarding further education, apprenticeship with university-entrance diploma or, I don't know, whatever you can do afterwards. And, and also regarding social prestige. And we try to communicate that.” (E_AT_V_2)

One of the challenges of JI, as explained by one policy manager, however, is, to make sure young adults do not drop out during the program. Although most participants are very motivated and eager to participate, their “salaries” during training are rather low. In particular refugees often want to financially support their families which they are not able to do during training. The comparatively higher salaries as unskilled workers are often a reason for them to quit training. One of the challenges for policy managers in this respect is to raise participants' awareness that attaining a training certificate will pay off financially in the long run.

For DKW participants the advantages are similar. In particular, they benefit from more job security, higher pay levels and more opportunities regarding further education. The cut-throat competition on the labor market is particularly fierce for this the DKW target group, not least due to low-skilled migrants entering the labor market. The program decreases the target group's replaceability and their labor market vulnerability by providing participants with the

opportunity to reach their dual apprenticeship attainment. As depicted in the previous chapter, however, the motivation behind participation is very often not related to material benefits, but to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth. For PS, experts appraised the policy as overall contributing to increase young adults' opportunities and choices. At the same time they stressed, that successive policies for those, who just do not have the capacities to engage in regular apprenticeship training or the first labor market afterwards, are missing. In particular they criticized a reduction in second labor market work places. Therefore, part of PS participants might benefit from the policy, but a reduction in life course uncertainty is permanently not achieved because of a lack in follow-up policies. Besides, one policy manager posed the question, if the stigmatizing effect of PS participation would maybe counteract the policies positive impact on young adults' life courses.

4.3 Governance of LLL policies

4.3.1 Actors involved and levels of policy making

Actors involved in the policies analyzed differ in their type and their function. The main functions identified correspond with funding, management, implementation and cooperation. A differentiation in types of actors can mainly be made between public and private actors and among private actors between for-profit and non-profit actors. Besides, actors involved differ regarding the scales they are located at – the local, regional, national or supra-national.

In terms of funding, BTTF is funded for 50 % by the ESF, for 25 % by the PES Vienna and for 25 % by the Viennese municipal department for social affairs (MA 40). JI is funded by the Austrian Insolvency Contingency Fund and the companies participating in the policy. Besides, the regional PES disburses social benefits (Coverage of Living Costs) for participants. DKW is funded by the regional administration of Upper Austria and PS are funded via the ESF and the Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs. For the policies analyzed, funding is covered predominantly by public actors, the exception being the contributions private companies discharge in JI. In terms of scale, funding actors are located at the regional, national and supra-national level.

In terms of management, for BTTF the Viennese MA 40 is the main responsible managing actor, working closely together with the Viennese Employment Promotion Fund (WAFF). For JI it is AUFLEB, an association set up in cooperation between the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) and the Trade Unions Federation (ÖGB). Management in the case of DKW is also a shared task between two social partners, the Upper Austrian regional Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Labor. Finally, PS are managed at federal level by NEBA, the Network for Professional Assistance located within the Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs and the federal Coordination Office for Education and Training until 18 (BundesKOST). At regional level management is conducted by the regional Coordination Offices. Managing actors for the policies analyzed are all public actors and are located at regional or national level, depending on the fact if the policy is implemented at regional or federal level.

The policies' implementation is predominantly not carried out by the actors who manage the policies. This is only the case for DKW. For BTTF, JI and PS actors responsible for the policies' implementation are social enterprises, non-profit education providers and other NGOs from the field of social work. These implementing organizations are partly embedded in regional and/or national organizational structures, but some only have one location.

By cooperation partners we mean institutional actors not directly involved in the policies, but relevant for their functioning, often these actors play an important role for young adults before or after participation in the respective policy. Cooperation partners within the single policies differ according to their objectives. However, in all policies, managers and implementing actors work together with the respective regional PES. The PES is mainly responsible for formally assigning participants to the policies and to administrative issues regarding their participations.

Private companies are of particular relevance as cooperation partners for BTTF and JI and to a lesser extent for DKW and PS. Education providers are cooperation partners for JI and DKW. For BTTF, JI and PS important partners are other social enterprises and NGOs, in particular for the exchange of information and coordination activities beyond the single policies. Other cooperation partners for BTTF is the Viennese Social Fund (FSW) and for PS youth coaches and the other organizations involved in the management and implementation of other NEBA policies. JI also cooperates with diverse social organizations for example providing support in the case of homelessness or outstanding debts. The array of cooperation partners is very broad and covers all types of actors at all levels.

4.3.2 Coordination among actors

For all policies analyzed we have identified a range of actors working together on conceptual issues and the implementation of the policies. Cooperation partners have different roles, functions and tasks within this processes. Therefore, the specific forms of cooperation activities, the reasons for cooperation and the degree of success of these cooperation differ.

In the case of BTTF and JI coordination activities take place on three levels. On the first level, organizations and actors involved in conceptualization and funding coordinate. Management is conducted by one of this organizations. This managing organization forms the link to the implementing organizations. On the second level, managing and implementing organizations coordinate. On a third level, the implementing organization coordinates with cooperation partners like companies. For DKW, coordination on street-level mainly takes place between the two managing organizations, the Chamber of Labor and the Chamber of Commerce. A policy manager spoke very positively about the flat hierarchies within the policy, making possible quick adaptations and changes if necessary.

„An advantage of the project is that we have very flat hierarchies. (...) I just talk to my colleagues, let's do something, and we do it, quickly, and then we just add it. We do not have big meetings, like they do in other projects sometimes. We have a steering committee that meets once a year.” (E_AT_UA_1)

Currently, the program's steering committee, including five people, meets once a year officially. However, at the beginning of the program the actors involved had a vivid exchange and regular meetings. This exchange was mainly about getting to know each other and developing a common understanding about the policy, in particular to assure that all actors involved would have a benevolent attitude towards the program's target group. The exchange, however, has lost in intensity and has become more difficult to organize, due to the increasing amount of people involved in the implementation of the policy.

For PS, coordination activities take place at local, regional and national level. At local level single PS coordinate with companies, schools, youth coaches and the PES. At the same time PS managers and employees are part of local youth networks coordinated by the Upper Austrian Chamber of Labor. These networks mainly serve as platforms to exchange informations for organizations working with youth and young adults. At regional level, all implementing organizations – 13 in Upper Austria – meet on a regular basis. At federal level, regional PS representatives gather regularly and coordinate with the federal managing organization NEBA.

Referring to the reasons for working together with other actors, these were made explicit for DKW and BTTF. In the case of DKW, the motivation was to bundle the experience and the knowledge of as many different actors as possible. The objective behind this bundling of knowledge was to provide a suitable policy with an approach attractive for the target group. In the case of BTTF, the main motivation for cooperation mentioned was the complex and heterogeneous target group of the policy.

„It has changed for a 100 % during the last fifteen, twenty years I would say. Nowadays everyone is a possible recipient of basic subsidies. Across all population strata, all educational levels, countries of origin, it does not matter, all demographic characteristics are represented. (...) And that is why we also have this board array (...) I would say we are almost forced to work together with more and more, to coordinate and collaborate with others. And there is of course a value added, for everyone, that we have overcome, that everyone just takes care about their own little boxes.” (E_AT_V_1)

Besides covering the needs of a very diverse target group, reasons for cooperation in BTTW are to prevent a “double tracking” of policies and to use cooperation as a means to bundle resources to make “something larger” possible.

For PS, cooperation and coordination takes place with NEBA, coordinating PS and four other policies for young adults at the interface of the education system and the labor market, and other organizations involved in the implementation of NEBA policies. NEBA and the respective coordination network was set up to bring more structure and a better systematic into a diverse and scattered policy landscape. Cooperation takes place to adapt and further develop the policy, to guarantee for a successful management of interfaces and transitions of young adults and to make efficient use of financial resources by preventing or at least reducing policy overlaps. Besides, PS managers engage in the exchange of information with other actors involved in the youth transition system and working with youth and young adults, including also training companies. Information exchange serves to bring together different bits of information and is motivated by the objective of providing policies according to young adults' needs.

For JI, no specific reasons for cooperation were mentioned in the interviews explicitly. However, in the case of JI, cooperation in particular with private companies, is a crucial part of the logic of the policy. The objective of the policy is to meet both, the vocational training demand of young adults and at the same time the staff requirements of companies. On the level of the coordinating actors, these two objectives are represented by the Chamber of Commerce and the Trade Union Federation. Cooperation, in this case, takes not only place to meet young adults' demands but also companies' staff and skills demands. The same, however, is also true for the other policies, more or less directly.

Referring to the “conduct” of actors involved in coordination activities and the success of these activities, interviewees were in general positive. A manager for JI stated, that in particular during the conceptualization phase of the policy, the different interests of cooperation partners played a crucial role but that these conflicts have been solved via compromises and concessions from both sides.

“...very intense during the development of the concept. The Trade Union Federation and the Chamber of Commerce. Not really fighting, but discussions. About what is important, and that the own interests are represented, that was very intense. (...) But they know each other well and they know how the other thinks.” (E_AT_V_2)

For DKW, both interviewees stated during the interview that the respective other party, was skeptical about the implementation of the program in the first place. According to the representative of the Chamber of Commerce the Chamber of Labor was hesitant in implementing the program due to “identity issues”, fearing that the target group would receive certificates without taking the effort others have taken to attain a certificate. Vice versa, according to the representative of the Chamber of Labor, in particular the examiners from the Chamber of Commerce were hesitant of introducing a “second class” apprenticeship certificate. The minimum age of 22 years for participants was a request expressed by the Chamber of Commerce, to prevent the program becoming a competitor for regular apprenticeship training.

Since negotiations have come to an end, however, the cooperation between the social partners has been labeled by both interviewees as “surprisingly successful” and “smoothly”. Both interviewees contrasted the Upper Austrian case of cooperation between social partners who would “not play false” with unsuccessful cooperation regarding this matter in other Austrian regions. For the two policies that have been set up by interest representatives, DKW and JI, cooperation is embedded within a broader social partnership culture of negotiations and concessions. However, for the case of DKW, both interviewees spoke very appreciative about each other and stated that successful cooperation would depend very much on the specific individuals involved and not so much on the organizations they represent.

The same point about successful cooperation depending very much on the respective persons involved, was made by a manager for PS. She stated that, cooperation and coordination with other organizations working in the field works quite well because people know each other and cooperation is often based on personal contacts and agreements. At the same time she pointed out that in particular actors engaged in the implementation of youth policies, foremost social NGOs and social enterprises, are competitors on this “market”. This, however, at least at street-level, would not influence coordination and cooperation activities. For the future, she stressed,

that the cooperation with schools and parents would become increasingly important. In particular the latter are often very difficult to reach out to. The two other PS managers had quite contrary opinions about cooperation with other actors. While one was quite positive about cooperation with companies, youth coaches, schools and parents, the other was rather critical on the cooperation with all those actors. His main points of critique related to the different approaches handled by PS and others which would make transitions and interfaces between policies hard to manage. In particular, he was critical about the role of youth coaches, who recommend youth and young adults to production schools. Spots in PS would partly not be filled because of youth coaches allocation approaches.

4.3.3 Challenges in cooperation and coordination

Cooperation and coordination among actors involved in the management and implementation of selected policies has been by and large described as positive and well-functioning. However, challenges have been identified for different phases of policy implementation and between actors on different policy levels. The main points of critique among interview partners though were related to more “systematic” issues and the relation of the respective policies to the education system or the labor market.

In the case of DKW, an interviewee stated that the phase of policy conceptualization was quite long and tiresome. It took very long until all partners involved were on the same page regarding the specific modalities of the policy. What united all of the actors involved was the strong commitment to designing a policy suited for the target group and tackling this specific problem.

“It was of course a long process, well, it took us, we have negotiated for three years. (...) These negotiations were quite tough. But it was clear from the beginning, it was clear that we wanted to find a suitable format for the target group. And after three years, all of a sudden, ‘Du kannst was!’ was there.” (E_AT_UA_5)

In the case of DKW, shared vision helped to overcome the differences concerning the specificities of the policy.

For BTTF, it was rather the phase of getting the project started, that posed some difficulties. We pointed already to the difficulty of attracting and keeping a reasonable number of participants in the section on policy implementation and connected challenges. A policy manager for BTTF stressed, that this problem was connected to the fact that it normally would take some time, until the policy was “anchored in practice”. BTTF (as a lot of other policies) has strong collaborations with the PES. The PES being responsible for assigning young adults to the respective policies. Because of the broad diversity of existing policies, it would take some time until street-level PES employees, are fully aware of the existence of a new policy and start assigning possible participants to the respective policy. To raise attention to new policies street-level PES employees participate in instruction courses on the policy. Keeping an overview of existing policies, however, poses a challenge for PES employees and subsequently for the establishment of a policy.

For two policies, DKW and PS, interview partners raised the issue of unification and standardization of regional policy at federal level, but both from a different point of view. A policy manager for DKW was very critical about the fact, that there was no federal policy for the formal recognition of non-formally and informally acquired skills that would guarantee young adults the same opportunities in all the regional states. Instead, this issue is handled differently in all regional states. On the one hand, the interview expressed his lack of understanding that actors at regional level in other regional states have been reluctant to implement a similar policy. On the other hand, he saw the responsibility for a unification of formal recognition practices at federal level.

A policy manager for PS, on the contrary, was critical about the standardization process PS have gone through since 2015, uniting existing PS under a federal label. Because of the unification it is quite hard for PS to account for regional and local specifics.

“There are of course regional differences, and, and it is like that, once you have a unified conceptual landscape with unified funding, you push the implementing organizations to their limits, because regional specifics are a big issue.” (E_AT_UA_3)

The same interviewee has also pointed to the fact that the actual target group in “his” PS differs quite from the target group envisioned in the PS concept. At least for some PS there seems to be a misfit between the standardized PS concept and the regional/local circumstances they work in. This implies a double challenge for PS employees: implementing the standardized concept and fulfilling its requirements and at the same time providing an offer that fits the needs of the regional/local actual target group. From this interview it seems that a too tight embedment of regional/local policies in federal structures decreases their efficiency as they have to fulfil two agendas at the same time. Besides, the interviewee was critical about the design and management of interfaces between policies, because the managing and implementing actors of different policies mostly have diverging objectives and approaches, increasing the likelihood of “loosing” young adults on the way from one policy to the other.

Regarding funding schemes and cooperation with funding actors, the policy managers working in ESF funded policies were all very negative about the cooperation with the ESF. Their main criticism was the large amount of resources that are necessary for documentation and accounting of ESF funded policies. Implying the diversion of funding away from the target group needs and towards bureaucratic and administrative tasks. A PS manager also criticized that the frame conditions to conduct “good work” are not given. Mainly referring to a lack in long-term funding schemes that would guarantee job security for PS employees. To master the challenge of working with very demanding young adults, it would be foremost necessary to overcome precarious working conditions of PS employees.

The structural problems mentioned by the interviewees are not directly challenges of coordination but nevertheless, relevant for understanding the interface between policy and the wider context in which the policy is embedded. Besides, systemic deficits also shed a different light on objectives and the efficacy of specific policies. The criticism expressed by interview partners was mainly related to Austrian labor market integration politics and policies of refugees and migrants. The overall message was that via the current approach problems are created which subsequently have to be tackled by special policies. Young adults with migration

background are overrepresented in unemployment statistics and also in the policies analyzed. First, the procedure for granting the right of asylum takes very long. Young adults are forced to inactivity during this time as most policies directed towards this target group only accept participants who have been granted asylum already. Second, migrants' competences and skills acquired abroad – in particular vocational skills – are in most cases not recognized. For young adults this often means that they again have to engage in vocational training and education. In part of the cases this may be justified as job profiles between their countries of origin and Austria differ, in other cases this means formal impediment in taking up work according to their profession. The non-recognition of existing skills and competences has been classified one of the largest problems regarding labor market integration by our interviewees. Third, migrants and refugees lack knowledge on the Austrian education system and the Austrian labor market as well as know-how on how they apply their competences and skills. Besides, not only referring to labor market integration of migrants, interviewees were critical about the schools system and the educational segregation it reproduces. Also the role of private companies was addressed, who via their hiring practices increase the competition on the labor market. A critical share of young adults is not able to keep up with this competition.

4.3.4 Summary and conclusion

In terms of antecedents of current policies, for all the four policies analyzed, there have been previous versions of the policy or at least similar attempts to approach the same “problem”. However, the policies selected for analysis all had some specific features that made them innovative and “new”. The specific objectives of the single policies analyzed are all related to a sustainable integration of young adults in to the labor market or the education and training system. However, the single policies' more specific objectives differ; these include reducing the number of basic income subsidies recipients, decreasing young adults' precarious labor market situation and providing a structure – outside the formal education system and the labor market – where young adults get some additional time for orientation and maturing. On the one hand, the approaches applied in the policies analyzed differ according to the definition of the policies' objectives and their target groups. On the other hand, common ground of all policies analyzed is their strong practical focus. For all policies, managers stated that the approach adopted implied a move away from course based theoretical learning. All policies analyzed have defined target groups. For all policies, however, the actual group of participants is more heterogeneous than envisioned in the policies' concepts. This means, that a matching with the conceptualized target group is only given for a part of participants. Besides, experts gave the impression, that upon implementation of the policies they realized that the target groups' issues are often much more complex than they had thought. If policy managers mentioned challenges regarding the policy's implementation, this was related to a mismatch in conceptualized and actual target group. In terms of gender, in all policies, men are overrepresented and women are underrepresented.

Analyzing the expert interviews, we found that policies partly take into account the life circumstances of their target group. Only in one case, DKW, this explicitly was related to family related care and reproductive activities. In the other cases, young adults' life circumstances are

taken into account by providing them time and support for finding employment or a training position for after participation in the policy. This, however, is directly related to the policies' objectives. For all policies analyzed, interviewees reported that young adults' participation leads in most cases to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth. This is mainly related to the experience of self-efficacy or positive learning experiences made during participation. Precondition for these experiences, however, seems to be young adults' commitment to participation. Very often, a first step is to trigger young adults' motivation. Interviewees for BTTF, PS and partly JI (mainly referring to participants who have grown up in Austria), explained that young adults demotivation would be the result of their lack of any plan or desire what they want for their future. We also found that they overall reduce young adults' professional life course uncertainty, at least from the experts' point of view. The objective of all policies analyzed is to foster young adults' sustainable integration into the education and training system or the labor market. The most important precondition for the policy's objective to be met is a match between the target groups as defined in the policy's concept and the actual participants.

Actors involved in the policies analyzed differ in their type and their function. The main functions identified correspond with funding, management, implementation and cooperation. A differentiation in types of actors can mainly be made between public and private actors and among private actors between for-profit and non-profit actors. Besides, actors involved differ regarding the scales they are located at – the local, regional, national or supra-national. For all policies analyzed we have identified a range of actors working together on conceptual issues and the implementation of the policies. Cooperation partners have different roles, functions and tasks within this processes. Therefore, the specific forms of cooperation activities, the reasons for cooperation and the degree of success of these cooperation differ. Cooperation and coordination among actors involved in the management and implementation of selected policies has been by and large described as positive and well-functioning. However, challenges have been identified for different phases of policy implementation and between actors on different policy levels. The main points of critique among interview partners though were related to more “systematic” issues and the relation of the respective policies to the education system or the labor market.

The four policies analyzed are very similar in some aspects and differ in others. For analysis we have selected two policies for Vienna and two for Upper Austria. One of them was a regional policy and the other a federal policy, respectively. The analysis of expert interviews provided valuable insights into the policies' design and governance as well as on impact on young adults' lives (from the experts' point of view). However, for the four policies analyzed we did not in particular see specific similarities between regional or federal policies, nor for the two policies in Vienna and Upper Austria. The number of cases analyzed is too small to speak about specific tendencies or even a pattern in this respect. Rather, the policies analyzed here, have to be seen and understood in their own right.

5. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN YOUNG ADULTS AND EXPERTS

5.1 Policies' design and young adults' experiences

The objective of all policies analyzed is young adults' sustainable integration into the education and training system or the regular labor market. Policy makers have adopted different approaches to achieve these objectives. Although the specific policy design differs among the policies analyzed, their common characteristic is the strong focus on practical tasks and practical learning. The experts we interviewed were critical about LLL policies based on course formats. The young adults we interviewed all were very positive about the approach of the policy they were participating in. They valued the strong practical focus. In particular, because they could directly engage in specific tasks. Through this direct engagement and the embeddedness in a real life working environment, they could directly employ their skills. Experiencing the direct impact of what they were doing, increased their feeling of being a valuable part of the whole working process. This very much helped them to assess for themselves their strengths and weaknesses. Working on a specific task with others also increased their sense of self-worth, as they experienced being an important part of the team, whose effort is necessary to achieve a common goal.

Even if they were not embedded in a group of people working together, the practical employment of young adults' skills raised their awareness about their own abilities. In many cases young adults expressed their surprise about their own skills. They were surprised of what they were actually capable of doing. Many of the young adults we interviewed have had unpleasant learning experiences in school and had established a self-perception based on these experiences. They labeled themselves as not being the type of person that likes to learn. Being confronted with practical forms of skills assessment and skills employment, the often were positively surprised about themselves and reported an increase in self-esteem. The approach adopted by the policies of providing the opportunity to engage in the labor market or to provide workplace-like environments was valued very much by the young adults we interviewed. Some of them were very much aware of the stigmatizing effect of participating in a policy for unemployed young adults and not being integrated into education/training or the first labor market. The practical approach of the policies seemed to reduce the feeling of stigmatization.

Beyond this, the policies aimed at helping young adults to attain education and training certificates; some more directly than others. The attainment of formal certificates on the one hand also increased young adults feeling of self-esteem and self-worth and on the other hand decreases their labor market vulnerability. Another important aspect mentioned by young adults regarding their experience with the selected policies is that they considered participation helpful for finding an apprenticeship position or a job. In particular because of the support they received from social workers and other street-level policy employees and because it was easier to find subsequent employment for them while they were "doing something". On the one hand this would make a better impression for possible employers and on the other hand young adults would be more active, because of the regular day-to-day structure they had through policy participation. Most of the young adults interviewed were thankful for the support they received

via the policy, including counseling on education and training issues but also beyond. Only for one policy a young adult told that the participants were surprised about the deviation between what they had been told about the policy and the reality. Although he said that he had the impression of just being used as a cheap worker, he still was very positive about the policies approach. Only he was missing the coaching and guidance that was promised to him beforehand.

5.2 Young adults' skills and their construction as target group

From the interview with experts we know that some policies had difficulties attracting the target group as it was defined in the policy concept. In one case the policy was too demanding for the target group attracted, in one other case the target group was partially better skilled than policy makers had expected. From the interviews with young adults we can see, that policy participation in some cases matched with their needs and in others it did not. If there was a mismatch, this was because of the already quite high skills level of the young adults. In particular for BTTF we talked to young adults who had already attained an apprenticeship certificate and had relevant working experience. They participated because they were unemployed for some time. However, they were not in a particular "vulnerable" situation. Anyway, even though we had the impression, that some of the young adults were over-qualified for participation in the respective measures, they were still happy for the opportunity to participate and did not make any negative comments about the policies and their role and tasks within them.

The young adults were portrayed by experts as diverse group. Partly young adults would be very capable and willing to advance with their education, training and work. Partly, however, young adults were characterized as having multiple problems, which hindered them to regularly participate in education, training or the labor market. Based on the interviews with young adults we had the impression that all young adults we interviewed were motivated and eager to participate in the formal education and training system or the first labor market. They partly were suffering because they were currently not able to do so. Based on the interviews we support a differentiation between young adults participating in the policies we analyzed. One group had made decisions in the past regarding education and training that have led to their current situation. These young adults were mainly very aware of how their past decisions had influenced their subsequent life. In our opinion this group needs opportunities and support in re-entering the formal education and training system and the first labor market. If this is done via specific LLL policies we think that their design should be very similar to formal education and training and labor market settings. Most young adults we interviewed are part of this group.

A second group of young adults can be distinguished. For this group their current life situation is very much influenced by their social environment and the experiences they have made in their families and at school as well as by their abilities. This group partly has made traumatic experiences and/or has been diagnosed with mental and/or learning disabilities. For this group finding their way into the formal education and training system or the labor market is much more difficult. LLL policies targeting this group have to take into account the young adults past

experiences and needs in terms of guidance, counseling and therapy. Independently of which group the young adults belonged to, they all conveyed their desire to have “a normal life”, to participate in education, training and work and were eager in taking an effort in achieving their goals. Comparing the self-representation of young adults with the perception of young adults of experts, we think that to a large degree experts have quite a realistic estimation about the young adults they are working with. Again in the case of BTTF, however, we have the impression that young adults were portrayed with more “deficits” than we would encounter them by talking to the young adults themselves.

Skills formation in the policies we analyzed takes place regarding different types of skills. Practical and theoretical skills are targeted as well as vocational skills and soft skills. The focus depends on the design of the policy and the policy’s target group. From both the interviews with experts and young adults we can conclude that even if vocational skills and theoretical knowledge is targeted, the learning of soft skills and working on the young adults’ personality, attitudes and behavior plays an important role in the policies we analyzed. Experts reported that this was the most relevant for young adults to learn. Young adults on the other hand reported that this was what they valued most about participation in the respective policies.

5.3 Young adults’ participation in LLL policy making

No forms of participation of young adults in LLL policy making were mentioned by experts or young adults. The network of actors included in LLL policy making and implementation for the policies we analyzed is broad. Young adults, however, seem not to be part of the process of policy making. In some cases experts hinted at the adaptation of policies based on young adults experiences during and after participation in the policy. It seem, however, that in most cases the effect of policies on young adults was assessed by social workers or other professionals and not by young adults themselves. However, for all policies professionals and expert engaged in policy making are in close contact with young adults as well as embedded in networks for the exchange on experiences with policies. We therefore think, that the policy makers have a rather realistic conception of the young adults and their needs. Young adults’ interests are represented in selected national policy making and negotiation processes via the Federal Youth Organization. However, this does not render unnecessary young adults’ direct involvement and representation of their interests in more specific LLL policy making at all other levels of policy making.

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Work Package 5

Qualitative analysis

Bulgaria – National Report

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to highlight the perspectives of the individuals behind the programs and measures of the lifelong learning policies (LLLP): the views and lived experiences of experts, practitioners, and young adults who have participated or are currently involved in the policies. Sixteen experts and twenty-two men and women aged up to 30 were interviewed in the two functional regions (FR) in Bulgaria that took part in the Young Adults project. We selected experts and young people in some measures that were common in both regions and representative for the LLLP in Bulgaria, such as the Youth Guarantee and the Student Practices, as well as measures specific for the living conditions and policy approaches on the regional level.

The report first presents the analysis of the qualitative information gathered in Plovdiv FR and then that in Blagoevgrad FR. Both parts follow the same structure: presenting the fieldwork, followed by the findings from the experts' interviews and then from the young people's interviews and finish by comparing the expectations and experiences of both groups.

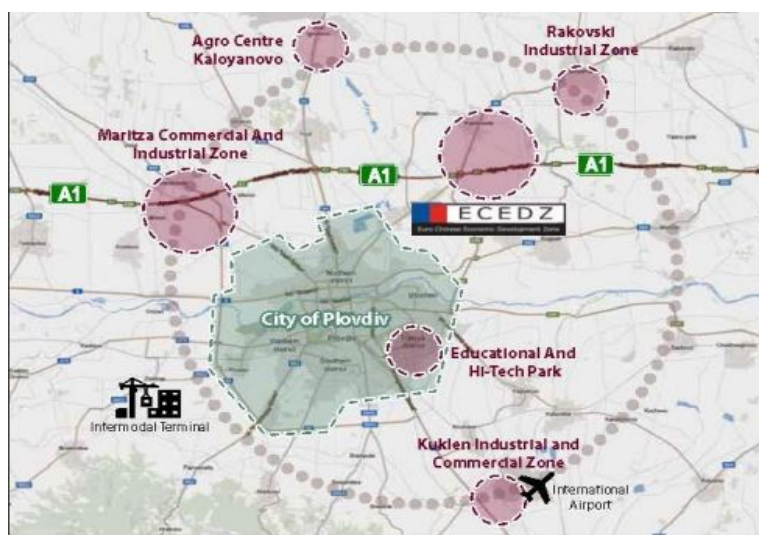
The LLL programs in Bulgaria come to fill in a missing link between the educational system and the labor market institutions and this is understood by both groups – policy experts and young adults. The interviewees share a generally positive evaluation of the projects and schemes. If anything, they tend to blame other actors in the field: teachers and employers for not meeting their responsibilities to the young. The formal educational system is rather rigid and flexible forms such as 'second chance schools' and 'dual education' are missing. As far as the policy levels are taken into consideration, the EU directives are considered necessary and relevant for the country and local conditions and specificity is sought in their implementation to the local needs. The most important programs in the two regions are the Youth Guarantee and the Student Practices but there are also other projects specific for the two regions which meet local needs. State programs offer wider access but still face underfunding. The projects of the civic sector organizations are usually better targeted and highly effective but have a narrow span and lack the support and cooperation with state actors. Young people's life projects meet with an unfavorable labor market and unresponsive training institutions. Those from more privileged backgrounds often accumulate various forms of training while searching for adequate job opportunities. Most vulnerable in their learning trajectories are the young Roma and other ethnic minority groups who tend to accumulate various disadvantages from early childhood such as poverty, early school dropout and early parenthood together with more or less open ethnic discrimination in the labor market. Individualized and flexible approaches to the training of such groups are rare, as is the consideration of the personal needs of all young people in the implementation of the training programs.

1. Qualitative findings in Plovdiv FR

1.1. Introduction

Plovdiv is the second largest city in Bulgaria after the capital Sofia. It is located in the South-Central region of the country, on the shores of Maritsa River in the Upper Thracian Plain. Its territory is 101,981 square km, and the population is 338153 persons or 4.6% of the total of the country (NSI, 2017). Plovdiv is a strategically important industrial, commercial, academic, cultural and transport-communication centre. It has vibrant cross-country economic links and hosts an International Fair with autumn and spring exhibitions and numerous specialized expos. The city is a strategic railroad junction, and Plovdiv Airport aspires to become an alternative to Sofia Airport. The Plovdiv region has many logistic advantages and is an intersection point of three Pan-European corridors (IV, VIII, and X). The preserved architectural, historical and cultural heritage makes the city as a major tourist centre of Bulgaria and was elected to be the European Capital of Culture in 2019.

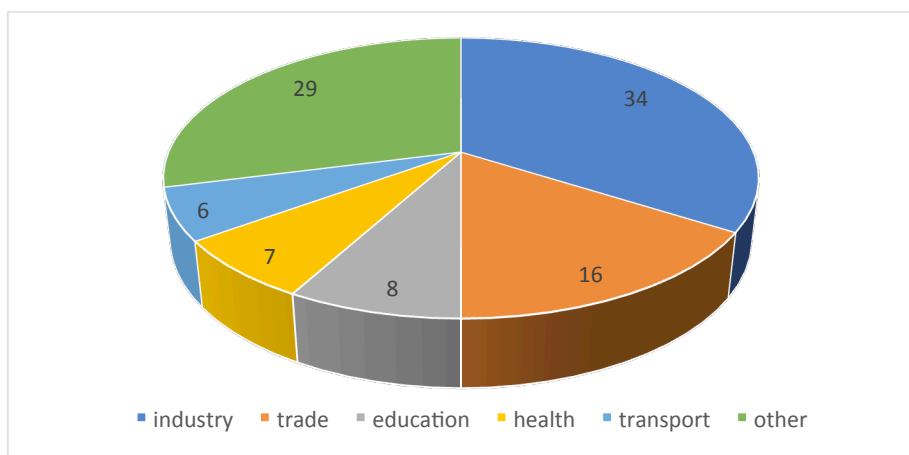
Figure 1.1. Economic map of Plovdiv FR



The economy in Plovdiv FR still has a significant share of industry which provides over a third (34%) of employment in the region. The local non-financial sector produced output for €7.3 billion in 2015 and contributed added value equivalent to €2.2 billion. The rise of productivity in the past decade is ensured by abundant capital investment. Expenditures on acquisition of land, machinery and equipment exceeded €900 million in 2015. Cumulative foreign direct investment in the real sector in the area reached €1.6 billion as of end-2015. Total foreign capital deployed in the Plovdiv region almost doubled between 2007 and 2011 and additional €330 million were invested in the local economy between 2012 and 2015. FDI in the region has grown at a rate of 11.7% annually for more than a decade (NSI, 2017). The IT sector is one of the fastest growing industries in recent years, providing opportunities for highly skilled labour. Hiring labour for the “light industries” such as

manufacturing of food and beverages as well as clothing and shoes is on average cheaper than employing a worker in the “heavy” industries, which typically require more specialized skills and knowledge, such as manufacturing of machines and equipment or metal parts. By occupations, wages for specialists, incl. engineers, are two times higher than those for skilled workers.

Figure 1.2. Employment in sectors, Plovdiv FR (%)



The population in Plovdiv FR had an activity rate of 68.8% in 2015 which is a rise of 2.7 p.p. since 2008 (NSI, 2017). The unemployment rate in 2015 fell with 3.5 p.p. in comparison with 2014. However, in 2015 in the age group 15 – 64 there were still 30000 registered as unemployed, as well as 138 000 people who were economically inactive. The administrative statistics of Plovdiv Labour Office (PLO, 2017) reports that in 2016 there were 1270 unemployed young people (19-29) registered in the Labour Office (average monthly number) which forms 18.2% of all registered unemployed. In 2016 in Plovdiv there were 152 young people taking part in the scheme Youth Employment (1769 participants for the country as a whole) and only 32 in the scheme Training and Employment for Young People (12223 participants for the country as a whole).

Young adults in Plovdiv FR face several risk factors that place them in vulnerable situations. Most underprivileged in education are young people of Roma origin (Mitev and Kovacheva, 2014). The Roma are 4.9% of the city population according to the last census in 2011 while experts consider this share to be much higher (OSI, 2008; Milenkova and Hristova, 2017). The young Roma are particularly disadvantaged because they are at a much higher risk of early school leaving due to poverty, cultural practices of early marriage and the existence of segregated schools. While young people from other minorities and the majority population also face the risk of dropping out before the obligatory school leaving age, for the Roma this often means not only a lack of any qualifications, but also remaining illiterate – about one fifth of the Roma youth according to the census data (NSI, 2011). Underprivileged in the labour market of the region are the long-term unemployed and those working in the informal economy but most at risk are the NEETs - with those not in education, training and employment who

are over 20% in the South-Central region. Young people with disabilities and from Roma ethnicity are overrepresented in this group. Those at risk of severe material deprivation in the total population reach 40% in the South-Central region. Again, in this group the most affected are families with many children, single mothers and Roma youth.

1.2. Approach to sampling, fieldwork and analysis in Plovdiv FR

When designing the sample for the qualitative interviews, the Plovdiv team started from the general theoretical perspective adopted in the project and developed selection criteria which would allow to capture the perspectives of young adults and experts on LLL policies in the two functional regions in Bulgaria. We created the sample starting from the policies in the two FR which we analysed in WP3 and added additional criteria to ensure that significant differences within the policy fields were represented. We aimed to achieve numbers in each sample (young adults and experts) which would be higher than required in order to safeguard the data collection from unexpected difficulties.

We selected policy schemes in LLL, labour market and youth and social policy which were among the policy priorities in the region and their target groups were young adults. This criterion allowed to examine how the chosen policies influenced the decisions, actions, intentions of young adults and the experts involved in the design and implementation of the programs. On the other hand, it presented a basis for a deeper analysis and assessment to what extent these policies were effective and actually supported young adults' transitions from education to employment and their overall well-being.

- 'Student practice' is a project, part of the priority axis "Lifelong learning and education" of the EU operational program "Science and education for an intelligent growth". The main objectives of the project are: improvement of the quality of education in higher education institutions through offering opportunities for obtaining practical experience and perfecting the practical skill of the students in correspondence with the needs and requirements of the job market; support for the transition from the education institutions to the job market; additional opportunity for practical education of students in an actual work environment; increase in the number of students who start working in their field immediately after graduating. This scheme is of relevance for our regions because of the high unemployment among university graduates and even the higher rate on underemployment among them as many holders of university diplomas work in jobs below their level of qualifications and do not use their skills potential.
- Youth guarantee in Plovdiv is implemented through two schemes. The, Scheme „Youth Employment” is the second chosen program in FR Plovdiv. It is a part of the "Development of human resources" operational program aiming at encouragement of employers to open up new job positions for the young unemployed (aged up to 29) and includes training and qualification for young people with medium educational level. This scheme is particularly relevant for the region as there is a high share of graduates from secondary school with general education and no specialized

qualifications and no work experience. The Scheme “Training and Employment for Young People” in FR Plovdiv targets young people up to the age of 29, who are already registered as unemployed at the employment centres and are offered a six-month internship. The training is conducted in real work settings. The main target group in this program are the NEETs and they were defined as one of the biggest policy challenges in the FR and the country as a whole.

- ‘Youth entrepreneurship’ is a program of the Labour Office in Plovdiv aimed at stimulating innovative way of thinking and business strategies among young people who would wish to realize their potential as independent actors or self-employed people on the job market. Education, personal qualities and competences are of particular Importance, not only for the realization of the young person, but also for the maintaining of the business endeavour and the stable development of the personal company. We chose this program because it was considered by the regional authorities as one on the most popular and successful initiatives and because in opinion surveys young people in the region are among those most willing to start their own business.
- The training programme of the Schenker logistics company is interesting in the fact that it is developed and implemented by a private provider with the aim to prepare young graduates for the work in the company. During the training they receive a grant equal to the minimum salary in the country.
- The fifth programme is the training provided by the Land Source of Income Foundation. This is an organization from the non-profit sector and targets specifically young Roma helping them buy land and training them to cultivate it. This program was analysed in WP6 and we included it here only to understand the context of the young participant of Roma origin whom we interviewed during the fieldwork.

Additional criterion for selecting experts for the interviews was their place in organizational hierarchy with the objective to contact high policy experts as well as street level practitioners. We also included other significant players in the public life in the region which were analysed in WP6. For the young people’s sample, we also had additional criteria. The first was gender and we aimed at even distribution by gender in the whole sample. By choosing gender as a criterion, we expected to reveal the diversity of motivations, expectations, intentions, as well as the behaviour, choices and preferences of men and women. The second criterion was ethnicity as Plovdiv is traditionally one of the Bulgarian cities with a rich mix of different ethnic and/or religious groups (Turks, Roma, Armenians, Jews, Muslim Bulgarians, Greeks and in recent years Russians and Chinese). We anticipated that representatives from the ethnic majority in Bulgaria would have better chances for education and occupational realization in the job market in comparison to some specific minority communities. Finally, we included the educational level as a selection criterion maximising diversity in the life chances of young people with different educational paths.

The realized sample of experts is the following: The Student Practice, the Youth Guarantee and Youth Entrepreneurship are each represented by two experts and the other LLL programmes by one each. The experts were equally divided by those working on a high level in the organizational hierarchy and those who could be described as street level professionals. By chance they were equally divided between men and women.

Table 1.1. Realized sample of experts in Plovdiv FR

Code of expert	Gender	Agency/ organization	Position	Organizational level	Programme
E_BG_P_1	F	Plovdiv Labour Office	Manager	high	Youth guarantee
E_BG_P_2	M	University of Plovdiv	Expert	low	Student practice
E_BG_P_3	F	Municipal Enterprise "Tourism"	Manager	high	Student practice
E_BG_P_4	M	Labour Office Maritza	Expert	low	Youth guarantee
E_BG_P_5	F	Regional Agency for Social Assistance Plovdiv	Expert	low	Social support
E_BG_P_6	M	Foundation Plovdiv 2019	Expert	low	Youth entrepreneurship
E_BG_P_7	F	Youth and Sport Directorate, Plovdiv Municipality	Manager	high	Youth entrepreneurship
E_BG_P_8	M	Schenker Training Centre	Manager	high	Schenker training centre

The realized sample of the interviewed young adults was somewhat more diverse. There were 5 women and 7 men among our interviewees aged from 22 to 30. By ethnicity the group was divided in 8 Bulgarians, 1 Armenian, 2 Roma, 1 Bulgarian Muslim (Pomak) and by education 7 people had university education, 4 had finished secondary education and 1 had completed elementary school only. There are two characteristics of our sample that deserve commenting upon which resulted from the way the interviewees were selected – we wished to match the experts with the young participants in the programmes so the interviewed experts gave us the contacts with the young adults. Those two features of the Bulgarian sample are the following. It is perhaps older than that in the other countries in the project (26 years of age) which reflects the strategic orientation of the country' policy – young people are supposed to follow the steps of the formal educational system till 23-24 and then in the job search it is the family which is the main institution providing career orientation, social contacts and emotional support when the young face difficulties in their labour market integration. State institutions interfere mostly at later stages. Also, the group as a whole does not seem strongly

underprivileged and facing grave social barriers. For us this is a manifestation for the assumption of Bulgarian policy makers that youth as a whole is a vulnerable group.

Table 1.2. Realized sample of young adults in Plovdiv FR

Code	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Policy Programme
Y_BG_P_1	F	24	majority	BA	Youth guarantee I – Scheme „Youth Employment”
Y_BG_P_2	M	25	minority	secondary	Youth guarantee II –Scheme “Training and Employment for Young People”
Y_BG_P_3	F	30	majority	MA	Youth guarantee I – Scheme „Youth Employment”
Y_BG_P_4	M	26	majority	MA	Youth guarantee I – Scheme „Youth Employment”
Y_BG_P_5	F	27	minority	MA	Youth guarantee I – Scheme „Youth Employment”
Y_BG_P_6	M	25	minority	secondary	Youth guarantee II –Scheme “Training and Employment for Young People”
Y_BG_P_7	F	30	majority	BA	Youth entrepreneurship
Y_BG_P_8	M	22	majority	Secondary	Student practice
Y_BG_P_9	M	27	majority	BA	Schenker training programme
Y_BG_P_10	F	22	majority	secondary	Student practice
Y_BG_P_11	M	29	minority	elementary	Roma Foundation
Y_BG_P_12	M	28	majority	BA	Schenker training programme

The fieldwork was conducted from March to June 2017. Our strategy for data collection included developing a list of experts on different levels of the organizational hierarchy of institutions dealing with LLL, employment, youth and social policy. The expert interviews were conducted by three young researchers each of whom contacted experts from the list in order to convince them to give an interview. All informants were visited at their workplaces and the interviews were held there, except E_BG_P_4. All experts stated to be very busy and unable to spend a great deal of time but once agreeing to participate, each of them approached the study seriously and answered the questions thoroughly. Initially, there was some anxiety from the audio recording but during the interview they started to relax and willing to share their opinions. There were no incidents.

The first interviewee (E_BG_P_1) was confident and calm during the interview. There were no difficult moments and the atmosphere was relaxed, only when the phone rang several times during the interview, the interviewee was nervous. There were many papers on the desk. It was much more difficult to arrange the interview with E_BG_P_2. After agreeing and starting with the questions, the interviewee became calm and gave comprehensive answers. The atmosphere was a bit tense because of people coming in and using this cabinet. The interview was conducted in the office of the interviewee which was used by other people too. The interview with E_BG_P_3 was conducted after working hours and the expert closed the office. The atmosphere was relaxed and there was background music in the office. No one interrupted the interview. The interviewee was motivated and delighted to speak. Initially the expert was anxious to talk about the problems, but in the course of the interview the interviewee relaxed and willingly shared opinions about difficulties and failures in their practices. The interviewee E_BG_P_4 was extremely serious during the interview and did not allow any distractions. Initially interviewee talked very fast but later calmed down and answered the questions more at ease. The interview was conducted in the house of the interviewee. The fifth interview (E_BG_P_5) was conducted in the office of the interviewee with a long queue of people (most of them Roma) waiting to receive their monthly social payments. The interviewee was nervous at the beginning. Then the interviewee calmed and started to talk. At some moments, when the interviewee thought what to answer, the colleague in the room intervened suggesting answers. There was some tension when talking about the problems of the minorities but in general the interviewee was motivated and delighted to speak. The sixth interview (E_BG_P_6) was problematic because of the workload of the expert. The interviewer had to wait for half an hour after the arranged time because there were a lot of people were in the office and the expert had to finish working with them before the interview started. During the interview the phone rang a lot of times and he had to answer so the interview stopped several times. The atmosphere with E_BG_P_7 was a little tense with the phone ringing and colleagues in the room intervening in the conversation. Finally, the interviewer asked for more peace and quiet for the interview and the phone was switched off. The interview with E_BG_P_8 was the difficult to negotiate due to the heavy workload of the expert. The interviewee was calm and wished to be as useful and comprehensive as possible. The atmosphere was relaxed. The interviewee was friendly and patiently answered the long list of questions from the interview guide.

The strategy for selecting young adults was to follow the experts' interviews and to ask the experts for contacts with current and former participants in the programmes. Thus, we aimed to have the perspectives of both groups in one programme which would allow to compare them at the stage of the analysis. One interviewer conducted the first seven interviews with young people all of whom were participants in the schemes provided by Plovdiv Labour Office. All of these interviews were conducted in cafes in the city. In order to achieve a greater diversity, two interviewers, young researchers, were additionally employed to conduct more interviews managed by other institutions. The young people

from Y_BG_P_8 to Y_BG_P_12 were approached through personal contacts of the research team. These interviews took place either in the homes or at the workplace of the interviewees. As the participants in the training programme of the Land Source of Income Foundation lived and worked in nearby villages, one of the interviewers travelled there together with the agronomist and interviewed a young Roma man in his home after work.

Ethical requirements were met in all interviews - all experts and young people first received the Information Letter stating the objectives and tasks of the project and then voluntarily signed the Declaration of Informed Consent. The conversations started only after the ethical procedures were finished. The young adults were largely responsive to the request for interview and agreed more readily than the experts. There were only two refusals to participate in the study. Most young people initially required to get detailed information about the project and then confirmed their agreement for the interview. With the exception of Y_BG_P_1, the other respondents were initially somewhat anxious to answer questions in front of the microphone but gradually relaxed in the course of the conversation. Interviewers did not encounter communication difficulties in general, with the exception of Y_BG_P_6, who did not always understand the questions.

All interviews, both with experts and young adults, were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Each interviewer provided protocols from the fieldwork and wrote two-page analytical abstracts after the interviews. These were presented and discussed at research meetings and subsequently revised. Each interview was coded by two researchers who then exchanged their coding lists and further analysed the texts. For the analysis the team followed the instructions provided in WP5 Working paper which were refined in numerous team meetings.

1.3. Results from the expert interviews in Plovdiv FR

The expert interviews present information about five LLL programmes: Student practices, Youth guarantee, Youth entrepreneurship, Agency for social assistance and Schenker Training Centre. The analysis does not claim representation, and instead aims to reveal the subjective views of interviewed experts on the policies and practices promoting LLL in Plovdiv FR.

1.3.1 Antecedents, objectives and expected impacts of LLL policies in FR

The policy program **Student practices** 2016-2020 is the second next phase of an earlier project which was implemented in 2013-2015. There is not a lot of information about what the innovation is in the second stage. According to E_BG_P_3 the current project is '*a natural extension*' of the previous one, which had the same name. In the view of the expert, the new phase only increased the mechanisms of control over all parties involved: the employers' companies, the universities and the students. The objectives of the project in both phases were to provide opportunities for practical training in real

work settings. Thus the students can sign a contract with different organizations and trainers and these are the companies that operate in Plovdiv and the surroundings.

“...to help students accumulate more practical knowledge already in a real work environment, each of them choosing the direction in which they are trained to be able to assess how much they want in the future to deal with what he did within these 240 hours”. (E_BG_P_3)

The expected impact according to E_BG_P_2 is to improve the quality of education on the one hand and to build better cooperation between business and higher education institutions.

The policy program **Youth guarantee** according to E_BG_P_4 is a continuation of the “First Job” program providing work placements for young people up to 29 years of age. *“Yes, in general, they are slightly different things, but they target almost the same groups in one range.”* According to E_BG_P_1 the new life to the programs came from the EU directives. They expressed concern that the “Youth Employment” program was running out. The both experts expected the impacts of the LLL program to be positive and to consist in involving a very large part of the young people in the territory of FR Plovdiv and to be able to direct them to jobs, as well as to satisfy the needs of the local businesses. Also it is expected that those youngsters who have participated in the program will continue with their employer after the term of their subsidized employment, thus entering into a permanent contract in the firm in which they have gained an internship.

According to the interviewed expert (E_BG_P_6) the policy program **Youth entrepreneurship** does not have any antecedents and is very innovative. It became possible when the city of Plovdiv was chosen for the first time to be the European Capital of Culture in 2019. The expert stated that one could consider as antecedents of the project previous initiatives involving volunteers. In the past there have been different types of information workshops targeting diverse target groups and youth were one of them. The expert E_BG_P_6 formulated the main objective as to involve young people in social entrepreneurship for public causes in the city. Through this participation in the initiatives of the Foundation Plovdiv 2019 and the partner organizations, they would acquire the necessary experience, social skills and professional experience. According to the other expert (E_BG_P_7) the project for young entrepreneurs is unique but started already in 2010. According to her the main objective is to develop the ‘*business orientation*’ of young people on the territory of Plovdiv Municipality. The prize in the competition is a great stimulus for the young to formulate business initiatives and receive public acknowledgement. The expected impacts are the young people to acquire a variety of skills - skills that will help them in the future in their professional and personal development.

The **Schenker training centre** according to E_BG_P_8 has no similar previous projects in Bulgaria. The objectives are to provide an internship program that comes to identify the right people who, in addition to graduating from a university, have an interest in further development in the specialty they

have studied theoretically only so far. The program is about creating a proposal for young people to come to the company and selecting them to work in the various departments of the company. The expected results are:

'to develop them professionally and after that to give the trainees the opportunity to be part of the company – while they are still fresh, immediately after leaving the university where they still lack work experience and specialization'. (E_BG_P_8)

The expert did not formulate the type of skills they were training the young for and said that it all depended on the inclinations of the young – for working with clients, for dealing with trade partners or in finance. It seemed that the program in practice was used to select potential employees but first test their abilities and motivation rather than providing training.

According to E_BG_P_5 the objectives of the program of the **Agency for social assistance** was to provide opportunities for clients to move from dependence on social benefit to the job market. However, according to the expert this did not work and there was a turn to the worse from the past to the future. The effect of the top-level politics is negative. They deal mostly with people from ethnic minorities who are *'not ready and do not wish'* to work. In the years 1991-1994 there was no such thing as it is in the present. Until then all people from the minorities went to school and after that worked.

"Everything happened after the changes when many of the companies closed, for example, the canning firms where they mostly worked in went bankrupt. The minorities have always been with lower education and were engaged in low-skilled jobs that they could perform OK. And after the changes, the 89th year, and especially 5-6-7 years after, everything was closed and everyone was out of work and then the state started offering the social support for the minority and they got used to the idea that life was easier without work." (E_BG_P_5)

The expected impact according to the expert is completely negative and if there is no change with the education of the minority children, the negative impact will continue to grow.

"...the weak point here is education, schools, all schools, without exception in [...] neighborhood, they are in charge of these delegated budgets, they 'teach' students who do not study at all, and therefore have 8th graders who do not know Bulgarian. No, they do not know how to write, they do not know how to speak in Bulgarian. This is only related to the delegated budgets, and then money is given, so now we are being given money for the new start, again to teach them. After 5 years it will be clear that they have not yet learnt anything and will still need to go to education courses to learn Bulgarian when the Bulgarian is taught from 1st to 3-4th grade, and it is now mandatory for children from the age of 5 to attend pre-school. So if they attend pre-school, the young children will learn Bulgarian! And from there everything rotates, the child does not know Bulgarian, how will

they work with no education and only benefits, they give birth at 14 years. At the age of 25 they are already grandparents, but still illiterate ... and everything rotates in a vicious circle and becomes very scary.' (E_BG_P_5).

Table 1.3 sums up the information about the programs presented above.

Table 1.3. Programs' antecedents, objectives and impacts

Program	Antecedents	Objectives	Expected Impacts
Student practices	Extension of the previous one, which was also called "Student practices"	Practical training in different organizations by mentors who are employees in the business companies or public organizations supported academic advisors from the university	improving the quality of education and building better cooperation between businesses and higher education institutions
Youth guarantee	"First Job" program "Youth Employment"	Steering unemployed young people towards employment as well as meeting the needs of the local businesses to employ qualified young people	Young people will gain the necessary skills so that they would be employed on a labor contract by the same employer after the term of their subsidized employment.
Youth entrepreneurship	n/a	Involving young people to participate in the initiatives of the Foundation Plovdiv 2019, as well as to develop business start-ups	young people will acquire a variety of skill that will allow them to develop business plans
Schenker training center	n/a	Recruiting and selecting motivated young people to work in the company	Finding a high quality motivated workforce, and increase employment rate in the region
Agency for social assistance	No need of such programs in the past as people worked in the state-owned companies.	Helping young people from the minorities to integrate more easily into society	Getting sued to not working and studying, having children early in life and living on benefits.

1.3.2. Construction of the target groups

In this paragraph we present the construction of the target groups done by the interviewed experts, looking particularly whether there is gender bias and neglect to social categories with different resources. We also examine experts' consideration of the living circumstances of young people, their family responsibilities and civic engagement, and the programs' impact on young adults' feelings of insecurity and autonomy.

The policy program **Student practices** assumes that young people have only theoretical knowledge and lack practical skills to work in business companies. The construction of the target groups according to the experts in this program is related to the selection of students for their inclusion in practical training during their bachelor's and master's courses and whether they can gain additional skills besides the ones acquired at the university. Participation in the project is taken by students who are already motivated to work in a real environment. According to an expert E_BG_P_2 *"the project is aimed at the shrewder students in the university community who thus enter the labor market, in a sense touch it for the first time"*.

As clearly emphasized in the interviews, the skills required by young people are determined by the practice practitioners themselves. In the announcements, the companies publish the terms and conditions that are closely linked to the requirements for young people's possession of skills. In this way, the training organizations strive to send them only students who meet their predetermined staffing needs.

The expert E_BG_P_2 identifies the project as successful in terms of eliminating differences between social groups. An additional achievement is that the choices of the target group are the competences and skills of the participants, not their social affiliation, that is, this social affiliation is irrelevant. As the interviewee (E_BG_P_2) points out, *"it does not matter what the group is, whether it is a minority group or not."* The project has a variety of students who work in different training organizations.

When establishing target groups, there is a bias towards the choice of higher education students. Preference is given to graduates and masters, which prevents the participation of all the students and puts the students in first and second courses in a disadvantaged position.

The uncertainty of the project's participants stems from the large bureaucracy involved in the very large number of documents required by them. In the course of the project, however, it is noticed how this uncertainty and mistrust are disappearing and how the project also has a beneficial effect on the life situation of young people:

"at one point their life cycle students get diplomas and they have to face the labor market and they have to face employers, and at least in this period of their practice they see the realities in the field in which they decided to develop and work after graduation ... so they acquire some skills for their lives." (E_BG_P_3)

The policy program **Youth guarantee** treats young people as having insufficient skills, education and motivation. The construction of the target group and the skill requirements of the young people eligible for the project depend on the judgment of the participating companies. They rely on what they need to be able to develop their own business through training and subsequent recruitment of young

people. It is noticed that young people who have communication skills and good performance skills are a priority group in the selection by the Labor Office. According to the expert (E_BG_P_1), young people *"gain confidence when participating in the project, especially when they work on what they want and what they have learned."* Through the experience gained, participants become more competitive on the labor market and this enables them to get better social status.

As a result of personal involvement, a large proportion of young people improve their living conditions, especially those who have a motivation for change. There is also another part of the young population lacking motivation because of the lack of parental support: *"There are young people whose grandparents lead them to register because their parents are abroad, for example. And they lead them here to get them to work."* (E_BG_P_1)

The expert (E_BG_P_1) sees the program as a means of overcoming discrimination and inequalities in the region through the opportunity for everyone to reach a job. On the one hand, this is achieved with the help of the case managers, which help younger men to make it easier to connect with employers. On the other hand, through mediators and their cooperation, the goal is to overcome the rejection of young people from different social groups. There is also some uncertainty about the program, and it is related to the low wages that employers offer to young people and which are incentives for them.

The policy program **Youth entrepreneurship** – The basis for choosing a target group for youth entrepreneurship is the skills that young people have for building entrepreneurship. Participants are mostly younger youths and those who have business ideas and desire to realize them. There is no discrimination in this program, and on the contrary, it is aimed at achieving equality: *"between people from different ethnic groups, people from different neighborhoods, people from different cities" ... "there is generally no distinction between gender, religion and social status. Everyone is welcome to apply."* (E_BG_P_7)

According to the expert E_BG_P_6, the effects of involving young people in the initiative are related to the acquisition of different skills that can help them in future professional and personal development. In addition to professional experience, young people also receive social and life experience. The life situation of young people is also improving as they become more confident, more capable and generally more active citizens with a clear position.

The policy program of the **Schenker training center** targets young people who have just graduated from a university specializing in the field in which Schenker develops. There is no bias towards a particular social group when selecting the target group. The program offers the same conditions for all candidates, regardless of gender, race or affiliation. The expert (E_BG_P_8) presents today's young people as 'lacking motivation':

At the moment young people do not wish to work, on the other hand if they wish to work, they wish to immediately start in a managerial position and get a salary of a minimum 5000 leva [BGN]... most do not think about an investment in the future but only about the sum that will enter into the pocket tomorrow. In the sense there is no long-term thinking, how to say, thinking in perspective.

The changes for young people after participating in the program are assessed as positive and are mainly related to the influence of the supervisor on the practitioner. *"It is very important if the interest of the young person is discovered at an early stage so that no time will be lost on both sides."* This will have a positive impact on the development of young people as well as on their social and personal lives. According to the expert, in order to substantially change the life situation of young people, it is necessary to increase the financial support they receive during the practice. This will eliminate insecurity and engage young people with more active behavior.

The policy program for the **Social support** is based on the Family Benefits Act for Children, the Social Assistance Act and the Disability Act. The program clearly distinguishes participants by gender and ethnicity. Female females belonging to ethnic minorities predominate. According to the expert E_BG_P_5, the program has a rather negative impact on the development of the ethnic minority population. They use the program as a means of obtaining financial support, and to this end they are creating children at an early age. Often even children are born with disabilities, which is related to getting bigger benefits and *"they are even encouraged to give birth to such children or to harm their children."* (E_BG_P_5)

The expert E_BG_P_5 considers that the program creates inequality between the majority of the population and the minority groups. While all live in a difficult situation, the program privileges ethnic minorities: *"as a whole, in the region, many people, not only the Roma population, but the mainly Bulgarian population is discriminated against."* This inequality between the participants arises from the fact that the participants of the ethnic minorities in the program are much more than the Bulgarians and the result is that

"...conflicts arise between the two communities because one is accustomed to living in one way, the other - in another way. There is some intolerance ... Just someone feels discriminated against by something, for example, when a Bulgarian has to queue with 50 people from the ethnic minorities". (E_BG_P_5)

1.3.3. Coordination between actors

In this section we analyze experts' interview to uncover the forms and levels of cooperation between institutional and individual actors in the implementation of programs, cases of conflicts, mechanisms for accountability and evaluation (as seen by the experts) and ways of dealing with wicked problems.

The main partners in the policy program **Student practices** are very diverse. The two interviewed experts pointed at significant actors in the program such as small and large employers' organizations, universities and state institutions in their role as employers. The communication is in three directions: between a university student, when starting and appointing an academic tutor to control the practice; between the student and the employers' organization, when practicing with a mentor appointed by the employer; between the university as an institution and the employers' organization, when the experts control and help to achieve the maximum efficiency of the internship. According to the expert E_BG_P_2 the communication between the three groups is clear and well defined, to a large extent documented by an electronic or hard copy. However, in order to create clarity in the process of practice and communication between partners, too much bureaucracy is created, which at some point acts as a problem.

"...too much documentation to fill in, bureaucracy in talks with employers and training organizations, we have concluded that this strongly demotivates them..." (E_BG_P_2)

Cooperation between partners is necessary because of the whole process will fail if one of the participants is excluded from the process. Of course, conflicts arise, but according to the two experts, they are resolved quickly because of the desire of all sides finish the program successfully. The main conflict situations, as the expert (E_BG_P_2) points out, are sometimes the inadequately prepared documentation or a mismatch between the character of the student and the mentor as part of the employers' organization. But by talking and arbitrating by the academic mentor, the student goes to a more appropriate practice for him.

Accountability and evaluation according to the experts is mainly expressed in the improvement of the process of matching between what the student wants as a form of practice and what the employer organization wants. The university on its part tries to mediate between the wishes of the students and the employers. There is no clearly defined form of assessment at the operational level but collecting a positive feedback from the student and the employer about the practice is considered to be a good practice.

Because the **Youth Guarantee Program** is set up at a European level, centrally controlled and implemented locally, the communication and partner network are complex. The network generally includes communication and cooperation among young people who are not working and are inactive, but want to work and the employment offices that contact different social partners, such as employers'

representatives, the Business Chamber, the Chamber of Commerce, the Employment Agency, the Directorate for Social support "and others.

Co-partnering, as the expert says (E_BG_P_1), is multi-layered because of the many agents involved in the project, including the conclusion of agreements, the development of plans, strategies, roundtables, exchange of experience, etc. When asked about conflicts, the interviewed expert defends the position of no conflicts. In the view of the research team, given the complexity of the links, the multiple channels of communication, the multiple goals and priorities, the many partners and last but not least the different levels of communication - European, central and local, conflicts are inevitable – from the stage of setting the goals to the stage of implementing them by all participants. However, the official position is that any misunderstandings can be solved quickly with communication without causing any serious disturbances. The position of a representative of the public authority to protect the program's effectiveness is understandable. It is clear that when conflicts arise, they are discussed only within the organizations without information being allowed to spread outside. Officially, accountability and evaluation is strictly defined at European and central level, without the experts at the operational level knowing them fully.

The **Youth Entrepreneurship Program** is offered to all young people who, together with the municipality, the Cultural Foundation and other youth and voluntary organizations are the main partners. The cooperation between the various organizations and the young people is expressed in the practice of volunteering, while the cooperation between the other partners, as revealed by the expert (E_BG_P_6), is expressed in organizing common events and a network of mutual assistance.

Conflicts arise only in the communication between the organizations and the youth. Like other programs and practices, these conflicts are due to the unrealistic expectations of young people. When asked how the conflicts are resolved, the expert said:

"With conversations and with ... examples. So like all human beings when you explain to a person exactly and clearly what they can expect, and not just what they read in the media, I think they accept things with understanding. And all people like to engage in a conversation, to ask and to get answers." (E_BG_P_6)

According to the expert, the only tools for dealing with wicked problems, given their simplicity and consistency, are to communicate and realistically talk about the benefits of the program.

The main partners of the policy program **Schenker training center** are Schenker, an employer organization that offers the training and the young people who would like to go through such a practice. As the expert (E_BG_P_8), has clearly stated, doing this kind of practice by Schenker in Plovdiv has begun recently and he personally has little experience. For this reason, contacts with other

partners are very limited. At that time, only some universities participate by selecting certain students without establishing an institutional link between the universities and the Schenker company.

The coordination between the partners is expressed mainly in two directions. First between students and Schenker, so that social networking, advertisements for internships and public information create the relationship that eventually becomes an internship. Secondly, between Schenker and the universities, where the opportunities for Schenker training and the wishes of university students are matched through communication.

The conflicts arise mainly as a clash between the expectations of the young people about the practice and the reality, as the expert points out. The lack of work habits and Schenker's desire to prepare their future workers sometimes shows the young people that they are not ready to work yet. In this case, the conflict is resolved through a conversation between the young person and the company. If possible, the young person is sent to the department closest to his/her ability and willingness to work, and if there is no such possibility, the practice is terminated.

"...there is a collision between what young people can offer and what they expect. What companies offer and what our future colleagues expect from the company because the expectations of young people in generations today do not correspond to what the company actually understands as offering. They do not understand what their company proposes to invest in them as time and effort; I mean that understanding is just how much money they will receive immediately." (E_BG_P_8)

Accountability and evaluation as seen by experts and ways of dealing with wicked problems at the operational level in the Schenker branch in Plovdiv are simple. The main criterion for evaluation is the number of young people who have refused to accept the offer, moved to another department or have gone through the training and started working as employees. In the view of the research team, a large part of the problems are due to the lack of human resources evaluation tools within the training programs. Although such a practice exists in Schneckner's office in Sofia, lack in Plovdiv creates challenges for optimizing results. The expert pointed out that in the capital, they have a lot of mechanisms and good practices, but in Plovdiv the program has only 2-3 years of implementation and things are in the process of development.

The policy program **Social support** is primarily aimed at helping disadvantaged groups mainly from ethnic minorities. The main partners, as the expert points out, are public institutions, young people and employers. In the conversation with the expert, it is clear that this is perhaps the most difficult program in terms of co - operation. The expert's words are discouraging to achieve good results in integrating young people into the labor market. This is understandable due to the many years of unfortunate attempts to integrate ethnic minorities, which is confirmed by the official national statistics.

Conflicts are clearly expressed because of the ethnic minorities' attempt to use the programs as only a source of financial income without attempts for labor market integration. These problems, as the expert reveals, also occur in other EU countries, and are caused by the closure of these ethnic groups into themselves and their thinking as recipients of rights, especially financial, but not of their responsibilities.

The process of reporting and dealing with wicked problems is difficult and ineffective. Because of the complexity of judging the family and financial situation of young people, it is almost impossible to assess what help they need and what to do for them. The conversation clearly shows the need for a serious change not only in this program, but also in the policy of integrating ethnic minority youth.

1.4. Results from the interviews with young adults in Plovdiv FR

1.4.1 Young adults' life courses

The young adults' interviews were analysed first as separate cases to uncover their learning trajectories, the subjective relevance of education and training for the young adults and the relationships between their learning biographies and other areas of life. A significant focus is placed on their participation in the LLL program in which they were selected for the interview and how this programme influenced and possibly changed their lives. In the analysis we use the codes shown in Table 1.3 and have deleted some of the details from their biographies such as the exact ethnic group or some personal details in order to preserve young adults' anonymity.

The first six interviews which follow here were with young people who were currently or in the past involved in two schemes of the Youth Guarantee program of the Labour Office in Plovdiv.

The young woman (Y_BG_P_1) is from a middle-class family which provided her with all the financial resources to gain to good education: including private lessons and fully covering her expenses for her university studies in the capital. She still lives in the family home (after returning from Sofia) and her parents are supporting her. Her mother, who is a senior expert in the local Labour Office, also helped with social contacts and information – for the employment scheme and for the job she was expecting to start soon after the interview. She presents herself as a person who knew what she wished to work since primary school. Her learning career shows that she was not very good at school which she blamed upon her 'demotivating' teachers and the lengthy teachers' strike. She managed to get a university diploma but not in the speciality she wanted and then could not find any jobs because "*the employers always wanted a 3-year working experience*". She was a participant in the Youth Scheme thanks to which she started working in an architectural studio. She was satisfied to acquired new knowledge and skills but did not stay in the job after that. Currently she is enrolled in an MA she does

not like and plans to enrol in another one when she finishes this. She wishes to have her own furniture design company in the future.

The second case is of a young man (Y_BG_P_2) from ethnic origin. He is from a working-class family with modest resources and although supportive of the young man's efforts to find a job, his parents could not provide him with useful career advice. Neither did the Labour Office and its training schemes. Unlike other informants, he does not see fault in his teachers' lack of teaching skills but in their disinterest to offer career orientation to their students. He is also critical of the '*theoretical orientation*' of the education and training he has been involved in. He has learnt much more from his numerous temporary jobs than from the formal education. He has worked in more than ten jobs but never stayed long which he attributes to his '*irritable character*'. The only place of work where he stayed for a year was the bell-foundry near Plovdiv, where he worked under the Youth Employment Program. The program finished and he had to return to the Labour Office again. He tried to get traineeships under this programme twice more but left them himself. He loves dealing with cars and has the practical skills for such jobs. His only wish is to work in something connected to cars, even if it would be selling second-hand parts. He is also contemplating emigration to the UK.

The third case (Y_BG_P_3) is a 30-year-old woman from a lower middle-class family. She lives with her retired father. The mother died five years ago which had an extremely strong influence on the formation of her character and the attitude to the world. She did not have a clear idea about her professional life. Her secondary education was in economics, then had a BA and MA in Physics and then another one in accounting. She was not satisfied with the theoretical orientation of the programmes. She applied for jobs in different places (schools, courts, real estate agencies), but was nowhere accepted. She blames this to her lack of connections. She worked on several programmes in the Labour Office, always on a fixed term contract. During her involvement in the Youth Guarantee program she worked as an accountant in a private company but the employer was dissatisfied with her, was not inclined to train her and after the 6-month program gave her a negative evaluation. She was currently working on another fixed term program at the Labour Office and had no idea what to do after that. She claimed it was better not to plan for the future. She was very pessimistic disappointed by friends, colleagues and employers. She considered that there was a gender discrimination in Bulgarian labour market.

The forth case (Y_BG_P_4) is of a young man, 26 years of age, with a clearly outlined school trajectory and a fixed life plan. He passed smoothly the levels of the formal educational system up to the MA level and never worked being financially supported by his parents. Given the solid education and privileged family environment in which he grew up, he easily managed to make the transition from education to employment. He finished his studies in law from the university in his home town and while preparing for the state exams, enrolled in the Youth Guarantee Program and used it to get an internship at a law

firm as a legal consultant with a 6-month contract. His case is probably the closest to the normative life course in the country and shows the preferred target group of the Labour Offices in Bulgaria.

The fifth interview (Y_BG_P_5) was with a young woman, 26 years old who is a representative of one of the ethnic minorities in Bulgaria, born and raised in a small mountain town. Her family belongs to the low layers of the middle class, religious and with traditional views on life. She had to fight for her right to get higher education with her father and was persistent succeeding in receiving two MA degrees. Despite her educational success she had a long battle to find a place in the labour market in the large city of Plovdiv. Her registration at the Labour Office as unemployed gave her access to information about various European programs and she got involved. Participation in several programs kept her busy and allowed to gain experience during this stage in her life. She changed many jobs, most of which she left when the programmes ended but also once her decision was due to experiencing harassment from a boss at work. She says she feels ashamed of having so many temporary jobs in her CV, most acquired thanks to involvement in LLL programmes but also considers that she has developed useful skills. She is now working in an NGO, satisfied with her job, and determined to succeed in it, having acquired additional IT skills from a private training company.

The sixth case (Y_BG_P_6) presents the life path of a young man of ethnic minority origin with secondary education who has successfully established himself in the labour market. He is from a poor family and grew up without his father. He remembers primary school as a happy time in his life, lots of friends and learning interesting things. When he finished the 8th grade, he planned to stop studying as many of his friends did. His mother and elder sister supported him and insisted that he signed up and got secondary education. He chose a vocational program in another town and was working for money during holidays and weekends in other people's plots of land and in construction. His family also persuaded him to study harder and he managed to get his diploma for secondary education. Then the family went to Greece to work in agriculture for 2-3 years. They went back together and a friend of his introduced him to the boss of a commercial company. He started working there as a loader. The accountant of the firm directed him to the Labour Office to sign up in a LLL Program under the Youth Guarantee. He had a six-month training period and was promoted as a warehouse keeper. He retained his post at the end of the program which was something that we did not find in any of the other cases of young people interviewed in Plovdiv. He plans to marry his girlfriend once she finished school and thinks that education is important for girls as well as for boys.

The seventh interview (Y_BG_P_7) was a case of a rather privileged young woman, aged 29, who was enrolled in the Youth Entrepreneurship Program of the Labour Office in Plovdiv. She is from a middle-class family and her parents work in the private sector. They have helped her with private lessons and supported her financially in her numerous unsuccessful applications to universities over the years. She changed universities and specialities she applied to without having a clear idea of what she wished to

study and even less what she wished to work after that. Her working career was also hectic with jobs as a waitress, bartender, hotel staff at the sea side. At some time, she wanted to become a teacher in Bulgarian language but no school accepted her. Registering as unemployed in the Labour Office, she enrolled in the Young Entrepreneur programme and started developing a business plan for a beauty parlour. This did not work out as she calculated that she would not have the necessary capital and then with the help of a friend she found a job in a telecommunications company where she still works. She invests all her time and efforts in her work but is also thinking about having a family in some time in the future.

The next group of five interviews is formed by young people in different LLL programs typical for the LLL policy in the city. They were offered by institutions besides the Labour Office. One was a programme of another state ministry, another one was offered by a private business company and the third one was managed by an NGO.

The eighth case (Y_BG_P_8) is a young man who participated in the Student Practices project run by Ministry of Education and Science. He is 22 and grew up in Plovdiv. The role of parents in his life is not very prominent and he does not talk much about them. He was good at school without being 'the excellent student in the class' and valued education more for the friends he made at school than for the knowledge he received. He studied at the prestigious high school in economics but found out that this was not what he wanted to do. He did a lot of sports and belongs to the fan club of a local football team. He started studying journalism at the university which he liked for the free time it allowed for activities having personal importance for the student. Together with two friends he created a cultural magazine that is gradually becoming successful. In 2017 he enrolled in the Student Practices project and chose the Youth Theatre where he participated in the preparation of a theatre play. The skills acquired during the internship he used in his own magazine. He is planning to study one semester in Lisbon under an Erasmus grant led by the curiosity to visit a 'Southern country'. He considers the other aspects of his life unpredictable.

A 22-year-old woman (Y_BG_P_10) is the second participant in the 'Student Practices' interviewed in our project. She followed the steps of the educational ladder with ease. Her academic success allows her to quickly change her choices and to experience these shifts not as a drama but as an opportunity for widening her skills and personal outlook on life. She is from a middle-class family and her parents act as a support institution giving their daughter a lot of freedom to make choices of schools and subjects. Besides being good at learning, she was very good at organizing events, playing sports, writing scenarios for school drama projects and was often the leader of the class. At the university, she studied journalism (after changing the chosen university and speciality three times) and invested most of her time in her studies. It was very important for her to acquire 'practical skills' not defined to any specific area, so she took every opportunity for internships. The first two trainings she did were

evaluated by her as 'useful in gaining experience but rather boring as everyday work'. In the third year she enrolled in the project Student practices which was much better organized and she stated that she discovered what she wanted to do as a profession after that. She is also planning to continue studying for an MA but she will pick up the place and the subject when the moment comes. She avoids having fixed plans for the future.

The next two cases are informants involved in the training programme of one of the biggest employers in Plovdiv – the Schenker international transport company.

The first interviewee (Y_BG_P_9) is a 27-year-old man taking an internship in the company. This is a case of a self-assured young man with clear life plans. His educational trajectory is rather linear. He received primary and secondary education in his home city. He worked in the administration of a private company for two years and then made up his mind to continue studying further. He went to study at the Higher School of Transport in Sofia. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree and signed up for an MA in the same institution. His graduate supervisor in the MA course suggested that he had abilities to get a doctorate, he has not yet made his mind. Having received two degrees – BA and MA in transport - he applied for an internship in a large international logistics company in Plovdiv. He is highly satisfied with the internship programme of the private company and hopes to be able to work for it in the future and make a career there.

The second interviewee (Y_BG_P_12) who was doing an internship in Schenker was a young man with higher education degree from the University of Transport in Sofia. Like the previous case, he was born and grew up in Plovdiv, receiving his primary and secondary education in his home town. His life trajectory is more specific because he had to work for money from the age of 15 in order to support his family. When he was in the 8th grade his father died, his mother was ill and could not work. His father's death was a key moment in his life and changed his everyday life forcing him to grow up quickly. During high school he worked in construction without a contract and this continued when studying part-time in the university. Nevertheless, he managed to follow the steps of the formal educational system and receive a BA and MA in the field of transport and logistics. Many additional internships allowed him to start working in a large company with prospects to build a career in it. He was highly satisfied with the one-year internship programme in Schenker where he started from the lowest step and gradually moved up, so he could understand the nature of work from the inside. He has ambitions to become a manager in the company. He also plans forming a family with his girlfriend in the near future.

The last case presented here is a young man of ethnic minority origin, aged 29 (Y_BG_P_11). He is an interesting case of having a short educational career, early work and early marriage and then thanks to the training and support he received from an NGO, he started his own business and managed to develop it. This gave him motivation to continue with his education and to encourage his children to

study hard. He lives in a village near Plovdiv and has 2 children: a boy of 8 years and a girl of 8 months and his wife is on one-year paid maternity leave. When he finished the 8th grade he did not continue his education and went to Greece where his parents were working at the time. He wanted to buy a car and people were making good money in Greece. On one of his holidays back home he married his wife and they went to Greece together where they stayed some more years. He returned several years ago and was contacted by the Land Foundation. They enrolled him in their training programme and still agronomists come to the village on a regular basis and advise the farmer. He is very satisfied to work for himself and make good money from the agricultural produce. He has plans to buy more land and build a warehouse. He has also signed up in part-time course to get secondary education. He says that the Foundation has taught him not only how to cultivate the land but also **'how to become a better person'**.

1.4.2. Construction of the life stories

In this paragraph we analyse the ways of young adults' self-presentation, dominant themes and discourses.

In the construction of the biographical narratives of young people there is a strong emphasis on the desire for professional realization and development. The majority described themselves as having an active and positive outlook on life (Y_BG_P_1, Y_BG_P_4, Y_BG_P_5, Y_BG_P_7, Y_BG_P_8, Y_BG_P_9 and Y_BG_P_10). They liked studying or at least passed through the levels of the educational system with ease. They were agentic in trying to develop work careers and gain new knowledge and skills. They said they owed a lot to their parents who supported them at difficult moments and helped them in choosing a school/university or an occupation:

"I knew what I wanted to do since the 5th grade - engineering design." (Y_BG_P_1)

"I always knew about myself that I would work something like international relations or ... or public relations. Work with people in general." (Y_BG_P_8)

There were also young people who spoke about losing part of the life support due to the loss of one parent (Y_BG_P_3, Y_BG_P_6, Y_BG_P_10). They regarded this as a turning point in their lives, and such personal shocks strongly influenced the formation of character and value system, the life trajectory and their professional realization. One of the young adults categorized himself as *talented and hardworking* but stressed that she was *underestimated* by teachers and employers (Y_BG_P_2). He always looked for the blame outside of himself and considered himself as a victim of the state, the social system, the employers or the circumstances. He planned to go work abroad because *"here in Bulgaria, in order for a person to develop as he wants, he must either hit the jackpot of the lottery ... or receive an inheritance."* (Y_BG_P_2). With the accumulation of professional experience, one of the young people (Y_BG_P_11) realizes the *lost benefits of lack of education*.

In the young people's stories, there are several dominant themes in the construction of their life stories. Thus, the **parent figure** is particularly important for all young people. In the stories, the parent is usually the authority, the positively figure that advises and directs the young person in making important life / professional decisions. Some of the young people say that while they do not accept automatically the advice of their parents (Y_BG_P_3, Y_BG_P_6, Y_BG_P_7), they listen and discuss. Only two of the young adults did not wish to speak about their parents (Y_BG_P_8 and Y_BG_P_9) which suggests possible conflicts in the family.

The **school teacher/university lecturer** were also central figures in the life of young people. The evaluations of the young people on the role of institutional authority are mixed: from a *positive assessment* and appreciation to the teachers for the preparation and guidance regarding the choice of higher education and professional realization (Y_BG_P_3, Y_BG_P_4, Y_BG_P_7), through *neutral* (Y_BG_P_5, Y_BG_P_6) to *critical* (Y_BG_P_1, Y_BG_P_2). The last two young people emphasize that teachers not only ignore them, they even hurt their future development. Thus Y_BG_P_1 pointed at the teachers' protests due to which the students missed much of the curriculum and Y_BG_P_2 considered that teachers did not motivate students to study and were not interested in students' life after school.

"In the 8th grade, the teachers' strikes ... lost 90% of the time. It was very difficult in the 8th grade... Then for 5 years we switched 10 teachers in French, so nobody knows anything." (Y_BG_P_1)

"It has not happened to me that some of my teachers have encouraged me to apply for a university. Their opinion is that everyone must decide where to go and how to proceed." (Y_BG_P_2)

Many young interviewees also commented on their encounters with people from business companies. The **employer** was a key figure in the life of young people at this stage of their lives. Typically, the young adults criticized employers for not willing to provide training and expects that they start off immediately doing all tasks (Y_BG_P_1, Y_BG_P_2, Y_BG_P_3):

"Yes, de facto you do not know anything, because your employer says "I will not deal with you, I will not teach you" because he will waste his time watching you, explaining what you have to do." (Y_BG_P_1)

"Most employers think that when you go, you have to know everything. And there is no way to have this knowledge, at least from higher education. (...) Employers do not understand that (LLL program(s)) is an internship program and they have to teach you." (Y_BG_P_3)

Of the 12 interviewed only three young people (Y_BG_P_6, Y_BG_P_9 and Y_BG_P_12) expressed satisfaction with their employers who offered them an employment contract after the training.

The uncertain future clearly stands out in the life stories of almost all young people. Most of them stress that it is difficult for them to make clear and definite plans for the future due to the economic

and political situation in the country. One of them (Y_BG_P_3) is categorical that inertia in life is a better survival strategy than the development of career development strategies.

1.4.3. Young people's life projects and expectations

In this paragraph we look into our interviewees' short-term and long-term plans, definite or indefinite occupational and other life projects.

Young people describe their life projects in two directions: professional and personal development. Four young people (Y_BG_P_4, Y_BG_P_9, Y_BG_P_11 and Y_BG_P_12) have a clear career strategy with a more or less fixed plan. Thus after graduating from high school Y_BG_P_4 follows the stages of his career as a lawyer. He perceives education as an intellectual investment in his professional realization and devotes a great deal of attention to (self)preparation at the Faculty of Law. In order to prepare for the upcoming state legal exams, he even refuses a job offer at a law firm and preferred the less time-consuming training offered by the Youth Guarantee:

"At the moment I can not combine my job with this employer with my preparation for these exams. I do not like to have mediocre results in two places, I like to have perfect results in one place. And I chose this place to be these magistrate competitions." (Y_BG_P_4)

Y_BG_P_11 plans to develop his business with the support of the Land Foundation, intends to buy more land and build a warehouse for agricultural production:

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

Two other interviewees (Y_BG_P_9 and Y_BG_P_12) intend to continue working in the firm they were currently employed and were determined to work to upgrade their skills and move to a manager position.

The other eight young people did not have a clear plan and said they would rely on chance or help from friends and parents in finding a job. For example, the young woman Y_BG_P_7 tried to find a job as a teacher through her father's connections but failed and then was successful to start a job in a telecommunications company through her boyfriend's contacts. Respondents Y_BG_P_8 and Y_BG_P_10 are friends from childhood and together they decided and created one of the popular journals in Plovdiv. They hope that this would not only be their main source of income but also a field for professional development.

Eleven of the young people intend to work and develop in Bulgaria. One (Y_BG_P_2) plans to leave the country and look for work abroad. He is firmly convinced of his professional qualities, and there is (just) one positive example of his successful friend.

In the case of personal development plans, all young people emphasized that they would like to create a family with children in the near future (Y_BG_P_11 is already has a family with 2 children). Most young people's expectations are that they will be able to combine their professional development with my family commitments. Y_BG_P_2 thinks it will be hard for him to support a family:

"Like any normal person, I want to build a family, but I just do not know (...) whether I will handle the payment I have to raise a child. This is something that actually stops me from thinking about these things." (Y_BG_P_2)

Analysing the stories of the young adults who took part in our study as a group, several characteristics come to the fore. The traditional divides along socio-economic background, gender and ethnicity, have an impact on the young people's trajectories. The three young men Y_BG_P_2, Y_BG_P_6, Y_BG_P_12, with ethnic minority origin are underprivileged in their educational chances and two of them have achieved only secondary education and one has dropped out of school before the obligatory age. Two of them Y_BG_P_6, Y_BG_P_12 had gone to work in agriculture in Greece which was a common practice for Bulgarian Roma before the crisis in 2008. This practice provided subsistence money to the poor families but often diminished the chances of their offspring to get a good education. The family background is one of the significant indicators along which the young adults' trajectories can be clustered. Only four young people come from working class families, and two from lower middle-class families living through financial difficulties. The high achievers such as Y_BG_P_4, Y_BG_P_7 and Y_BG_P_10 were clearly from privileged families. It is not only the financial resources of the family that played a role but also parents' abilities to provide advice and contacts for their offspring paths along the steps of the formal educational system, the LLL opportunities and job openings. Most families with the exception of the family of Y_BG_P_8 were presented as supportive by the young interviewees. We did not get enough detailed information about the emotional relations among the family members but it is another important factor that we should keep in mind. Two young people have lost a parent – a key event that has created both financial and emotional difficulties in their life trajectories.

Gender turned out to play a clearly limiting role in one case – that of Y_BG_P_5. Combined with the specific minority status of belonging to an ethnic community and the traditional patriarchal values of the father in the family, the young girl had to fight to get the higher education she wished to achieve. The women's solidarity (on the part of the mother and the twin sister) obviously played a role to overcome this barrier. In our small sample it was only women who complained of gender discrimination in the job search. The 30-year-old young woman, Y_BG_P_3, was convinced that if she set up a family and took a maternity leave to care for her children, she would lose her job.

This means you only need to work, work, work and nothing more. If you're a woman they expect that you will have children one day and take leaves to care for them, so you're a second quality person... it's always like this (started crying)." (Y_BG_P_3)

Fatima shared with the interviewer her experience of psychological harassment at the workplace. She had to leave one of her jobs because of the mistreatment of her employer in the small private company.

She (the boss) screams at everybody and they just bear it. I could not stand up all this mentally. After a while I could not sleep at home and could go to work only with sedatives, it did not make sense (and I left)." (Y_BG_P_5)

It was interesting that most of young people presented themselves as autonomous actors despite that they were living in their parents' home and in most cases, were financially dependent on their parents. Only students studying in another city were renting apartments while coming home for weekends and holidays. Only one of the Roma men who had formed a family was separately from his parents. Our results are in line with NSI statistics of the late average age of Bulgarians leaving the parental home - 32 years for men and 27 years for women (NSI, 2017). The fact that only one Roma man had his own children and none of the interviewed women suggests that having difficulties in the school to work transition delays the formation of own family. Bulgaria has one of the lowest age for women to give birth to the first child - 25.7 years of age (Eurostat, 2015: 37). It seems that the liberal ideology has influenced young people's self-perception. Even those who blamed their teachers of the low quality of the education provided or for not being interested in young people's personal development, found personal reasons for school failure - for example Aram stated that a lot of his problems in school and work were due to his 'irritable character'. When making important decisions in life (changing school, choosing university) most young people relied on their parents' advice, sometimes adding friend's opinions. Almost all young people aspired to form their own family and raising children but delayed it for the undefined future (with the exception of Angel who became a father at about 20 years of age).

Most young people tried to conform with the 'normal' paths through the educational system. It was only one of the ethnic minority men who dropped out of school after finishing primary school and enrolled back in the educational system to receive secondary education at the age of 29. Reflecting on his choice to leave school, he blames himself (his wish to buy a car) and not 'the circumstances' - his choice was not to stay alone trying to study while his parents were working in Greece:

"I left the school because there was a lot of work there (in Greece), people were earning good money, so I left the school. And now I study in part-time... I want to have a secondary (education) because that is good, if I want to get work elsewhere. It is now that they all want secondary

education everywhere... So, I tell my children what we learn is important and it's good to ... go to school" (Y_BG_P_11)

The young people's efforts to follow the official educational path do not mean that the system coincided with their learning trajectories. One third of the young interviewees had switched from one vocational school to the other and even more often from one university to the other. The qualitative data suggests a major failure in the career orientation of the young at the point of finishing secondary school. Even those with well-to-do parents in many cases changed their choices of universities and specialities before finally settling into one. University students were more privileged in their access to internships than students in secondary vocational schools, again frequently changing their choices.

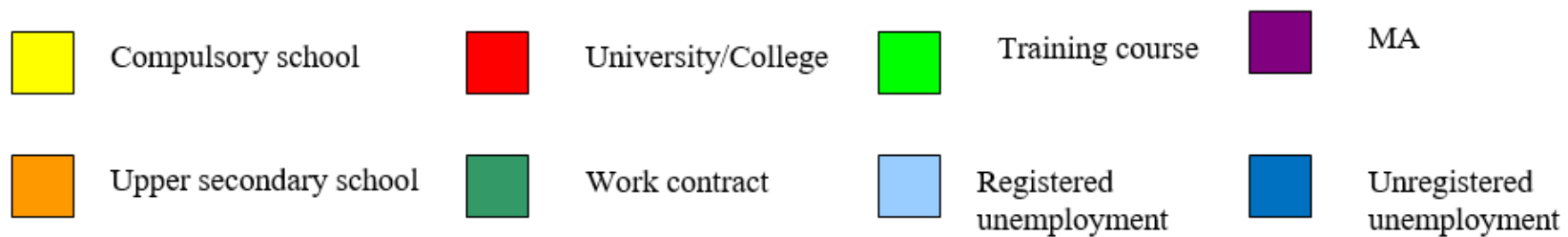
Our data display two new trends in the working careers of young people in Plovdiv. First, many start working while still at school or university and in jobs completely different than the speciality in which they were studying which is a radical break from the communist past and their parents' experiences. Second, they face high job insecurity working informally, without labour contracts, and quickly switching from one job to the other. This is again a significant change since communism when 'informal' work was almost impossible as the state controlled the 'right and obligation' to work and job mobility was strongly sanctioned as 'negative job turnover'. Y_BG_P_2, Y_BG_P_5 and Y_BG_P_7 had internalized this stance of negative evaluation of having a 'fragmented career' and felt uneasy to show the numerous short-term jobs in their CVs.

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

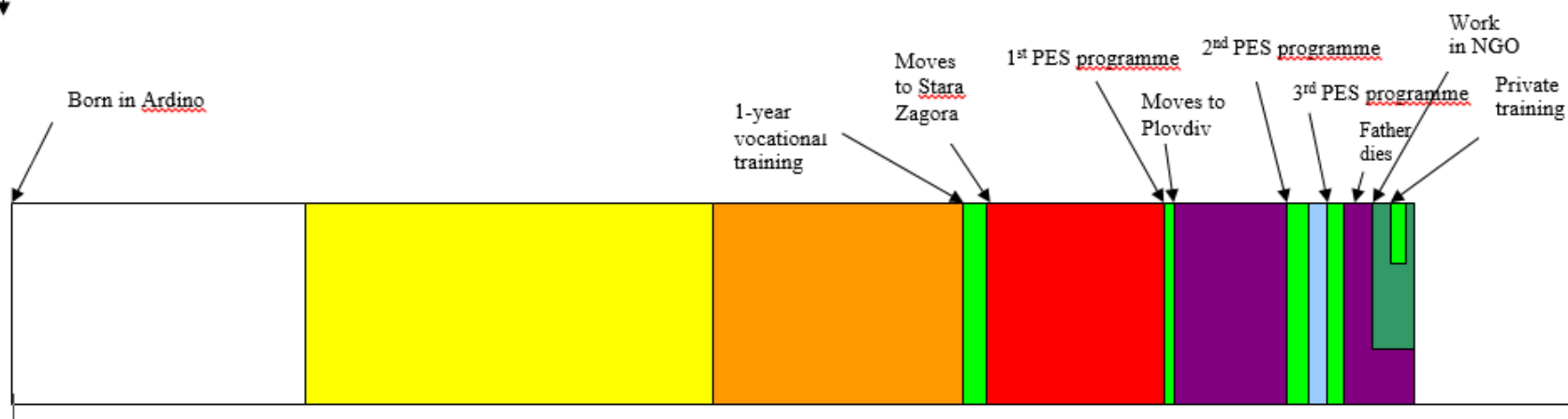
We created an illustration of the school-to-work transition path of Y_BG_P_5 whom we present by a pseudonym Fatme (Figure 3) as she shared many of the common characteristics of the young adults in Bulgaria. Unable to find a direct entry into the unfriendly labour market, they get involved in different educational programmes and accumulate diplomas without much increasing their chances of securing an employment contract. Thus, Fatme has been involved in several training programmes of public employment services (PES), has one MA and is studying for a second degree, has had short encounters with different employers that has made her trajectory a fragmented one.

Figure 1.3. The line of Fatme's school-to-work transition

Phases:



Events: ↓



Besides the common experience of the insecurities of the transition from education to employment, we could discern a significant diversity in their attitudes and practices of involvement in LLL programmes. Some were satisfied with the work skills they had developed during the training but would not like to continue working in this field. Others were pressed to enrol in state programmes by their actual or potential employers. Thus, the two minority men, Y_BG_P_2 and Y_BG_P_6, had been recruited into the Youth Guarantee Programme by their employers who in this way would save the money they should have paid for the young employees' wages and social security.

As I decided to apply for the job, my boss mentioned that he had participated in this (LLL) program and I participated in the same program. (...) And if I want to start with them, this is the condition because the program actually requires it. (...) I did not know about this program before. And then I was impressed by the fact that a lot of the companies participate precisely because of the amount that helps them for the budget later on. (Y_BG_P_2)

The young woman from an ethnic minority origin had a similar experience:

I started looking for a new job (...) When they saw that I was of such an age and I had the education, they immediately made the link that they could use subsidized employment for me. They made me wait for the (Youth Employment) program to open, I was appointed by this program and only after that they offered me the place. Still on a very good salary, but it became clear to me that as the program expires, the salary will change again. (Y_BG_P_5)

However, there were many positive experiences as well. Y_BG_P_6 had been promoted to a better paid job after completing the programme. The students in journalism Y_BG_P_9 and Y_BG_P_10 and the law student Y_BG_P_4 were highly satisfied with their experiences with the Student Practices and the Youth Guarantee as they added more internships to their CVs and acquired some new skills which they could have developed in other programmes as well. The two young men Y_BG_P_9 and Y_BG_P_12 were happy to have been able to take the training programme of Schenker international company but it seems that their satisfaction came more from the perspectives to get a job in the company than from the skills they acquired in the programme after having university degrees (BA and MA) in the same field. Most satisfied with his participation in the LLLP was Y_BG_P_11, the farmer supported by the Land Source of Income Foundation, who developed his practical skills for cultivating the land, received funding to buy the land for his farm and in addition, developed his identity learning 'how to become a better person' in his own words.

Participation in LLL programs was not considered as a key moment in their life trajectory by any of the interviewed young people. None openly criticised the street level experts or the policy makers in the field. Those who had worked themselves in Labour office under their training programs spoke well of the practitioners there and understood the difficulties they faced:

They [the experts] try and try to explain to everybody, but it's just really hard to turn everyone around." (Y_BG_P_1)

"Of course, there is the help from [the name of the expert]. He always gives advice that can help, because we do not know the things." (Y_BG_P_11)

The latter answer was given by the young farmer supported by the Land Foundation. He was the most positive to the experts and had established a personal relationship knowing the man by name. Most young people however, referred to the experts without even knowing them and rather spoke about the institution and not about the people inside. This is in a sharp contrast with the individual approach of the Foundation towards its trainees.

"In fact, I submitted the documents to the Labor Office, and most probably the experts provided them to the employer because the employer had some idea of me before our first meeting. And this means that he most probably met the documents I have provided to the Labor Office" (Y_BG_P_4)

Another meaningful gap in young people's narratives was the lack of the term 'skills'. Rather they spoke about 'being or not prepared for work'. Most important for them was 'to be able to understand the tasks' they were allocated and to do them properly. The young lawyer explained that he thought to go to the training ready to fulfil any task but then reconsidered his capacity.

"I wanted to work, and I wanted to show how good a lawyer I can be, and I went with the attitude of being a top lawyer from the first second on the first day I got to work, and how it all comes out of me the first time. But it turned out that it just did not. I realized that as much as I was good at the simulation case studies at the university, no matter how well I did the state exams, that was training, that was a simulation, that was part of the fictional life in order to verify the student's law knowledge. (...) And this was initially the hard time - to optimize my time and to carefully think about the steps I do to avoid losing time and doing the job." (Y_BG_P_4)

The young man who had trained in the logistics company explained what he needed to do his job well what we can define as 'hard' or occupational skills:

'Everything is complex - client-facing (...) perfect Excel for shipment handling. In a second, you have to do 10 things at once, but you need to know what's most important. You have to satisfy the interests of both the company and the client. Because if there are no customers, there is no company.' (Y_BG_P_12)

Several young people claimed that the training was extremely poor and they did not learn anything useful (Y_BG_P_1, Y_BG_P_6, Y_BG_P_7, Y_BG_P_11). Most young people did not talk about soft skills as well. It might be that the young people were not aware of the importance of these skills or that such

soft skills were not valued by the employers. Only one young man Y_BG_P_2, in his self presentation, seems to have intuitively captured his lack of communication and teamwork skills and considers this to be his personal flaw:

"And for some jobs it's my fault, because my character is different, more self-explanatory, although at the moment I'm a little more reluctant, but apparently over time man is changing. At the beginning when I started working, I was more vigorous, I wanted to be freer. While I've been re-thinking about my life for six years now. "(Y_BG_P_2)

Summing up, we can distinguish the following patterns in young people's learning trajectories in Plovdiv FR focusing on their experiences from the LLL programmes:

- Participation in LLLP as a way of maximizing opportunities

This type is characteristic for the young people with a more privileged family background and with easy and direct movement through the 'normal' educational system. They freely choose which programme to select, have no problem in being accepted and add new experiences and some useful skills and contacts in their CVs. We can allocate Boris, Plamen, Elena and Neli to this pattern of learning biography. When some of them switch from one programme to another, it is done in an experimenting style rather than feeling pressed to choose anything.

- Participation in LLLP as a way to keep yourself busy

Young people in this trajectory have not passed easily through the levels of the formal educational system and the experiences and realistic prospects of long-term unemployment have pushed them to choose enrolment in LLLP programs. The training keeps them busy providing some skills but is not perceived as a step up the occupational career. This trajectory is typical for young people from families with limited resources, in terms not only of financial but of cultural capital, the latter meaning the ability of parents to provide professional advice to their offspring. Ana, Aram, Fatima and Villi belong to this group.

- Participation in LLLP as a way of gaining access to the firm

This pattern involves taking up training not with a motivation to fill in a gap of particular skills or because of the prospect of unemployment. The participation in a programme in this case is a stepping stone, a way to secure employment into the company which otherwise will not give you a job. This learning strategy is applied by young people from families with more or less limited resources such as Dimo and Jordan wishing to work in the international logistics company Schenker and Assen who was pressed to sign up with the Youth Guarantee in order to secure his employment in the private company which he liked.

- Participation in LLLP as a way to acquire the skills and a source of income

This learning path is represented by one case only – that of the young man from ethnic minority, who failed the formal educational system and needed knowledge and skills to work in agriculture in Bulgaria rather than taking seasonal employment abroad. His motivation to learn in order to have secure, permanent and independent income turned into a life strategy for personal development and he wished to transmit these values to his children.

In the following table we try to summarise and compare young people's life trajectories from the parental family through formal and non-education and to work.

Table 1.4. Young people's learning and working trajectories

Case	Family background	Self-image	Learning trajectory	Job search strategy	Programme/ perceived effect
Y_BG_P_1	Middle class, lives with parents, who are supportive	Self-assured person, capable of planning	Not very good at school, blaming teachers for failures, achieved higher education but not in the speciality she wished, studies for MA	'Always' knew what she wished to work, blames employers for not trusting the young; has had one training job but did not stay, dreams about having her own furniture studio	She got access to the Youth Guarantee through her mother, got some skills but not in furniture design
Y_BG_P_2	Working class, lives with parents who are supportive	Independent, with 'irritable character'	Liked school for the friends he made, but not for its 'theoretical orientation; finished vocational high school; 'learnt more' from the jobs he had worked in.	Has held more than 10 jobs, half without a contract; ready to work anything with cars, thinks about emigration	Has made two unsuccessful attempts to get enrolled in the Youth Guarantee, the third time was successful but was not offered a contract at the end and is now registered again in the Labour Office.
Y_BG_P_3	Lower-middle class family, mother died 5 years ago (key event), lives with father	Very pessimistic, disappointed by friends, private employers, public institutions, 'no point to	No linear path and changing orientation, holds MA in physics, currently works as administrative assistant in the Labour Office	Has applied for jobs at schools and in private companies, but only 'people with connections' are accepted. Does not know what to do with her life; considers that there	Has held 3 jobs in the Labour Office, always under some job creation schemes. Under the 'Youth Guarantee' worked in a private company but finished with a

		plan'.		is a gender discrimination in the labour market	negative reference.
Y_BG_P_4	Upper middle-class family, lives with parents	Self-assured, with a clear life plan	Very good at school, follows the steps of the educational system – from prestigious school to university law.	Linear orientation towards the legal profession	Used the Youth guarantee to get internship as a legal consultant in a private law firm.
Y_BG_P_5	Lower middle-class family, father against her university studies, twin sister as a key person	Respects father and traditions but persists in what she is aspiring to	Good at school, has two MAs in different subjects, learnt a lot from the temporary jobs, added training courses in different skills, such as IT from a private educational provider	Changed numerous jobs, many through the Labour Office, many of them she left because she 'did not like them' but once because of harassment from the boss.	Satisfied with the skills she acquired when working under the Youth Guarantee and used them to find a job with an employment contract in an NGO
Y_BG_P_6	Poor single-mother Roma family, agricultural worker.	Shy, 'doing what comes next'	Primary school as a happy period with lots of friends, his mother and sister (key persons) insisted to get secondary education, worked while studying	After doing agricultural and construction work off the record while studying in the vocational school, he worked in agriculture in Greece for 2-3 years, then found a job with a commercial company as a loader	The accountant of the company made him register with the Youth Guarantee and during the training he worked in the same company. After that he was promoted to a higher position.
Y_BG_P_7	Middle-class family, supportive	Still experimenting and does not have a clear life plan	She was not able to follow a linear path through the university and despite private lessons, has several unsuccessful applications to different universities.	Hectic job career as well – numerous unsuccessful job applications and many temporary jobs. Her current job is in a telecommunications company	When in the Youth Entrepreneurship programme, she developed a business plan to start a beauty parlour but then abandoned the idea as not feasible.
Y_BG_P_8	Possible conflict but not story about his	Active and innovative, oriented towards	Good at school, elite programs, likes his BA major for 'the free time it	Has not had any jobs yet, still at school. Established and runs his own	During the Student Practice programme worked in the Youth Theatre and the new

	parents	culture	allows for personal development', does a lot of sports	cultural magazine together with friends	skills he acquired used in the editing of his magazine.
Y_BG_P_9	Working-class family, supportive parents	Self-assured, clear life plans	Linear educational trajectory up to high school, then had a two-year working experience, then studied for a BA and MA in Sofia	Between high school and university worked for two years.	Enrolled in the training program of Schenker and plans to make a career there. Sees it as a necessary step to get a job in the company
Y_BG_P_10	Middle-class family, rents a flat in the university city, supportive parents	'Easy learner', good at organizing things, autonomous, avoids planning for the future	Leader of the class, good at extracurricular activities, changing universities and specialties, several internships	Has not have any jobs yet, only three internships.	Under the student Practice she not only developed new skills but finally found what she wished to work in the future.
Y_BG_P_11	Poor Roma family, agricultural workers, has his own family and 2 children	Satisfied with life	Short educational career, dropped out of school after the 8 th grade in order to work in Greece with his family, now involved in secondary school	Agricultural work in Greece, worked on other people's farms	With the training programme of the Land Foundation he bought his own plot and started farming. Learnt both practical (farming) and life skills – 'how to become a better person'.
Y_BG_P_12	Middle-class family, his father died when he was 15 (key event), his mother is the significant person in his life	Self-reliant young man	Despite financial difficulties and the need to work during holidays, he has had a linear educational career up to MA at the university. Took many internships while at the university.	Worked in construction without a contract before graduation	Started the training programme of Schenker and plans to work in it after that, very useful to 'start from the lowest step'.

1.5. Interaction between experts and young people

This section of the report aims to compare and contrast the perspectives of the two groups interviewed in the qualitative part of the study – that of experts implementing LLL policies on the local level and that of young adults participating in the programs and schemes of LLLP.

We received information about the interaction between the two groups as early as at the stage of developing the lists of young people participants in the LLLP programs that were most significant for Plovdiv FR (as established in WP3). The selection of interviewees was based on the suggestions of the Labor Office in order to see a program from the viewpoints of the two main groups involved in them – providers and participants. In the first round we ended up with a list of young people who were from rather privileged family backgrounds which we consider indicative of how the policy experts define their target groups. The public policies in Plovdiv FR perceive youth as a whole as a vulnerable group, so most programs are directed towards aged-defined groups. Most programs of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy address youth up to the age of 29 and declare that there is no differentiation (meaning no discriminatory) treatment based on gender, ethnicity or religious affiliation. The official policy documents list some vulnerable groups but the practices draw a different picture, the officials selecting young people with more resources and greater chances for successfully ending the program. The main beneficiaries of the Youth Guarantee program are young people with university education or the most active persons with secondary education. The project Student Practices of the Ministry of Education and Science similarly address a wide but still rather privileged group – university students. As we see from the stories of our interviewees, many of university students have had other internships, so a clandestine selection of the most active and promising young adults is underway. The training program of the private employer is also aiming to pick up the best among the numerous candidates and do not specify any preferences for vulnerable groups. It is only the NGO that specifically targets an underprivileged social group – the young Roma. We can make the conclusion that both state and private providers aim at picking those applicants who have the greatest potential to finish the program successfully. Young people from all strands readily accept the program offers to try different opportunities, to develop their CVs or just not to stay in the register of the long-term unemployed.

Comparing the objectives as seen by the experts and young adults' expectations, it is clear that they often go in different directions. The experts focus on trainings that focus on occupational skills ignoring the specific needs and wider personal aspirations of young people while for the young getting an employment contract in the desired occupation is the primary goal. For those from privileged backgrounds often involvement in LLLP means accumulating diplomas. The low-qualified youth consider that the practitioners in the programs do not care what happens after the training ends.

It is clear that the development of the state LLL policies is a centralized process managed by the relevant ministries and young people are not invited and not expected to contribute to the design of the programs and schemes. Very often the young participants get recruited by the employers themselves in order to save money or use cheap labor for the period of the internship, as in the case of the Youth Guarantee. On its part, the training center of the private company uses MA holders for a period of 9 months paying them the minimum salary for unskilled work. The experts from the state agencies also recruited participants 'from above' often ignoring their individual work and career aspirations. Even more neglected seem the individual personal needs of the applicants for the programs.

Comparing experts' practices and young adults' experiences again what comes to the fore is that the experts in some state programs do not really follow and keep track of the challenges that the trainees face. Once settled in a 'real work setting' (a phrase so much loved by the experts) the young are left to the 'mercy' of the employer and there is no monitoring of the process of implementation.

Points at which the experts and the young largely agreed were some of the difficulties in implementing the programs: long and complicated application procedure, long period of approval, and complicate procedure for reporting. Both groups often blamed the third participant in the process of LLL – the employers who expected the young to be fully acquainted with the job requirements, to be ready to work on complex tasks for low pay. In many cases however the experts and practitioners blamed the young for their 'unrealistic expectations for high remuneration while in internships and not willing to accept low pay for the training periods.

The program providers were either unaware or unconcerned about the mistreating practices of the employers working on LLLP programs such as replacing trainees immediately after the end of the period without offering an employment contract to any or keeping the trainees on the job only if they agree on a reduced salary. Under the Young Entrepreneur Program of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the requirements for the business start-up are so high that make the services of an external consultancy company necessary while the funding is so small making the founding of a company unrealistic.

In the practices of the private logistics company we could detect a hidden gender bias. We were asking specifically for contacts with women who currently were or had been taking part in the training program and the management did not (very probably) could not provide us with any names. Similarly, the two young men trainees in the center whom we interviewed said that they did not know any women in the program.

In the interview of the practitioner working in the Agency for social assistance there was an open bias against the Roma who were portrayed as having a culture which does not value learning and is prone

to promiscuity and early births. The policy of the Agency clearly avoids such statements but the practice of working with the most vulnerable groups among the ethnic minorities who are dependent on social benefits give rise to such views. In contrast, the three young people from the ethnic minorities whom we interviewed, Y_BG_P_2 and Y_BG_P_6 as participants in the Youth Guarantee and Y_BG_P_11 in the Scheme of the Land Source of Income, were not passive onlookers at life but actively searching for opportunities to integrate in the labor market despite it being unfavorable to them.

Both experts and young people expressed positive evaluations towards LLLP programs, because they enable both the accumulation of experience and establishment of contacts that would be useful in young people's job search. Such programs provide an opportunity to the young not only to acquire new knowledge and skills, but also to have time to rethink career prospects in a particular area, to revisit their life projects more widely. However, it was clear that the criteria for evaluation of the success of a program differed in the views of the experts and the young. The policy makers and practitioners focused on the numbers of the participants enrolled in the program and the numbers of those completing it to the end. For the young a success clearly meant that they training led to a personally satisfactory and more or less permanent job and not to a new registration in the Labor Office as unemployed and a probably new training.

The LLLP is designed so as to provide more resources to ease young people's transition from education to employment and to direct them towards the 'normal' life course which is understood as the young having found a stable job by the age of 29. Not only the experts, but also all young people are aware of the difficulty to move from school/university to a workplace. Both groups agreed about the lack of practical experience at the point of university/school completion. Many emphasize that the young person should continue to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities after completing the formal education, including acquisition of soft skills such as teamwork, responsibility for actions and solutions, flexibility and creativity. In this sense, the planning of the individual phases of life depends on their own motivation and on the development of personal strategies for career development. The complicated economic and social situation in the country is an additional factor hampering the rapid labor market integration of young people. As a result, they feel insecure about their future and are unable to develop feasible and detailed life plans. the specific stages of their lives. Only four of the interviewed young adults were sure in their choice of occupational career. That is why the public and private programs are one of the necessary "entry points" into the world of work.

2. Qualitative findings in Blagoevgrad FR

2.1. Introduction

Living conditions in FR Blagoevgrad

Blagoevgrad FR (Figure 3.1) is the sixth largest district in the country covering 14 municipalities and 280 settlements. It has a relatively good demographic structure. The urban population in the district is 59% and it shares sixth place with Varna district on the largest number of rural population.

Figure 2.1: Blagoevgrad FR



The FR is characterized by diversified economic branch structure: food and tobacco processing industries, tourism, transport and communications, textile industry, timber and furniture industries, iron processing and machinery industry, construction materials industry, as well as pharmaceuticals, plastics, paper and shoes production. The developed labour market is an important prerequisite for the professional development of young adults in their life course. Industry occupies a significant place in the economic activities of the region. Its branches form 25.7% in total products in Blagoevgrad FR. More than 30% of all employed people in the region are engaged in the industry. There are several leading industrial branches in the area. Food industry constitutes 31% of the whole FR industry and its companies form the predominant employment area. Textile industry, which is of particular importance for the economy of the region in recent years. Active players, at the end of 2014, dealing with the production of clothing industry are 739 or 27.8% of the total regional industry. Most of them are small and micro businesses. Typical of this sector is the participation of foreign investors (Greek, German, and French) that created new owned or joint ventures in the field. Wood and furniture production form another important segment of the regional industry. The development of the industry is based on the use of local raw materials and has a perspective. Tourism in the region is a major

sector of the economy. Agriculture is also developed. The specialization of region crop production in the country is determined by the production of tobacco.

Blagoevgrad FR is a significant educational and cultural centre of the Republic of Bulgaria. The large number of young adults in the district is a good basis for the development and implementation of LLL practices in formal and non-formal education. There is a total of 133 educational institutions that include 106 general schools, 3 special schools, 1 arts school, 18 vocational high schools, 2 postgraduate colleges and 2 universities. The dropouts in primary and secondary education are 1,6% vs. 2.8% in the country in 2014.

Each of the municipalities in the FR Blagoevgrad has independence, its own mayor and municipal council, carrying out administrative and management functions related to the municipality and its population in economic, administrative, educational and cultural aspect. One of the important features of the municipalities in the FR Blagoevgrad is that territorially and administratively coordinated by the biggest city in the district - Blagoevgrad, which is central to the FR. Within the region, each of the offices is controlled by the central national bodies of the relevant agencies or ministries as public institutions. All of these characteristics of the population and the systems of education, economy and labour market in the BFRs suggest a wide range of diversity in the approaches towards young adults and the policies required for their inclusion in LLL. BFR demonstrates efforts to establish effective cohesion between education, economy and business.

The policies in FR Blagoevgrad

We analysed four main programs carried out after 2013 in FR Blagoevgrad, conducted under the labour market policy as well as in LLL policies for YAs.

LIFELONG LEARNING HUB – LLL-HUB (2013-2016)

The project was carried out under the leadership of the Regional Inspectorate of Education (RIE), and shows specific LLL activities for young adults. It brings together ten partners from eight European countries representing public authorities, civil society organizations, chambers of commerce and educational institutions. The LLL-Hub project aimed at fostering shared meaning about lifelong learning across Europe by encouraging cross-sectorial cooperation and dialogue about the European agenda at national and regional level. The project addressed the challenge of building a genuine partnership approach by setting up a multilateral network of actors. By doing so it aims to create a feeling of shared responsibility and ownership among relevant stakeholders on EU lifelong learning strategies. The project aimed to structure the transnational policy learning on European lifelong learning strategies based on genuine research and dialogue at regional, national and EU level (Boyadjieva et al, 2013).

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TRAINING PRACTICES (2007-2013) (2014-2020)

This is another LLL policy practice conducted in FR Blagoevgrad FR. The program is funded by the European Structural and Investments Funds under the "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020" Operational Program. It is open to all students registered in the Register of current and discontinued students and Ph. D. students. The policy conforms to the strategic objective of the Operational Program for improving the quality of education through gain practical experience and improvement of practical skills of university students in accordance with the needs of the labour market. The other significant objective is to facilitate the transition from educational institutions to the workplace and increase the successful realization of young people into the labour market as well as to increase the number of students who find a job immediately after graduation. This measure is important for FR Blagoevgrad because it synthesizes the efforts and activities of both the university as a lifelong learning institution and the various training organizations - public and private, NGO sector, business, that are located at the regional and local level and which hold student practices in order to enhance the experience and skills of the participants in a particular environment. The program contributes to the effective functioning of the educational process at the university level and in organizations; it also contributes to the harmonization of regional environment to include more young adults in workflow and strengthening the relationship between education - work environment - labour market.

START IN THE CARIER

This is another program implemented in the FR Blagoevgrad. The main objective of the program is to be provided opportunities to acquire work experience for unemployed young people who have completed secondary or higher education in order to facilitate their transition between education and employment. The "Career Start" is aimed at young people under 29 years of age who have completed their higher education and no experience. Young people can apply for jobs under the program – in the central departments and regional administrations. In addition, are established jobs for various agencies (Interior Ministry, the Regional Inspectorate of Education and the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water).

The program is implemented in two components:

- Component 1: YAs up to 29 years without a professional experience in the specialty who have completed higher education and are registered in a "Labour Office". They are employed for 9 months. Employers under Component 1 are public administrations - the central government departments, the district and municipal administrations.

- Component 2: YAs up to 24 years who have completed their vocational education, with no work experience, and registered in the "Labour Office". They are employed for 6 months. Employers under Component 2 are from the private sector.

YOUTH GUARANTEE

The National Youth Guarantee Policy is aimed at YAs for receiving a job offer, continuing education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of being out of work or leaving the formal education system. Funding is from the state budget and under European funds, according to the National Action Plans for Employment for the respective year.

The implementation of the program at regional level is connected with the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (2014-2020) (NYGIP). The NYGIP provides for every young person aged 15-24 to receive a qualitative offer of: a job, continuing of the education or apprenticeship and training within four months after becoming unemployed or leaving the system of formal education. In order for this to happen, the young people have to be registered with the regional labour office. Each young person has an individual action plan prepared by the experts, presenting his full profile. This helps providing the adequate job, education or training offer.

The NYGIP was applied in various stages. In 2014, the priority was to provide a job or an educational opportunity for people with primary or lower education, since these comprise the largest group of the registered with the labour office people up to the age of 24. For those who have secondary the efforts are directed in providing a first job or training for acquiring a professional qualification. The university graduates receive their first job offer. The NYGIP also cover young adults who do not study or work, and are not registered with the labor office. The activities include directing the young towards local schools and local labor offices, as well as private institutions providing job opportunities.

2.2. Data collection, sampling and analysis in FR Blagoevgrad

10 interviews (Chengelova, 2016) with young adults were conducted in the BFR. In the shaping of the Young Adults sample was followed 3 criteria: "participation in the programs of BFR", "ethnicity", "gender" (Table 1). On this basis, we selected the following young adults:

- Ethnos: 3 (Ethnic minorities), 7 (Bulgarians)
- Sex: 4 Males and 6 Females

- Participation in the BFR programs: 4 interviews under the "Student Practice" program; 3 – interviews with participants in "Carrier Start" program; 2 interviews under the "Youth Guarantee" program, 1 interview with participant in the "LLL-HUB" program.

Table 2.1

Student Practice	Y_BG_B_1 (male, ethnic minority); Y_BG_B_2 (male, Bg); Y_BG_B_3 (female, Bg); Y_BG_B_4 (female, Bg)
LLL – HUB	Y_BG_B_5 (female, Bg)
Carrier Start	Y_BG_B_6 (female, ethnic minority); Y_BG_B_7 (female, ethnic minority); Y_BG_B_8 (female, Bg)
Youth Guarantee	Y_BG_B_9 (male, Bg, with disabilities); Y_BG_B_10 (male, Bg)

In choosing young adults the team used lists of young people who participated in the projects; young people were randomly, taking into account characteristics: gender and ethnicity.

8 interviews with experts were conducted in the BFR. In the selection of the experts, was followed the next criteria: "participation in the programs carried out in BFR", "level of expertise" (Table 2). On this basis, we selected the following experts:

- Managers: 5
- Street level: 3
- Participation in BFP programs: 3 interviews under the "Student Practice" program; 3 interviews with experts in "Carrier Start" and "Youth Guarantee" programs, 2 interviews with experts in "LLL – HUB" program.

Table 2.2

Student Practice	E_BG_B_1 (Manager); E_BG_B_2 (Street level); E_BG_B_3 (Street level);
LLL – HUB	E_BG_B_4 (Street level); E_BG_B_5 (Manager)
Carrier Start	E_BG_B_6 (Manager); E_BG_B_7 (Manager); E_BG_B_8 (Manager)
Youth Guarantee	E_BG_B_6 (Manager); E_BG_B_7 (Manager); E_BG_B_8 (Manager)

When selecting the experts, we contacted the Labor Office in Blagoevgrad, the Employment Agency Directorate in Blagoevgrad, which are responsible to carry out the “Carrier Start” and “Youth Guarantee” projects and contacted the experts working on the implementation of these programs. In the “LLL – HUB” project we contacted the Regional Management Authority of Blagoevgrad and conducted interviews with the experts who worked on the project. In the “Student Practice” project, we contacted SWU experts who are involved as academic mentors or functional experts in the project. Expert access was provided by team interviewers. The interviews with experts in the “Student Practices” program were easily conducted because the interviewees were university lecturers who participated in the project and carried out various project activities. They shared without difficulty how the project is being implemented, which students are involved in, what their expectations are regarding the internships they are taking part in. In the course of the interviews, various aspects of the relationship with the Ministry of Education and Science were discussed, as well as with the organizations where the student internships take place.

There were no problems, tensions or incidents in communicating with interviewees. They were willing to cooperate on their behalf, responding in detail to the questions asked, and were keen to share their experiences and observations on the “Student Practices” project. In this sense, for the team, these were useful meetings in order to build a real picture for the project and its implementation. The “LLL – HUB” program was implemented by the Regional Education Authority of Blagoevgrad. We contacted the director of the REA, who presented the experts that worked on this project. We arranged meetings with the two experts and an interviewer from the team conducted the interviews with them. The interviewer’s impressions were that both experts have been accountable and rigorous in their responses, and the meetings have gone through a responsive environment. There have been no difficulties, incidents or problems with conducting interviews. The “Carrier Start” and “Youth Guarantee” programs are implemented by the Employment Agency of Blagoevgrad. Three interviews with experts from the Employment Agency were conducted. The EA Director introduced the interviewers to the staff who worked on the projects and interview meetings were arranged. The interviews took place at the workplace in the offices of three experts who answered carefully and thoroughly the questions.

In summary, there were no difficulties and incidents to interfere with communication when conducting interviews with experts. There were no respondents’ refusals or reluctance to answer questions. The experts were well-meaning and willing to share the multifaceted information on the projects they are working on.

The field work with the young people passed without tensions and incidents. Respondents under the Student Practices project were students from the SWU who participated in internships - organized and conducted within the framework of the project activities. The students shared their experience with the project, the positive aspects or shortcomings of the project, as well as their expectations and opinions, recommendations on the project. In conducting interviews, students were responsive and they responded to all questions related to their life, educational activities and the institutional environment. Four interviews were conducted - one interview was with ethnic minority student and three with Bulgarians. One young adult was interviewed under the program "LLL – HUB", who was trained at the Regional Education Administration. The respondent has participated in the "LLL - HUB" project at various stages and has a lot of impressions on how to conduct it. In addition, the project was completed in 2016 and this is a prerequisite for a comprehensive and realistic assessment of project activities. The Interviewer said that the interview took place in a calm atmosphere and without incident, as answers were given to all the questions, though a bit short, which required the interviewer to ask additional questions and to stimulate giving more detailed answers. The interview was conducted outside the office of the Regional Education Authority, no other persons were present and the interviewee was in a relaxed environment. Under the "Carrier Start" project was interviewed 3 respondents. They participated in the project at different times, but for all three of them this project participation was over. Two of the respondents were hired in the same institution where their internship from the "Carrier Start" project had taken place. It definitely affects the readiness and willingness in giving answers, and demonstrated responsiveness at first contact made by interviewers with the respondents. During the three interviews, there were no registered difficulties in understanding questions or reluctance to answer the questions. Two of the interviews were with representatives of ethnic minorities (Milenkova, 2017) who answered all questions. Under the "Youth Guarantee" project, 2 persons were interviewed. In one case the respondent was participated in different programs, and this allows him to compare the effects of the projects. One of the respondents was a disabled person, and as a representative of a vulnerable group this did not create inconveniences and difficulties.

In summary it can be said that the respondents have expressed readiness to meet willingness to cooperate on the "Young Adullt" project and there were no incidents or refusals to answer questions.

2.3. Analysis of interviews with experts

2.3.1. Short contextual information about the interviews

E_BG_B_1. The interviewee is an Assistant Professor (PhD) in the Faculty of Public health, health care and sport at South-West University „Neofit Rislki“. She has worked as a functional expert under the project "Student Practices" (Stage 1). Functional expert is a representative of the university, which

supports and organizes the implementation of project activities. She is currently working on a new project "Student Practices" - Phase 2 (2014-2020), which is a continuation of the "Student Practices" project Phase 1 (2007-2013). The interviewee presented in detail the work of all participants in the project. The respondent was very positive and kind. The interview was held at the respondent's office, subject to a prior appointment. The expert during the first phase of the project worked at the SWU Career Centre. The Career Center is a partner who conducts the project and is responsible, for organizing and supervising the implementation of project activities and is the point of contact with the management team of the project at Ministry of Education and Science (MES). The respondent participates in the two phases of the project, in the first phase she was a functional expert, requiring in-depth knowledge for the project activities, active participation, insight from different sides of the activities carried out, but also a variety of impressions from the work of the participants in the project, as well as for the result of the student internships. The interview was conducted in a very well-intentioned environment, giving answers to the questions asked.

E_BG_B_2 The interviewee has worked as a mentor under the project "Student Practices". Mentor is an employee from the training organization, who instructs the students during the training practice in a real working environment. The interviewee provides a good and effective practice of interaction between the business and university. The organization of the mentor is in the non-governmental sector and it has been involved in a lot of projects. This represents this organization as a good partner in the "Student Practices" project because it has a wealth of experience and the opportunity to provide professional and in-depth support during the student's internship. Participation in various projects of training organization provides opportunities after completion of the internship project for students to continue their partnership with this NGO and they have the opportunity for further workload. In addition, the interviewee has worked as a social worker in the Mental health Centre of Information, which is part of the Global Initiative in Psychiatry – Sofia. Furthermore, the interviewee has experience as a volunteer. The interview was selected for analysis because the interviewee is a young woman with a first-hand experience in the practical training of the young people. The interview was carried out at the respondent's office, after a prior appointment. The interview was conducted in a very well-planned environment, with detailed answers to the questions asked.

E_BG_B_3 The interviewee has worked as an Academic mentor under the project "Student Practices". Academic mentor is the university teacher - a project partner responsible for practical training of the students from the same university. The functions of the academic mentor are expressed in maintaining contact with the student who participates in the internship, because in parallel with the internship the student continues his studies at the university. Student practice lasts 240 hours, which Trainee can take within 6 months. In this way it is possible to reconcile training in the university with an

internship that takes place in a training organization, which provides the training of student practices that create a real environment for training. The academic mentor controls the university education and the practice in the organization, the rhythm of the internship, performance of the duties in the training organization. Upon completion of the practice academic mentor makes a statement about carried out internship because he/she is directly responsible for the student and his training. The interviewee is an Associate Professor, PhD at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (South-West University "Neofit Rilski"). The interviewee was selected due to the fact that she is also a trade union leader - a member of the executive board of the university syndicate, which is an opportunity to show and additional point of view – that of the university trade union. The interview was carried out at the respondent's office, after a prior appointment. The interview has conducted in a very well-intentioned environment, answering the questions asked.

E_BG_B_4 The interviewee has worked as a Street level expert under the project "LLL_HUB". She visited the town of Mechelen (Belgium) on the final meeting, where she participated in second panel (Mentoring and LifeLong Learning Guidance) where characteristic features were discussed regarding students' consulting in secondary education. She was one of the young experts who worked in the project. No other experts' names related to the project were provided at the Regional Education Management – Blagoevgrad. The Lifelong Learning Hub (LLL-Hub) project brought together ten partners from eight European countries representing public authorities, civil society organisations, chambers of commerce and educational institutions. The project was aimed at gathering diverse information about LLL policies, practices and projects that are carried out at regional level. The other idea of the project was to make visits to the cities involved in the project and to get direct impressions and observations from the practices. The interviewee is an Assistant Professor (PhD) in the Faculty of Economics (South-West University „Neofit Rilski“). This combination of project expertise and teaching activity allows the rationalization of the project and assessment of its contribution and benefits on a regional basis as well as the effectiveness of project activities. The interview was carried out at the respondent's office, after a prior arrangement. The interview was conducted in a very well-intentioned environment, answering the questions asked.

E_BG_B_5 The interviewee is an expert at Regional Education Management - Blagoevgrad. She has great experience in the elaboration, work and participation in European projects. Regional Education Management – Blagoevgrad is a Project partner. The interviewee has worked as a manager under the project "LLL_HUB" and she participated in providing a report on the general state of Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria - the state policy, the implementation of the national LLL strategy, as well as pointing out the region specific problems and the presentation of good practices. There were participated lecturers, directors, pupils and career guidance consultants, university lecturers, representatives of local

government at the regional level. They have been involved in the planned activities to provide a link between education and labour market requirements. In the final stage of the project forums in Blagoevgrad, partnership and cooperation networks of stakeholders were established. Young adults get involved in the project (LLL-Hub) as participants in the workshops of the LLL forum, which aims to contribute to the dialogue with experts and stakeholders. The interview was carried out at the respondent's office, after a prior arrangement. The interview was conducted in a very well-intentioned environment, answering the questions asked.

E_BG_B_6 The interviewee is a manager at the Regional Employment Service Blagoevgrad. She has been working for 21 years at the Employment Agency in Blagoevgrad. The department consists of two sectors; the first one is related to intermediary services, where one sector manager and two experts work. The second sector is "Program measures, qualifications and control". There is also a head of sector, one chief expert who works and prepares forecasts monthly bulletins, as well as he monitors the labour market, the territory of the Blagoevgrad region and the Kyustendil region as a whole. The objectives of the Employment Services Department at Employment Agency in Blagoevgrad are program measures, qualifications and control, preparing forecasts, monthly bulletins, monitors the labour market on the territory of the Blagoevgrad region and the Kyustendil region as a whole for the regional service. The interview took place in her office, which is located in the municipal building of the city. The manager was very busy and finding free time was of great importance for conducting the interview. She suggested familiarizing the team with all projects related to young adults who would be interested, as well as with the staff involved in these projects.

E_BG_B_7 The interviewee is a manager at the Intermediary sector services at the Regional Directorate of the Employment Agency in Blagoevgrad. She has been working about 20 years in the Employment Agency. The objectives of the intermediary sector services at the regional directorate of the Employment Agency are related to the methodical support of all job offices in the region to provide mediation services or employment to all jobseekers and part of them are actually young people because they are a priority. She has long experience in the development of European projects and participation in them. The interviewee was friendly and willing to cooperate and to share the main points of her Department and the basic aspects of the projects' implementation in the FR. The interview took place in her office, which is located in the municipal building of the city. The interviewee was very busy and finding free time was of great importance for conducting the interview. The manager suggested familiarizing the team with all projects related to young adults who would be interested, as well as with the staff involved in these projects. She was quite calm during the interview. The interview was carried out at the respondent's office, after a prior arrangement and it was conducted in a very well-intentioned environment, answering the questions asked.

E_BG_B_8 The interviewee is a manager in Sector Programming measures at the Regional Directorate of the Employment Agency in Blagoevgrad. She has been working over 20 years in the Employment Agency. She has serious experience in the development of European projects and participation in them. The objectives of Sector “Programming measures, qualifications and control” are: implementing the national employment action plan, conducting specific projects under the 2014-2020 operational programs, implementing programs at the national level. She was friendly and willing to cooperate and to share the main points of the Department and the basic aspects of the projects’ implementation in the FR. The interview took place in her office, which is located in the municipal building of the city. The manager at the Regional Directorate of the Employment Agency was very busy and finding free time was of great importance for conducting the interview. The interviewee suggested familiarizing the team with all projects related to young adults who would be interested, as well as with the staff involved in these projects. She was quite calm during the interview. The interview was carried out at the respondent's office, after a prior arrangement and it was conducted in a very well-intentioned environment, answering the questions asked.

2.3.2. Short summaries on the interviews

Based on the interviews with experts, several summaries can be made regarding the projects in which they participate and which were discussed by the experts interviewed.

LLL - HUB

2.3.3. Antecedents, objectives and expected impacts, construction of target groups and coordination between actors in each of the LLL policies in Blagoevgrad FR

Respondents shared that the LLL-Hub project is useful because aims at fostering shared meaning about lifelong learning across Europe by encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue about the European agenda at national and regional level. *„The main objectives of the project are to discuss the good practices in different European countries that participated in the project; best practices related to continuing training and pointed out the most effective ones in order to provide relevant recommendations to the European Union institutions and to ensure future funding for these best practices respectively”* (E_BG_B_4).

„Bulgarian Lifelong Learning (LLL) policy is related to achieving the long-term social and economic goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth defined at European and national levels. Improving the conditions in the country as a result of the proposed changes and focusing on the problems in this area will also inevitably affect the regional achievements.” (E_BG_B_5)

Blagoevgrad FR participates by two institutions: Regional Inspectorate for Education (now Regional Education Management) and the Career Center – Blagoevgrad. Regional Education Authority is engaged in control and methodological assistance to schools in the region. This is a MES Unit. The Career guidance Centers are considered by the Law of Vocational Education and Training. *“The Career Center assists students by carrying out its own work (mostly high school students, 6-7 grade children), who have to select a vocational high school or other kind of high school where students receive valuable information and make more informed choices about what to continue studying and possibly choosing a profession, and that makes it easier for them to adapt to professional life.”* (E_BG_B_4).

Within the LLL-Hub project, various good policies and practices that are implemented and developed in the participating countries are monitored, evaluated and discussed. Thus, in a particular context, positive issues can be discussed or questions rose about the development and implementation of good practices and policies.

Construction of the target groups

Bulgarian Lifelong Learning (LLL) policy is related to achieving the long-term social and economic goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth defined at European and national levels. Improving the conditions in the country as a result of the proposed changes and focusing on the problems in this area that also inevitably affect the regional achievements.

„Based on better informed young people more quickly find the most suitable information for their career, which has a corresponding benefit to them, but also for employers and government institutions. Employers are more satisfied with employee who is motivated and knows his profession.” (E_BG_B_4)

The project is definitely aimed at constructing young adults as an age group. A special project's focus is unemployed young people.

„For example, many people in Bulgaria have psychological problems, which prevent them from being professionally employed. So also to provide teams of psychologists with these centers to carry out appropriate professional work with the unemployed and the pupils to overcome the different complexes they have and thus to optimally integrate people into working life.” (E_BG_B_4).

This defines the project as stimulating the participation of young adults in different forms of learning, enhancing their participation in existing learning activities - both formal and informal.

“What was interesting within our panel and Bulgarian participants and many participants from other countries shared the low level of motivation among young people towards professional activity.” (E_BG_B_4).

Improving the education and qualification of young adults also affects their better living conditions associated with finding employment and realizing the labor market. *„Improving the conditions and*

opportunities for strategic LLL measures will lead to overcoming inequalities and helping to realize the labour market.” (E_BG_B_5).

Coordination between actors

One of the problems that respondents in carried out interviews shared is the need to highlight good practices as well as to implement them in the practice.

„I would definite the main problem as “a voice in the wilderness”. People have good ideas, good practices, however they do not share these practices because there are no organized forums. Sharing the experience in these forums allows the quick establishment of good practices to all countries.” (E_BG_B_4).

Overall, this is a critique to the Bulgarian management of education and integrating foreign experience in general. The other problem is insufficient funding of different activities related to adult training.

“The final result was that, due to the limited funding, not all good practices could be implemented. If I had money, I would have suggested and implemented similar career centers across Europe. The activity may even be extended to include older people, not just junior high school and high school students.” (E_BG_B_4).

The project was evaluated as useful and significant for the region: *„The project was successful as the representatives of the European authorities on the final meeting expressed a high assessment of the project's results and undertake/undertook to continue the funding policy of lifelong learning at the central European level” (E_BG_B_4).*

STUDENT PRACTICIES

Antecedents, objectives and expected impacts of LLL policies in the FR

The project objectives are related to *“the acquisition the more practical skills and competencies of students even during their training that will allow them easier adaptation of school to work transition and thus make them more successful and more confident in themselves” (E_BG_B_3).* It is focussed on students first steps when they enter the labour market, and when they actually participated in competitions to take up specific positions for which they have been trained within the bachelor's and master's degrees.

According to the experts the project is oriented to:

“1) to support the quality of education by providing the opportunity to acquire practical experience and to improve the practical skills of the students in accordance with the needs of the labour market; 2) Building partnerships between educational institutions and businesses; 3) Facilitating the transition from an educational institution to a workplace and increasing the successful realization of young people in the labour market” (E_BG_B_1).

The accumulations of practical experience, the possibility of professional realization are some of the issues that have been solved with the implementation of the project.

"The main objective of the project "Student Practices" is - the students to touch the labour market in reality". (E_BG_B_2). The most important thing for the students is to get introduced with their future employers. The established link between students and employers by the project is very important and for the employers. They have the opportunity to meet students „to see what they are, what skills they have" (E_BG_B_3) and get in touch „with people who can potentially be hired afterwards" (E_BG_B_3).

Construction of the target groups

The project constructed the target groups through the achieved results:

"the results are as follows: improved practical skills of students in line with the needs of the labour market; Building strong partnerships between universities and businesses; Created working habits and developed certain personal qualities of the students. Additionally updated curricula, disciplines according to the needs of the labour market; Created opportunities for employers to select students who have demonstrated the skills to be directly involved in the labour market." (E_BG_B_1).

In this sense the target groups are students at tertiary level of education, which are registered in the Register of students in universities.

„Through the system, the student applies for the position he/she chooses, corresponding to the professional field in which he/she is trained. The training organization selects the students. Upon approval by the training organization, the student confirms their participation in the practical training. The student indicates through the information system an academic tutor, draws up a practice schedules which is confirmed by the mentor and is coordinated with the academic tutor. The contract between the students and the higher school, which is a model, is concluded after confirmation by the student for participation in the practice and in the presence of concluded and attached in the system contracts between the training organization and the higher school, a mentor and a higher school, an academic supervisor and a higher education institution and a confirmed program and timetable in the system." (E_BG_B_1).

"There are no discriminated groups. Every regular or external student is listed, completes his/her system profile, which contains information about the specialty, course, form of training." (E_BG_B_1).

Coordination between actors

Respondents said that the project is appropriate for university environment.

"I hope the project to be successful because it has its own pluses and opportunities. Of course, it depends on the people themselves who are involved in it, the extent to which they will take advantage of the project, from employers, because some of them have the possibility to hire

students but there are organizations that do not have the opportunity to pay and it is difficult.” (E_BG_B_2).

The project conducting depends on the people themselves who are involved in it.

It could say that the participation and activity of students are also very important, their desire to acquire skills in practice; but in order to move from trainees to hiring it is necessary to have a demand from the training organization itself. This is a two-way process according the respondents. Not all students participating in the project are equally active during the practice; and this was observed in all activities - different participation of individuals involved in activities. *“The project is effective, but it depends on the students themselves. Efficiency is measured by: they have the opportunity to learn how to do a lot of things that are going to happen in the future; things that should be useful to them, and things they may have missed before.”* (E_BG_B_2).

The interviewed experts said *“the main project outcome is the successful transition of university students to the labour market”* (E_BG_B_2). The efficiency of the project is measured by the variety of practical skills the students have mastered, which will also be needed in the future.

The experts shared that most of the students have changed their behaviour during the course of the project. *„Some of them become responsible and it is mostly related to their training because they ultimately understand that really what they learn here helps their needs and entering the workplace, they refer to this knowledge. Most of them realize it and change their attitudes. They become more serious.”* (E_BG_B_3)

In the course of the project, the interviewed experts said that no serious problems have been arisen in the implementation of the project. *“No serious problems have been arisen in the implementation of the project activities except some technical imperfections in the web, which however are cleared in the process of work.”* (E_BG_B_1).

However, *“the greater control of practical training is needed. More effective control over the practices that are carried out is needed; as well as the link between universities and organizations and whether the proposed training organization is actually adequate to student’s qualification”* (E_BG_B_2).

„The effectiveness of the project would be even higher if the hours foreseen for communication and control between a mentor, academic mentor and a student were a little more in the academic tutor part. Students interact with mentors according to schedule daily or several times a week, but the possibilities academic supervisor to monitor the process (to watch him) are very limited.” (E_BG_B_3).

The other problem is connected with *„little more caution towards the contracts with organizations and institutions that accept students in practice and whether they can really provide them with competent mentoring. Consider those organizations that have more authority and experience.”* (E_BG_B_3).

START IN CARRIER

Antecedents, objectives and expected impacts of LLL policies in the FR

The "Start in Career" program has been implemented since 2003. Since then, the program at national and regional level has involved young people on the labour market, providing employment, acquiring practical skills that complement the acquired knowledge in educational institutions. This program has a high rating both in Blagoevgrad municipal organizations and in other areas of the country at district and functional region level because most of the young people who have started somehow manage to keep their jobs.

*"The main objective of **"Start in carrier"** program is to provide employment to unemployed youths up to 29 years of age registered in the Labour Offices, respectively to start work with central agencies, district and municipal administrations to acquire the relevant professional Experience."* (E_BG_B_6).

"This program gives the young adults a chance to acquire the relevant work experience that the employees need in order to be able to continue in those areas where they wish, and those who have worked under the program but were released after 9 months. I can say that it is easier for them to find a job because one of the requirements of the real sector employers is to hire people who have a work experience and experience in the completed specialty." (E_BG_B_6).

Employers are the ones who declare jobs and declare their positions, what kind of staff they need. *"Some employers need accountants, financiers; others need lawyers, so I think it's a good result for the local labour market"* (E_BG_B_6).

Construction of the target groups

Young people wishing to study and participating in this program must not be at the age of 29 at the time of application, also have completed higher education, respectively the particular job they are applying for requires a bachelor's or a master's degree, and have not worked in the specialty of its higher education.

"After submitting the application to the labour offices, the unemployed young adults according to the requirements of the employers and after their ranking, are interviewed by the employer; two, three, or five young people can apply for one job position. After the interview, the employer and a specific committee draw up a record of the examination and include the candidates in the program. After the selection of the respective young adult, the employer concludes an employment contract for a period of 9 months. Currently, for this year, the basic salary is 550 leva with all the insurance payments on it and the employment as mentioned was 9 months" (E_BG_B_6).

"I think there are no problems, the interest of the young adults in this project and in the others where they are target group is big and I think it is better to continue to develop in this direction and

to have more projects for young adults, to keep the youth in Bulgaria, not to go abroad.” (E_BG_B_6).

“It's all in line with local business because the projects are running data from local statistics, we're building a project on the basis of these data and seeing what the local labor market needs.” (E_BG_B_8).

Coordination between actors

According to the experts, young people feel satisfied about being involved and working on the project, as they are given responsibilities that allow them to accumulate professional experience and skills and be employed later on.

“Not only this project, all conducted projects contribute to the economic and social development of the region. Let's hope for projects and programs in the future, as I said, there are also encouraging measures specifically targeted at the young adults involved in the National Employment Action Plan, so these are some good policies that give a start not only for young adults but also for all unemployed registered with the Labour Office.” (E_BG_B_6).

There are many examples that experts indicated as a successful realization of the young adults involved in the project after completion the internship. *“The first youngster who passed this program was currently working as an expert at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Another example, one of the employees, the chief exporter in the department of Employment Agency, also started under the Career Start Program, which is already the chief expert in the Programming and Qualification and Control sector” (E_BG_B_6).*

The main problem arise is that not all of the young people remain in the organization after their participation in the project. *“Employers are applying for job disclosure, and on the other hand, the interest of young adults in these jobs is large” (E_BG_B_6). “The results are good because the most important thing is to see the satisfaction in young people who have learnt something. The problem is after completing the course.” (E_BG_B_8).*

YOUTH GUARANTEE

Antecedents, objectives and expected impacts of LLL policies in the FR

The National Youth Guarantee for Bulgaria targets every young person of the age from 15 to 24 years to receive a good job offer, extension of education, apprenticeship or internship within 4 months of being out of work, or leaving the system of formal education. *“Youth Guarantee - This program and the efforts are directed especially towards young people.” (E_BG_B_8).*

One of the stages of the program is aimed at young people registered with the labour offices; by the end of the 4th month after their registration they receive a job offer. In 2014, training and

employment of young people up to 25 years of age were financed with priority primary and lower education (early school leavers), whose registration in the labour offices was up to 4 months inclusive.

“Precisely with the fact that including these young people in any kind of activity, whether it is a course, qualification or internship it is a positive effect for them and for their families and for the region economics.” (E_BG_B_7).

Construction of the target groups

About young people with higher and secondary education, with the duration of registration in the labour offices up to and including 4 months, the start of the first job (apprenticeship) was funded. Implementation of the National Youth Guarantee was launched in January 2014, measures and programs funded by the state budget. Young people who do not work and do not study and are not registered with the Labour Offices receive information about the possible services they can use after registering with the Labour Offices within one month of receiving their individual data and address for correspondence in the institution or organization that initiates their activation.

“Program is oriented to all jobseekers; part of them is actually young people because they are a priority. For a number of years, they have been a top priority and a primary target group for all employment services, most of them linked to the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee Program in 2014. One of the aims is to mobilize inactive young people, those who do not work and study.”(E_BG_B_7).

“First of all, from the municipalities we receive information about the young people in the territory of Blagoevgrad region, and then we check which youths have dropped out of training by coordinating our actions with the Ministry of Education and Science, thus reaching young people who do not work and do not learn and are of Roma origin. Then we train them and assign them to the project”. (E_BG_B_7).

In 2014, schemes aimed at young people funded by the ESF were launched, funds under the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative. By 2020 the activities are financed by the state budget and with European funds under the National Action Plans for Employment for the relevant year. *“Since the target groups are the young people from our statistics, we can see in which field the unemployed young have the highest percentage and that is where we create a course.” (E_BG_B_8).*

The implementation of the program in the Southwest region is generally not funded by the Youth Employment Initiative, but mostly with funds from the state budget.

“We work in this direction, especially with the Roma, because they are constantly considered to be downplayed when they become active and feel good for themselves and for the others, they have achieved the most important thing to feel and have an equal start with all people.” (E_BG_B_7).

“The young people in the project first report information on the boards, leaflets, the young people are very smart, they are interested, they ask, the mediators also when they talk to a specific young person explain to them what is to come and what to expect. If a person is interested he fills an application and is included in the project.” (E_BG_B_8).

Coordination between actors

“I would not say there are problems or conflicts, there are team efforts to be work organized and to reach the goal to help long-term unemployed young people to participate in the labour market. There are no problems, they are already clear from the municipalities, and we are getting the young people on the territory of the Blagoevgrad region, then we coordinate with the Ministry of Education and Science the actions to see who, the youths have fallen from training and the municipalities have been appointed.” (E_BG_B_7).

According to experts young adults feel happy about being involved and working on the project, being assigned responsibilities, and doing so, which gives them the chance to have greater self-esteem and authority in the future.

“In every municipality of the region the specific young people's qualities are different. For example in Belitsa we are working with one contingent of young people, with Roma neighbourhoods with another, and here in the district towns are quite another type of young people.” (E_BG_B_7).

“What we do in this aspect, for example, a job broker when working with young person, makes him a portrait in the sense, asking him questions, learns what his skills are, besides the documents, he establishes and what qualities he has, does he possess technical skills, are they communicative, what has he worked and what he has acquired as knowledge but no document.” (E_BG_B_7).

“There are many things to do for young people, in the labour offices I mean a professional orientation, groups, workshops are held with young people, interviews are held in the form of a conversation, interviews about how to write a cover letter, how to write a biography, they are very satisfied with the people, especially in the career center in the regional office, the psychologists are working very well with them.” (E_BG_B_8).

2.4. Analysis of Interviews with Youth

2.4.1. Short contextual information about the interviews

Y_BG_B_1 is a student from the South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. He originally comes from the village of Ribnovo, Municipality of Garmen. He graduated the secondary school in his native village. Then he becomes a student at the “South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. The respondent is interested in computer subjects; he

is a football referee, too. His student's practice was in a computer company. He was an IT administrator there. He learned a lot of programming languages at university and this helped him a lot in the company. During the whole interview he was very calm and gave an impression of/for very well-balanced person. The interviewee is from ethnic minority.

Y_BG_B_2 is a student at the South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. He is 21 years old. He was born in Lom, Municipality of Montana, North – West Bulgaria. He graduated the Secondary school (Computer Systems and Technologies) in Pravets. After that he becomes a student at the South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. The interviewee is interested in Political sciences; he is a social active young man. He belongs to one of the biggest political party in Bulgaria. He participated in the student practices project as an administrative and business expert. During the whole interview the respondent was very calm and well-balanced.

Y_BG_B_3 is a student at the South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. She is 31 years old. She was born in Sliven. She is married with one child and she is working while in the university. She has a positive view of education, although the marriage and family are in the first place she decided to graduate from the university. She will graduate in Political sciences. She is an example of successful woman who combines education with personal/ family life. She has the support of her parents and she has “wonderful relations with them”. The interviewee was a little nervous; however, she answered all the questions that have been asked. She participated twice in the project Students practices: during the first and fourth year of her university education.

Y_BG_B_4 is a student at the South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. She is 24 years old. She was born in Vidin, North – West Bulgaria. Her father's works in the Regional Food Safety Agency and her mother is a librarian. She graduated her secondary school in Vidin. Then she becomes a student at the “South – West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. She holds Master's degree in Law science subjects. She didn't find it difficult to talk easily about her personal life except the passage of sharing the most important moments of her life; probably because one of the moment was concerned with her grandfather's death. She seemed like a very sensitive and ambitious person with high marks in her secondary school and with high academic performance. This is the result of the support she receives from her parents. She practice was at the municipal administration in Blagoevgrad.

Y_BG_B_5 is a junior expert at the Regional Education Management – Blagoevgrad. She has a large experience in the elaboration, work and participation in European projects. She has worked as an

expert under the project "LLL_HUB". The interviewee was a student at South-West University "Neofit Rilski"- Blagoevgrad. She has a Ph.D degree from the same University. The interviewee has participated in several programs oriented to encourage young adults to find a job – "Student Practices" (while she was a student of South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad), "Start in Career", "LLL Hub". She is a Bulgarian.

Y_BG_B_6 was a student at South-West University "Neofit Rilski"- Blagoevgrad. The respondent has a Bachelor degree. She is a young woman works under the project Start in the Career. She worked as a tire repair shop manager in Blagoevgrad. She made a short reference to her life, mostly her school life and pointed out the difficulties she had while searching for a job after graduating. She has a positive view for the future. The interviewee is from ethnic minority.

Y_BG_B_7 is a young woman works under the project Start in the Career. She worked municipal or regional administration and in the agencies respectively. She was a student at South-West University "Neofit Rilski"- Blagoevgrad. She has a master's degree in Law. Pointed out the difficulties she had while searching for a job after graduating. The respondent has a positive view for the future. She has difficulties finding a job after graduating that is why she decided to apply for the project "Start in the Career". She can not specify her expectations of life, but she is sure for her professional growth. She has confidently definite herself to the success. The interviewee is from ethnic minority.

Y_BG_B_8 is a young woman works under the project Start in the Career. She interviewee was a student at South-West University "Neofit Rilski"- Blagoevgrad. She has a Master's degree in Law and is also interested in Bulgarian history. She is an individual who has a very difficult life without parents. She graduated from humanitarian school and she is interested in Bulgarian history. She even has a nickname "Bulgarska", because she writes novels. The respondent seems like she is a big patriot, probably because she knew very well the history of Bulgaria and respects the country she is born in. She relies on herself only. Also, she is very thankful to her teachers about their support.

Y_BG_B_9 is a young man. He is a very sociable and conversable person. He has large experience in the elaboration, work and participation in European projects. Over the last five years, he has been involved in Erasmus projects at least once a year. He was a student at South-West University "Neofit Rilski"- Blagoevgrad. He has been involved in student career development forums. The respondent is working at the Blagoevgrad Informational Centre of Blagoevgrad Municipality. He is responsible for the supervision of students who carry out their practical training at the Informational Centre. He is working with young adults. The respondent has not been looking for a job in the specialty so intensive. He worked in a local travel agency for several months. Then he went to work with his father for their

own business. At the moment the interviewee works in the Blagoevgrad Informational Centre of Blagoevgrad Municipality (*„I accepted the offer because the job was in the area of tourism. I expected to be interesting and that's why I'm here“*). The respondent holds a Masters' degree in Tourism from the South-West University “Neofit Rilski”- Blagoevgrad. He was participated in “Youth Guarantee” project, he is a person with disabilities.

Y_BG_B_10 is a young man works under the project “Youth Guarantee”. He was a student at South-West University “Neofit Rilski”- Blagoevgrad. He has a Bachelor degree in Public Administration and a master’s degree in Human Recourse Management. He holds a bachelor and master’s degree from South-West University “Neofit Rilski”- Blagoevgrad. He studied for a long time while realizing and find his place. His opinion is that Bulgarian education prepares well students for professional realization/ practice. In his opinion, there is no link between practical and theoretical experience.

2.4.2. How do LLL policies construct their target groups?

The target groups addressed /focused on young adults and vulnerable groups (from an indicative age of 18 and after leaving initial education and training from Blagoevgrad region) after entry into working life or participated different European projects and programs. The target groups live in Blagoevgrad region, South- Western Bulgaria. It considered the complementarily between public policies and dynamics of private markets in the EU market and analysed actors, dynamics, trends, mismatches and overlaps. Policies designed groups as they clearly put certain preliminary requirements that young adults must meet, for example:

- The Career Start Program requires participants to be up to 29 years of age with a tertiary education and no practical experience in the specialty
- The "Student Practices" program requires students to be taught at a university and registered in the database.

These examples show that each policy has its target group to which this policy is focused. The programs are clearly differentiated not only as activities and conceived effects, but also as a group that is identified by different characteristics: age, education, ethnicity, etc. There are policies that target unemployed and illiterate young people, which make policies a catalyst for support and assistance to vulnerable groups. The goal of each policy is to stimulate social inclusion, and so the groups are constructed by the policy.

Regarding to the gender bias, none of the interviewed respondent has entailed some gender bias or discrimination while participated in “Students’ practices project”, “LLL- HUB project”, “Start in the Career” or “Youth Guarantee” programs.

2.4.3. What are young people's life projects?

Regarding the expectations in life and personal realization it should be noted that for all of the respondents the education is a basic value for the success and a better life in the future. *"The good education is a way to find a better job in the city and live better"* (Y_BG_B_1). Those of them who are still at the university plan to graduate first and searching for a proper job. Some of them still believe of their success and development, while others are more pessimistic. The pessimistic attitudes are the result of disappointment *"To some extent, I expected something to change into our country I do not like the way of policy making and I am forward looking to convince as many people as I can to have a public position and to be social active"* (Y_BG_B_2) and the *"existing corruption in the region"* (Y_BG_B_2). On the other hand, comparing of religion and beliefs the interesting thing is that young adults who come from poor regions are relying on their own capacity and motivation; while the other respondents expect "help" from the state or university or institution for their development and education.

"If we only rely on the university, we cannot get what's needed. It's all about how much you've mobilized, what you want. What is the motivation because without extracurricular work you can achieve a little. You need to do some extra homework, out of the university. Everything depends on the person himself that is the most important"(Y_BG_B_1).

Family background can also result in contextual differences that may affect achievement and motivation.

"I always knew that the family was very important..... I felt the support of my parents during my entire training, but especially when I finished my education and I was financially troubled, then I received very strong support and I am grateful to my parents who, at this difficult time, came to me. Now I continue to feel respect from my family that I have managed to finish my education and now I continue to work and cope with life."(Y_BG_B_6).

The "middle class" families or "ethnic" families are more likely to raise their children to choose and focus on the exact sphere in education, and also of the importance of education in general. As a result the respondents have demonstrated one very positive attitude towards school and education. There is also a link between birthplace and mobilization. *"I still think that when a person has ambitions and he takes initiative, go the right way"* (Y_BG_B_5).

It seems like Young Adults that came from poor regions are more motivated to receive their university education, because this will help them to "escape" from the "village" or "small town" and to find a better job in the big cities. *"I have a positive view of education, although the marriage and child are the first place I decided to graduate at the university."* (Y_BG_B_3).

Interviewed young adults' life projects are concerned with university graduation, searching and finding proper job. Those who already have a job plan to settle down and have a family. Of course,

there are Young Adults who want to develop and have their own business. The general feeling is that in spite of the difficulties Young Adults find in their professional developments they are very confident and have very ambitious projects for developing themselves.

“My expectations don't exclude favorable outcome such as opening my own tire center, but honestly, I do not know how things will develop in the future..... I see myself as a successful young person with a business of his own” (Y_BG_B_6).

2.4.4. Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making? (GOV)

Young people in Blagoevgrad region widely support democracy, but are distanced from the policy making. All of the Young Adults that have been interviewed are sceptical of the political and administrative machineries. The majority of Young Adults would like to see more equal distribution of resources throughout the globe. Young people in Blagoevgrad region have greater self-confidence than trust in the institutions of representative democracy. Few young people belong to political parties and voting levels are generally on the decline (Y_BG_B_2 belongs to one of the biggest political party in Bulgaria.). Better-educated and socially active Young Adults are more likely to be involved in 'real politics' and unemployed youth less than others are. Political transformation in Bulgaria has also enabled many Young Adults to take prominent roles in public politics. There is no guarantee that this will become a permanent feature, but it may have a lasting effect in that Young Adults have seen that it is possible. Organized civil society is the forum in which Young Adults should be more active, with sports associations remaining by far the most popular. In general the Young Adults in Blagoevgrad region still lack trust in organized civil society and keep their distance. *“The expectations in the beginning were justified, but now they do not take into account the political crisis and the things in the country; with us things are not very good.” (Y_BG_B_3).*

On the other hand meaningful youth participation and leadership require that Young Adults and young peoples' organizations have opportunities, capacities, and benefit from an enabling environment and relevant evidence based programmes and policies at LLL policy-making level in Blagoevgrad region. In the interviews that have been conducted a majority of respondents expressing that the main challenges for youth were *“limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making processes” (Y_BG_B_2).* *“With limited opportunities and exposure” (Y_BG_B_5)* to *“meaningfully participate in inclusive decision-making processes” (Y_BG_B_9),* Young Adults feel “unheard” of their society. The need for participatory structures and greater trust between youth and institutions and for greater capacity development were also stressed.

2.4.5. What do young adults think about their skills?

With respect to the Young Adults skills interviews have shown a clear link between family/parents' support and Young Adults success in life. In other words, parents who are actively involved in their

children's education and provide a stimulating learning environment at home can help their children develop feelings of competence, control, curiosity, and positive attitudes about academics, according to various studies. Student skills are influenced not only by family/parents, but also to varying degrees by teachers, according to the respondents. According to interviewed Young Adults, skills may be also acquired in various contexts over the lifetime; education is thought to be particularly important in forming skills. Most of the interviewed are familiar with foreign languages; however *"to be disciplined and accurate are the most valuable skills"* (Y_BG_B_9) according to the respondents. *"Every skill has a positive influence even if it is not directly related to the work of a person; To be able to present yourself, your ideas, your visions"* (Y_BG_B_5).

Social skills such as "self-confidence", "self-direction" and "risk-taking" are also increasingly important, because people are expected to be able to behave much more autonomously. *"Learning how to learn", "to adapt", "to change" and "to make sense of the vast information flows"* (Y_BG_B_8) are now generic skills that everyone should acquire. *"It is important to be able to communicate with people and to apply the Lifelong Learning as a way of life"* (Y_BG_B_5).

Employers are increasingly demanding the ability to learn and acquire new skills rapidly and to adapt to new challenges and situations.

The most important skill in demand job at the moment is the "booming" and quickly developed computer industry that is why computer skills are advisable. Foreign languages and knowledge of a second language is preferable, too.

In general the interviewed Young Adults believe that they have to develop and improve their personal skills during the whole life.

2.5. Interaction between experts and youth

LLL - HUB

Regarding this program, both the youth and the experts did not differ in their assessments of its usefulness and significance for the functional region. Respondents – YAs and experts shared that the LLL-Hub project is useful because aims at fostering shared meaning about lifelong learning across Europe by encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue about the European agenda at national and regional level. This program is very important because it provides a thorough knowledge of the policies that are at the national level as well as at regional level. It was necessary to systematize all the policies adopted by the MES as Strategies or Laws and to remove what is relevant to the LLL. There are many institutions that work on individual projects and they have achieved results, they work with young adults for their training. The organizations carried out the projects with YAs have received funding from different organizations. It was necessary to summarize these good practices that had to be collected. The program "LLL HUB" aimed that – to describe LLL practices on regional

level so that other organizations could use them in their work. As mentioned in the project description, the LLL-HUB activities included a presentation of good national and regional practices that could be perceived and implemented by other countries.

Experts have stated that within the project, various good policies and practices that are implemented and developed in the participating countries are monitored, evaluated and discussed. Thus, in a particular context, positive issues can be discussed or questions rose about the development and implementation of good practices and policies. Bulgarian Lifelong Learning (LLL) policy is related to achieving the long-term social and economic goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth defined at European and national levels. *"Improving the conditions in the country as a result of the proposed changes and focusing on the problems in this area will also inevitably affect the regional achievements."* (E_BG_B_5).

One of the problems that respondents share is the need not only to highlight good practices but also to implement them. There is a real danger that best practices remain only at the level of "discussion" by the participants in different projects, and little effort is being made to introduce them into Bulgarian conditions. Overall, this is a critique to the Bulgarian management of education and integrating foreign experience in general.

STUDENTS PRACTICIES

For this program, it can be said that good interaction has been achieved between young adults and experts. Participants evaluate the program as positive for all aspects and as successful. One of its main features is that all students can apply for it - there are no limitations on the submission of queries. Every regular or external student is listed, completes his/her system profile, which contains information about the specialty, course, form of training. Respondents say the project has its own pluses and opportunities. The project conducting depends on the people themselves who are involved in it, the extent to which they will take advantage of the project, from employers, because some of them have the possibility to hire students. The hiring student from the training organization after completion the internship is also practiced; but it mainly depends on the organization and what is the demand for staff. It could say that the participation and activity of students are also very important, their desire to acquire skills in practice; but in order to move from trainees to hiring it is necessary to have a demand from the training organization itself. This is a two-way process according the respondents. Not all students participating in the project are equally active during the practice; and this was observed in all activities - different participation of individuals involved in activities.

The interviewed experts said the main project outcome is the successful transition of university students to the labour market. The efficiency of the project is measured by the variety of practical skills the students have mastered, which will also be needed in the future. In the course of the project, the interviewed experts say that no serious problems have been arisen in the implementation of the

project. However, the greater control of practical training is needed. More effective control over the practices that are carried out is needed; as well as the link between universities and organizations and whether the proposed training organization is actually adequate to student's qualification. In addition, the academic mentors said that the project provides job opportunities after completing the internship, so it is better for students to practice the last year when the effect will be greatest.

Students said that the program enables them to fall into an organization or firm, to participate in a real work process, to be part of the communication of employees, to perform different tasks that are assigned to them. All this is an important condition for the gradual accumulation of practical experience, which is the basis for their future work. All interviewed students express their satisfaction with their participation in this program. Thus, the interaction between participants - students, academic mentors, mentors based on shared views under the interviews is high.

START IN CAREER

Experts and young adults who have participated in the program express their satisfaction with the availability of this project and its conducting. Experts said that the implementation of the program is at a high organizational level. The Territorial Departments of the Employment Agency - responsible for the implementation of the program, with the support of the regional and municipal administrations, are conducting an information campaign for acquaintance with the Program and the opportunities it offers. The Territorial Divisions of the Employment Agency carry out mediation activities to motivate employers and young people to increase employment.

The selection of the young people according to the requirements of the employers is made through:

- Component 1: Unemployed youths up to 29 years of age with higher education and without work experience are recruited for 9 months.
- Component 2: Unemployed youths up to 24 years of age who have completed vocational education in the last 24 months, without work experience in the profession in which they have acquired qualification, and registered in the Labour Office are hired for 6 months.

Continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Program is being carried out. Interviewed experts state that they adhere to a number of principles in their work:

- Transparency and publicity - involvement in the implementation of the Program of various management and public structures;
- The effectiveness of the system in carrying out activities;
- Legitimacy - development and implementation of activities according to the legal framework of the Employment Promotion Act;
- Volunteering - the participation of unemployed youths in the Program is by their own decision;
- Resource provision - financing from the state budget;
- Social partnership in the implementation of the Program.

The youngsters interviewed express their satisfaction with the participation in the program; the three interviews were conducted with young people who have completed higher education and who did not have a practical experience in the specialty. After passing the program, two of respondents have already been appointed to administrative structures and work in the specialty they have graduated. The presence of one-way assessment indicates that the program actually succeeds in achieving good synergy and interaction.

YOUTH GUARANTEE

Interviewed experts and young adults who participated in the Youth Guarantee Program point out the effect of the measures and actions that are determined by the youth profile:

- Learning literacy. For young people with low levels of basic knowledge: reading, writing, mathematics, and more (illiterate persons) due to early leaving the system of formal education and the opportunity provided for acquisition of knowledge corresponding to the initial level of primary education with literacy and access to vocational training.
- Training to acquire professional qualifications and/or key competencies sought on the labour market by engaging in vocational training to acquire knowledge and skills in occupations.
- Support for finding employment in the primary labour market. The youngsters will receive information and refer to jobs matching their profile.
- Providing work placement for young people with education and training qualification..
- Providing apprenticeships to young people without a qualification who do not wish to join education and training courses.

These measures and actions for intervention are assessed by the respondents as effective both in personal and regional terms.

Based on the comparison between the shared opinions of young adults and experts participating in the programs implemented in BFR, the following summaries for the interaction between youth and experts can be made.

The information that has been gathered during the interviews raises several research analytical issues. The first basic question is: how important is the active involvement of the young adults in the presented programs? The active involvement of the youth can be considered to the touchstone of the programs' success. It can be said that the programs under consideration are open to young people to the high extent. In addition, for the promotion of the programs, the Employment Agency undertakes information campaigns and the Career Centre at the South-West University promotes its project activities.

The other important thing in the programs presented is how social and economic change in Bulgarian society affects the motivation for work and the ambitions of young people. The projects discussed, and their participants, show one very positive attitude towards school and education which can be listed as:

- The education is the most important factor for the success in the society;
- Each educational degree is crucial to develop personally as well as professional skills;
- Every skill has a positive influence even if it is not directly related to the job of the person;
- The education is stronger factor than ethnicity for personal development.

2.5.1. Emerging Issues

Generally some of the interviews show the role of the civic position together with education as main factors for the success in the society.

Another issue in the analysis of the interaction between experts and young people is the link between education and the labor market; and in particular, the correlation between the taught study content in educational institutions and the demands of the labor market; or how formal education prepare young people for the employers' requirements; what is the relationship between demand and supply of skills. Some of the interviews are underlined the existing gaps between theory and practice in Bulgarian education. In this sense, educational institutions should now seek to combine the growing demand for practical skills of students with updating the curricula. Professionals (in the education and training system) need to find a balance between theory and practice to prepare the students with the tools that make them more adaptable to the labor market. Educational institutions are facing a very dynamic industry and the market that is changing. What employers are looking for is also changing. In addition, teachers and educational systems need to form new skills and abilities for professions that do not yet exist. In other words, besides academic knowledge, nowadays employers look for qualities such as creativity and emotional intelligence, as well as analytical and problem resolving skills.

The discrepancies between institutions consist in the fact that universities do not always supervising the realization of students, they place emphasis on training. Companies that invest in training their employees are few. They prefer to hire qualified specialists; only 23% of companies in Bulgaria invest in the training of staff. That is why it is necessary more active link between the two types of institutions.

In this respect, the interaction of experts and young adults is expressed in emphasizing on:

- Activities that focus on transition from education to employment, such as: internships, open doors, apprenticeship;
- Encouraging companies to hire young people.
- Introducing dual training: when students are both studying and working.

In this context in the interviews carried out is underlined difficult economic situation in Blagoevgrad region, reducing of the investments, contraction of the labor market, which hinders the

realization of young people and finding a job. In some of the interviews, experts focus on the share of unemployed and vulnerable groups - ethnic minorities, single mothers, people with disabilities who need protection and support - is growing. Need to create Special programs for coping with problems.

In addition, the interaction between the positions expressed in the interviews of youth and experts is related to highlighting the importance and contribution of the projects carried out on a regional basis and in relation to each individual involved in the projects. Each of the projects carried out has contributed to the development of both professional skills and social qualities. Participants therefore show the importance of projects for young adults. In addition, these programs are crucial because they are related to providing employment, income, and hence a better quality of life. Increasing the employment is a key to reducing poverty and social exclusion; people feel more engaged in the social environment and as a part of it. The basic challenges for the youngest people in Blagoevgrad FR are to find a suitable work and information from a mentor or friend who supports young adults, which graduated university or vocational school, but who still do not have enough experience.

Interactive moment in interviews is the importance of soft skills. It is emphasized that:

- The young people must be brought up to be able to show responsibility, respect to the workplace, as well as to show respect to people with whom he/she works, study, lives;
- Every skill has a positive influence even if it is not directly related to the job;
- Young adult should be able to present yourself, your ideas, your visions;
- Should be able to communicate with people and to apply the Lifelong Learning as a way of life.

According to one of the respondents

„the person has to be very proactive/ enterprising. Initiation, curiosity, constant participation in a number of training sessions, increasing his/her knowledge in different fields, being able to present him/herself and to have the ability of presenting good practices so that the acquired competences in some way give the confidence that young adults can find and personal fulfilment and realization on national and regional level.“ (Y_BG_B_5).

A conclusion from the interviews is the implementation the good practices and European experience. The interviews indicated that it is not enough to describe the advantages of different practices that develop as part of the European experience, but also to learn and apply in Bulgarian conditions as part of the educational and economic environment.

A very important moment in the unfolding of the interaction of young adults - experts, is the point of view and the angle of reasoning. The fact that young adults appreciate conducted projects through their own life course. They think about family, friends, education and their surroundings. Significant others have a special place in their rational.

- The role of the family in young adult's development - as financial and emotional support. Family background can also result in contextual differences that may affect achievement and success. The respondents are good examples how parents and family become an extremely essential factor for

youth development and future. All the interviewed young people stressed the role of the family they built and had a decisive impact on them and the choices they made.

- Teachers and the educational environment and their impact and the formation of habits.
- Friends and informal environment as a source of support and information.
- Institution - emphasis on the formal side as organizing courses and trainings.

What is important to them lies in the opportunities to develop, participate in life, and find a good environment to be successful.

Some of the interviews with the young females set the topic for the role of a woman: whether she wants to find a better and well paid job and she could have the ability to combine professional realization and motherhood. It turns out that gender and the role of motherhood and the relationship with the children remains an eternal theme and can become a problem for the young families and the professional choice of women. The basic question is: how the family and marriage itself might help or hinder the social mobility of its members. The topic of the parenting is a large one and includes things such as socialization of children, parental roles, ect.

In the case of experts, the evaluation of projects is done through the contribution of the relevant project to the region and the institution. Reflection allows penetration into deeper community habitus that allow appreciation of utility in a more abstract and generalized form.

Young adults emphasize their satisfaction with participating in the programs and that they can be trained in organization. It is important for them:

- To participate in the real practical environment;
- To entrust them with specific tasks and duties;
- To receive payment through their participation in the program.

The review shows that there is an interaction between the assessments and perceptions of young adults and experts. In common evaluations, the similarity between shared views is indicative of the fact that ongoing projects in the functional region are estimated to be necessary in practice by both groups of respondents. This is not only indicative of the importance of programs, but also for their effectiveness in terms of similarity in perceiving the effect of programs and how to implement them. It can be said that this is indicative for the existence of interaction, as well as the search not only of interrelations between the two groups of social actors but also of realizing a common cause to the implementation of the projects. Although starting from different positions to the programs concerned: young adults from the position of personal success and realization, and the experts - from the position of their management or street position, included in the project expertise, it is noticed that there is a general focus on expectations and the evaluation of project activities, and therefore an indicator of successful outcomes.

Conclusions

The LLLP in Bulgaria does not have the longer traditions and the wider spread as the policies in Western European countries. However, it faces similar challenges in trying to support young adults' transitions into work and independent living. We expected that focusing on the regional level we would uncover we would uncover specific approaches to the implementation of the programs and initiatives meeting local needs in the two FR. However, the analysis showed a common approach to the construction of the objectives, target groups and success criteria. Control and evaluation came from above – the Ministries in the capital Sofia which in turn followed the EU directives. The experts' discourse very often repeated the terms of those EU directives. Different from the official European discourse were only the constructions of the young in Bulgaria as low motivated, having an unrealistic self-esteem and a short-term vision. One of the conclusions of this report is the need to increase the autonomy and flexibility of regional policies as to allow a local focus in the design and implementation of LLLP.

The analyzed programs in both regions were evaluated by the interviewed experts and young adults as beneficial for their region and contributing to the development of the practical skills of young adults and their getting acquainted with the requirements of employers in the real economy. The projects presented in the report all focused on building the link between the educational institutions, training providers and the labor market. The numbers of trainees completing the programs were considered the major indicator of successful outcomes.

The experts and young adults in the two regions in their interviews emphasized the importance of education as a factor for mobility in society. It is interesting that given the positive attitude to education in general, there is so little of LLL offers and even less take up. Experts and the young alike agreed that education in Bulgaria did not meet market requirements and should be practically oriented. In this connection it is necessary the activities that focus on transition from education to employment, such as: internships, open doors, apprenticeship to expand. Expectations are that practically centered learning and market-oriented skills encourage companies to hire young people more actively and the introducing of dual training: when students are both studying and working is of great importance. Dual training is not implemented in the formal education and training system in the two functional regions. The Bulgarian case is another confirmation to the mismatch between LLL policies and labor market needs.

The programs studied represent a very good opportunity to include unemployed young people in the labor market as well as to gain practical experience through apprenticeship and internship programs. However, the real impact is not the intended one. After completing the internship, the organization or the company in which the traineeship is implemented very rarely employs any of the trainees. In

addition, when selecting applicants for the internship, the decisions are taken by the organization in which the traineeship will take place, so the most needed are left outside. On their part, the experts in the LLLP do not employ an individualized approach to the young people that look for their services and give a preferential treatment to those who show the highest prospects of successfully finishing the program.

Generally, the legal and political macro framework (e.g. strategies and laws) are focused on educational outcomes; but, there is a lack of internal coherence between different levels of the educational system: most of the educational institutions on a regional level remain passive observers. All this indicates that under Bulgarian conditions there are significant problems associated with the practical implementation of policies and programs adopted at national and regional level relate to young adults. Most regional institutions have not yet created adequate organizational conditions for widespread continuing education of adults due to lack of financing and long-term vision.

An important conclusion is that the studied policies have a European or national funding, but the young adults are excluded from the LLL policy making process and their voice is not heard. It seems that without taking into consideration the diverse needs of the young people who are in-between education and employment and without special attention to those in most vulnerable situations the LLLP will not reach sustainable results.

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Work Package 5
Qualitative Analysis
Croatian National report

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Executive Summary

The difficulties Croatia is facing have an effect on the social status, problems and needs of youth, as well as the way society perceives and treats their problems and potentials. That is why the main objective of this National report is contextualising the opportunities of young adults in Croatia by description and analysis of the view-points of regional policy makers, practitioners and young adults regarding the regional resources, objectives and priorities in terms of skills in two functional regions. As defined in the *Qualitative Analysis Work Package Proposal* (2017), the aims of this National report are to distinguish between the perspectives of different stakeholders, detect contradictions and gaps, look for established regional and local networks of actors and analyse whether and to what extent they allow and promote young people's participation in designing and evaluating those policies.

Therefore, this national report is based on the qualitative analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with young adults and experts in the two Croatian functional regions. The interviewees (young adults and experts) were chosen in agreement with the members of the National Advisory Board, who pointed to the main actors and users of LLL policies at the regional and local levels. Due to the fact that Croatia is highly centralised country, the interviewees in both functional regions were selected from the same types of institutions. Young adults are selected from the sample of the users of public open universities, regional offices of the Croatian Employment Service and civil society organisations.

Altogether, 16 young adults and 12 experts were interviewed. The structure of the interviewed experts in Istria County is: a professional of the Croatian Employment Service at the regional level, two professionals of the local Open Public University, a professional of the Administrative Department for Education, Sports and Technical Culture and two managers of the Civil Society Organisations. The structure of the interviewed experts in Osijek-Baranja County is: a professional of the Croatian Employment Service at the regional level (Lifelong career guidance centre), a professional of the local Open Public University, a professional of the Civil Society Organisations, a professional of the regional offices of the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, a manager of the Administrative Department for Culture, Children and Youth and a manager of the Civil Society Organisations. In Istria County from 8 young adults, there were 5 young women and 3 young men, of whom 3 persons are so far unemployed, one is employed and 4 are still enrolled in education. In Osijek-Baranja County there has been interviewed 5 young women and 3 young men, of whom 7 persons are so far unemployed and 1 person is employed.

The analysis has offered few main conclusions about expert interviews in both functional regions of Croatia:

- Most institutions have common antecedents, linked to the independence of Croatia and the democratization of the Croatian society;
- The common objectives of the analysed institutions are to increase young adults' employability with the improvement of their skills, qualification and access to information;
- Less attention is given to encouraging the changes in the society for the benefit of the youth activities, programmes and policies are fragmented (the system is highly centralised);

- Local authorities lack initiative and awareness of the need to create priorities and regional or local policies;
- There is no reliable evaluation of the effects of policies implementation (some statistical data are available, but are not used in planning future activities);
- The majority of the experts are focused on their work without getting deeper into its impact on the LLL policy in its whole.

While analysing young adults interviews it is obvious that good connection with members of their family as well as support from their family, young adults in Croatia see as a main point in facing their problems. During their education, most of young adults in Croatia were enrolled in different out-of-school activities, mostly in some types of sport or in the music schools. While presenting themselves, young adults are mostly focused on presenting their practical skills. They are oriented on the skills that they can use in their everyday-life situations and they are not so proactive in participating in activities that would lead to the community improvement. Generally, it could be concluded that young adults in Croatia are dissatisfied with life in Croatia. They are worried about their future, and most of them believe that they will not be able to find a job in profession, especially the job they love. Because of that they are unable to plan their future regarding any other life important question. Most of them have negative feelings towards situation at labour market. They recognize the labour market as centre of nepotism, where you are more competitive if you are member of a political party.

According to that conclusions some challenges of LLL policies in Croatia were identified. There is a lack of implementation of national policies at the regional and local level. At the same time different stakeholders in the community are competitive and educational, social welfare and labour market policies are fragmented. This leaves NEET youth, but also youth in general in hard position. While talking about LLL policies, in general, young people in Osijek-Baranja and in Istria Functional Region are not included in creating LLL policies. Most of them are not informed about their opportunities and they do not expect anything from the Croatian Employment Service. If young adults want to get retraining or training, they usually need to pay it for themselves. Therefore, LLL policies are not recognizing different social categories.

Finally, the conclusion of this analysis is that there are many institutions on local and regional level that have as a goal raising quality of life of young adults through raising their employment. Main problem that cause failure of that programs is lack of coordination between different stakeholders and between three main systems: educational, social welfare and employment. Besides that, the institutions are choosing to deal with few measures on local level, based on their particular interest. At the same time there are no evaluation of measures implementation, so there is no feedback if actions and programs do help young adults in improving their life-quality. Lack of coordination and lack of evaluation are creating skills mismatch at local and regional level, that is visible to all actors included. All this leaves young adults in an unpleasant situation: unemployed, without any financial stability, living with their parents and unable to plan their future life. This situation, according with high level of nepotism in employment, makes young adults dissatisfied with their life in Croatia and makes them willing to leave Croatia. The main thing that both experts and young adults from both regions claim is that LLL policies should be changed and improved in order to answer to the special needs of young adults' transition to labour market.

Introduction

In recent years, from a young person's perspective Croatia seems to be a decidedly more stable society to grow up in and come of age, than it was during the social transformation in the 1990s. In the early 1990s Croatia was still at war that had economic and political consequences on the direction and pace of long-term social development. Unsatisfactory results of social transformation manifested themselves in deficient democratization of the Croatian society, and even more in the devastation of economic resources. These circumstances have led to massive loss of jobs, with the accompanying decrease in the standard of living and general quality of life for most citizens. The subsequent period of democratic consolidation and long-term process of Croatia's accession to the European union, helped decrease democratic deficits present in the first decade of the transition, but generally economic circumstances did not improve. On the contrary, in 2008, the economic crisis started to spill over into Croatia, which, together with the indigenous structural deficiencies, contributed to continuous worsening of the economic situation (Ilišin et al., 2013). Generally, it could be concluded that after the first harsh transitional decade, a period of democratic consolidation, followed by a slower tempo of economic development began.

Youth in Croatia still grows up in a society that offers more risk and insecurity than opportunity for a better future. The processes of globalisation carries with it identical problems for youth in the European environment, but the Croatian youth is in an unfavourable position to a measure in which the Croatian society is more heavily burdened by problems than the more developed parts of Europe (Ilišin & Radin, 2007).

According to the *Quantitative Analysis Young Adults' Data – Croatian Briefing Paper* (Domović, Bouillet & Pažur, 2017), the living conditions of Croatian youth are characterised by the following circumstances:

- the economic conditions are significantly under the EU average (even with a visible economic growth in 2015, the Croatian GDP is still 42% lower than the EU average)
- Croatian labour productivity is significantly under (around 40-50%) the EU and Euro area countries average
- the employment of youth in the 15-24 age group is below the EU average (Croatia is one of the three EU28 member countries with the highest youth unemployment, the economic activity rate of youth has decreased in the last ten years and economically active youth in the labour market shows a great gender gap, especially in the last three years)
- the key issues faced by young people when entering the labour market in Croatia are the lack of previous work experience and mismatch between their qualifications and the skill demand
- the social protection expenditure in the national GDP is behind the expenditure in the GDP of EU member countries (even though the Gini index in Croatia has not significantly changed in the last six years and is equal to the Gini index of the EU average, the material deprivation rate for the total population in Croatia, in relation to the EU, is several times higher)
- Croatian people are less satisfied than the average European citizens when it comes to satisfaction with financial situation, overall life, recreational and green areas and the living environment

- the rate of natural population decline and the problem of demographic ageing in Croatia is worrying (the average age of the population is continuously rising, the fertility rate in Croatia is low and does not show significant changes)
- in comparison to other EU countries, the share of Croatian youth living with their parents is very high
- Croatia is faced with a very high emigration rate¹.

The difficulties Croatia is facing have an effect on the social status, problems and needs of youth, as well as the way society perceives and treats their problems and potentials. That is why the main objective of this National report is contextualising the opportunities of young adults in Croatia by description and analysis of the view-points of regional policy makers, practitioners and young adults regarding the regional resources, objectives and priorities in terms of skills in two functional regions.

As defined in the *Qualitative Analysis Work Package Proposal* (2017), the aims of this National report are to

- distinguish between the perspectives of different stakeholders
- detect contradictions and gaps
- look for established regional and local networks of actors and
- analyse whether and to what extent they allow and promote young people's participation in designing and evaluating those policies.

The underpinning hypothesis is that official discourses (CPE) and governance (GOV) contribute to shape life course pathways (LCR). This hypothesis will be tested by three main research tasks:

1. to explore young adults' and experts' perceptions of social expectations underlying policies and initiatives at the national, regional and local levels
2. to assess the interaction of LLL policies, young people's living conditions and county specific context
3. to compare data from two functional regions (Osijek-Baranja and Istria County).

The National report is closely connected with other Croatian national reports generated in other work packages, especially with the WP3, WP4 and WP6.

The main conclusion of the *Policy Mapping, Review and Analysis – Croatia* (WP3), is that Croatia is characterised by relatively rich legislative activity, accompanied by a continuous development of policy documents directed towards various social groups, where youth are relatively rarely the addressee of those policies and laws. Still, the analysed documents indicate that youth are given attention in the Croatian society, which is particularly visible in the measures of active youth employment policy and the *National Programme for the Youth 2014-2017*.

¹According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017), 36,436 persons emigrated from Croatia in year 2016. Among them, 27.38% are young adults (persons in age from 15-29). The largest negative total net migration of population was recorded in the County of Osijek-Baranja (-3,952), while 1.379 people emigrated from Istria County.

The *Quantitative Analysis Young Adults' Data – Croatian Briefing Paper* (WP4) showed that the key issues that young people are faced with when entering the labour market in Croatia are the lack of previous work experience and a mismatch between their qualifications and the skill demand. These problems are particularly evident in cases of individuals with lower educational attainment, young mothers and the Roma population. Long-term unemployment and large differences in regional youth unemployment rates are also recognized.

The *Comparative Analysis Skills Supply and Demand - Croatian National report* (WP6) leads to the conclusion that the current system of vocational education and training in Croatia does not ensure the acquisition of competences needed in the labour market, because the education supply and education programs are not adjusting to the new developments and circumstances fast enough. The content of most of the existing curricula and teaching programs offers little opportunity for the learners to acquire contemporary competences, because their modernization is not in pace with the development of new knowledge and technologies. An important dimension of labour market instability is the mismatch of supply and demand of different skills at the sectoral, regional and occupational levels. This is due to the slow adjustment of skill structures in the periods of rapid structural change that characterizes the post-transition economy.

This National report is based on the qualitative analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with young adults and experts in the two Croatian functional regions. This method was chosen because the nature of the research questions requires explanation and understanding of the impact that LLL policies have on the life course of young adults. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide an opportunity for individual depth of focus, but also allow the participants (young adults and experts) to reflect on the topic of the conversation.

As agreed at the YOUNG_ADULLT project level, the interviews with young adults and experts were taken, transcribed and analysed in accordance with the common framework for interview schedules (Coding and Reporting Guidelines). The interviewees (young adults and experts) were chosen in agreement with the members of the National Advisory Board, who pointed to the main actors and users of LLL policies at the regional and local levels. Due to the fact that Croatia is highly centralised country, the interviewees in both functional regions were selected from the same types of institutions.

The experts are the representatives of following institutions:

- Public Open Universities
These institutions provide various adult learning programmes, formal and non-formal education. Their programmes vary from basic education and literacy to secondary school courses, occupational retraining courses, foreign language courses, computer technology, general education and cultural courses.
- The regional offices of the Croatian Employment Service
This is the leading institution in the Croatian labour market, bringing together the entire labour supply and demand with the aim of full employment. This is achieved through effective mediation, and by developing high-quality services in line with the clients' needs; developing their own knowledge, skills and abilities as well as through promoting partnerships with stakeholders in the labour market.
- The regional offices of the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts

This institution gives special attention to educating its members, in particular by providing secondary education, retraining and skills upgrade of tradesmen and potential tradesmen in the form of lifelong education. The Education Department is organized into teams for the purpose of providing educational services on the whole territory of Croatia.

- Regional authorities

They are administrative departments and Region's services established for the performance of works in the self-governing domain of the Region, as well as for the performance of works of state administration transferred to the Region.

- Civil Society Organisations

Civil Society Organisations have played an important role in preparing for the accession to the EU and supporting different sectoral reforms, e. g. overall promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Civil society organisations already act as relevant providers of direct assistance and protection to victims of corruption and violation of human rights, as well as advocates of sustainable environmental protection, social rights and transparent policy processes.

Young adults are selected from the sample of the users of:

- Public Open Universities
- regional offices of the Croatian Employment Service and
- Civil Society Organisations.

All interviews were prepared, taken and treated according to the Quality Assurance Plan, the Ethical Code of the YOUNG_ADULLT project and of the University of Zagreb, and in compliance with the Project's Data Protection Protocol.

Data collection, Treatment and Analysis

Participants

The participants of in-depth semi-structured interviews are young adults and experts from two Croatian functional regions. They are:

- Istria County and
- Osijek-Baranja County.

The counties have the status of regional authorities that have a broad scope of responsibilities in the field of education, healthcare, regional and urban planning, economic development, environmental protection, transport and traffic infrastructure, maintenance of public roads, and issuing location and construction permits.

Istria County is the westernmost part of Croatia situated by the Adriatic Sea and encompassing most of the territory of the Istrian peninsula. Administratively, Istria County consists of 41 territorial units of local self-government (10 towns and 31 municipalities). Istria County is one of the more entrepreneurial and economically better developed regions in Croatia (above 75% of the average of the Republic of Croatia). According to the last 2011 census (the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), Istria County has 208,055 inhabitants (4.86% of the total population of Croatia). In relation to the previous census of 2001, this represents an increase of 0.8%. The ageing index for Istria County is 136.8, which is higher than the national average (115.0). Among the youth aged 20 to 29, there are 4,521 (17.2%) persons with higher education and 20,356 (76.61%) persons with secondary school education, which is in line with the Croatian average (Regional strategy of development of Istria Functional Region until 2020). The persons younger than 29 years of age constituted almost one third of all the unemployed in Istria County.

Osijek-Baranja County is a continental county, located in the Pannonian valley in north-eastern Croatia, extending over an area of 4,149 km² on a fertile plains soil between the rivers Sava, Drava, and Danube. The area of Osijek-Baranja County makes up 7.3% of the total area of the Republic of Croatia. Administratively, the Osijek-Baranja County consists of 42 territorial units of local self-government (7 towns and 35 municipalities). The Osijek-Baranja County is one of the counties with the lowest competitiveness rank and the lowest development index (below 75% of the average of the Republic of Croatia). The county was devastated during the war of 1991-1995 (its GDP fell by 70% and the previously prosperous companies were severely damaged and closed during the war). According to the last 2011 census (the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), Osijek-Baranja County has 305,032 inhabitants representing 7.1% of the total population. The average population density is below the national average (73.5 inhabitants/square km). Among youth aged 20 to 29, there are 5,991 (14.7%) persons with higher education and 31,776 (77.95%) persons with secondary school education. According to the records of the Employment Service – Regional office in Osijek, by the end of December 2016, the highest share in the structure of the unemployed was made up by unemployed persons older than 50, whereas the share of young persons aged 15 to 24 was 18.2%. However, the Osijek-Baranja County has the largest negative total net population migration.

In each functional region, the same national legislation is implemented (presented in **Table 1**). The analysis provided in the *Policy Mapping, Review and Analysis – Croatia* shows that Croatia is characterised by relatively rich legislative activity, accompanied by a continuous development of policy documents directed towards various social groups, where youth are relatively rarely the addressee of those policies and laws. Still, the analysed documents indicate that youth are given attention in the Croatian society, which is particularly visible in the measures of active youth employment policy and in the *National Programme for the Youth 2014-2017*. The analysis also points to the relatively high level of centralisation of LLL policies for youth. Regardless of the expectation that these national documents are to be operatively implemented at the regional and local levels, this seldom happens, since local self-government units rarely specify and adapt the national needs to the needs of their citizens, thus showing that most of the benefits for the youth are granted at the national level.

Table 1: Croatian laws and public policies regulating the LLL issues (source: Policy Mapping, Review and Analysis – Croatia)

Labour market		Education		Social policies	
Laws (6)	Public policies (4)	Laws (5)	Public policies (2)	Laws (1)	Public policies (3)
<i>Labour Act</i> (2013) <i>Act on Job Placement and Unemployment Insurance</i> (2008) <i>Act on Contributions</i> (2008) <i>The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act</i> (2013) <i>Employment Promotion Act</i> (2012)	<i>Guidelines for the development and implementation of active policy of employment in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2015 – 2017</i> <i>Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan</i> (2014) <i>Strategy for Lifelong Guidance and Career Development in the Republic of Croatia</i> (2016 – 2020) <i>Strategy for Entrepreneurship Development in the Republic of Croatia</i> (2013-2020)	<i>Primary and Secondary School Education Act</i> (2008) <i>Vocational Education Act</i> (2009) <i>Adult Education Act</i> (2007) <i>Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act</i> (2003) <i>Public Open University Act</i> (1997)	<i>Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge</i> (2014) <i>Development of Vocational Education and Training Programme</i> (2016 – 2020)	<i>Social Welfare Act</i> (2013)	<i>National Programme for Youth</i> (2014 – 2017) <i>National Roma Inclusion Strategy</i> (2013 – 2020) <i>Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic Of Croatia</i> (2014 – 2020)

The criteria for selection of the interviewees was driven by the research questions and the purpose of the research, a time-frame of the research and available resources. We chose interviewees that are information-rich and that might reveal system weakness. The National Advisory Board pointed out main actors and users of LLL policies at the regional and local level, who were contacted to participate in interviews as experts. The final interviewed experts

were selected from the larger sample because of the specific role they have in the organization and/or implementation process of LLL policies at the local/regional level. They are managers and professionals that can increase the usefulness and relevance of information on the LLL policies.

Youth adults involved in this analysis were chosen according to following criteria:

- functional region (8 young adults from each county);
- age (from 19 to 29 years);
- gender (young women and young man);
- employment (employed and unemployed young people);
- involvement in LLL policies (young people who use measures from the LLL policies and young people who do not use them).

They were selected as users of different programmes offered by the Croatian Employment Service, Open Public Universities and Civil Sector Organisations.

The structure of the interviewed experts in Istria County is:

- a professional of the Croatian Employment Service at the regional level
- two professionals of the local Open Public University
- a professional of the Administrative Department for Education, Sports and Technical Culture
- two managers of the Civil Society Organisations.

The structure of the interviewed experts in Osijek-Baranja County is:

- a professional of the Croatian Employment Service at the regional level(Lifelong career guidance centre)
- a professional of the local Open Public University
- a professional of the Civil Society Organisations
- a professional of the regional offices of the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts
- a manager of the Administrative Department for Culture, Children and Youth
- a manager of the Civil Society Organisations.

The structure of the interviewed young adults in Istria County is:

- 5 young women and 3 young men
- of whom 3 persons are so far unemployed, 1 person is employed and 4 are enrolled in education.

The structure of the interviewed young adults in Osijek-Baranja County is:

- 5 young women and 3 young men
- of whom 7 persons are so far unemployed and 1 person is employed.

Altogether, 16 young adults and 12 experts were interviewed.

Data collection and content

Central principles and guidelines of data collection for the purpose of this analysis are:

- a) *free and informed consent*, reflecting the respect for the autonomy, dignity and voluntariness of individuals, who were adequately informed of all aspects related to the research and of their right to withdraw before giving their permission and consent (by oral and written statement of awareness and consent provided by each participant)
- b) *procedures and safeguards in research involving vulnerable and non-competent subjects*, indicating the need to raise awareness and understanding of issues related to 'vulnerability', including issues of language and representation (by providing an appropriate atmosphere and the use of generally understandable language)
- c) *balancing potential harms and benefits arising from research participation* (by fair incentives to participate)
- d) the importance of ensuring *privacy and confidentiality* concerning the control and disclosure of personal data and information related to *data management, security and protection* in what concerns keeping the information gathered in a secure and confidential manner (by the Data Security Protocol).

As previously mentioned, the participants were chosen in collaboration with the members of the National Advisory Board. After being informed about the aims and method of the project and the research, they contacted the managers of relevant institutions and made arrangements for the time and means of doing the interviews.

The members of the project's Croatian team (Vlatka Domović, Dejana Bouillet and Monika Pažur) took the interviews. All of them are experienced in the use of qualitative method in social research. Moreover, Vlatka Domović and Dejana Bouillet participated in two Preparatory Workshops (held in November 2016 in Porto and June 2017 in Granada). Monika Pažur was instructed about the procedures for the national data collection by these two team members. Most of the interviews took place in the institutions listed above. Two young adults were interviewed via a Skype meeting, while one manager and one professional were interviewed at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb. At the beginning of the conversation, all participants signed the *Information letter and consent form*. After that, a short questionnaire about personal data of participant was fulfilled.

The content of interviews was highly connected with the research questions proposed in the *Qualitative Analysis Work Package Proposal*, with small adjustments to the cultural context.

The interviews for young adults were focused on their biographical experience (LCR approach)², with special attention given to their experience in:

- early childhood
- family life

²„Biography is ‘a story told in the present about events and experiences in a person’s life in the past and her/his expectations for the future’. Biography is not a simple chain of life events but rather is a “told life”, that is, it involves a subjective meaning-making with regard to the individual shape of the life-course. At the same time, biography is shaped by the interplay between agency and structure and its understanding requires the ability ‘to hear, behind the sole of a human voice, the music of society in the background’” (Glossary of the YOUNG_ADULLLT project, <http://www.young-adulllt.eu>).

- peer relationships
- formal education, training and qualifications
- subjective assessment of learning, knowledge and abilities
- employment.

The last part of the interviews was focused on the CPE and GOV approaches, covering the issues such as:

- How do LLL policies construct their target groups?
- How do these policies recognise different social categories?
- Do they participate in LLL policy making? If the answer is yes, how they participate?
- What skill formation services do they demand?

Each interview started with the sentence “Please, tell me your life story. Start from the very beginning, tell me everything that you remember and find relevant. Take all the time you need, I will not interrupt. I will just take some notes and maybe ask some questions in the end.” When the young person stopped talking, the interviewer asked sub-questions by using active listening techniques, guided by the objectives and content of the interview. On average, the interviews with young people lasted for half an hour.

The interviews for experts have encompassed all the three theoretical perspectives underpinning the research (CPE, GOV and LCR approaches). The main group of questions was the following:

- CPE Approach:
What are the objectives of the measure you are working in? Which outcomes it is supposed to provide? What problems do you tackle with this measure?
How is the target group defined? How do young people come into the policy?
- GOV Approach:
Who participates in this policy area in this region? Who else do you cooperate with?
What does this cooperation look like?
What problems do you tackle with this cooperation(s)? Did this policy provoke any conflict between the participants?
Did the policy fit with local needs?
- CPE and GOV Approaches:
Do you recognise the impact of these policies? How do they think the policies can be successful?
How do these policies contribute to the development of the functional region? Did they notice any changes among the youth during the measure (programmes, projects)?
Can these policies (programmes, projects) tackle inequality and discrimination?
- LCR Approach:
Do these policies help young people to carry on with their everyday life?
Does this policy induce young people to make their own decisions on their future?
How they would describe the recent generation of youth?

All the questions were directed to the local and regional context. The majority of the interviewed experts were friendly and talkative. They seemed to be satisfied with the opportunity to express their own attitudes and opinions. On average, the interviews with experts lasted for an hour and a half.

Data analysis

The process of qualitative analysis in the research includes the following steps: (1) transcribing of the interviews, (2) reading and analysing the transcripts, (3) writing summaries, (4) determining units of coding, (5) coding interviews, and (5) the analysis and interpretation of the meanings of the defined categories.

Coding the interviews with experts

According to the *Coding and Reporting Guidelines*, the interviews with experts were directed towards obtaining an answer to one general question: “What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies?”, keeping in mind the definition of the target groups, references to living conditions and autonomy of the youth (CPE and LCP approaches), as well as the accountability and responsibilities of policies (GOV approach).

Table 2: Codes of interviews with experts

General data	<i>Field of work//Policy sectors (LMP, EDP, SYP); Working position; Education; Professional experience</i>
Objectives	<i>Original purpose of the policy; Expected results; Expected outcomes and impacts</i>
Approaches	<i>Starting points; Specific measures and programs</i>
Implementation	<i>Main methods of work; Main subjects of work</i>
Evaluation	<i>Methods of evaluation; Follow up activities; Exchange of information with other services</i>
Target groups	<i>Characteristics of target groups; Criteria of selection; Coverage of NEET youth</i>
Policy actors	<i>Level of participation of decision-making process; Possibilities of improvement of personal and institutional impact on policies</i>
Governance	<i>National, regional or local level; Financing; Monitoring; Main collaborators; Developed procedures of coordination</i>

The details of the codes are presented in the chapter “Analysis of the interviews with experts”.

Coding the interviews with young adults

In the process of coding the biographical interviews, the attention was given to three main aspects of young adults’ life stories:

- thematic and theoretical codes (What are the young people speaking about?, How are the young people speaking and constructing their narratives?)
- subjective relevance of their personal experience (in relation to their lives and LLL policies)

- the connection of the past experience with the present situation and expectations for the future.

The main groups of coding were directed to the presentation of the youth (in particular in the context of their life), to the ways in which they construct their biography (how they tell his/her story), as well as to the education, learning and LLL policies (**Table 3**).

Table 3: Codes of interviews with young adults

Presentation of the self	<p><i>General data: age, gender, NEET status, achieved level of education, family status</i></p> <p><i>Key life points: people, places, environment, initiative, self-image, satisfaction</i></p> <p><i>Life plan: imagination of the ideal life as adult, concrete steps (migration, education, work), professional orientation</i></p> <p><i>Skills: personal strengths and weaknesses</i></p>
Construction of the life story	<p><i>Dominant themes, concepts, terms, words: family, friends, education, job, activities, interests, abilities, emotions</i></p> <p><i>Recurrent constructions: buzzwords, eloquence, informativeness</i></p> <p><i>Causal explanations: consciousness, connections of stories or aspects of life</i></p> <p><i>Justification: affirmative, negative, reasons of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, expectations in present and future time</i></p>
Life experience	<p><i>School trajectory: self-description, desire to succeeded, school experience, residential mobility, school transition, perceived start of schooling, information about options</i></p> <p><i>Social network at school: school maters, lack of friends, contributions</i></p> <p><i>Academic performance: school achievement, learning at school, school activities, perception of support, positive/negative feelings</i></p> <p><i>Teachers and other support staff: feelings, support, quality of communication, satisfaction, results</i></p>
Participation in LLL policy	<p><i>Contacts with policies: information, interpretation, expectation, participation</i></p> <p><i>Relation with policy goals an life plan: relevance, evaluation, contribution to the achievements of skills</i></p> <p><i>Possibilities of improvement: willingness to participate, necessary changes, goals</i></p>

The details of the codes are presented in the chapter “Analysis of the interviews with young adults”.

Analysis of the interviews with experts

General data

General data about the experts from the two Croatian functional regions (Istria and Osijek-Baranja County) who participated in the interviews are showed in **Table 4**.

Table 4: General data about the experts

Expert	Gender	Age	Field of work	Policy sector	Working position	Education	Professional experience(in years)
I_F_1	F	33	CES	LMP	professional	Croatian language and literature	2
I_F_2	F	48	POU	EDP	professional	Italian language	23
I_F_3	F	27	LA	SYP	professional	Economy	2
I_F_4	F	27	POU	EDP	professional	History Teacher	1
I_F_5	F	28	NGO	SYP	manager	Journalism	7
I_F_6	F	38	POU	EDP	manager	Economy	7
OB_F_1	F	59	NGO	SYP & EDP	professional	Pedagogy	20
OB_F_2	M	31	CES	LMP	professional	Psychology	4
OB_F_3	M	58	LA	EDP & SYP	manager	Kinesiology	23
OB_F_4	F	48	NGO	EDP	manager	Andragogy	12
OB_F_5	M	44	POU	EDP	professional	Economy	8
OB_F_6	M	57	TRC	EDP & LMP	professional	Kinesiology	15

LEGEND: I – Istrian FR, OB – Osijek-Baranja FR; M – male; F – female; POU – Public Open University, NGO – nongovernmental organisation, LA – Local authorities, TRC – Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, CES– Croatian Employment Service; EDP – educational policy, SYP – social youth policy, LMP – labour market policy

The data presented in this analysis are based on the experience of:

- 4 managers and 8 professionals
- 3 experts who work in the NGO sector, 2 experts who present local authorities, 4 experts who work in the Open Public Universities, 2 experts from the Croatian Employment Service and one expert from the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts
- 3 experts who should implement labour market policies, 8 experts who should implement educational policies and 5 experts who should implement social youth *policies (3 experts should deal with two policy sectors).

Although all the interviewed experts have a high level of education, their professions are not closely connected with their work place and responsibilities. For example, the profession of the manager of the local Department for Education, Children and Youth in Osijek-Baranja County is Kinesiology, while one teacher works in the sector of labour market policy (in Istria

County). Only a few experts were educated in the field of their professional work. This circumstance is important for the rest of the analysis, because a lot of the interviewed do not have the type of education relevant for their field of their work. Moreover, they were not involved in the in-service education or training, which would insure that their professional competences are in the line with the requirements of their job.

The following statements illustrate proposed conclusion:

“No, no, they (local and regional authorities) do not have a vision. There is also a great amount of misunderstanding of what civil society organisations are and what they do. The state administration is slow, inert and there are very many people who don’t even want to get informed, but that passivity also stems from the fact that there is nothing and nobody that will motivate them to be a bit more innovative and proactive.” Manager of NGO, Istria

“Well, I think the authorities and all those involved in the making of those decisions should be more lead by praxis and what happens ‘in real life’. There is a difference between making decisions with no relation to praxis, when everything is on a theoretical level and things look great, but when it comes to actual praxis, things turn out to be completely different. My opinion is that people with experience should be involved in the process for the sake of improving the efficiency and making more realistic decisions.” Professional worker in CES, Osijek-Baranja County

“There is no strategic thinking on the level of the Pula city, it is an entirely ad hoc political situation. By the change of priorities, these types of decisions change as well. Young people are becoming decorations.” Manager if NGO, Istria

The objectives, approaches, implementation and evaluation of LLL policies

This part of the analysis is directed towards the answer to the question: “What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies?”

Antecedents of local institutions, organisations and services have common background, connected with the social changes in Croatia that happened after the Homeland War (1991-1995). This means that all of them were established at the beginning of the independence of the Republic of Croatia. However, some of them (e. g. Croatian Employment Services, Public Open Universities, Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts) existed in Former Yugoslavia, while other institutions (NGOs, local authorities) were established during the process of democratisation of the Croatian society. In **Table 5**, the data about the most important objectives of the policies are presented.

Table 5: Objectives of the policies

Expert	Original purpose	Expected results	Expected outcomes and impacts
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	increase the competitiveness of the labour force and to meet the needs of the labour market	reducing the number of unemployed in the region	better preparation of users for labour market
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	increase user's employability	qualifications providing	improvement of employment opportunities
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	to harmonised a local youth policy with youth needs	to adopt and implement a city youth program	developed infrastructure for youth activities
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	increase user's employability	qualifications providing	improvement of employment opportunities
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	encourage changes in society for the benefit of youth	available information, widespread volunteering and non-formal educational programmes for young people	developed infrastructure for youth activities
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	increase user's employability	qualifications providing	improvement of employment opportunities
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	to help to young person in different life situation	providing the right information and enable them to be informed	improvement of employment opportunities
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	increase the competitiveness of the labour force and to meet the needs of the labour market	help to young people in their career planning	youth that are informed about their career possibilities
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	funding and support for institutions for compulsory education	appropriate conditions and quality of compulsory education	financed projects of schools and NGOs
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	encourage changes in society for the benefit of youth	available information, widespread volunteering and non-formal educational programmes for young people	developed infrastructure for youth activities
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	increase user's employability	qualifications providing	improvement of employment opportunities
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP (TRC, P)	advancement of Craftsmen	quality assurance of craft professionals	improvement of links between vocational education and labour market

Generally, it is possible to conclude that the institutions, organisations and services included in this analysis are directed towards the increase of the user's employability with the improvement of skills, qualification and level of information given to the youth, while less attention is given to encouraging the changes in the society for the benefit of the youth. Here are some examples that illustrate this conclusion:

"The goal is to enable people to find work immediately, to be able to navigate the labour market more easily." Advisor at Open Public University, Istria

„Only volunteering contributes to the development of competencies of youth and that is how better employability for them is encouraged. Young people that have taken part in volunteering have continued to be active in the community, and have also received a confirmation that they matter and that they are worthy. Many that have signed up for volunteering have made contacts in the community and have therefore felt more included.“ Manager of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County

"Projects enable people who are unemployed to get some kind of an education, to enter the education system, to improve their competencies. Because people will pay for regular programmes themselves if they want to finish, and projects give the opportunity to those who can't afford that." Advisor at Open Public University, Istria

Moreover, the data presented in **Table 5** show that the interviewees do not have a clear picture about the expected outcomes of their activities, because they are oriented towards the general expectations and the purpose of their work. The following statements illustrate that conclusion:

"We want to prompt some kind of change, and what makes us necessary are the flaws in the system around us. Our goal is to help young people realize their potential. Encouraging the youth." Manager of an NGO, Istria

"What I mean is that we invite NGOs to apply for our tender and let them suggest what they would like to do." Local authority, Osijek-Baranja county

"... make the life quality of youth in Pula better, to increase the number of extracurricular activities, to bring all the possibilities which happen in the local community closer to them. Simultaneously, we want to hear about some new needs of youth so we can follow the times we live in and enable some new plans and activities for them. So that their elementary needs can be satisfied." Local authority, Istria

The main approaches of experts' work are presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Approaches to the policies

Expert	Starting points	Measures and programmes
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	national laws for labour market policies	implemented active labour market policies which stimulate employment, self-employment, training, occupational training and participation in public works programmes of specific target groups and the preservation of jobs with employers in difficulties
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	labour market needs and user's needs	verified educational programs for various occupations
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	National programme for youth and Programme of Local Youth Council	coordination of local youth policy, co-financing of other organizations' programs, organizing events and gathering youth
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	labour market needs and different national policies	verified educational programs for various occupations
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	international, national and regional youth policies and strategies	info-centre, trainings, youth exchanges
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	national and international LLL policies, data from CES and users' needs	verified educational programs for various occupations
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	National and Local action plan for Youth, youths' needs	info centres for youth, work-shops, youth gatherings
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	Youth Guarantee plan, needs of youth	flyers and catalogues, work-shops and lectures in schools and faculties
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	Local Public needs program	awarding the best students, school's building maintenance, equipping schools, scholarships, financing of NGOs', schools' programmes and youth initiatives
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	National Strategy for Civil Society, Joint Inclusion Memorandum, Documents of European Network of Centres for Voluntarism, European Strategy 2020 ...	management of voluntarism, non-profit management, social entrepreneurship, development of social and communication skills
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	national educational policies and users' needs	verified educational programs for various occupations
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP (TRC, P)	laws about vocational education	master exams for craft professionals

The majority of the interviewees were not able to list all the laws, policies and other strategic documents underpinning their practical work (*"I know that there are documents about children's rights and similar topics, for example. There are also our city and county documents about children's participation. There are also documents about children in need. There is a lot of those documents."*, local authority, Osijek-Baranja County). The majority of them mentioned some general policy documents or laws and pointed out that they were orientated to the daily tasks of their job (*"We are trying to improve education in such a way that we define priorities and give suggestions to the county authorities."*, professional worker at the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, Osijek-Baranja County). Only a few of the interviewed professionals have deeper insights into the aims and content of the international and national policy documents. Some of them work in the NGOs, while others are narrowly focused on a specific policy document.

None of the interviewed professionals mentioned the theoretical underpinnings of their work, although all the respondents expect positive changes in education, competences and employability of the youth.

It is possible to conclude that the experts are guided by the particular interests of their institutions, while the broader picture of LLL policy is absent (*"We are not content. Maybe the situation is not as bad on the national level considering procedures, criteria and transparency. On our local level the criteria according to which resources are assigned are helter-skelter, oranges and apples mixed. Young people are in the category 'the youth and others', so in the same category resources for the youth and organisations for preservation of the memories of Josip Broz Tito get assigned. It is just a big mess. Local authorities are not really clear on the categories of users or what the priorities within those categories should be. On the national level criteria is clearer and there is more transparency."*, manager of an NGO, Istria).

The exceptions are NGO representatives who try to enable young people to assume the responsibility for themselves and for the development of the society they are a part of, in which their needs are recognized and responded to at all levels (*"I think the civil sector contributes in great amounts towards the upgrading of the knowledge young people obtain throughout their lives. It also helps them fully realise themselves as people, as someone who needs to live in a family, a neighbourhood, a city, a community in general. The first and foremost is the importance of communication skills ..."*, professional worker of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County).

It is a worrying fact that local authorities do not have a proactive approach and the need to create local LLL policies. Instead, they fund programs of other institutions, often without clearly and transparently defined priorities and goals they want to achieve (*"We mostly deal with management projects, and the least with youth work. We are dependent on the requirements of the tenders and we are led by that more than the needs of the youth we work with. It is hard to keep continuity in some of our services, so instead we offer them as projects."*, manager of NGO, Istria). Informal and non-formal learning offered by NGOs, Lifelong career guidance centre of the Croatian Employment Service, while Open Public Universities and the regional department of the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts are oriented towards formal adult education.

It is evident that these institutions are focused on a small number of measures and programs in their offer. There is no direct link among social, educational and labour market activities and

policies. This conclusion is also supported by the results of the analysis of the main methods of the implementation of the programmes (**Table 7**).

Some statements of interviewed experts illustrate that conclusion:

„They (youth in vulnerable situations) are in the biggest need of help, but they are hard to reach. There is one boy that comes to the info centre either by train without a ticket or by hitch-hiking, he has no friends. He considers himself a part of our team, but he is in a very difficult situation. ... It is a lot more demanding to get to the ones who cannot help themselves and we need extra support for that, but we don't have it. The bigger amount of work, the smaller the number of the ones that are going to do it, but not because they don't want to do it, rather because they might need some other kind of support which isn't developed enough.“ Professional worker of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County

“... for years it has been a struggle with the programmes, struggle with the structure of admissions of pupils and all that. The Ministry of Education should show a little more understanding towards thee regions for the labour market. Specifically, in Osijek we have one big construction school which teaches construction vocations which are deficit vocations in the county. However, there are not enough interested pupils so the programmes get shut down, and the interested students get transferred to some different vocation. That is a big problem.” Professional worker at the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, Osijek-Baranja County

“... I can't follow the NEET people on foot, we lack a channel for communication. They won't give it to us. Our central LLCG office says that it is not necessary.“ Professional worker at CES, Osijek-Baranja County

Table 7: The implementation of the programmes and activities

Expert	Main methods of work	Main subjects of work
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	counselling, co-funding	connecting workers and employers, inclusion into active employment policy measures
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	lectures and practical work	elementary and vocational education, specialized courses
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	organisation, funding, informing	youth policy, activism
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	lectures and practical work	elementary and vocational education, specialized courses
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	info-centre, work-shops, mentoring, individual support	voluntarism, soft skills, social and communication skills
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	lectures and practical work	elementary and vocational education, specialized courses
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	projects, trainings, informing (ICT, media), street-work, group work	training of soft skills, social and communication skills, activism, counselling
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	career guidance	exchanges of information, mainly group work (sometimes individual support)
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	co-funding	programmes of other institutions, scholarships
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	work-shops, mentoring, individual support	voluntarism, education, facilitating of the processes, organizing forums, supporting new initiatives
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	lectures and practical work	elementary and vocational education, specialized courses
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP (TRC, P)	theoretical and practical education, exams	different crafts

In line with the expectations, Open Public Universities are focused on accredited educational programs, and NGOs are oriented towards informal learning. The activities that dominant are the ones based on the belief that better education and information contribute to better employability of young people. Volunteering programs offer activities for acquiring competencies through active work. The Croatian Employment Service is the only institution that connects workers and employers. This institution also offers active employment policy measures, but they do not lead to permanent employment of young people (because they are of limited duration).

“The procedure runs relatively smoothly, it has improved this year because the deadlines for solving requests have been reduced. Last year it would take a long time; people would sometimes even wait a few months for their requests to be solved so we could carry out a measure. When the government’s policy changed, many people were affected negatively due to the fact that their requests either weren’t right according to the new conditions, or they no longer had the right to use certain measures. That was often the cause of unpleasant situations of those people complaining.” Advisor at CES, Istria

The measures implemented by the local authorities that would connect educational institutions with the labour market are missing.

„Look, the problem lies in the competences because the Ministry is in charge of the University, counties are in charge of high schools, the city of Pula is the founder of kindergartens and primary schools. During decision making and beginning to work on projects, we have to ask for permission from the county so we could begin working altogether. Not all teachers are ready to have presentations during homeroom classes because some people agree with the policy, some don’t, some don’t even understand the policy and think it has something to do with political parties. A barrier exists here and that is a problem.“ Local authority, Istria

“We cannot achieve cooperation with the local employment bureau to inform their users about our programmes... We got the space from the city, but we never get money. The Istria County only has no tender for the youth...it’s hard to get their financial support.” Manager of an NGO, Istria

“... a great problem lies in the fact that we were founded exclusively by CES, yet 50% of my users are pupils. I don’t have a way to follow those pupils, to keep a record of what I am doing. You have no idea of the problems I encounter when I go to a school to gather the OIB numbers of pupils. Some share the information, while some don’t.” Professional worker at CES, Osijek-Baranja County

It is very difficult to determine the effectiveness of the mentioned measures, since the systems and procedures of their evaluation are generally not developed (**Table 8**).

Table 8: Evaluation of the results of the programmes and activities

Expert	Methods of evaluation	Follow up activities	Exchange of information with other services
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	Statistical data (the number of participants in some activities)	Does not exist.	Informal communication with youth and colleagues Formal reports and prescribed documentation
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	Does not exist.	Informal feedback from users	Low. Informal communication with youth and colleagues in CES Formal reports and prescribed documentation
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	Does not exist.	Does not exist.	Low. Communication within the Youth Council Formal reports

Expert	Methods of evaluation	Follow up activities	Exchange of information with other services
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	Questionnaires and surveys with employers User's satisfaction	Does not exist (they just check if learners past exams)	Low. Informal communication with youth and colleagues in CES Formal reports and prescribed documentation
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	Analysis prepared by research institutions Evaluation of work-shops (fulfilment of expectations)	Informal feedback from users	Very low. Dissatisfaction with the level of collaboration with town and CES Formal reports and prescribed documentation
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	Does not exist.	Does not exist.	Low. Informal communication with youth and colleagues in CES Formal reports and prescribed documentation
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	Number of users Personal feelings Impact in the public	Informal feedback from users	Appropriate. Internet, Facebook, Info web-site Informal contacts Formal reports and prescribed documentation
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	Number of users and activities Socio-demographic data about users	Informal feedback from users	Low. Formal reports and prescribed documentation
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	Does not exist.	Does not exist.	Very low. Collaboration among departments of the same institution Formal reports and prescribed documentation
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	Analysis prepared by research institutions Evaluation of work-shops (fulfilment of expectations)	Informal feedback from users	Very low. Dissatisfaction with the level of collaboration with other stakeholders (disinterest for youth policy) Formal reports and prescribed documentation
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	Number of users	Informal feedback from users	Average. Sometimes they prepare education according to the needs of CES Formal reports and prescribed documentation
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP (TRC, P)	Number of exams	Does not exist.	Low. Formal reports and prescribed documentation

The data presented in **Table 8** show that the culture of evaluation in the institutions involved in this analysis does not exist. Some institutions (especially NGOs) try to change this fact, but real evaluation of the impacts of their activities is unknown. It remains unknown whether the financial and human resources that are invested in those activities and programmes can achieve their purpose or goals.

“I don’t have any feedback. I think it would be good if I called them a few months after they have graduated and ask how they have been progressing in their workplace because 90% of our attendants have a job or found it if they did not have it already.”
Advisor at Open Public University, Istria

„I noticed that whenever young people do or learn something new, they smile. I see that they are satisfied and interested in returning to volunteer, they ask if they can get involved in more activities. I think that they are satisfied in the end. They have all written that they are satisfied in the questionnaires at the end of the workshops.“ Local authority, Istria

„We conduct surveys among employers, in a certain sector. If we are developing a programme in the catering industry, we visit at least ten to twenty hotels or tourist agencies and ask what they think is needed, what is in demand.“ Advisor at Open Public University, Istria

„I think the biggest results are the personal feelings that the young people have learnt or received something. I do not deal with numbers, but we see the improvement in the behaviour and life perspective of a person that has been using our services for a while. One boy came to one of our workshops and wanted to leave in the middle of it, but ended up staying as a volunteer. He had some personal problems, however, he was closed off as a person. With time he made such a big change in himself. I cannot explain this to anyone or measure it, there isn’t a very big number of such situations, but every such person is a personal best for me.“ Professional worker of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County

“Regarding us, we evaluated the situation after every module where we followed the expectations that the youth had from the education. We tested their knowledge before and after the course as well as whether their interests have deepened. We asked them to grade the lecturers and to assess whether they would be able to further use the knowledge they have obtained and how. At the end of the education we also made an oral evaluation through a world café. We wanted to check what was the most important thing that the youth have received, what they thought was missing, what they thought of the way we worked.... there is no evaluation of the effect whatsoever. We are working on that now. We have decided to connect with some European organisations with focus on measuring the effect of volunteering on social involvement of youth. We now know that from various contacts with youth. We somehow follow the volunteers’ work, but the young people that have gone through the education are being less followed.” Manager of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County

Based on the analysis of the interviews it is possible to conclude that:

- most institutions have common antecedents, linked to the independence of Croatia and the democratization of the Croatian society
- the common objectives of the analysed institutions are to increase young adults' employability with the improvement of their skills, qualification and access to information
- less attention is given to encouraging the changes in the society for the benefit of the youth
- activities, programmes and policies are fragmented (the system is highly centralised)
- local authorities lack initiative and awareness of the need to create priorities and regional or local policies
- there is no reliable evaluation of the effects of policies implementation (some statistical data are available, but are not used in planning future activities)
- the majority of the experts are focused on their work without getting deeper into its impact on the LLL policy in its whole.

Target groups of the policies

This section is directed towards the analysis of the following questions:

- How do LLL policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?
- How do LLL policies take into account the living conditions, family responsibilities and civil engagement of young adults?
- Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty?

The main results of the analysis of the interviews are presented in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Target groups of the programmes and activities

Expert	Characteristics of target groups	Criteria of selection	Coverage of NEET youth
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	Unemployed persons from the register of CES	Unemployment, without ownership of the company, crafts etc., out of formal education	Particularly, with some specific programmes and measures.
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	Youth and adult	Need for adult education	Particularly, (low educated people mostly because of the low socio-economic status).
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	Youth	Not specified	Very low, if there is a need for funding some NGO's programme for NEET youth.
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	Youth and adult	Need for adult education	Very low, if someone contact them.
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	Youth	Voluntary base	Particularly, in some specific projects.
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	Youth and adult	Need for adult education	Very low, if someone contact them.
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	Youth	Voluntary base	Particularly, in some specific projects(youth from rural area, material deprived youth).
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	Unemployed persons, employers, dominant users: Youth (75%)	Not specified	No possibilities to reach and follow them, lack of channel of communication.
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	Pupils, students, schools and NGO sector	Criteria for obtaining scholarships (grades, social status of youth)	Children and youth with disabilities (by NGOs), scholarships for social deprived students.
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	Youth	Voluntary base	Particularly, in some particular projects (Roma youth, unemployed youth, youth with disabilities).
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	Youth and adult	Need for adult education	Particularly, with some specific programmes and measures (education in prisons, drug addiction centres, Roma people).
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP (TRC, P)	persons with completed vocational education (50% of them are youth)	Formal qualification for craft profession and 2 or 3 years of work experience	Very low, if someone contact them.

According to statements of the interviewed experts, there is no gender bias in the programmes and activities. However, the youth are exclusive users of the activities offered by NGOs, while local authorities do not have special youth departments. In Istria County there is only one person responsible for the youth policy, while in the Osijek-Baranja County youth policy is not

recognised. A larger problem is that young people in vulnerable situations are not in the focus of any regional or local institutions.

“When I wanted to include Romani people in the education of adults, a colleague from CES found all of them who were in their records and said they didn’t have adequate education. From those say 50 people, 10 of them came, from those 10, 5 had already been here, and from those 5, 2 you could not keep in school in any way. The society doesn’t understand that it needs to cooperate, work. The prevailing mentality here is ‘Better 100 days in shade, than one at work’.” Advisor at Open Public University, Istria

„We took into consideration the fact that we have to investigate what vulnerable youth groups are and to encourage their involvement with society. The problem is that those young people don’t gather, they are in the Roma People Council of Pula and the Roma People Council of the Istria FR, they are followers of the older, their involvement doesn’t get noticed.” Local authority, Istria

„We go to them and invite them to join us in what we do here. They say what they need and what they would like. However, when something gets organised, the response tends to be small. The reasons for that are really diverse ... Today’s youth give up on getting involved in something much quicker.” Professional worker of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County

„We cooperate with the organisation Neovisnost (Sobriety), therefore, with people who have had personal experiences with addiction, either to drugs or gambling. A few of them were completing high school programmes. They need to be worked with individually. Some of them are in such a situation where their brain is clearly ‘fried’ from synthetic drugs. It is sometimes very visible in the process of learning that they have difficulties. The programme is slower and very often adapted to individuals. As a professor, I often visit both male-only and female-only prisons and I work with the inmates. Working with them is a very specific process and I follow the situation all the time. The results are amazing, the inmates are young people that have the opportunity to finish their education or to get qualified for a job as they serve their sentence.” Professional worker in an Open Public University, Osijek-Baranja County

Social welfare in Croatia is highly centralised and there are no local and regional initiatives to improve their opportunities for participation in education, labour market or active citizenship. The NGOs try to overcome this problem, but they do not have enough resources to aid all the young people in vulnerable situations. Moreover, the communication and connection between local institutions and social welfare centres is not developed. That is why most young people in vulnerable situations are not aware that some programs in which they can participate exist or are available in their community.

The users pay for the programmes of Open Public Universities. Sometimes the Croatian Employment Service pays for their participation in the programmes (in the case of specific projects that the Open Public Universities win on tenders). European Union funds some of the programs. In this case, they are free for the users. It means that some programmes take into account, but insufficiently, the living conditions of the youth. Some NGOs try to improve civic engagement of young adults, but just one of them deals with the family responsibilities of the young people.

All of the analysed LLL policies try to foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty. However, the impact of these activities is unknown. It is certain that the existing activities are insufficient, that they are not sufficiently networked and fail to achieve the appropriate results (the majority of the experts emphasised these weaknesses of the policies).

Governance of the policies

In this part of the analysis, the attention is given to the following questions:

- Which actors are involved in LLL policies? How these actors coordinate their activity?
- To whom are LLL policies accountable?
- How do LLL policies deal with multi-level “wicked problems”?

As mentioned previously, that majority of the interviewed experts are not familiar with the existing LLL policies, because most of them are occupied with their daily work, without a deeper insight into the theoretical or strategic meaning or impact of these activities on the society. The organisational aspects of their institutions are showed in **Table 10**.

Table 10: Governance of the policies

Expert	Level	Financing	Monitoring	Main collaborators	Developed procedures of coordination
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	Regional	National resources Stable Not related to the projects	Does not exist	Employees Open Public universities Other employers	Does not exist
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	Regional (Public)	Users and local projects Relatively stable Related to the activities	Does not exist	5 employees External contractors (50 teachers)	Working groups and collaborative bodies
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	Local	Local resources Stable Not related to the projects	Does not exist	Local authorities Other stakeholders involved in the youth policy (eg. schools, NGOs)	Does not exist
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	Regional (Private)	Users and projects Relatively stable Related to the activities	Internal meetings	4 Employees Croatian Employment Services Other employers	Local protocols

Expert	Level	Financing	Monitoring	Main collaborators	Developed procedures of coordination
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	Regional	EU funds, national, regional and local resources Unstable Related to the projects	Internal meetings	4 employees Other stakeholders involved in youth policy	Does not exist
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	Regional	Users and projects Relatively stable Related to the activities	In the frame of some projects	Employees Croatian Employment Services	Exchange of information
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	Regional	EU funds, national, regional and local resources Unstable Related to the projects	In the frame of some projects	9 employees a lot of external contractors (trained for trainings)	Does not exist
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	National	National resources Stable Not related to the projects	Web application	3 employees	Agreements with schools
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	Local	Local Stable Not related to the projects	Does not exist	Schools NGOs	Contracts
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	Regional	EU funds, national, regional and local resources Unstable Related to the projects	Introspective approach, internal	10 employees Other organisations (NGO, faculties, international organisations)	Does not exist
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	Local (Private)	Users and local projects Relatively stable Related to the activities	Internal meetings	Employees Croatian Employment Services Other employers External contractors (teachers)	Does not exist
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP	Regional	Membership's fees and participation of users	Does not exist	3 employees Craftsmen	Exchange of information

Expert	Level	Financing	Monitoring	Main collaborators	Developed procedures of coordination
(TRC, P)		Stable Not related to the projects		Agency for vocational education	

Each organisation has its own organisational structure, and all of them collaborate with other participants in LLL policies, only a few of them are oriented towards the development of some kind of the collaborative culture. For example, some experts mentioned:

“... if we were to not have an answer, we look for a person who can provide it for us. We contact the CES of the OPU, we ask them, they answer us and we provide the information to the person that needs it as soon as possible. In case we are dealing with financial support, if a young people needs it for an international meeting, we would ask the young person in question to write a letter which we forward to the office in charge...”
Local authority, Istria

“Youth Council ... Except there is the next generation of political parties so that is a political playground.” Manager of an NGO, Istria

“Then we receive very rigid, strict tenders that are very specifically geared towards certain topics. The EU forced it this way. And then when they come, at least 3 years pass from their creation to the implementation, and in those 3 years the social environment changes so much...” Manager of an NGO, Osijek-Baranja County

That indicator is worrying, but it is in line with the previously observed weaknesses in the implementation of LLL policies. It is therefore interesting to consider the ways in which experts experience their influence and the impact of their institution on the creation of the LLL policies (**Table 11**).

Table 11: Policy actors

Expert	Level of participation of decision-making process	Possibilities of improvement of personal and institutional impact on policies
I_F_1 LMP (CES, P)	Does not participate	Decentralisation. Better coordination among departments and services.
I_F_2 EDP (POU, P)	Does not participate	More communication among Open public universities, as well as with regional authorities.
I_F_3 SYP (LA, P)	Conducts policy-making processes	Better planning. Evaluation. Long-term strategies.
I_F_4 EDP (POU, P)	Does not participate	Formulation of recommendations. Networking.
I_F_5 SYP (NGO, M)	Participate in the regional policy-making processes	Better knowledge on youth needs by local authorities. Better system of financing.
I_F_6 EDP (POU, M)	Does not participate	More EU projects. Better cooperation to enable young people in NEET status to obtain qualifications.
OB_F_1 SYP & EDP (NGO, P)	Participate in the national policy-making processes	Formal recognition of qualifications achieved by non-formal learning.
OB_F_2 LMP (CES, P)	Does not participate	Respect of local initiatives by the national authorities, better coordination of activities, more freedom.
OB_F_3 EDP & SYP (LA, M)	Does not participate	Nothing.
OB_F_4 EDP (NGO, M)	Participate in the national and local policy-making processes	Formulation of local policies and priorities. Better collaboration among stakeholders
OB_F_5 EDP (POU, P)	Does not participate	Nothing.
OB_F_6 EDP & LMP (TRC, P)	Does not participate	Flexibility of the system of vocational education.

Many interlocutors have recounted their experience of participating in some activities with other stakeholders, but they are not familiar with the term "policy-making" (*"Legislation is clear, we adapt and that is it."*, advisor at Open Public University, Istria). Some of them said that the managers of their institution do not welcome their initiatives (*"CES has a strong hierarchy, it's a typical national institution, a dinosaur. Concerning decision making, we have suggestions which are very rarely considered, which is a shame."*, professional worker at CES). The representatives of the NGOs indicate that local authorities do not understand youth policy and the term "participation". Finally, it is important to notice that the head of the local office for the youth does not need to create a policy. He believes that it is sufficient to co-finance schools and NGO programs.

As expected, the experts have many ideas about the necessary changes in their work with the purpose of improving its quality and impact (*"... I have been giving only suggestions for the*

past 15 years, and it is known who comes to the conclusions. The suggestions get sent to institutions, but it is not known why they are not accepted. Most likely because of the situation. There are certainly many objective parameters, but there are many subjective ones too.”, professional worker at the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, Osijek-Baranja County).

They highlighted the need for developing local and regional LLL policies and the need for better collaboration among different stakeholders. Some experts recognised the need for evaluating the results of their work. However, only a few representatives of the NGOs have some ideas about the initiatives that should be taken to achieve these changes (*“We have finally gotten to that point where we established a better cooperation with the stock market and visibility within the community. We achieved that exactly because of our work on politics for the youth.”, manager of an NGO, Istria*). The majority of the experts are waiting that something happens by magic.

According to the results of the analysis of the interviews with experts, the following challenges of LLL policies in Croatia were identified:

- The lack of the implementation of national policies at the regional and local levels
- The competitiveness of different stakeholders in the community
- The fragmentation of educational, social welfare and labour market policies
- Outdated vocational education programs
- The lack of programmes directed to the youth in NEET status
- The lack of funding for some programmes for the youth.

Analysis of the interview with young adults

Presentation of biographies

Istria Functional Region

Y_I_F_1

This interviewee is a 26 year-old male, who has completed elementary school. He lives with his mother and younger brother. He has two more sisters who don't live with them. His mother is unemployed, and she is a user of social welfare. He is unemployed as well. He has started vocational school for welders, but because of his allergy to dust he left school after the first semester. He is registered with the Croatian Employment Service, and he has taken different trainings in order to find a job. He considers himself to be a fast learner who would be able to do different types of jobs. Even though he cannot find a job for a long time, he expects nothing from the Croatian Employment Service. He is not satisfied with his life, mostly because of his long-term unemployment. His plans for the future is to stay in Pula and take any job.

Y_I_F_2

This interviewee is a 25 year-old female. She has completed vocational school and is a hairdresser. She has two sisters and lives with her boyfriend. She is employed, but she is actively looking for a new job, because she is not satisfied with the job that she has (too much travelling). She sees her mother as a great support in her life. During her education she has had two re-trainings. After graduating as a hairdresser, her mother has paid for her first retraining for a commercialist. At the moment of the interview with her, she was enrolled in the second retraining, for an economist. She sees herself as a communicative and sociable person who loves to work. She has positive feelings about her elementary school, where she had a lot of friends and where she participated in different extracurricular activities. She expressed negative feeling about her search for a job, because she is continuously dealing with nepotism in employment. In visioning her future life, she would love to graduate from university, find a good job, get married and have a family.

Y_I_F_3

This interviewee is a 28 year-old female who has finished secondary school of economics. She is an only child, and lives with both of her parents. She is a long-term unemployed. She has epilepsy, diagnosed when she was in the 4th grade of elementary school. She believes she has a supportive family. Even though she considers herself as hard worker and fast in doing given tasks on a job, she was unable to find a job for 2 years. Because of that she is negative about labour market situation. She believes that she cannot find a job because she doesn't have a driving license, and that all employers expect from her to be able to drive herself from one place to another. She has positive feelings about both, elementary and secondary school, where she had friends. She has participated in a *Professional Training Without Employment* programme (offered by the Croatian Employment Service), and she believes that employers are using this active measure of employment to get cheap work force. Even though she is a long-term unemployed, she expects nothing from her counsellor in the Croatian Employment Service. She is not satisfied, and she is unable to see any change of

her situation in the future. She has lost motivation and self-confidence during her long-term job search. In the future she would love to continue her professional development and find a job.

Y_I_F_4

This interviewee is a 26 year-old female. She lives with her mother and sister. At the moment she holds a Baccalaureate degree in Croatian Studies and Humanities, but she is still enrolled into education. As a child she was looked after by her grandmother, a social pedagogist who had significant influence on her. She has positive feelings about her elementary and secondary school (gymnasium), where she had many friends. She was a professional rower during her elementary and secondary-school education. She considers herself to be an open and communicative person, adaptable to different situations, a team player, and creative, with lots of ideas. She is satisfied with her life decisions. In the future she would like to obtain a PhD degree and have family.

Y_I_F_5

This interviewee is a 24 year-old female. At the moment of the interview she had a Baccalaureate degree in Psychology, but she was nearing the achievement of ISCED7 level of education. She comes from a big family, two brothers and one sister, which she believes was one of the key points in her life. She lives with her boyfriend in her family house. Earlier decisions of her older brother and sister had influenced her decisions (same high school – gymnasium, going to study in Zagreb). She had supportive parents. She loves working with young people. She had already been a volunteer for 5 years. She volunteered in different nongovernmental organizations. She was an excellent student, and she remembers her education with positive feelings, and her teachers as gentle and supportive. She believes that she has developed social skills and presentation skills. In the near future she expects to benefit from the *Professional Training Without Employment* measure and she would like to participate in different trainings provided by nongovernmental organisations to further develop her life skills. In the future she would like to stay in Pula, find a job that she loves, get married and have two children.

Y_I_F_6

This interviewee is a 22 year-old female. She has graduated from secondary school and became commercialist, and at the moment she is at the university, studying Croatian language and literature. She has a brother and a sister, and she lives with her mother and a sister. Her father died when she was in secondary school. She believes that her father's illness and death had a strong influence on her, because she has become more serious about her responsibilities. She finds her mother very attentive to her needs. She has positive feelings about her experience with education, she had friends in school and was a very good student. She participated in a lot of extracurricular activities, such as going to music school, playing volleyball and tennis. She remembers her secondary-school class teacher being supportive and empathic towards her problems, and as the one who motivated her to go to the university. She is volunteering and working at the student radio station as an editor. She likes that job and she would like to do something similar after graduation. She sees herself as a perfectionist who is willing to take responsibilities and loves team work, with developed communication skills. She would love to participate in different trainings offered by NGOs to develop more

specific skills. In the future she would like to stay in Pula, and be a language editor, perhaps at a radio station.

Y_I_F_7

This interviewee is a 25 year-old male. He holds a Baccalaureate degree in Culture and Tourism. At the moment he is at a Masters level study in Austria, studying Management and European Projects. He lives with both parents, and he is an only child. He finds his parents strict but supportive. During his education, both in elementary and secondary school he was verbally and physically abused by his peers. Because of that experience, he feels not satisfied with his life even at the moment. He believes that he was a victim of abuse because he didn't know how to stand up for himself, and because of his excellent academic achievement and good financial situation. He remembers the pedagogist in the elementary school he went to as the only school professional who was trying to help him with the problem of being abused. In his formal education he hasn't had any friends, but he participated in many extracurricular activities (swimming, horse riding, learning languages). The relations that he had with his peers were much better during his university years. He believes that he is an authentic person with an attitude, and that he has different skills developed: he is ambitious, has goals and knows how to achieve them, and is a good team player. He visits different spiritual workshops that help him deal with the trauma of being the victim of abuse. In the future he only knows that he would like to live in Croatia, but not in Pula or Medulin.

Y_I_F_8

This interviewee is a 19 year-old male, who has finished elementary school and dropped out of secondary school. He is unemployed, lives with his mother and grandmother. His parents are recently divorced. During the elementary school he was a very good student, he had friends and participated in many extracurricular activities (handball, chess, theatre). During the secondary school he became depressed and wasn't able to adjust to the school culture. He was bored during the lessons that were mostly lectures, and he was more interested in gaining knowledge that had practical use. Because of that he was mocked by other students. Even though he finished the first two years of secondary school with good grades, in the third year he began to feel depressed. He said that he was unable to go to school every day, just sit there and listen to the teachers. He had an opportunity to pass the final exams, but he failed in Math. Because of that, he lost the right to free secondary education. At the moment he is out of education and unemployed. The situation makes him feel not satisfied and worried about his future without a secondary school degree. Nevertheless, he participates in a lot of activities, such as volunteering and creating social and video games. He would like to participate in trainings offered by nongovernmental organisations to develop life skills. At the moment he thinks that his communication and leadership skills are well developed. He speaks several languages and he finds himself proactive. While picturing his future life, his vision is blurry, because he doesn't know what he would be able to do without a secondary school diploma. Therefore, he would like to finish secondary school in adult education, but he and his family cannot afford to pay for it. He doesn't expect that any institution in the education or labour market system will help him.

Osijek-Baranja Functional Region

Y_OB_F_1

This interviewee is a 20 year-old female. She graduated from secondary school (gymnasium). At the moment she is unemployed and not continuing education at the university level. She failed the final exams, so she plans to go to the university next year. She lives with her parents. She has two older sisters. She has pointed out that her sisters had a strong influence on her. She believes that she has learned important life skills much more from them than in school. She finds her parents supportive. She has positive emotions towards school, even though she remembers one Roma pupil abusing her in the lower grades of elementary school. In addition, she remembers some teachers preferring some students over the others, which made her frustrated at the time. During her education she was actively involved in sport professionally, so now she gets some money for training children. She believes herself to be a person who accepts differences, unlike most people in Osijek. At the moment she is volunteering with refugees. In the future, she would like to work as a psychotherapist.

Y_OB_F_2

This interviewee is a 29 year-old female. She graduated from secondary school (gymnasium). At the moment she is unemployed. She lives with her mother, who she finds very supportive. She has an older sister who lives abroad. She mentioned that she had a bad relationship with her father, and that because of that she is unable to find a suitable boyfriend. During her childhood she moved a lot, so she changed a lot of elementary schools. Her memories of that part of her life are negative, because she remembers children not accepting her and teasing her for being "tubby". She thinks she was not a good student. After she finished gymnasium she started with show-business, or more specifically, with modelling. She believes that she has some good qualities for being in show-business, but she is negative towards nepotism in it. She has developed various skills through different jobs that she was doing. She sees herself as communicative, open-minded, professional and hard-working person. In the future, she would like to get retraining and find a regular job. She thinks she would leave show-business, even though she is trying to build her career as a singer at the moment. She wants to have a family. She is not actively thinking about leaving Croatia, but for her it is not an improbable option.

Y_OB_F_3

This interviewee is a 26 year-old male who holds an ISCED7 degree (graduated from the Faculty of Law). At the moment he lives with his wife, and he is unemployed. He is not satisfied and negative towards nepotism in employment. He has positive memories of his education experience where he was an excellent student. He believes that there was a lack of practice in his university studies. He participated in the *Professional Training Without Employment* programme, which, he suggests, should be cancelled or changed, because his experience is that employers use this programme to get cheap workers. Even though he is long-term unemployed, he expects nothing from his counsellor at the Croatian Employment Service. He is looking for job out of his qualification, but still he hopes to find a job as a lawyer in the future.

Y_OB_F_4

This interviewee is a 24 year-old male. He holds a Baccalaureate degree in Radiology. He lives with his mother. His father killed himself when he was 12 (he had PTSD from the Homeland War). He has just started the *Professional Training Without Employment*. When he was 3 years old his parents got divorced. After that they moved a lot, but he was always in the same elementary school. He has positive emotions towards elementary school, had a lot of friends and he was a good student. He preferred teachers who listened to students' opinions and were more inclusive in their lecturing. His mother is a nurse, so he wanted to work in a hospital. Because of that, he went to Split to study at the university, where he graduated in Radiology without any problems. As his main skills, he points out that he is a team player, and a gentle and communicative person who treats others with respect. He is active and has many hobbies (playing the guitar, going to gym, waking the dog), and because of that he would say that he is a happy person. In the future he would like to work in the Clinical Hospital Centre in Osijek. In the worst case scenario (no job) he would move somewhere far away (like Canada).

Y_OB_F_5

This interviewee is 29 year-old female. She graduated from the Faculty of Law. At the moment she has been unemployed for a year. She lives alone in Osijek. She moved to Osijek at the beginning of the secondary school (gymnasium) in order to get better education. Because of that, she remembers the period of secondary schooling as negative. She said that it was very difficult for her to adjust to the new environment, she missed her parents and didn't feel accepted by the people in Osijek. She got disappointed at the university because students weren't motivated to study and because it was expected from students to be only passive observers. She believes that there is a hyper-production of lawyers with one year of experience (obtained through the *Professional Training Without Employment* programme). She trained Taekwondo. She finds herself not satisfied because she is unable to find a job and because her parents still financially support her. She believes that she is communicative, resourceful and independent. She would try to find a job in Osijek until the end of the year, and if she doesn't find it, she would move abroad.

Y_OB_F_6

This interviewee is a 22 year-old female. She graduated from secondary school in Serbia where she lived with her father and her younger sister. When she was 11 years old her brother died and her parents got divorced. Her mother moved to Osijek and she (the interviewee) took care of the household chores, her younger sister and father. When she was 18, she moved to Osijek to live with her mother. She had many different jobs in Osijek, but she mostly worked as a waitress. The year she moved to Osijek she did not know that she had to pay for her health assurance, so she accumulated a debt of 12,000 Kuna (around 1,600 Euro). Because of that she cannot go to work anywhere outside of Osijek (e. g. for seasonal work at the seaside) until she pays back the debt. She doesn't have Croatian citizenship and the length of her temporary ID card is around 6 months to a year. She loves to work as a waitress, but many employers want her to work without regular work contract which entails paying for her health and pension insurance. She has mostly positive memories about her elementary school. She believes that she is communicative and a kind person. In the future, she is thinking about moving to Germany or Ireland in her pursuit for a better life.

Y_OB_F_7

This interviewee is a 27 year-old male, who holds a Master degree in Education and History. He lives with his parents and he has an older sister. He is not employed. He made a lot of choices under the influence of other people in his life: grandmother, teacher, older sister, parents. He remembers his elementary and secondary school with positive emotions. He had a lot of friends and was an excellent student. He preferred authoritative teachers. During his education his parents enrolled him into a music school (to play saxophone) and into Karate training. He says that he is a professional saxophonist and a person who has good characteristics to be a good pedagogist. When he started his university education he was more interested in History, but during his studying he got more interested into becoming a pedagogist. He participated in *Professional Training Without Employment* working as a pedagogist in a school. He is very negative about the Croatian society, especially about the quality of education and nepotism in employment. He believes that there is a lack of development of practical skills during higher education programmes. In the future he would like to work as a pedagogist. If he stays unemployed for too long, he plans to leave Croatia.

Y_OB_F_8

This interviewee is a 27 year-old female who holds a Master degree in Psychology. She is unemployed and lives with her parents. She has positive memories of her elementary and secondary education. She was an excellent student who chose her own educational path. She preferred teachers who used different methods of teaching then just lecturing. She considers herself to be a proactive person with well-developed communicational and teamwork skills. She participated in the *Professional Training Without Employment* programme. She speaks negatively about the atmosphere in Osijek, and therefore her plans for the future are to obtain more training in the field of Psychology and leave Osijek.

General data about young adults

General data about interviewed young adults are summarized in **Table 12**.

Table 12: General data about young adults

Young adult	Age	Gender	NEET status	Achieved level of education	Family status
Y_I_F_1	26	M	Yes	ISCED1	Lives with mother and younger brother, has two more sisters
Y_I_F_2	25	F	No	ISCED2	Lives with boyfriend, has two sisters
Y_I_F_3	28	F	Yes	ISCED3	Lives with parents, only child
Y_I_F_4	26	F	No	ISCED6	Lives with mom and sister, parents divorced
Y_I_F_5	24	F	No	ISCED6	Lives with boyfriend, has two brothers and one sister, parents live together
Y_I_F_6	22	F	No	ISCED3	Lives with mother and sister, has one more brother, father died
Y_I_F_7	25	M	No	ISCED6	Lives with both parents, only child
Y_I_F_8	19	M	Yes	ISCED1	Lives with mother and grandmother, only child, parents divorced
Y_OB_F_1	20	F	Yes	ISCED3	Lives with both parents, has two older sisters
Y_OB_F_2	29	F	Yes	ISCED3	Lives with mother, has one sister, parents divorced
Y_OB_F_3	26	M	Yes	ISCED7	Lives with his wife, parents lives together, only child
Y_OB_F_4	24	M	No	ISCED6	Lives with mother, father killed himself, only child
Y_OB_F_5	29	F	Yes	ISCED7	Lives by herself, parents live together in another region, only child
Y_OB_F_6	22	F	No	ISCED2	Lives with mother, father and sister live in Serbia, parents divorced
Y_OB_F_7	27	M	Yes	ISCED7	Lives with both parents, has one sister
Y_OB_F_8	27	F	Yes	ISCED7	Lives with both parents

The data presented in this analysis are based on the experience of 16 interviewed young adults:

- Aged 19-29 (6 of them aged 19-24, and 10 of them aged 25-29);
- 10 females and 6 males;
- 9 of them are in the NEET status – not employed, not involved in education or in training;
- According to their achieved level of education: ISCED1: 2 interviewees, ISCED2: 2 interviewees, ISCED3: 4 interviewees, ISCED6: 4 interviewees, ISCED7: 4 interviewees;
- 3 young adults with ISCED6 and one with ISCED3 are still enrolled in education;
- Only 2 interviewed young adults are employed (ISCED2 and ISCED3);
- 12 of the interviewed young adults still live with one (7 of them lives with mother) or both (4) parents, 3 of them live with their boyfriend (2) or wife (1), and only one young adult lives alone.

Most of the interviewed young adults are unemployed, regardless the achieved level of their education. Because of their unemployment, they are unable to become autonomous in their personal life, and therefore 12 of them still live with one or both parents. According to the data, 7 young adults, age 25 and over, are in the NEET status, living with their parents.

By looking more deeply into the general data to compare two functional regions, the analysis shows higher levels of education in Osijek-Baranja County (4x ISCED7, 1x ISCED6), than in Istria County (3x ISCED 6). Nevertheless, there were 6 young adults in NEET status in Osijek-Baranja County, compared to 3 young adults in NEET status in Istria County. While in Istria the unemployed young adults are the ones with lower achieved level of education (2x ISCED1 and 1x ISCED3), in Osijek-Baranja County 4 out of 6 young adults in NEET status have achieved ISCED7 level in their education.

Dominant issues and ways of self-presentation

Dominant issues and ways of self-presentation are going to be presented in **Table 13** in three dimensions: key life points that have defined the interviewed young adults in some educational and/or professional way, young adults` vision of their future in the next 5 to 10 years, and the skills that the young adults recognized as the ones that they have well developed. Along with the presentation of the dominant issues in the lives of young adults, this chapter will also answer the question of what young adults think about their skills.

Table 13: Patterns of biographies of young adults

Young adult	Key life points	Life plan	Skills
Y_I_F_1	quit high school (welder) because of allergy to dust, lives with his mum on social welfare support	find a job, doesn't want to move	fast learner
Y_I_F_2	mother is her big support, in the process of requalification (not satisfied with the current job - too much travelling), lots of extracurricular activities	find a good job, get married and have family, finish college	communicative, social, loves to work

Y_I_F_3	has epilepsy, long-term unemployed	continue professional development, find job	hard working, fast
Y_I_F_4	grandmother (great influence), professional rower, fears graduating from the university	wants to finish PhD, have family	open, communicative, adaptable to different situations, good at team work, creative, has ideas
Y_I_F_5	big family, volunteering, plans connected with her boyfriend's plans,	wants to stay in Pula, find a job that she loves, have husband and two children	developed social skills, presentation skills
Y_I_F_6	death and illness of father, good relationship with mother, works as an editor at a student radio station, listens to motivational speakers	wants to be a language editor, maybe at a radio station, wants to stay in Pula	perfectionist, loves team work, taking responsibilities, communicative
Y_I_F_7	was physically and verbally abused in elementary and secondary school, visits spiritual workshops, had support from pedagogist in elementary school, strict parents	wants to live in Croatia, but not in Pula or Medulin	authentic, has an attitude, communicative, loves meeting different people, ambitious, has goals and knows how to achieve them, team player
Y_I_F_8	father and mother divorced last year, unable to finish high school (depression), lots of non formal trainings and volunteering, not satisfied (he doesn't know what he will do without a high school diploma)	can't tell, doesn't want to have a conventional job	restrained, communicative skills, proactive, different languages, leadership skills
Y_OB_F_1	Influence of older sisters, volunteerism, sports	she would love to work as a physiotherapist	sport trainer for children, organizing events
Y_OB_F_2	changing a lot of schools, bad relationship with father, ambitious, developing skills through different jobs, religious	wants to finish some course and find regular work, wants to have a family, maybe leave Croatia	communicative, open-minded, professional, hard-working
Y_OB_F_3	comes from Bosnia, not satisfied	can't see any future, hopes he would find a job as a lawyer	interpretation of legal files, understanding of legal terminology

Y_OB_F_4	good relationship with mother, satisfied with life, enjoys individual activities (gym, walking dog...)	he would like to live in Osijek and work in Clinical Hospital Centre Osijek, in the worst case scenario (no job) he would move to someplace far away (like Canada)	loves team work, he is gentle, communicative and treats others with respect
Y_OB_F_5	move to Osijek (adjustment to the new environment), not satisfied (no job), great (financial) support of parents , training Taekwondo	she would love to find a job, if she won't be able to she is thinking about moving out of Croatia in next year	hard working, communicative, resourceful, independent
Y_OB_F_6	death of brother, divorced parents, not able to get Croatian citizenship, has a great debt for health insurance	doesn't know, wants to move to Germany or Ireland	fast, communicative, gentle
Y_OB_F_7	grandmother, history teacher, older sister, good self-confidence	he would love to work as a pedagogist, unemployed, plans to leave Croatia	represent his self as a professional saxophonist and as a person who has good competences and characteristics to be a good pedagogist
Y_OB_F_8	excellent student, financial support from parents	further training in psychology, plans to leave Osijek	good communication skills, proactive, team work competences

According to the data presented in **Table 13**, a few conclusions about the self-presentation of the young adults could be proposed. Almost all of the interviewed young adults highlighted the support from their family as an important or key point in their development and in facing problems in their life. Also, almost half of the interviewed persons indicated a strong influence of a family member (older sister/brother, grandmother) in choosing the type of secondary school or university. This conclusion is presented in following statement:

“Regarding education, my grandmother is reason why I’ve studied history. She was a Latin and history teacher in a high school for 40 years. Since I was a child she raised my interest for history through different picture books.” Osijek-Baranja County, male, 27, unemployed

Young adults mostly represent themselves through two groups of skills: social skills and work-related skills. While talking about their well-developed skills, almost all young adults said that they are communicative, and that they have good team-work skills. Another group of skills that young adults pointed out are their work-related skills, such as: hard-working, fast, fast learner. Only a few of the interviewed young adults, while talking about the skills that they have

developed, highlighted the skills connected to their profession. One interviewee mentioned that he thinks he had skills to be a good pedagogist, and another that he had some skills developed that one needed in order to be a lawyer. One interviewee said that she believed that she learned much more life-important skills from her sisters than in school:

“More of my skills I have developed with help of my sisters than in elementary and secondary school.” Osijek-Baranja County, female, 20, unemployed

While talking about their plans, a lot more young adults highlighted their will to find a job (all 16 young adults), then their will to have a family in the future (only 4 young adults). Only a few of the young adults mentioned their wish to leave their local community, but most young adults from Osijek-Baranja County said that they were ready to leave Croatia in order to find a job. One of the interviewee said the following statement:

“I gave Croatia a deadline. If I won’t be able to find a job in Croatia until the end of the year, I will move abroad. My years are passing by, and I am unable to plan anything in my life.” Osijek-Baranja County, female, 29, unemployed

Construction of the life story

Construction of the life story of young adults will be presented in **Table 14** through dominant themes, concepts, terms and words connected to their family, friends, education, activities, interests, abilities and emotions, through their eloquence, through their consciousness and connections of stories or aspects of life, and through their general satisfaction or dissatisfaction in life and reasons for that state.

Table 14: Construction of the life story of young adults

Young adult	Dominant themes	Recurrent construction	Casual explanations	Justification
Y_I_F_1	Actively looking for job, unemployed mother on social care	Not interested	N/A	Not satisfied
Y_I_F_2	Supportive family environment, participates in retraining, lot of activities (assembly, folklore, volleyball)	Moderately eloquent	N/A	Satisfied with personal support, not with labour market situation (nepotism, importance of belonging to political parties)
Y_I_F_3	Supportive family environment, has epilepsy, long-term unemployed	Not informed	N/A	Not satisfied, lost motivation for job search, can’t see any change in the future, negative about labour market needs (she believes she can’t find job because she doesn’t have driving license and

				only 1 year of work experience)
Y_I_F_4	Supportive family environment, under great influence by her grandmother, worked for 2 years after she obtained her baccalaureate degree	Eloquent	consciousness of different processes around her	Satisfied with her life decisions, afraid of what will happen when she finishes university study
Y_I_F_5	Supportive family environment, big family, volunteers, wants to work with young people	Eloquent	Not consciousness about bad conditions in the labour market	Expects to find a good job, believes that being an active citizen is not something that employers want to hear
Y_I_F_6	Supportive mother, went to same high school as her older sister, volunteers, lot of activities (music school - piano, volleyball, tennis)	Eloquent	She became more serious about things after death of her father	Affirmative, expects to work at her university college after she graduates from it
Y_I_F_7	Finds his parents as strict but supportive, during his education he was abused, lot of activities (swimming, horse-riding, learning languages)	Moderately eloquent	N/A	Not satisfied because of trauma of being a victim of abuse
Y_I_F_8	Had support from his mother but he didn't feel that she understood him, feels that the education system can't answer to his needs (curiosity, understand things, learning through action), lot of activities (handball, chess, theatre, volunteering, social and video games)	Very eloquent	Consciousness about connection between finishing high school and searching for job	Negative towards educational system because it is not flexible and adjustable to different needs, not satisfied that non-formal skills are not valued in the labour market
Y_OB_F_1	Supportive family environment, under the influence of two older sisters, positive towards differences, volunteers, involved in sports	Not so informed	Great influence in her life by the choices of her older sisters	Negative towards people in Osijek who are not tolerant towards differences, and towards people who appreciate differences
Y_OB_F_2	Good relationship with mother problems with father, she was in show	Not so informed	Consciousness about herself and decisions she made	Negative towards nepotism in the show business

	business (modelling, dance, singing)			
Y_OB_F_3	Actively looking for job for 5 months (sent around 200 job applications), he volunteered	Not so informed	N/A	Negative towards nepotism in employment, looking for job outside of his qualifications, believes that joining a political party will help him find a job
Y_OB_F_4	Supportive mother, parents divorced when he was 3, he moved a lot (10 times), lot of activities (playing a guitar, going to gym, have a dog)	N/A	Conscious	Satisfied with his life because he believes he is doing things that make him happy
Y_OB_F_5	Supportive family environment, she moved to Osijek while entering high school to get better education, long term unemployed, involved in sports	Eloquent	Lack of confidence (because of long term unemployment)	Dissatisfied with education in Croatia - students are just passive observers and therefore they don't develop any life-important skills, dissatisfied with people from Osijek (hard accepting someone out of Osijek), negative towards hyper-production of lawyers
Y_OB_F_6	Parents divorced, death of brother, mother moved to Osijek when she was 11, she was doing house work for her younger sister and her father, with 18 she moved to Osijek to find a job, loves to work as waitress, can't get papers (citizenship)	Not informed about her obligations as foreign citizen in Croatia	Not aware of institutions that could help in her situation	Negative towards her health insurance situation
Y_OB_F_7	Supportive family environment, under influence of grandmother, finished music school (playing saxophone for money)	Sharing a lot of information about educational system in general	Aware that a lot of choices in his life was made under a influence of other people (grandmother, professor, sister, parents...).	Negative towards Croatian society, especially with the quality of education and nepotism

Y_OB_F_8	Supportive family environment , an excellent student, she chooses her educational path, loves learning languages	Not informed	Not so conscious about labour market problems	Negative towards atmosphere in Osijek
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Almost all of the interviewed young adults pointed out supportive family environment as an important factor in the construction of their life story. Seven young adults (out of 12 that still live in their family homes) live only with their mother. Another important element in the construction of the young adults' life story is their participation in various and numerous extracurricular activities. Almost all young adults mentioned more than one extracurricular activity that they had participated in during their elementary and/or secondary- school education. Some of the activities were different types of sports (handball, volleyball, Taekwondo, Karate, swimming, rowing), languages and music school (piano, saxophone, guitar). An interesting point is that none of them mentioned any skills developed through the participation in these activities as the skills that they had well developed until then. Nevertheless, a few of them used these skills as a way of earning some money while waiting to get a job (training children in sports, playing an instrument for money).

An important part of the construction of the young adults' life story is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their life. Most of the interviewed young adults said that they are dissatisfied with their life at the moment. That statement is connected with their inability to find a job. Four interviewees were negative about the education system: with its inflexibility and the lack of practical skills development. Most of the young adults were negative about the nepotism in the labour market. All of them said that being a part of a political party would help a person to get a job. An interesting statement was one given by a long-term unemployed young adult from Istria, who claimed that she had not been able to find a job because she did not have a driving license, and that the employer expected her to drive herself by car from one place to another. A few of the interviewed young adults from Osijek-Baranja County highlighted the problem of hyper-production of lawyers in their community, who were mostly unemployed after university graduation.

Another thing that young adults were negative about was the general atmosphere in their local community. This was mostly true for Osijek-Baranja County where the interviewed young people said that the atmosphere was negative, and depressing and that people were not tolerant towards differences or people who appreciated differences.

In addition there are few statements of young adults that are representing their dissatisfaction with situation at labour market and in their local community as general:

"I believe that entering a political party would help me to get a job. But I still don't want to do that." Osijek-Baranja County, male, 26, unemployed

"I mean, I love Osijek and I love Croatia. I wanted to live here, but situation is becoming worse. I have no illusions that I will ever get a job in Osijek. It is all about who you know and whose you are." Osijek-Baranja County, male, 27, unemployed

“Once I went to gay pride, and all people in Osijek were judging me about that. They were questioning my wish to be part of a gay pride.” Osijek-Baranja County, female, 20, unemployed

More positive and affirmative mood was expressed by the interviewed young adults from Istria County who had not yet finished their education, and still had not entered the labour market. They all expected to find a job in their profession. Although two of them were at the end of their education, none of them were aware of their obligations and opportunities in relation to entering the labour market. None of those four young adults were aware of the situation in the labour market.

Life experiences

The following chapter presents a structural comparison of the life experiences that the young adults gained during their educational path. The experiences are connected to the school trajectory (school experiences, school transition, information about options), social network at schools, academic performance and their memories of teachers and other support staff. On the basis of the comparison, this chapter will try to answer to the following questions: What are the young adults' life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects? What are the young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course?

Table 15: Life experiences of young adults connected to the education system

Young adult	School trajectory	Social network at school	Academic performance	Teachers and other support stuff
Y_I_F_1	Completed elementary school, started vocational school to become a welder, he wasn't able to finish it because of his allergy; the Croatian Employment Service required him to complete that school, he did but can't work as a welder, he underwent different trainings	Had friends	N/A	Doesn't remember
Y_I_F_2	Positive feelings about elementary school	Had a lot of friends	Enjoyed vocational school for hairdressers, a lot of activities in elementary school	Nothing special to highlight
Y_I_F_3	Positive feelings	Had friends	Support from teachers and friends regarding her medical condition, average student	Nothing special to highlight
Y_I_F_4	Positive feelings	Had friends	Excellent student, was a professional rower	Remembers math teacher from the secondary school who

				was talking partially in Italian, she complained about her to the school principal, because of that she failed math in the 1st year of secondary school
Y_I_F_5	Positive feelings	Had friends	Excellent student	Remembers all teachers as good, supportive and gentle
Y_I_F_6	Positive feelings	Had friends	Very good student	Describes her teachers as kind and correct, in high school she said that her class teacher helped her and motivated her to go to university
Y_I_F_7	Negative feelings because of abuse at school; believes that he was abused because he didn't know how to stand up for himself, and because other children were jealous of him because of his grades and good financial situation	In elementary school had some friends, in secondary school maybe one	Excellent student	he remembers most teachers in elementary school as good (supportive), but he remembers some that were nervous; he recognizes only the elementary school pedagogist as the one who wanted to help him in relation to the abuse
Y_I_F_8	Positive feelings towards the elementary school, negative towards the secondary school	Always had friends, but in the secondary school he remembers that he was annoying most of the students because he was asking questions about the subject content	Very good student in the elementary school, he finished all classes in secondary school, but in the 3rd year he started to feel depressed, had problems, school didn't know and didn't want to deal with that, he failed final exams so he is unable to go to secondary school any more	He remembers teachers as generally not good because they would just come and talk and expected the students to be quiet and listen; Remembers the chemistry teacher as good because he tried to explain things in other ways, not just lecturing
Y_OB_F_1	Positive feelings, she believes she gained more knowledge and skills for life through volunteering and	Had friends, abused by a Roma girl in lower	Excellent student in elementary school, in the first year of secondary school she initially failed	Bad experiences (teachers preferring some students over other)

	from her older sisters then in school	grades of the elementary school	chemistry, and she failed the final exam in math, so she paused one year before she applied for university	
Y_OB_F_2	Changed a lot of schools because of moving	Bad memories - children not accepting her in different schools, verbally abused	Not a good student	Bad experience (physical violence, discrimination because of her (tubby) look)
Y_OB_F_3	Positive feelings, lack of practice at the university	Had friends	Excellent student in the elementary school, very good student in secondary school	Nothing special
Y_OB_F_4	Negative feelings about the pre-school, positive feelings about the elementary school	Had lot of friends	Good student, completed final exams, graduated from the university in Split	Prefers democratic teachers (who listened to students' opinions) to authoritative teachers
Y_OB_F_5	Negative feelings towards the secondary school (because she came to Osijek and she wasn't feeling accepted)	Had friends	Good student, interested in Law, disappointed with the conditions at Faculty of Law and the motivation of other students for studying	Nothing special
Y_OB_F_6	Positive feelings towards the elementary school	Had friends	Good student in the elementary school, failed one class in secondary school because of family problems	N/A
Y_OB_F_7	Positive feelings, believes there is a lack of practical skills development at the higher education level	Had lot of friends	Positive feelings, went to music school and did sports	Prefers authoritative teachers, has positive feelings towards professors
Y_OB_F_8	Positive feelings towards the elementary school, negative feelings towards the secondary school	Had friends	Positive feelings, always a good student, makes her own carrier choices	Prefers teachers who use different teaching methods (connecting the content with practical skills) to those who mainly lecture

All of the interviewed young adults completed elementary school (ISCED1). Most of them had positive feelings about that period in their lives. An interesting point is that although some of them remembered some unpleasant feelings (unfair teachers, bullying), they still generally remembered that period as positive. Many young adults that have positive feelings about elementary school, had negative feelings about their secondary school. Their negative feelings towards the elementary or secondary school were connected with abuse, changing schools over the years and changing the local community to which the school belonged. Not many of the interviewed young people expected anything from their elementary and secondary school. A few of them expected that the university study would help them develop more practical skills. One interviewee was very disappointed with situation at her college, which is readable in following statement:

"I was deeply disappointed when I entered the college. Many other students weren't interested in studying law at all, and they weren't participating at any lectures. On some lectures students needed to sit on the floor because there was no place for everybody in the classroom. To professors we were just a number, they were reading our surname wrong over and over again. There was no way to distinguish oneself from the heap."
Osijek-Baranja County, female, 29, unemployed

Most of the young adults said that they had friends in elementary and in secondary school. A few of them remembered that they were not accepted by their class mates and that they were physically and/or verbally abused.

While talking about teachers, a lot of interviewed young adults were not able to say or highlight anything special about their relationship with a teacher. Others either remembered situations when teachers were very supportive (motivation to go to university, showing empathy for their medical condition), or situations when teachers were violent, nervous or unfair (preferred some students over others). Young adults were negative towards authoritative teachers and teachers whose only teaching method was lecturing. They were positive towards teachers who tried to explain the subject content through more practical methods connected to the development of everyday life skills. Here are few statements regarding teachers:

"I remember this one teacher; she was yelling a lot. Once she striped my notebook because I accidentally skipped one page in it." Istria County, male, 25, in education

"The teacher used to comment my chubby look, she used to say: Why are you advertising this pudgy belly?" Osijek-Baranja County, female, 29, unemployed

"Most of the teachers in my elementary school were young. I liked their democratic approach to teaching, where we were able to share our opinions." Osijek-Baranja County, male, 24, unemployed

"Of course, there were some teachers that I liked better. They were more relaxed and they had different lecturing style then just presenting the content. They were more focused on practical use of their subject." Istria County, male, 19, unemployed

Participation in LLL policy

On the basis of the contact and relation of the young adults with policies, this chapter will provide answered to the following questions: How do LLL policies construct their target group? How do these policies recognize social categories? Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making?

Table 16: Participation of young adults in LLL policy

Young adult	Contact with policies	Relation with policy goals	Possibilities of improvement
Y_I_F_1	Has a counsellor at the Croatian Employment Service, expects nothing	None	None
Y_I_F_2	Her mother paid for one requalification in the open public university, another one she paid for herself	None	Wants to participate in different learning possibilities to get a better job
Y_I_F_3	Participated in the professional training without employment programme, has a counsellor at Croatian Employment Service, and expects them to help her find a job	None	Wants to do a retraining, she thinks that employers are using a professional training without employment programme to get cheap employees
Y_I_F_4	None	None	None
Y_I_F_5	Expects to participate in the professional training without employment programme	None	Wants to participate in different trainings provided by NGOs to get specific skills
Y_I_F_6	None	N/A	Wants to participate in different trainings provided by NGOs to get specific skills
Y_I_F_7	None	None	N/A
Y_I_F_8	With formal system he has no connection so far, and expects nothing	He participates in different non-formal programs, to get non-formal skills	N/A
Y_OB_F_1	None	None	None
Y_OB_F_2	Not informed	None	Willing to pay for a training to find a regular job
Y_OB_F_3	Participated in the professional training without employment	None	He believes that a professional training without employment programme

	programme, expects nothing from his counsellor at the Croatian Employment Service		should change because employers use this measure to find a cheap work force
Y_OB_F_4	Just entered the professional training without employment	None	Willing to pay for a training to become a gym trainer, he believes that employers use the professional training without employment so that they do not need to employ someone to do that job
Y_OB_F_5	Participated in a professional training without employment programme, expects nothing from his counsellor at the Croatian Employment Service	None	She believes that the professional training without employment programme is not good anymore because it is hyper-producing lawyers with one year of work experience
Y_OB_F_6	Expects nothing, not informed about possibilities	None	None
Y_OB_F_7	Participated in the professional training without employment programme	None	None
Y_OB_F_8	Participated in the professional training without employment programme	None	None

One of the most used LLL policies is the *Professional Training Without Employment* programme. It is a one-year-long active employment measure designed by the Croatian Employment Service. This measure is seen as a way for young people to get a one-year work experience in their profession. During this year a person is not employed. His/her health insurance and “salary” are paid from the State Budget. In 2011, the beneficiaries of this measure were getting 1,600 Kuna (around 220 Euro) per month, and since 2015 the amount has increased to 2,400 Kuna (around 320 Euro) per month. Here are some average costs of living in Croatia (in the year 2016) according to the Numbeo³ data base: apartment 1 bedroom in the city: 290 Euro per month, basic utilities (electricity, heating, water, garbage): 160 Euro per month, Meal in inexpensive restaurant: 6 Euro, Milk and Bread (500g): 2 Euro, Fitness club: 32 Euro per month. Six interviewed young adults have participated in this programme. One of them is ISCED3, one of them is ISCED6 and 4 of them are ISCED7. The interviewees with ISCED7 have pointed out that they have been in education for 17 or more years, and that

³ https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Croatia

they are still not ready to start working, but they need to have one more year in order to develop practical skills needed in their profession. The participants of this programme said that the programme should change or be cancelled because many employers use it to get employees for free. All of the young adults who participated in this programme are still unemployed. The statement of one interviewee who participated in the programme of professional training is:

“This measure needs to be cancelled or changed. Employers are using it to have cheap workforce and they have no obligation to employ the probationer.” Istria County, female, 28, unemployed

Four young adults mentioned that they had their counsellor at the Croatian Employment Service. They explained their relationship as formal (they send their counsellor an e-mail with the list of all jobs that they applied to, otherwise they would be erased from the evidence list). None of the long-term unemployed young adults expect anything from their counsellors or the Croatian Employment Service. This is well readable in the following statement:

“This communication with the counsellor has become like some formality for me. I send him an e-mail with the list of all job calls that I have applied for and I make clear that I didn’t get any of those.” Osijek-Baranja County, male, 26, unemployed

Many young adults expressed their willingness to participate in different types of training. Some of them are even willing to pay for retraining in order to get any job. But few of them said that they would like to participate in retraining but they cannot afford to pay for it. There are some young adults who recognized the opportunities that are given to them by NGO programs. They said that they planned to participate in different trainings provided by NGOs in order to develop some practical skills.

Conclusions about young adults

Starting from the key factors of young adults’ self-presentation it is obvious that good connection with members of their family as well as support from their family, young adults in Croatia see as a main point in facing their problems. Most of the young adults have positive feelings about their elementary school, while those feelings become more negative in their secondary school participation. Some of the young adults have remembered their teachers as the ones who motivated them in their future life steps, especially regarding their educational decisions. During their education, most of young adults in Croatia were enrolled in different out-of-school activities, mostly in some types of sport or in the music schools. While presenting themselves, young adults are mostly focused on presenting their practical skills. They are oriented on the skills that they can use in their everyday-life situations and they are not so proactive in participating in activities that would lead to the community improvement.

Generally, it could be concluded that young adults in Croatia are dissatisfied with life in Croatia. They are worried about their future, and most of them believe that they will not be able to find a job in profession, especially the job they love. Because of that they are unable to plan their future regarding any other life important question. Most of them have negative

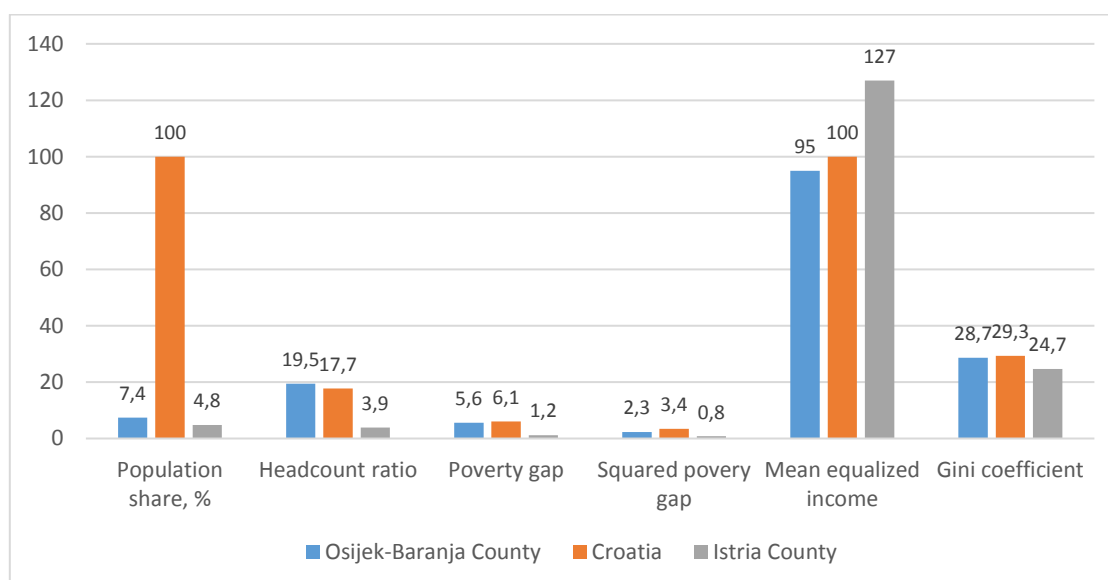
feelings towards situation at labour market. They recognize the labour market as centre of nepotism, where you are more competitive if you are member of a political party.

While talking about LL policies, in general, young people in Osijek-Baranja and in Istria Functional Region are not included in creating LLL policies. Most of them are not informed about their opportunities and they do not expect anything from the Croatian Employment Service. Although they think that professional training without employment should be changed or cancelled, they still participate in it. They see this measure as a “normal” step in their professional development. If young adults want to get retraining or training, they usually need to pay it for themselves. Therefore, LLL policies are not recognizing different social categories.

Interaction between young adults and experts

After gaining its independence in 1991, the Republic of Croatia managed to transform itself into a functioning market economy. This process is accompanied by numerous challenges that include fast development of new knowledge and technologies, frequent changes in the labour market and growing demand for highly qualified labour force, demographic aging of the population, etc. In order to attain sustainable growth and faster reduction of income gap towards EU average, it is necessary to tackle some external imbalances, as well as socio-economic disparities. With 56.542 km² of the surface area and around 4.200.000 inhabitants, Croatia is small country in terms of population and size. Despite its small size, it is quite diversified country with long history of pronounced regional disparities. This is particularly true for regional disparities in the areas of education, employment, feeling of happiness and personal satisfaction.

Some data that illustrate these disparities in two Croatian functional regions are shown in Graph 1.



Graph 1: Basic Statistics for two Functional Regions (*source: Rubil, 2013*)

These data confirm that governments and public institutions in Croatia are losing the fight against major regional disparities and various social problems caused by bureaucracy, tardiness, lack of entrepreneurial activities, innovativeness, support for young people and ability to create an entrepreneurial environment that would ensure higher quality of living (Singer et al., 2011).

Before analysing the existing institutional infrastructure in education and labour market development in Osijek-Baranja and Istria County, it is necessary to reiterate that there is a distinct gap in the levels of economic and social development between those two regions, which is visible in:

- considerable economic differences: a GDP per capita, the unemployment rate, an average salary, and consequently in the overall level of living standard in these

functional regions (that are less favourable in Osijek-Baranja County than in Istria County)

- availability of used/unused natural resources as preconditions of development (in Istria County, natural resources are better exploited than in Osijek-Baranja County)
- war consequences (Osijek-Baranja County was affected by war, while Istria County was not).

On the other hand, both functional regions share some common strengths that include:

- excellent geographic and transport position;
- rich cultural and historic heritage;
- rich and diverse natural resources;
- satisfactory road infrastructure;
- dynamic sector of small and medium-size enterprises;
- existing and potential business zones for the construction and agriculture;
- similar organisations and institutions in the field of education and labour market.

The huge gap that was developed between different Croatian Regions has unfolded several social issues that should be addressed by all actors of society. However, institutions responsible for solving them have lack of capacities and capabilities to quality answer to those problems. This process, should involve the knowledge and expertise of all existing institutions in private, public and civil sector, and should be carried out on partnership basis at local, regional and national level.

The analysis in this report presents that there are no differences in the level of establishment and development of institutional infrastructure in two functional regions. In both cases, it can be concluded that direct implementation of national legislation and strategies at the regional and local level has failed. Potential reasons for that failure could be:

- national legislation does not promote local and regional development;
- there is decentralisation of the duties, but not of the financial resources;
- there is no comprehensive, policy/action oriented modification plan (there are only accidental individual efforts, proposals, projects, programmes, actions on the local basis);
- there is lack of partnership and trust between the stakeholders;
- there is lack of government capacities for implementation of built-in institutional framework;
- there is no strategic planning or partnership actions of steps for future development of counties;
- there is inefficient public administration that presents one of the main limitations for further development;
- there is a gap between the written policies and its implementation (the institutional role and documents versus the policies and actions - each institution protects its position).

These conclusions are in line with the analysis of Dragičević and Letunić (2008), who highlighted the existing disparity between the built institutional infrastructure and its implementation at regional levels, as well as the lack of the regional government's creativeness, strong leadership and political support for regional initiatives. Moreover, authors conclude that regional strategies, policies and action plans should be dynamic and innovative.

This means that, according to the specific regional situation in Croatia (huge economic and social differences), it is not suitable to “import” or imitate national or European institutions’ strategies and policies at the local or regional level, because underdevelopment and unequal development cannot be overcome simply by importing institutions that were successful in other context.

From the above mentioned analysis, stems the important question: “How detected challenges and miss-matches in the regional institutional systems affect young adults who lives in these regions?”.

Young people as a social group share actual and ascribed social characteristics that determine their social role, the consequence of which is the insufficient integration of youth into the overall social life and their more unfavourable social status in comparison with the older population. Young people are in a specific transitional period in which the disproportion of psychophysical and social maturity is characteristic: they are no longer protected as children, and they still do not have all the possibilities and opportunities available to adults. Such situation makes them one of the most vulnerable segments of the population, which requires a special relation of the society towards their interests, problems, needs and life perspectives (Ilišin, 2006; Ilišin & Spajić-Vrkaš, 2015).

In conceiving any national, regional or local policy it is certainly important to respect the fact that young people are not a homogenous social group. Croatian youth mutually significantly differs by social background, conditions of family and wider socialization, educational accomplishments, socioprofessional status, lifestyles, life aspirations, political views, behaviour patterns, etc. The existing differentiations therefore require a policy that will encompass the interests and needs of different (sub)groups of young people and that will ensure equally good life prospects for everyone. Unemployment, increasing poverty and job insecurity are the biggest problems of today’s young generation in Croatia. Furthermore, police, judiciary and civil society organizations enjoy the highest share of the young generation’s trust in institutions, while at the same time there is least trust in government and political parties (Kovačić, 2014). According to the content of the interviews with young adults, it is possible to conclude that young people isolate themselves from politics, especially institutionalised (conventional, formal) politics, which is manifested in their weak interest in policies and below-average participation in political institutions and processes. Young people are quite homogeneous in sharing this sense of political (civic) helplessness.

Even though all citizens are responsible for the development of democracy, in effect responsible institutions and stakeholders have greater social and political power and responsibility for implementation of democratic values and praxes. One would expect for youth problems to come to the agenda but that to a large extent does not correspond to reality. Overlapping jurisdictions, problems with guideline implementation, lack of educated and informed professionals in relevant offices, and the deficit of actual political will – these are the reasons why Croatian youth policy remains underdeveloped. Our analysis shows that reasons for this lying down in the shortage of staff that influences the inability to cope with the complex matter of youth policy, as well as in sluggish implementation of Youth Guarantee, some problems surrounding national, regional and local grants allocation for CSOs etc. Due to a lack of coherence in the actual public policy, the absence of coordination between stakeholders and indifference of the political elites towards the necessity to resolve problems

young people in Croatia are facing, their full potential cannot be used. Therefore, only the setting of youth priorities on top of the political agenda can ensure positive youth (and social) development.

However, data on youth work in Croatia is quite scarce. While youth work has been widely developed and implemented through various forms in a majority of local communities, it is barely documented and (expert) analysis of any kind is chronically missing (Bužinkić et al., 2015). Although youth policy as such is in place on local, regional (county) and national level, there is no framework on youth work and no (explicit) guides for its practice in Croatia. Thus, it seems that everybody is currently free to interpret the concept of youth work according to his or her own subjective perspective, analysis, experience and/or competence. Over time, youth work is developing within civil society organizations but has not been recognized as influential outside the civil society sphere. A common and unified strategy or agreed upon regulation of youth work of any kind remains elusive in Croatia. Moreover, the educational programmes for youth workers are not established in any educational institution, with few exceptions of NGO's informal education.

While there is large number of CSOs in Croatia that describe children and youth as their direct beneficiaries, it is remarkable that there has been no analysis or research of any kind in regard to their impact on youth development (Bužinkić et al., 2015). Even though the programs and projects offered by CSOs are more flexible, often innovative, and can be adjusted by following young people's feedback, the CSO's that participated in our analysis stressed the lack of motivating young people to participation in their activities. CSO's in Croatia, in addition to having only small numbers of active members, are irregularly distributed throughout the country, and are particularly rare in settlements below 20.000 habitants. Because of this, volunteering is insufficiently present among general population, including youth. That is particularly true of formal volunteering through CSO's. When it comes to the readiness of youth for volunteer work, previous research established that 40% of youth are willing to become involved, 20% are not interested in volunteer work, and 40% are indecisive and do not know (Ilišin et al., 2013). These are the main reasons that the CSO's do not have enough strong impact and contribution to the quality of life of youth.

Furthermore, the data presented in our analysis leads to the conclusion that youth unemployment in Croatia is the result of difficult school-to-work transitions caused by a mismatch between the skills of employment seekers and the needs of the labour market. One of important area for successful transitions from education to labour market is vocational training. The level of participation in vocational education and training (VET) at the upper secondary level in Croatia is one of the highest in the EU, at 70.3%, compared to an EU average of 46.7 % in 2015 (Butković, 2017). However, in 2016 the employment rate of upper secondary graduates was 66.8%, compared to the EU average of 74.2%. Additionally, about 45% of Croatian graduates are employed in jobs outside their field of education. Croatian researches show that only 23% of youth would chose education in vocational schools, while the rest (77%) prefer university studies (Ilišin et al., 2013).

The current system of vocational education and training does not ensure the acquisition of competences needed in the labour market, because the education supply and education programmes are not modernised fast enough. According to our analysis, they are neither based on the market needs analyses, nor are the employment rate indicators and/or the

education continuation rate of the pupils who completed vocational education followed up. Insufficient real qualifications or the inexistence of the labour market need for such profile of competencies, nevertheless, factually leads to aggravated employability, thus diminishing national and individual potentials for growth and progress. The vocational education system is facing a big challenge of continuing modernisation of the education supply and working methods. The contents of the great majority of the existing curricula and teaching programmes is outdated and offers no possibility of acquiring contemporary knowledge, skills and competencies, because the dynamics of their modernisation does not follow the development of new knowledge and technologies. An aggravating circumstance of their regular modernisation is under-staffedness in the system, as well as financial implications it requires. Moreover, the methodology of drafting curricula and teaching programmes provides no mechanisms that would ensure that they reflect not only contemporary knowledge, but also their relevance in the world of work. Nowadays, the curricula and teaching programmes are created exclusively within the education system that not sufficiently knows and follows the labour market trends. An additional problem is the structure of the curricula and teaching programmes itself, which is subject-oriented and prescribes the tasks of teachers themselves, and not the competencies a pupil has to acquire. In other words, the focus is on teaching, and not on learning.

This problem is equally presents in both functional regions, because the analysis of the network of educational programmes in Osijek-Baranja and Istria County leads to the conclusion that the vocational programmes distribution is not sufficiently relevant in terms of the regional labour market needs. Participants in our study believe that the reasons of such situation are lying down in:

- the lack of coordination among key stakeholders in the field of (vocational) education and employment policies;
- continuous labour market segmentation;
- destruction of the country's industrial potential and
- the lack of overall strategic approach to ensure social and economic independence of young people in Croatia.

According to analysis the most notable group of problems of young adults is concern about future and lack of social events and options. There is no evidence that age, gender, regional distribution and war experiences significantly affected the hierarchy of priority problems.

Experts and managers stressed that this network is not sufficiently rational in terms of the ratio of labour market needs and the price for the implementation of particular programmes. This leads to a huge dispersion of programmes in various schools and various environments, and a low average number of pupils who attend a particular programme per one school. The labour market analyses and their projections, the economic plans of development at local and national level, are still not taken as a necessary precondition for planning the enrolment needs. In the same way, clear quantitative indicators of successful employability in the occupational field and/or the education indicators are not taken into account, and often do not exist, when planning enrolment. On the other hand, the existing indicators show that a considerable number of young people educated in vocational professions, and particularly in three-year programmes, has difficulties in finding work and/or is not employed in the discipline they were educated for. With regard to finding a job, youth equally rely on their personal qualities (as competence and education), and on interventions of influential persons (liaisons and

acquaintances, including political interventions). According to youth, Croatian nepotism undervalues people's knowledge because the only way to get things done is to have your own people inside – the nephews, the pressure points.

It is obviously that three dimensions are crucial for understating youth unemployment in Croatia: **governance, labour market supply and labour market demand (Buković, 2014)**. The first dimension can be referred to as “**governance**”. It relates to the ability of “the system” (intended as key labour market stakeholders) to develop coordinated policies that are well targeted, based on high-quality data, properly financed and continuously coordinated and evaluated. The Croatian system represents in many ways a complete contradiction to this description. An aspect with plenty of room for improvement is the lack of clear target groups in the population between 15-29 years of age. Policy-makers justify this approach by stating that interventions would otherwise end up being too “rigid” and “inflexible”, but in reality such lack of targeting leads to an over-representation of youth with higher education diplomas as beneficiaries of active labour market measures. This can be contrasted with the structure of youth unemployment, which is dominated by youth with lower qualifications. It is also very frequent for active labour market measures to “run out of steam”: due to the budgetary gap, further implementation is not possible in the last quarter of the fiscal year, and sometimes even earlier. This is a well-known issue that is periodically stressed by both beneficiaries and experts. Somewhat surprisingly, among key policy makers this tends to be interpreted as a “job well done” in the sense of efficient budgetary spending, neglecting among other unfavourable outcomes the queuing effect it creates. Finally, a lack of administrative capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate employment policy is too often coupled by an absence of continuity and strategic approach to policymaking.

The second dimension that requires an immediate attention is **labour market supply**. This is primarily related to the educational system, both formal and non-formal education, and informal learning. Croatia is performing badly in this dimension as well, which creates bottlenecks in the transition from education to the labour market. A diverse set of actors such trade unions, civil society organisations and universities, usually work within their own arenas. Apart from the more pragmatic motivations of public sector trade unions and universities which have to do with protecting jobs of their members and the survival of certain departments, the general argument here is a refusal to submit education to the demands of the labour market. This cleavage makes the situation politically very complicated and sensitive for any official willing to tackle the problems within this arena, while overlapping competencies between the ministries in charge education and labour does little to help the case.

The third dimension is **labour market demand**. Simply put, the Croatian economy currently does not have the capacity for sufficient job creation which could significantly reduce youth unemployment, nor are there any indications that this will change even in the mid-term. Around 300,000 jobs were lost in industry during the 1990s within the framework of privatisation, which was, and still is, a fiercely contested in economic, political and legal sphere. This loss, among other things, permanently reduced the economy's export potential, directing it towards the import-orientated, fiscally dependent and ultimately unsustainable growth path that characterised the 2000s. New concepts and ideas on how to generate job creation are urgently needed as the previous models, which focused firstly on public investment, and later on private (foreign) investments obviously did not meet the mark. Greater focus on a social and sustainable economy may be part of the solution.

To improve the poor employment outcomes of vocational education graduates, Croatia in September 2016 adopted a Vocational Education and Training Development Plan 2016–2020, which should guide the update of the vocational education curricula, increase the share of work-based learning, and improve the quality of teaching. However, this strategy, without taking into account regional specificities, will not lead to the desired changes in the link between education and the labor market. The mechanisms of creating the education supply and the education programmes may be realised only through partnership with all the stakeholders of vocational education (employers, trade unions, chambers, local government representatives, and all other interested parties) at the local and regional levels. It is particularly important to define the roles of stakeholders and bodies that will act as a link between vocational education and the labour market, and higher education. The principal holders of this process could be sectoral councils, being the bodies that present, with competence, to the system of vocational education and training the needs of the labour market and higher education that need to be met by the vocational education. In the function of better meeting the labour market needs, it is necessary to further develop and enhance the lifelong professional orientation in vocational education and lifelong learning activities, as important tools of education and employment policy.

However, according to the official statistic data, only 2.3% of labour active population in Croatia have been participating in some form of education and training, which is quite low compared to EU average of 10,8% (Strategic framework for Development 2006-2013, Government of the Republic of Croatia). There are several reasons for such adverse statistics:

- majority of people who obtained the highest degree of formal education at universities or polytechnics do not continue with education and training
- even though Croatian firms/organizations have improved their education and training practices during the last five years, these activities are still not perceived as strategically relevant
- there is a lack of people's self-confidence and in many cases (continues) education and training in older age is perceived as a 'shame'
- high costs of education, family duties and lack of employers' support.

The qualitative analysis of young people's thinking about education indicates that youth, irrespectively of whether they are still in the process of education, are looking for work or have managed to find it, have a high level of extrinsic motivation and the aspiration of finding a secure job that can ensure their livelihood. Alternative aspirations, connected with additional education and training, are really rare.

Promotion of lifelong learning should influence the key actors whose actions can eliminate the obstacles for inclusion into lifelong learning. That particularly applies to structural and situational obstacles. It is important to familiarise the decision makers on national, regional and local levels with all dimensions of execution and benefits from lifelong learning. Moreover, it is important to enhance the awareness that by eliminating obstacles and additionally motivating citizens it is possible to increase the participation in lifelong learning and achieve a higher level of participation, which is already recognized as a considerable problem in Croatia. Promotion should commence in institutions of early and preschool education, continue in primary and secondary schools, and finally be present in higher education and adult educational institutions (Strategic Framework for Promotion of Lifelong Learning in The Republic of Croatia 2017-2021).

The basic problem of lifelong learning and the education of adults in Croatia is the issue of fitting in different age groups into a single process (Panža, 2010). How to fit in children which leave secondary education with 16, 17 or 18 years and workers who lose their jobs after 30 or more years of service and can hardly adapt to new skills which are required for their reinstatement on the labour market (computer skills, knowledge of foreign languages, technical knowledge, quick adaptation to changes and other). The development of strategies, educational programmes and models for working with adults should, therefore, take into consideration the age of the (sub)group which is, or will be, involved in the (adult) education process. At the first sight the groups of the young who have abandoned regular secondary education and belong to the category of adults seem to be homogeneous, but they come from different backgrounds and have various experiences and a different understanding of the value of education. All this and a number of other personal differences need to be taken into consideration when deciding on education policies in adult education (Klapan et al., 2013).

Another issue that arises from our analysis is that young people in vulnerable situation are taking part in the LLL programmes less and less. In both functional regions, the lack of infrastructure and opportunities for marginalised young people is visible.

In the Croatian context, some groups of young people are more vulnerable and have a higher risk of long-term unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. The most prominent groups facing such risks include:

- young people with disabilities and health problems
- young people belonging to ethnic or national minorities (especially Roma girls that face obstacles connected with gender inequality and ethnicity)
- young people who have not completed their primary and secondary education
- young criminal offenders, and those without adequate family support and from institutions of social care
- young people from remote areas (young people from less serviced areas usually face geographical obstacles and economic obstacles because they do not have sufficient opportunities for employment in their communities).

These groups of young people face more obstacles and often have more problems associated with achieving success in education, accessing educational programs and with employment. In addition, these groups of young people are more likely to need alternative educational programs and additional support around employment and inclusion. However, our analysis shows that needed measures are often not provided in a systematic and effective way at regional and local levels, because the local services stay only declaratory and support is provided without the adequate evaluation of their work.

Our research has shown that strengths of young people are the following:

- good relationships (good relationship and connectedness with parents and good relationship toward family and friends)
- potential for success (involvement in educational process or labour market; satisfaction with the choice of school; good cognitive abilities; responsible attitude toward obligations; good academic performance and motivation)
- knowledge of a foreign language (due to the possibility of migration from Croatia).

Youth in vulnerable situation are weak in these areas, but they do not find the adequate support in local community that would lead to their better life-chances. If young adults in vulnerable situation want to gain skills after or out of the regular education system, the problem they are facing is financing. Programmes in open universities, part-time studies, postgraduate studies are financed by the students themselves. Another problem, noticed by interviewed people, in the concept of lifelong learning and retraining of young adults, is their lack of motivation often caused by disbelief that those educational acts will lead them to employment.

Given all the above mentioned weaknesses, it is not surprisingly that youth are looking for their future outside of Croatia. The main reasons are of economic nature: improvement of the standard of living and easier employment. In addition, the generally unfavourable situation in Croatia motivate young adults to leave the country.

In addition, this national report compare gained results in two directions: comparison between experts and young adults and comparison between Osijek-Baranja and Istria Functional Regions. Those comparisons are made in 6 main dimensions: objectives, approaches, implementation, evaluation, target groups and governance, which is visible in **Table 17**.

Table 17 Comparison between expert and young adults

EXPERTS	YOUTH
OBJECTIVES	FUTURE PLANS
the increase of the user's employability with the improvement of skills, qualification and level of information given to the youth, while less attention is given to encouraging the changes in the society for the benefit of the youth	Expectations Have a job in a profession.
lack of clear picture about the expected outcomes of their activities, because they are oriented towards the general expectations and the purpose of their work	Experiences Unemployed. Ready to live Croatia in order to find a job.
APPROACHES	SELF-PRESENTATION
only a few of the experts have deeper insights into the aims and content of the international and national policy documents	Expectations Family and education will help you in your future life.
none of the experts mentioned the theoretical underpinnings of their work, although all of them expect positive changes in education, competences and employability of the youth	Experiences Importance of support from family Influence of the family member in choosing education Not recognizing skills connected to their profession as good developed
experts are guided by the particular interests of their institutions, while the broader picture of LLL policy is absent	
local authorities do not have a proactive approach and the need to create local LLL policies	
lack of direct link among social, educational and labour market activities and policies	
IMPLEMENTATION	EDUCATION EXPERIENCES
the measures implemented by the local authorities that would connect educational institutions with the labour market are missing	Expectations No expectation from educational institutions.

	<p>Expecting to develop practical skills at university.</p> <p>Experiences Positive feelings connected to elementary school. Negative feelings connected to secondary school. Disappointment with lack of development of life-important skills through education, especially at universities.</p>
EVALUATION	LIFE SATISFACTION
<p>it is very difficult to determine the effectiveness of the mentioned measures, since the systems and procedures of their evaluation are generally not developed</p> <p>the culture of evaluation in the institutions involved in this analysis does not exist</p>	<p>Expectation Finishing education will help you to find a job in your profession, fulfil your life goals and be satisfied.</p> <p>Experiences Dissatisfied because of inability to find a job and nepotism in the country especially connected to the labour market.</p>
TARGET GROUPS	INDEPENDENCE
<p>there is no gender bias in the programmes and activities</p> <p>the youth are exclusive users of the activities offered by NGOs, while local authorities do not have special youth departments</p> <p>young people in vulnerable situations are not in the focus of any regional or local institutions</p> <p>most young people in vulnerable situations are not aware that some programs in which they can participate exist or are available in their community</p> <p>All of the analysed LLL policies try to foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty (the impact of these activities is unknown)</p>	<p>Expectation Have a family and a job.</p> <p>Experiences Unemployed Living with parents. Half of interviewed young adults are in the NEET status.</p>
GOVERNANCE	Participation in LLL policies
<p>only a few of institutions are oriented towards the development of some kind of the collaborative culture</p> <p>many experts have some experience of participating in some activities with other stakeholders, but they are not familiar with the term "policy-making"</p> <p>the experts have many ideas about the necessary changes in their work with the purpose of improving its quality and impact</p>	<p>Expectations LLL policy helps young people to enter labour market system</p> <p>Experiences Not informed about possibilities. Not participating in LLL policies. Expects nothing from institutions of LLL policies. Not able to enrol in training because it should be financed by participants themselves. Willing to go to different trainings to develop life-important skills.</p>

Regarding objectives of educational and labour market system, both experts and young adults have a vision of improving young adults' skills with the purpose of raising their employment. Young adults are expecting to use developed skills in order to find a job in a profession that they are interested in. Unfortunately, our analysis shows that young adults have difficulties to find a job. On the other side, the experts do not have clear picture if their activities are successful in fulfilling their goals. Slow improvement of the unemployment situation leads young adults to the conclusion that the only way for them to find a job is to live Croatia. This is especially visible in Osijek-Baranja County where most young adults who are unemployed for year or more are planning to go abroad. Regarding objectives there are no further differences between two functional regions.

As it has been mentioned before, even though the approaches to improve youth policy comes from the national and region level, experts do not completely understand the theoretical background of those legalisations. They are choosing to deal with few measures on local level, based on particular interest of their institution. Lack of capacities of local and regional authorities to develop strategy to face youth problems is leading to the situation in which young adults do not recognize any educational or labour market institutions as once that will support them in their transition to labour market and in their future life. Young adults underline their family as main support that they have in facing life problems. This data is similar in both Osijek-Baranja and Istria County.

The local and regional youth policy makers are separating policy regarding education of young adults and policy regarding employment of young adults while implementing selected measures. Responsible institutions in those two systems are not coordinated and because of that great skills mismatch is developed, that is visible to both, experts and young adults. While the main reasons of long-term unemployment of young adults in both regions are lack of experience and practical work, still educational programs do not increase quantity of praxes at secondary or higher education level. That is one of the main objections that young adults highlighted about educational system. Young adults who have finished ISCED 6 or ISCED 7 are very disappointed with lack of development life-important skills even at university level. In both regions there are similar institutions in the educational and labour market system, and in both of them there is lack of cooperation in facing youth unemployment problems. Even so, young adults in Osijek-Baranja County are more aware of the skills mismatch that this no-cooperation is causing. They have underlined continuous hyper production of lawyers and economists in their region. Even though the mismatch is obvious, there is still no changes from university quota.

The evaluation of implemented measures is absent in both, Osijek-Baranja and Istria Functional Region. However, one of the indicators of efficiency of measures could be the perception about life quality and life satisfaction of final beneficiaries of those measures, young adults. Young adults expected that finishing secondary and/or higher education would help them to find a satisfying job and start the life of them own. But, the analysis shows that youth in Osijek-Baranja and Istria County are dissatisfied in life because of inability to find a job. They are unmotivated and bitter on high level of nepotism in the labour market system. Young adults in Osijek-Baranja County are representing that in the way that joining a political party would be a step to get a job.

Because of well-known life dissatisfaction of youth, analysed LLL policies are trying to foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographic uncertainty. The failing of those efforts is readable from young adults' analysis, that are showing that most young adults are without any financial stability, still living with their parents and mainly belong to a NEET status. The reason of failure could be that local authorities do not recognize young people as a special group with specific needs, and therefore they don't have youth department for dealing with aggregated youth policy. That is especially bad for young people in vulnerable situations, who are invisible to responsible institutions. While looking more deeply in differences between the regions, the expert analyses are very similar. Regarding young adults, there is more NEET status young adults in Osijek-Baranja County. While in Istria the unemployed young adults are the ones with lower achieved level of education, in Osijek-Baranja County most of young adults in NEET status have achieved ISCED7 level in their education.

The main result of the analysis is that the LLL policy is not answering needs of young adults because of lack of coordination between different institutions and lack of evaluation of the measures implementation. Young adults, in both regions, are not informed about LLL policies and are not participating in once. They are unaware of different possibilities that they have and they expect nothing from Croatian Employment Service. While thinking about training or retraining they do not recognize NGOs as important actor that could help them in development of their skills. At the same time, they recognize open public universities, but mainly they are not able to pay for their programs. The main thing that both experts and young adults from both regions claim is that LLL policies should be changed and improved in order to answer to the special needs of young adults' transition to labour market.

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Work Package 5

Qualitative Analysis

National Report: Finland

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Executive Summary

This report presents and analyses the expert and young adult interviews conducted in two functional regions in Finland, Southwest Finland and Kainuu. The aim was to, firstly, assess the interaction that LLL policies, young adults' living conditions, as well as both country and region specific contexts have in promoting growth and social inclusion, and, secondly, explore young adults' perceptions of the social expectations that underlie the policies and initiatives, competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings, as well as the complementarity of policies, local contexts, living conditions, and individual life projects and styles. The regional differences in the opportunity structures are evident when looking at the functional regions of this study. Life opportunities available to young people are more versatile in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu, where youth unemployment rates are higher and the level of overall well-being of young people is lower than in Finland on average. There are also much fewer educational opportunities available for compulsory school graduates in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland. Furthermore, the labour market in Southwest Finland is larger and more versatile than the labour market in Kainuu, and it is more likely for young people to find employment in the open market in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu. Hence, young adults residing in these two regions live in quite different realities when it comes to their future prospects.

According to the interviewed regional experts, the objectives of the LLL policies include reducing youth unemployment, tackling social exclusion of young adults, increasing the rate of VET completion and reducing the number of drop-outs. It is noteworthy that tackling social exclusion of young adults was mentioned explicitly as a key objective of the policy measures only in the interviews with the experts in the functional region Kainuu. The clear difference highlights the discrepancies in the socio-economic structures and living conditions of youth and young adults in the two contrasting functional regions. However, all the experts from each of the regional policy measures and both of the functional regions emphasised the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. The logic behind this kind of an approach was that young adults have to reach a certain level of functional abilities, skills, and wellbeing in order to be a situation where the main goal of the policy measure, such as successfully completing VET or entering the labour market, can be reached. Strengthening young adults' self-confidence, autonomy, and agency, as well as reducing their biographical uncertainty were also among the main goals of the LLL policies.

The experts found cooperation with other relevant institutions and policy actors to be of utmost importance. They attributed the successfulness of network cooperation to well-functioning collaboration networks, low level of bureaucracy, shared understanding between the cooperation partners of the roles, expectations, goals, and credit of success, as well as long-lasting, positive relationships with the individual members of the network. Collaboration was one of the ways in which so-called wicked problems were tackled. By working together with experts from several different fields it was seen possible to address the multilevel wicked problems in a way that would not be possible for a single policy measure or actor.

The most dominant themes of the young adult interviews were the challenges included in the life stories, such as learning and neuropsychological disorders, mental and physical illnesses, circadian rhythm problems, major problems in family, and having been bullied at school, as well as the (lack of) support from family, friends, and school. For many, the

problems related to learning at school were still reflected on the way they perceived themselves as learners and also more generally, and vocational education and training was typically the self-evident choice after compulsory education as attending general upper secondary education was seen something that would have been outside their abilities and as they saw themselves as learning-by-doing kind of people. Two thirds of the interviewed young adults had been or still were suffering from some form of mental illness. The onset of a physical and/or mental illness had significant effects on the life courses and educational paths as well as the future prospects of the young adults. In many cases they had to drop out of education or at least put their studies on hold for a considerable amount of time. Nearly half of the interviewed young adults were bullied at school, and many of them found that it had had severe effects on their life courses and self-perceptions. For the majority the consequences were drastic, such as onset of mental illness, dropping out of education, or loss of self-confidence and feelings of hopelessness.

Three general life course patterns were identified from the life stories of the young adults. The first pattern was characterised by a fairly stable life course that was interrupted by, for example, an onset of a mental illness or being severely bullied at school. However, these young adults were able to 'return to route' and continue to pursue their typically rather clear and realistic future aspirations. The second life course pattern is much more fragmented than the first one; problems start earlier or are more severe, and this pattern is characterised by dropping out of education at least once, but often more times. Future aspirations are unclear or not very realistic with regard to their abilities or available resources. The third life course pattern is less common in the sample than the two previous ones. Characteristic for this pattern is that the starting point for life is very good. Relationships with family and friend are close, there is lot of available support, learning is enjoyable and achievement high. Further study aspirations after general upper secondary school are very ambitious, but despite several attempts they do not get accepted to the desired study programme. Failing to gain access to education despite previous success at school together with other taxing circumstances leads to an onset of severe mental health problems and to a more drastic interruption in the life course. These life course patterns of the young adults in vulnerable situations show that they come from many different backgrounds and have many different types of challenges, which implies that they all do not necessarily benefit from same types of support.

With regard to their life projects and future expectations, especially in relation to education and work, roughly half of the interviewed young adults had rather clear and realistic goals while the other half was more or less struggling with trying to figure out what it is that they would like and be able to do in the future. For most of the young adults things like employability after graduation or the typical wage level in the occupational field were of very little relevance. Occupational aspirations were typically based on hopes of having a meaningful and personally fulfilling job that would be nice to go to every day. Despite their already fragmented life courses, the majority of young adults interviewed in this study were planning their future based on the culturally constructed model of 'the normal life course'. They had rather normative and conventional understanding of adulthood despite the accumulating challenges and the vulnerable situations they were living in. Typically their view of their life in ten years time included having a meaningful and steady job, an apartment or house of their own, and a spouse – perhaps children as well. One important finding was that the regional opportunity structures were not really reflected on the young adults' perceived and planned life projects, even though the polarisation of regional opportunity structures was very much highlighted by the interviewed national level experts. Generally speaking, despite

the different living conditions, young adults in both functional regions had a rather positive and confident outlook on life.

1. Introduction

The **Work Package 5 – Qualitative Analysis** of the *Young Adults* project aims to, as stated in the WP5 Proposal, explore the impact of Lifelong Learning policies on young adults (hereafter WP5, YA project, and LLL policies). It analyses also the place of formal and informal learning in youth life projects, investigates potential barriers the policies may omit and the potential conflicts they may cause or exacerbate, and outlines the mechanisms for policies to become effective by analysing the perspectives and perceptions of young adults and a variety of regional and national experts. Following these guidelines, this Finnish national report has a two-fold goal. Firstly, it assess the interaction that LLL policies, young adults' living conditions, as well as both country and region specific contexts have in promoting growth and social inclusion. This is done by analysing 13 interviews conducted with regional and national experts. Secondly, it explores young adults' perceptions of the social expectations that underlie the policies and initiatives, competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings, as well as the complementarity of policies, local contexts, living conditions, and individual life projects and styles. The means to this end are analyses of 17 interviews conducted with young adults living in two very different regions of Finland.

Finland consists of 19 regions of which two contrasting ones were chosen for further analysis and comparison: Southwest Finland representing the urban and marine southwest, and Kainuu, which represents the rural northeast by the Russian border (Figure 1). With regard to the NUTS2 level, Southwest Finland belongs to South Finland, and Kainuu to North and East Finland. The two functional regions differ significantly from each other in terms of both socio-demographic features and the educational and labour market opportunities available for young adults (Rinne et al., 2016; 2017; Silvennoinen et al. 2017).

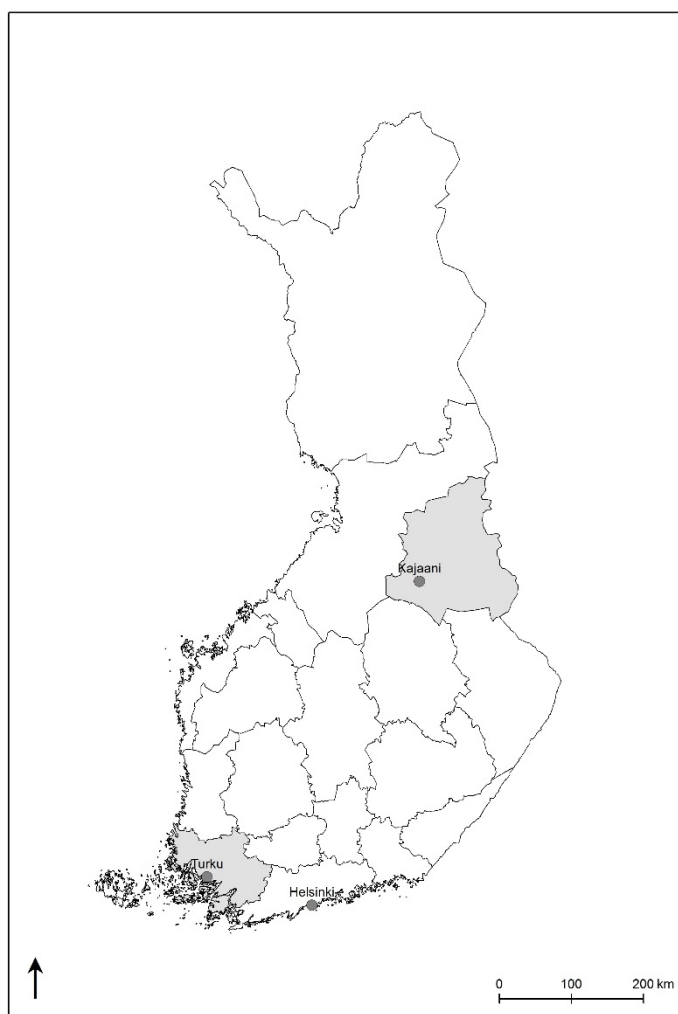


Figure 1. Southwest Finland and Kainuu (source: Maanmittauslaitos, 2016)

1.1 The Functional Regions and Young Adults' Living Conditions

Southwest Finland (Figure 2) consists of 27 municipalities and it is located by the coast of the Archipelago Sea. While Southwest Finland encompasses mainly urban and marine areas, the region includes also some rural parts. Southwest Finland has a population of around 473,000 inhabitants, which makes it the third largest region in Finland. The capital city of the region is Turku, which, with a total population of around 186,000, is currently the sixth biggest city in Finland. Turku is surrounded by smaller towns some of which are rather wealthy and from which many people commute to Turku for work or study. Southwest Finland is the second largest economic area in Finland with strong links to the Stockholm business area. The main industries of the region are marine industry and metal construction. However, over the past few decades, the traditional industries have been complemented by the growing service sector. Southwest Finland is also a strong educational region with 75 post-compulsory educational institutions, two universities, and four universities of applied sciences. (Regional Council of Southwest Finland, 2010; 2014; Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, 2013.)

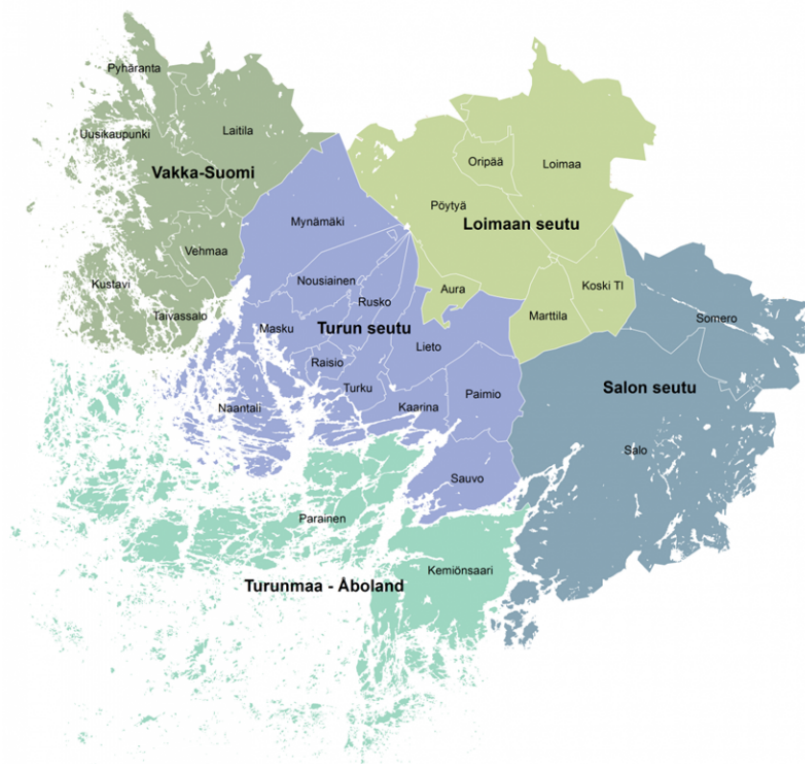


Figure 2. Map of Southwest Finland (source: Regional Council of Southwest Finland)

Kainuu (Figure 3) consists of eight municipalities, which are primarily rural. The region is located in northern Finland, and while it is larger in terms of acreage (Kainuu is roughly the size of Belgium) than Southwest Finland, it is much more sparsely populated. The population of Kainuu is around 75,000, which makes it the second smallest region in mainland Finland. The capital city of the region is Kajaani, which is the only municipality of the region that can be described as mainly urban. However, with its 38,000 inhabitants, Kajaani is notably small for a region's capital city. Compared to Southwest Finland, there are much fewer post-

compulsory educational opportunities in Kainuu; there are no universities (however, a separate unit of the University of Oulu is located in Kajaani) and only one university of applied sciences. Altogether, there are 21 post-compulsory educational institutions in the region. The young people living in Kainuu are, in many cases, forced to leave their home towns due to the scarcity of educational opportunities in the region. (Regional Council of Kainuu, 2015; 2016; Kainuu Social Welfare and Health Care Joint Authority, 2014.) Southwest Finland on the other hand, and Turku in particular, is an attractive area for youth and young adults to live in due to its versatile educational offerings.



Figure 3. Map of Kainuu (source: Regional Council of Kainuu)

As mentioned above, the two functional regions Southwest Finland and Kainuu are located in the opposite 'sides' of Finland and they are defined by quite different realities and future prospects for young people. The general trend since the 1960s' has been the concentration of population in the southern parts of the country whereas the northern and eastern parts are becoming more and more sparsely populated because people living in northern and eastern Finland tend to move to southern cities after completing compulsory or upper secondary education. Thus, despite some immigration, northern and eastern parts of Finland have been losing population. In the period from 2005 to 2015, this has especially been the case in the segment of young adults and the working age population more generally. With regard to the functional regions, in Kainuu, the population growth rate is negative and the dependency ratio is much higher when compared to Southwest Finland or the whole country on average. Southwest Finland, in turn, is a wealthier region with a growing population and more versatile life opportunities available for young adults. It is also a more multicultural region than Kainuu, where the share of immigrants is considerably lower.

In terms of educational attainment, there are clear differences between Southwest Finland and Kainuu. In Finland, on average 34 percent of the female population has completed ISCED 5–8 level of education, whereas only 26 percent of men have attained the respective educational level. The share is about the same in Southwest Finland, while in Kainuu the percentage for ISCED 5–8 level education is 27 for women and 20 for men, which is clearly lower than the national average. The majority of young adults in Kainuu attain ISCED 3–4 level education, but the growing percentage of people whose highest attained education is at this level has, however, come at the expense of higher educational level attainment. In Kainuu, the share of young adults having only ISCED 0–2 level education has decreased

during the past ten years and was about ten percent in 2015. In Southwest Finland, the share of the respective group has increased since 2008.

Southwest Finland recovered from the economic depression of the 1990's earlier than Finland on average, not to talk about Kainuu where the size of the labour force has been decreasing for the whole period. In Southwest Finland, the employment has been at a higher level than in Finland on average whereas the employment rate in Kainuu has decreased quite dramatically within the past decades being now only about 70 percent of the level it was in the beginning of the 1990's, a level much lower than the Finnish average. The risk of poverty and social exclusion has grown bigger especially in northern and eastern regions of Finland, and in certain regions of the country, including Kainuu, getting a job without work experience and vocational training is practically non-existent. The share of NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) youth is bigger in the NUTS2 level region North and East Finland than in the region South Finland or in Finland on average.

1.2 LLL Policies in the Functional Regions

In Southwest Finland, many of the LLL policies are governed by a number of different educational project coordinating institutions and education institutes. The majority of the projects are organised by the City of Turku but also, for example, the cities of Raisio and Salo are collaborating on different projects. It can be argued that the planning for future has been quite active in this region: there is a clear strategic plan for organising education in Southwest Finland as well as a plan that focuses specifically on young adults' transition from education into the labour market. At least on a rhetorical level, the importance of these transitions is strongly emphasised in different policy documents. Social exclusion or marginalisation of youth and young adults is seen as a major threat at an individual level, but also as a severe financial and social problem for the society. Many municipalities of the region collaborate with each other intensively. However, it is also noteworthy that some of the smaller municipalities are completely missing from the large-scale projects. Southwest Finland has a high number of educational organisations, and they work in cooperation in LLL policy projects many of which are funded by the EU.

Overall, it can be argued that the three policy sectors relevant for the YA project, i.e. labour market policy (LMP), education policy (EP), and youth and social policy (YSP), are well covered in the LLL policies in Southwest Finland, and that the emphasis on youth is considerable. Many of the LLL policy measures of the region focus on youth and young adults who need educational support, qualifications, and personal guidance in order to become employable and reach the labour market. The focus of the policies and policy measures is often on learning of the individuals; for example, there are plenty of different educational guidance services available for young adults in the region. The target groups for these services are typically young immigrants, youth and young adults who need special support, but also young entrepreneurs who need instructions and advice on how to run their businesses and young adults with higher education certificates facing problems finding employment.

In the Kainuu functional region, the LLL policies are fairly well organised and different institutions and actors work in collaboration within region. This is not made only possible but also necessary by the fact that there is a rather limited amount of resources to be used for this purpose in the region, and there are only a relatively small number of people living in an area that is large in acreage. In the Kainuu welfare plan for children and young people, the

fact that the region's children and young people are in poorer health than the rest of the country on average is highlighted as a major challenge. Education's effect on well-being is emphasised, so one of the region's main goals is to reduce the number of young people left outside active measures while implementing the Youth Guarantee. Most of the LLL policy actors work or provide their services in more than one of the region's municipalities, although many actors work mainly in and from Kajaani, which is the capital of the region.

Out of the three policy fields central for the YA project, YSP sector is best represented in the (concrete) LLL policies in the Kainuu region. There are also several policies that can be categorised as belonging to the LMP sector. However, in the mapping process of Kainuu's LLL policies targeted at young adults, only one policy measure oriented clearly towards the EP sector emerged (although its goals include also improving general life management skills and reducing social exclusion, which are typical goals for YSP). While goals and objectives related to educational policy are, of course, taken into account in many of the youth and social policy documents and measures, as well as in more general policy plans and programmes, it seems to be that educational policy objectives are in almost all the cases subsumed in more 'comprehensive' LLL policies in this region.

One factor behind the absence of a larger number of LLL policies in the EP field is that there is only one major institution in the region that provides vocational education and training (VET) in the municipalities, so it seems to be also the only relevant actor when it comes to executing more concrete educational LLL policies with regard to the target group of the YA project. One reason behind this could be that VET is likely to be a more realistic and desired choice compared to general upper secondary education for most of the young adults in vulnerable situations, so the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences and the general upper secondary schools of the municipalities are not targeting their resources to cater to the needs of this group of young adults. The dominance of policies leaning towards the YSP sector can be explained also by the urgent need for these types of measures 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 whole country.

The six selected LLL policy measures, three from both of the functional regions, include policies from all the three policy fields central for the YA project. From Southwest Finland, the selected policy measures are:

- 1) **On-the-job learning workshop** of a VET institution that provides support for the students who have difficulties in finding a suitable company for the on-the-job learning periods and in completing the periods (LMP)
- 2) **Arrears workshop** of a VET institution providing students with support for completing unfinished study tasks and improving learning skills (EP)
- 3) **Low-threshold guidance centre** bringing together different services aimed at youth and young adults; part of Regional Youth Services (YSP)

From Kainuu, the following measures were selected:

- 1) **Coaching and rehabilitation service**, which has its main focus on employability and work life skills, and is targeted at unemployed young adults who are having difficulties in finding employment or a suitable study place, or facing a high risk of social exclusion; out-sourced services for public employment and social policy institutions (LMP)

- 2) **Preparatory training for VET** of a VET institution aimed at youth and young adults who have no study place after completing comprehensive schooling and young adults who need support to improve their learning capacity before enrolling to VET (EP)
- 3) **Low-threshold guidance centre** bringing together different services aimed at youth and young adults; under the administration of municipality's Employment Services Centre (YSP)

These policy measures are presented in more detail in Chapter 3 *Analysis of the Expert Interviews* of this report.

2. Data Collection, Treatment, and Analysis

The data utilised in this national report include ten interviews of regional experts, three interviews of national level experts, and 17 interviews of young adults living in the functional regions Southwest Finland and Kainuu. The data were collected within a three-month period in the spring of 2017.

2.1 Sampling

As mentioned earlier, the regions selected from Finland are two very contrasting cases with Southwest Finland representing the urban and marine southwest, and Kainuu the rural and peripheral northeast, and one concrete LLL policy measure was chosen from each of the three relevant LLL policy fields (LMP, EP, and YSP) in both of the functional regions. The goal was to select measures, which were clearly aimed at the target group of the YA project, had a long-term orientation, were on-going at the time of the YA project's data collection, were part of a wider cooperation network of relevant actors in the region, and provided a sufficient amount of information about their aims, implementation, and evaluation (policy documents, websites, reports and so forth).

Expert Sample

Both managers and street-level experts were interviewed from each LLL policy measure with the exception of the two EP measures from which only a manager was interviewed in Kainuu and only a street-level professional in Southwest Finland. The relevance of the managers and street-level professionals stems from their ability to provide the YA project with an understanding of the regions' situation with regard to young adults' life courses, skills, vulnerabilities, and living conditions. They are also able to give insights with regard to the challenges characteristic to the functional region in question, and to how the different policies and programmes meet the needs of the young adults living in the functional regions.

In addition to the aforementioned regional experts, three national level experts (one from each LLL policy field) were also included in the sample due to the high relevance of the national LLL policies in the Finnish context. The details of the Finnish expert sample are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Expert sample in Finland

Position and LLL policy field	Southwest Finland	Kainuu	National level
Manager (K)/street-level (SF), Education policy	1	1	1

Manager and street-level expert, Youth and social policy	2	2	1
Manager and street-level expert, Labour market policy	2	2	1
TOTAL	5	5	3

Note: National level experts are in a managerial position

Young Adult Sample

The young adult interviewees were, when possible, selected from the same LLL policy measures as the expert interviewees. In both of the functional regions, the interviewed experts helped enormously with the young adult interviews by contacting the young adults, informing them about the YA project and its goals, arranging interview times, and providing suitable spaces to conduct the interviews.

Deviations from the Sampling Plan

Gender was taken account in the sampling of young adults, but initially the aim was to base the sampling also on ethnicity. However, there were no LLL policy participants with immigrant background who would have been willing to participate in the study in either of the functional regions. In addition, no drop-outs of the policy measures, who were also intended to be included in the sample in the sampling plan, were reached in the process of finding young adults to participate in the study.

As can be seen from Table 2, finding participants from the LLL policy measures in the EP and LMP fields in Southwest Finland was a struggle. In addition, there were also difficulties in finding participants from the selected YSP measure in that region. As mentioned above, the regional experts helped with contacting the young adults, but despite their utmost efforts only four young adults wanted initially to participate in the study. Some of the experts approached young adults personally, and, at the YSP measure, they also announced the possibility to participate publicly. According to these experts, some of the young adults did not show up despite initially agreeing to participate, some did not reply to experts' messages, and some declined to participate for one reason or another, such as shyness or overstrain. Because only a small number of young adults were reached through the chosen policy measures in Southwest Finland, another regional policy measures were contacted. Finally, a career planner of a youth workshop was able to find four young adults who were involved in the workshop and willing to take part in the study. In the youth workshop in question, young people can try their hand at some traditional handicraft work, while also receiving guidance from youth workers and a career planners in order to solve challenges of their everyday life. Due to these issues the YSP field is significantly over-represented in the Southwest Finland, which is the case with female interviewees as well. However, as the policy measures were meant to be mainly an access point to gain contact with the young adults, and as YSP significantly overlaps with the other two policy fields in Finland, the sample of young adults from the functional region Southwest Finland can be found sufficient with regard to the goals of this work package.

Table 2. Young adult sample in Finland

LLL Policy field	Southwest Finland	Kainuu
Education policy	1 male	2 female
Youth and social policy	4(+2) [*] female, 2 male	1 female, 2 male
Labour market policy	1 female	2 female, 2 male
TOTAL	8(+2)	9

Note: Two interviews (female interviewees from the YSP measure in Southwest Finland; Y_FI_SF_1 and Y_FI_SF_3) are excluded from the analysis because they are part of an 'oversample' and technically do not belong to the target group of the YA project as they are employed with employment aid/employment assistance in the policy measure.

2.2 Fieldwork Diary

Four researchers conducted the Finnish WP5 interviews: one in the functional region Kainuu, one in the functional region Southwest Finland, and two at the national level. The interview questions were translated from English to Finnish and fitted to the national context together with all the members of the Finnish research team. Only some minor modifications were made to the wording of the proposed interview questions for young adults and regional experts. With regard to the Finnish national level expert interviews, the questions proposed in the WP5 proposal were modified to suit the policy level (national instead of regional) and complemented with some of the interview questions relevant to the Finnish context.

The procedures of the regional expert and young adult interviews were discussed in detail on several occasions before conducting any of the interviews, and the two researchers working on the regional interviews shared their experiences throughout the interview process as did the two researchers working in cooperation with the national level expert interviews. The general interview guidelines and schedules provided in the WP5 proposal were followed carefully when possible. The deviations from the interview schedules occurred mainly in situations where the interviewee had already spontaneously answered to a question. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed into text, and anonymised following the YA project's instructions.

The details of the interviews with regional and national experts are presented in Appendix 1, and the details of the young adult interviews in Appendix 2. Generally, the experts were happy to participate in the study and talked freely from their positions. The overall quality of the expert interviews is good as they were mostly very informative and covered the topics detailed in the interview instructions. The majority of the experts had a long work experience in their respective fields and were, thus, able to reflect on the changes that had taken place in those fields. With regard to the young adult interviews, the spontaneous life stories were quite short in the majority of the cases but the internal interview questions were answered mostly at length. Overall, most of the interviewed young adults were happy to talk about and reflect their lives and experiences openly and in detail. In some of the interviews, there were clearly topics that the interviewee did not want to address, which was, of course, respected. The overall quality of the young adult interviews is good.

2.3 Analysis

Here, the analysis processes of the Finnish regional and national LLL policy expert interviews as well as young adult interviews are shortly presented. NVivo 11 software was used for coding of all the interviews. The codes suggested in the WP5 Proposal were taken into account, but when other issues not included in the suggestions emerged from the data, new codes were added.

Analysis Process of the Expert Interviews

As proposed in the Coding and Reporting Guidelines, the first step of the analysis process was reading the interview transcripts several times and writing analytic interview summaries of them, although the initial coding round was done parallel with writing the summaries as it helped to cover all the themes to be included in the summaries. The coding process included several rounds of coding as the initial codes were complemented with new ones, some codes were divided further to sub-codes, and the internal consistency of the coding across the interviews was checked.

The following codes were used in the regional expert interview analysis:

- Objectives, problems to be solved
- Target group
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Accountability
- Expected impacts
- Changes
 - *Previous changes*
 - *Foreseen changes*
 - *Desired changes*
- Cooperation
 - *Cooperation partners*
 - *Conflicts in cooperation*
- Effects on the region
- Emansipating and helping young adults
- Problems
 - *Internal problems*
 - *External problems*
- Interviewee

The national level expert interviews were coded with the following codes:

- Policy objectives
- Problems and challenges
- Policy evaluation
- Cooperation
- Perspectives on regions
- Other important notions

Analysis Process of the Young Adult Interviews

As with the expert interviews, the analysis of the young adult interviews started with reading the interview transcripts several times and writing analytic interview summaries of them. The second step of the analysis process included several rounds of re-reading and coding of the interview transcriptions. During this process, the initial codes were complemented with new ones, some codes were divided to sub-codes, and the internal consistency of the coding was evaluated.

The young adult interviews were coded with the following codes:

- Self
 - *Actor or re-actors*
 - *Dominant themes*
- Life story
 - *Causal explanations*
 - *Reasons for choices*
 - *Deviant behaviour*
 - *Educational trajectory*
 - *School experiences*
 - *Problems*
 - *Social relationships*
 - *Family*
 - *Parents' wishes for future*
- Future
 - *Concrete next steps*
 - *Ideal life, life project*
 - *Professional orientation*
- Policies
 - *Current policy*
 - *Previous policies*
 - *Own needs*
- Skills
 - *During the measure*
 - *Prior to the measure*
 - *Relation to future life*

3. Analysis of the Expert Interviews

In this chapter, the descriptive analysis of the six regional and three national level expert interviews is presented. The covered themes of the regional level analysis include, for example, objectives and impacts of LLL policy measures, construction of target groups, policy actors and their cooperation, policies' accountability, as well as the ways in which the policy measures take into account the living conditions of young adults, how they foster young adults' autonomy, and how they tackle wicked problems. Table 3 presents the policy fields and some central features of the six regional policy measures through which both the interviewed regional experts and majority of the young adults were contacted.

Table 3. The six regional LLL policy measures selected for analysis in Finland

Region	Southwest Finland			Kainuu		
Policy field	LMP	EP	YSP	LMP	EP	YSP
Measure	On-the-job learning workshop	Arrears workshop	Low-threshold guidance centre	Coaching and rehabilitation service	Preparatory training for VET	Low-threshold guidance centre
Directly based on a wider policy	Yes, regional policy project	No	Yes, national level policy	No	Yes, national level policy	Yes, national level policy
Main funders	The VET institution in question	The VET institution in question	ESF, the municipality	Municipalities, TE Office, KELA, SOTE	The VET institution in question	ESF, the municipality
Main focus/objectives	Rates of VET drop-out and completion, youth unemployment	Rates of VET drop-out and completion in target time	Youth unemployment, school drop-out; scattered nature of services	Youth unemployment, social exclusion	Rate of VET drop-out, social exclusion	Social exclusion; life course transitions
Approach	Improving students' working life and career management skills by using individually tailored support	Improving students' learning and life management skills by providing multi-professional support	Lowering the threshold for young people seeking their way to services by minimising bureaucracy and making	Providing individualised support for young people in their job-seeking and empowering them to take on	Improving students' learning and career management skills by flexibilisation of educational and	Taking a comprehensive approach to young people's life and providing tailored support for their

			services more flexible	more responsibility	learning practices	individual needs
Target group	All under 28-yr-olds students of the VET institution, especially special needs and immigrant students	All students of the VET institute	Youth and young adults under 30-yr-olds living in the municipality	Under 30-yr-olds with a vocational degree	School drop-outs, young immigrants, youth and young adults with poor study and learning skills	All under 30-yr-olds living in the region

Note: TE Office – the Employment and Economic Development Services, KELA – the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, SOTE – Kainuu Social Welfare and Health Care Joint Authority

With the national level expert interview analysis, the focus is on the policy objectives, main challenges and problems in the policy field, cooperation with other policy actors, and perspectives the national level experts have on regional issues.

3.1 Antecedents and Objectives

Here, the focus is on the objectives of the regional LLL policy measures as well as on the impacts that are expected from the policy measures according to the interviewed experts. Firstly, however, the ways in which the services, now provided by the policy measures under analysis, have been organised before is examined.

Antecedents of the Policies

All the six regional LLL policy measures had antecedents in a sense that the services they provide had been previously available in some different kind of form. Two different general types of predecessors can be recognised. In three cases, the service in question had been provided by the same institution but it had been re-focused, re-organised, and/or ‘centralised’ to its current form. For example, the *Arrears workshop* for providing support for completing unfinished study tasks as well as for learning and studying more generally (EP, Southwest Finland) was preceded by remedial instruction given to the students by their vocational teachers, but to improve the efficiency and coverage (it can be assumed that not all teachers had the same amount of time, resources, or interest to provide additional support for their students), the *Arrears workshop* was set up as a part of the special needs education of the VET institution so that this type of support would be available for all students, and that it would be possible to provide more in-depth support for those in need with special needs teachers’ participation. Another example of this ‘antecedent type’ is the policy measure in the field of LMP in Kainuu, which is a *Coaching and rehabilitation service* providing, for example, a workshop for individualised support in job-seeking to young adults with vocational certificates. Previously, this type of coaching service was offered to under ten young adults per year, and the service was rather unfocused and not well-organised. The current workshop was developed on that basis in cooperation with the regional employment agency, but with a much clearer focus and goals, as well as greater volume with regard to the number of participants.

“Perhaps it was more that teachers provided remedial teaching. But we have started to focus on the workshop activities, so there is less remedial teaching offered by individual teachers.” Expert, EP, Southwest Finland

“Yes, apparently on some level there have been about ten customers per year, maybe even less, to whom we have offered this workstart type of service, but now it is done properly with a higher volume and clear goals. Then there is the co-operation system with the regional employment agency, which has become a lot stronger and clearer.”
Expert, LMP, Kainuu

The second type of predecessors of the policy measures is that the same services had been provided before by several different actors, institutions, and/or projects, and, in the current LLL policy measure, these different services and service providers have been brought together in order to improve both the efficiency of the services and their accessibility for young adults. A good example of this is the *Low-threshold guidance centre* for youth and young adults in Southwest Finland, where representatives of different organisations provide their services, which are mainly, but not only, related to education and employment.

“Previously they have been perhaps more scattered. Now that these have been combined into one work community, the idea has been that these service processes would become quicker and more easily approachable for the young people, that there would be a familiar place where they could get comprehensive services, so that it wouldn’t be like, first you go here [district] and meet someone. And they talk about employment contracts. And then they send you there [another district] and... So the system would be customer-oriented in that sense, it is probably the main point here.”
Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

Policy Objectives

The objectives of the six regional LLL policy measures, which are presented in Table 3 in the beginning of this chapter, include reducing youth unemployment, tackling social exclusion of young adults, increasing the rate of VET completion and, respectively, reducing the number of VET (and other school) drop-outs. Also several ‘intermediate’ or ‘half-way’ objectives or goals were mentioned in the regional expert interviews, such as empowering young adults, improving their functional abilities and self-confidence, facilitating civic participation, and teaching them life management, study, and social skills.

“I mean everyone has difficulties in admitting their own problems and challenges in life. And when you talk and talk and talk about them, they become something you don’t have to be ashamed of. (---) Finding them and talking about them has in a way influenced the fact that this young person finds it easier to accept themselves and get experiences of success and so on. So that all kinds of support and help are incredibly important there.” Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

“Here the young person has an opportunity to think. For starters, many have a chance to get control of their lives, because we have these school drop-outs and underachievers who have skived off through comprehensive school or haven’t found their own right place. So for them this is the right place, because here they have a year to think [about choosing a field of vocational education].” Expert, EP, Kainuu

Reducing youth unemployment and VET drop-out rates were the most common objectives as one or both of them were mentioned in the interviews as central objectives in five of the six LLL policy measures. The only measure that does not have either one of them as a clear key objective, the *Low-threshold guidance centre* in Kainuu, targets many of its services to young

adults in such challenging situations that participation in education or the labour market is not realistic for them in the near future.

“Our goal is to solve how to activate young people, to wake them up and get them motivated about their own lives, whether it is a case of going to school or work or rehabilitation, or strengthening their self-esteem. Our objective here is to solve these problems that young people have. (---)I feel like we are pulling these young people away from social exclusion, and it is no longer a question of preventive work. Especially now, these young people have in their own words been socially excluded for a long time, but maybe we can prevent them from winding up institutionalised.” Expert, YSP, Kainuu

It is noteworthy that tackling social exclusion of young adults was mentioned explicitly as a key objective of the policy measures only in the interviews with the experts in the functional region Kainuu. This is, of course, not to say that there are no LLL policy measures focusing on this issue in Southwest Finland, but in the interviews with the five experts from the three selected policy measures of Southwest Finland, social exclusion was shortly referred to, but in no way stressed or highlighted, only by the two experts of the *On-the-job learning workshop* (LMP). This difference in the regional LLL policy emphasis is the most evident in the field of YSP as the two regional policy measures (the *Low-threshold guidance centres*) derive from the same national level LLL policy (the Youth Guarantee), but have still rather different key focuses: youth unemployment and school drop-out in Southwest Finland, and social exclusion and life course transitions in Kainuu. While this could be seen as an oversimplification of the situation as, for example, the YSP policy measure in Kainuu has also some services related to employment and education, on the level of the most central policy objectives, the difference is clear and it highlights the discrepancies in the socio-economic structures and living conditions of youth and young adults in the two contrasting functional regions. It can be argued that the YSP policy measure in Southwest Finland leans rather heavily towards the LMP and EP fields, whereas the YPS policy measure in Kainuu focuses more on the functional abilities and overall wellbeing of the young adults being a more ‘social’ social policy.

However, it is very important to stress the fact that all the ten interviewed experts from each of the six regional policy measures talked rather at length about the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults participating in the measures by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. In addition to acknowledging the existence of these factors, all the policy measures address them either by providing individualised support for the young adults themselves or by finding other service providers (mostly public or third sector actors or other policy projects) that have available the forms of support that suit the needs of the young adults. The logic behind this kind of an approach is, according to the expert interviewees, that young adults have to reach a certain level of functional abilities, skills, as well as physical and mental wellbeing in order to be a situation where the main goal of the policy measure, such as successfully completing VET or entering the labour market, can be reached. The following excerpts from the interviews with three experts from Southwest Finland provide examples of this.

“The educational guidance and study support and finding a job have definitely been the central themes. But now there are these pop-up operators, and we have noticed that these problems tend to pile up in a sense, as there may be examples where a young person has come here to apply for a job. And they have ended up using a sex

therapist's services. And it has been discovered that getting a job may be dependent on some part of their own sexual identity, and that there is so much stress there that the job is not a priority." Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

"There are many things related to on-the-job learning and employment. For example, if on-the-job learning isn't going well or you can't find a place there, or you have many challenges with working life, then we might think that this person may have problems with life management in general, because these things go hand in hand. In these cases they may need more extensive support and we can be in contact with different parties. So if a worklife coach sees that a student is facing a huge amount of different challenges, for example, regarding their health, they will certainly guide the student forward to see a public health nurse or a social worker. Or if it comes up that they have challenges at home or something, then of course we will start to work things out; there is no way the student is ready to enter working life if he or she is facing a ton of challenges." Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

"And we can make some more extensive agreements, like sometimes I may go out with a young person to take care of something if I feel that it would be beneficial for them, which in turn contributes to the matter of on-the-job learning. So in these situations I feel like we should just act, we can't close our eyes and say that this workshop is meant for this one thing alone. So yes, it is comprehensive, we take care of things." Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

Expected impacts

The impacts that are expected from the LLL policy measures vary based mostly on their policy fields, objectives, and approaches (see Table 3). With regard to the *Coaching and rehabilitation service* in Kainuu and the *On-the-job learning workshop* in Southwest Finland (both LMP), the expected impacts are related to reducing youth unemployment and the number of NEETs in the region, and increasing the rate of VET participation and completion. For the *Preparatory training for VET* (EP, Kainuu) the expectations include for the young adults to find a suitable vocational field and to successfully enroll into a 'regular' study programme in the VET institution. The interviewee mentioned that they are also expected to catch the students who drop out from the different study programmes of the institution. In Southwest Finland, the *Arrears workshop* (EP) is expected to have a positive impact on students' timely progression through and completion of studies. Decreasing the number of students dropping out of VET is also a central expectation for the policy.

"Well, they expect that when young people come to us we get them sorted out, and when they leave they will have a profession and a job." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

"Well, probably that the trainees would find their own field and get a place in basic education as students in that field. Or working life. Or apprenticeship, these are the options that we have. (---) Perhaps also that there would be a place for these drop-outs, so they wouldn't become marginalised." Expert, EP, Kainuu

The experts of the two regional YSP field policy measures, which derive from the same national level policy, the Youth Guarantee, see the expectations for impact in a somewhat different light. When asked about the issue, the experts in Kainuu approached it from the viewpoint of the young adults and the services being provided, while the experts in Southwest Finland took the funders (ESF, the municipality) and municipal employment

official's perspectives as can be seen from the interview excerpts below. However, there are also similarities as one shared expectation is to have a positive effect on youth employment in the municipality or the region, although it is clearly a more central one for the measure in Southwest Finland.

"The funders have their own expectations for results, and they have the actual numbers of starting and finishing customers that they require. And the Employment Committee of the city is of course expecting us to have a positive impact on youth employment, and they are constantly monitoring the numbers we employ with the city employment appropriation. They monitor how much goes to rehabilitative work activities, and how many people we get off from the black list." Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

"That we would have as few young people as possible outside services, so that they would get the services they need. Then again, if we think about reducing for instance long-term unemployment, our goals include that we wouldn't have unemployed young people, or at least that there would be fewer of them, and that we could work with education institutions to support the youth so that there wouldn't be these negative differences at schools or education institutions. And that young people would get an occupation and finish comprehensive school and continue on the next path." Expert, YSP, Kainuu

3.2 Target Groups

The target group of the *Arrears workshop* (Southwest Finland, EP) consists of all the students of the VET institution providing the measures, which reflects its role as part of the special needs education of the institution. The *On-the-job learning workshop* (Southwest Finland, LMP) has a similar target group, but it focuses especially on special needs and immigrant students, and it has excluded adult students (over 27-years-olds) from its target group, although the age limit is not always strictly followed. The definition of this target group (and the whole policy measure) stems from a wider-scale employment policy project, which was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture, executed by a network formed by several educational organisations and foundations of the Southwest Finland region, focused on youth and young adults, and aimed to develop work-based learning and guidance for students with different educational needs, and to diversify the work-based learning methods. In these two cases, vocational teachers, special needs teachers, and guidance counsellors are typically the ones who guide students to these services, but students can contact and enter the workshops themselves.

"We defined the age range for the project at the time (---) the age limit was about 27, so that we didn't include adult learners in this project. And I still don't have in a way, but the limit is a bit vague, because of course we help those who need it. I have had people of all ages there. But for the most part it is the young people." Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

"Well, I feel that for the young people it is mostly a question of teachers or student counsellors or special education teachers noticing that hey, you are missing this and this, and then they guide you onwards. Whereas many adults may be more independent and notice it themselves. If they for example don't understand medical calculations, they want to attend the Arrears workshop to learn more." Expert, EP, Southwest Finland

The third measure that is provided within and by a VET institution is the *Preparatory training for VET* (Kainuu, EP), which is based on the Government's Vocational Education and Training Act. The Act states that the primary target group of the preparatory training includes youth and young adults who have a comprehensive school certificate and need help with strengthening their study skills, and guidance and support in selecting a vocational field and profession. Young people with special educational needs, immigrant background, and those who are not in education for a variety of different reasons belong to the target group according to the national policy. At the regional level, those students who drop out from the different study programmes of the VET institution form a significant target group.

"This is meant for young people who have completed comprehensive education but don't have a study place, and also for young people with immigrant background who do not yet have strong enough language skills to study. And we have also had students (-- -) who have been at home, who have at one point started a line and then interrupted the studies, so that they don't have an upper secondary degree. And also for those who drop out from the lines. For example in Kainuu everyone gets into upper secondary education. Those who get into their fifth or third option and are not so happy about it usually drop out during the autumn term and then we catch them; so for all of them." Expert, EP, Kainuu

The target groups of the different workshops available in the *Coaching and rehabilitation service* (LMP, Kainuu) include young adults who need individually tailored, mostly long-term support to be able to participate in education and the labour market, as well as young adults who have a vocational degree and motivation to find employment but need short-term help in job-seeking. Many of the workshops are out-sourced services of the regional TE Office (the Employment and Economic Development Services), KELA (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland), and the Kainuu SOTE (Social Welfare and Health Care Joint Authority); in the latter case, the services are implemented and participants selected in collaboration with the Kainuu Central Hospital. The target groups of the out-sourced services are defined by or together with the buyer. The ways in which the young adults enter the services vary; for example, the TE Office offers young adult the possibility to participate in its out-sourced service, while participation in the out-sourced services of KELA requires a doctor's statement describing how one's health impacts their work capacity and occupational choices. Within the *Coaching and rehabilitation service*, participant can transfer from one workshop to another depending on their needs and functional abilities in a flexible way.

"And we can say that when it comes to young people, something can be found for everyone. Some young people have an occupation, but haven't been able to find employment, then there's others who don't have an occupation and can't seem to find their own place, and we can offer something to everyone. And another positive thing we have here is that we have been able to chain these services. For example, psychiatric rehabilitation is a long process, where people need a longer path to move to working life. (---) And many times the first stage consists of KELA services, or it is noticed at some Startti training [period for analysing the functional capability needed for working] that this person requires more support; then we transfer them to our different services." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

The two *Low-threshold guidance centres* (YSP) have fairly straightforward target groups: all the youth and young adults under 30-years-old living in the municipality (Southwest Finland) or the region (Kainuu). The age limits are defined the ESF and the Government's Youth Act.

“But we have an extensive target group, as it is under 30. We have these 15-year-old sneaker dudes and then those who may already have a university degree and kids, who have been in working life and have experience.” Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

“This house is for all young people. You don’t have to have the Donald Duck type black clouds above your head with lightning bolts, but you can come here in both joy and sadness; it can be a so-called light and nice matter of, for example, asking for help to do an internship abroad and finding out what you need for it.” Expert, YSP, Kainuu

3.3 Actors, Cooperation, and Coordination

Figures 4 and 5 present the private, public, and third sector actors that are the cooperation partners of the LLL policy measures in Southwest Finland and Kainuu according to the expert interviewees. The red, blue, and green ‘policy measure boxes’ include both a concrete measure and its wider context (e.g. the VET institution or the Regional Youth Services) when relevant, as well as the services within them. The purpose of the colours of the lines indicating cooperation relationships between the measures and policy actors is to aid interpretability, and the lines indicate two-way relationships. The positioning of the actors (‘boxes’) in the figure does not indicate hierarchical relations or positions between the different actors and institutions. The explanations of the abbreviations used in the figures are as follows: TE Office refers to the regional Employment and Economic Development Services, KELA is the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, Kainuu SOTE is the Kainuu Social Welfare and Health Care Joint Authority, TYP refers to the Multi-sectoral Joint Employment Service, ELY Centre is short for the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, AVI is the Regional State Administrative Agency, and VKK refers to the Insurance Rehabilitation Association of Finland.

The most typical cooperation partners are public welfare (especially mental health) services, local and regional employers, different employment administrators and services, and educational institutions, which may include comprehensive schools, VET institutions, vocational special education institution, general upper secondary schools, universities of applied sciences, adult education institutions, and universities. As can be seen from the figures, in total, the experts in Kainuu mentioned more cooperation partners than the experts in Southwest Finland. In both functional regions, it is the *Low-threshold guidance centre* (YSP) that has the largest cooperation network, which is understandable given their wide target groups with varying needs. It is also the YPS measures that have the most cooperation with different third sector actors.

The cooperation between the policy measures and other policy institutions and actors is typically coordinated and developed by using well-established, formal network collaboration with the other municipal and regional actors. Central goals of the network collaboration are in many cases to avoid redundant overlap in the services provided by the different actors and to try to make sure that there are no gaps in the service network through which a young person could fall through. This was emphasised especially in the interviews with the experts in the functional region Kainuu. In the everyday operations, a direct contact via email or phone with a designated liaison is the most common and effective way of smaller-scale coordination and communication.

“Our interaction with the TE Office is really direct, and we are in contact daily via e-mail or telephone. They only need to send us a message to say that there is a person to

whom we have presented your program and they will be in contact with you soon, and maybe give us some background information. That's all we need." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

The forms of collaboration vary significantly based mainly on the objective of the policy measure and the main mission of the partner. With regard to the private sector, cooperation with region's companies and employers includes mainly practical training, work-try-out, and on-the-job learning periods. The cooperation with public sector institutions and actors is typically related to education, employment, social security, as well as physical and mental wellbeing of the young adults. The latter is also the main focus in collaboration with third sector actors.

"It's about co-operation, where a partner contacts us and then a young person is directed to the workshop. After that we take care of the young person's business together, make plans, and just make concrete observations of how they are doing. Have they been to their appointments, have they been able to commit, how things have gone. In these cases we have meetings with the official and the young person to discuss their matters and think about how to continue. We try to figure whether this Startti workshop is still the right place or should the person be already moved somewhere else. So most typically we have this kind of network meetings." Expert, YSP, Kainuu

In both of the functional regions and in all the policy measures, cooperation with individual actors and collaboration networks is seen essential but, especially the latter, also as a challenging way of working.

"I feel that cooperation is essential to take the students' studies forward; there are so many different fields and studies that it requires close cooperation to keep up with how someone's studies are going, and I for one feel that cooperation is mutually crucial." Expert, EP, Southwest Finland

"Network co-operation is probably one of the most challenging work forms. (---) With regard to networks, the important things include managing the network, the turnover of people, and then the information flow about what we are doing. The network must be serviced all the time. And also the people, many of the people in the network go through changes in their work forms, so you have to always be alert about what is going on. Network co-operation is like a living creature, like an amoeba, it lives and changes all the time." Expert, YSP, Kainuu

Keys to success

The interviewed policy experts attribute the successfulness of network cooperation to well-functioning collaboration networks, low level of bureaucracy, shared understanding between the cooperation partners of the roles, expectations, goals, and credit of success, as well as long-lasting, positive relationships with the individual members of the network. Many of the experts emphasised that the people working with youth and young adults in the municipality or region know each other well and have been working together in collaboration for many years, which, according to them, makes cooperation easy and efficient – at least as long as the intrapersonal relationships are positive and have 'good chemistry'. The organisational culture of the cooperation partners play an important role; if cooperation is not, for some reason, valued or facilitated within an organisation, it is reflected negatively on the network.

"The cooperation is made simple, and nobody is pushing to make the decisions. We see the benefits that result from the other party's work, and try to make things effortless. And this job is done on the personal level and not from behind an authority; we have people who work together, so if the chemistry is about right, it is easy to do things as a group, and when we have successes it's not an individual accomplishment. We did. It's much better. Our result together is this, along with this many young people. We have succeeded pretty well together." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

"Of course, when we have a long history of co-operation, we have certain companies that know that the students we send struggle with certain issues, and so they have learned to cope with these challenging students." Expert, EP, Kainuu

"When I came to work here it was pretty easy, because I had an existing network when we started doing this. In a way it was a merger of partners, everyone here knew each other. (---) I think our cooperation works because we have been forced to work together. We have mutual customers. And we do not compete with one another. Each of us has enough work in this, this is an enormous sector. There's plenty of work for everyone. If we think about what will benefit the customer, and consider this for a while, we make progress. (---) So we don't just dabble among ourselves here, but have common network meetings to find out what's best for our customers. Our operations are open and based on co-operation." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

Challenges in cooperation

According to the experts, there are several factors causing challenges to the cooperation with the other policy actors, such as finding time, informing the target group and relevant actors about the measure and its goals, finding a shared understanding of the individual young adults' functional abilities and realistic options in the near future, some public sector actors transferring their responsibilities to the measure, mental health professionals expecting a more 'therapeutic' approach from the measure than is its purpose, when a young adults does not allow their situation to be shared in the collaboration network or do not invite the measure's experts to the network (which is possible in some cases in which participation is voluntary and not based on a formal agreement), and employers' reluctance to take in young adults for on-the-job learning or practical training periods.

"Not all people are entering working life, and we, too, have struggled with the TE Office, because their idea is that after coming to us, the customer's next destination is working life. But for us, directing a customer to Kela rehabilitation services is an accomplishment for us; it means that their resources were not enough for working life and, instead, they need a rehabilitation period to get them started or some other treatment episodes in between. You have to take care of the basics before entering working life is even possible." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

"There haven't been any actual conflicts in the cooperation, but awareness requires a lot of work. We have been creating a whole new job description and it has taken a lot of work among teachers and perhaps also students to make everyone aware of what this service is all about, for what needs and whom it is meant, who can benefit from it and where does the guidance come from. In essence, who can direct you to the service and what type of students are the target group." Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

“At the moment, there is some kind of unwillingness in the air; companies can’t take on-the-job learners due to their own insufficient resources. This naturally varies between different fields, but sometimes companies say no. Of course, this social situation affects things, as well. There are no jobs even for those with qualifications and everything. People are laid off and reduced, which also has an impact here.” Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

In Kainuu, some of the experts mentioned that the Government’s forthcoming Reform on Regional Government, Health, and Social Services causes uncertainty about future roles of the collaboration partners as well as the allocation of resources, which brings challenges to the cooperation. In Southwest Finland, especially with regard to the YSP field measure, the experts felt that the discrepancies and conflicts between national and regional level policies caused significant challenges to the cooperation between them and some of the regional actors. In addition, the organisation level differences in budgets, organisation of operations, steepness of hierarchies, management models, and such make close cooperation rather difficult from the viewpoint of allocation of resources and division of work.

“There have been some changes at Kela, when some tasks were moved there from the health and social services. In Kainuu, the regional government is already handling the health and social services, or they were at the regional government and then came the reform of the Social and Health Care Joint Authority. And in municipalities we have the technical sector and education, but then the health and social services are again on the outside, which makes co-operation more difficult. In a way, we have already been living the life that is becoming reality for the rest of the state with the health and social services reform and the regional government reform. These different changes are happening all the time, and we must be aware of them. Plus we have to keep track of our partners there because their actions affect our operations, so you’ve got to be awake all the time.” Expert, YSP, Kainuu

“Well, sure, collaboration is going well at the level of our daily work with the customers, but when it comes to making structural decisions about, for example, the allocation of resources, time is often wasted, because all sectors have their own interests and the city reforms often conflict with the national one. We now have this national background project that steers these Ohjaamo guidance centres, and often it is in conflict with the city’s own interests.” Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

“It is kind of a problem that all of these people have their own bosses who breathe down on them and say what they must do and dictate their daily schedules. So not everything fits our work within the Ohjaamo guidance centre. These are matters for negotiation, and we always get demands from own teams and units. They can be very different; the government and the municipality have differences in their procedures, tasks and organisational models and even matters of authority.” Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

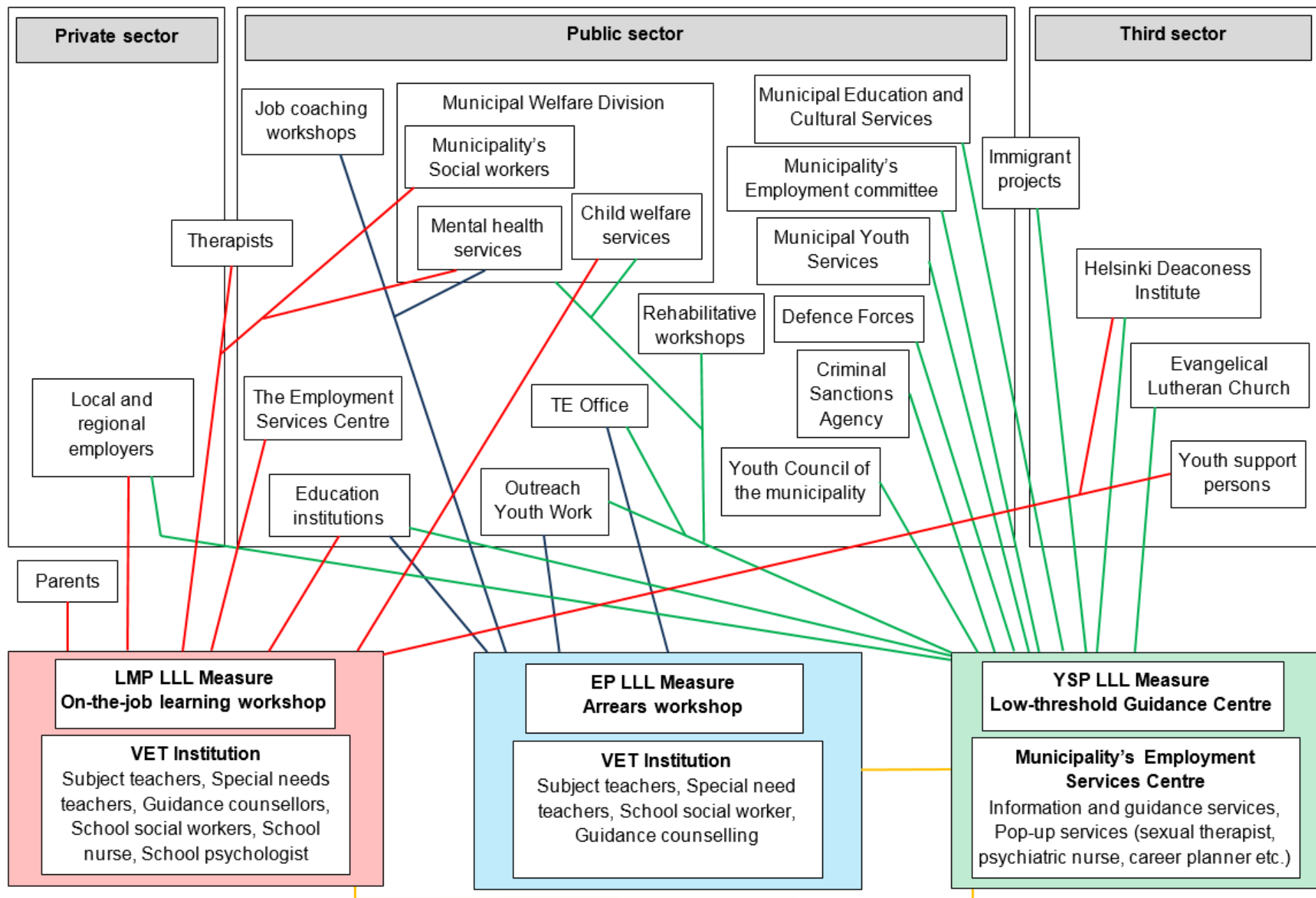


Figure 4. Cooperation in the functional region Southwest Finland according to the interviewed experts

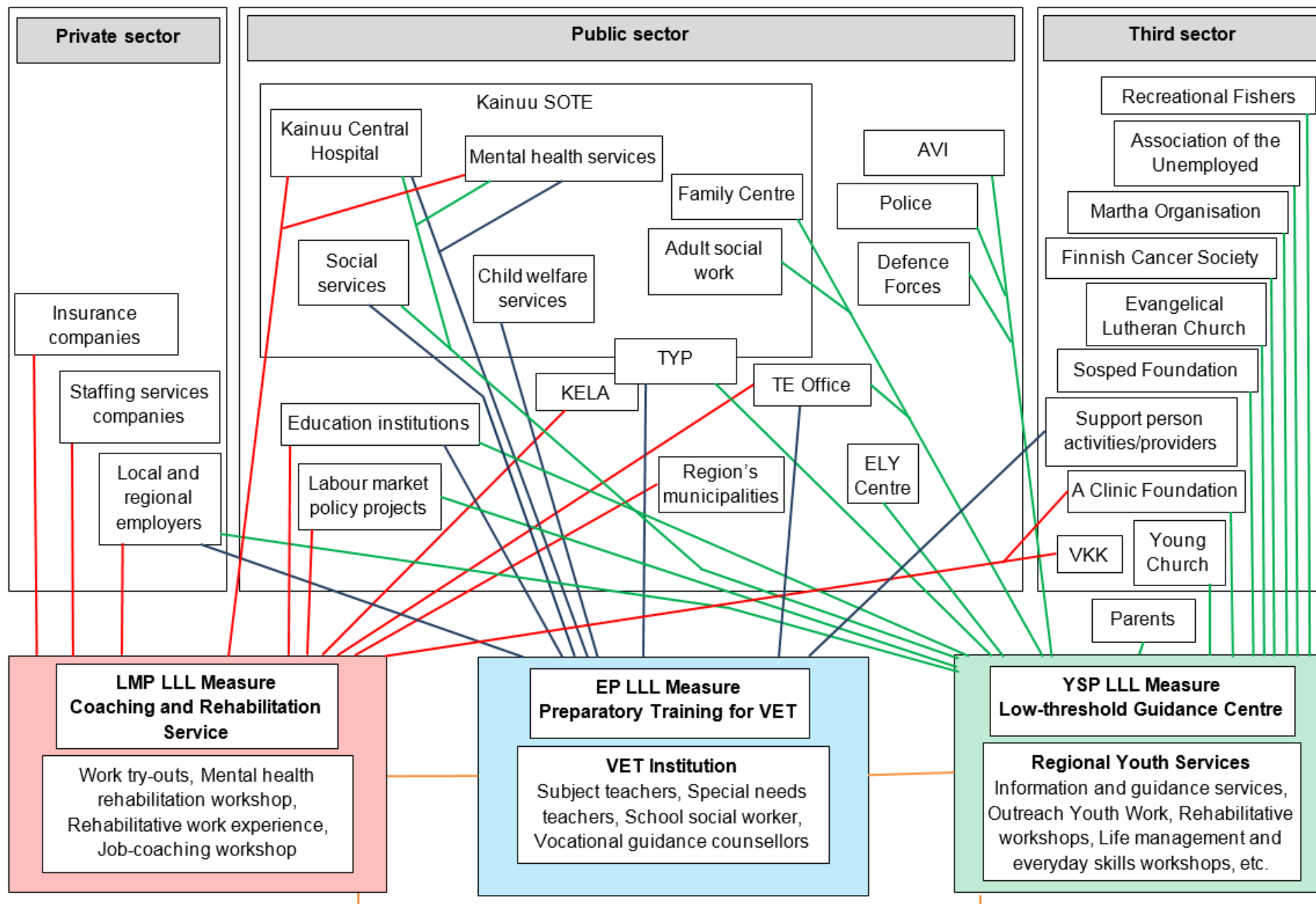


Figure 5. Cooperation in the functional region Kainuu according to the interviewed experts

3.4 Accountability and Evaluation

To put it simply, the six LLL policy measures are accountable to their funders to which majority of them also report about their participants and operations (the main funders are presented in Table 3 on page 13). The *Arrears workshop* (EP, Southwest Finland), *Preparatory training for VET* (EP, Kainuu), and *On-the-job learning workshop* (LMP, Southwest Finland) are part of VET institutions and, hence, their operations are monitored and evaluated by those institutions. The YSP field policies, the *Low-threshold guidance centres*, are under the administration of municipal Employment Services Centre (Southwest Finland) or regional Youth Services (Kainuu) to which they are, in addition to the ESF, accountable. The *Coaching and Rehabilitation service* (LMP, Kainuu), which provides mostly out-sourced services, is owned by three of the regions municipalities, and as a result, it is accountable to the municipalities as well as to those public institutions that buy its services.

The LLL policy measures are evaluated in a number of different ways of which Table 4 presents an overview. The forms of evaluation include following the number of participant entering and exiting the measure, evaluating how the participants make progress while in the measure, participant follow-ups by personal contacts or through information systems, collecting feedback from participants and collaboration partners, using participant self-evaluations, and using different evaluation tools developed in the wider policy context ('policy evaluation tools').

Table 4. The forms of evaluation used in the LLL policy measures

Measure/ Region	LMP/SF	LMP/K	EP/SF	EP/K	YSP/SF	YSP/K
Number of participants		x			x	x
Participants' progress evaluation		x	x	x		x
Participant follow-ups	x	x	x	x	x	
Participant feedback	x				x	x
Partner feedback	x					x
Participant self-evaluation		x				x
Policy evaluation tools	x			x	x	x

Note: SF Southwest Finland, K Kainuu

In the *Low-threshold guidance centre* (YSP) in Southwest Finland, reporting and evaluating the operations and achieved results was difficult according to the experts due to the number of different information systems used by the actors and institutions working in close collaboration.

"Information systems are a big challenge. We have people from different organisations, all of whom are using a different information system. And they all enter their own results in their own systems. We have really struggled with getting our results out, when people mark them in their own systems and the systems don't communicate with each other. One of my young people can visit many places here within Ohjaamo, which

means that the whole problem is doubled and cumulates constantly. (---) So yes, reporting is a challenge.” Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

3.5 Young Adults’ Life Courses

As mentioned in the Introduction, Southwest Finland and Kainuu are two contrasting regions representing two quite different realities and future prospects for young people. One central way in which the many of policy measures take into account the living conditions of young adults is that their design and objectives are based on the regional characteristics and needs. A good example of this is the YSP field policy measure in Kainuu, the *Low-threshold guidance centre*, which acknowledges the heightened risk of social exclusion as well as the comparatively low levels of wellbeing and functional abilities among the region’s young adults, as the interview excerpt below shows.

”Our operation is based on a youth work perspective, not education and working life like Ohjaamo guidance centres usually are; instead, our focus is to help the young people get their life and everyday activities under control. And it is precisely this youth orientation that is our driving force. The policy emphasis starts from our regional needs. (---) And we wanted to keep this broader perspective instead of just pushing work, work and studies, because you can’t go out there if the basics are off. If the foundation isn’t right, it leads to kids going off to study and school and then dropping out when they realise that they don’t have the resources or they have made the wrong choice.”
Expert, YSP, Kainuu

From a more individual perspective, by taking a holistic approach to their participants’ lives the six policy measures recognise the relevance of the young adults’ living conditions, such as income, housing, and social relationships, and offer support when needed. The young adults are typically offered conversational support and assistance in finding and contacting other relevant support providers, such as the Social Welfare Office and Housing Services.

”The biggest problems are social issues, but then there are economic problems, and simply matters of becoming independent, like when you have moved in your own home and then you can’t cope there, you can’t cook or take care of the bills. I process these issues with them and often help to sort them out. And I remind them and push them on to take care of their business, and guide them to see the right people; I help the young people to cope with life. And we often talk about all kinds of other problems with these young people as well. Some may have boyfriend trouble and then they cry over breakups. And then there are also economic matters. We just talk these things over with a young person and guide them and say that hey, you are not the only person to struggle with those problems, and now you simply go out there and take care of this.”
Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

”One of our tasks is to have these groups where they start off with tiny steps and according to their own resources. But we may also encounter issues like having loans and insufficient liquidity, and then we have to think about what to do in those cases. Or someone is losing their apartment or something like that, where their whole life is falling apart. Or in situations where a person’s bank account has been closed and they have no money and can’t use their card, we help to figure out where to get money for food and the food for today.” Expert, YSP, Kainuu

Social participation

The issue of social participation and civil engagement of young adults emerged in only some of the Finnish expert interviews. Both of the *Low-threshold guidance centre* cooperate with the Defence Forces (the Finnish military national defence is based on the civic duty of military service, every man must attend a call-up the year he turns 18, and women can apply for voluntary military service; all men must either do military service or non-military service), and the one in Southwest Finland encourages young adults to take an active interest in their community and vote in, for example, parliamentary and municipal elections.

“Naturally, we try to promote the youth’s own interest to take care of their own business as much as we can. For example, now that we had the election, we interviewed candidates from Turku and then encouraged young people to vote; it is a simple example. Even though we are politically non-attached and have no official opinion on these matters, we do want young people to promote their own interests.” Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

None of the experts raised the issue of family responsibilities in the interviews. This is likely due to the relatively young age of most of the measures’ participants as well as to the comprehensive and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC; ‘day care’) system in Finland in which all children under school-age have a subjective right to participate and the fee depends on family income and the number of children (ECEC is completely free of charge for families with a low level of income). Hence, if a young adult who has enrolled into a policy measure has children, they are not very likely to affect the parent’s participation in a policy measure to a significant extent.

Especially the experts from the two *Low-threshold guidance centres* (YSP) emphasised that youth and young adults are very much involved in the planning of the policy measure’s activities. Involving the measure’s participants also in this way in making decisions about their own lives was seen important. In Kainuu, where the target group includes young adults typically in more vulnerable situations, the street-level expert raised the issue that not all young adults are able to take part in a collaborative decision-making process or even to make suggestions about future activities.

“And the third essential objective is tied to one of our themes, which is youth participation, in that young people are involved in developing this operation.” Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

“This a participatory operation: we work together with the group that we have, and they get to influence the contents of the activities. Of course, the ability to throw out ideas and present your thoughts may vary quite a lot, as some people have a huge amount of ideas. It is a whole other thing, though, if they are realistic. Then again, others seem to have no ability to come up with ideas. But we listen to everyone when we are, for example, planning our activities, and in a way everybody’s contribution can already be seen there.” Expert, YSP, Kainuu

Autonomy and Biographical Uncertainty

As mentioned earlier with regard to the policy objectives and taking account of young adults’ living conditions, the holistic approach on participants’ lives the measures take is closely related to facilitating their autonomy and reducing biographical uncertainty. For example, in

the *Coaching and rehabilitation service* (LMP, Kainuu), especially as the functional abilities improve and grow stronger, participants set their own goals, plan their courses of action, and contact different representatives of the labour market and education institutions themselves, while the coaches' role is to be by their side and provide support only when necessary. The aim is that the participants become more active and able to make decision concerning their own lives, build up their self-esteem and self-confidence, and recognise their own skills and strengths.

"They already evaluate themselves and what they are like and what they can do, but when they start to open up and discover that hey, I can do quite a lot and I am actually a good guy, it is a big deal. (---) The courage comes out a little bit when you get to tell people about yourself, and when we practice job interviews we videotape them if that is what the young person wants. We record it on video, do the job interview and then watch the tape. The young person then watches it like an employer would and considers if they would hire themselves." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

This type of autonomy strengthening and emancipation is a very typical approach also for the other LLL policy measures. Actually, in the majority of the expert interviews in both of the regions, lack of self-confidence and low levels of self-esteem of the young adults were mentioned as a central problem to be resolved in order to facilitate the autonomy and independent initiative abilities of the young adults. These problems with self-esteem and self-confidence were attributed mainly to their previous failures in education (e.g. dropping out of education, being kicked out from on-the-job learning period in a company, or not getting in to any study programme) and employment (not being able to find or stay in employment) and were tried to be solved by ensuring that the young adults have a 'series of small successes' during their time in the measure – a phrase that emerged in several interviews. Many of the expert interviewees highlighted also that they do not do things for the participants, they merely provide help and support when it is needed, and that emancipation of the young adults is always the end goal in this regard.

"Recently, I was writing a report on a young person who was doing practical training. This person started here with us, received good feedback and transferred outside to do practical training at a company, got commendable evaluations there but then quit because he or she didn't believe they had what it takes. So this is one of the things we are aiming at, we want to give the young people small experiences of success to lift up their self-esteem." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

"A student may already have some interrupted on-the-job learning periods and he or she may feel like they are a complete failure and rubbish and whatnot, so that's when the coach is there for them and offers encouragement and support and says that we'll do it together, and that you can do it and you'll make it. (---) That is the goal that the coaching and the coach fade into the background, and the student can take care of things for themselves. Sometimes that doesn't work and then we offer support for that too, but it is the objective that the person could function independently and the coach would become kind of useless." Expert, LMP, Southwest Finland

"Our services are based on the young people's voluntariness and their needs. The young people define what they need and what they want. That's our starting point, we don't want our employees telling the youth what's best for them, but the young people themselves know what they need and want. And always according to their own resources, and what they are capable of handling." Expert, YSP, Kainuu

With regard to facilitating the autonomy of the young adults, also the importance of helping the participants to improve their skills related to everyday life management, learning and studying, career management and working life, social relationships and communication, and time management was emphasised by the experts. Increasing motivation and strengthening the ability to take responsibility of one's own actions and choices were also significant aims according to many of the interviewees. These skills and abilities are central for young adults not only on the path of becoming able to take more control of one's own life and make choices and decisions about it, but also for reducing the uncertainty that is related to their future life courses.

In addition to strengthening the different skills young adults will need throughout their life courses, one way of reducing their biographical uncertainty used by the LLL policy measures is to provide the young adults with help and support in life course transitions. All the six measures had a strong emphasis on life course transitions, be it from social exclusion back to active citizenship, from the policy measure to full-time education, or from VET to the labour market.

"Yes, especially when a student is about to graduate we consider whether they will need some kind of support for job seeking, as we have this job application workshop where we offer help for writing CV's and job applications. We also work together with the TE Office to figure out ways to help especially those who struggle with finding employment, and we try to come up with suitable forms of support and ways to support them after studies and in that very final stage. So we co-operate with the TE Office and they send a special advisor here every spring, because that is when the majority of the young people graduate. They meet here at the education institution and then the student will already make their first appointment at the TE Office. So in a way we escort them to working life, and if they don't get a job right away, we will of course tell them how they can apply for social benefits." Expert, EP, Southwest Finland

Wicked Problems

Many aspects of the policy measures aimed at tackling wicked problems are closely related to the ways in which the measures try to facilitate the autonomy of young adults and reduce their biographical uncertainty, which are discussed above. However, other tools are also used when trying to resolve these multijurisdictional and multilevel problems, and one central tool is network collaboration. By working together with, for example, employment officials and services, education institutions and special needs education professionals, social services, mental and physical health professionals, and addiction treatment centres, and, thus, by bringing together a wide range of professional skills and representatives of the relevant jurisdictional fields, it is possible to address the multilevel wicked problems in a way that would not be possible for a single policy measure or actor.

"A special needs teacher naturally thinks a lot about how the studies are going, but we also have meetings where we discuss how a young adult is doing with their studies, and especially if they are not going so well, then that's when we start to think about their problems and life management. We also work together with school social workers. When customers have mental health problems, we work with school nurses, doctors and psychologists. Special needs teachers are often those who help young people look for help from these other support services. (---) So it's pretty much all encompassing and takes into account personal problems and so on, because they're really the things

that affect studies the most. Then again, some young people have their sleep rhythm all messed up." Expert, EP, Southwest Finland

Helping young adults to carry on with their everyday lives and increasing their general wellbeing is also an important aspect of the holistic approach taken on by the policy measures. In addition to providing help and support with issues related to the living conditions of young adults, such as income and housing, majority of the policy measures help their participants in different everyday tasks, which may include things like going grocery shopping, cooking food, paying bills in a net bank, filling out different types of application forms, and taking care of physical wellbeing by exercising and doing sports. These everyday skills are usually practiced together with the group, but sometimes especially the street-level experts can go to a bank, super market, doctor's appointment or such with an individual young adult. One expert talked at length about how even leaving one's own apartment can sometimes be too challenging for those young adults who are suffering from a social phobia, anxiety disorder, or obsessive-compulsive disorder, in which case the expert can go to the participant's apartment and help them to walk out of the door. Many of the interviewed experts mentioned how many young adults have problems with their circadian rhythm so that they sleep during the day and stay up through the night, which is obviously a major problem when aiming at education or employment. In Kainuu, in some of the interviews loneliness emerged as a significant problem for which the peer group in the measure was seen as 'first aid'.

"Our operation helps them to structure their everyday life. Now there are many young people who sleep during the day and are up all night, so we want to give them structure by offering a place to go and a more regular schedule, and just to help them to learn how to run a normal everyday life." Expert, LMP, Kainuu

"People draft aid applications here and we provide help with them. Here you can print out appendices, scan, and take care of these things for free. (---) We also offer guidance to young people with for example debt problems, by first dealing with the problems here and then maybe requesting assistance from a debt advisor. Then we have also social workers who can offer a lot of support for the daily life." Expert, YSP, Southwest Finland

"We can provide a rhythm for their daily life. And contents for those weekdays. We organise everyday activities, such as cooking and exercising, which they can utilise also in the future; one example is learning how to cook meatballs, which is a skill that will help them in their daily lives. We also learn how to play badminton, which is also an activity they can take with them to their daily lives, as long as they just have a friend to play with." Expert, YSP, Kainuu

For some of the policy measures, one of the aims is to reduce ethnic discrimination either by tackling the challenges young Roma people face in finding employment (LMP, Kainuu) or by helping immigrant students overcome challenges related to language skills and employers' potential prejudice (LMP, Southwest Finland). In addition, improving young immigrants' Finnish language and study skills is one of the main goals of the *Preparatory training for VET* (EP, Kainuu). More broadly, social equality was promoted by recognising and taking into account social categories in the operations of the measures, for example, by aiming at leveling out the differences stemming from young adults' social backgrounds (EP, Kainuu), targeting support especially to those young adults whose families are not able to provide that (e.g. who are not familiar with the options available in the education system and can not,

therefore, help with educational choices and transitions; YSP, Kainuu), and solving problems related to intergenerational disadvantage (LMP, Kainuu). It is quite interesting, that the theme of social equality emerged explicitly only in the interviews in the functional region Kainuu.

3.6 National Level Experts

Due to the high relevance of the national LLL policies in the Finnish context, in addition to the regional policy experts, three national level policy experts from the fields of youth and social policy, education policy, and labour market policy were interviewed. Here, their views on the main challenges and main policy objectives of their field related to young adults are shortly presented.

Main challenges

According to the interviewed national level policy experts the main challenges related to young adults at the national level in Finland are the rather difficult economic situation, regional and social polarisation of the Finnish society, and issues of skilled labour force and the overall education level of the population. The expert from the labour market policy field highlights the connection between the economic situation and the polarisation of the society as can be seen from the interview excerpt below.

"At least the official truth is that our economy is not in a good situation, and due to that there have been cuts to different services. And if we think about young people, then it is, of course, connected to family policies and social policies, because even though supporting and helping families and so on is on an international comparison on a good level, you can still see the effects of the budget cuts starting from child welfare clinics and compulsory schools and so on. In all of them we can see that things are not at such a good level as we would like to see them to be. And this is then naturally reflected on the possibilities that young people have in their lives. The regional differences have slowly started to grow, and people from different regions and backgrounds are not in an equal position in relation to this system. The more financial stability there is in the family and the closer to big cities you live, the better are your possibilities in life. And the poorer your family is and the further away you live from the big cities, the smaller is the amount of possibilities in your life." National level expert, LMP

He continues by talking about another way in which the budget cuts contribute to the social polarisation and the effects family background has on the life course trajectories of young people and young adults.

"According to my understanding the reduced resources have started to show also in the quantity and quality of guidance counselling and support at schools. This means that young people are increasingly left to make the decisions about upper secondary education by themselves or with their parents. And other parents have better abilities to help their children because of their own background. And this is reflected on the fact that family background can affect which path, general or vocational, you choose." National level expert, LMP

Also the policy expert from the field of youth and social policy raises the issue of polarisation as one of the main challenges and highlights the importance of regional policies in this regard. He also refers to the differences in main challenges between regions.

"I would say that polarisation is the one challenge that emerges strongly. (---) For us it shows itself as a regional issue, like how education is organised, how education is accessed, what are the available possibilities. There are differences, it can be seen at the level of the population, we have a much higher degree of immigrants in some places than in others, and it is one thing that contributes to this polarisation development. The capital region is a different field of problems than, for example, Kainuu. (---) And I do see that one of the big challenges for us with this big group of young people is, is how the regional policy is constructed." National level expert, YSP

The viewpoint of the expert from the field of education policy differs from the other two as the expert, and he emphasises the challenges related to the skill level of the labour force and the general educational level of the population.

"From the viewpoint of my own field, the challenges related to skills are, of course, big. Like in BIAC we still clearly have adults whose basic skills are not adequate. That is a major challenge, which we need to do something about, like a central one. And it is reflected on the labour market as well, if we have groups in the labour force who are lacking the basic skills. It raises the question whether we will have enough skilled labour force in the future, which is then reflected on economic situation and so on. (---) And one quite challenging thing is that, like PISA studies show that they have come down a bit, like. We are facing challenges here. So if the skill level has been coming down, we can also see that the educational level is not getting higher but it is stuck to its level." National level expert, EP

Policy objectives

When asked about the central objectives in their policy fields, the national level experts talked about the Finnish Youth Guarantee, social participation of young people, supporting youth work at a grass-root level, and improving the attractiveness of vocational education and training and reducing its drop-out rate. These themes were similar to the ones the regional experts raised in their interviews from the regional perspective.

According to the expert in the labour market policy field, the main policy objective in relation to young adults revolved around securing interruption-free educational pathways.

"In the recent years it has, of course, been this Youth Guarantee and the activities related to Ohjaamos [low-threshold guidance centres] and the Kohtaamo [coordinating project at national level]. And more generally the idea that we aim to secure that people wouldn't fall after compulsory education and after general upper secondary and vocational education into different traps or gaps, and that the educational paths would be smooth." National level expert, LMP

For the policy expert working in the field of youth and social policy, the main objectives were, firstly, to support young adults' social participation and to include them in the decision making about things that concern their own lives, and, secondly, to support the regional and local policy actors of the field with financial and information guidance.

"This social participation, which I understand a very broad concept, and finding employment, and this lifelong learning, this like finding a job and a study place. These for us a two very different types of things. The social participation is part of our general policy, it is one of our most important values with which we do a lot of work. It is connected to the way in which young people are included in the decision making that influences them. (---) Then when it comes to the labour market, there we, now we are talking about targeted youth work and there we have three main things. We have two forms of support, one is supporting the field of youth workshops and then we have outreach youth work. (---) The third thing is the multi-sectoral cooperation groups that are mandatory for municipalities. With regard to them it is not a money issue, it is information guidance that we do." National level expert, YSP

Lastly, the expert of education policy discussed in this regard increasing the attractiveness of vocational education as an educational path for young people and young adults, increasing completion and decreasing its drop-out rate.

"We have paid a lot of attention, or let's say that if we think about vocational education, the attractiveness of vocational education has increased. If we think especially about the beginning of 2000s, the attractiveness of vocational education has increased and an increasing number of young people choose vocational education. And this is a result of determined work that has been done in education policy. And the other thing is that even though there is a lot of talk about the high drop-out rates in vocational education, but at a general level the drop-out rates have come down. Just like, here we have paid really a lot of attention to these things, to completion and reducing the drop-out rate. We have had large-scale projects that have been going on where we have tried to tell about the ways how this can be reduced. Overall, getting the education level of young people to a higher level, especially from the viewpoint of getting all the young people on board, that is something that has been emphasised in education policy really a lot." National level expert, EP

4. Analysis of the Young Adult Interviews

In this chapter, the analysis of the 17 young adult interviews is presented. The themes of the analysis include young adults' biographical self-presentations, life projects and future expectations especially in relation to their skills, and participation in LLL policies. All the names of the young adults have been changed, no individual interviewees are linked to the LLL policy measures they are attending or have attended, and the exact age and region of residence are withheld in order to protect their anonymity and to comply with research ethics. With respect to that, also some details of the biographies have been changed in a way that further prevents identification of the interviewees but does not interfere with the analysis.

4.1 *Biographies of Young Adults*

“Aaron”

Aaron is a young man in his late twenties. He has always lived in his home town. He lives on his own, but visits his family regularly. His family includes mother, stepfather, and one sibling. He has a strained relationship with his mother, who he says is narcissist. He has completed compulsory education and is about to graduate from vocational school. Previously he has started two VET study programmes, but did not finish either of them due to not coping with his studies. He has been bullied a lot all through his educational path. He has also been diagnosed with two severe mental illnesses. He is currently attending therapy and he feels that he has received support from school and teachers, but not from his mother. Aaron describes himself as someone who is different and stands out everywhere he goes. He has nonetheless found a circle of friends who he feels safe with and who appreciate his courage in expressing openly who he is. He is also able to talk about himself and his strengths and weaknesses quite openly and realistically. There is a feeling that Aaron has been somewhat lost with his life, but he is very hopeful about his future. His plans for the future include applying to a university of applied sciences, working, and finding happiness.

“Aleksi”

Aleksi is a young man in his early twenties. He is close with his family, which includes both parents and two siblings. He states that he had a pretty uneventful early school career, but in a good way. He had friends and school went well. In lower secondary school he went to a class with a special emphasis. During lower secondary school he was diagnosed with a chronic physical disease due to which he graduated from school one year behind his age group. After that he enrolled into general upper secondary school but it became soon obvious that the study pace was too much for him and his health, and he first transferred to

night school and later dropped out completely. Then he moved to another city to study at a vocational special needs education and training institution from which he had recently graduated at the time of the interview. He has moved back to his home town and applied to a university of applied sciences. While waiting for the results he attended a LLL policy measure 'to have something to do instead of just staying home'. His health is better at the moment, but stress is what makes the disease worse, so that is something he has to keep in mind all the time. He has also been at times suffering from depression on the count of his life not going the way he had hoped it would go. In ten years he hopes to have graduated from university of applied sciences and to have a job. He is open to the idea of maybe living outside his home town as well. Aleksi presents himself as someone who is quite active, goal-oriented, and determined when it comes to his future. He has a realistic idea of his abilities, strengths, and restrictions.

"Eeva"

Eeva is a young woman in her late twenties. She says her childhood was not a very safe one, and she had to learn to be independent early on due to her parents 'not having their things together, like paying bills and stuff'. There were drastic events with long-term consequences in her family when she was younger. She has mainly lived in the town she currently lives. She has always been in special education due to learning difficulties caused by a type of sensory processing disorder. The support she got from friends in lower secondary school was important for her. She has finished two vocational degrees and was about to finish the third one when she was diagnosed with a chronic physical disease and was forced to discontinue her studies. From then on she has been unemployed, on sick leave, or in rehabilitative work. She has been treated for her illness, and her health is currently much better. She, however, still suffers from pain attacks, which increase with stress and pressure. Her plan for the future is to get a normal job, because she feels she has gotten stuck to rehabilitative work and it is time to move forward. She is, nonetheless, very optimistic about her future in which she would like to see her husband, house, garden, and some farm animals. She describes herself as someone who has really liked to study, and the fact that she had to quit studying due to her physical illness was devastating to her.

"Elsa"

Elsa is a young woman in her late teens. Her family includes parents and siblings, but her parents have divorced a couple of years ago. She has good memories of her childhood, and she remembers having lots of friends. Her parents are not very educated, but have been supportive of her wanting to study further. She has close relationships with both of them especially after the turmoil of teenage years has passed. She states that she really liked primary school, learning, and the teachers there. Midway through lower secondary school she, however, began to be rebellious, skip school, and smoke cigarettes. That did not affect her grades too much, and she graduated with a good GPA. After compulsory school, she has started two different secondary education degrees, but has not finished them. According to her, the main reason for that was that the studies were organised really poorly and that the teachers did not have the time to teach them properly. She skipped school a lot and, since lower secondary school, she has also had severe problems with her circadian rhythm. At the time of the interview, Elsa is attending a LLL policy measure in order to take some time, really think what she wants to do next, and get help for the circadian rhythm problems. She lives with a friend of hers, and friends play a major part in her life story. She presents herself as someone who is very social and outgoing, values family and friends, enjoys learning, and is interested in many things. In the future she hopes to live in her own apartment with her

boyfriend, have good relationship with her family, have an interesting and versatile job, and to have moved out from her home town.

“Helena”

Helena is a young woman in her early twenties. She has always lived in a small rural community. She is the only child of a single mother, but her grandparents and her extended family have always been close to her. Her mother has been on disability retirement from very early on, which meant that they had very tight with money, and her mother was always home when she came home from school. She has happy memories of her childhood. She now lives together with her boyfriend. Helena liked school and had many friends. After compulsory school she applied to three vocational schools, but did not get in to any. She then attended the 10th grade and she feels the year was very rewarding. After 10th grade she continued her studies at a vocational school. At the time of the interview, she had finished the three-year studies the previous week and was at the moment taking some vacation time before starting to really look for a job. She injured herself in an accident in work training in the second year of her studies and has now some physical restrictions. After the injury, she has begun to think that maybe she made a mistake when choosing her field of study, and she is now considering studying for a physically less straining job. Doing that would, however, either cost several hundred Euros (short course at private education) or take 1,5 years more studying at the same school she just finished, albeit a different field. Now she is attending a LLL policy measure, which she hopes will help her to secure a job or a study place in the near future. Her dream job would be an 8–16 office job with weekends off. In the future, she hopes to have a steady job and to be together with her current boyfriend. On the whole, she is very stable and happy, and the only reason things are somewhat troublesome for her is the physical injury. However, she is currently rather stressed about finding a suitable job for herself. She is confident it will happen eventually, but is worried about how long it is going to take. She is positive about the skills that she has, finds making new friends easy, and although she did not get accepted into vocational education right after finishing compulsory school she sees that as a positive thing, as it gave her more time to mature and think what she really wanted to study and do in the future.

“Henri”

Henri is a young man in his early twenties. He has a good relationship with his parents and feels that they have been supportive of him. His parents are both retired, and siblings live on their own. He states that his childhood was fairly normal and school went well, until near the end of primary school when he started to be bullied and ‘everything began to go downhill from there’. His grades dropped at that point due to him missing school so much; because he was afraid of being bullied, he did not want to go to school. The bullying continued all through lower secondary school and ended only when he went to vocational school where he found friends. The bullying targeted his appearance and severely affected his self-confidence and self-esteem as well as his life choices. He feels very strongly that his teachers did not really do anything about the bullying. He suffered from depression for a long time, and on the 9th grade, due to the bullying, he tried to kill himself. In vocational school there was no more bullying and his grades got better, but the study field ended up being not right for him. However, he did finish the education, but is now applying to a new vocational education programme in another field. If he gets accepted and finishes the education he plans to apply to university of applied sciences and continue his studies. His passion in life, which he discovered during his vocational studies, is arts. It has helped him to process the negative emotions and memories caused by the bullying, and he hopes to be able to work as a

professional artist some day in the future. He presents himself as a person who is hard-working, interested in studying and has good language skills, but at the same time quite insecure and negatively affected by his experiences. In the future he hopes to, in addition to having a career in arts, live in his own house or perhaps farm. He is planning to move on his own if he gets accepted into the study programme he has applied to.

”Julia”

Julia is a young woman in her early twenties. Her parents divorced when she was a young child, and she lived with her father. Her relationship with her father is not close, and she says that he was not really interested in her and her sibling’s life and education. Her relationship with her mother was closer but they met only every two weeks. Julia has good memories of compulsory education, she thinks that everything went well, although she did not get good grades, which she now thinks is due to an undiagnosed neuropsychological disorder. She had an accident while doing sports when she was in compulsory school. It took her almost a year to recover and she had to quit her sports hobbies. Currently she feels fully recovered. After compulsory education she enrolled into a VET programme. The programme included two practical training periods. The first one was a nice experience, and she learned a lot in there. For the second one she moved into another city. There she had some problems with her ‘work trainer’ who was then replaced. She stayed in the city after the period ended because her boyfriend lived there, and she did not feel like returning home. After graduating from VET she looked for job but could not find one. She started to feel anxious and depressed, and she moved back home after breaking up with her boyfriend because her family and most of her friend lived there. She continued to look for a job and tried to keep herself active by, for example, helping family members with housework. Employment officials suggested that she should contact the LLL policy measure she is now attending, which they thought could help her find a work try-out place and later on also employment. In the near future, she wants to find a job, but thinks that she will also eventually study more. In ten years she hopes to have a job, husband, maybe also children, her own home, and had a chance to work abroad. She is also interested in becoming an entrepreneur at some later point. Julia describes herself as a person who likes to work with people and is good at that, who is social and athletic, but not a good student.

“Laura”

Laura is a young woman in her early twenties. Her family includes both parents and a sibling. She is very close with her family and has received a lot of support and care from them. She talks a lot about her friends who are clearly very important to her. She was a very good student and has good memories from compulsory school, but she was bullied especially at lower secondary school by some of the children in her class. She found that really difficult, and at the same time there was some turmoil in her friend group, which upset her even more. However, she did feel that she got support from some of her friends. After compulsory education she applied into a popular, esteemed, and difficult-to-get-in study programme at a university, but she did not get accepted. Then, following her friend’s example, she decided to take a position as an Au Pair in a Central European country for little less than a year. After returning to Finland, she applied to the same study programme at the university, but, again, did not get accepted. Then she decided to move to the city where the university is located to study the subject at Open University. While she did really well in those studies she felt very lonely as she did not have any friends or acquaintances in the city. After the third time of applying and not getting accepted into the university, she started to feel symptoms of burnout, she had trouble sleeping, and, eventually, she started to have serious mental health

problems. At that point she moved back home. She is now diagnosed with two mental health illnesses. However, she does not agree with the doctors about the diagnoses, she does not feel that they accurately describe her and her condition. She is currently starting to feel better but realises that her healing process is by far not ready yet. She has given up the idea of the university's study programme as she thinks it is time to let it go and do something different, and is thinking about a completely different study field in a university of applied sciences. To study in that programme she would have to move into another city, which worries her quite a bit because she is afraid that she might not cope there alone. At the time of the interview Laura was attending a type of rehabilitative LLL policy measure. She likes it there as she enjoys the activities and peer-support from the group. In ten years she hopes to have a stable life situation with her family and friends close to her. She wishes to feel safe. Laura presents herself as an intelligent and active person, who is interested in many things, motivated, and driven.

“Maria”

Maria is a young woman in her early twenties. Her parents are divorced, and her father has re-married. She has step-siblings. She says that her relationship with her parents, especially father, was not close when she was growing up, but they have grown closer since she moved to live on her own. Her grandmother has always been very close and supportive to her. She does not have many memories from her childhood and the time in primary school. She does talk about being bullied at lower secondary school. She feels ashamed that she was bullied and that it was somehow her own fault. She enjoyed learning languages and arts but struggled with mathematical subjects. After compulsory education she enrolled into VET, but she stayed there only a short time before dropping out because it was not what she had expected it to be, and was not motivated to continue. As one of her friends had gone to 10th grade, she decided to go there as well. She really enjoyed that year and felt like she gained back some of her self-confidence that she had lost due to being bullied and became more social. After 10th grade, she enrolled again into VET to another field of study. She stayed there for one year before dropping out as she lost her interest and motivation. She found some short-time jobs, but after a while decided to try to find a more suitable field of VET. At the time of the interview, she had applied to two study programmes and was waiting for the results. Starting from lower secondary school, she has had a habit of skipping school, which she says is due to boredom at school. In ten years she hopes to have a nice and interesting job, no money worries, good health, and to be close to her family and friends. Maria describes herself as a slow learner and a forgetful person. However, she tells that if she is interested in something she puts in the effort to learn it and does not find it difficult to concentrate. With regard to education, her main problem seems to be that she does not really know what she would like to do in the future, gets bored easily, and has somewhat unrealistic expectations of the study programmes' contents.

“Markus”

Markus is a young man in his early twenties. His parents divorced when he was a child, and he lived with his mother and siblings. He has a good relationship with both of the parents and sees his father quite regularly. As his mother was long-term unemployed, he feels that the poor financial situation of the family has affected his life and opportunities. In primary school, he was transferred into a special needs education class because of a neuropsychological disorder, which made learning difficult. He found the special needs education class to be restless and learning there difficult. He thinks it made things worse for him. After compulsory education he attended a vocational special needs education and training programme and

graduated from there. Then he attended the compulsory military service, which was followed by a period of unemployment during which he had occasional work try-outs and short-term jobs. He says he was quite depressed then. At the time of the interview he was just about to start a one-year training suggested to him by employment officials, and he thinks that it will help him expand his skills and improve his employment opportunities. One main issue that has made it difficult for him to find a job is that he cannot afford to pay for a driver's license, thus he is not able to accept jobs further away from home. He is very confident that he will find employment after the training and he is saving money for a driver's license. He feels upset that he did not put more effort into his previous studies, mainly in compulsory school, and is a bit worried that he will struggle to keep up with others in the training. Markus presents himself as someone who is loyal and understanding to his friends, struggles with learning, is prone to depression, has not got a very high self-confidence but is currently very goal-oriented and determined.

“Mikael”

Mikael is a young man in his mid-twenties. His family includes both parents and two siblings. When he was younger his relationship with his parents was quite strained, and they have at times been mentally abusive toward him and kept telling him that he will never become anything. Later on, their relationship has improved at least to some extent. He was diagnosed with a form of developmental difficulty as a child, and he has also a chronic physical disease that causes certain restrictions to his life. He has had a problematic school career from the beginning. He has learning difficulties, neuropsychological problems, language-related problems, and two mental illness diagnosis. He has also been bullied in compulsory school and, to a lesser extent, also in vocational special needs education. He says that he got no support from his family nor from the teachers. During lower secondary school his relatives got concerned about his mental wellbeing and directed him to a school nurse who then sent him to a hospital's psychiatrist. He has been in intensive therapy. After compulsory education, he moved into a bigger city, attended first preparatory training for VET and then enrolled into a special needs VET programme. However, due to his mental health problems getting worse, he dropped out. When he was in preparatory training, he met a youth worker who became a very important person in his life. The youth worker listened, understood, and provided support for him, and introduced him to different LLL policy measures that he then attended. He has enjoyed the support measures, gained more confidence, and is coping much better with his physical and mental challenges. Mikael is planning a career in the social services sector as he feels that others could benefit from the understanding and perspective he has gained through his own experiences. He presents himself as someone who is very emphatic and open-minded and who wants to help other people.

“Niina”

Niina is a young woman in her early twenties. She has a close relationship with her family, which includes her parents and siblings. However, she mentions that talking about deeper personal issues and feelings has never been part of the 'culture' of her family. She has some issues with her physical health that affect her occupational possibilities to a certain extent; she is not able to work in her dream job because of them. She was bullied especially in primary school, which was the main reason why she did not really like going to school at the time. In lower secondary school, the bullying eventually stopped as she learned to talk back and she started to enjoy studying more, but she was absent a lot as started to get anxious and scared of the school surroundings and people there. She would have been really

interested in her studies and eager to learn, but the social anxiety was too bad to cope with. After compulsory school, she went to a general upper secondary school. As she did not have any clear plans about further studies of future occupation, she thought that she could use the 'extra' time to think about her future. However, she was absent a lot due to both physical and mental health issues, and, in addition to the anxiety disorder, she got depressed and eventually dropped out. After that she decided to go to a VET institution in a bigger city, but she went to that school only for two days before going first on sick leave and then dropping out completely due to the mental health problems. She moved back home and has since been trying to get better and to think about what she would like to do in the future. While she has been offered different kinds of support measures in the past, at the time of the interview she was attending her first LLL policy measure. She is considering applying to VET later on, but is not sure at what point she will have reached the level of functional abilities to actually participate in education. In ten years she hopes to have a steady job and her own house. Niina presents herself as timid, anxious, and indecisive person who likes both studying and doing things with her hands. She is the only one of the interviewed young adults who does not mention friends at all.

“Oskari”

Oskari is a young man in his early twenties. He lives on his own. His parents divorced when he was a child, and he moved with his father to live in a different city. He did see his mother regularly and later moved to live with her and her new family. However, Oskari and his mother have always had a very problematic relationship, and he is currently considering cutting her off of his life completely because all the issues with her stress him out a lot. He has one very close friend without whom he says he could not cope. He was diagnosed with a chronic physical disease at a young age, and he was transferred to special education in primary school due to a neuropsychological disorder and learning difficulties. He says he did not learn much at school. He has started some vocational type courses, but as his life tends to 'spiral out of control' (alcohol, drugs, quickie loans and such), he has not been successful in finishing them. He is currently enrolled in a special education vocational school, but is taking some time off in order to 'get things together'. However, he has found it difficult to maintain a normal circadian rhythm and says that he often feels depressed. Oskari presents himself as someone who is confident in his own abilities, creative, learns by doing, and enjoys doing things with his own hands. He finds school boring and expresses negative attitudes towards it several times in the interview. While he struggles with 'managing' his life, he does not express particularly negative feelings toward his future. His future plans include living near his family and friends and working in the field he is currently studying, although it is not quite his dream profession. His next steps are getting his life together and finishing his school.

“Saara”

Saara is a young woman in her early twenties. She lives with her friend quite close to the town in which she was born and her family still lives. Her parents divorced when she was a small child, but she is close to both of them and has always seen them regularly. She nowadays also has a stepmother and step-siblings. She has many good close friends. For lower secondary school she attended a class with a special emphasis. She really liked the school. After that she attended upper secondary school in a school with emphasis on one field of arts. The school was not located in her home town, so she did have to move and start living on her own. Although she enjoyed the school, it was a big change for her and there were some signs of a mental illness appearing. She was, however, able to complete the

school, graduate, and move back home. Sometime after graduation she found a part-time job at the bigger city and she moved there. The work experience was, however, not a good one, and after a year she had to leave the place due to mental health problems. She is currently attending rehabilitative work shop and feels much better. At the same time she has been actively applying to art schools, but has so far not been accepted into any. The interviewee talks positively about herself and schools, and she has positive feelings toward work in general and toward her possibilities in the future. The only problem she sees is the fact that she has not been able to get into the art schools. She has received a lot of support from her parents and friends, and she will continue applying to the school she wants to get into. She presents herself as a person who is a sensitive, diligent 'good girl', who just wants to get into an art school and continue her studies.

“Sofia”

Sofia is a young woman in her mid-twenties. She is the only child of a single mother and in her childhood they had tight with money. She does not know her father. She was born and has lived most of her life in a town quite far from the one she lives in at the moment on her own. She has always had friends, but has also at times felt lonely. She feels she was gifted at school and liked learning, but she did not learn to work at school because she got away with things without working for them. In elementary school, she was also bullied a lot, and she says it was hell for her. After elementary school, she continued to lower secondary school with a special emphasis in one field of arts. That school she really liked, and it helped to start building up her self-confidence after the bullying in her previous school. She felt she was talented in the field of the school's special emphasis, but she stopped doing her homework altogether, and also other problems started to appear. She suffers from a chronic physical disease, non-diagnosed neuropsychological disorder, and one of the anxiety disorders, for which she has medication. She has started study programmes in the same field of arts as the emphasis of her lower secondary school in both VET and university of applied science and has studied in them for several years, but she has not graduated from either of them. It has always been her mental health that has forced her to quit her studies and go on sick leave. The pressure of creative work has just been too much for her. She is now attending a rehabilitative work shop and is very happy with that. She is currently also more realistic about the kind of work that is good for a sensitive person like herself. She presents herself as a person who is artistically talented, but also perfectionist to a point in which it has negative effect on her mental health and capability to work. She does not, however, present the limitations she has as a negative thing, rather like a matter of fact and just something she has to take into consideration when planning her future. In the future she sees herself working in the field of mechanical and production technology either in Finland or USA.

“Timo”

Timo is a young man in his early twenties. He lives in the town he was born in. His family includes mother, father and one sibling. His parents divorced when he was very young, and the children stayed with their mother. He has kept close contact with his father and when he was a teenager, as a result of some trouble with his mother, he and his sibling moved in with the father. He has always liked school and learning and he states that he was a pretty good student. After elementary school, he continued his studies at a lower secondary school with a special emphasis. He really liked the school, but there was some bullying, and the problems at home began to reflect on his school work. He then continued to upper secondary school, which he had to quit after two years due to a mental health problems. He had moved out to

live on his own at the age of 18, but due to the mental illness he was forced to move back home to his father. He received treatment and was later able to enrol and complete studies at VET. Already during his studies he was able to get a job in his field and he was very happy with that. At times he still struggled with the depression and at some point he started to drink heavily. A couple of years ago things then escalated to a point in which he was sentenced to prison for a violent crime. At the time of the interview he was on supervised probationary freedom for which he needed to have a rehabilitative work contact. The tone with which Timo talks about himself is rather positive. He talks also about the prison experience quite positively in a sense that it was something that finally changed the direction of his life for the better. He is also aware of the possible causes to his depression; many life changes within a short period of time were just too much to handle on his own. He presents himself as a person who is rather private and reserved, and who liked learning in elementary school. He has good relationships with his close ones despite his prison sentence, and in his future he sees work or studies. However, he does not want to stress about the future as he is confident that things will work out for him.

“Tommi”

Tommi is a young man in his early twenties. He has always lived in his home town, and moving elsewhere is not something he would even consider. He is close with his extended family (parents, sibling, grandparents, godparents, and cousins) and friends, and talks about them a lot. After completing compulsory school, the VET programme that he was initially interested in was considered to be difficult for him due to his developmental and neuropsychological difficulties, and ended up studying in a completely different programme. It was not, however, a good fit for him and he dropped out. He then spent a year in preparatory training for VET, enrolled into a different VET study programme, and is now about to graduate. Tommi describes himself and his life so far very positively, and although there have been some adversity in his life, namely the diagnosis of a neuropsychological disorder and a language-related learning difficulty, he is very positive about his abilities and future possibilities. It seems that he has good memories of school time and he has had good friends. He does not have a clear plan for the future yet, but work and a more powerful computer are something he would want to obtain. His dream job would be working as a customer support person as he would like to help people that way.

Life course patterns

Three very general and simplified types of life course patterns related especially to educational pathways can be identified from the young adult interviews¹. In the first pattern, everything starts well: there are no major family-related problems in the young adult's life, they have friends, and school career takes off at least fairly well. If they have some challenges with learning they get support or just persevere. Then, somewhere along the way, either during compulsory school or in upper secondary education, there is a something that causes an interruption to the life course. This could be an onset of a physical or mental illness, bullying starting, or some other form of drastic change in life circumstances, or a

¹ One young adult's life story is so drastically different from the rest of the interviewed young adults that it could not be subsumed under any of the presented life course patterns.

combination. Recovering from an illness, transferring to a socially more stable environment (such as changing school) and gaining back trust in oneself and other people, or otherwise working to solve the issue that has caused the life course interruption takes typically a significant amount of time but the young adult is able to 'return to route'. They have clear or fairly clear educational and occupational aspirations and the means to achieve them. The aspirations are realistic and fit their abilities. Even if the first upper secondary education turns out not to be the right one, it is nevertheless often completed before continuing to other, more interesting or suitable studies. The interruption of the life course is only temporary in this sense. This type of pattern can be identified in six life stories of the young adults.

The second type of pattern portrays a much more fragmented life course than the first one. Problems related to development, learning, social relationships, or such start typically quite early on, and when they start later, they are severe and have long-term consequences on the life course. This life course pattern is characterised by dropping out of education at least once, but often more times typically due to the education not meeting the expectations, losing interest and motivation, or health problems. Future aspirations are unclear or not very realistic with regard to their abilities or other available resources. Employability is not considered when considering options for future education. Educational programmes are applied and enrolled to often based on vague, if any, ideas of what the programme includes, what kind of professional skills it provides, and what kind of jobs it qualifies for. While many are concerned about some aspects of their future, their outlook on life is quite positive on a general level. Compared to the first pattern, these young adults have typically attended more different kinds of support measures. Out of the sample, eight life stories fit to this general pattern.

The third pattern type was evident in the life stories of two young women. This pattern includes a lot of support and care right from the start, and a wide social network of friends and loved ones with whom the relationships are close. There were many positive experiences at school, and the academic skills were good and achievement high. There was some turmoil in social relationships but also enough available support, hence no major effects on the individual life course occurred. After compulsory education enrolling into and graduating from general upper secondary education was a natural next step. Further study aspirations are very ambitious, and the next phase of the life course includes applying several times to popular, difficult-to-get-in study programmes at tertiary level educational institution (i.e. university or university of applied sciences) but not getting accepted despite a lot of effort put into the application process. Working or studying something else in between application rounds. Eventually it all gets too much, which leads to the onset of severe mental health problems. Recovering will take a long time, and future plans need to be adjusted to the changed circumstances.

Again, it needs to be stressed that these patterns are very general and include considerable variation. However, they do show that young adults in vulnerable situations come from many different backgrounds and have many different types of challenges, which implies that they need very different kinds of support to solve their main challenges and do not all necessarily benefit from same types of support. No differences based on gender or the region of residence emerged from the interviews or the life course patterns.

4.2 Dominant Issues in the Interviews

There were several dominant themes that emerged from the interviews with the 17 young adults in Finland. Many of them were related to the challenges the young adults have faced or were facing in their lives and their consequences on their life courses. Here, these challenges are clustered into seven rather broad categories, which are learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia, non-verbal learning disabilities), neuropsychological disorders (e.g. Autism spectrum disorders, ADD, ADHD), mental illnesses (e.g. depression, anxiety disorder, personality disorders, OCD, phobias), physical illnesses and injuries, circadian rhythm problems (i.e. problems with the so-called ‘internal body clock’), major problems in family (e.g. violence, abuse, alcoholism), and having been bullied at school. The first two, learning disabilities and neuropsychological disabilities, are closely related especially due to the similar effects they often have on the individual’s learning and educational trajectories. Table 5 presents the challenges the individual young adults have been or still were facing² as well as the frequency of the challenges in the Finnish young adult sample.

Another group of dominant themes that emerged from the interviews includes the forms and sources of support the young adults have received – or, for some, the lack of them. Here, the most relevant actors are family members, friends, teachers and other school personnel, as well as health care professionals and experts working in different policy measures and projects. In this respect, also the relevance of the available resources and pedagogical solutions of educational programmes emerged in many interviews.

Table 5. Main challenges in the lives of the interviewed young adults

	Learning disability	Neuro-psycho-logical disorder	Mental illness	Physical illness/ injury	Circadian rhythm problems	Major problems in family	Bullied at school
Aaron			X		X	X	X
Aleksi			X	X			
Eeva	X			X		X	
Elsa					X		
Helena				X			
Henri			X				X
Julia		X	X	X			
Laura			X				X
Maria	X						X
Markus	X		X				
Mikael	X	X	X	X		X	X
Niina			X	X			X
Oskari	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Saara			X		X		

² It needs, of course, to be emphasised here that the challenge categories, especially the first four, each include a heterogeneous group of difficulties, disabilities, and illnesses that can have varying degrees of severity and impact the individual life courses differently. Also a same kind and degree of a certain challenge can have very different effects, if any at all, on the lives of different individuals. The purpose of the table is merely to systematise some of the interview findings, not to describe or categorise the individual young adults in any way.

Sofia		X	X		X		X
Timo			X			X	X
Tommi	X	X					
Challenge's frequency	5/17	6/17	12/17	7/17	5/17	5/17	8/17

Learning and neuropsychological disorders

One of the dominant themes that emerged from the majority of the interviews was different kinds of difficulties in learning, paying attention, and concentrating the young adults had experienced at school. For many, the problems related to learning at school were still reflected on the way they perceived themselves as learners and also more generally. ‘*I’m a slow learner*’, ‘*Nothing stuck to my head*’, and ‘*Even when I tried, I still did not learn*’ were typical phrases in the interviews of these young adults, and some of them expressed that they felt inferior to other students in their classes.

“And of course, you learn and remember the things you are interested in. Or, well, I was interested in many things at school but it was somehow, like. I don’t know why, but remembering things was difficult. I studied for exams and I remembered the things I studied for a short while, but it just did not stick in my head. (---) Or, you know, in vocational school it was somehow really irritating when the others were always ahead, and I, even easy things, God damn, I didn’t understand or couldn’t do.” Markus

“It was really awful at school because I didn’t know what caused it [the learning difficulty in math]. And I thought, and teachers said, that I just simply am stupid when it comes to math. It was a big relief when I found out the reason [a learning disability].” Eeva

“I never really got good grades from exams even though I studied for them. I always did kind of bad anyways. In class my attention often wandered to different things, and it was hard for me to concentrate.” Julia

The effects of these problems on their educational paths varied. Many stayed in ‘regular’ classes through their compulsory and upper secondary education, but in more severe cases some or all of the teaching was given in smaller special needs education classes. While few of them felt like a special needs education class was at least a somewhat neutral experience, more often it actually made things worse typically due to more restless student groups. On the other hand, there were also few young adults with learning and/or neuropsychological disabilities that held themselves responsible for their troubles.

“When I was sent to the special needs education it was a complete disaster because there were also all the other ADHD kids. So studying became almost completely impossible there.” Oskari

“I don’t think that the school could have done more. It was just up to me, it was my own thing. I think that they must have been teaching well. I’m sure it was a good idea to provide more support. And in classes it was good, it was just up to me.” Maria

For the young adults with learning or neuropsychological disorders, vocational education and training was typically the self-evident choice after compulsory education as attending general

upper secondary education was seen something that would have been outside their abilities and as they saw themselves as learning-by-doing kind of people.

"As long as I get to work with my hands, that is what I'm interested in and not the theory. In vocational school, not much of the theory stuck to my head, but once we got to the actual work, then I also remembered the things we did. I'm more like a doer type." Markus

"I've been on these kind of on-the-job learning periods that have lasted for few months, and I've liked to be there. But I don't like going to school. Even the teachers have been surprised that what is this, you actually show up at the work place. For me it [going to work] is like physical exercise. I've chosen the field because I'm no computer guy, like. (---) Somehow I just don't like school, there is never anything else to do but sit with my phone." Oskari

Physical and Mental illnesses

Two thirds of the interviewed young adults had been or still were suffering from some form of mental illness, and roughly one third has a chronic physical illness or injury. Most frequently mentioned mental illnesses were depression and anxiety disorder, while the issues with physical health varied more. With regard to their life stories, the mental health problems were typically seen as a consequence of some previous difficulties, such as becoming physically ill, being bullied at school, having a difficult situation at home, or having to face many drastic changes without adequate support.

"I tried to go to a general upper secondary school for a while but then my physical health deteriorated again and I couldn't manage with my studies. And then the whole situation lead to an onset of depression." Aleksi

"So I dropped out of school because I felt like I wasn't going to make it and I got anxious around the other students [due to being bullied for a long time before]. Mikael

"Although I was absent from [the lower secondary] school a lot partly because, there was not so much bullying because I learned to talk back, but like it was the, going to school and being there and perhaps also like the people, so it like started to scare me and make me anxious as an environment, but studying in itself would have been interesting, really interesting. And even now I'm interested in studying, but it still a little bit, the environment and the people." Niina

"Creative work is actually pretty rough in a way, when you try a bit too hard, so I should have taken it a bit more with a 'who cares' kind of attitude, and then I collapsed. So, but still I was already like so anxious about going to school that I wasn't able to go back anymore, even when my physical health had already gotten better, so, then I was on sick leave. And then, like, it got to be so bad that I almost didn't dare to leave home [in the fear of meeting someone from school]." Sofia

Quite understandably, the onset of a physical and/or mental illness had significant effects on the life courses and educational paths as well as the future prospects of the young adults. In many cases they had to drop out of education or at least put their studies on hold for a considerable amount of time. In some cases a physical illness was followed by mental health problems, which made the recovery time even longer. For many, the issues were something

that they needed to consider when planning their future educational and occupational life courses.

"At one point I thought about it [a VET programme], and I would still be interested in it, but I have these restrictions due to my health. And in that kind of working environment I could lose my health completely. But that is the only field that, it would have been a dream, but I can't. And that is partly the reason why I'm completely at lost now and don't know what I should study." Niina

"I've been talking with my family about if I got into that study programme would I be able to cope with everything. In that programme there is contact teaching only two days a week, and with that I could manage. If it would be from Monday to Friday eight hours a day then it would be completely out of the question. It would be way too straining. (---) And the lack of a support network in the city where the school is worries me as well. What if it all [loneliness, burnout, onset of a mental illness] happens again." Laura

Circadian rhythm problems

Challenges with acquiring and maintaining a suitable the circadian rhythm were also mentioned quite frequently in the life stories of the young adults. Problems with waking up in the morning and staying awake through the day have caused them problems at school and work. While some of them felt that the issue was more of a personal attribute, others suffered from it and tried to find help. Some found that going to school might provide them with an adequate structure into their lives to help them gain a rhythm that would suit the surrounding society better.

"In lower secondary I was late from school a lot. And here [LLL policy measure] I've been late and forgetting things. I more of a night person. I'm not a morning person." Tommi

"It has been difficult to maintain a rhythm in life and it feels like I'm stuck in depression and so, so I have done all kinds of stupid things, taken thousands of euros of quickie loans, and it feels like I'm in pieces, like I need something that would start to put me back together again, like maybe the rhythm [of going to school] would start to do that." Oskari

"Since lower secondary school I've had it like it is impossible to fall asleep before midnight and it is awful to wake up before noon. (---) And it has always been, like an alarm clock doesn't help at all, I mean really. I sleep either three or thirteen hours, I haven't got a rhythm of seven, eight, nine hours." Elsa

Bullying at school

Nearly half of the interviewed young adults were bullied at school, and many of them found that it had had severe effects on their life courses and self-perceptions. While in some life stories bullying was mentioned only in passing, for the majority the consequences were drastic, such as onset of mental illness, dropping out of education, or loss of self-confidence, a negative self-image, and feelings of hopelessness.

"Yes [the bullying has affected the choices I have made]. And they were not good choices. There was for example this, there were many opportunities to accept help, but

I didn't. Because umm I suppose I expected that it just wouldn't help anything. For example, I don't remember properly, but there was a chance to attend like a hospital school, but I didn't accept it. I, I sure have regret it later quite a lot. If I could go back to the moment, I would take it." Henri

"I didn't like going to school because I was bullied. And sometimes it felt like if you didn't learn something right away then you were kind of blamed for that. In lower secondary school it got a bit easier because I started to like studying more, even though I was absent a lot. I wasn't bullied anymore because I learnt how to talk back, but it was like going to school and perhaps also the people, it started to scare me, the surroundings. Studying would have been interesting, really interesting. And still is but it is the surroundings and the people." Niina

"I somehow then felt that I was like inferior to others. And even then I was ashamed. I couldn't admit it to anybody although I felt really bad at the time. And maybe I am still somehow ashamed that I have been bullied. I don't want to admit it to anybody." Maria

It was very typical that the young adults who had been bullied at school felt that the school did not do much to help them. Some mentioned that the teachers did try to intervene and discuss the issue with the bullies, but that it did not make much, if any, difference. However, some of the young adults felt very strongly that the teachers were not interested at all and left them to cope with their own devices, and they found the memories very upsetting.

"They [the teachers] noticed the bullying at some point and tried to intervene but they couldn't make it stop. They could have tried to do more. (---) I got no support from any adults". Mikael

Support in Personal Life

As all the interviewed young adults had faced one or more major challenge in their lives, different sources and forms of support were among the life stories' dominant themes. While family was the main source of support and care for many, there were also young adults for whom family was more a source of problems than anything else. Parent's alcoholism or mental health problems and abusive relationships with parents were part of some of the life stories.

"And then nowadays, and my mother like, she has never, if I have been bullied, she has more like been, been maybe more on the side of these bullies or like something." Aaron

"I don't feel like she [his mother] cares about me. So I've decided that I might have to cut her off my life completely, that it would be much easier and safer for me to live without her. (---) It feels difficult when she says I can trust her but I know I can't and it has affected my all the aspects of my life. I stress so much that I don't even know how to go to school, it feels like everything is going into ruins." Oskari

"I got no support from anyone when I was in compulsory school. Even my parents told me all the time that I will never be anything in life, there was something all the time, I was told off and called names from every direction. It didn't feel good." Mikael

Having friends or a trustworthy and supportive adult in one's life was a major factor in many of the young adults' life stories. The adult can, but does not have to, be a relative; some

interviewed young adults told about a close and loving relationship with their grandparent, while others had found an empowering relationship with someone working in the field of health care or youth work.

"I wasn't really one of the popular ones, if we were to think about that. I was a little like, that, I was always taken in, like the last or so in sports and stuff, but it didn't particularly ever bother me. Because I had three good friends and then I outside of them, I had other friends as well and one friend in another class and so." Saara

"The teacher took me to [a LLL policy measure], and there was this one person who worked there, he has helped and supported me a lot and been part of my life for long now. When he came here to work [another LLL policy measure], I came with him. (---) He has really done a lot for me, stuck up for me and understood me." Mikael

"Well it has been ever since I was little. Even when I was small I liked to go there a lot, like sleepovers and things. And even now I always call her to ask if I can go over for a cup of coffee and then I go. There we just talk about this and that. And I can talk about school or money or whatever I want. It is a place where it's always nice to go to." Maria

On the other hand, lack of friends and supportive adults in life is a clear vulnerability. In some cases, the young adult had good relationship with their parents and had friends, but was living far away from them, which often resulted in feelings of loneliness.

"It was probably because I had no friends in my class, and as the things at home were not easy at that point, so I had too many things on my mind besides going to school, I had no energy left to be interested in studying." Timo

"I didn't really know anyone there and my family and friends were very far away. You don't really get to know any of the other students when you study at an Open University. (---) I was very lonely." Laura

Issues with Support at School

The relevance of guidance counselling at school emerged from several of the interviews. Many young adults thought that the counselling they received at the end of lower secondary school or in the beginning of upper secondary education was not adequate, and that some of their choices they made on their educational path were not the right ones because of that. Some felt also very strongly that young people are forced to make major decisions with long-term consequences about their future too early on. Related to this, some of the young adults expressed frustration with those adults who they felt were stuck with the rigid idea that one should choose a field of study, graduate, and work on that field from then on.

"So life has been more like this kind of searching, and I haven't had the courage to apply to anywhere, and I haven't really known where I could apply to. Somehow I felt that even in lower secondary school, when we had to start applying to upper secondary education when comprehensive education was coming to an end, there wasn't, well of course there was some talk about, in school these guidance counsellors and such, but it was really like that they [guidance counsellors] showed that these are the basic professions, like police, doctor and such, and then they let it just be, like either you apply to a vocational school or to a general upper secondary school, and that was that." Niina

"In the last year of general upper secondary school I realised that I had like made a mistake. Well, the first realisation was on the first grade of the school, I had made a mistake not choosing to study advanced mathematics. That was a mistake. Then I talked with our guidance counsellor who said that I could switch from basic to advanced mathematics, but it was already almost Christmas and I would have been so far behind. (---) And then in third year I realised that I had closed some door for myself by not studying more chemistry and biology, I would have needed those in order to be able to apply to a study programme I was interested in." Laura

"It's like young people have to make the decision about what they are going to be when they grow up way too early. Like I'm going to get a [vocational degree] this spring, but still I don't really know what I'm going to be when I grow up. It's more like we can do many things in our lives, not just that one thing. Well, some might stick with the one thing, but like we can do many different things in life." Aaron

"It shouldn't be thought of as a bad thing if you start an education and then switch it to something else or drop out. Because if the field of study is not really that interesting or you don't feel like you belong, then it's not going to be nice in there. (---) If there is no interest, then it is hard to concentrate. And it's not, I'm so young so there's no hurry to get an occupation yet, I can still try out many fields. And if you feel like it, you can return to a thing that you were previously doing, it's not so serious, I think. Even though many say that if you start an education, you should stick with it." Maria

For one young woman, the guidance counsellor at her lower secondary school had actually told that she should select a study programme suitable for girls as the one she was really interested in was 'for boys only'.

"And well, then there was, well it was not my field at all, so at school had our guidance counsellor said to me that now you will go to the [study programme] cause you're a girl, but like I would have wanted to study something related to cars, like auto mechanics, but yeah, that idea didn't suit our guidance counsellor who, like, it's only for boys." Eva

Especially in unusual or non-typical situations, such as the onset of a severe physical illness or switching from study programme to another in the middle of a school year, some of the young adults felt that the support gotten from school was many times inadequate or non-existent. In those cases, young adults felt that they had been left on their own to cope with a difficult situation, which often lead to eventually dropping out of the study programme they were in at the time.

"The school didn't know what to do. I had been absent for four, five months, and they just said 'Well, try to come next week'. They gave me no assignments or materials. And at that point, studying by myself was impossible, I would have needed something to support me in that." Aleksi

"And with the general upper secondary education [part of the dual studies], at the time my situation was so bad that I didn't have the energy to go to school. Well then they said that I have to do the courses independently. I got fairly good grades from exams but because I was absent a lot, I got really bad grades to my report card. (---) I feel bad about that, I should have finished at least that school." Elsa

In some cases, the pedagogical solutions and teachers attitudes in vocational education and training programmes caused frustration and problems for the young adults. From their perspective, either the teachers did not have the time or willingness to actually teach them, or the content of the studies was outdated or not well adapted to its purpose.

"I remember one day when I was there, the teacher just disappeared for the rest of the day and we had no idea what to do. We tried to call the teacher but got no answer. Apparently the teacher had something else to do. We had no idea what we were supposed to do for the rest of the school day. (---) All the students were really frustrated, and then we just ran around the school building to see if we could find the teacher. Eventually everyone just went home. (---) It wasn't the first time it had happened." Maria

"I lost all my motivation when it was changed to YritysAmis Model [an entrepreneur-like learning environment], then it all started to go, like when you asked the teachers for help, they were like look from Google or think about it yourself, think about how it could be done, like you have to solve the problems on your own. (---) Then I dropped out from there, or like transferred internally to another study programme. And well, then I thought that this is really nice, I really like this field and want to learn. At the point I was six months behind everyone and didn't know how I could catch them up. And then the teachers refused to teach me those things, they just told me to ask a friend, like we don't have time to teach you. (---) The teachers just drank coffee and smoked cigarettes." Elsa

"It wasn't nice to go through things that you know already and are self-evident. And then we worked on some project, which was completely useless and nobody will ever use. We solved some problems in a really stupid way, nobody ever does it like that in the real life. It was completely useless." Henri

4.3 Life Projects and Future Expectations

As already mentioned when describing the life course patterns that could be identified from the interviews with the young adults, when it came to the future, especially in relation to education and work, roughly half of the interviewed young adults had rather clear and realistic goals while the other half was more or less struggling with trying to figure out what it is that they would like and be able to do in the future. On general, the relevance of formal education for the future life courses was evident in the interviews as it played an important part in the life projects of virtually all of the young adults. However, for most of them things like employability after graduation or the typical wage level in the occupational field were of very little relevance. Occupational aspirations were typically based on hopes of having a meaningful and personally fulfilling job that would be nice to go to every day. Many times the expectations the young adults had for the contents of study programmes or the job that they qualify for seemed not to be very realistic. Only very few talked about looking for information by, for example, taking a look at the study programme's web pages or contacting the educational institution, or considering the likelihood of finding employment after graduation.

"I'm going to apply to a university of applied sciences to study [a subject]. (---) I think the employment prospects are good here, I haven't really looked that up, it's just something I'm interested in. I knew I was going to do that before I came here [LLL policy measure], this is just a way of spending time before the school starts." Aleks

"Even though many say that people are only interested in money and because of that you have to take any job, but I've never really been interested in money, like I only want to get money. I just think it's nice that a person gets to do what they like to do." Elsa

"Even now [after several NEET years] I'm in a situation, like I still don't really know, I'm kind a running out of faith, like where to, like I want to study and work, but I don't really know where, what I would like to do. (---) [When planning the future] you have to think about not thinking too much about the employment prospects because you don't want to study something that you are not at all interested in." Niina

For many of the young adults, the skills that they have were connected to their life projects and future aspirations. They talked about their skills, which were typically acquired during childhood and adolescence from family member or through hobbies. When talking about their skills these young adults were quite confident and seemed proud.

"Wee-eel, in this field it is pretty much like you learn most of these things by yourself, there is so much new information coming all the time. I've pretty much been learning these things in my free time. There weren't really anything special that I would have learned at the vocational school either." Aleks

"I've been doing crafts ever since I was little and like drawing and things. Those are my good qualities, and I've learned to be sensible and organised because I had to take care of myself since I was little, I can control many situations. (--) I think that doing crafts has affected [future aspirations and plans], I've liked them and I knew that they had those type of things in the school as well. It probably comes from there." Julia

"I've developed a steady and precise hand through my hobbies, and like, in general this manual dexterity. And it's easy to see that because of that handling all these tools and working with them, I've got a steady hand and that. (---) These skills help a lot in this type of work. I think I could be really good at this." Sofia

The ideal futures that the young adults imagined they would have in ten years time were mostly rather conventional, and their understanding of adulthood was quite normative. All of them mentioned that they would like to have a job, preferably a stable, interesting, and personally fulfilling one. Being graduated from upper secondary or tertiary education, having an own apartment or house, as well as having a spouse and close and warm relationship with family and friends were also often included in the image of the ideal future. Few mentioned also having children or pets as a goal. Happiness, safety, and regular lifestyle were important for many of the young adults' life projects.

"I've been trying to think about that [ideal life in ten years time], but it is a bit difficult. I hope that I would have a job, and perhaps I and my spouse would have our own house and a vegetable garden and what not. We have been planning that we should get a house with a garden because I would like to have some farm animals." Eeva

"I think I will still be living in Finland then, I don't think that I will leave. And I would have a higher degree than the one I currently have. And I would have job. I don't think I will have like power or money, but I would have like happiness." Aaron

"At least I would think that I have a job and a husband and perhaps also a child. And a own home. Just kind of basic dreams, but I also dream about moving abroad at some

point, to work abroad. You could always move back to Finland, if it doesn't feel like your thing, you could always come back." Julia

"Well, I hope that I would have a job I like going to and that I'm interested in. And that I would be able to properly provide for myself, so that I wouldn't have to think about if I have money for food and things. And not to have a pile of unpaid bills lying around. And that I would be healthy. And that I would still have people, like my parents, granny or friends so that I wouldn't be alone. That's all." Maria

4.4 Participation in LLL Policies

A vast majority of the interviewed young adults found the LLL policy measures they were attending or had attended meaningful and well-suited for their purpose. Only few talked about the policy measure neutrally, and none negatively. The young adults had typically learned about the policy measures from employment officials, health care professionals, or school guidance counsellors, but there were also some that had looked and found the measure by themselves or together with a family member. For many, the main goals of attending the policy measure were to get time to recover and reach a level of functional abilities needed for further studies or employment, and/or to figure out what they would like to do in the future. In this respect, the fact that many of the LLL policy measures provide young adults with a chance to try out jobs, or work tasks that are typically included in jobs, in different fields was found useful either for figuring out a suitable and interesting occupational field to pursue in the future, or for acquiring new or maintaining previously obtained skills. The need for help in finding a job, getting support for studies, and having something to do while waiting for studies to start or continue were also mentioned as reasons for participation.

"There is something to do, so you don't have to just be at home and stuff, at some point we leave from here for a work try-out out there outside, so in here we sort of prepare ourselves for when we eventually get a job or study place." Julia

"The work here [LLL policy measure] has given me so much, like strength. I took more work hours and days really quickly. I wouldn't have had the confidence or a CV to apply for a normal job, I couldn't probably have coped with a normal job, or at least I couldn't have trusted that. So this rehabilitative thing that I started was the best option." Sofia

"Then this [LLL policy measure] came up, like what if you go there so you won't be completely idle and like that. Then I was like ok, I'll go there, it can't hurt. And there I will have a chance to think about what it is that I really want to do with my life, like really think about it and not just make some hasty, like that might be something nice." Elsa

"I was looking online and this was the first place that I came across, so I decided to call here. And then I came to visit the place, they showed me all the facilities here. (---) This is a nice place. And I do like it here." Timo

An often mentioned important aspect of participation in a LLL policy measure was that it helped the young adults to gain or maintain a normal rhythm in their lives, which they found to be very difficult in a situation where there is nothing to do during the weeks. Some of the young adults talked about how straining life is when there is nothing to do, and that the longer one stays at home the harder it becomes to 'get back' and become active again.

"Now that I'm on this gap year, so when I quit school and applied right away to this type of youth activity thing so that I could maintain my rhythm." Oskari

"Well, work always makes you tired, but my mood is good and spirits is high or like that. Compared to if you just stay home doing nothing, playing computer games or drinking or things like that. It is easier to keep up your spirits when you have something to think about and keep you preoccupied, now and then my thoughts have been depressed, this gives me something else to think about instead of depression." Markus

"Well, it has changed my everyday life in a sense that I have been doing nothing for so long. But now I've noticed when I have a day off, I've started to wonder that how could I have lived like just doing nothing. I think that this [measure] has had a positive effect. It has been, well not hard, but still, I don't know. But I think that it has been positive." Niina

For some, the peer support that they gained from the other young adults in the policy measure was a very meaningful thing. Meeting people who had had similar experiences and challenges in their lives or having a safe and confidential peer group around them was an empowering experience for them. Although, getting acquainted with the group took sometimes a while.

"I've become a much stronger person thanks to the [LLL policy measure], many there have had similar experiences, it has helped a lot." Mikael

"At first I didn't feel like I belonged here at all. Not because the people would have been mean or not have accepted me into the group, but our backgrounds were just so different. (---) But like, it is nice to spend time with them, and it feels much more like we are a tight group now." Laura

Participation in the planning and decision-making of the contents of the policy measures was mentioned only in very few of the young adult interviews. The ones who mentioned it were attending a policy measure in the field of youth and social policy and found it to be a nice thing, but they did not elaborate the issue beyond that.

5. Interaction of Young Adults and Experts from the Perspectives of Life Course, Governance, and Cultural Political Economy

In this concluding chapter, the interaction between the young adults and experts interviewed in WP5 is analysed. For this task, the main perspective utilised is life course perspective, although the theoretical viewpoints of governance and cultural political economy are included in the analyses as well. In life course research, the emphasis is put on the dynamic linkage between *social structure*, *institutions*, and *individual action*. In short, life course illuminates how structural and institutional conditions and changes affect human lives. Thus, following this idea and, in accordance with the view adopted for this concluding chapter, a person's life course consists of life phases and transitions that are constructed in reciprocal processes between political, social, and economic conditions, welfare state regulations and provisions, as well as biographical decisions and investments concerning the changing living circumstances. Historical conditions (economic cycles, wars) and institutional arrangements (education systems, labour markets, welfare provisions) influence the shaping of individual biographies. Hence, life course transitions and trajectories are constructed differently in

different socio-historical, structural, cultural, and institutional settings. (Heinz, Huinink, Swader, & Weymann, 2009.)

In the following chapter, the aim is to analyse and understand the dynamics between social structure, institutions, and individual action in shaping young adults' life courses in the functional regions of *Southwest Finland* and *Kainuu*. The chapter starts with a general overview of the Finnish context in which the analysis is mainly performed using the governance perspective, although the cultural political economy perspective is utilised as well. After that, young adults' life courses, as well as the interaction between them and the interviewed experts are analysed by utilising the theoretical framework provided by Elder (1998) and supplemented by the theoretical views inspired by the perspective of cultural political economy. The following are the key principles in this framework: 1) *historical time and place*, 2) *timing in life and life-span development*, 3) *linked lives*, and 4) *human agency*.

5.1 Finland – the Country of Decentralisation and Regionalisation

To understand the governance of young adults' life courses, one has to start with a short introduction to the recent history of the country. Ever since the post-war era, the cornerstones of the Finnish education policy, labour policy, youth policy, and social policy alike have been inclusion and universalism. However, since the recession in the beginning of the 1990s and the financial crisis of the 2010s, there have been considerable budget cuts to the welfare state, thus shifting the emphasis into a more selective and market-oriented direction with education strongly affected. Centralised steering, especially in education, was drastically reduced in the 1990s, while the decentralisation, deregulation, and decision making powers of local administration were increased. (Berisha, Rinne, Järvinen, & Kinnari, 2017.) Due to these changes, the role of regional level planning and implementation of LLL policies has increased in Finland over the course of the past decades.

Over all, decentralisation has been one of the dominant trends in public administration in Finland over the recent years. Decentralisation can be understood as distancing something from the centre and it is a well-known concept to all public sector actors. Regionalisation can be used as its synonym and centralisation as its antonym. (Kaarakainen, 2008.)

In Finland, at the level of normative measures, deregulation and decentralisation have simultaneously meant a change in control and governance systems and a transition to a completely new type of administrative culture that highlights the importance of evaluations. This related redistribution and decentralisation of power has largely taken place since 1988 beginning with the free commune experiment in Kainuu, the state subsidy system (L 705/1992) and municipal legislation (L 365/1995) that were renewed as its result.

The fuzzy concept of a broad 'evaluation experts network' has led to a situation in which a number of different actors have the mandate to assess the success of public policy measures and implementations, while no one has the exclusive right to their operation, much less the related rule-making rights. As a result, the evaluation of political measures has been expanded and become more scientific and politicised, and the importance of the data it produces has increased.

In the policy planning and implementation hierarchy, regions can be placed in between national and municipality-level government authorities. Regions are governed by regional councils, which serve as cooperation forums for the municipalities of the region. The regional councils are responsible for general regional policy planning as well as policy programmes

within the region. According to the principles of network governance (Määttä & Erikson, 2015), the councils draw up plans and programmes together with the central and local government authorities as well as the enterprises and associations operating in the region.

Regional administrative actors then mediate the policy texts and policies from national to local level. At the same time regional actors also mediate the 'correct understanding' of the policies, including framing of the problems, naming of the target groups and selected vocabularies. A cultural political economy perspective helps us to view the policies from a wider angle than the one that the 'self-understanding' of the policy texts and actions, as such, reveal. At the level of implementation of the policies, the terminologies used (economic, social, cultural, etc.) are taken for granted when looking at the phenomena and potential solutions. This is where the power of framing comes into play. At the implementation level, practical issues are often the main focus, while more general connections between the phenomenon and society are not discussed. Practical policies as well as 'higher level' policy documents are, however, always based on some perspective. This higher level understanding has constructed the 'problem' and the 'reality' around it. Often the administrative understanding unpoliticises the subject matter and presents it as if a clear-cut solution, based on, for example, economic vocabularies and principles, exists for the problem. This way political solutions turn into technical solutions. Yet with this approach, a large portion of the problem's framework is not brought to the front as it is left outside the reality constructed by the policies.

5.2 Young Adults' Life Courses in Socio-historical Context

The first principle of Elder's (1998) framework, *historical time and place*, refers to a view according to which individual life courses are always embedded in certain socio-historical context. Historical periods, social structures, circumstances, and living conditions influence individual decisions, transitions, and, thus, also life courses. The examples of these are global, national, and local economic developments, LLL policies, education system, local educational arrangements, and the labour market, which together construct the structure of opportunities that is different for individuals living in different countries and regions. The structure of opportunities has also been different for individuals belonging to different generations at the time they experienced their life course transitions. Moreover, policies, public services, and infrastructures are typically regional or local and thus an important part of the opportunity structures that constitute individuals' everyday environment. (Elder, 1998; Levy & Bühlmann, 2016.)

The life courses of the young adults in this study are embedded in the early 21st century Finland that is a sparsely populated, relatively culturally homogeneous country in Northern Europe. Finland has a population of roughly 5.5 million inhabitants out of which 5.3 million are Finnish citizens and only approximately 230.000 are foreign citizens living in Finland. There are two official languages: Finnish and Swedish, and the Swedish-speaking minority consists of 290,000 people. Additionally, in Lapland there is a minority of 2000 people who speak Sami, a Finno-Ugric language, as their native tongue. (Statistics Finland, 2017.)

The schooling experiences of the young adults interviewed in this study are from Finnish comprehensive school, which is characteristically intertwined with the Scandinavian notion of the welfare state entailing a strong emphasis on equal educational opportunities. As one of the key elements of the Scandinavian welfare model, the comprehensive school system is identified by universal, non-selective, and free basic education provided by the public sector.

PISA results from the early 2000's on have shown that not only is the average level in reading, mathematics, and sciences high in Finland, but also the share of low achievers is comparatively small. Another important sign is that the highly standardised Finnish school system with low-level of stratification (Tikkanen, Bledowski, & Felczak, 2015) has been successful in compensating for the poor socioeconomic background of pupils. Also, the between school variation in learning outcomes is one of the smallest in the OECD world. The school system has proved to be homogeneous in quality. Thus, at the upper secondary and tertiary level, young people have relatively good educational opportunities.

However, since the 1980s, Finnish economy has suffered two severe crises which have affected the life courses of young people and young adults born in the 1990s; the first one was experienced in the early 1990's and the second one as a result of the global financial crisis in 2008. Both crises have had drastic effects on youth un/employment. After the second financial crisis especially the unemployment of young males has increased markedly. Uncertain employment prospects have also had discouraging effects on the educational motivation of young people especially at the lower end of the achievement curve.

The formative generational experiences of young adults interviewed in this study are related to societal risks and uncertainties. According to the Mannheim's (1952) theory of generations, the collective identity and sense of belongingness shared by the members of each generation is shaped and constructed in a certain socio-historical context. Mannheim speaks of a social generation pointing to a group of relatively same-aged individuals who share certain definitive modes of behaviour, feeling, and thought, and, thus, a collective identity. Most young adults interviewed in this study were born in the early or late 1990s. Thus, when they were teenagers or just slightly older they were faced with the global recession of the 2008 during a sensitive period in their lives. As a generation, they have experienced the risks and uncertainties related to school-to-work transitions of the present day society. At the time when they were growing up, also the inequalities in the regional opportunity structures began to increase in Finland.

The regional differences in the opportunity structures are evident when looking at the functional regions of this study, *Southwest Finland* and *Kainuu*. Life opportunities available to young people are more versatile in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu, where youth unemployment rates are higher and the level of overall well-being of young people is lower than in Finland on average. There are also much fewer educational opportunities available for compulsory school graduates in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland. Furthermore, the labour market in Southwest Finland is larger and more versatile than the labour market in Kainuu, and it is more likely for young people to find employment in the open market in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu.

Hence, young adults that live in these two functional regions live in quite different realities when it comes to their future prospects. On the one hand, in Kainuu, the negative population development trend is intensified by young people moving out of the region in search of jobs or education. One of Kainuu's main challenges, therefore, is to find a way to entice people to move in to Kainuu from elsewhere in Finland or from abroad. The scarcity of educational and labour market opportunities is reflected in young people's lack of faith in the future which is one of the LLL-policy challenges in Kainuu. In Southwest Finland, on the other hand, the greatest LLL-policy challenge identified by the interviewed experts is the increasing polarisation and segregation among young people and young adults.

However, even the experts do not see the problematic situation of the disadvantaged youth stemming from structural constraints, such as the tightening competition inherent in class society, for example. The labour market and the relationships between the parties of the working life are arenas for political struggles. Similarly, the struggle between social classes permeates the education market, which is built on a logic that is based on middle and upper-class culture. Studies show that compared to successful or average young people, the young people who struggle with education and employment come more often from a disadvantaged background and are the children of poorly educated parents. Class background, therefore, essentially determines the way these young people perceive their own opportunities and whether they believe in their chances of being successful in the competitive education and labour markets. A similar situation is easier to detect in societies with sharper class differences such as the UK and France, but the perception of class differences and the general existence of classes in the society has grown in the 2000s also in Finland. For example, the income and health differences between different social classes have markedly increased over the last 20 years in Finland.

5.3 *Timing in Life and Life-span Development*

The second principle, *timing in life and life-span development* states firstly that the developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in an individual's life. Secondly, each life phase affects the entire life-course. Early experiences and transitions can have enduring consequences by affecting the subsequent experiences and transitions, even after many years, thus, resulting in cumulative advantages and disadvantages. This means that there is an interdependence of the past, the present, and the future and, thus, a path dependence of the life course. In this respect, life course is viewed as a cumulative process consisting of subsequent experiences, choices, and transitions. (Elder, 1998.) Further, socially and culturally constructed 'age expectations' include notions about timing and order of transitions, such as transition from education to work. At the same time, they are constructing the model about 'how life should be lived'. At the beginning of the 21st century, traditional biographical milestones such as starting a job, parenthood, marriage, and retirement rarely pass according to the conventional age markers. Volatile labour markets create diversified and uncertain pathways into and within the employment system and, thus, lead to more age variability of occupational and private transitions. At the same time, individual options regarding the timing and duration of transitions between life phases and institutions are increasing in addition to the risks of unintended consequences and failures. Moreover, at the same time, there are blurring of life-phases and contingent trajectories and unequal distribution of life chances and wealth. (Heinz et al., 2009)

The life courses of many of the young adults interviewed in this study consists of series of 'failures' such as repeated school interruptions. This came up also in the interviews of the experts many of whom emphasised that their aim is to create a 'series of small successes' to the lives of young people and young adults, which would then strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem. This, in turn, would have a positive effect on their overall well-being and integration to education and the labour market later on. Further, many study participants had been bullied at school, an experience that has had long-lasting consequences to their life courses. Low self-esteem, fear of social situations, depression, anxiety, and loneliness came up in many interviews as the consequences of being bullied. The importance of these problems were recognised by the experts as well. Indeed, according to the interviewed experts in all the LLL policy fields and in both functional regions, lack of

self-confidence and self-esteem were recognised among the main challenges related to young adults' participation in the policy measures. While in the expert interviews the problem was not solely attributed to bullying, in young adults' biographies bullying played a major role. Based on this finding, one can argue that taking the social wellbeing of children and youth into account as they proceed through the education system is of utmost importance. This is further highlighted by the prevalence of mental health problems among the young adults in vulnerable situations.

Despite their already fragmentary life courses, the majority of young adults interviewed in this study were planning their future based on the culturally constructed model of 'the normal life course'. They had rather normative and conventional understanding of adulthood despite the accumulating challenges and the vulnerable situations they were living in. Typically their view of their life in ten years time included having a meaningful and steady job, an apartment or house of their own, and a spouse – perhaps children as well. One important finding was that the regional opportunity structures were not really reflected on the young adults' perceived and planned life projects. Generally speaking, despite the different living conditions, young adults in both functional regions had a rather positive and confident outlook on life.

Policies built on the assumption of 'normal life course' do not, however, treat the disadvantaged young as full citizens. The increasing social sector costs have inspired politicians, right-wing politicians in particular, to justify all kinds of cuts to social benefits and lowering the level of benefits. First on the list of benefits to receive cuts are the ones of those who are outside the labour force. 'Overly generous', gratuitous social security is seen as an explanation to why some youth choose to remain outside education and the labour force. The benefits aimed at younger people may be an easier target since young people are not considered full citizens yet and have no strong, organised lobbying to support them. Due to their age, young people have not yet benefitted the society in any way and as such they have no right to demand support. The foundation for this logic is the concept of individual responsibility contained in the neoliberalist ideology – in this case the responsibility is placed on underprivileged young people.

In employment policies, sanctions are a very common way to approach the situation of disadvantaged young people (poorly educated, difficulties in finding employment). The primary goal seems to be to reduce the number of youth falling under the 'unemployed' category. An important method appears to be the tightening of the conditions for receiving labour market subsidy. Since 1996 the right to receive unemployment benefits has been connected an obligation for people who are 18–24 years of age and have not completed a vocational qualification to apply to educational programmes. A young person must apply to at least three educational programmes, and if they are accepted they must start and complete the educational programme in order to be entitled to receive unemployment benefits.

The publicly provided education has also been subjected to many changes, and no new resources for education are to be expected in the foreseeable future. The education network has been streamlined, which means that several institutions have been merged or closed down. The objective of shortening the graduation times is realised by shortening the duration of the formal educational programmes as well as by cutting the amount of content. Also, as the connection between vocational training and working life has improved, the amount of general educational content has decreased. Young citizens are, thus, primarily seen as members of the labour market and skills that are essential in the functioning civil society and democracy make way for skills that increase productivity. Interestingly, this development is opposite to the current government's rhetoric regarding raising the level of education.

5.4 Linked Lives in Young Adults' Life Courses

Third principle, *linked lives* refers to social relationships and networks, such as family and friends, contributing to the shaping of individual life courses. However, social ties to significant others not only mean support in life course decisions and transitions, but can also become forms of social control and constraint in channeling individual decisions and actions. (Elder, 1998.) Even though in this study the main emphasis is on educational and labour market trajectories, it has to be remembered that the young adults interviewed in this study were coping with multiple roles at the same time. Social and economic problems, such as housing problems were taken into account when designing the supportive policy measures, and the challenges related to becoming independent was emphasised in the interviews of the experts.

Many of young adults interviewed in this study had grown up in broken families, and felt that they had not received enough support and guidance for their life choices from their parents. This was not, however, a clear-cut finding; some interviewees told about close relationships with their parents and the strong support they received from them, as well as about a large network of friends during the school years. That being said, even though many interviews included memories of a happy childhood, in some cases the divorce of the parents had led to a drifting life where homes as well as family compositions were constantly changing.

With regard to support received from parents, in worst cases, the interviewees' relationship with their parents had been quite strained and they even had had to listen to the parents repeatedly telling them that they will never be anything. In several studies, the significance of social and psychological support received from the 'significant others', no matter who they are, has been emphasised. The received positive support affects one's conception of the self, which in turn affects one's view of the future. If the experiences concerning the self are positive, and the chances of influencing own future are perceived to be good, a person will act in a goal-directed manner and will form a coherent picture of their future opportunities. In contrast, if a person perceives to have only little control over own future, they will most likely experience the future in a hopeless and fatalistic manner. (Jahnukainen & Järvinen, 2005.) In this study, young adults told about significant others, referring at times to a close relationship with some adult outside the family circle that had been important to them during their life courses. For one interviewee, for example, a youth worker in local youth workshop had been a particularly important adult contact in the interviewee's life. In this respect, the importance of teachers was emphasised in some of the interviews as well.

If one's family relationships are unstable, the role of peers and friends as significant others affecting one's life decisions will become more important. Experiences related to peers during school years were both negative and positive in the interviews. While in the case of many interviewees, social problems and emotional traumas caused by long-lasting bullying was in the center of their life stories, for others the support received from peers had proved to be the most important resource in coping with the demands of life both inside and outside education. For many, the role of peers had also been important when making educational choices. This was the case especially among those young adults who had no educational and future plan. It is often the case that young people are choosing upper secondary general education, just because the process of thinking about and comparing various educational and occupational alternatives is still incomplete in their case. In this kind of a situation, choosing general track is viewed as providing three years of extra time to make their occupational decision compared to vocational education in which case the occupational choice has to be made earlier (Järvinen, 1998). This was the case for some interviewed

young adults, who had chosen to continue their post-compulsory studies in upper secondary general school just because that was the most common choice among their peer groups. In Kainuu region with a narrower structure of opportunities, the decision concerning whether to move away or stay is more crucial in their life in comparison with young adults in Southwest Finland. Interestingly, among the interviewees, friends had also had an important influence on their choices and some young adults had stayed in the region just because their friends had made a similar decision.

5.5 Agency in Transitions

Fourth principle of Elder's framework is *human agency*. The interaction between structure and agency means that even though some individuals are able to select the paths they follow, their choices are not made in a social vacuum. All life choices are contingent on the opportunities and constraints of social structure and culture. (Elder, 1998). Recent notions such as 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) have become crucial for understanding how subjects develop meaningful and coherent biographies in response to objectively contingent life courses. While convincing model of the individual as a social actor must include valid assumptions about the internal dynamics of self-regulation, decision making, and identity construction, these must be embedded in social contexts. (Heinz et al., 2009.)

Many young adults interviewed in this study had life histories that included various social and personal difficulties and challenges. Their agency was restricted by external constraints, and they felt that they had only a limited range of options to choose from. This is recognised in policies, where one of the most important objectives is to empower young adults and strengthen their agency. However, because of the low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence of the young adults in question, the experts viewed this objective as a big challenge for them.

The key questions related to agency are what kinds of beliefs and perspectives do individuals have on their future possibilities, how much they feel to be in control of their life, and what do they think about what is possible for them. Rather than having a strategic transition behaviour, the interviewed young adults had 'step by step' or 'wait and see' behaviours (see Evans, 2007).

An important finding concerning young adults' view of their agency was that many young adults had internalised societal and structural problems so that they saw the reason for their problems and struggles in themselves. For instance, in Kainuu, where youth unemployment level is higher than in Finland on average, young adults attributed the reasons for their problems in finding employment to being 'failures' in themselves as recognised also by the interviewed experts. Thus, they might define themselves as 'slow in learning' or say that 'it's just me that can't learn' without recognising the significance of their social environment or schooling arrangements to their educational success and choices.

5.6 LLL Policies in Supporting Young Adults' Life Courses and Transitions

The basic problems of young people who are in a weak position in the labour and education markets are the result of a lack of jobs, which feeds the depressing view of the future that these young people have. The larger context of the phenomenon is the decline in so-called low-skilled jobs and the increase of highly educated population, as a result of which the competition between individuals for the available training places and jobs has intensified. As

a result of these changes, people who struggled with education have mostly lost faith in their ability to succeed in the intense competition for decently paid work. In fact, many of the measures against youth unemployment are not targeted at unemployment – they are targeted at the youth. There are attempts to treat structural problems (the lack of jobs in proportion to the number of those without a job) through measures targeted at individuals (changing the people who do not have a job). One of the most important success criteria is, therefore, the extent to which the measures are successful in bringing the disadvantaged young adults back into the competition for jobs.

LLL policies can be seen as means to provide an institutional support for the conduct of individual life courses. Their aim is to compensate the volatility of markets by supporting the shaping of trajectories, sequences, and whole trajectories over the course of life (Heinz et al., 2009). LLL policies represent not only societal expectations but also public interventions that aim to bring about preferred visions of individual development and ‘normal’ life courses.

In Finnish LLL policies, concerning also both functional regions of this study, there seems to be a tension between societal expectations related to a standardised ‘normal’ life course and the recent shift towards de-standardised life courses. Despite the fact that non-standardised life courses are becoming more common, the LLL policies seem to be based mainly on the assumption of the prevalence of the standardised ‘normal’ life course model, more evidently in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu, where biographical uncertainties were reflected on the policies more clearly. One important challenge faced by the present LLL policies is how to take into account and deal with the fact that a large share of today’s young people and young adults do not follow the chronological steps of education, work, and retirement. In contrast, their careers are becoming less predictable involving breaks as well as the blending of the educational and labour market statuses of different kinds, which was the case in the life courses of young adults interviewed in this study. Further, since de-standardisation concerns not only the school-to-work transitions but other transitions, such as housing and family transitions as well, the key issue is how well the LLL policies work in practice in the contemporary societal situation where life courses are slipping from their temporal patterns, meaning that life stages are no longer determined by a specific age and the duration and forms of life course transitions as they used to be. Especially in Southwest Finland, but also in Kainuu, promoting smooth school-to-work transitions, including timely progression through and completion of studies, seems to be a key policy priority in LLL policies, particularly in educational and labour market policies. Despite this, the elements of recognising the need for individualised and tailored measures of support to make individualised and de-standardised learning and labour market trajectories possible are included in the policies as well. Moreover, all the interviewed experts emphasised the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on the young adults participating in the measures by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account.

The interviews of young adults revealed how early experiences and transitions can have enduring consequences by affecting subsequent experiences and transitions, thus resulting to cumulating disadvantages. The life courses of the interviewed young adults are underlining the fact that many young adults would need more comprehensive and long-lasting counselling and support in their transitions from one education level to another. The most critical transition point seems to be the transition from lower to upper secondary education. Supportive measures should be available and used well before the problems start to cumulate. There is a clear need for support not only before and during transitions, but also

after them. The social wellbeing of children and young people should also be paid attention to from the very first stages of schooling.

The interviews revealed that empowering young people and young adults, and related to this, strengthening young adults' agency, are important objectives of the present LLL policies. This includes improving young adults' self-confidence and facilitating their civic participation. Further, especially the experts from the two LLL policy measures in the field of youth and social policy emphasised that young people and young adults alike are heavily involved in the planning of the policy measures and activities. Involving the young adults in this way was seen by the experts as a way of empowering them and giving them a chance to participate in making decisions concerning their own lives.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Brief description of the expert interviews

Appendix 2. Brief description of the young adult interviews

Appendix 1. Brief description of the expert interviews

File code	Region	Policy field	Interview					
			Location	Interviewer	Duration	Disposition to talk	Incidents	Quality
E_FI_K_1	Kainuu	LMP	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	0:59:38	Very eager to talk and interested in the YA project. Relaxed and shared thoughts and opinions freely. Gave a tour of the facilities.	None	Very good, rich in information
E_FI_K_2	Kainuu	LMP	Interviewee's office	J. Tikkanen	0:50:08	Seemed a bit nervous in the beginning but relaxed quickly and talked more consistently. Was happy to participate.	None	Good, interviewee got side-tracked quite easily
E_FI_K_3	Kainuu	YSP	Interviewee's office	J. Tikkanen	1:15:14	Talked freely and at length. Has long experience in the field and was eager to reflect on the changes and their reasons.	Interviewee had to take a phone call	Very good, interviewee was very experienced
E_FI_K_4	Kainuu	YPS	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	0:56:37	Very relaxed and informal atmosphere. Talked freely, the interview was rather 'conversational'. Was eager to participate	None	Good, interviewee was fairly new to the job
E_FI_K_5	Kainuu	EP	Classroom	J. Tikkanen	0:52:44	Happy to participate but seemed to be a bit distracted due to an important meeting, which was just before the interview.	None	Good, interviewee seemed to have a lot on their mind but answered clearly
E_FI_SF_1	Southwest Finland	LMP	Classroom	R. Plamper	0:58:31	Seemed to be a little nervous in the beginning of the interview but relaxed considerably and talked freely and willingly later on.	None	Very good, interviewee was very experienced
E_FI_SF_2	Southwest Finland	LMP	Meeting room	R. Plamper	1:06:05	Eager to talk. The atmosphere was not fully unreserved but that was probably because the interviewer was a little unclear.	None	Good, interviewee did not work in the measure anymore, but participated in the planning of it
E_FI_SF_3	Southwest Finland	YSP	Meeting room	R. Plamper	1:09:51	Relaxed and self-confident. In the beginning, the interviewee was very official and it seemed almost to be talking straight from an official document of the project.	None	Very good, rich in information
E_FI_SF_4	Southwest Finland	EP	Interviewee's office	R. Plamper	0:46:03	Relaxed and interested in the project. Talked very openly about their work, students and the institution. Wide perspective.	None	Very good, interviewee was very experienced
E_FI_SF_5	Southwest Finland	YSP	Meeting room	R. Plamper	0:42:03	Relaxed but a little distant sometimes giving vague statements and seemed not to be willing to go deeper into the issues (or did not have enough experience to do so).	None	Good, fairly general and short answers
E_FI_NAT_1	National level	YSP	Interviewee's office	R. Rinne, T. Järvinen	1:28:58	Very eager to talk. Talked freely and at length. Very reflexive, critical thinking. Has long experience in the field. Structured and wide-scale view on topic.	None	Very good, rich in information.
E_FI_NAT_2	National level	EP	Meeting room	R. Rinne, T. Järvinen	0:41:01	Interviewee had forgotten the meeting. Interview started late. A little nervous at the beginning, but relaxed later on. Has long experience in the field. Good view on topic, but was cautious to answer some question	None	Good enough interview in general. Good in certain respects, moderate in others.
E_FI_NAT_3	National level	LMP	Meeting room	R. Rinne, T. Järvinen	0:49:25	Very eager to talk. Talked freely and length. Very reflexive, critical thinking. Has long experience in the field. Structured and wide-scale view on topic.	Interviewee had to take a phone call	Very good, rich in information

Appendix 2. Brief description of the young adult interviews

Alias	Interview					
	Location	Interviewer	Duration	Disposition to talk	Incidents	Quality
Aaron	Teacher's office	R. Plamper	01:01:45	In the beginning the interviewee was tensed but he relaxed during the interview. He was very eager to talk about his life and told many stories rather not always sticking to the topic.	Some noise from corridor	The interviewee talks a lot, sporadically, steers off topic often and maybe talks a bit too intimately at times. He is very willing to share his story and he wants to be heard. He has no trouble producing the spontaneous biography.
Aleksi	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	00:28:26	The interviewee was relaxed and confident and talked very freely. His answers were really short and concise, and he talked quite fast.	None	The spontaneous biography is relative long, at least in comparison to those of the other interviewees'. He begins his story at the kindergarten and proceeds from there calmly and in an organised manner to the present day. He is able to go into detail when needed but to also stay focused on the topic and keep the story doing.
Eeva	Counsellor's office	R. Plamper	00:45:54	She was peaceful and rather quiet but talked freely since the beginning of the interview. From time to time she was giggling but when asked about her parents she told that they are dead and that was very emotional for her.	None	The tone of the interview is very positive and bright. Contrary to the other interviewees, who started their spontaneous biography by telling about their family, early childhood and school time, and then continuing to later education, the interviewee skipped the early parts completely and started with the life after compulsory school.
Elsa	Class room	J. Tikkanen	00:40:48	The interviewee seemed fairly relaxed and was happy to participate in the interview. She was talkative, and the interview was rather 'conversational'.	None	In the beginning of the interview the interviewee does not quite know how to start and the spontaneous biography is very brief. However, as the interviewer asks specific questions she is more than happy to respond.
Helena	Office room	R. Plamper	00:57:00	She was happy and relaxed and talked eagerly. However, when coming back again and again to the topic of her health issue with hands she was seemingly in anguish.	None	The interviewee talks openly and at length. She tells about her life events and the hardships she has encountered very candidly and trustingly. She has no trouble producing spontaneous biography, although it is not very long.
Henri	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	00:45:52	The interviewee seemed rather shy and nervous as he did not make much eye contact and kept tapping his foot and fingers throughout the interview. It seemed, however, that he was very motivated to participate in the interview and 'get his story out'.	None	The spontaneous biography of this interviewee is extremely short. All in all his answers are super short and it feels as if he wants the interviewer to do all the work and he really does not seem to offer any answers willingly. Also, the answers he does offer are mostly one word 'yes/no' answers or very short sentences.
Julia	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	00:43:47	The interviewee was relaxed right from the start and seemed interested in the research project and the interview questions. She was eager to talk, but needed a lot of internal questions to facilitate reflecting on her life course so far.	None	The spontaneous biography of the interviewee, although it is concise, covers her life from her family to compulsory school years and all the way to present day. After that, however, her answers are rather short and to the point. The feeling is that she is not trying to be elusive, but rather she is not used to reflect on her feelings and life events and cannot not therefore offer that to this interview either.
Laura	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	01:12:36	The interviewee was very eager to talk and did, indeed, talk at length about many aspects of her life course. With regard to her mental health problems, however, she was clearly more reserved.	None	The most distinctive feature of the interview is the length of the interviewee's answers. Not only are the answers long, but also coherent and full of detail. The interviewee is very obliging and willing to share her story.

Maria	Class room	J. Tikkanen	01:06:04	The interviewee seemed rather reserved. She talked in a way that seemed quite free but it was like she was talking to herself, not the interviewer. She made very little eye contact.	Some noise from corridor	The spontaneous biography of the interviewee is very long, but also rather chattered. She has trouble getting started and needs some additional help from the interviewer in order to know what the interviewer wants her to talk about, but it seemingly gets easier once she starts talking about her school time and later education.
Markus	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	00:42:14	The interviewee was quite reserved at first but relaxed during the interview. He was not all that talkative and answered most of the questions rather shortly and concisely.	None	The spontaneous biography of the interviewee's is extremely short and concise. He merely recaps his educational path from the end of compulsory school to present day.
Mikael	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	00:38:46	The interviewee was relaxed and talked freely throughout the interview. He had a quite severe speech impediment due to which the interviewer struggled, especially in the beginning of the interview, to make out what he was saying.	None	The interviewee is not able to produce any kind of spontaneous biography at all. This may be due to his conditions of mild mental retardation and severe speech impediment. He is, however, open and willing to participate, but it just seems difficult for him to express his thoughts fluently.
Niina	Meeting room	J. Tikkanen	00:50:17	The interviewee seemed rather relaxed and talkative with the exception of (mental) health issues, which she didn't seem to want to talk about in detail even though she mentions them several times during the interview and though they had had a significant impact on her life course.	None	The spontaneous biographical account is not very elaborate, but she gives quite lengthy answers to the internal questions. The interview was fairly 'conversational', especially towards the end, but overall with regard to the method, probably not narrative enough.
Oskari	Office room	R. Plamper	01:00:19	He talked openly but the interviewer got sometimes confused with the details. He was relaxed since the beginning but sometimes when he talked about his mother he became tense and irritated.	None	The interviewee talked a lot and at length, and his spontaneous biography is fairly long (at least compared to many other Finnish young adults we interviewed). He is very able to reflect on his life experiences and their (self-perceived) causes as well as the ways he could solve his problems and move on in his life, even though he is currently struggling.
Saara	Counsellor's office	R. Plamper	00:48:10	She was relaxed, a little silent but joyful and talked willingly.	None	The interviewee seems to have a very stable picture of herself and her strengths and weaknesses. She talks willingly and at length, and at times steers off the topic. Her answers are organised and she is very articulate. Her spontaneous biography is neither long nor detailed.
Sofia	Counsellor's office	R. Plamper	01:05:12	She was happy and talked freely and lively about her life throughout the interview. She was very unreserved and sociable so the situation did not resemble an interview but more like a chat.	None	The interviewee talks a lot, at times even babbles. Her interview is by far the longest one. However, it seems that she talks at length and with very specific details about certain issues, but with other issues the answers are very short and quite evasive. Her spontaneous biography is long and detailed.
Timo	Counsellor's office	R. Plamper	00:37:25	He was relaxed but evasive throughout the interview and answered shortly to the questions. Maybe he did not want to talk about some topics.	None	The way the interviewee talks about himself seems very factual and to the point. The answers are there, but he does not tell much beyond them or express emotions or extra thoughts. His interview is one of the shortest ones and his spontaneous biography is very brief.
Tommi	Teacher's office	R. Plamper	00:33:58	In the beginning he was a little tensed. However, he started to talk rather freely even though he did not have so much to say. Sometimes the interviewer got a hunch that he did not want to tell everything or maybe he just did not find anything to say.	None	The distinctive feature of this interview is the shortness of the answers. The interviewee is very cooperative and willingly offers the answers, but it seems that he just is not able to build answers that would express long strains of thought. The spontaneous biography is also only a couple of sentences long.

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Work Package 5

Qualitative Analysis Germany – National Report

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Executive Summary

Life Long Learning (LLL) policies across Europe have been repeatedly described as highly fragmented and often conflicting in their objectives in relation to their target groups and means of implementation. Although they aim to improve economic growth and social inclusion for young adults, they might produce unintended effects when they are not well suited to the highly diverse target groups, their needs and their life trajectories, especially as the fragmented LLL policies produce different effects in different contexts. Departing from the LLL policies fitness for young adults, the project YOUNG_ADULLLT aims at identifying necessary parameters for future decision-making support systems. LLL policies for young adults are analysed in their interplay between economy, society, labour market as well as education and training systems at regional and local levels, including discussing issues of fragmentation and discrepancies affecting young adults' life course. Thus, the objectives of the project are:

1. To understand the relationship and complementarity of LLL policies in terms of orientations and objectives to their specific target groups including (intended and unintended) effects on their life course;
2. To enquire into policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults to explore hidden resources of young adults building their life projects;
3. To research LLL policies in their embedding and interaction in the regional economy, the labour market and individual life projects of young adults to identify best practices.

In the context of the overall objective of YOUNG_ADULLLT, this sub-study (WP 5) analyses the policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults and experts. As LLL policies become effective at the regional/local level, it provides insights into learning histories and their competences acquired in the available informal and non-formal contexts. As both are shaped by specific living conditions and educational/ employment/ etc. possibilities on site, this analysis allows us both, understanding how learning histories evolve in a specific context and give young people a voice to express their needs and expectations. Both is a precondition for successfully connecting young adults' needs and possibilities with education/training offers provided by LLL policies).

Thus, the aim of WP 5 is twofold: This National Report *first*, provides a systematic overview of the young adults' life projects, their perceptions of LLL policies, the compatibility with personal interests and orientations and their possibilities on site to improve their learning effectiveness. *Second*, it explores to what extent and how living conditions of young adults mediate and influence lifelong learning policies, by means of analyses of interviews with experts.

In order to describe and understand the perspective of young adults as well as life courses in both Functional Regions (FR), seven tasks were performed:

1. Developing interview questions and provide sampling criteria.
2. Contacting interviewees, conducting the interviews, followed by its transcription and anonymisation.
3. Probing coding and analysis procedures along example interviews leading to a refinement of the coding categories by harmonising the criteria as well as taking possible particularities into account.
4. Producing short summaries of each interview.

5. Coding and analysing the perception, meaning making and learning histories of young adults as well as the experts view on the interaction of LLL policies with young adults living conditions in the regional specific context.
6. Comparing the interaction between young adults and experts.
7. Report and assess the particularities and living conditions young adults are embedded in, which can exacerbate risk for young adults for building meaningful life projects and their needs for creating successful and effective life course using their skills in the given context.

In this study, the research object has been conceptualised along the perception and learning histories of young adults (chapter 2). Young adults are a heterogeneous group regarding their social realities, life projects, perspectives and needs and thus are differently affected by the various local context in which LLL policies unfold. This requires focusing on the subjectivities and individual life courses along their biography, learning history, professional career aspirations, subjective life projects, living conditions, their support systems, resilience, experience with LLL policies as well as the expectations they are confronted with.

Based on this conceptualisation the subjectivities and individual lives course are described along their learning histories as well as their meaning making of these along social, regional, gender and ethnic based inequalities; the life opportunities or obstacles created, which then manifest in educational and school-to-work transitions. Thus, the Report distinguish between the life stories of young adults, i.e. the themes young adults are talking about and how they talk about their life stories, i.e. how they present themselves and construct their life stories.

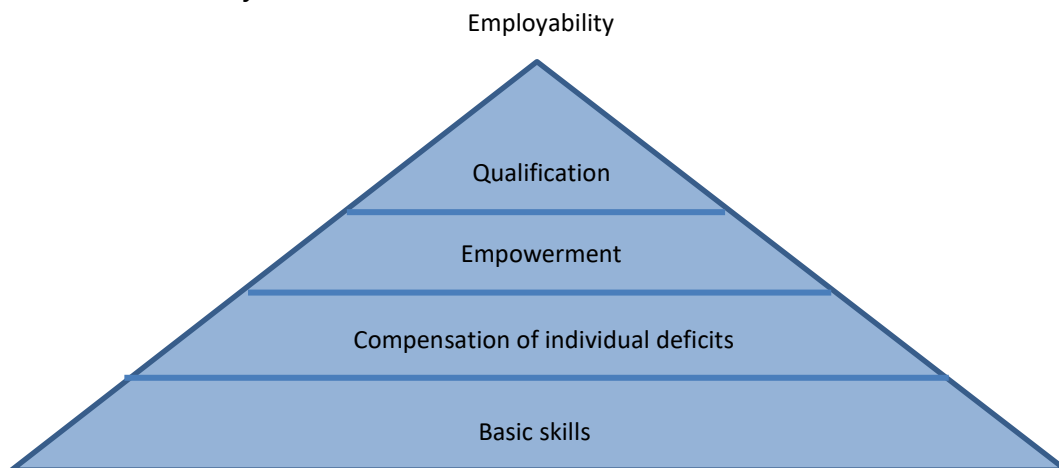
The results of this National Report are based on a qualitative analysis through interviews-in-depth with young adults (n=17) and experts from policy, employment and training/ providers (n=13). The interviews are chosen within the 2 FRs and policies mapped with in the previously finished sub-study on policy mapping, review and analysis (Working Package 3). Thus, we have in Rhein-Main 6 interviews with experts and 9 with young adults respectively in Bremen 7 with experts and 8 with young adults. The numbers vary due to the different possibilities of access to the field. The data collection of the interviews with young adults is conducted with biographical narrative interviews allowing us to understand their learning histories. The data collection of the experts is conducted with guided expert interviews to collect data on the young adults' experience with LLL policies in the two regions, FR Rhein-Main and Bremen, as well as on their skill sets.

The analysis follows this logic as well: first, the analysis is presented for the FR Rhein-Main, both experts (3.1), young adults (3.2) and their interaction with each other followed by the description of the experts in Bremen (4.1), the young adults (4.2) and their interaction with each other.

The young adults' experience with LLL policies **from the perspective of experts in the FR Rhein-Main** (3.1) are described along categories like objectives and evaluation, target groups, autonomy and biographical uncertainty and cooperation among actors. The main results are as followed:

- *Division of work between different actors and measures of lifelong learning*: Looking at the objectives of the policies on site, it seems as they are not really developing a common pattern. However, if we understand it as a functional differentiated system, we notice that they work together/intertwine and unfold their full potential in combination. Their different objectives can be envisioned as a task-pyramid/need-pyramid, with the different levels: basic skills, compensation of individual deficits, empowerment, qualification. Thus, each policy fulfils a different objective, almost in a complementary way yet unintentionally. The following figure shows the pyramid with its different levels:

FIGURE 2: Task Pyramid of LLL Policies



- *Target groups of lifelong-learning – between requirements and scopes of decision-making*: We noticed that, the service providers are not autonomous in choosing their target group as they are bound to the regulations of their funders or the requirements of companies. But they have decision-making-scopes and they use them differently. On the one hand, to ensure having full capacities of their measures/education courses and on the other hand, to support their potential participants to fulfil the access criteria (e.g. by offering support to successful complete aptitude tests). In some cases, this seems necessary because the participants “pushed down by the Jobcenter and the society” (E_GER_F_3 - 485) and thus are “not ambitious (at all)” (E_GER_F_3 - 484).
- *What living conditions of young adults do see experts as relevant?*: The living conditions are a crucial aspect for all experts, however, with a different focus. While the living conditions of the participants in the Fachoberschule (FOS/ specialised secondary school) from the perspective of the experts are strongly linked with the social background and the milieu, the experts of the independent service providers refer back to categories like “problem areas” and “expectations of others”. We assume that the diverse perspectives of the experts are connected with the objectives of the policies they are embedded in. While the here mentioned service providers try to change the situations (and the young adults!) the education course is focused on achieving the educational attainment.
- *“Autonomy”*: The different ways in which increasing autonomy and reducing biographical uncertainty are addressed can be explained with the different traditions and levels on which the measures are located and with different underlying pedagogical concepts. While both PmP and FOS reduce these aims to getting access to and functioning in the labour market and thereby equate autonomy with employment and adaption to labour market demands, VbFF – due to being

rooted in feminist approaches – tries to compromise between adapting to labour market demands and supporting young women in developing self-reflexivity.

- *The embeddedness of lifelong-learning policies:* The funders of the measures play a crucial role how the policies are embedded, which is the Jobcenter in two of the three chosen cases of our analysis of the FR Rhein-Main. For instance, they regulate the access of the young adults to the measure, along their age or as an obligatory part of the benefits system. Additionally, the service providers have an often loose but mostly dense net of co-operations established, which are used especially if they reach their own (professional) limits (i.e. cooperation with psychological support services).

The life courses and learning histories of young adults in the FR Rhein-Main (3.2) are described along like access to the measure, their life projects and professional orientations and their involvement in policy making on site.

- *Access – target group:* Through the analysis, two aspects of access can be differentiated: *First*, the amount of information the young adults have in the first place about the existence and availability of a measure. *Second*, the access criteria and procedures on site. For instance, the FOS students and in “Perspektive mit Plan” (PmP, ‘Perspective with a Plan’) experienced their access as “barrier-free” or just a formal act, the “Verein zur beruflichen Förderung von Frauen” (VbFF) women experienced a complex access procedure, including aptitude tests and personal interviews.
- *Peoples’ life projects – professional orientation:* We noticed a nearly optimal fitting between the function of the measure and the young adults’ description of their life projects respective their professional orientations. Only one student (Y_GER_F_9) reports that he did not choose the professional focus by his own. But he also mentioned that he comes to terms and continues his way.
- *Young adults’ expectations:* Their expectations are twofold: First, their anticipated future aims, and second, expected demands they see themselves to be confronted with. In the analysed interviews, we can observe a correspondence between expectations and the measures themselves. The participants of the independent service providers express their satisfaction with the arrangement of the measure especially against the contrast of former situations. In the FOS, the participants mainly see themselves confronted with the expectations of a successful graduation. All three measures share, that the young adults hope for a better future through them, mainly including a stable occupational future.
- *Involvement of young adults in the policy-making on site:* The involvement of the young adults depends on the objective of the policy itself and varies between complete involvement – partially involvement – none involvement: For instance, in PmP, a tailor-made single-case counselling, the participants themselves are allowed to set the agenda in accordance with their needs (complete involvement). The young mother in the VbFF are confronted with a given agenda, yet have the possibility to choose between additional offers and who can demand individual support (partially involvement). In contrast, the FOS, the curriculum is set and the students have the least possibility to choose along their needs (none involvement).

The interaction between young adults and experts in the FR Rhein-Main (3.3) is elaborated by describing the constellations of match/mismatch between expectations and experience parallel and/ or across the interviews.

- *Measure objectives and participants’ expectations:* For all selected measures the expectations of the young adults are in line with the offers of the providers, showing a good fit. Even in the FOS

we state an ideal fitting, especially because the students did not expect more than their successful completing of the education course. However, the question arises, if in the case of the FOS, the expectations of the young adults are already molded through their previous school experience, i.e. knowing, that the focus is on grades and attainment rather than a holistic support.

- *Access procedures and participants' experiences:* All of the selected measures use access criteria procedures. These procedures happen very publicly (aptitude tests, personal interviews in the VbFF / clear requirements in the FOS), in the management of the service provider (decision-making scope in the FOS / PmP) or indirectly because of the interest of third actors (companies in the VbFF). All providers try to be not too harsh in the use of the access criteria.
- *Fostering autonomy:* The bandwidth of fostering autonomy reaches from direct support within the measure to the support which ignores the present and aims direct in the future. But in all these cases we noticed a high agreement of the young adults who participate in the measures with this offered support. It seems, that on both sides the discourses on labour market inclusion as a means for autonomy is internalised as the focus is on a far, yet as promising described, occupational future.
- *Co-operating networks:* There is a well-functioning system of support measures in the region. The networks of the independent service provider deliver additional value for the young adults. Because of the multi-dimensional problems of young adults, a single service provider is often not sufficient but an important starting point for holistic support. The task pyramid (figure 2) shows how different providers and measures are coordinated and connected through a discursive net that links basic skills with an interpretation of empowerment inspired by activation and regular qualifications.

The young adults' experience with LLL policies **from the perspective of experts in the FR Bremen** (4.1) are described along categories like antecedents, objectives and evaluation, target groups, autonomy and biographical uncertainty and cooperation among actors. The main results are as followed:

- *Antecedents, objectives and evaluation of LLL policies:* Two of the policies emerged as a reaction to regional problems namely youth unemployment rates and drop-out rates from vocational education, while other two pre-existed in terms of target groups and objectives and therefore were re-labelled. With regard to the way objective were addressed a certain similarity to FR Rhein-Main can be observed: ensuring basic skills and stabilizing, empowering and training/qualifying. In contrast to Rhein-Main, most policies do not focus on one objective but rather combine several of them. Although, the combination of objectives seems they follow a more holistic approach, the overall scope is focused on employability, i.e. labour market inclusion of the young adults and avoidance of unemployment. We assume, that this is due to the impact of the funders of the policies. They provide the rules and regulations the measures have to comply to, mostly the Jobcenter, whose overall aim to support the transition into employment.
- *Target Groups:* The heterogeneous target groups are often described from a deficit perspective (e.g. lack of skill, psychological problems) and access the policies through different entry points. First, access based on application upon entrance, second, access imposed by the funding organisation i.e. by Jobcenter and third, no access criteria at all, as there are low threshold policies. When the experts describe gender imbalance they mainly refer to the fact that women are barely represented in the technical field, they barely find a training company after giving birth to children, etc.
- *Living conditions of the young adults:* It seems, that the policies objectives form a lens for the experts description. Especially the family situation, social background and the neighbourhood the

young adults grow up leads their description from a deficit perspective, i.e. describe the young adults coming from troubled areas marked by unemployment and lack of possibilities. This very milieu specific defines them along the social setting they grew up in and regards the social and structural settings as obstacles for them.

- *Autonomy and biographical uncertainty:* Their autonomy is defined and limited within a narrow set frame of employability as it is mostly described as the young adults' freedom to choose extra-curricular activities, but not education and training related content. Even for the policies with a focus social and pedagogical interventions the goal of employability is leading: They perceive motivation and stabilisation of the young adults as a precondition towards their autonomy, thus being able to enter the labour market. However, in order to reach that goal personal engagement of the policy personnel goes normally beyond the measures' framework (e.g. home visits, accompany to doctors' appointments).
- *Actors, coordination and cooperation:* Cooperation with different actors was mentioned as a key to enhancing the young adults' training opportunities. For enabling the transition from education in to training and work the experts emphasise on the role of the private sector, regardless of the policies objectives. Thus, they all developed stable and broad collaboration with the private actors. It seems, that the policies are steered by the demand of the private sector, and thus, by the labour market.

The **life courses and learning histories of young adults in the FR Bremen (4.2)** are described along the following categories: life and professional projects, expectation regarding the phases of their life courses and participation in LLL policy making.

- *Young adults' life projects:* When young adults referred to "life projects" they mostly referred to future career plans, specifically to their school to vocational education and subsequently from vocational education to the labour market. Thus, the rather labour market oriented objectives of the LLL policies match the young adults' anticipation for their future.
- *Young adults' life expectations:* The life expectations are mostly interlinked with the objectives of the policies. For instance, if the policy provides a school leaving certificate, the participants state, that they intend to gain one. Overall, employability is the most important goal for the young adults and having a stable job is described as the positive vision of their life. However, the stable employment was not described as a goal in itself but rather an instrument to achieve other goals in life as well: being to support a family on their own, buying material good or travel.
- *Participation in LLL policy making:* The participation in the LLL policy making through young adults was not mentioned in the interviews. It seems, that the young adults either perceive themselves not as active participants or they have a limited agency. We assume the latter one, as they all described the policies having a positive impact on their life.
- *Access and young adults:* The participation in the policies did not depends on the amount of information the young adults had access to. Their access was either voluntary, mostly informed by teachers, or involuntary as obligated part of the benefits scheme they already participated in.

The **interaction between young adults and experts in the FR Bremen (4.3)** is elaborated by describing the constellations of match/mismatch between expectations and experience parallel and/ or across the interviews.

- *Measure objectives and participants expectations:* The analysis showed that there is only a partial correspondence between policy's objective and what they expected towards the policy. The incongruence is mainly caused by either too low or too high expectations, e.g. the young adults perceived the level of curricular requirement in the vocational school too low or expected more a more service orientated approach, such as providing an apprenticeship instead of helping with the application process.
- *Access procedures and participants experiences:* In general, the access criteria are either established by the funding institution (i.e. as a requirement of the welfare benefit scheme) or based on applications (i.e. support through teachers and family). In the case of the latter, the access into the LLL policies can be perceived as an exit strategy from the formal school system, as many young adults received the recommendation for the policies by their teachers because they would not meet the academic expectancies of a regular school.
- *Fostering autonomy:* Both experts and young adults view autonomy from the perspective of the reduction of biographical uncertainty towards vocational education and employment (e.g. as variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities). Empowerment is perceived as means to the goal of employability: the stabilization and motivation of young adults is not a goal in itself, but rather their preparation to participate in the labour market.
- *Co-operating networks:* The policies have well established networks in the public and the private sector within the region, and are used to pave the young adults' way into the labour market (e.g. internships, apprenticeships, employment etc.).
- As a conclusion we can say that the young adults have completely internalised the discourse on labour market integration as they all have their future career plans at heart. A second aspect is about the interaction between the young adults and experts which although hierarchical is based on trust and dedication. The cooperation with networks has at its core the enhancement of young adults' empowerment and training opportunities.

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1. Introduction.

Life Long Learning (LLL) policies unfold differently in local contexts and influence the transition from school to work. Each context provides distinct opportunities or constraints affecting their social realities. As LLL policies are tailored for the national level, not necessarily for the local level, they display often competing and ambivalent orientations and objectives which can mismatch with young adults' life courses. The interlinkage of personal needs, interests and opportunities in the local context are important as they shape young adults' biographies and allows to understand the relationship between the individual agency and the societal structure (Bertaux, 1990). Therefore, the learning biographies of young adults allow to describe first, their subjective experience and expectations of the future (cf. Kohli, 1985) and second their individual role in meaning making and active construction of their own biography in the interplay with the social context, especially in times of uncertainty due to fragmentations and fractures in their life course (cf. Schröer et al, 2013, S. 11; Walther, 2006, p. 120). Thus, describing their learning biographies highlights to what extent and how the life course of young adults is interceded and influenced by LLL policies and their living conditions.

In the context of the overall objective of YOUNG_ADULLLT, this sub-study (WP 5) focuses on the qualitative analysis of the young adults and experts' perception of policies' fit and potentials for their life course. As LLL policies become effective at the regional/local level, the sub-study aims to provide insights into the learning histories of young adults shaped by the specific living conditions in the different local contexts for investigating young adults' competences acquired in the available informal and non-formal contexts. The LLL policies have been mapped and reviewed in a previous -study (WP3) (cf. Kotthoff et al., 2017), As the learning histories are embedded in specific living conditions, the risk profiles provided in the quantitative sub-study (WP4) are contextualised in the described life courses (cf. Schaufler et al., 2017) as well as in the skill supply and demand of the labour markets (WP6) on site (cf. Weiler et al., 2017b).

The biographies of young adults are analysed along their institutionalised construction. This means, we focus on their 'narrated life' and how they create subjective meaning making in their life course within institutional regulations and policies. Young adults are embedded in normative, legal and organisational rules forming perceptions on how young adults should build a successful life – however, the opportunities are often out of the young adults' control. Therefore, creating a successful life course includes different aspects besides personal interest and capacity, such as the regional opportunities on site as well as society's expectation of what goals and aims should be achieved in different life stages and ages (cf. Elder, 1994; Brückner & Mayer, 2004; Heinz et al. 2009). Departing from this, we *first*, analyse the pathways of young adults which are molded by the prevailing institutional arrangements and the decisions they make at

given moments in their life course; *second*, by complementing this description with experts' views on the possibilities and limitations of LLL policies for the young adults living, learning and working within these regions (Functional Regions, cf. Kotthoff et al. 2017; Weiler et al. 2017a). This allows us not only to understand their learning histories in relation to their living conditions, but also to give young people a voice to express their needs and expectations as a precondition for successfully connecting with education/training offers (policies). Both, the living conditions and LLL policies in both regions are briefly going to be described in the following sections.

Brief descriptions of living conditions of young adults:

Growing up in a specific region can make it easier or hinder in creating 'successful' life projects. As young adults are heterogeneous group regarding their social realities, life projects and perspectives they are also affected differently by structural developments as different regions provide differing socio-economic opportunities and limitations. For instance, if a young adult wants to make an apprenticeship, but no opportunities are offered by the labour market on site, building a career is limited. Thus, the living condition can produce and/or enhance vulnerable situations for young adults (cf. Schaufler et al, 2017, p. 8ff.). The following figure shows, that the social realities in the FR Rein-Main and Bremen vary along structural characteristics of the regions, such as the infrastructure, education and work opportunities.

Both regions vary demographically, with the FR Rhein-Main being the larger region, both geographically and in terms of population density having a tightly knit urban metropolitan area with an intensive social mobility while the FR Bremen is more a more rural area with a small core and sparsely populated agricultural surroundings (ibid., p. 15). The core of Rhein-Main is growing by attracting workforce rather than people planning families. In contrast, Bremen is overall shrinking and we can observe a high amount of an early motherhood. In both cases, more and more young adults live at home – also due to the high living costs (Frankfurt a.M.: 14 EUR/m² and City of Bremen: 9,06 EUR/m²) and changed reforms of social policy.

Although Both regions are rather wealthy, it is unevenly distributed as the outer rims hardly participate from the economic turnover. For instance, let alone the city of Frankfurt a.M. exceeds 91,300 EUR the national average (GDP 35,900 EUR/ capita) and the EU-28 average (27,600 EUR/ capita) as well its directs surrounding areas like Offenbach (37,100 EUR) or in its very southern rim the district Alzey-Worms (23,700 EUR). In Bremen, its main city has an GDP of 47,300 EUR, not even the half of Frankfurt city, with a lower wealth in its outer areas (Verden: 17,800 EUR; Osterholz: 20,400 EUR; Oldenburg: 20,500 EUR) (INKAR; 2017). Especially the rural and agriculture areas in Bremen, have little economic strength, as this sector contributes remarkably little to the overall GDP (in this sector we have for example 0.76% of the turnover

compared to 1.8% EU-28 average). Plus, in Bremen traditionally dominant sectors are on the decline (such as logistics), other low-wage sectors are growing (cf. Schaufler et al., 2017, p. 22f.).

Table 1 Selected variables from the German Quantitative Analysis of Young Adults' Data

Variables	FR Rhein-Main	FR Bremen
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14.755,3 km² • 6.5% of the German population (approx. 5.3 million inhabitants); • young adults: 5.5% (20-24) and 6.6% (25-29) (NUTS-2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13.750,97 km² • 3.3% of the German population (approx. 2.7 million inhabitants); • young adults: 6.4% (20-24) and 7.5% (25-29) (NUTS-2)
Young adults living with their parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50.1% (20-29) • Males: 2006: 57.2%; 2013: 60.1% • Women: 2006: 32.8%; 2013: 39.4% 	
Family planning	Postponement of motherhood (age 40-45) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frankfurt a.M.: 1995-2014 from 7.4% to 17.6% • German average: 4.4% to 10.9% 	early motherhood (under age of 20) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Bremerhaven: 2014: 20.2% • German average: 7.9%
GDP per capita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014: 38,830 EUR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014: 29,690 EUR
NEETS	Darmstadt (NUTS-2) 2016: 7,3%	Bremen (NUTS-2) 2016: 9.4%
	Under EU-27 average (11.5%) Over national average (6.6%)	
Youth unemployment (2014; under 25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With 5.1% rather low, under EU (22.2%) and national average (5.7%) • Frankfurt city: 6.8% • Worms: 8.6% • Offenbach: 8.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With 6.4% rather high and over national average • City of Bremerhaven: 13.6% • Wilhelmshaven: 9.7% • Bremen: 9%
disposable income for households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darmstadt (NUTS-2) 21,600 EUR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bremen (NUTS-2) 19,700 EUR

© Schaufler et al., 2017; Sources: Eurostat Demography and migration database, EU-SILC microdata, Eurostat Economy and finance database, INKAR 2017

In Germany, the regions largely determine the chances for education and thus occupation (cf. Schaufler et al., 2017, p. 24ff., cf. Weiler et al., 2017b, p. 12). In both regions more and more students receive the Abitur for entering higher education (approx. 40% in Rhein-Main and 30% in Bremen), but we have districts where the lower secondary education certificate (Haupschule) has very high attainment levels (over 20% in city of Offenbach, Aschaffenburg and Friesland) – a school from steadily on the decline due to reforms. Being at risk is also mirrored by the number of NEETS: Although their number is under the EU average, the core of both regions is above it. A stable share of 28% are in the transitions system (Übergangssystem) waiting to enter the VET system, however, competing with the students from higher school tracks (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2016, p. 103ff.).

The situation of the labour market shows similarities and differences between the Functional Regions. In both regions, the labour markets are highly unequal along the territory, showing the concentration of high skilled workers in the core-parts, while the low economic developed regions seems to retain low-skilled workers. However, the conditions to access labour market are quite diverse: growing up in Bremen is a higher risk for being unemployed in itself, especially, as it seems, that the unemployment rates in Bremen fluctuate, while in Rhein-Main they are slowly but steadily reduced. At the same time, the number of apprenticeship vacancies is rather low in FR Bremen and cannot absorb all the unemployed young adults available for employment. As a result, the high expectations from employers increases the competition for jobs especially for those local young adults that are socially stigmatised (Weiler et al., 2017b, p. 18ff.; p. 35ff.).

Living in the core of both regions enhances the risk of receiving benefits for long term-unemployment. The region itself seems to be a strong predictor of poverty, as the child poverty rate varies: The chances of growing up poor are three times higher in the cities Bremerhaven, Bremerhaven (37.2%, FR Bremen) or Offenbach (34.8%, FR Rhein-Main) than in the cities Osterholz (9.3%, FR Bremen) or the city of Fulda (9%, FR Rhein-Main). The above-mentioned poverty risk profiles are similar in terms of health, as growing up in poor families leads to a decreased health status. As detailed local data is missing, we assume, based on data on poverty and unemployment, that the health risk is also high in the cities of Bremerhaven and Wilhelmshaven (both FR Bremen) and Worms and Offenbach (both FR Rhein-Main).

As a result, young adults living in the two regions face different structural obstacles, which can cause uncertainty in their life course. As LLL policies address young adults, especially in situations of high uncertainty or near social exclusion (cf. Kotthoff et al., 2017), the offered policies in the two regions come to the fore.

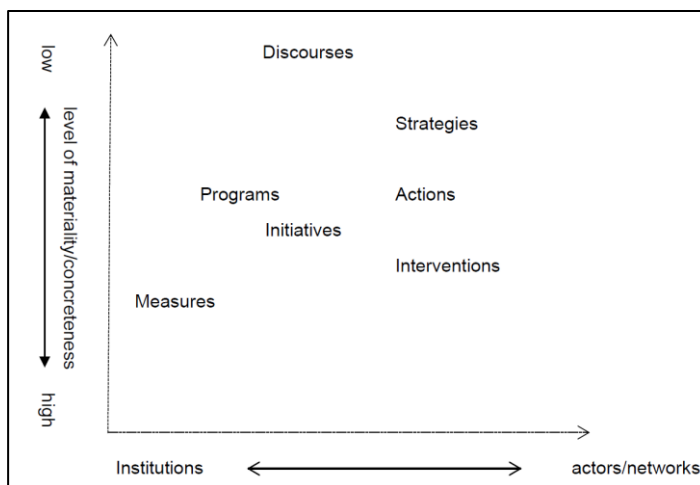
Brief description of policies in each functional region:

The key term “policy” is employed in YOUNG_ADULLLT on the basis of a broad definition to correspond with the wide scope of LLL activities in each functional region (cf. Kotthoff et al., 2017, p. 16). In political science, policy is commonly conceptualized from a system-theoretical perspective as one of three basic dimensions of the political: “institutional (polity), substantive (policy) and processual (politics)” (Bohlinger et al., 2016, p. 12; Windhoff-Héritier, 1987). From this perspective “policy” refers to “the *content* of political decisions and collective binding regulations conducted by or at least in cooperation with political elites or representatives” (Kotthoff et al., 2017, p. 15), as well as to proposals for such regulation made by different political actors in different policy areas (cf. Kotthoff et al., 2017, p. 15). As the factors and actors influencing this content dimension might vary substantially among the research sites in the project, the use of the term “policies” in YOUNG_ADULLLT includes

“policies ranging from a low level of materiality and concreteness, such as discourses, to very concrete measures. In addition, our understanding of ‘policies’ includes policies, which are formally initiated and run by a single or a group of institutions (e.g. ministry of labour and/or ministry of education) as well as those policies, which are more informally initiated and run by networks” (Kotthoff et al., 2017, p. 16).

Departing from this broad definition of policy, LLL policies were mapped, reviewed and analysed in a previous sub-study by selecting nine policies per Functional Regions (cf. Bittlingmayer et al., 2016). Using the broad definition, in the German context we employed a broad spectrum from concrete measures to strategies and agendas.

Figure 1 Coordinate system for identifying policies



Source: Kotthoff et al., 2017, p. 17

As these policies are the basis for the selection of the interviewees (experts and young adults) LLL policies were selected that cover primarily the age frame of the target group young adult (18-29) in educational, social, youth and labour market policies. The main results of these analyses are:

- In both FRs, the LLL policies are situated at the intersection of education, labour-market, and social youth policy and marked by an activating approach although the structural and socio-economic conditions vary in the regions (cf. Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, p. 1ff.).
- Most of the LLL policies in both regions follow more of a utilitarian humanist perspective than an emancipatory humanism perspective. This means that the LLL policies aim to foster the young adults' employability by improving their skills and educational trajectories with LLL policies rather than presenting education as a goal in itself (cf. ibid, p. 4f7f.).

- As a consequence, the target groups of young adults are shaped along a notion of being in need of gaining the next certificate, skill set etc. in other word, to participate in the labour market (ibid., p. 48).
- The overall policy goals – “labour market integration, reduction of early school leavers and ensuring sufficient numbers of skilled workers” (ibid., p. 3) – are strongly shaped by discourses on a national level concerned with individualizing problems rather than identifying structural obstacles. Among these discourses are the “academisation of the VET system, the shortage of skilled workers as well as skill and demand (mis)matches” (ibid., p. 3).

Although both regions have similarities in the policies objectives, they are implemented differently on the regional/local level. The following tables show a brief summary of the main characteristics of the mapped policies along the above mentioned level of materiality/ institutionalisation, their target group, the objectives of the measurement, the solutions proposed by the LLL policy as well as the policies time horizon. The objectives between the regions differ. While in FR Rhein-Main the main focus is on educational policies, in FR Bremen the focus is on youth, social and labour market policies (ibid, p. 3). For instance, the LLL policies in both regions focus on different target groups. FR Bremen clearly focusses on individuals that are identified as low/unskilled and of (potential) cost to the welfare system. For example, programmes frequently target Early School Leavers (ESL) or those at risk of turning into ESL. Measures aim at securing either the acquirement of a school-leaving certificate, the transition into the in the VET-system, or the successful completion of an already initiated qualification in the VET-system. The “Werkschule”, for instance, is a type of school dedicated to learners who have completed 8th grade and are struggling with their studies (Lernbenachteiligung). The school offers the possibility to obtain the “Berufsbildungsreife” (vocational education entrance qualification) in a context that offers an additional year for the two-year curriculum, multiprofessional teams and small classes, as well as practice-based instruction geared towards “successful integration into the skilled craft’s sector of the VET system” (Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, pp. 24f.).

While measures for this target group are important in the FR Rhein-Main as well, they are complemented by interventions directed at individuals that have already acquired a school-leaving certificate or an initial set of labour-market relevant skills. The “Netzwerk Wiedereinstieg” (network re-entry), for example, seeks to activate already skilled workers (Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, p. 65). Furthermore, in the FR Rhein-Main, a stronger commitment to address structural problems at the interface between education and VET-systems is added to the overall concern of LLL policies with increasing individual capacity. The objective of the “Qualifizierungsoffensive” (qualification campaign), for example, is to develop more flexible and permeable systems and structures of training and further education, financing among other projects aiming to improve transition management (cf. Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, pp. 29–30).

Table 2 Mapping of LLL policies in FR (cf. Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, pp. 64-70)

	Materiality (M) & institutionalisation (I)	Target group	Objective	Solutions proposed	Time horizon
“Fachkräftesicherung Hessen - Gesamtkonzept”	Governmental initiative - Low to medium level of M - High level of I	- Broad; including low skilled workers and migrants	- Activating of unexploited working potential - Providing tailor-made post-qualification for low skilled worker	- Vocational training and further education - Immigration and integration	- Mid-term (5 year duration)
“Netzwerk Wiedereinstieg”	Network - Low to medium level of M - Low level of I	- Mothers; especially young adults	- Enabling reintegration into professional life	- Pooling resources in a network	- Long-term
“Qualifizierungsoffensive”	Governmental initiative - Low to medium level of M - High level of I	- Employees of all ages	- Increasing the flexibility and permeability of systems and structures of training	- Funds for projects sharing the same objectives - Improvement of frameworks	- Mid-term (6 year duration)
„Qualifizierte Ausbildungsbegleitung in Betrieb und Berufsschule“ (QuABB)	Programme under ‘Qualifizierungsoffensive’ - Medium to high level of M - High level of I	- Apprentices in the dual system and their training companies	- Increasing completion of the apprenticeships	- Coaching - Improved networking of relevant actors	- Mid-term (until 2020)
„Optimierung der lokalen Vermittlungssarbeit im Übergang Schule – Beruf“ (OloV)	Programme under ‘Qualifizierungsoffensive’ with network character - Medium level of M - Medium to high level of I	- Pupils in general schools - Young adult school leavers and youth - Young adults in the transition system - Independent service providers	- Improving visibility and transparency of measures and actors	- Improved networking of relevant actors - Development and provision of guidelines and quality standards	- Long term (since 2005)
“Gesellschaft für Jugendbeschäftigung” (GBJ)	Municipal service provider - High level of M - High level of I	- Pupils in secondary schools and vocational schools - Young people who are addressed by social services and the Job Center	- Integration of young people into the labour market - Systematization of the school to work transitions - Supporting young people to develop realistic ideas of professions.	- Wide range	- Long term (for 20 years)
“Verein zur beruflichen Förderung von Frauen” (VbFF)	Independent service provider - High level of M - High level of I	- single mothers up to 26 years with a school leaving qualification	- successful transition into the VET system	- thirty hours per week part-time vocational training	- Long term (since 1998)
“Fachoberschulen”	Education course - High level of M - High level of I	- young people with at least an intermediate school leaving certificate	- acquisition of leaving certificate that provides entrance qualification for universities of applied science	- schooling - vocational training	- Permanent
“Perspektive mit Plan”	Measure - High level of M - High level of I	- Young people between 16 and 26 commissioned by the City of Frankfurt and the “Jugendjobcenter” (youth employment agency)	- Solving individual problems	- Consulting and holistic support	- Long term

Table 3 Mapping of LLL policies in FR Bremen (cf. Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, pp. 58-63)

	Materiality (M) & institutionalisation (I)	Target group	Objective	Solutions proposed	Time horizon
“JOBSTARTER plus – Project NewStart Bremen” (NewStart)	Project - low level of M - medium level of I	- University students at risk of drop out / drop outs	- Successful transition into VET system	- Counselling	- Mid-term; further funding unclear
„MoTivation, ZiEle, Erfahrung und KoMpetenz“ (TEAM)	Project - medium level of M - Low to medium level of I	- Young adults without a school leaving certificate	- Enabling transition over the first threshold	- Vocation-oriented schooling: approx. 50/50 ordinary schooling and VET training in work-shops	- Long-term
„COMMPASS: Aufbruch. Respekt. Orientierung“ (COMPASS)	Project - Medium to high M - Low level of I	- Students of the special school from ‘Werkschule’	- Raising self-esteem and respect for others - Enabling transition over the first threshold	- Mentoring	- Mid-term
„Berufliche Lebensplanung für junge Mütter“ (BeLeM)	Project - High level of M - Medium level of I	- Mothers under the age of 21 with difficulties to reintegrate	- Achieving a school-leaving certificate	- Schooling in small groups with child care - Offers on Vocational and life orientation	- /
„Lust auf Zukunft“	Project - Low to medium level of M - Low level of I	- Early school leavers and students at risk of leaving school early	- Return to or continuation of schooling	- Seminars and classes in profession and life orientation.	- Long-term (since 1995)
“Verhinderung von Bildungsabbrüchen” (VerA)	Project - Low level of M - Low level of I	- Apprentices at risk of interrupting their apprenticeships	- Completion of the apprenticeship	- Mentoring and counselling	- Long-term (10 year duration)
“Jugend stärken”	Project - Low level of M - Medium to low level of I	- Drop-outs in disadvantaged quarters	- Reintegration into regular schooling/VET	- Outreach and support through street workers	- Long-term
“Bleib dran”	Project - Low to medium level of M - Low to medium level of I	- Individuals encountering problems during their apprenticeship	- Continuation of the apprenticeship or successful transition to another apprenticeship	- Mediation	- Long-term
“Werkschule”	Type of school - High level of M - High level of I	- Students at risk of leaving school early	- Enabling transition over the first threshold	- Vocation-oriented schooling	- Permanent

WP5 offers important insights to various actors involved in the field of lifelong learning. Policy-makers and education authorities get an overview of the lifelong learning policy landscape and the current state of a field which is often described as an unclear and inscrutable 'jungle'. This report shows that, despite all the differentiation in the field, general structures and developments occur. Policy-makers can use these insights to guide the processes happening in the field. Researchers and professional communities can use this report to obtain insights into conducting a complex multi-level research design and, furthermore, to see the benefits of combining different theoretical perspectives within a comparative research project. Even if we think that this report supplies quite a few answers, we strongly recommend using the results, but especially the open questions of this report as starting points for further research, which are necessary in such a dynamic and relevant field. For service providers, we offer with this report insights into the lifelong learning policy landscape in their country. It can be used for initiating self-reflection processes in their own organisation or region. Some of the findings will seem confusing to this group of actors; other findings will be assumed as self-evident, but can be used to strengthen already implemented processes. And, last but not least, we are convinced that the insights of WP5 and this report could support and strengthen the implementation of LLL-policies and are therefore useful for young adults.

This national report is divided into five parts beside this introduction. After the introduction in chapter 2 the methodology is presented including the data collection process, the sampling criteria, the approach to the interviewers training and the approach of the analysis. The results for the FR Rhein-Main is presented in Chapter 3 and divided into the results based on the interviews with the expert (3.1.) and the young adults (3.2.). The results are drawn together in a comparative analysis of the interaction between young adults and experts (3.3.). Chapter 4 is structured in the same way and presents the results from the FR Bremen.

The following sub-chapter provides an overview of the data gathering process.

2. Data collection, Treatment and Analysis

Based on the overall theoretical perspectives of the project (cf. Weiler et al., 2017a), the research object has been conceptualised along the subjectivities and individual life courses in young adults' learning histories in their regional settings. As young adults are a heterogeneous group regarding their lives courses, perspectives and living conditions (cf. Weiler et al., 2016), they have different needs, interests and opportunities to create a meaningful life. Each life course is shaped differently by the regional setting there are embedded in, as LLL policies fit differently into the local context, providing different opportunities for creating an autonomous life and balance out biographical uncertainty. Therefore, growing up in a specific region can make-or-break it for young adults, as some regions make it easier to create their life projects along their needs

than others do. Against this background, the analysis of young adults' life courses allows to describe the particularities of needs and interests of young adults within the conditions of the regions they are living in, which can exacerbate biographical uncertainty and vulnerability for young adults building their life project.

Being a young adult is a crucial time as key decisions are made on education, training, creating a family and engaging with society (cf. Wutzkowsky & Weiler, 2016). However, the point in time and aim of these transitions are shaped by society's expectations as the life course is embedded in institutionalised social perceptions of normative, legal or organisational rules (cf. Elder, 1994; Brückner & Mayer, 2004; Heinz et al. 2009; Weiler et al., 2017). These expectations often display a notion of a linear life course, meaning that each transition follows age-related stages in their developmental process. This means the points in time when a young adult should finish school, should start to work, should start to build their own family are highly determined by societal values. Deviations from that timeline, e.g. due to lack of opportunities (external factors) or illness (internal factors) can potentially lead to their being socially constructed as 'outsiders' from dominant social norms or 'normality', hindering their growth and social inclusion (cf. Kovacheva, 2016). However, due to social change, these socially created courses and sequences can no longer be taken for granted as they increasingly become non-linear and fragmented. The universal expectation of a standardised life course following linear patterns is dissolving more and more, shifting into a discontinuous and disordered life course; however, this idea of standardised life courses continues to often be supported by LLL policies (cf. Weiler et al., 2017, p. 73f.). As a result, young adults face social expectations of how they should create their life course that their surroundings no longer provide the needed opportunities for. Thus, building a meaningful life course cannot be reduced to personal motives and skills but also needs to take the institutional resources and constraints into account (ibid. p.75). Thus, this National Report informs future policy-making on the relation of agency and structure to develop a better understanding of how young adults create meaningful biographies within contingent live courses and biographical uncertainty.

Departing from this conceptualisation, the report provides a description of young adults' life courses as well as their meaning making of these along social, regional, gender and ethnic-based inequalities; the life opportunities or obstacles created, which then manifest in educational and school-to-work transitions. This means that this report to distinguish between the life stories of young adults, i.e. the themes young adults are talking about and how they talk about their life stories, i.e. how they present themselves and construct their life stories. As their life stories are influenced by LLL policies, their skills and formal/ non-formal qualifications in the selected regional contexts are of central importance, especially in relation to the labour market.

The qualitative analysis based the policies mapped within the previously finished sub-study on policy mapping, review and analysis (WP3). We selected policies of all three important policy fields of LLL. Education, labour market and the social- and youth policy sector. Three policies per functional region were selected for the fieldwork and analysis in WP5. For the selection we orientated on the concept of maximum contrast. The measures we take into account show the broad range of LLL polices, with different target groups, different requirements and different functions.

For the FR Rhein-Main the following policies form the empirical data base for WP5:

- 1) The first measure is offered by an independent service provider for further education, the “Zentrum für Weiterbildung” / “Centre for further education” (ZfW). The measure is called “Perspektive mit Plan” / “perspective with a plan (PmP). Background of this measure is the finding that young people, who depend on social benefits, have often multiple problems at the same time. The plurality of the problems can prevent the search for a job or a VET place which makes it impossible for them to get into the labour market. The measure provides consulting and support for young people between 16 and 26 commissioned by the City of Frankfurt and the Jobcenter, which are at the same time the funder. PmP offers an individual tailor-fitted support. The concrete support the measure offers depends on the needs of the young person. Possible Interventions can be individual case work for coping with the everyday life, group trainings, competence trainings, stabilisation, guidance, clarification of the life situation, initiation of assistance measures, long-term, intense social-pedagogical support at the transition into vocational training, further education or Work, development of personal and professional perspectives.
- 2) The VbFF (Association for the professional development for women) is an independent service provider for support measures with a focus on training and professional development, which aims primarily at women. The organization was founded in 1978 in Frankfurt am Main and has a history in the women’s movement and still refers to a feminist perspective. They offer a thirty hours per week part-time vocational training for single mothers. They cooperate with companies und support the single mothers in coping with the challenges of child care during vocational training (in company and professional school) and different social problems. The vocational training takes place in the collaborating companies and the VbFF itself, where they organize child care, specialized teaching and exam preparation. Their objective is to enable young mothers a vocational training. They address single mothers up to 26 years living in Frankfurt and having a school leaving qualification.

- 3) “Fachoberschulen” (FOS) are courses of general education with a professional focus organized in professional schools. The courses address young people with at least an intermediate school leaving certificate. Certificates provide access to higher education in universities of applied science (not regular universities). There are different forms of organization, disciplines and professional focus (e.g. engineering, construction technology, nutrition, social services). The school selected has its professional focus on construction.

For the FR Bremen these three policies were selected:

- 1) *Werksschule* is a new institutionalized school form since 2012, which has the goal to provide students having learning difficulties with a secondary school degree, which leads to a further integration into the VET system or labour market. In comparison to other school forms in the *Werksschule* students have less theoretical input and more practical instruction and at the same time they also have more time instead of 2 years three years (from 9th to 11th grade) to complete their school degree of erweiterte Berufsbildungsreife (extended vocational education)
- 2) *Jugend Stärken* (‘Strengthening Youth’) deals with counselling, case management and clearing mainly of young adults being in the transition from school to work but also NEETs, ESL, etc. This policy is mainly directed to young adults aged between 18-24, who are in the transition system between school and work and are not optimally aided by the policies of the regulating system. They mostly come from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and they get support in career orientation and also in matters related to familiar, financial, legal and health issues. A second policy of the same independent service provider, in which young adults are referred to in the interview is *Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung (BaE-External Vocational Training)*, which trains young adults sent by the Job Center as apprentices and tries to place them in a company, in which they can continue their apprenticeships. Finally, the third policy mentioned and described by the experts is called *Förderzentrum Jugend* (Youth Support Centre) and has a manifold goal: to offer individual stabilization, help with job and apprenticeships’ applications, help them gain a school leaving certificate and help them finding an apprenticeship position or a job.

- 3) *Bleib Dran (Keep at It!)* is part of Bremer LLL policy landscape since 1999 and has been created as a response to the high drop-out rates (of 20-25%) from VET. It aims to support apprentices mainly from the craft-based trades (as having the highest drop-out rates) but newly also from the industry to finish their apprenticeships. This support is in form of low threshold counselling, conflict mediation and prevention.

Within these policies we conducted interviews with experts and young adults. The data collection of the experts is conducted with guided expert interviews. A criterion for the selection of the experts was their location in the hierarchy of the organization. Our aim was to sample managers of the policies as well as street level professionals. The following tables show the realized samples in the FR Rhein-Main (table 4) and FR Bremen (table 5):

Table 4 Realized sample of experts in FR Rhein-Main

Code of expert	Gender	Agency/ organisation	Position	Programme
E_GER_F_1	F	VBFF ('the association').	head of department / case manager	Part-time training
E_GER_F_2	F	VBFF ('the association').	Street-level-professional	Part-time training
E_GER_F_3	F	ZfW (centre for further education)	Manager and street-level-professional	Perspektive mit Plan (perspective with a plan)
E_GER_F_4	M	ZfW (centre for further education)	Street-level-professional	Perspektive mit Plan (perspective with a plan)
E_GER_F_5	F	vocational school	Street-level-professional	Fachoberschule (FOS)
E_GER_F_6	M	vocational school	Manager and streetlevel-professional	Fachoberschule (FOS)

Table 5 Realized sample of experts in FR Bremen

Code of expert	Gender	Agency/ organisation	Position	Programme
E_GER_B_1	M	TBZ	Head master/manager	<i>Werksschule</i>
E_GER_B_2	2F+1M	WaBeQ GmbHg	Department head team manager street level professional	<i>Jugend Stärken Förderzentrum BaE</i>
E_GER_B_3	2F+ 1M	Bleib Dran project	Street level professionals	<i>Bleib Dran</i>

The data collection of young adults' perception and experience with LLL policies is conducted with biographical narrative interviews. This allowed us to understand the specific living conditions of young adults and their learning histories. For the selection of the young adults we tried to achieve a balanced sample with regard to gender for the whole sample. According to the given target group of young adults we took care to sample young adults between 18 and 29 years old.

The usage of this sampling criteria leads to the following realized sample in the FR Rhein-Main (table 6) and the FR Bremen (table 7):

Table 6 Realized sample of young adults in FR Rhein-Main

Code	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Policy Programme
Y_GER_F_1	F	18	majority	Secondary (Hauptschule)	"Perspektive mit Plan"
Y_GER_F_2	M	24	majority	Secondary (Realschule)	"Perspektive mit Plan"
Y_GER_F_3	F	28	minority	Higher school leaving certificate (Abitur)	VbFF
Y_GER_F_4	F	24	majority	Secondary (Hauptschule)	VbFF
Y_GER_F_5	F	27	minority	Higher school leaving certificate (Abitur)	VbFF
Y_GER_F_6	M	25	majority	Secondary (Realschule)	"Perspektive mit Plan"
Y_GER_F_7	M	19	minority	Specialised Higher school leaving certificate (Fachabitur)	Fachoberschule
Y_GER_F_8	M	19	Majority	Specialised Higher school leaving certificate (Fachabitur)	Fachoberschule
Y_GER_F_9	M	18	Minority	Specialised Higher school leaving certificate (Fachabitur)	Fachoberschule

Table 7 Realized sample of young adults in FR Bremen

Code	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Policy Programme
Y_GER_B_1	M	20	majority	Secondary (Hauptschule)	<i>Werksschule</i>
Y_GER_B_2	M	18	majority	Secondary	<i>Werksschule</i>

				(Hauptschule)	
Y_GER_B_3	M	18	minority	Secondary (Hauptschule)	<i>Werkschule</i>
Y_GER_B_4	M	22	minority	Specialised Higher school leaving certificate (Fachabitur)	<i>Werkschule</i>
Y_GER_B_5	M	19	majority	Secondary (Hauptschule)	<i>Werkschule</i>
Y_GER_B_6	M	25	majority	Secondary (Realschule)	<i>Förderzentrum</i>
Y_GER_B_7	F	19	majority	Secondary (Hauptschule)	<i>Förderzentrum</i>
Y_GER_B_8	F	25	majority	Secondary (Realschule)	<i>BaE</i>

The tables show that we conducted and analysed in total 17 interviews with young adults and 13 interviews with experts on site. For the FR Rhein-Main we conducted interviews with 6 experts. In each policy we interviewed the responsible manager of the measure and one street level professional. In some cases the managers are at the same time directly involved in the work with the young adults. Only in the VbFF the manager is excluded from the work with the young adults. We conducted 9 Interviews with young adults, three per policy. In the VbFF we only sampled women (because it is a measure for young mothers) and in the FOS we only sampled men (which is nearly in accordance with all students in the FOS on the selected vocational school, because of the professional focus of the school). For PmP we sampled one woman and two men, which lead in the end to a balanced sample. For the FR Bremen we conducted 3 interviews with 7 experts. In *Werkschule* we interviewed the head master/manager as he was directly involved in working with young adults. At the independent service provider *WaBeQ* we interviewed an upper manager, a project manager and a street level professional. In *Bleib Dran* only street level professionals were represented. In *Werkschule* we interviewed 5 male participants, while in *Förderzentrum* a male and a female beneficiary and in *BaE* a woman.

In order to conduct the interviews in accordance with the general guidelines and to assure a common, but case-based, handling of the guidelines a workshop with all involved Interviewer in Germany was conducted. Result of this Workshop was the adaption and translation of the general guidelines in the German language and context. The workshop was embedded in several online based exchanges, which were also used to prepare the access to the fieldwork.

The analysis follows two approaches: First, this sub-study conducts interviews with young adults and experts as a grounded theory-based analysis of qualitative interviews. Second, it

analyses the biographical interviews of young adults and the expert interviews along thematic and theoretical codes. In preparation of the coding a workshop with all in this procedure involved researchers took place. The shared guidelines and the first provided codes were discussed and a common understanding was developed among all German partners. This procedure leads to a common set of codes. This process was urgently required because the coding took place in all three German partner institutions. Furthermore a periodically online exchange was established and the set of codes was adjusted from time to time in cooperation with all partners.

All steps regarding the data collection have been conducted according to good conduct in research, ethical standards and data protection (Parreira do Amaral et al. 2016). This included that all necessary authorisations and approvals were obtained. In the Case of the FR Bremen prior to the beginning of the fieldwork research, all consent letters and forms used for the data collection were submitted to the EC's Research Executive Agency (REA) and Bremer Ministry of Education. In the case of the FR Rhein-Main the consent of the requested organizations were obtained. The interviews were transcribed and anonymised according to the already established scientific and ethical regulations.

3. FR RHEIN-MAIN

3.1 Analysis of Interviews with experts

The analysis of the research questions with regard to the selected policies is carried out in two steps. In a first step, we present the empirical data and the chosen policies. In a second step, we elaborate commonalities, differences and discuss the results on a higher level of abstraction, which means that we make conclusions with regard to the functioning and effects of lifelong-learning policies in a more general perspective.

3.1.1. Division of Work between different actors and measures of lifelong learning

In the FR Rhein-Main the analysed policies differ with regard to their main objectives. There is ZfW with its measure PmP providing individual coaching and guidance according to the needs of the individual case. Concrete aims are defined jointly by the participant and the ZfW at the beginning of the measure. The manager of PmP explains that objectives are handled flexibly because some problems of the young adults only become visible once a relationship of trust has

been established and this needs some time: *“With the entry into the measure goals are developed, which of course can be adapted or extended any time”* (E_GER_F_3 – 22ff).

Another policy is the FOS, a regular course of professional education with the objective of providing a school leaving qualification, in this case the ‚Fachhochschulreife‘ providing access to studies at polytechniques (but not at universities). Hence, this qualification makes way to further education and to jobs with higher recognition, often higher payment and in sum with higher chances to live an independent and self-determined life.

The third policy is the VbFF providing part-time vocational training for women. In the end of this measure stands the completion of an apprenticeship, which provides the women access to employment in a specific profession: *“On the one hand of course, the women get an official apprenticeship and become financially independent from the welfare office and from their husbands. So they can live their lives independently from any other factors. That is the primary goal. The next goal is that they grow personally”* (E_GER_F_2 – 369ff). The apprenticeship is just a mean to an end – independence from the state and from men. Apart from this, a secondary goal is the personal development of the young women.

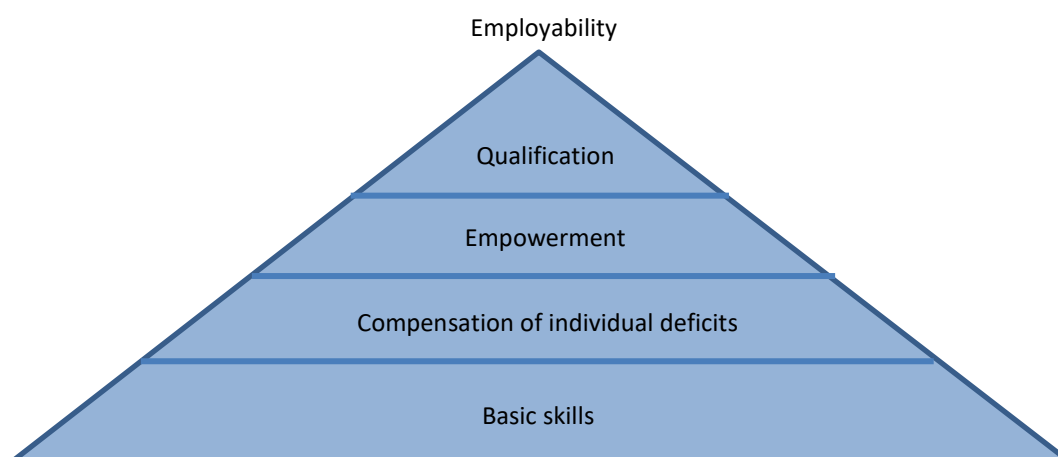
At first sight, the objectives of these policies seem to be very different and far away from a common pattern. But if we understand them as parts of a functionally differentiated system we notice that they are interrelated and unfold their full potential in combination with each other. This system can be envisioned as a pyramid of needs and tasks (see figure 1)¹. On the bottom we have policies which address basic, sometimes even existential needs of the young adults. In Germany we locate especially the Jobcenter with its task to pay a minimal welfare benefit, on this step. On the next level we have policies aimed at compensating individual deficits which are seen as barriers for training or employment. These are often funded by the Jobcenter and PmP of ZfW is one of these measures. These policies (and the young adults concerned) address multiple problems and deficits with regard to basic skills – which they construct and reproduce at the same time. The next level can be characterised by empowerment, even if we see that aspects of empowerment can be identified at all levels. After stabilizing the young adults at the level of compensation, more or less in terms of stopping a downward trajectory, the level of empowerment has the task to enable the young adults “to climb up”. Within all of the analysed policies we find actions with the objective of strengthening young adults’ competencies to cope with their lives. From basic skills in PmP, like using public transport to fostering cultural education in VbFF. At the top level of the pyramid we have the policies which provide regular qualifications, whether this is ‚Fachhochschulreife‘ or a completed apprenticeship. Policies on this level form the top of the task-pyramid of lifelong-learning policies. Based on this systematic picture of the lifelong-

¹ This significant finding applies for Germany overall. Because of the complementary sample this becomes especially apparent in the FR RheinMain.

learning landscape in Rhein-Main it is very easy to construct a potential case of a young adult who participates in all of these measures and successively climbs up the different levels of the pyramid. Indeed one of our young adult interview partners in the PmP aims at entering FOS next year. In the case of a young woman one can even imagine that after participating in the PmP measure she joins FOS, gets pregnant and gets an apprenticeship at the VbFF or does her apprenticeship at the VbFF first and then starts the FOS to continue studies at a university of applied sciences.

In fact, the different policies share the overall orientation towards employability and independence through standard employment with the only difference that the top level provides direct access while the lower levels are aimed at providing required prerequisites.

Figure 2 Task Pyramid of LLL Policies



3.1.2. Target groups of lifelong-learning – between requirements and scopes of decision-making

In the following we try to reconstruct from the expert interviews how target groups are constructed in the cases resulting from the interaction between different actors and levels. The ZfW can be seen as a constellation in which the group for the PmP measure is constructed with regard to different perspectives, actors and requirements. First of all, there are the funders of the project, the Jobcenter and the municipality, both have ‘bought’ a certain share of the measure’s capacity. This means that only young adults who are inhabitants of Frankfurt have access to this measure. The manager explains that young adults sent by the Jobcenter often have been involved already in a lot of other (Jobcenter) measures. In the beginning of the measure the young people are described as “*not ambitious (at all)*” (E_GER_F_3 - 484) with regard to the measure. According to her participants are “*pushed down by the Jobcenter and the society*” (E_GER_F_3 - 485). A practitioner adds that PmP is the last measure which can be offered to young people: “*There is nothing below.*” (E_GER_F_4 - 404). This assessment is reflected by the assumption that

young adults which participate in the measure have all kind of problems like homelessness, debts, family troubles, mental illness, drug abuse etc. and often a combination of the mentioned problems. Even if PmP is a residual scheme, the staff refer at least two requirements which have to be fulfilled by the young adults to get access: they have to be between 16 and 26 years of age and particular attention is given to reliability and honesty. Both requirements are, from the experts' perspective, necessary to establish a relationship of trust and for productive cooperation. The composition of the target group looks different in the FOS. Following the statements of the experts, the target group of the FOS is characterized by their heterogeneity: *"Some parents are physicians while others work on building sites or receive Hartz IV [benefits]"* (E_GER_F_5 – 794ff). The teachers we spoke with mentioned also the cultural, religious and national heterogeneity as something students have to cope with. Additionally, most of the students are young men because of the professional direction of this specific FOS (mainly occupations in the sector of construction). At the same time, they ascribe their students a high level of social competence: *"The students have a high competence to handle heterogeneity. Classroom climate is relatively good given the diversity. They tolerate each other in their diversity and don't start conflicts for every single difference"* (E_GER_F_6 – 1198ff). Main criterion for access to FOS are at least average grades in three main school subjects - math, German and English – in their intermediate school-leaving certificate. The manager of the FOS explains that the complexity of the German school system and of course the complexity of life course trajectories implies a lot of scope for interpretation of these criteria even if, at first glance, they appear rather strict. Just one example: in integrated comprehensive schools (which are an exception in Germany but widely spread in Frankfurt), students are divided into different achievement levels. For the transition into FOS this poses the question how to assess the grades of the different courses. Do grades obtained in lower courses have less value than in the higher ones? Or do lower grades in higher courses have the same value as better grades in the lower courses? This leads to dilemmas in the selection of students for the FOS, but at the same time provides those who are responsible for selection of students, significant scope of decision-making. It is worth mentioning that there is no age limit for access which is absolutely exceptional in Germany (and which may be explained by the original function of FOS of providing specialised workers and trained craftsmen a route of upward social mobility).

It is obvious that VbFF addresses only women. Apart from this, the target group is constructed according to some further aspects participants have to fulfil. As the part-time-vocational training for young mothers is funded by the Jobcenter the young women have to be clients of the Jobcenter Frankfurt. The age limit is 25 (for older women there is a similar measure). To be sure that the participants are women who have a chance to get an apprenticeship in a private company, the VbFF applies a series of selection criteria: participants need to have achieved a school leaving qualification and they need to have skills in math, German language and other aspects of

general education which are assessed by means of aptitude tests and personal interviews which experts characterise as hurdles and a time of stress. *"It should be relatively realistic, while they are in training they are very well embedded here. If we were an employer on the first labour market, we would have far less participants, because many employers don't have the patience, if something does not work. We have a 'double ground' [in terms of safety net]. That's why we try to create realistic situations at key points, at least where it is possible"* (E_GER_F_2 - 60). At the same time, they offer their potential participants a 6 month preparation course to be able to pass the tests and give them the chance to repeat the test. *"This is very important for us. Even if we do not take a woman, we tell her clearly that she can apply again at any time, as soon as her situation has changed"* (E_GER_F_2 - 127). For the VbFF it is important that women are willing to complete their apprenticeship successfully despite all adversities and that they are not overstrained by the multiple requirements of this period. All these criteria show that the women in the measure need to be stable in terms of personal development and everyday life. Even if many of them have non-linear life course trajectories, the dominant "problem" of the participants has to be that they have children and need a part-time vocational training, because this is their only chance of professional qualification.

First of all it is obvious that the service providers, and in this sense the professional school is also a service provider, are not free to choose the young adults they want. They are bound to the regulations of their funders or in the case of the VbFF to the recruitment criteria of the companies which follow their own rationalities and which do not have to be in line with the objectives and instruments of VbFF. But we also notice that the service providers have scopes of decision-making and they use them differently. They use them on the one hand to be sure that all places of their measures/courses are filled. On the other hand, they use them to support their potential participants to fulfil the access criteria. We notice that the requirements the young adults have to fulfil are in fact staggered in congruence to the above mentioned task-pyramid. While the target group of PmP does not need any formal qualifications as entrance requirement, for the VbFF and the FOS preferably good school leaving qualifications are necessary. And also with regard to soft skills, the requirements rise from PmP to the VbFF measure. Here the education course FOS is in a special role, they are exclusively orientated towards prior achievement.

3.1.3. What living conditions of young adults do see experts as relevant?

The constellations of constructing target groups described above are reflected by the way in which staff refer to the young adults they work with, their living conditions and needs. However, they focus on different aspects of it. The multiple problems of the participants in PmP have already been mentioned above. In fact, the implementation of PmP is one reaction to policy makers' perception of vulnerable living conditions of young adults. Hence, ZfW staff explicitly claim

to take the individual needs of the young adults into account by offering individual counselling: *"We need this high ratio of staff to provide guidance to the young people"* (E_GER_F_3 – 156f). The manager emphasizes that this measure is also a consequence of the experience that a lot of young adults *"see a barrier to proceed"* (E_GER_F_3 – 62f). As a result, the first personal encounter between a potential participant and staff takes place *"not in our location, but somewhere else, in a café or even at their home or in any location which is comfortable for them, in their comfort zone, so to speak"* (E_GER_F_3 – 64ff). In the beginning of the cooperation process, they prefer a procedure of small steps which do not overstrain the participants as they have so many „*problem areas*“ (E_GER_F_4 - 59) that it is necessary to prioritize and go step by step. If possible, they try to mobilise resources within the family of the participants. However, most families are part of the problem themselves or live too far away or just do not exist.

School can be a dominant institution in the life of young people. Even more if school conditions differ a lot from their "normal life". In FOS, the young adults are confronted with a heterogeneity which is described by the experts as an *"image of the society"* (E_GER_F_5 - 814), from children of physicians and academics, of construction workers, to parents who depend on social welfare benefits. The heterogeneous student population contains petty criminals, middle class young people and football professionals. Nevertheless, the experts describe a good classroom climate although referring to a rough style of communication and mutual contact and assuming that some students may avoid coming to school because of this situation: *"They say: this is sometimes somehow too hard"* (E_GER_F_6 - 1109). They ascribe such behaviour mainly to the family and social background.

The experts of the VbFF characterize the living conditions of their participants as shaped by the diverse expectations the young women are confronted with, including the expectations of the VbFF itself: *"Our women are engaged in different fields of activity. They are not only docked to our measure, they are docked to the company, which has expectations towards them, they are docked to vocational school who have expectations too, being on time, studying, being present and we here do so, too. Then there are the child care facilities with their expectations, a lot of expectations"* (E_GER_F_2 – 340ff). At the same time, many of the participants are characterised as women with difficulties of German language. Many of them have a migrant background and they often have no "social net" which may buffer frictions between the diverse expectations or support them with their tight time management. The experts highlight the importance of time management, especially against the background of a 30h/per week of training and the various expectations the young women have to cope with: *"Time-management is an important factor [...] How can I manage all these things, how do I structure the day, when do I have to get up to drop off the children, to arrive at the location of the apprenticeship and so on"* (E_GER_F_1 – 161ff).

While experts of FOS link the living conditions of young adults with their social background and milieu, the experts of the independent service providers ZfW and VbFF refer to categories like

“problem areas” and “expectations of others”. They refer to social situations, teachers refer to categories related to origin. We assume that the diverse perspectives on the relevance of living conditions are connected with the objectives of the policies have. While the service providers ZfW and VbFF try to change the situations (and the young adults!) the education course is focused on educational attainment and achieving qualifications

3.1.4. “Autonomy”

To what extent can the measures be interpreted as fostering their autonomy?² The ways in which the staff of PmP describes supporting the young adult are described as diverse as the young adults. With their above mentioned “*step by step*” (E_GER_F_4 - 612) procedure the PmP aims to compensate deficits and problems. For example, one staff member describes the procedure of helping young people in filling the application forms for student grants (Schüler-Bafög) as follows: “*Well, sometimes when I have to fill in an application form for student grants, I would like to tear up the application form and throw it in the air. I am a native speaker, I studied and yet I still sit and think what is this? For me it sometimes feels like bullying and then I think how must the young person feel?*” (E_GER_F_3 – 933ff). In this case, PmP is described as support in terms of enforcing young adults’ rights against the bureaucracy of the welfare state. Another staff member reports having supported a young adult in learning how to use the public transport system or putting his bills in order. Once these basic skills are established, in some cases staff of PmP go beyond their primary task and try to organise contacts with (co-operating) companies to support young adults in finding a job. All these actions may be interpreted as fostering autonomy and, to a certain extent, as reducing biographical uncertainty. However, if autonomy is understood in terms of self-reflexivity it reveals that the primary orientation towards compensation of deficits rather limits the scope of support in terms of adaptation to functioning within a given order without reflecting.

In the FOS, autonomy and biographical uncertainty are also issues, but on a different level and in a different way. The FOS leads to a school leaving qualification which allows young adults to gain access to institutions of higher education. Hence, autonomy and biographical (un)certainty are directly connected to the school leaving qualification, marks and the outlook for possibilities in the future: “*I would say that the young adult who leaves here with a good qualification has really good future opportunities and has overcome a very important threshold in the education system*” (E_GER_F_6 – 550ff). At the same time, one teacher mentioned that she would appreciate if there were more school-social-work and more cultural education and possibilities to “*well, just to foster children from educationally disadvantaged families and to strengthen them for our society*” (E_GER_F_5 – 834f).

² Autonomy is a term we brought from outside into the analysis and not term the experts in the field used explicitly.

Autonomy is an issue which is often mentioned in the interviews with the experts from the VbFF linked to the objectives of the organisation. Here, autonomy is on the one hand referred to in terms of independence from the state and from men, on the other hand in terms of personal development. The latter is addressed by activities in the field of cultural education: *“What can we do here? Catching up, following up, improving school and professional things and I do sessions with the women in the social-pedagogical area. That can be time management, self-organisation, that can be going to an exhibition from time to time, because it is very important for me that the women become familiar with our cultural landscape. We organise theatre projects with our women to raise their self-esteem”* (E_GER_F_2 - 38ff).

The different ways in which increasing autonomy and reducing biographical uncertainty are addressed can be explained with the different traditions and levels on which the measures are located and with different underlying pedagogical concepts. While both PmP and FOS reduce these aims to getting access to and functioning in the labour market and thereby equate autonomy with employment and adaption to labour market demands, VbFF – due to being rooted in feminist approaches – tries to compromise between adapting to labour market demands and supporting young women in developing self-reflexivity.

3.1.5. The embeddedness of lifelong-learning policies

In the expert interviews, reference was made to a diversity of relationships of cooperation in which the providing organisations are embedded. In the case of PmP, not all of them are directly connected with the lifelong-learning policy itself because of the broad objectives and the different problems of young adults. The experts refer to debt counsellors, hospitals, pregnancy counselling services, homeless counselling services and many more. They highlight that it depends on the most pressing issues in a young adult's life whether they stop the young person's participation in PmP and take him/her to the hospital instead or if they continue their work but in parallel accompany the young person to other service providers. In sum, the experts point out that they have a dense network of support measures where they can send the young adults, if they do not fit into their target group or need further support. In the interviews with the experts the Jobcenter emerged as an important co-operation partner in different respect. As mentioned above, the Jobcenter is a main funder of the project inasmuch as they have “bought” half of the 18 available places. In the beginning of the project, PmP directly approached young adults in the job centre itself: *„We recruited many young men and women with this direct approach. And they came to us more reliably than now with being allocated by the Jobcenter“* (E_GER_F_4 – 105ff). This procedure was no longer accepted by the Jobcenter: *“[...] we have been thrown out. [...] the job centre didn't want that any longer [...] they didn't want somebody else deciding who joins the measure and who doesn't. They want to have the decision-making authority. Just a struggle for power”* (E_GER_F_4 – 145ff). According to PmP staff, the Jobcenter nowadays allocates young

adults to the PmP and the staff can decide whether they want and can work with the young adult or not. Depending on the problem area, sometimes a co-operation between the Jobcenter and the PmP staff is necessary: *“Sometimes the Jobcenter comes with some concerns which can’t be resolved by us, because we say that the participants cannot resolve the concern. Then we tell the Jobcenter what we need to resolve the concern. Mostly the Jobcenter agrees”* (E_GER_F_4 – 495ff). One of the experts explained that there are sometimes communication problems with the Jobcenter, because their staff can hardly be reached by phone. But in general the PmP experts emphasize the good co-operation with the Jobcenter. Of course the Jobcenter as the funder of (at least half of) the project wants to see results which leads to the question of accountability and evaluation. The ZfW developed a self-evaluation procedure with which they try to make the development of the young adults in the measure visible. They ask their participants (or just assess the situation of the young adult by themselves) at least in the beginning and in the end of the measure. *“That are such criteria: is the housing situation clarified? Entry, finally. Is contact to authorities clarified? Entry, finally. [...] Then, are they mentally stable? Entry, finally. That’s the way we check it”* (E_GER_F_4 – 568ff). According to the experts, the co-operation with the municipality is much easier. The ZfW is free to choose the young adults they want and no further restrictions are mentioned by the experts. One further actor are companies who are sometimes contacted to provide their participants access to casual jobs for young adults who are not looking for an apprenticeship and just want to earn some money. It seems that this kind of support is mainly based on informal contacts of the staff with companies.

The FOS, as a regular education course, is embedded in the local/regional landscape in a different way. Responsible for the content of the education course is the vocational school, but the school has to follow the guidelines of the curriculum, which is agreed upon by a working group of the conference of ministers of education of the federal states at national level. Within this framework, the school and the teachers are free to use the available scope of options. The manager of the FOS explains that many teachers of the school had previously worked in companies and know very well what kind of competences, skills and knowledge are needed in the companies. Within the FOS there are only some attempts to get in contact with companies or universities as both are potential destinations for the FOS graduates. These attempts are organised mainly by particularly committed teachers. With regard to evaluation, it seems that FOS is much more interested into securing high student numbers than in the evaluation of the outcomes. On the one hand, the manager says: *“I have the pressure to get the number of students here continuously and to get the house full [...] FOS, that are 3 or 4 teacher positions in our school. Otherwise we would have to explain 3 or 4 teachers that they have to work elsewhere [...] That is something we want to avoid. Well, we want to be present on the market, I would say”* (E_GER_F_6 – 663ff). On the other hand, he would be interested in data on the graduates: *“We have no graduates’ survey. That would be interesting for us as well”* (E_GER_F_6 - 498).

The part-time training for women of the VbFF is a measure where different stakeholders of the labour market and vocational training (i.e. employers, vocational schools and the young women) come together. The VbFF plays a mediating and coordinating role between these actors. With their long history and their roots in the women's movement, especially with regard to professional development, they have a lot of contacts with companies. A central actor mentioned in the interviews are the chambers of commerce and crafts who are in a central position with regard to the regulation of apprenticeships. The VbFF experts report about the struggle with the chambers, especially in the past: *"The idea [of part-time-vocational training] came about in the VbFF I think in the 80ies, but the chambers were against it, saying that apprenticeships have to last much longer and so on. But the way of thinking changed a bit and then it was possible. Part-time doesn't have to mean 20h per week, but can be 30h. And in this timeframe it is possible to complete an apprenticeship in 3 years. And then all involved actors agreed and the bill passed as an amendment of labour law in 2005. And this, it could be said, happened due to us, the VbFF [...]. And even if it is not written in the vocational education law that an independent service provider is necessary, it is very difficult to find an apprenticeship without the involvement of a service provider"* (E_GER_F_1 – 479ff). This quotation shows further that the VbFF is active as a lobbyist for their target group and that staff present themselves as very successful in this field. In some training professions, the VbFF is the official training company, which means that a training contract is made only between the young women and the VbFF. In other professions the young women are trainees of a company while VbFF "only" provides additional guidance. Hence, the level of co-operation between the VbFF and the companies differs. In the concrete cooperation with the companies the young women are a central element. The first contact is established through the young women who have to present themselves in the companies as potential trainees. In the process of the apprenticeship *"we have periodical conversations about the current state of the apprenticeship which we conduct on site in the companies, so we go to the companies, they don't have to come to us"* (E_GER_F_2 – 823ff). At the same time, experts of VbFF report that they keep lists with companies that turned out to be unreliable, for example for short-term cancellation of confirmed internships. According to VbFF experts, they reacted by strengthening the integration of the women in their own programme. At the end of the apprenticeship a final discussion with the participant and the company is conducted. The experts report that the feedback is regularly very positive. The women are happy about the diverse support during the apprenticeship and the companies as well. Furthermore, the VbFF is in contact with diverse service providers and counselling services if participants need additional support, for example, debt counselling, mental services and so on. These are not institutionalized co-operation relationships, but depending on the needs of the women the VbFF guides them to further support services. The co-operation with the Jobcenter is mentioned in the interviews only marginally. As an important funder of the project, the Jobcenter expects from the VbFF to describe the success of the measure: *"What hap-*

pened with the participants after the apprenticeship? First of all, who completed the apprenticeship, what happened then – directly after the measure, up to two months later? The youth und social welfare benefit office for example has monthly statistics where the issue is more about the number of participants in the projects, quarterly statistics, drop-outs or completed tests” (E_GER_F_1 – 566ff). This monitoring and evaluation is absolutely accepted: “We have such a high percentage of completed apprenticeships, I think. I don’t know. But we have to fulfil this criteria, because we are financed by the authorities and of course they want to know whether all the money for the project makes sense or not” (E_GER_F_2 – 924ff).

Some points clearly stick out: First, the service providers and their measures depend on the funders, which is the Jobcenter in two of the three chosen cases. We notice that this means at the same time that the funder (and with regard to the part-time training also the companies!) have a significant impact on the measures. In the interviews this becomes explicit with regard to the access to the measures and the shaping of the target group and with regard to monitoring procedures and evaluation outcomes. Even if the general control aspect of evaluations is accepted by the staff, some requirements and restrictions are criticized. Second, we notice that the service providers have an often loose but mostly dense net of co-operations established, which are used especially if they reach their own (professional) limits. All experts would agree that they are not only responsible for their own field. If necessary, they guide the young adult/participant to the, in their perspective, right institution/service. In the case of FOS, as an education course with a clear (educational) task, the situation differs a bit. With the exception of individual teachers, it seems that the living conditions of their participants are accepted as “given from society” and thereby as outside their own responsibility.

3.2 Analysis of Interviews with young adults

On the following pages we present a short introduction into the biographies of the young adults in the Rhein-Main Region who gave us insight into their biographies, into their lives and their, their experiences. After this introduction we elaborate differences and commonalities and identify patterns in the structure of the young adults we include in our sample. We follow up with the analysis of the interviews with the young adults with regard to central research questions.

Y_GER_F_1’s biography is characterized by mental illness and diverse experiences of violence. She was a victim of violence in her family and in school. Classmates, other students and even a teacher in the primary school bullied her because of her speech disorder or “*because they wanted to*” (Y_GER_F_1 - 274). When she was in the 5th or 6th grade, the youth welfare office intervened and placed her in a children’s home against her will. After a few months she was allowed

to go back to her family. For a long time in her life she was under medical treatment. The therapies ranged from speech therapies to therapies against self-harm and depressions. She got in contact with PmP because of the contacts between the hospital where she had therapy and the ZfW. Now they work together with the aim of achieving more stability in her life, with her own flat, a vocational training and a normal job.

Y_GER_F_2 describes his childhood as dominated by his mother, who took little interest in caring for him. His father died from cancer when he was eleven years old. The mother moved with him and his brother into the house of a new partner and lived with him and his two children. He described his life in this time period as unhappy and conflictual. The partner of his mother preferred his own children and he described his mother as a destructive person who tried to harm him. He completed training as a chef from which he wanted to drop out after the first three weeks of the apprenticeship but his mother forced him to finish the vocational training. He told us about many negative experiences with “authority figures” like his superiors, his mother, the partner of his mother and Jobcenter staff. Three weeks after his 18th birthday he left his home, moved in with his girlfriend and broke with his family. Because of his deep rejection of his profession as a chef, he had disputes with the Jobcenter, which did not accept his decision not to work in this profession. Now he lives in Frankfurt and is completing the ZfW measure “Perspektive mit Plan”. He is really happy with the measure and especially with his contact persons. *“My mother, my family never ever answered my questions. Then I stopped asking. Here I have the possibility to ask, no matter what. He [particular ZfW staff] answered everything”* (Y_GER_F_2 - 220). As a next step in his future he plans to go to the FOS (Fachoberschule) in order to increase his school qualifications.

Y_GER_F_3 was born and raised in an African country. She had 4 siblings and 6 half-siblings. Her father worked for a national chamber of commerce and industry. Her mother was self-employed. After her school time she moved to Germany, where she lived with a physician’s family. She visited several language courses and got married at that time. After her time as an au-pair she lived in a small village near Frankfurt and worked in a hotel in different remits. While she worked in the hotel she got pregnant and gave birth to a child. Her husband wanted her to abort the child and did not accept her decision which was the reason for their divorce. A colleague in the hotel drew her attention to the VbFF and the possibility to do a part-time vocational training. Against the resistance of the Jobcenter she moved to Frankfurt and started her apprenticeship in the “association”. She gives the impression of being a strong-minded, independent and well-educated woman who knows very well what she wants.

Y_GER_F_4 is a young mother participating in the part-time training in the VbFF. Her parents got divorced when she was very young. She grew up with her mother and her brother in rather poor conditions. She describes her life with a loving mother but very violent environment with poverty, drug abuse, criminal persons and sexual abuse. She got pregnant before her 16th birthday

and lost the child. She also mentioned a suicide attempt and a life-threatening injury, which she barely survived. When she was 16, she got pregnant again. This time she kept the child, against the will of the father and his parents. She started two apprenticeships but completed none of them. The first one because the working conditions were extremely bad and the second one because of the birth of her child. With the help of a contact person in the health department she got in contact with the VbFF. Despite all the mentioned circumstances and blows, she gives the impression that she is a fighter: *“I still take detours, but I have initiated a lot by myself and have gone through a lot, but I have a small child sitting at home who calls me ‘mother’. That is wonderful and I do not regret anything”* (Y_GER_F_4 – 1313ff).

Y_GER_F_5 was born in Eastern Europe. She grew up with her aunt and her uncle until she was 6 years old, because her physical parents did not want her. Her mother tried to lose her when she was pregnant by acting harmfully. When she was 6 years old her aunt and her uncle got divorced and she had to go back to her physical parents, where she was unhappy. At the age of 12 years she finally managed to live with her aunt again. With 18 years she got pregnant for the first time and left school. Because of her pregnancy she married her boyfriend. She finished school after her child was born at an evening school and got her Abitur. She got divorced, when she was in the 12. grade level because of different ideas of life. In order to finance her studies at university she came to Germany and worked as a geriatric nurse. Because of the high costs she stopped her studies and decided to move to Germany with her family. Her studies were not recognised in Germany, therefore she was not allowed to continue. She worked for a few months as a house keeper. With the help of the Jobcenter she found the VbFF and started her apprenticeship as an office clerk in a bank. She finished her training two or three months before the interview and is now working for this bank.

Y_GER_F_6 lived with his family in the city of Frankfurt until the age of 6 when his parents divorced. Afterwards he divided his time living with both of them, resulting in a conflictual time accompanied by many relocations and nine changes of primary school class due to which he had to repeat the 3rd grade. When he had 12 years, his father was diagnosed with a severe illness and died shortly after. The youth welfare office intervened and the boy moved permanently in with another foster family to another city. He was not allowed to move back to his family due to their health and living conditions but he enjoyed living with the 2nd foster family. After finishing intermediate secondary school (Realschule), he moved back to Frankfurt living with his grandfather in order to start an internship in a garage, which should have led to an apprenticeship in the same company, although he did not like the boss. He moved to a residential home, had to leave again for disciplinary reasons, moved in an own apartment, but was kicked out again due to owing the rent. After the internship, he was not taken over by the company for apprenticeship, as he did not go to vocational school. He was beaten up severely during his few days at school and came to school with police protection. After working in a temporary employment agency as well

as after several further relocations, he lives now with his girlfriend, is unemployed and is participant of the measure PmP.

Y_GER_F_7s' parents are born in Croatia but moved to Germany in the end of the 1980ies. He lived with his parents and his 3 years older sister in a small city near Frankfurt. The father has a construction company and works a lot and earns the money for the family. *"The father is working, the mother is mainly at home and prepares the food, household, something like that. And the children are responsible for education (laughing)"* (Y_GER_F_7 – 881ff). His life course seems to be very standardised. Kindergarten, primary school, secondary school (Gymnasium). However, instead of doing the Abitur he decided to change the type of school for a more practice based qualification, the FOS. A few years ago he moved with his family from a district of Frankfurt to a smaller city in the near of Frankfurt where his father had have built an own home. He presents himself as a person, who had no problems to integrate himself in groups.

Y_GER_F_8 is a student in the FOS. He grew up with his family in a small neighbouring city of Frankfurt. He has a three-year older brother with whom he went to school together. Both of his parents work; his father is self-employed. After attending the Kindergarten, he went to the primary school and got the recommendation for upper secondary school (Gymnasium). He had many friends and went regularly to football training. He had to repeat the 10. grade, as his school grades dropped in his majors (German, Math, French); the grades in his minors remained on the range of 'good' to 'very good'. After the repetition, his grade did not improve further so he decided to change school and attend a higher vocational education schools (FOS). Parallel to the school, he also completes an internship in a construction company where his grandfather previously worked. Currently, he is graduating from school. He expects good marks and is planning to study construction engineering at a polytechnique.

Y_GER_F_9 lives with his parents and his four brothers in the city of Frankfurt. Both his parents are from Northern Africa and moved to Germany before his oldest brother was born. He states, that he comes from a "failure family" ("Versagerfamilie") growing up in difficult conditions that affected his life. He attended the intermediary secondary school (Realschule) although he had the necessary grades for attending upper secondary school (Gymnasium). After the 5. grade, he did not focus on homework and rather spent time outside "doing crap" as this was normal in the district he grew up. He also got in contact with persons taking drugs. As a result, his grades started to decrease from the 8. grade onwards. He wanted to repeat the 10. grade, however the teachers let him pass (an increasingly normal practice in the lower school tracks in Germany to get rid of difficult students), and he finished school with a 'satisfy' as an average grade. After school, he attended the FOS specialized in construction, although he was at first not interested in structural engineering. In the 12. grade he started to like the major subject of construction as he had a teacher he liked. He plans to study construction engineering and wants to have his own company one day.

Table 8 Overview about the interviewed young adults

Name	Family background	Self-presentation	Learning experiences/trajectories	Professional orientation	Measure / perceived effect
Y_GER_F_1	Socio-economically weak	Dominant issues of mental illness and experiences of violence	Bullied by classmates and teachers. Interrupted school career and some school changes	Over a long period of time: dominance of a backward orientation regarding coping with the present.	PmP: stabilizing life and initiating and establishing plans for the future
Y_GER_F_2	Socio-economically weak	Victim of authority figures, especially of his mother. Struggles with mental illness	Sufficiently good grades; completed a chef apprenticeship	Rejects working as a chef. Wants to work in the social sector, like coaching and supporting people	PmP: learning everyday life and planning next steps
Y_GER_F_3	Born and raised in an African country/socioeconomically high	strong-minded, independent and a well-educated woman	Got her high school diploma. Came to Germany as an au-pair. Worked in a hotel and started her apprenticeship against the resistance of the job centre	Wants to become someone: rejects apprenticeships with high investment and low income.	VbFF: she was able to start an apprenticeship as a single mother without any family support.
Y_GER_F_4	Socio-economically weak	While she experienced a lot in an environment which was characterized by crime, drug abuse and violence, she didn't surrender	School was just a side issue in her life.	She started two apprenticeships but quit both, because of different issues. She wants to do something, but is not focussed on a special sector.	VbFF: enables her access to an apprenticeship while she has a child. She gets additional support, whenever she needs.
Y_GER_F_5	Born and raised in an Eastern European Country / socio-economically weak	A doer. Lived under unfavourable conditions. Has been going her own way since she was 18.	A good student.	She wants to reach professional success. She is willing to go step by step on her way.	VbFF: She participates and enjoys the additional offers and events of the VbFF a lot. She finished her apprenticeship a few months ago and is now employed in the company.
Y_GER_F_6	Socio-	Someone	Many school	He worked for a	PmP: He asked for

	economically weak	who was forced into being a passive actor from early on in his life. Grew up in challenging living conditions.	changes. A repetition of the 3th grade. Insufficient middle school performance Got mobbed and could attend vocational school only under police protection	temporary employment agency doing different jobs. He liked the variety of jobs he did, he always checks himself by asking if he would be happy in the job the next 20 years – and he has not found a positive answer yet.	support at the Jobcenter and was forwarded to the PmP.
Y_GER_F_7	Middle-class	A normal guy, who had no problems integrating himself in groups	Standard life course but quit the Gymnasium and decided to do a more practically oriented qualification.	He follows his father in the construction sector.	FOS: the professional focus of the FOS allows him to specialize his skills and to concentrate on school subjects he likes.
Y_GER_F_8	Middle-class	He presents himself especially in the context of his school-life. In his perspective he failed in school for structural reasons.	He had to repeat the 10th Grade of the Gymnasium; After the repetition, his grades did not improve so he decided to change school and attend FOS.	He is planning to study construction engineering.	FOS: He finished the FOS with excellent grades, which allows him to study at a university of applied sciences in the profession he strives.
Y_GER_F_9	Socio-economically weak	Someone who things happen to and someone who was “doing crap” growing up. Comes from a “failure family”	Attended middle secondary school. School became less and less important until an internship where he got bullied. From then on he wanted to be successful in school so that he never had to work on a construction site.	He started the FOS although he had no interest in construction. Meanwhile he plans to study construction engineering after the FOS	FOS: He found an inspiring teacher and finished school.

First of all we see that we have a broad range of young adults who are participating in the different LLL measures. The differences between the young adults are related to their family background, their self-presentation, their learning experiences and trajectories, their professional orientation and even the analysis of the perceived benefit of the measure varies. The bandwidth

of young adults, who spoke with us about their biographies, their experiences and the LLL policies in which they participate, reaches from young adults grown up in poverty (Y_GER_F_1, Y_GER_F_5) over middle class youth (Y_GER_F_7, Y_GER_F_8) to people with an upper class background (Y_GER_F_3). It reaches from young adults with a personal migration experience (Y_GER_F_3, Y_GER_F_5) over people with a migration background in the second generation (Y_GER_F_7, Y_GER_F_9) to young people from German families (Y_GER_F_1, Y_GER_F_6). They grew up under different conditions and made different experiences. Many have caring parents which are strong supporters and a social resource they can count on (Y_GER_F_7). Some others have caring parents which are for different reasons not able to support their children adequately (Y_GER_F_1, Y_GER_F_4). And then we have some young adults without any support from their parents whom they describe as destructive (Y_GER_F_2, Y_GER_F_5) or as completely out of reach (Y_GER_F_3, Y_GER_F_5). These differences were expected because we assumed that the target groups of LLL measures are wide spread and would reflect the diversity of the German society or at least of a certain section of the society. We see these assumptions confirmed.

Besides all the mentioned differences and the heterogeneity of the interviewed young adults, some general commonalities could be observed. In one or another way most of the interviewed young adults expressed their willingness to be successful with regard to a profession. These two women are typical examples: *"I want to make something of myself"* (Y_GER_F_3 – 612f) and *"And I had other ideas about life. I want to reach something in my life"* (Y_GER_F_5 - 26f). This general attitude is less expressed by the young adults who are still struggling at the time of the interview. For example Y_GER_F_1: *„It is complex. I have a lot of wishes, but I don't know how to realise them or even if I should realize them. I have to work on a lot of issues and I don't know how to prioritise. I am still confused, that's why this is a big help"* (1468 ff). Nevertheless all these quotations show that all these young persons are oriented towards the future. They are all working on themselves to improve themselves and their lives. Lifelong learning – or better: the necessity and demand to get involved with lifelong learning – seems to be a phenomenon which is inherent to their life situations. A further commonality is that all of the life course trajectories have frictions, detours and deviations from the so called standard life course ('Normallebenslauf') but of course to different degrees and on different levels. It is obvious with regard to biographies like the one from Y_GER_F_1 and Y_GER_F_4 but also the middle class students Y_GER_F_7 and Y_GER_F_8 left the pathway of the standard life course by changing the school form from the Gymnasium to a more practical alternative. It seems that LLL policies for young adults have the function of repair shops in Germany.

We emphasised now the range and heterogeneity and the commonalities of the interviewed young adults. Furthermore some patterns could be observed. We can see that the participants in PmP are struggling more with themselves and the environment they live in than the participants of the other measures. The participants from the FOS are the group of young adults in our sam-

ple which are very close to a standard life course. The issues they are struggling with or they have coped with are in the comparison with the other young adults less divergent from a standard life course. If we want to cluster the young women from VbFF some of them are very close to the participants of the PmP, while others are closer to the participants of the FOS. Following these observation we can create a very rough order of vulnerability, from PmP participants as the ones in the most vulnerable situation, over the VbFF mothers to the FOS students with the least vulnerable situations. If we look at such an order we see a strong correlation between the socio-economic origin, their experiences and their measures. This order seems similar to the above-mentioned “pyramids”. With regard to these observations, we see an almost optimal fitting between the task of the policies and the needs of the young adults.

3.2.1. Access – target group

A key point for the participation in a LLL measure is the access. What are the experiences of young adults who are entering a measure? Did they experience barriers, rejection or did they feel welcome? All this experiences help us to understand the construction of the target group in the policies.

The access to PmP proceeds unevenly. Y_GER_F_1 was in hospital for a therapy and asked the social worker of the hospital if he could help him organise his life, especially with regard to financing his existence. The social worker knew the ZfW and the PmP measure and established contact. Y_GER_F_2 got in contact with the ZfW through the Jobcenter. After more than half a year, he trusted the Jobcenter staff and talked to her about his difficulties. She established the contact with the ZfW. He described his first impression of the ZfW: *“yes, when I was there for the first time I was welcomed by E_GER_F_4. He grinned and looked as ever and this, this warm manner ... Then I thought, okay, where have I come?”* (Y_GER_F_2 – 1258 ff). Y_GER_F_6 was also sent by the Jobcenter to the ZfW: *„I was at the Jobcenter and I wanted to do something, I didn’t want to sit at home the whole day, to get a rhythm, standing up in the morning, going somewhere. [...] I asked in the Jobcenter for a measure.”* (Y_GER_F_6 - 1249) Here we see both pathways into PmP: on the one hand through the direct approach of young adults themselves or through third persons and on the other hand through the Jobcenter. No one of our interviewees had the impression that there were further barriers, tests needed or something which prevented them from participating.

The access to the part-time training of the VbFF occurs partly similar to PmP but reveals also clear differences. In contrast to Y_GER_F_5, who was sent by the Jobcenter to the VbFF – similar to Y_GER_F_2 of ZfW -, Y_GER_F_4s’ access is similar to Y_GER_F_1s’ access to ZfW. She knew about VbFF and the training by her contact person in the health department who supported her with regard to her child. Y_GER_F_3 was asked by her employer who was a company co-operating with VbFF: *“When I worked in the office, the woman said, you are doing well. That is*

something for you. Go for it. You can do an apprenticeship. I know an association" (Y_GER_F_3 – 496ff). While in the ZfW the young adults did not report about any barriers or tests they had to do to participate in the measure the young women from the VbFF did. Especially the story of Y_GER_F_3 was full of detours and difficulties until she could participate in the part-time training. She went to VbFF and got the information that they could only offer part-time training to young women living in Frankfurt and who are clients of the Jobcenter. So she quit her job and moved to Frankfurt which had unforeseen effects on her: *„At that time I lived in a small town and they told me: We are sorry, but we don't accept people living outside Frankfurt. You have to live in Frankfurt and be a client of the Jobcenter. But I worked regularly, I didn't depend on the state. Why? Why is this a criterion? Why do I have to go to the Jobcenter? I don't understand. Then she said: yes, gave me a number from here and told me to call the Jobcenter and clarify the situation. Then I went to the Jobcenter and they told me: yes, Ms (Name), 'we are sorry, you quit your job in order to come to us. You will get 30% [benefits] less than regular' (Y_GER_F_3 – 63ff). ... A few weeks later I called them again and I said, that can't be true. I will inform myself. I go to my lawyer. I thought about it. Yes, why? I want to make something of myself and then, they put obstacles in my way. I said no, I call my lawyer and then it was possible, suddenly"* (ibid. – 610ff). Beside these funding regulations young mothers have to fulfil further requirements to participate in the measure. All three women report about the aptitude tests and the personal interviews they had to comply. Y_GER_F_5 reported though that in her case it was not necessary to pass the tests: *"I came here and had done the tests. It was a math and a grammar test. I didn't understand the grammar test at all. I couldn't tick any word or write down anything, because I didn't understand. But the math and logical thinking was good. That's why I got the place in the VbFF"* (Y_GER_F_5 – 72ff).

The central information source about the existence and the possibilities of the FOS is informal contacts. All three students we spoke with reported that friends, teacher or family members had told them that the FOS would be a good option for them. All three students shared that they were more or less struggling in their former schools and decided to do a more practice orientated school leaving qualification (Y_GER_F_7) or at least the vocational baccalaureate diploma (Y_GER_F_9), which does not give access to universities but to studies at universities for applied sciences (polytechniques). All three spoke about their application to attend the FOS, but for all of them it seemed to be just a formal act.

We have to differentiate between two aspects of access. The first aspect is about the general knowledge about the existence and a availability of a measure. We see on the one hand young adults who get information about informal contacts; especially this is right especially for students of the FOS, but also Y_GER_F_3 from the VbFF was informed about the measure by a colleague. On the other hand we see young adults who are already embedded in institutional contexts and who are informed by these institutional actors. In our cases these were the Jobcenters,

hospitals and the health department. The second aspect touches the question of access criteria/access procedures. While the FOS students and the PmP participants experienced their access as “natural” or a formal act, the VbFF women experienced a complex access procedure. In one case (Y_GER_F_3) this procedure began already previously, because of the requirements of the funding organization.

3.2.2. Peoples’ life projects – professional orientation

The question about life projects and their professional orientation concerned the young adults in PmP in a specific way as they struggled with diverse issues and lived in precarious conditions. Y_GER_F_1 for example limited her attention to the nearest future: *“moving out is my focus at present and I started a therapy which is very complex for me”* (Y_GER_F_1 – 1390f). She answered to the question about her professional future and wishes in the following way: *„It is complex. I have a lot of wishes, but I don’t know how to realize them or even if I should realize them. I have to work on a lot of issues and I don’t know how to prioritize. I am still confused, that’s why this [PmP] is a big help”* (Y_GER_F_1 – 1468ff). Y_GER_F_2 is significantly clearer in his direction and orientation. After his mother had forced him to finish the apprenticeship as a chef and because of diseases connected to this profession he could not imagine working as a chef again. Instead he wanted to work in the social sector: *„okay, I have to work with people, something with people. [...] It is fun to help people. I feel well, when I can teach people something, when I can help other people with my knowledge“* (Y_GER_F_2 – 1518ff). That’s why he decided to attend the FOS in the social sector. Y_GER_F_6 had worked in a lot of jobs and gained experience in many professions, but he did not find anything that he could imagine as satisfying him for the next 20 years. On the other side he had a clear picture of the qualities of a job: *“in the workshop, when I was working private, so to say, I saw how the people relied on me and that I was the man they needed, so to say. And to contribute to the society, that satisfies me extremely”* (Y_GER_F_6 – 1217ff). With the help of PmP he is looking for an apprenticeship.

The participants in the VbFF are already one step ahead, because they are already in an apprenticeship nevertheless, they have ideas of their life projects and their professional orientation. All of them share that their children play a key role in their future plans. Y_GER_F_3 plans in little steps: *“I make myself little, little, little goals, so that I have a sense of achievement”* (Y_GER_F_3 – 1213ff). At the same time she looks towards the future and prepares her professional development: *“And I already said to my boss before the last annual interview that I would like to talk about a permanent employment at the next annual meeting and he said: The chances look good and you do a very good job”* (Y_GER_F_3 – 1251ff). Her further plans are less concrete: she wants to study and live in her own flat. The life and professional career of Y_GER_F_4 were interrupted by di-

verse events. She got back on her feet again and again. Now she wants to finish her apprenticeship as an office clerk and then “... *I plan to apply for working at the police in the office and that they take me on. I want to work my way up, that's my goal; in any case, earning enough money so that I can bring my son and myself through life*” (Y_GER_F_4 – 1372ff). Y_GER_F_5 presented herself from the beginning as a person who wanted to achieve something and who is willing to work hard for her goals. She grew up in poverty “*and I had other ideas of life. I want to achieve something in my life*” (Y_GER_F_5 - 26f). She waited until she was 18 years old and then she took her life into her own hands. She started studying, worked as a geriatric nurse and moved to Germany. She finished the apprenticeship at the VbFF. She was employed and works for a company recognised in the sector.

Two students of the FOS, Y_GER_F_8 and Y_GER_F_9, planned to start their studies of construction engineering after having originally had different ideas and intentions. Y_GER_F_8 is interested in the professional sector: “*This is my plan: Studying construction engineering, doing my master and then looking where it goes*” (Y_GER_F_8 – 1430f). For Y_GER_F_9 a profession is a means to an end. Certainly, he wants to do something which he likes doing for 40 years but his choice of the construction sector was rather random: “*I had ideas, but I never knew which direction to take. Yes, construction engineering is nothing I really chose. I had low grades in the 10th grade and this was the only school that accepted me, although I didn't have the aptitude for the vocational baccalaureate diploma. Now I have finished the 12th grade. Now I want to submit an application at the university of applied sciences for construction engineering*” (Y_GER_F_9 - 271). He just wants to earn enough money for a big family. Y_GER_F_8 and Y_GER_F_9 plan to study, which is in line with the institutional aim of FOS. Y_GER_F_7 instead wants to start an apprenticeship. For him, his father who has a company in dry construction is a role model. He has a very clear idea of his professional future life. After finishing the apprenticeship he wants to get into the company of his father.

In sum we noticed here a nearly optimal fitting between the function of the measure and the young adults life projects respective their professional orientations. While some of the PmP students need really basic support and are not able focus on a professional future other demand this aspect of help explicit. It seems that both demands are served by PmP. The part-time training in the VbFF seems to be exact the support the young mothers demand. It enables them to complete their apprenticeship and even if not all of them want to work in the learned profession forever it is seen as the basis of their professional future. Similar is also right for the FOS. Only one student (Y_GER_F_9) reports that he did not choose the professional focus by his own. But he also mentioned that he comes to terms and continues his way.

3.2.3. Young adults' expectations

When we talk about expectations of young adults we have to point out that expectations consist of two elements. On the one hand, expectation refers to an anticipated future and how this future is arranged. On the other hand, expectation means that there is a certain aspiration towards a certain future arrangement. The expectations of the young adults are characterized by a strong need and desire of fair treatment. This becomes especially clear in the statements of the participants in PmP. All of them have made very bad experiences in their lives like bullying (Y_GER_F_1, Y_GER_F_2, Y_GER_F_6), diverse experiences of physical violence (Y_GER_F_1, Y_GER_F_6), uncaring parents (Y_GER_F_1, Y_GER_F_2) and many more major or minor experiences of injustice. For example Y_GER_F_1 insists that victims of diseases also have the right to be integrated into society: *"that I as a human being, as an adult am allowed to live and learn and that I as a affected person, I am allowed to work, that I can be normal despite my problems, that I have my place in normal society"* (Y_GER_F_1 – 151ff). These experiences have also a big impact on their professional orientation. For example Y_GER_F_1 did not know where to go and what to work, but she is interested in speech therapy and psychology or Y_GER_F_2 plans to work in the social sector because he made the experience that helping other people satisfies him. And also the participants in the VbFF relate to the aspect of justice like in the already mentioned example of Y_GER_F_3 and her indignation about the procedures in the Jobcenter. The same applies to Y_GER_F_5, who talked about her biological parents, who described how she grew up and how everyone told her she was unwanted and how this lead to her will and her decision to break out and "achieve something". The participants of the FOS grew up in calmer and more guarded environments, especially Y_GER_F_7 and Y_GER_F_8. In their narratives the aspect of justice is less dominant.

Closely linked to the aspect of justice are the expectations they formulate with regard to their current situation/measure. Most of the young adults do not formulate their expectations directly. The expectations of the participants in PmP are especially reflected in terms of the contrast of the support they did not get in the past but which they get now in the measure: *"I have learned that I can come to them with every simple and trivial question and I get an answer. And I really found hope here and I have the feeling that I got a perspective. [...] I have the feeling that here are human beings who really support special cases like me (laughs). Yes, and it is the first time I feel safe"* (Y_GER_F_1 – 1231ff). Or Y_GER_F_2: *"That were two things, three things which are good: First, so to say: I could ask questions. Second: I had someone who listened, because I had never someone who listened. That did not exist. I could never say what I wanted. And he [ZfW staff] has knowledge by his experience, so he could help me in many areas"* (Y_GER_F_2 – 1306ff). The expectations of the young mothers participating in the VbFF are more focused on the situation with their children. Y_GER_F_3 expresses her expectations by answering the question why she did not

start a normal apprenticeship: *“I could have. There was already one, who left the part-time training [...] and it suits her. But she has her mother, she has her family, who picks up the child, she has got support there. I am alone. And I am happy that I get support here”* (Y_GER_F_3 – 972ff). Or they are focusing on the importance of support and help in general: *“And that’s why I think in general that this a chance and a very good project, which could help many people and I hope that more people can participate in such things, that such things get more funding, because I know exactly and have seen that there are enough young people who could not see the light at the end of the tunnel and who need help.”* This reveals the close link of experiences of (in)justice and the expectation of help. The FOS students do not fit in this respect. As it is a part of the education system, the expectations of the participants in FOS are focused on their successful graduation. In sum, we come to the conclusion that there is correspondence between the anticipated future arrangement and the measures themselves. In PmP and VbFF, the young adults express their satisfaction with the arrangement of the measure especially against the contrast of former situations. In all three measures the young adults gain hope for a better future.

3.2.4. Involvement of young adults in the policy-making on site

The question of the participation of young adults in the LLL policy making has been answered differently by the interviewed young adults. For young adults in PmP the question does not arise because of the task and the self-conception of the measure in terms of tailor-made individual counselling. The needs of and the relevance of objectives for the young adults guide the work of the staff which becomes clear in a quotation of Y_GER_F_2: *“I didn’t know what I wanted. I just knew that I didn’t want to cook. But I didn’t know what else to do [...] I didn’t know which profession, I only knew the direction. And they tried to find out what I actually want with career-choice-tests and such things; and helped me to find a psychologist. We have searched for such things [...] Then he [staff] thought how he could help me. Some things, like going outside, overcoming my fears, seeing that nothing bad happens when I don’t speak well”* (Y_GER_F_2 – 1271ff).

In the VbFF the content and the procedure of the measure are much more determined. The young adults have to participate in the preparation courses, they have to do the personal interview, the aptitude tests, and find a company for the apprenticeship. They have to attend in the companies and in vocational school. Otherwise they risk to get excluded from the measure. But the VbFF offers additional support, which is voluntary. *“And we also visited museums, which was very important for me, because I didn’t know the city of Frankfurt very well. I could notice what we have seen and what I wanted to visit with my family”* (Y_GER_F_5 – 85ff). Y_GER_F_4 points out that beside the core procedures of part-time training the VbFF was always there if any support was needed: *“Everybody needs a bit of individual support. They offered me some too”* [Y_GER_F_4 – 1158f]. In this way, the young women influence the concrete offers of the VbFF in accordance

with their needs. One further aspect Y_GER_F_5 pointed out is that the young women can decide *“which teacher they like most and they could choose this teacher also for the exam preparation”* (Y_GER_F_5 – 1361ff).

And again the FOS as a regular education course differs from the other measures. The curriculum is given and additional support offers exist in the school but they are not promoted actively for students in FOS.

In sum, we notice that with regard to the chosen measures we see a hierarchy of potential policy-making involvement of young adults which, to take the metaphor further, looks like a pyramid. At the broad bottom we have the participants from PmP which are involved in setting the agenda in accordance with their needs. In the middle we have the young mothers from the VbFF who have to deal with the given agenda but have the possibility to voluntarily choose between additional offers and who can ask for individual support. The FOS students form the top of the pyramid. Here the amount of participation in policy-making is the least pronounced. Obviously, participation decreases with increasing status of the measure and increasing recognition of the learning they provide.

3.3 Interaction between young adults and experts

This chapter is based on relating the interviews with the experts on the one side and the young adults on the other side. We want to highlight specific points of our analysis, especially with regard to constellations of match or mismatch of perspectives, expectations and experiences.

3.3.1. Objectives of the measures and participants' expectations

The experts' descriptions of the objectives of their measures leads us back to the task pyramid of LLL measures (see figure 1). Every task is represented by a certain level of the pyramid. On the bottom we have policies which secure the stabilisation of the life situation and basic skills of the young adults. On the next level policies have the task to compensate for multiple problems and for basic deficits of young adults or of the situations they are in. On the level of empowerment, measures try to strengthen the competences which help young adults to cope with their lives in a better way and empower them to reach the next level, the qualification level. The ideal and ideology implies that qualification leads to employability and to an independent life. This loosely coupled system of measures (WP6 national report) operates a broad range of needs and demands and – according to official rhetoric - there is the appropriate measure for every young adult and for every need. To assess this, we relate the objectives of the measures and the statements of the young adults about their expectations. We have already mentioned that participants in PmP expressed their expectations especially in light of the contrast of the support they

did not get in the past but are getting now in the measure, which gives us hints about the match of measure and need: *“I have learned that I can come to them with every simple and trivial question and I get an answer. And I really find hope here and I have the feeling that I have a perspective [...] I have the feeling that here are human beings who really support special cases like me (laughs). Yes, and it is the first time I feel safe”* (Y_GER_F_1 – 1231ff). Y_GER_F_2: *“There are two things which are good: First, I can ask questions, so to say. Second, I have someone who listens, because I never had someone who listened. I could never say what I want. And he [staff] has knowledge due to his experience, so he can help me in many respect”* (Y_GER_F_2 – 1306ff). Y_GER_F_3, as a participant in the VbFF, for example, expresses that she could have found and completed an apprenticeship by herself and her skills but it was not possible due to the the social situation: *“I could have. There was already one who left the part-time training [...] and it works for her. But she has her mother, she has her family, who picks up the child, she has support there. I am alone. And I am happy that I got support here”* (Y_GER_F_3 - 972). Obviously, the assessment of provision and expectations seem to match for PmP and VbFF, at least to a certain respect. For FOS the situation looks a bit different, at first glance. FOS students did not express expectations in a very clear and explicit way. As a part of the education system, FOS-students are focused on their successful graduation. Of course they expect a fair treatment and assessment, but there is nothing which could be interpreted as further expectations concerning the FOS. FOS is a pure qualifications measure. It leads to the school leaving qualification which allows students to study at universities of applied sciences. This is the task and this is the expectation of the young adults. Therefore, the absence of expectations is the perfect match with the objective of the measure.

But this result can also be result of a selective procedure and the rigid application of access criteria? This leads us to the following analysis, which takes a closer look at the access procedures in the measure.

3.3.2. Access procedures and participants experiences

In this section, we concentrate on the access procedures in the chosen LLL measures by consulting the statements of the experts and the experiences of the young adults. We have already elaborated the way in which the measures select their participants and also the perception of the young adults of this procedure.

In PmP we have not identified any problems and access barriers from the perspective of the young adults. Of course, it needs being said that we have a positive selection in our sample, because we only spoke with young adults who are participants in the measure. The experts mention “only” soft skills like reliability as access criteria as well as serious mental problems. At the same time, two of three interviewed young adults reported that they had mental problems and were under medical treatment parallel to PmP. Y_GER_F_1 pointed out that they (hospital, PmP

and herself) work together with the aim of achieving more stability in her life. The mismatch in PmP seems to be more pronounced between the funder and the ZfW. We already mentioned the statement of E_GER_F_4 who reports about the advantages of their direct approach in the Job Center and their prohibition of this procedure, which he called *“just a struggle for power”* (E_GER_F_4 – 149). This shows the importance of the funding organisation for the way young people have the chance to participate in such a measure.

We have already analysed that access of young adults into VbFF is more difficult than in the other measures. Especially the example of Y_GER_F_3 was impressive. She went to VbFF and received the information that they could only offer part-time training to young women living in Frankfurt and who are clients of the Jobcenter. So she quit her job and moved to Frankfurt which had negative effects for her, because the Jobcenter did not accept her decision to quit her temporary job. Furthermore, the Jobcenter criticised the amount of her rent. Only with the help of her lawyer was she able to deal with the Jobcenters’ requirements. We have also seen that VbFF is not free to choose the young adults they want. They are bound to the regulations of the Jobcenter who finances the measure. Here we see a serious mismatch between the rationalities of the funding organisation and the service provider who has to take other interests into account. E_GER_F_1 reported about the resistance of the chambers in the past and the long way until the change in the labour law 2005. Even if there is a development and a change in thinking, the VbFF and its participants depend on the cooperation with the companies, because they are responsible for the practical part of the company-based training in Germany. They decide with whom they work. And here another observation has to be made: The VbFF has an elaborated multi-stage access procedure for their potential participants. Aptitude tests, personal interviews and criterion of a school leaving qualification. This effort is established in order to ensure that the women they support have good chances of being accepted by the companies as apprentices. Furthermore this is a way for the VbFF to ensure that the young adults are able to complete the apprenticeship, which is not a matter of course for a young mother. On the one hand we already elaborated the knowledge of the VbFF about the diverse expectations their participants have to cope with: e.g. the VbFF measure, companies, child care facilities and many more. And also the diverse difficulties the young mothers have, like their German language skills as a result of their migration background. At the same time they often live alone without a supporting social background: *“I am alone. And I am happy that I get support here”* (Y_GER_F_3 – 974). And even if the meaning of these requirements and procedures are understandable, they mean at the same time that the target group consists of young adults who have a certain level of social stability, cognitive capacity and a formal school certificate. The measure is thereby a solution for a concrete group of people in a concrete (not completely) vulnerable situation. This is a contradiction to the holistic ideal that every woman should get the chance to live an independent life (which means in Germany at least to have a completed apprenticeship). The solution of the VbFF shows us

that they know about this contradiction. We already mentioned Y_GER_F_5 who did not understand the grammar test at all, but nevertheless get the chance to participate in the part-time training. The VbFF offers preparation courses to support the young women for succeeding in their own aptitude tests. They allow their potential participants to repeat the tests again and again. This shows the balance act of a service provider with a feminist and holistic perspective, the necessity to cooperate with the economic sector, and the access regulations imposed by the funder.

The outward communication of FOS towards potential students is formal and clear and is related to the grades in their intermediate school-leaving certificate. But the manager of FOS has some scope of decision-making and he uses it especially to be sure that all places of their education courses are full. But these procedures happen in the background.

In all of the selected measures we notice the use of access criteria procedures. These procedures happen very publicly (aptitude tests, personal interviews in the VbFF / clear requirements in the FOS), in the management of the service provider (scope of decision-making in FOS and PmP) or indirectly because of the interest of third actors (companies in the VbFF). In the preceding section we have raised the question whether the use of harsh selection criteria are the reason for the very good matching of objectives of measures and expectations of young adults. After analysing the procedures of access we come to the conclusion that the service providers (including FOS) do not in fact select their participants extremely harshly, but rather try to find enough people to support.

3.3.3. Fostering autonomy

In the former chapters we have already elaborated the perspective of the experts about fostering autonomy. We have come to the conclusion that many of the actions in PmP may be interpreted as fostering autonomy and to a certain extent as reducing biographical uncertainty – if interpreted in terms of employability and adaptation to labour market demands. These actions are in accordance with the objectives of the measure and aiming on stabilizing the lives of their participants. Experts report about support for young adults to enforce their rights against the bureaucracy of the welfare state or in another case, about support for a young adult to learn how to use the public transport system or helps him to put his bills in order. The young adults on the other hand appreciate these offers very much and perceive them as support in their everyday life: “And I really found hope here and I have the feeling that I got a perspective [...] I have the feeling that here are human beings who really support special cases like me (laughs). Yes, and it is the first time I feel safe” (Y_GER_F_1 – 1232ff). In PmP we notice a match between the provision of basic support and the statement of the young adults that they get support for stabilizing their life and reducing their biographical uncertainty. However, it needs being said that for them motiva-

tion is rather surviving, getting their feet back on the grounds and being included in the labour market than autonomy in a more holistic sense. Increasing autonomy is an explicit objective of the part-time vocational training and VbFF in general. They do not only aim at providing young women independence from the state and from men but also offer activities in the field of cultural education in order to stimulate personal development and self-reflexivity: “What can we do here? Catching up, following up, improving, school and professional things and I do sessions with the women in the social-pedagogical area. That could be: time management, self-organisation, that could be, we go sometimes in an exhibition, because it is very important for me that the women become familiar with our cultural landscape. We do theatre projects with our women to raise their self-esteem” (E_GER_F_2 - 38ff). The young mothers are absolutely in line with these offers of support to foster their autonomy. A general statement of the young mothers in the VbFF is that they want to achieve something that they want to be someone. They highlight that they want to take care of their children, which means for them also to earn enough money in order to sustain them: “I plan to apply for working at the police in the office and hope that they take me on. I want to work my way up, that’s my goal; in any case, earning enough money so that I can sustain my son and myself” (Y_GER_F_4 - 1372ff). For VbFF we also notice a match between the attempt to foster autonomy and the perception of the young mothers that they get support with their children and in all other areas of their life. And last but not least the same match exists for the FOS, even if in a different way. Both FOS staff and their objectives and the young adults expectations and perceptions of support are in line with each other. In the perception of both teachers and students autonomy is a consequence of the school leaving qualification. Objectives of FOS and expectations of the students seem to be in line as the students, at least in our interviews, did not ask for any further support. An exception is the engagement of E_GER_F_5 who wants to implement more cultural further education: “well, just to foster children from educationally disadvantaged families and to strengthen them for our society” (E_GER_F_5 - 834f).

The bandwidth of fostering autonomy reaches from direct support within the measure to the support which ignores the present and aims direct in the future like in the FOS, where the everyday procedures are oriented to the school leaving qualification and hence to the formal qualifications which enables access to higher institutions. But in all these cases we noticed a high agreement with these support among the young adults who participate in the measures.

At the same time it needs being stated that the underlying understanding of autonomy is limited to employability and employment. This justifies a pedagogical concept of learning which primarily orientated towards adaption to the labour market (with a partial exception of the cultural education approach in VbFF). It is worth mentioning that and obviously symptomatic for lifelong learning biographies in the activating welfare state that expectations of providers and learners

do not differ in this respect but that young people are already socialised in a way that secures matching with lifelong-learning policies.

3.3.4. Co-operating networks

Especially the independent service providers ZfW and VbFF maintain a dense network of co-operating organizations. While the ZfW measure PmP, as a programme of individual counselling and guidance, is focused on the needs of their participants, the VbFF offers also permanent social-pedagogical support (E_GER_F_2 is a social-pedagogical specialist). In some cases professional behaviour means accepting the limitations of the own profession and guiding participants to other specialists. This happens in both cases. In PmP Y_GER_F_1 reports about a “triade” of hospital, PmP and herself who work together to stabilize her life. In the part time-training, Y_GER_F_4 mentions that psychological support was offered: *“Everybody needs a bit individual support. They offered me some too”* [Y_GER_F_4 – 1158f]. And also the co-operation between the VbFF and companies has already been mentioned in this report. Based on the interviews we see a well-functioning system of support measures in the region. We come to the conclusion that the networks of the independent service providers provide an added value for the young adults. This is important, because the interviews with the experts as well as the interviews with the young adults demonstrate the multi-dimensional problems young adults have to cope with. Therefore a single service provider is often not sufficient but an important starting point for holistic support. The task pyramid (figure 1) shows how different providers and measures are coordinated and connected through a discursive net that links basic skills with an interpretation of empowerment inspired by activation and regular qualifications.

3.3.5. Further insights of the three theoretical perspectives

Our analysis was guided by a theoretical framework which consists of three theoretical perspectives: Cultural political economy (CPE), life course research (LCR) and governance (GOV). In this section we highlight the main insights of these three perspectives with regard to the interactions between young adults and experts.

The cultural political economy perspective leads our attention to the interaction processes of target group construction in the selected policies. We noticed that beside the official requirements a lot of policy making happens on site. Here we see a confirmation of Lipskys’ (1980) finding that street-level-bureaucracies advance to policy makers. In FOS, clear access criteria are given with the curriculum. But because of the complex education system in Germany managers have a good deal of scope of decision-making scope and they use it to get enough students. This means for the young adults, that it is easier for them to attend FOS as if the requirements were used strictly. A similar picture can be observed in VbFF. We noticed a complex access procedure

but at the same time a lot of support for potential participants is offered to complete the procedure successfully.

The life course research perspective underlying the interaction between actors and levels of lifelong learning policies is implicit to the task pyramid. In the standard life course qualifications are seen as the normal way to secure employability. Where and for whom this standard life course is not accessible or does not work in the normal way, compensatory intermediate levels are introduced to catch up with basic skills and with empowerment which – in an activation context – is mainly interpreted in developing a sense of self-responsibility for the own life course trajectory.

The Governance-perspective elucidated the embeddedness and interdependences of the regional and local actors. For example, the cooperations between hospitals and PmP or between the companies and the VbFF. As the funder of two of the chosen measures the Jobcenter is of particular importance for the local LLL policy landscape. The Jobcenter appears as central actor who enables with his financial power a lot diverse support. At the same time their requirements and regulations have, as mentioned above, a huge impact on the way the support of the independent service providers is delivered. Beside they engagement in enabling support they prevents support with their requirements and made the access to the measures more difficult. We noticed here incompatible rationalities in the here overlapping sectors of labour market and lifelong-learning policies.

4. FR BREMEN

The present analysis of the interviews with young adults and experts in the FR Bremen will be performed in three consecutive steps: *First*, the interviews with the experts will concentrate on the questions raised by the core team (4.1). *Second*, the interviews with the young adults are presented and analysed according to the questions proposed in the WP 5 proposal. *Third*, both perspectives of the experts and young adults will be brought together in the last section and analysed with regard to their similarities and differences (4.3). The final step requires a higher level of abstraction and will allow us to make pertinent statements on LLL policies.

4.1 Analysis of Interviews with experts

Based on the introduction and data collection, treatment and analysis from the previous sections, chapter 4 presents the analysis of the interviews with the experts with regard to the policies' objectives, living conditions and autonomy of young adults, accountability and coordination among actors in FR Bremen.

As previously stated, in FR Bremen we concentrated on three interviews with seven experts from the following LLL policies: *Werkshule*, *Bleib Dran (Keep at it)* and *Jugend Stärken (Strengthening Youth)* with also direct focus on other policies led by the same independent provider: *Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung (BaE-External Vocational Training)* and *Förderzentrum Jugend (Youth Support Center)*.

4.1.2 Antecedents, objectives and evaluation

In this section we will mainly concentrate on how the above mentioned policies have started, on what objectives they have and how they are evaluated in order to get the first impression on them.

Antecedents of the policies

With regard to the antecedents of the policies in FR Bremen, it can be said that all three policies were created to proactively respond to the already existing problems in the region i.e. high dropout rate among apprentices in mainly craft based trades, high numbers of low school performers and young adults on welfare. Two of the initiatives: *Werkshule* and *Bleib Dran* have in common the fact that they are bottom-up policies and were created at the suggestion of single individuals.

The policy *Werkshule* came into life, when an expert from the Ministry of Education started advocating for the creation of the project. As the WP5 expert states:

“She had her thoughts on the disadvantaged and she thought with other colleagues of how to structure (the project) and started a trial run in 2009 with, I think, five classes. And then it has increased since 2010, in 2010 we also joined in. I met her in 2009, no in 2007, for some other reason and in 2010 she asked us if we want to start a *Werkschule* class and we accepted, otherwise we wouldn’t have had this class. And because I was totally convinced of the concept and first of all, because there were good facilities and this social worker, I thought of very positive, right? [Name] is meanwhile the director of the entire vocational education in Bremen and is the speaker of the commission for VET.” (E_GER_B_1).

The project was then institutionalized in the Bremer school system in 2012. This means that the funding is secured by the Ministry of Education

The policy *Bleib Dran* was founded in the year 1999 by the Academy of Work and Politics now called the Center of Work and Politics due to the efforts of Eva Quante-Brandt at the time university employee, now Minister of Education, Health and Consumer Protection, who according to the WP5 expert “did her research in the field of drop outs from Bremer craft- based trades and the VET” [E_GER_B_3] and noticed how imperative such a project was. She started to cooperate with different stakeholders from Bremen: Job Center, trade unions and VET schools and thus the very first steps of the project in the form of a working committee called Drop Outs was born. The project then took its course and started being financed by the Ministry of Education, ESF and Employer Agency. Since 2016 the policy has addressed all the dual educational system in Bremen and Bremerhaven.

The next policy *Jugend Stärken* is part of a broad nationwide programme, which is represented in 178 communities and has started in 2015 and continues till 2018. It is unknown how the idea accrued, but it is certain that the promotion and strengthening of disadvantaged neighbourhoods was intended. Adjacent to this policy, two other policies from the same independent service provider are also taken into consideration as they were also described by the experts.

The first one is called *Förderzentrum Jugend (Youth Support Center)* and the second one *Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung (BaE-External Vocational Training)*. *Förderzentrum Jugend* is mainly addressed to young adults between 18 and 25 years old, who are unemployed i.e. receiver of ALG II – or Harz IV – minimum social benefits and face different kinds of difficulties. With the help of stabilizing and empowerment approaches, they should be helped to discover their own potentials and talents. The support lasts between 6 and 12 months. This policy was founded in the year 2014 and it runs till 2019 and is funded in a proportion of 30% by the ESF and the rest from Senator für Wirtschaft Arbeit und Häfen (Ministry of Economy, Employment and Ports) and Job enter Bremen. It comprises five *Förderzentren (Youth Support Centers)* for 250 young adults. This is a regional initiative developed in 2014 at the Ministry level. As the WP5 expert states:

“it exists since November 2014, this is a new development in Bremen these so called *Förderzentren*, before *Förderzentren* were called Helping Schools but this is not the same, *Förderzentrum* as a new instrument of the Employment Agency, this is a stabilizing policy and there are 120 places, there is a *Förderzentrum* in Bremen and there is one in Bremer-haven for young adults under the age of 25” (E_GER_B_2)

Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung (BaE-External Vocational Training) was founded in 1999 and is addressed to young adults under the age of 25, who are looking for an apprenticeship position. It also uses a stabilizing and empowerment approach. The difference to *Förderzentrum* is that here the young adults are trained for the labour market.

To sum up, the above mentioned policies are concerned mainly with three phases: firstly, stabilizing and offering young adults being in difficult situations a perspective; secondly, compensating for deficits and empowering and third, training and qualifying. For the first and second steps the *Förderzentrum* is responsible. *Jugend Stärken* and *Bleib Dran* are also responsible for the second step and *BaE* and *Werkschule* are responsible for the final one.

Objectives

The following subsection is dedicated to the question: “What are the objectives of the LLL policies?” We will thus shortly analyse which objectives each LLL policy has and how was it explained by the experts interviewed.

The *Werkschule* is mainly directed to students with disadvantages in terms of learning. According to the WP5 expert:

“the *Werkschule* is a chance for the students who are having trouble breaking into the labour market, do not like going to school and should do all other things but going to school, at least for a while” (E_GER_B_1).

As it can be seen from the above quotation, according to the expert, when the aforementioned students refuse to go to a general school, *Werkschule* offers them the chance to complete their studies, in spite of performing poorly at school previously to admission, by giving them one more year of time from the 9th to 12th grade. The instruction comprises both theoretical (two days per week) and practical (in the workshop of the school three days per week) training. The scope, according to the expert, is that the *Werkschule* students are prepared for an apprenticeship during these three years, “are taught certain competences like structured work, punctuality, how to keep files tidy, in general, we give them a structure or a GOAL” (E_GER_B_1). So as it can be seen above, both the economic and integrative holistic rationale are behind this model.

In the project *Bleib Dran* the main objective is, as the experts state that the unreflected drop out is avoided at any price. Therefore, mediation and counselling among vocational schools, companies and apprentices are needed. The counselling is carried out at twelve vocational schools in Bremen.

The objective of *Jugend Stärken*, which is a solely counselling policy, is to help young adults, who come either voluntarily to the project or are sent by someone, with their job and apprenticeship applications, with legal and financial matters and/or other problems they have. The counselling is flexible and is held in many places such as in Job Center and in some neighbourhoods. This measure is, as the experts puts it “basically for young adults, who are not obliged to attend school anymore but who couldn’t find their way into the apprenticeship or work” (E_GER_B_2). *BaE* measure has in its focus the training of disadvantaged young adults and procurement of apprenticeships in companies. The young adults are age 18 - 25 and are sent by the Job Center, which means that either they or their parents live on welfare. The aim of this measure is that these young adults are led and get integrated in the primary labour market sector. The placement in apprenticeships can happen only by means of cooperation with companies or by internships. 52 positions are thus financed by the Job Center.

The measure *Förderzentrum Jugend* was created in 2014 and is the precursor of the so called helping school, “it is a new instrument of the Employment Agency and a preparing stabilizing measure” (E_GER_B_2) and it includes 120 positions. The Job Center sends to the independent service provider all the young adults under the age of 25, who have failed all other measures and help offered. It is expected that they get stabilized, get a daily structure and get trained so that they can be placed in either work or apprenticeships.

To sum up, all the policies presented above follow directly or indirectly the same agenda: labour market integration and avoidance of unemployment and living on welfare. In order to achieve this, three different strategies like stabilization, empowerment and training are used and engaged.

Evaluation strategies of the policies

This section deals with different types of evaluation strategies as well as the related criteria connected to the funding institutions. Each policy uses different evaluation strategies according to the type of funding, which is provided. One common trait of all the analysed policies is that Job Center is either solely or co- funder and therefore, the evaluation criteria are almost similar.

The *Werkschule*, as it also gets funds from the Job Center for the further education courses and extra-curricular activities, has to be externally certified once in five years. The *AZAV (Akkredi-*

tierungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Arbeitsförderung- Accreditation and Authorization of Employment Promotion) certification costs 5000 Euro, from which 50% are taken over by the Job-centre and the rest has to be independently procured. The goal of AZAV is to improve performance and the efficacy of the *Werkshule* regarding the employment policy. For this goal to be achieved seven steps are necessary: personal meeting, creation of offer, contract, audit, admission decision monitoring audit and re- accreditation. This means that *Werkshule* is closely monitored during the period of time, in which is authorized. Another way of evaluation is by examining the rate of students, who attain their school leaving certificate and find an apprenticeship. According to the interviewed expert, the average rate is 80%. In some years, it is even of 100%.

In the case of *Bleib Dran, ESF*, as one of the co-funders, has strict evaluation methods like feedback questionnaires and also the number of cases counselled: around 3000 students in 2016. Adjacently, in the team there is a continuous self-evaluation with regard to creating innovative ideas and responding to new challenges.

Jugend Stärken and Förderzentrum are being evaluated by the Job Center and ESF and *BaE* only by the Job Center. As *Jugend Stärken* is a low threshold measure, the only control mechanism in vigor is to offer a certain amount of counseling which happens in the form of mobile counseling, as the employee of the measure has fixed hours every day in certain neighborhoods.

According to the experts, the young adults are 17-18 average age, are gender-balanced and depending on neighborhood, the migration background is as high as of 65-70%.

The evaluation for *Förderzentrum and BaE* is mainly done by the Job Center in the form of weekly meetings with the employees of the policy. During the meeting, each participant is evaluated and a progress report is presented.

As it can be seen from above, the type of funding and institutions are very important when evaluations are done. ESF and the Job Center seem to have strict rules and regulations and that is why the results are more palpable and visible. Nevertheless, the tendency is that these evaluations are rarely available to the public.

4.1.2 Target groups

In the following section the target groups will be described from the perspective of the experts. We will pay attention to commonalities but also differences in the way these young adults are defined and described by the experts.

According to the experts, with the exception of *Bleib Dran and Jugend Stärken* the young adults are seldom masters of their lives, as they are part of the welfare system and are obliged to follow

rules and regulation otherwise sanctions are to be expected. All experts state that they do their best in taking into account the diverse experiences and living conditions of the young adults. Sustainability is one of the quality standards of which the experts are proud of, as once the measure goes to an end, they still follow the life courses of their participants and some participants stay in touch with their former teachers and mentors. When the E_GER_B_2 says that: “we hang on them and we value them as they are”, [...] “it also takes long time to motivate them”, she stresses the holistic approach the WabeQ staff uses in the work with the young adults. As they further mention they witness many participants, who due to their efforts come back to the measure and say that “with the exception of my mother, no one cares”.

The following traits are common to all young adults as the experts specify: most of them come from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, are often former drug and alcohol addicts have debts, experienced little parental control and come from less-educated families that are themselves under great distress.

The students attending the *Werkschule* are between 14-19 years old and as stated by the expert, are representatives of the lower half of the social scale and they are neglected by the school system as the support is strongly directed to the higher half. So, according to him, gaps and problems arise during the compulsorily general education, and this lack of basic skills can barely be caught up by the vocational schools. The young adults are defined mainly as being lower school performers with low chances to enter the VET system and who are also afraid of failure:

“so the Werkschule is a mean to catch somehow the very weak” (E_GER_B_1)[...] “they often are afraid to enter the VET system, are afraid of this regularity and are afraid to gain negative experience in regard to application rejection” (E_GER_B_1).

According to the E_GER_B_1 expert 15% of the young adults end up in the transition system as they cannot make up their mind. This is mainly due to their familiar circumstances with parents receiving welfare, a vicious circle hard to break through. Exactly that is what the teachers in vocational schools try to do, to break through the circle and offer them a different perspective from welfare. E_GER_B_1 mentions that there is a standard procedure in dealing with the young adults, who just start the *Werkschule*. At first they are “set on track”, which means the teachers have to make sure they come regularly and punctually to school. Then they are taught to gain confidence in the school personnel. As he further declares, they normally do not have a structure in their working modus and techniques. They also do not learn how to learn at the compulsory schools, so they get taught, on how to do that during the three years of *Werkschule*. The expert stresses also the fact that the Werkschule students neither have the necessary support at home nor the necessary learning atmosphere and infrastructure: often they do not even have their own desk at home, and “they see school as a necessary evil, where it is warm and dry and

homework is normally not done.” Migration stigma is also a constant, which is passed from one generation to the other, especially when they come from specific neighbourhoods in Bremen.

In spite of these barriers, one of the most important impacts of the policy on their life is that they start trusting the teachers and the team at the *Werkschule*. This is perhaps the most important and perceptible change that the experts perceive in their students.

Another visible change, he says, is that they get a structure in their daily lives. They approximately get an idea of how it could be if they fully invest in their education and get committed to what they do.

With regard to gender, he articulates that in this *Werkschule*, which is mainly specialized in technics, women are barely represented. In seven years since the project has started, a number of approximately 100 students visited the *Werkschule*, of which, only five were women, he further continued. Thus, female participation is very low. According to him, there was a project Girls for Technic, which ceased being funded at the end of 2016 and which encouraged women to start a technical career. When the project was cut, he was puzzled and could not understand why the funding was cut because he supported it and enrolled all his female participants in it so that they became motivated for the technical field. He also remarked that the teachers working in the policy have a better contact and impression on the young adults as they work with them daily in comparison to him, who is interacting with them from a manager point of view.

In the measure *Bleib Dran*, young adults experience a different kind of distress as in other measures. As the E_GER_B_3 experts indicate the main reasons for dropping out from apprenticeships are additional to the one mentioned above: lack of accommodation, high travel costs for commuting between home and company, especially in catering strict hierarchy, unsuitable work hours, pregnancy and lack of part time apprenticeships. Especially in women typical professions, female apprentices rarely find a company to continue their apprenticeships after giving birth to their children. Apprentices searching for mediation often feel inhibited as they fear escalation of the conflict. Finding a solution depends often on the type of conflict and the resources the apprenticeships have at their disposal.

In *Jugend Stärken*, *Förderzentrum* and *BaE* the E_GER_B_2 experts state that all their participants have similar living conditions and come from a similar social background but have other heterogeneous characteristics. Adjacent to the characteristics described before, they also mention that 40% of the participants struggle with psychological problems that have massively increased over the last three years. Many participants come from long-time unemployed families that have their own issues and problems and that only experienced Hartz IV (minimum welfare support)

over generations. They then continue specifying that factors like struggle for survival, low- pay sector, minimum wage, low education, shortages in education system negatively impacted the lives of the children and increased their precarity. They then conclude that due to this systematic discrimination over generations, they find the reaction of the young adults to not fulfill the requirements imposed on them by Job Center and society in general, a healthy one. Other factors with which they are confronted, they remark, are that the young adults also witness no parental control, have no regulated schedule, tend to stay awake all night and thus oversleep and come late to school, so the consequence is that they can hardly follow the lessons. They also have little frustration tolerance and resilience, they do not learn at school, seem to be unable to find the right path in life and they lack basic skills. Therefore, they seem unable to cope with life, as their parents haven't taught them how. As it can be seen from above the living conditions are described in rather negative terms and indicate poor support at home.

In terms of gender issues, it can be mentioned that *Jugend Stärken* is gender balanced having 50% women and the rest men. In *Förderzentrum*, from 120 participants, one third are women two thirds are men and in *BaE*, there were only 3 women participants in the program's total existence, currently there are 52 male participants.

According to E_GER_B_2 experts the participants from *Förderzentrum* are quite heterogeneous and are randomly included in the policy by the Job Center:

“our young adults failed through all social systems, skipped other measures; or we have high school graduates who applied at university and wait for an answer and they were also sent to us, completely strange, people with rehabilitation status, who are not supposed to be here; and our assignment is basically to stabilize them, to put it bluntly, to give them a daily structure and a partial professional orientation; so they are three days in our workshops, and the goal of this policy is indeed to mainly or primarily place them in vocational training or employment. They are young people of an average age of 20- 21, who either never started an apprenticeship or dropped out from it or they do not have a school leaving certificate and now they have the chance to do a lower secondary degree with us” (E_GER_B_2).

They then continue by saying that their participants are sent to the policy first for six months and depending on the individual cases, their stay is extended. Only 50% of the participants sent to the policy by the Job Center attended it and from this group, only 50% visit the measure on a regular basis. The other 50% disappear from the policy. They can contact only the ones who sign a consent form and pay them visits at home and show them that they are interested in having them as participants. The citation above shows the problems the experts are confronted with, the heterogeneity of their participants and their lack of commitment.

To sum up, we can say that the young adults described by the experts are very heterogeneous depending on which policy they are included. In general, they are described in terms of precarity and risk.

4.1.3 Living conditions of the young adults in FR Bremen

The notion of living conditions of the young adults is used in text with the meaning of social and working conditions. We will refer here to their situation as it is described by the experts in each LLL policy. It seems that building trust and offering them support are central socio-pedagogical strategies used in working with the target group.

According to the E_GER_B_1 expert, the main focus of the school personnel is to build trust and confidence and empower the participants so much that they get the chance to acquire a school degree and to enter the VET afterwards. Personal commitment is also mentioned: when the young adults do not show up at school both teachers and the social worker pay them visits at home to see the reasons behind their class skipping and to motivate them to resume their studies. So he concludes, the team's engagement and dedication goes beyond the normal set framework. The same approach is also used by the team of *Jugend Stärken*.

The young adults from *Förderzentrum*, *BaE* and *Jugend Stärken* struggle with far more complex situations than the young adults from the other measures, so the helping strategies have to be more refined and flexible. The E_GER_B_2_WP5 experts emphasize that not only do they pay visits at home but they also defend them against the Job Center, so that no penalties are imposed on them in case of rules' violation. Their engagement goes beyond matters connected to the measure as they state that they also settle issues with administration and offices to clarify situations of abortion, accompany women to gynecologists, for example. Some of the young adults need almost non-stop support, a mother figure, or someone to rely on: "they need to be continuously motivated, to stay tuned" (E_GER_B_2). This is exactly what they get during the measures. Sometimes some of the young adults say: "I want to be an adult now," and reject their support around the clock.

As the experts also mention, in case of aggressive behavior towards the team and other participants, clear sanctions are applied and they are dismissed. In the *Förderzentrum* many participants dropped out within the first 18 months but then when they came back six months after they had not been dismissed but reintegrated in the measure as a welcoming sign. The team is flexible and also generous and empathic as they know about the issues their participants are

struggling with. And this reaction corresponds to their pedagogical mission/ethics to not leave anyone behind.

With reference to *Jugend Stärke* the experts say that as it is a low threshold policy control cannot be imposed on the youth searching for advice and help. It is more difficult to engage in an authentic and sincere dialog as the participation is voluntarily. The same is the case for *Bleib Dran*. Interventions are under the form of calls and emails but if the young adults do not react on them, then the team has no other choice than to draw back.

In summary, it seems that the experts take into account the living conditions of the young adults when they take decisions. They respect their pedagogical creed to protect and support their participants and thus avoid that they turn into criminals. A low rate of young adults will get lost in the process, but the society should accept that not all of them can be saved. The rationale behind the high commitment from the experts' side derives from the idea that everyone deserves a second sometimes a third or fourth chance.

4.1.4 Autonomy and biographical uncertainty

The following question is at the core of this section: "Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty?" This question will be further detailed in the section 4.3 of this report, which highlights both perspectives of the experts and the participants.

At a first glance, it seems that the young adults have enough spaces where they can make independent and autonomous decisions. With regard to *Werkschule*, the E_GER_B_1 expert says that the students decide on their own to enrol in the technical school and on the participation in extra-curricular activities. But when it comes to choosing the apprenticeships, he says, that most of the time the decisions are led by coincidence and are arbitrary. The skills supply and demand dictate upon apprenticeships' opening and the young adults are accordingly directed toward them. If they necessarily want to do an apprenticeship they wish for and they do not get it, then they have to be flexible enough to accept a different one that is available. So in this sense, they do not have much decisional freedom. He continues then by specifying that the chances are quite good for *Werkschule* students to enter the VET system and get employed especially as in the trade sectors many positions are open. This is also a field in which skilled personnel is missing. He then continues that they try to reduce biographical uncertainty by means of extra-curricular activities in the form of outdoor activities are offered but also theatre and cinema visits, coaching in writing applications, for example. Although the goal of the policy is entrance into VET system, it seems that they also get to learn how to integrate into society and not only how to be

productive. So a more holistic approach is engaged so that they get integrated into labour market.

The young adults from *Jugend Stärken*, *Förderzentrum* and *BaE* seem to need more attention and support on their path to employment as they deal with more psychological problems than the others. As mentioned in the previous section, the employees take over roles of parents and offer the young adults support around the clock. As they stress, most of them seem to be in need of this support and only a low number behave as mature adults and are treated as such.

Therefore, as it follows the experts describe the concrete approaches to reduce biographical uncertainty. In *Jugend Stärken* the one-to-one mentoring are used to reduce biographical uncertainties and to guide the young adults through the transition process. Help is offered with job and apprenticeship applications, advice on debt reduction and support with any type of paperwork. In the other two measures, the teachers, the projects managers, the social workers and therapists are acting as mentors, mediators, guides and helpers as the young adults need constant motivation to finish their apprenticeships and school degrees.

In *Bleib Dran*, where the focus is on conflicts, the young adults are requested to be more proactive and autonomous in their decisions as the E_GER_B_3 experts highlight. Coaching, mediation and counselling are available, as well as support but it often depends on the ability of the young adults to address directly the conflict and to confront their colleagues and bosses or not. They emphasize that the young adults have to take the decision, if they enter a conflict or not. The team can direct them to different support agencies, offer them alternatives but in the end, it depends on the young adults, on how far they want to go in the process.

To conclude, it can be said that the young adults get a lot of support from the experts to overcome their biographical uncertainties in the form of extra-curricular activities, cooperation with other agency, when their expertise is not enough, coaching and mentoring. Before being autonomous, it is important for the experts that the young adults are stabilized, motivated and empowered. Gaining trust is perhaps the biggest step towards autonomy as the E_GER_B_1 expert mentions. However, when young adults get support around the clock, the danger exists that the young adults become dependent on others.

4.1.5 Actors, coordination and cooperation

With regard to the actors involved in the policies and to their coordination, this subsection takes up a governance perspective. One similarity that defines all analysed LLL policies is that they closely collaborate with the private sector. Without the private sector, it wouldn't be possible for these young adults to access the labour market and enter the VET system. In addition, each poli-

cy has its own collaborators depending on its degree of institutionalization. The *Werkschule* started as a project in 2009 and then three years later was integrated into the education system. This shift had profound implications as it financially became autonomous. The main close cooperation is with the Ministries of Education and the Employment Agency as the main funders. So the *Werkschule* is accountable to them. The Chambers of Commerce and Chamber of Crafts, Chamber of Employees and other *Werkschulen* are valued for exchange of experience and ideas. The *Werkschule* has a contact person at the Employment Agency, who deals with funding issues. WaBeQ and *Bleib Dran* are established well-known providers in the Bremer VET scene. In comparison to *Werkschule*, the measures led are having a project status, which means concretely that they constantly have to apply for funds, which mostly are limited to short periods of time. This fact brings with it certain insecurity for both the project employees and participants. This fact is often stated by the E_GER_B_2 expert in the management position. She says that she continuously has to apply for funds, so that she secures the position of many employees, who work part-time. Therefore, many of the policies they are in charge of are a continuation of other policies, which would change names but remain similar in content.

The creation of *Jugendberufsagentur*, an agency that should be a mediator and coordinator between the young adults and the independent providers, has a direct impact on both latter policies. Firstly, it brings a certain competition to *Bleib Dran* as both deal with coaching and guidance of drop outs in VET. Secondly, the independent service providers will have to work with *Jugendberufsagentur* more closely, as many of their contact persons work now at the agency. According to the WP 5 experts, in the north of Bremen the collaboration with the *Jugendberufsagentur* works wonderfully, but the one with the *Jugendberufsagentur* in Bremen Mitte is currently still under development.

Jugend Stärken and *Bleib Dran* are both financed by *ESF*, which means that there is a close collaboration between actors. In addition, *Bleib Dran* is also financed by the Ministry of Economic Work. The project is accountable to both of the actors. *ESF* has strict evaluation criteria, which are to be fulfilled in order to get the necessary funds.

According to the E_GER_B_2 experts other important actors are the 600 companies from the private sector as well as the Employment Agency and other independent service providers. As they stress, lately, the Job Center uses a lot of pressure to see the young adults integrated into the labour market. They “take a very close look” at the drop outs and compare the high drop-out quota of 50% in *Förderzentrum* to lower drop-out quotas of other independent providers. The independent service provider feels discriminated in this way, as they cannot choose their target groups. The heterogeneous participants they get force them to constantly redefine their meth-

ods and concepts of work. So comparing vulnerable with stable target groups seems to them improper. Nevertheless, they stress the fact that they understand the position of the Job Center, as it uses tax money and thus, have the moral obligation to invest it carefully.

Additionally, *Bleib Dran* works close together with vocational teachers as they are main multipliers in the work with apprentices. They also work with social workers, training companies, trade unions and chambers as mediators between the measure and training companies. They also connect young adults with other providers/projects when their expertise is limited in some areas. Therefore, in legal matters/questions there are cooperation agreements with other projects like “*Integrationslotse*” and *Senior-Expert-Service*.

In conclusion, it can be stressed that the funders are the main coordinators and evaluators of the policies, which have to comply with their rules and regulations. In this sense, the relationship is hierarchical. Adjacent, the lack of continuous funding poses also a danger for the employees of the policies, with the exception of *Werksschule*. Short-term contracts bring the employees in a precarious situation.

4.1.6 Multi-level “wicked problems”

Many aspects of the policies aimed at tackling wicked problems are mainly related to issues of attributes and role of ESF in the policies, the influence of Jugendberufsagentur on the future of the policies and also on the mismatches between skills supply and demands.

A first wicked problem that can be mentioned is the fact that although the interviewed policy experts have described the evaluation criteria imposed by *ESF* as funder or co-funder of the selected policies, they failed in describing the role and the attributes of the *ESF* in the policies. They also omitted to mention the degree of cooperation with other institutions, especially with the Job Center, in its concurrent structure. From the regional interviewed expert from WP6, we know that ESF is thought of as filling the gaps that cannot be addressed by the Job Center. The WP6 expert sees no competition or contradiction between the two previously mentioned funding institutions.

A second development that is worth mentioning, is the creation of *Jugendberufsagentur* (*Youth Employment Agency*) on the regional and local level, which is supposed to cluster all the information and services that young people need, in order to facilitate their transition between school and work. Therefore, different ministries, Job Centre, the Employment Agency and Youth Welfare Offices, employers and vocational schools are involved in the process. A first observation that has to be made is that in spite of the fact that the independent service providers are accountable to it, they neither have an office in the building nor are represented in commissions.

Secondly, as consultations in VET system is part of the work of *Jugendberufsagentur*, the questions that emerge are about what happens to independent service providers like *Bleib dran* that also act in the same field? Will they be closed down? This was the main concern of the employees of *Bleib Dran* as this would eventually leave them unemployed.

Another aspect raised by the E_GER_B_2 experts was that the Job Cent has its own agenda connected to the domains in which the apprenticeships are offered. This often collides with the labour market and the living conditions of the young adults. As there is a mismatch between demand and supply, young adults are further pushed into biographical uncertainty. As they state: “we had this topic, upon what criteria is decided, which professions are publicly called for tender; from time to time we really couldn’t understand why apprenticeships as bike fitters were offered as it was no demand for the bike industry and lots of shops closed down. Since three or four years it has been a boom in the field and the demand also increased, so we can say, now is okay, we really train to supply the demand. This was a long digression on the sense and non-sense of some decisions made by the funders” (E_GER_B_2). And they conclude, “we do not have the possibility to influence” the policy decision making.

In summary, it can be said that these three developments: the degree of involvement of *ESF* in the policy, the creation of *Jugendberufsagenturen* and the lack of voice of the independent providers in policy decision-making are important issues that are worth being further investigated.

4.2 Analysis of Interviews with young adults

In this chapter we will analyse the interviews which we led with eight young adults in the FR Bremen. These interviews deal with young adults who were in the past or at the time of the interviews involved in the LLL policies under scrutiny. The chapter is structured in the following way: section 4.2.1 presents a short summary of their biographies. Following this first descriptive section of this chapter, the second section is dedicated to the analysis and clustering of patterns of biographies (4.2.2). In the remaining sections of this chapter we will perform a structured comparison of the biographies according to thematic categories such as the construction of the target group, young adults’ life course expectations and life plans, their participation in LLL policy-making and young adults’ skills (4.2.3.).

4.2.1. Presentation of biographies

The following section portrays the key events in the biographies³ of eight young adults interviewed in the FR Bremen. The sample includes six males and two females. With the exceptions of two males, all remaining interviewees were born in Germany. With reference to the interviews these summaries highlight the key events in their life course with special emphasis on their educational and professional trajectories as well as their experiences. In the next section (4.2.2) we will analyse and cluster their biographies with regard to the similarities and differences found in the young adults' self-presentation as well as to other dominant issues such as migration, bullying and gender, for example.

Y_GER_B_1 is 20 years old and was born in Bremen. He spent 6 years in an elementary school, where he did not feel comfortable at all, as he suggested in his interview. During that time he was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia. He then changed to upper secondary school but as it was closed down he had to decide upon a new school so his teachers recommended him to go to the *Werkschule*, where he received his lower secondary degree. In 2015, he started an apprenticeship as a goldsmith, which he is about to complete. His career trajectory is marked by multiple changes of companies during his second apprenticeship year. Also in 2015, when he turned 18, he mentioned that he set up his own goldsmith company. Since then he has created and sold his own jewellery collection on crafts markets over weekends and on Facebook. At the time of the interview he was struggling with health problems.

Y_GER_B_2 is 18 and was born in Bremen. He grew up with his mother, who was a single parent. He had to repeat the 2nd grade in the elementary school as he had problems in German and Math. He explained that he experienced bullying from primary school until year 7. Therefore, he started therapy with a psychologist and was sent to a clinic for three months. He then changed schools in the 8th and again in the 9th grade. Following the recommendation of his class teacher he visited the *Werkschule* and applied for entrance and was about to finish lower secondary school at the time of the interview. With his school leaving exam, he intended to start an apprenticeship in warehouse logistics and he has already signed a contract with training company. During all these changes he was living at home where he shared a flat with his mother and his stepfather.

Y_GER_B_3 is 18 and was born in a Central European country and moved to Germany when he was 6 years old. At the end of the primary school he received the recommendation to visit an academically orientated secondary school (*Gymnasium*). In the 6th grade he had to change schools and move to less academic secondary school (*Realschule*) due to problems with the German language. Shortly after he had to change schools again and attended a lower secondary

³ Biography understood as „told life“ i.e. interpretation of past events and experiences of a person's life and his/her expectations for the future. For more information, please consult our project's glossary: http://www.young-adultlt.eu/glossary/listview.php?we_objectID=188

school. At the end of 8th grade he was also told by his teachers to apply for the *Werkschule*. At the time of the interview he was about to finish it and to start an apprenticeship as systems mechanic. He had already signed the contract with the hiring company. His parents hold a high school degree from the countries in which they were born.

Y_GER_B_4 was born on 16th of August 1995 in a Near Eastern country. His grandfather came to Germany as a guest worker and brought his father to Germany when he was 14. He came with his mother to Germany when he was 7 years old and was therefore sent to a remedial course for 2-3 years where he learned German. Afterwards he was directly included in the 3rd grade of a primary school. He often stressed the fact that he had great problems speaking and writing in German. He changed schools in the 5th and in the 8th grade. Following the advice of his class teacher and with her help he applied for the *Werkschule*, where he finished his school leaving certificate in the 12th grade. After completing the school degree he started an external vocational training as a production mechanic at the same vocational school centre. Upon completion he then continued for one year at a vocational high school. At the time of the interview he received the results of his final exam of the vocational high school degree and planned to apply for an undergraduate course at a University for Applied Sciences.

Y_GER_B_5 was born on 1st June 1998 in Bremen. In the elementary school the teacher discovered that he had writing and counting problems. At a closer investigation he was then diagnosed with dyslexia and therefore received a recommendation to visit a special needs school between 6th and 9th grade. Due to the fact that there were too few students at that school he had to skip the 5th grade and was enrolled directly into the 6th grade. In the 9th grade he had to decide whether he wanted to change to a different special needs school as his school was about to be demolished or to apply for the *Werkschule*. He informed himself about the *Werkschule* and applied for it together with other friends. At the time of the interview he was about to finish the *Werkschule* and to start an external vocational training as an industry mechanic at the same vocational educational centre in which he attended the *Werkschule*. During the time of the interview he lived with his mother and his brother. His father had left the family when he was 6 months old.

Y_GER_B_6 is 25 years old and was born in Bremen. After the primary school, he was sent to an orientation school where he stayed until the 6th grade. In the 6th grade he received a recommendation for a lower secondary school. He finished it with a leaving certificate, however without taking the final exam. He was then sent to a transition school for two years. Upon completion, he was included into a programme run by the Job Centre, called 'One Euro Job', in which he received social benefits and an additional 60 cents per hour payment. He mainly worked in gardening. There, with the help of a teacher, he then applied for the *Erwachsenenschule* (Adult Education

School) in Bremen, where he had the possibility of turning his lower secondary school degree into an upper school degree. However, after graduation he could not find an apprenticeship position. Due to health problems and the death of his father he stayed at home and lived on welfare. After a year the Job Centre sent him to a so-called *Förderzentrum*, where he was taught how to write applications for apprenticeship positions.

Y_GER_B_7 was born on the 21st of February 1998 in Germany. Before she started the elementary school she had to move twice, once between cities and once within a city. She describes her performance in primary school as good, but it declined during the 5th to 8th grade. She started taking drugs when she was 12 and often missed school. She left the lower secondary school which took her one year longer with a school leaving certificate. Shortly after completion, she started an apprenticeship as a care assistant, which she voluntarily ended in the second year so that she could start a detox therapy in a clinic. In the clinic, she met her boyfriend and with him she decided to move to Bremen to be closer to his family. The Job Center sent her to a *Förderzentrum*, where she upgraded her school degree to upper secondary school. She grew up with her mother and has had no contact to her father.

Y_GER_B_8 is 25 years old and was born in Bremen. In the primary school she did not get on with her teacher and therefore her parents decided to change schools. She then did her upper secondary school degree and afterwards started an apprenticeship as an electronic technician. Shortly before she was about to finish her apprenticeship, she left it because she was, as she maintained in the interview, bullied by her instructor and her fellow apprentices. She then decided to move with her boyfriend to the countryside in a different federal state. As there were no many jobs available she did many temporary helping jobs and lived on benefits. After three years of living in the countryside, she decided to return to Bremen in 2015. After a tragic episode in her life she stayed at home for one year and lived on welfare. She was sent to *Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung* (BaE-External Vocational Training) by the Job Center where she does two years apprenticeship as a bike fitter. During the time of the interview she lived alone, but her parents were living close by.

4.2.2. Analysis and clustering of patterns of biographies

After the brief description of the biographies of the interviewees in the previous section, section will analyse and cluster these biographies with regard to the topics of bullying, health, migration, people, places and causalities and justifications in the construction of life courses. These clusters rely on the codes we previously used in analyzing the biographies and which were listed in the section 2.2 of this report. While it is not in our intention to reduce the biographies to mere categories, certain similarities and differences appear to be very significant.

Self- presentation and construction of life stories

This section outlines, after a short presentation of the similarities and differences between the biographies of the young adults, two categories which rely on codes previously set. Self-presentation is thus understood as a synergy of persons, places and reaction as actor or reactor. The construction of life stories highlights the justification and causal explanation of events in the life courses. These categories will be presented according to the relevance given to them by the young adults in the construction of their life stories.

Based on the short presentations of the young adults in the previous section we can see that the young adults are quite diverse with regard to their biographies, family backgrounds, their school trajectories, professional path and even in the way they experience their life. Four of the young adults were raised by single mothers (Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_5, Y_GER_B_6, Y_GER_B_7), but only two experienced poverty (Y_GER_B_6 and Y_GER_B_7) as they lived on benefits. Two of the respondents are migrants as they came to Germany when they were six respectively seven years old as in the cases of Y_GER_B_3 and Y_GER_B_4. They also mentioned their ties to the countries in which they were born and described them as their home countries. Therefore, they spent each school vacation there and had problems with the German language.

As the family backgrounds are very heterogeneous, they were all raised differently and have a different connection to their parents. While most interviewees experienced caring families, who were a real support during school or in difficult times, in some cases the fathers were completely absent from their lives as for Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_5 and Y_GER_B_7. In one case the family was destructive and no source of reliance and support (Y_GER_B_6).

With regard to education, five of the young adults hold a lower secondary degree, two upper secondary and one vocational baccalaureate. Five interviewees are attending the *Werkschule* (Y_GER_B_1, Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_3, Y_GER_B_4, and Y_GER_B_5), while Y_GER_B_6 and Y_GER_B_7 are attending the *Förderzentrum* and Y_GER_B_8 is participating in the *Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung (BaE-External Vocational Training)*. While the educational attainments of the most participants correlate with the levels of education of their parents, i.e. they have lower and upper secondary school leaving certificates, two cases deviate from this pattern. Although Y_GER_B_4's mother is illiterate and his father has an upper secondary school leaving certificate, he achieved a vocational high school degree, which indicates an increase in his educational status. The reasons for his achievement were the support from his father and the headmaster of the *Werkschule* and also his "ambition" as he states. By contrast, Y_GER_B_4's mother finished university and his father holds an upper secondary school leaving certificate. Thus, his educational attainment is marked by a decrease caused mainly by his dyslexia and dyscalculia. Therefore, the

correlation between parent's educational level and these negative expectations with regard to the *Werkschule*, as a school where "idiots" go, is understandable.

Referring to the agency of the participants at a personal level without taking into consideration the institutional constraints, two typologies emerged: those who act independently with regard to decision-making in educational and vocational trajectories and those who depend on and are influenced by other people.

While Y_GER_B_1 presents himself as a hard-working goal-oriented male, who "marched through" his school and vocational education because he does not like to be idle because "one has to do something, otherwise a rolling stone gathers no moss". Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_5 and Y_GER_B_4 were helped either by their parents or teachers. Thus, Y_GER_B_4 states, "my father wanted that I rather do my vocational baccalaureate, or to put it differently, he pushed me in that direction". He did not plan anything but was helped and pushed step by step throughout school and at the end he succeeded in finishing a vocational high school.

One other similarity regarding the life courses of the young adults that could be observed is that while the participants of *Werkschule* have almost a linear "standard" life course, marked by few deviations in educational and vocational trajectories, the other participants from other two policies (Y_GER_B_6, Y_GER_B_7 and Y_GER_B_8) have experienced more frictions and detours and are facing more psychological and professional instability. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that they are participants of LLL policies that focus on stabilizing and empowering them, while *Werkschule* aims at vocational qualifications.

We will now continue by explaining, the causes of these deviations and non-linearity in/of life courses of the young adults.

Firstly, there are individual uncontrollable dimensions such as dyslexia and dyscalculia as in the cases of Y_GER_B_1 and Y_GER_B_5 and difficulties to learn as for Y_GER_B_2. These dimensions, which can be partially corrected by hard work and practice influenced their educational trajectories negatively and thus made them 'end up' in the *Werkschule*, a policy dedicated to students disadvantaged in terms of learning.

Secondly, there are external uncontrollable dimensions like migration, language acquisition, family background and bullying such as in the cases of Y_GER_B_3, Y_GER_B_4, Y_GER_B_6 and Y_GER_B_7. And thirdly, internal controllable dimensions like alcohol and drug addiction. In this context Y_GER_B_6 is an interesting case, because he defines himself as being in opposition to his family: "You see, my family is not the smartest." He then continues and says that his role models

are his friends and not his family “as they all live in Bremen and have somehow cleaning jobs” (Y_GER_B_6). Although he sees his family as the source of his depression and failure through school, he uses it as a positive impulse to change his life.

As a conclusion, it has to be mentioned that we are dealing with heterogeneous participants who differ in their life courses on grounds of different educational and vocational patterns, agency, as well as with regard to the influence of their internal and external controllable or uncontrollable dimensions like family, migration, language acquisition and health in the way they present themselves and construct their life story.

Dominant issues

As mentioned before in section 4.2.2, issues like bullying, health and migration also seem to have an influence on the lives of young adults. The following section will highlight their importance in the life courses of the interviewees.

First of all, it is noteworthy to mention that three out of eight participants constructed their life story around issues of bullying at school. According to Y_GER_B_2 and Y_GER_B_8, they were victims and Y_GER_B_6 was a doer but “only doing a minimal part”. In the same sentence he relativizes his statement by mentioning that the whole class was involved in playing pranks and doing bullying.

According to Y_GER_B_2 and Y_GER_B_8, their bullying experiences had negative consequences on their life course. For Y_GER_B_2 it meant weak academic performance at school. As he states in his interview the reasons for him being bullied were in the fact that:

“I was very quiet, I didn’t speak much, I had a difficult phase in my class because there were a lot of migrants, so, I am not against migrants as I am myself half-migrant and in the past was really a problem that I was so quiet and I couldn’t show what I can” (Y_GER_B_2).

He also states that he „experienced a lot of difficult things, but I endured them well” (Y_GER_B_2). One of his main resilience resources was his mother, as he says.

Y_GER_B_8 starts her story with her leaving the upper secondary school and entering the vocational education system. She then stresses that:

“in August 2009 I went to start my first apprenticeship as an electronics technicians for operating technology. I learned this for two and half years. Then I quit because of bullying problems both from peers’ and instructors’ side” (Y_GER_B_8)

This dropping out forced her to enter a vulnerable life trajectory relying on welfare. Thus, for three years she struggled with depression and low self-esteem. When she entered the LLL programme she lived on welfare and was sent to it by the Job Center.

Additional to bullying, health problems were also an issue. They were mainly caused by bullying as was the case for Y_GER_B_8 and Y_GER_B_2 or by lack of family support as for Y_GER_B_6_WP5 or by diseases i.e. tumour, as in the case of Y_GER_B_1. The story of Y_GER_B_7 is quite particular as the health problems were caused by both, lack of family support and by drug addiction. As she states:

„when I was 12 I moved in the wrong environment. Accordingly, I came into contact with drugs and I did not go to school and everything went down because I only wanted to have fun and I was not clear-headed because of drugs anymore”

This drug addiction led to poor school leaving certificate and dropping out from the apprenticeship.

In addition to bullying and health problems, migration is also a dominant issue in the life course of Y_GER_B_3 and Y_GER_B_4 as they came to Germany when they were six or seven years old respectively. They both highlight that they struggled with the German language, which influenced their educational trajectory. Additionally, “wrong friends” turned Y_GER_B_4 into a juvenile delinquent. As for Y_GER_B_3 he experienced a down turn when he was downgraded from *Gymnasium* to a lower secondary school, because the teachers said, that “grades are quite good, but problems with German“. This demotivated him and so he did not feel like learning anymore.

To conclude, we can see that the above mentioned dominant topics have shaped the young adults’ educational and professional trajectories and contributed to their participation in the policies under consideration.

4.2.3 Structured comparison according to thematic categories

In this section we will compare the biographies according to thematic categories such as how the target groups are constructed, what expectations and plans the young adults have towards their life and how they define their skills. In the first section we will take a look at the access criteria of the policies as an important factor in construction and definition of young adults as target groups. In the second section the life course expectations, understood as future plans will be elaborated so that in the third section on life plans and in the fourth section on skills, the interviewee’s perspectives will be taken into account as important steps in their future planning of their careers/professional steps.

Construction of the target group

In this section, as already specified above, questions such as , how do LLL policies construct their target groups, do they entail gender biases and how do these policies recognise social catego-

ries? (CPE & LCR) are in focus, as important dimension in interactions between experts and young adults. The dimensions will be analysed, in a first step, according to how they are accessed by the young adults so that afterwards issues of gender bias are treated.

Werkschule, *Förderzentrum* and *Ausserbetriebliche Ausbildung* (BaE-External Vocational Training) constitute important LLL policies in the region as they prepare the young adults for entering the vocational education system and thus the labour market. Therefore, the beneficiaries of these policies are either young adults disadvantaged in terms of learning, or participants who need support in stabilising and entering the VET. Although all respondents stress the positive effect of the policies on their life:

“Actually everything changed since I was at TBZ” (Technical Vocational Center, where *Werkschule* is incorporated) (Y_GER_B_1)

“The school really helped me to further educate and to live my life, now I can start everything in peace (Y_GER_B_2)

“New beginning [...], I had to perform again” (Y_GER_B_3)

with regard to their impression prior to the access, these policies are viewed as for people with all sorts of problems and who are not able to cope with regular school system or with life in general.

While Y_GER_B_1 did not want to enrol in the *Werkschule* because “we thought that the very last idiots were sent there, which was also the case”, Y_GER_B_2 went there and he talked to 18-19 years students who

“told me a bit that they also experienced difficult times and then they started here and they said that it quite helped, that they could further live their lives and there was nothing negative about this school, and then I thought that I would try and then I started here”(Y_GER_B_2)

In *Förderzentrum* and *BaE*, where the young adults are sent by the Job Center, they are mostly referred in order to learn to wake up early, not to be lazy and have a daily routine and a goal again, which implies that at a discourse level they are lacking all these abilities.

“Mr. (Name) was his name, from the Job Center, he saw somehow or he notices that I lacked motivation and he said I have a different idea, you go now to this measure *Förderzentrum*, and there you can master your daily programme, so that you can notice again, okay to wake up at 8, to have a stable schedule” (Y_GER_B_6)

“they [the Job Center] recommended this policy and I willingly immediately said I accept this with pleasure, so that I get a daily routine and not be lazy at home, I need to do something, I want to achieve something in life” (Y_GER_B_7)

“and then they [Job Center] said at the moment we won’t let you work due to your psychological problems and then they said, we have an apprenticeship included in a policy, this could suit you, we can send you there without any hesitation, because you are not in the free labour market and there you cannot be dismissed so quickly, if you do not feel well psychologically. And so I am there since last year” (Y_GER_B_8)

The last example raises also questions of expectations from the Job Center. As it can be seen the expectations from the Job Center and the independent provider are very low. The young adults are constructed as fragile and unstable.

To conclude, we can say that these policies are addressed to specific target groups characterized mostly in negative terms, from a deficit-oriented perspective. Gender imbalance between training opportunities and job acquisition are mostly referred to in technical fields where women are underrepresented.

Young adults’ life projects and expectations

In this section we will concentrate on the aspects of young adults’ life projects which mostly refer to life plans and concrete next steps (or to LCR perspective). This will be applied when we will answer the questions: What are young people’s life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects (LCR)? Expectations refer mostly to future life plans and concentrate on the question, what are young adults’ expectations regarding the phases of their life course? (LCR)

With regard to young adults’ life plans, it can be added that the most of them have explicit plans, some young adults have more elaborate life projects, while others are less developed, depending on the timing of their life courses.

The first observation that can be made is that the main focus of most of the young adults’ life projects, i.e. their future career/professional plans, was on the transition from school to vocational education and from vocational education in labour market. Here timing of the life courses allows the young adults to focus on short-term future plans, all of them connected to vocational development as in the case of *Werkschule*.

As Y_GER_B_1 is about to complete his apprenticeship and Y_GER_B_4 has just completed his vocational high school, they get more concrete in the description of their future plans:

“as soon as I finish my apprenticeship I go to [city] for six months to do a certified course as jewellery and stone setter, this is a further training und that is the person who fixes the stones in the rings and necklaces, so to say. This is a separate profession and it is quite good and there you earn a bit more money as a goldsmith” (Y_GER_B_1)

“now I would like to study in the field of mechanical engineering, in any case in the technical field, I applied at the university in [city] and in the [city]. In the [city] I would like to study at the university Mechanical engineering, development and design” (Y_GER_B_4)

Similar to the first two life stories, Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_3 and Y_GER_B_5 are focused on finishing school and entering the VET. All three of them with the exception of Y_GER_B_5 have already signed the contracts with their training companies. Y_GER_B_5 will start an in-house vocational training and parallel to this he wants to search for a training company.

By contrast, the participants from *Förderzentrum* (Y_GER_B_6 and Y_GER_B_7), although they also focus on future professional plans, they do not have immediate perspectives, as they still work on getting stabilized before entering the VET or the labour market.

With regard to “expectations”, they are here mainly understood as future plans. In this sense, the questions which were asked were how they imagine their life in ten years.

Although most of them wanted to have a stable job, Y_GER_B_3 seemed to be confused by the question, as he said that his future “will be good” and then explained that he did not really think about it because he had his apprenticeship on his mind.

By contrast, some young adults were thinking of setting up their own business (Y_GER_B_1) or developing it (Y_GER_B_8), while Y_GER_B_7 wishes that her future children “have a really beautiful childhood, which I did not have”. The latter statement indicates that she did not have a settled childhood and that she wants to do better than her parents.

Of great significance is the fact that both females (Y_GER_B_7 and Y_GER_B_8) stressed the importance of being trained and have a completed apprenticeship so that they can offer their children material stability and be a role model for them. Only one male mentioned the desire to have children in the future. This could indicate that either they are too young to think about having families or that children are no priority in their life.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the concreteness of the future plans depends firstly, on the timing of life as those in school are more prone to short-time future plans. Secondly, once the vocational training is achieved the plans are more long-term oriented. And thirdly, with regard to the personal and family situation, psychological stability is here a precondition for further planning. The future is mostly described in terms of stable relationships, stable jobs and stable environments.

Participation of young adults in LLL policy –making

In this last section we will focus on first contacts between the LLL policies and young adults as well as on their experience as participants of these policies. Thus, the question, whether young adults participate in LLL policy-making? (GOV) is central to this section.

As we already pointed out in the expert section of this report a plethora of stakeholder from both public and private sectors are involved in these three policies. Each policy is accountable mainly directly to the main funders as the Ministries of Education and the Job Center in the case of *Werkshule* and Job Center and *ESF* in the case of *Förderzentrum* and *BaE*. So the funders set the curriculum, the examination methods, the access to the policy as well as defining the target groups i.e defining the structural and institutional frameworks.

Although the regulation is hierarchical and expectations are well formulated, the experts at the local level still have the freedom to contextualise penalties and choose their own methods and methodologies on how to interact with the young adults. Nevertheless, it is common practice from the experts' side that the young adults get second chances even after high absenteeism is registered as in the case of Y_GER_B_6. But in general, they cannot influence or change the policy.

It is, however, a mutual consensus among all participants that these LLL policies have a positive impact on their life courses. As Y_GER_B_6 states, he did not come for months but then decided to regularly participate and since then he was quickly „enthused” by the project and “came every day” (Y_GER_B_6). His goal is to get an apprenticeship so he makes use of all the training opportunities he can get during the measure. The positive impact is also mentioned by young adults from the *Werkshule*. In their cases they regained a new attitude towards learning and attending school again, which is indicated by statements such as “I enjoyed going to school again” (Y_GER_B_1) and “[*Werkshule* meant] a new school, a new experience I want to make, a new better experience, again (Y_GER_B_3)”.

Young adults' skills

One important aspect in the interviews were questions related to how the young adults think about their skills. Skills were translated in German with “Kompetenzen und Fähigkeiten” (competences and abilities), but they were not further defined. The questions referred to where these competences and abilities were learned before and during the measure and if they were helpful for the future professional development. So when the questions were asked we noticed that the young adults had difficulties explaining about their own skills/competences. In general, on the one hand, they associated their abilities mainly with personal and social skills like creativity, talent, good interaction as in the case of Y_GER_B_1, or fast learning, good memory, ambition, good working atmosphere and resilience as in the cases of Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_4, Y_GER_B_7 and Y_GER_B_8. On the other hand, Y_GER_B_3 and Y_GER_B_5 seemed to be confused about

what to list as skills and listed punctuality, reliability, self-confidence as their skills. This last view of the young adults seems to resonate with the expectancy of the *Werkschule* expert towards the objectives of the policy. As he states, *Werkschule's* goal is to prepare the students for the vocational training, by endowing them with certain competences like punctuality, tidiness and structure in files and way of working.

According to Y_GER_B_1, the skills he learned during the *Werkschule* he could easily transfer to any technical profession. From the two *Lehrmeister* from *Werkschule* he said he learned „far more than basic skills, because we really learned a lot and lots of processing methods that can be transferred one to one to almost all crafts and trades and I think this brought me very fast forward in the craft of goldsmith“. This aspect is confirmed by the fact that all the young adults from *Werkschule* did very diverse internships during their time at school. For instance, Y_GER_B_5 did internships such as carpentry, roofing, metalworker and precision mechanic and Y_GER_B_3 gathered practical experience as an industry mechanic, car mechanic, retail salesman and in the kindergarten. As they, sometimes, have no influence on what apprenticeships they will get, as it depends on the offers of the labour market, they have to be endowed with skills that are easily transferable.

In general, all young adults from *Werkschule* do not have any problems finding internships and even apprenticeships. This can be explained with the help of skills transferability, good practical preparation during the school in forms of internships and the great demand on the labour market in the crafts sector. They all made reference to their crafts skills and to the fact that they learned a lot practical skills in the workshops of the *Werkschule*. They all described their projects in manual work that they had to do during school from repairing and assembling bikes to creating a machine vice. Y_GER_B_6 even described that his technical skills will help him in the future when he will own a house, because he is saving money in order to construct the house himself.

With regard to the question of what kind of skill formation services they demanded, they did not explicitly express their thoughts on that but they said that they received good support during the measures to improve their applications as in the case of Y_GER_B_6. He also expressed his concern that no matter how good he is and how much he learns he still gets one rejection after the other. He almost signed an apprenticeship contract with one company, but then two months later he got rejected, which made him feel "depressed". But he stressed that this time he will not give up, he will search further. The only negative aspect is that the policy is coming to an end and as he is already 25 so he cannot extend his participation anymore and thus, he is more prone to turn unemployed. Therefore, he applies for apprenticeships like mechatronic technician all over Germany to avoid unemployment and as well "to get slowly out of this prison I call it home"

(Y_GER_B_6). Again he stresses the negative feelings towards his living conditions. This is a dominant theme throughout his interview.

4.3 Interaction between young adults and experts

While the previous sections analysed the interviews with the experts and young adults separately, this chapter will compare and contrast their expectations and experiences with the help of the questions presented in the sections 4.1 and 4.2 which will make reference to the three theoretical perspectives of Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Life Course Research (LCR), and Governance (GOV). In general CPE and GOV refer to how the institutions/structures construct the target groups by accentuating certain traits and thus creating a collective image. LCR mediates between the experiences of young adults and the perspectives the institutions/structures on them. This process of interaction although fluid is not always consensual, therefore, it is normal that mismatches occur.

With reference to above mentioned perspectives, the next section will focus on how the target groups are constructed and if there are some gender biases involved in all policies dealt with.

4.3.1. Construction of target groups, gender biases and recognition of social categories (CPE)

The question of how the selected policies construct their target groups was integrated in the perspective of the experts and that of the young adults. Both views will be presented by analysing policy for policy. As mentioned before, the target group construction can be seen from both theoretical perspectives, CPE and GOV, as it is not easy to draw a sharp line between them.

At a general level, a first observation that can be made is that most experts define the young adults in a similar way, namely as suffering from certain deficits. It seems that the policies address the compensation for the deficits in different manners. Even if the independent service provider does not directly select its participants, this selection is made by the Job Center, according to the personal life situation of the young adults. If we take a look at the task pyramid (Figure 2) from the executive summary we will see certain congruence between the personal life situation of the young adults and the objectives of the policies. On the last level we have policies, which focus on the stabilisation and basic skills of the young adults. In a following step the policies will concentrate on the compensation for the deficits detected by the experts. On a third level, that of empowerment, they will acquire skills and competences so that they better cope with their lives and subsequently with the expectations of the experts. On the top level, the policies are mostly directed to training and labour market integration. These processes are fluid and transcendent as they are to be found in all policies.

With regard to the task pyramid referred to before, *Werkschule* selects the young adults on the basis of their disadvantages in terms of learning. The goal of the policy is that all its students achieve a school leaving certificate and thus, get access to the vocational education system. On a policy task level this means not only to qualify them and increase their school achievements but also to restore their trust in the school system and in their abilities. He enforces then his statement by saying that the *Werkschule* participants are the representatives of the “lower half of the social scale” and are, in this opinion, neglected by the regular school system. Therefore, the young adults miss basic skills. He then concludes that it is impossible for *Werkschule* and in general, for the vocational schools to compensate what the school system missed to do. However, although the objective of the policy is that the young adults receive a school leaving certificate and enter the vocational education system the other aspects connected to compensation and empowerment are not left aside, but take place at the same time. They are mostly addressed with the help of extra-curricular activities.

As with regard to the young adults in the *Werkschule* they confirmed the fact that they were low school achievers and therefore, had to apply for the *Werkschule*. These problems were mostly connected either to dyslexia, low learning achievement or to lack of competence with regard to German which made them ‘end up’ in this policy. As the access is regulated by an application process and by school achievements, the expectancies of the young adults were not always positive. As Y_GER_B_1 specified, he did not want to enrol in the *Werkschule* because “we thought that the very last idiots were sent there, which was also the case” (Y_GER_B_1). He then accounts for the very first discussion with the expert. According to him, the expert of the *Werkschule* asked him, why he would be enrolled there, as he would be overqualified and too smart for *Werkschule*. This information is so far interesting as it addressed the way in which the expert of the policy sees the target group.

However, all of the interviewees stated that it felt good to be in the *Werkschule*. “I really like it and I think this experience brought me further. It was actually like a school apprenticeship” (Y_GER_B_1). *Werkschule* is referred to as “it was fun again to go to school” (Y_GER_B_1), “I enjoyed school again” (Y_GER_B_2), “it was a new beginning” (Y_GER_B_3).

Therefore, these findings confirm the fact that there is a multi-level approach on how students problems are addressed and dealt with so that the goal of the policy is achieved, i.e the integration of the young adults into vocational system.

The next policy *Förderzentrum* is a policy which aims to offer individual stabilization, help with job and apprenticeships’ applications, help young adults to gain a school leaving certificate and to help them finding an apprenticeship position or a job. This policy targets young adults under

the age of 25 who are receiving social benefits and are NEETs. 120 positions are open each year and the beneficiaries are sent to the independent service provider by the Job Center.

BaE policy has in its focus the training of disadvantaged young adults and placement of apprenticeships in companies. The young adults are age 18 - 25 and are sent by the Job Center, which means that either they or their parents live on welfare. These two last policies will be analysed together as they are similar in their objectives, target groups and access criteria.

In general, the E_GER_B_3 experts state that all their participants have similar living conditions and, although heterogeneous, they come from a similar social background. As they are all sent by the Job Center, the independent service provider has no influence on who enters these policies. Therefore, most of them have failed all other measures and help/programs offered. It is expected that they get stabilised, get a daily structure and get trained so that they can be placed in either work or apprenticeship.

The access to the policy is described by the students in similar terms as above. They are sent to these policies by the Job Center officers in order for them to learn to wake up early, not to be lazy and have a daily routine and a goal again. These images that the young adults trigger imply that at a discourse level they are lacking all these abilities. Apparently they have also internalised all of these characterizations because they are not called into question by the young adults during their interviews. However, they all describe the policies in positive terms, especially referring to the support they get there.

Y_GER_B_6 feels that his expectancies towards professional advancement were not fulfilled by the policy as he was not placed in any apprenticeship but rather helped with the improvement of his apprenticeship applications. As he is already 25, once the policy will go to an end, there will be no other chances for him to extend his participation in it. Therefore, he finds himself in a particular stressful situation as his future after the policy is uncertain. In this sense there is a mismatch between what he expected- entering the vocational education system- and what he gets, i.e. training on how to write work and apprenticeship applications. The experience of the others beneficiaries are aligned to their expectations. There is also a match between what is expected that the young adults do, i.e. stabilize, empower and enter the VET or labour market, and what the young adults want to do.

With regard to gender biases, it can be said that there is no gender bias in the recruitment of the young adults, but we can talk of gender imbalance. As the *Werkschule* expert says, since the policy was founded in 2009 only 5 girls from over 100 students took part at the policy. He then continues stressing that women in general are underrepresented in the technical field. The same

image emerged from the *BaE* policy as there are only 3 women and 52 males who do an apprenticeship in the crafts field there.

As a conclusion, it can be said that LLL policies construct the target group according to the imaginaries of the labour market. The utilitarian perspective on LLL, which puts emphasis on learning as a means of enhancing productivity, seems to be strongly prioritized in these LLL policies. Of course, the stabilizing and empowerment approaches used imply a more holistic approach, which stresses the importance of learning as a means of individual development in general, but they both address the same goal: employability.

4.3.2. Autonomy of young adults and reduction of biographical uncertainty? (LCR)

In the interviews, the experts were asked to express their opinion on how they foster the autonomy of the young adults and thus help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty. Although there was not such a specific question for the young adults, we can, nevertheless, take under consideration young adults' life plans and expectations. As we already elaborated the perspective of the experts on how they foster young adults' autonomy, we can conclude that autonomy is mostly directed to reducing biographical uncertainty by means of vocational and labour market integration. Even though the young adults witness different levels of achievement, they are all expected to enter the vocational system and at the end, to be employed.

With regard to *Werkschule*, the E_GER_B_1 expert explains that the students decide on their own to enrol in the technical school and also to take part at extra-curricular activities. He also argues that the students "get also a structure in their life" which will help them later on in life. Although the young adults are free to decide on extra-curricular activities, they have sometimes no influence on what kind of apprenticeship they will get, as it is regulated by the supply and demand in the region. However, he then continues and states that there are differences among young adults in the way they plan their future. While the most know what they want and find an apprenticeship before leaving the *Werkschule*, a small number of students have problems in taking decisions and need more support:

"they must be independent and take decisions on what they want to do. Sometimes WE doubt too, as they do not get things done, although this is almost an exception. And the most eventually will know what they want".

As it can be seen from above, the expert defines autonomy as independence and decision-making with regard to their professional development. So the reduction of the biographical uncertainty it can happen only when they are included in the vocational system and later on in the labour market.

As there was no reference in the interview about the young adults' autonomy, we will take a look at what their expectations towards their future are. According to the young adults Y_GER_B_2, Y_GER_B_3 and Y_GER_B_5, their main expectations are to get a school degree and start an apprenticeship. As Y_GER_B_1 and Y_GER_B_3 have already finished the *Werkschule* and entered the VET system, their expectation is directed towards employment, but not before qualifying themselves further.

When it comes to *Förderzentrum* and *BaE*, the experts argue that their beneficiaries need more attention and support on their path to empowerment as they are dealing with more psychological problems than the others. As E_GER_B_2 continues:

“our assignment is basically to stabilize them, to put it bluntly, give them a daily structure and a partial professional orientation, so they are three days in the workshops we have, and the goal of this policy is indeed to mainly or overriding place them in vocational training or employment”.
(E_GER_B_2)

Basically, in these two policies the participants, although unstable due to different reasons, they have to get empowered so that at the end they are attractive enough for the labour market. In this context empowerment is regarded as a means to increase employability.

The future plans of young adults from *Förderzentrum* and *BaE* (Y_GER_B_6, Y_GER_B_7 and Y_GER_B_8) are also directed to employment. They expect to start their own business as a bike fitter or to do an apprenticeship. Especially, for women it is important that they are trained so that they can be a role model for their future children. In general, the relationship between experts and young adults is marked by certain dialectic. On the one hand, the experts offer them non-stop support that they need it and on the other hand, the young adults want to be independent as the experts expect them to be. The life courses of these young adults are also more non-linear and marked by deviations in educational and professional trajectories. Moreover, they also have negative experiences caused by bullying, family or health problems. Therefore they need more support motivation and time to be integrated into the labour market.

As a conclusion we can say that both experts and young adults view autonomy in direct relation to employability and employment (e.g. as variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities). Empowerment is perceived as a means to increasing their labour market integration: the stabilization and motivation of young adults is not a goal in itself, but rather their preparation to participate in the labour market.

4.3.3. Participation of young adults in LLL policy-making(GOV)

As already pointed out in the expert section of this report, there is a broad collaboration and cooperation between the public and private sectors in these policies. Each policy is mainly di-

rectly accountable to the main funders as the Ministries of Education and the Job Center in the case of *Werkschule* and Job Center and ESF in the case of *Förderzentrum* and *BaE*. As the E_GER_2 experts from *Förderzentrum* and *BaE* stress, they are free to develop the general concept, i.e. content, implementation and methods, but are not allowed to decide about the type of professions and apprenticeships they want to offer to the young adults. And secondly, the relationship between Job Center and the independent providers is strictly hierarchical as the independent providers are not free to choose their participants. They have to follow the regulations of the Job Center with regard to evaluation and integration of young adults into the labour market. The same is the case with the *Werkschule* as it can decide upon its didactics and methods of preparation, but they have no influence on the curriculum or final exams.

Nevertheless, we could not find any proof in the interviews that the young adults have an influence on the LLL policy-making. They can decide upon extra-curricular activities, but not on participation in policy-making. However, as already mentioned before, they all mentioned the positive role of the policies in their life courses.

4.3.2. Young adults' skills and skill formation (GOV)

As already mentioned in the previous sections, there is a different perspective on how experts assess the skills of the young adults and how the young adults assess them themselves. In order to compare and contrast the perspectives of young adults and experts on skills, reference will be made to the section written on skills as well as to a statement brought to light during the interviews with the experts.

On the one hand, the experts describe the young adults as lacking “basic skills”, unable to cope with life as they have psychological problems, come from Hartz IV (minimum of social benefits) families and do not know how to learn, etc. On the other hand, the young adults make references to all the skills learned during the policies. According to both the students and the *Werkschule* expert, the transferability of skills is the key to entering the vocational and professional systems. According to Y_GER_B_1, the skills that he learned at the *Werkschule* with the help of the two *Lehrmeister* are easily transferable to all technical contexts as they taught him the very essence of the technical basics. As he then continues:

„I learned far more than basic skills, because we really learned a lot and lots of processing methods that can be transferred one to one to almost all crafts and trades and I think this brought me very fast forward in the craft of goldsmith”. (Y_GER_B_1)

As all the young adults from *Werkschule* did very diverse internships during their school time, which indicates about the transferability of (basic) skills/knowledge in technical field.

Another aspect connected to the skills in the technical field is that, according to the expert, the *Werkschule* has a good network of private companies in the crafts and industry sector interested in offering young adults internships and apprenticeships. As the E_GER_B_1 states, companies have recognised the potential and skills of young adults beyond grades and recognised the fact that

“they do not need only “chiefs but also Indians that learn a craft profession as usual and then they do not leave for further training or studying, but they need these skilled workers” (E_GER_B_1).

These ideas reflect again that all young adults did a wide spectrum of internships during *Werkschule*, which first, confirms the fact that there is a tight collaboration between the *Werkschule* and private actors. Secondly, the learned skills in the workshops of the *Werkschule* and during internships can be easily transferred into VET system, which brings us to the third observation that the young adults are flexible enough to accept any internship offered to them as all cases of young adults already confirmed. And finally, it seems that the practical experience and the technical and social skills gained during internships and at school and not the grades are the prevalent factors when finding an apprenticeship. This shows that in times of a shortage of skilled staff, companies have shifted their admission criteria from grades to skills.

To sum up, we can say that although the experts have a deficit-oriented approach towards defining the skills of young adults, they use their broad cooperation with both public and private sectors to enhance the skills of their participants, and thus ensure the access of young adults to employability.

5. Conclusion

In this report we analysed selected LLL policies in two functional regions in Germany. We showed the broad variance of LLL policies and their participants in the regions and in Germany in general. We want to use the conclusion to summarise our general results along the following central categories: diversity, employability, individualisation as well as participation and thereby sketch an overview of the current state of the LLL landscape in Germany.

Commonality in diversity

In both regions we noticed a large number of actors and an even larger number of measures, which are related to the area of LLL. This complex diversity forms a functional differentiated system, in which they work together/intertwine and unfold their full potential in combination. Their different objectives can be envisioned as a task-pyramid/need-pyramid with different

levels: basic skills, compensation of individual deficits, empowerment, and qualification. Thus, each policy fulfils different objectives, almost in a complementary way yet unintentionally.

No fewer complex is the diversity of the young adults, who participate in LLL measures in both regions. The biographical interviews make their histories, experiences and in sum their biographies visible and allow perceiving them as entire persons in a complex world, which often focuses only on their human capital, even in the field of LLL. This leads us to the next aspect, which is a common result for both functional regions in Germany.

Commonality in employability

In both regions the LLL policies are aligned to the aim of employability, sometimes directly sometimes as a vanishing point. This depends on the measures' target group, their objectives and their location on the task-pyramid (figure 2). This focus on employability is understandable in a society, in which labour market integration is synonym for social integration. But with this result the question of the functions of LLL emerges. For both regions we noticed that the function of the selected policies could be described as "repair shops". The biographies of the young adults show that previous institutions (like school, family, welfare state, economy) and measures were not able to support the young adults in a way that they were empowered to live a self-determined life. The LLL measures have now the task to compensate for the failures of the previous instances. Wedded with the aspect of employability and the repair-shop function of LLL measures is another general development of our time, which is also a commonality in the selected regions, the individualisation.

Commonality in Individualisation

While we stated in the section above that the status quo of the young adults is a consequence of the failures of previous involved structures and entities, the public discourses focus much more on the individual than on structures or institutions. This perspective is also dominant in the narratives of the experts, which is hardly remarkable because it is their job and often their profession to approach the individual. The consequence is a widespread deficit perspective on the young adults, which of course is again and again overcome by single experts or less pronounced in single measures. In sum, this leads the perspective on individual problems, which no longer take structural problems into account. Structural problems were redefined in problems of individuals, which were then starting points for social pedagogical interventions and of course a welcome legitimization for LLL measures. This analytical result reduces in no way the quality of the support in the chosen measures for the young adults, who are, as shown, in both regions very happy with the offered help.

Differences in participation

In both regions, the participation of the young adults differs significantly. In the FR Rhein-Main the involvement varies on the objective of the policy itself between a complete involvement to none involvement, for instance from an agenda setting along their needs versus a set curriculum. In contrast, in the FR Bremen the interviewees made no references being involved in the decision-making process on site. It seems, the policy enable different forms of agency as well as perceived forms of agency: while in the FR Rhein-Main the young adults perceive themselves as active parts of creating their lifelong learning process, in FR Bremen the young adults position themselves as recipients of learning processes.

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Working Paper

young adult

Work Package 5

Qualitative Analysis

Report on Genoa and Milan (Italy)

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0. Executive Summary

The Italian YOUNG ADULLLT team from the University of Genoa has conducted qualitative research in Genoa and Milan Functional Regions. All the interviews with young adults and most of the interviews with the experts were focused on the two case studies selected for the YOUNG ADULLLT Project: Civic Service in Genoa and NEETwork Project in Milan.

In Genoa, 7 professional experts and 7 young adults were interviewed. In Milan, 12 experts and 6 young adults were included in the sample. Semi-structured interviews to the experts were focused on the policy's design, implementation, target-group, actors and impact, stakeholders' coordination and multilevel governance. Narrative biographical interviews were conducted with the addressees of the two measures selected as case studies. The age range of these people goes from 18 to 29 years, and the interviews were focused on their life story, their plans for the future, their policy experience and their own skills perception.

Very similar samples of experts were interviewed in each FRs. In GFR, the sample of experts interviewed consisted of two policy managers (upper level policy managers), three projects managers, and two practitioners, street level managers, tutors. Excluding the first two experts, they are all connected to the Civic Service measure. The experts sample in MFR has been constructed with the rationale applied for the sample in GFR: two upper level policy managers gave us information and insights concerning the LLL field in the Functional Region, while the remaining experts belong (at different levels) to the NEETwork project (the second Italian case study)

The analysis of the interviews with experts produced the following findings:

- there is a strong difficulty to translate EU policies at local level and, particularly when policies try to include disadvantaged and vulnerable groups;
- the distance from upper level experts and young people seems to be high: the rhetoric of laziness is very strong even if it is clear that NEETs are a inhomogeneous target group with great differences concerning qualifications, social capital, economic and social conditions;
- there is an important trend toward individualistic policies like Dote Unica (see Palumbo et al., 2017b): traditional labour market policies, as well as professional training initiatives seem to be less and less fitting the current needs of the labour market, and this implies further problems for youngsters in planning their future.

Concerning the interviewed young adults, they might all be labelled as 'vulnerable' respondents, albeit with some variations. Indeed, none of the interviewed Milanese young adults have completed the upper secondary school and most of them had experiences of long-term unemployment, in addition to a general condition of limited economic and cultural resources. On the contrary, the Genoese young adults achieved higher levels of education (mostly university degree) but they experienced a lot of short-term and/or unstable jobs, living the precariousness of the local labour market (which is much less dynamic if compared to the one of the Milan Functional Region). This condition often leads them to perform unqualified jobs, despite their high educational qualification. Thus, in the case of the Milanese young adults it is proper to consider a "structural vulnerability", while for the Genoese young adults the concept of vulnerability applies especially to their professional profiles.

The analysis of these interviews produced the following findings:

- the structural vulnerability also implies a significant distance from the local institutions, which entails problems in the engagement process of these youths. Thus, the impact of measures aiming at supporting lower educational and professional profiles is limited by the same social features of the targets;
- at a national level, the relevance of formal qualification is still very high, at least at a cultural level. Even though high degrees of education do not necessarily guarantee good performances on the labour market (as the case of the Genoese youths clearly shows), the qualification lack shortens very strongly the range of achievable opportunities, even in the market of low-skilled jobs. Furthermore, this condition affects not only the coping tactics applied by the young adults in the present, but it also shapes their future planning, which gets even more blurred in absence of a formal qualification to lean on;
- given the recognized high relevance of the formal qualification, a few unqualified youths proved to be able to resist to the potential self-stigmatization, declaring a certain confidence in their own actual skills. Consequently, the possibility to access to a process of formal recognition of informal e non formal skills (which is currently not available at Italian level) would reduce inequalities on the labour market;
- in low-dynamic labor markets like the one of Genoa, the low competitiveness of high educational degrees is often tackled by (middle-upper class) youths by further specialization, which on the one hand contributes to maintain high levels of activation, while on the other hand threatens to lead to over-specialization, indefinitely postponing the actual integration in the market and the achieving of independence.

A further section of the report explores the interaction of experts and young adults in the context of lifelong learning policies. The analysis of this interaction yields the following conclusions:

- the interactions between operators and young adults are mostly shaped by the CPE embedded in the policies and in the operators' behavior, and they are accepted or suffered by young adults. Young adults can be classified in different groups, on the basis of their degree of awareness and acceptance of the goals of the policies and of the means that the policies themselves put at their disposal;
- So we met retreatants, who do not share the CPE embedded in policies but are unable to find a different one and unaware of its feature, young adults who accept the CPE for instrumental reasons or because they share the its underlying assumptions, innovators, who try to bend policies to their needs, also if they do not share the embedded CPE;
- there are cases of positive interaction when young adults really fit with this CPE, more for objective than subjective reasons; that is, while on the subjective level you are fought between hearing you failed and not having the strength to design your future, on the objective level the measure recognizes both your resources and your shortcomings, and therefore it supports you in a project that is not imposed on you but that constitutes to a certain extent the natural development of your life project: a good example is constituted by the IFTS or by the apprenticeship well done (see Palumbo et al, 2016). There are also cases where young people are strong enough in terms of cultural and social capital to be able to consider measures as opportunities within their own life strategy and therefore can "govern" the embedded CPE using it for the part that is useful for their project.

1. Introduction

1.1. Brief description of living conditions of young adults

Following the economic and financial crisis that began in 2008, the Italian labour market has gone through a particularly critical phase in recent years. In times of crisis, the weaker components of the labour force face greater difficulties in entering and staying in the labour market.

Among these, young people have characteristics of fragility partly linked to the criticality of the transition from the education and training system to the world of work. The difficulty of entering the world of work has generated a widespread increase in job search times.

In Italy, the proportion of young people not in employment and not in education or training (NEET) is considerably increased during the Greater Recession. Before 2007, the NEET rate in Italy was already high, around 20%, 4 points percentages above the OECD average. The NEET rate was modest reduction in 2015, but remains significantly above pre-crisis levels, almost double the OECD average (15%).

As in other OECD countries, the majority of OECD countries Young NEETs (60%) do not even look for a work. In addition, young women are the predominant part of the NEETs, although their share has fallen from 60% of the total (mainly made up of inactive women) before the crisis, to about half in 2014. Indeed, the sharp rise of youth unemployment during the crisis has affected more young men than young women.

As in all OECD countries, the NEETs phenomenon is most common among young people with low levels of education, in comparison with the young people most educated. considering the trend of NEETs in the two areas involved in the YA project, Liguria and Lombardy has many similarities and in 2016 the percentage in the two regions was quite the same.

Early school leaving rates remain very high in Italy, where about 30% of men and 23% of women aged between 25 and 34 does not have a secondary school qualification higher, compared to an OECD average 18% and 14% respectively.

Among young Italians born abroad, the rate of NEET is about one third higher than young people born in Italy.

However, this gap is smaller than average in OECD countries, where young people born outside their respective countries have an average 50% higher probability of being NEET.

Italy has the largest proportion of young people (15-29) with low levels of literacy (20%) and the second highest proportion of young people with low numerical skills (26%). Although young people perform better than adults between the ages of 30 and 54, or there has been an improvement compared to previous generations, young Italians have lower results compared to other OECD countries.

The Italian population is ageing rapidly. In Italy in 2015, there were 38 elderly people (65 years of age or older) per 100 people aged between 20 and 64. This level is twice as high as in 1970 (19%), but only half of the estimated 2060 (74%) level. Italy also has the lowest share of 15-29 year olds (15%) compared to an OECD average of 19%.

The old dependency ratio confirms a worst demographic dynamic in Liguria in comparison with Lombardy. Regarding the life expectancy indicator, in Lombardy (83.9

on average), the indicator shows a better situation than in Liguria (82,8 on average), anyway higher than the great part of Italian regions.

Italy has the fourth highest life expectancy among OECD countries after Japan, Spain and Switzerland, equal to 83.2 years, 2.6 years higher than the OECD average. Normally, life expectancy varies according to gender and other socio-demographic characteristics (such as the level of education), particularly among men. Differences are less pronounced in Italy, where men with high levels of education can expect only 4.5 years longer than men with low levels of education, compared to an average difference of 8 years in OECD countries.

Italy spends 29% of GDP on public social protection - the fourth highest share among OECD countries - where the average is 22% of GDP. Ageing populations put upward pressure on pension expenditure, which represents 16% of GDP, the highest share among OECD countries.

Italy is improving the financial sustainability of its pension system, thanks to long-term structural reforms (transition towards a national defined contribution system and an increase in the retirement age).

As in most Mediterranean countries, the rate of suicides in Italy is quite low, 6 suicides per 100.000 people, half of the OECD average. As in other OECD countries, young people aged between 15 and 29 are less likely to commit suicide than older people aged over 70. The incidence of suicides among young people in Italy is three times lower than among the elderly, and equal to half of the OECD average. Men are more likely to commit suicide than women, four times more likely in Italy, as in the OECD average.

A cohesive society needs citizens who trust each other and institutions. Only 30% of Italians report a level of trust in others, and 29% say they have confidence in the national government. Both rates are below the OECD average (36% and 42% respectively), and confidence levels are even lower among young people.

Where people live has an important impact on their opportunities to live well. How's Life in your Region? and the OECD regional well-being web-tool assess performance across 9 dimensions of well-being in the 362 OECD large regions – 21 of which are in Italy.

Italy's performance across the different well-being dimensions is mixed. There are large disparities in material living conditions, as measured for instance by job opportunities and income. These are mirrored by large differences in safety between regions.

In general living conditions in Lombardy are better, and this evaluation emerges both from objective data, both from perceptions of citizens. We must consider that Liguria is the region with the oldest population, as said heavily affected by economic and demographic crisis, caused serious disturbance in educational and social sectors. Less young people in an ageing context with fewer opportunities and a greater part of population at risk of social exclusion contribute also to lower levels of subjective well-being and lower expectations for the future.

1.2. Brief description of policies in each Functional Region

In Italy we have a recent new regulation, both in the job market regulation domain, both in the educational one. The reform called "Jobs Act" aims at fostering the permanent employing, proposing incentives for recruitment and timespan-based patterns of increasing levels of protection for the contracts along the time. Furthermore, the reform provides actions of outplacement for laid off workers, integrating passive measures of income support with active measures as the tailored requalification training paths and the recruitment incentives. The educational reform "The good school", introduces the work-related learning paths starting from the third year of the High Schools and in general gives more room to the interlinks between school and work. It forecast also Departmental Centres for LLL. Young policies are related to the first of the two abovementioned reforms, and assume that the need for these policies mainly stems from the fact that young people are disadvantaged by the same regulation of the labour market, which still favours already employed people, namely (mostly male) adult people. We must add also Youth Guarantee Program, that will be discussed more in detail further, because a number of interviewees are engaged in this program. In general young adult policies are funded by ESF, with the exception of regional additional funds, stronger in Lombardy and weaker in Liguria, that allows the local levels to propose local policies better fitting with their population's specific needs.

In Italy, European requests for the establishment of Youth Guarantee have been incorporated into the Italian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, a document that spells out common actions to be taken throughout Italy.

This Plan, sent to Brussels in December 2013 and launched by the Commission in January 2014, represents the result of the work of concertation between State and Regions, and other public and private actors.

The Plan not only marks the first formal step towards the definition of a national strategy based on the introduction of initiatives in favour of young people, but also lays the foundations for the launch of an important project structural reform of the reorganisation of active labour market policies.

The unified strategy through which the Youth Guarantee takes shape in Italy introduces an innovative governance model in the management of interventions, joined together between the Ministry of Labour (which plays an overall directing role), Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, which assume the role of delegated implementing bodies active policy actions in the territories.

Next to the Italian Plan identifying actions municipalities throughout the national territory, each Region defines its own Plan Implementation (Regional Implementation Plans - PAR), implemented by means of conventions bilateral agreements, the characteristics of which have been compared with the Ministry of Work. Territorial implementation has therefore led to a regional declination of the national strategy, which has been structured over time within a unified and shared action plan, which has allowed significant flexibility, such as to be respected and to enhance regional specificities and timescales.

The Implementation of the Italian Plan began with the opening of the National Guarantee Portal on May 2014. This platform represents the "place" within the which is the source of relevant information on all young people enrolling in the programme, regardless of their geographical origin. In this way, every young person resident in Italy

becomes reachable from the employment services located in all of Italy the Regions, going beyond existing territorial limits and allowing their application the contestability of the above-mentioned services. The technology platform follows therefore a logic of transparency and exchange of information and can be considered as follows a key reform to ensure preventive and activation actions, representing the shared knowledge tool between the Ministry of Labour and Regions for planning and management of active policies in our country.

The implementation of the national platform is also a crucial step in order to implement the monitoring and evaluation system provided for in the Plan able to provide elements for the continuous improvement of interventions.

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee confronts Italy with changes of institutional character, which is primarily an important cultural passage.

The aim is to dilute a local approach in favour of a more sustainable path, integrated and coordinated. In particular, the main challenges that the country has encountered to address these issues are the overcoming of organisational problems, and of management of the public structures responsible for employment services. Also, the integration of the information systems, the need to make the best use of resources available, and the implementation of an active policy governance system extended to the entire audience of users of the employment services have to be included.

The main differences that emerge from the analysis of the policies at a regional level show that in Lombardy (and in the MFR) policymakers try to apply the activation paradigm using “Dote Unica” mechanism, which allows the addressees the power to choose the policies in which spend a voucher. In Liguria Region (and in GFR), moreover, for a long-time policy was implemented by public and private organisations that chose addressees after that Region funded the policy.

2. Data collection, Treatment and Analysis

Tables 1, 2 and 3 outline the sample of interviews in the two Functional Regions selected in Italy.

Generally, 19 experts (7 in Genoa and 12 in Milan) and 13 young adults were interviewed (7 in Genoa and 6 in Milan).

All the interviewers were post-doc research fellows at the Department of Science of Education at University of Genoa. The interview questions were translated from English to Italian. Specific procedures were followed as set by guidelines of Young Adults Project. Particularly, an information letter was given previously to all interviewees asking consent to the information use for researching purposes, observing confidentiality and anonymization procedures. Thus, all respondents signed a consent form to conform with ethical requirements. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and anonymised. All the interviews were carried out from March 2016 to July 2017.

In both the Genoa and Milan Functional Regions, policy managers, project managers and practitioners were interviewed. At GFR, the sample of experts interviewed consisted of two policy managers (upper—level policy managers), three projects managers, and two practitioners, street level managers, tutors. Excluding 2 policy managers who have been interviewed in order to gather a wider perspective about the LLL field in the Genoa Functional Region, all the experts are connected to the Civic Service measure within the Youth Guarantee scheme in Liguria Region (our case study for the GFR). Thus, from project managers to street level experts, the sample aims to reconstruct the process of policy-making and implementing of the analysed measure by the perspective of actors at different levels and stages.

In MFR the experts sample includes two policy managers (upper—level policy managers), four projects managers, and six practitioners, street level managers, tutors. The experts sample in MFR has been constructed with the rationale applied for the sample in GFR: two upper level policy managers gave us information and insights concerning the LLL field in the Functional Region, while the remaining experts belong (at different levels) to the NEETwork project (our case study for the MFR), an integrative measure of the Lombardia Region Youth Guarantee scheme.

Table 1. Sample of experts interviewed in Genoa and Milan Functional Regions

Experts	GFR	MFR
Policy managers Upper-level policy managers	2	2
Project managers	3	4
Practitioners, street level managers, tutors	2	6
Total	7	12

Reaching the experts in some cases was challenging, and there were some difficulties to schedule the interview because they were too busy. In the majority of the cases, the appointment was agreed with their secretariat by phone sending by email a formal letter explaining the content and aims of the project as well as the purpose of the interview. In other cases, appointment was agreed directly with the expert by phone. In both regions all participants signed a consent form which had been developed according to the general guidelines of Young Adults.

The experts were amenable and appeared interested about the project; they gave great information on the LLL policies in the FRs and provided us interesting insights. Generally, the interviews took between 30 and 90 minutes and were recorded. They took place in the office of the interviewees.

As already mentioned, given the strong focus of both our expert samples, we have set two “extra” interviews in each Functional Region in order to further analyze the field of the policies selected in WP3, also evaluating potential information overlapping and/or blind spots of the research materials gathered for WP6.

The sample of interviewed young adults in the two Functional Regions differ for some features. The Genoese young adults are older than the Milanese ones (in the first case the mean age is 27, in the second one is 22) and their achieved level of education are higher (mainly university degree, while none of the Milanese young adults completed the high school). Young adults came from varied socio-economic backgrounds, but most of them were working-class (in Milan just one interviewed came from middle class). Excluding one interviewee in Milan, all the respondents and their families were born in Italy. At the moment of the interview, all the young adults are living with birth family (just excluding one Genoese guy). Regarding the gender, in both samples there is a prevalence of males, even if in both the samples the gender balance was observed, although unable to be perfectly established.

Table 2: Sample of young adults interviewed in the functional region of Genoa

Code	Gender	Age	Socio-economic background	Autochthonous /Foreign-born parents	Achieved level of education	Household condition
Y_IT_G_1	M	28	Middle class	Autochthonous	Three-year University degree	With birth family
Y_IT_G_2	F	24	Working class	Autochthonous	Three-year University degree	With birth family
Y_IT_G_3	F	26	Working class	Autochthonous	Three-year University degree	With birth family
Y_IT_G_4	F	28	Working class	Autochthonous	Five-year University degree	With birth family
Y_IT_G_5	M	30	Middle class	Autochthonous	Three-year qualification	With birth family
Y_IT_G_6	M	24	Middle class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	With birth family
Y_IT_G_7	M	30	Middle class	Autochthonous	Five-year University degree	Alone

Table 3: Sample of young adults interviewed in the functional region of Milan

Code	Gender	Age	Socio-economic background	Autochthonous/Foreign-born parents	Achieved level of education	Household condition
Y_IT_M_1	M	23	Middle class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	With birth family
Y_IT_M_2	F	24	Working class	Foreign	Lower secondary school	With birth family
Y_IT_M_3	F	22	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	With birth family
Y_IT_M_4	M	22	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	With birth family
Y_IT_M_5	M	21	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	With birth family
Y_IT_M_6	M	22	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	With birth family

The access to the YA followed the same specific procedure in each FR. There was a first contact with the project manager (one belonging to Civic Service in GFR and on to NEETwork project in MFR) presenting the research project and identifying the potential available interviewees. After receiving the list of potential interviewees, the researchers directly contacted by phone the young adults, proposing an appointment for the interview and sending by email a formal letter explaining the content and aims of the project as well as the purpose of the interview.

Reaching young adults proved to be challenging, especially in the Milan Functional Region. The NEETwork project officers were extremely helpful in contacting a sample of young adults' potential interviewees. However, since the NEETwork project itself provides a number of interviews with its addresses (both as psychosocial support tool and monitoring tool), the potential interviewed have been carefully selected by the NEETwork experts, in order to avoid the overlapping among different kinds of interviewees. Moreover, it was not possible to contact the project drop-outs as initially expected, then the final sample is composed by young adults who were carrying out the traineeship and young adults who had already completed their paths within NEETwork project. More generally, some contacted young adults did not show up despite, initially agreeing to participate, some did not reply to our messages, and some declined to participate.

In relation to the interviews fieldwork, generally the Milanese young adults were not very talkative when asked to develop their biographical account. For this reason, they were asked to answer more precise questions regarding the main themes, usually without having comprehensive answers, but just "yes" or "not". In GFR the interviews developed with a more participatory behaviour by the young adults, who appeared opened for the conversation and happy to talk about and reflect their lives and experiences openly and in detail. The general mood of the interview was relaxed and friendly. The biographical approach proved to result in short initial narratives, mainly

starting talking about their schooling and university experiences. The different approach to the interview by the young adults in GFR and MFR is evident also considering the different duration: interviews with Milanese young adults were shorter and the contents were more concise.

In MFR the interviews carried out at the Institution in which the young adults were performing (or had already completed) their traineeship; the NEETwork experts provided a suitable space to conduct the interviews. In GFR all the young adults were interviewed at the Department of Science of Education.

3. Analysis of interviews with the experts

In this section we analyse the interviews with experts conducted following the proposal of the core team of the WP5. The research questions were presented in YOUNG ADULLLT WP5 Deliverable 2.1.

The section firstly analyses the interviews with experts conducted in the Functional Region of Genoa and secondly in the Functional Region of Milan. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented regarding common and diverging points of both Regions.

3.1. Analysis of interviews with experts in Genoa Functional Region

Antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies in GFR

In this section we aim to analyse which are the reflections of the interviewed experts on the approaches, objectives and impacts of the LLL policies. Their opinions and discourses are key elements to understand how these policies are designed, selected, re-contextualised and implemented at a local level; and they also constitute a first necessary element to be taken into account in order to understand how these policies are shaping vulnerable young adults' life courses.

Antecedents of LLL policies and political approach

LLL are considered not as a global scheme, but as a sum of labour policies and professional training initiatives, which is separated by social policies. Priorities seem to be based more on EU goals (NEETs activation and unemployment tackling) than on a deep and shared local orientation.

The dependence on EU funds seems to hardly condition the construction of policies: decision makers try to adapt initiatives into frames established by EU but, youth seems to be not a priority:

in the employment axis, in addition to the youth axis, there is the funding of the 'unemployed' priority, let's call them in a broader sense, where you therefore have both young people and adults in it (E_IT_G_7)

when an over-50 person is expelled from the labour market, it is worse than the young person who is 18 and he is looking for it... because he does not

have the support of the family, and he does not have a familiar welfare (WP6 E_IT_G_4)

and more

NEETs are on the young side, because they are in fact the young priority for the Commission. (...) this change of scenery keeps us thinking about whether to reprogramming resources, then going more to touch the 25 years, over 40, just to understand, because in our regional context there is a large incidence of unemployment of the age group 30-50 years (E_IT_G_7)

Problems to solve are related to economic and demographic transformation more than to youth conditions and unemployment:

The demographic aspect is worrying, not only because there are few births, but also because we have a youth population not of NEETs, but of smart guys who have to leave away from our region. (WP6 E_IT_G_1)

In that sense the Youth Guarantee Scheme seems to be mostly an opportunity to have funds and to have a possibility to change and improve the governance and the organization of services that are unanimously considered obsolete:

You need to quickly explain how is the situation and organization of the Public Employment Agencies in Italy, which has been over the years, however, neglected offices, both in terms of resources, and in terms of organization. (...) Youth Guarantee has determined a sort of organizational revolution (E_IT_G_6)

In GFR, and in Liguria, there is still no orientation towards personalized policies as YG suggests (and it is one of the main difference between GFR and MFR as we will see), but more as personal project in a shared and collective frame, as in our case study, the Civic Service. In that case, in fact, CS in YG has an ethical role, in order to support young people in a particular context, the Third Sector, traditionally separated by others economic sector.

The effort we have made for the Youth Guarantee is to adapt the motivations of the Civic Service, to a more social, more dedicated and let's say more ethical aspect (E_IT_G_1)

In general, we can say that the majority of the interviewees think that LLL policies in GFR do not need a precise priority on young adults: most discourses are focusing on detailed and fragmented aspects (in particular issues on organization, allocation of resources, lack of public funds, differences among economic sectors). There is no overview perspective, but only itemized and disjointed topics. In this frame upper level experts seem to try to adapt UE policies and target group as young adult without

conviction, but they still thinking that it will be better to give priority to elder citizen because they don't have a familiar welfare as a support

Objectives and impact of the LLL policies

The main objective of the analysed LLL policies referred to young adult, in particular local adaptation of UE policies, as stated by almost all the interviewees is to improve the employability, offering them, through the Civic Service, a possibility to test themselves in a work environment within a protected context. About other policies experts mentioned in particular self-employment and training in specific economic sector as ICT, logistics, port and tourism. One of the main issue that expert consider is related to the fact that there is an important mismatch between what young adults can do in this local context and what they are studying for or they are looking for. The responsibility of this mismatch is to be attributed to young people and their families, that unable to adequately orient them:

Only families of a certain disposition have a strategy. Normal families do not think you have to create a strategy starting from your attitudes and skills, on your possibilities (E_IT_G_1)

So, on the one hand, objectives of LLL policies have to change the mismatch between young adult's choice and chances of local labour market, but measures are not precisely correlated to this. Experts seems to trust in the possibility that policies, in particular local application of EU policies as YG, can have indirect effects in order to solve the main local problems. In that sense YG can have an indirect impact on a new organization of public service agency, and through this to suggest experts themselves about goal, desires, objectives of young adult:

there were regular meetings with 30-40 young people explaining what the Youth Guarantee program was. And also from the questions we received as operators, you could really had the pulse, how to say, constant, alive, about what are the attitudes of the youngsters on work and training. (E_IT_G_6)

Another indirect effect of EU policies is a new perspective about inclusion: in Italy and in particular in Liguria and GFR social policies were traditionally separated from labour market policies, but now the guidelines from Brussels force the Regions to have a more generalist approach, and this is perceived as a top-down input, but not a bottom-up need:

There is all the recommendation inclusion part that weighs at least 20% of the resources of the Operational Program, but that is not what we used to do, for example courses for non-EU citizens, and so on, but it is also services to people, so we have meant that social services also enter into the implementation of the OP, with lines dedicated to them. And here it has changed, it has changed a lot, it has changed a lot. (E_IT_G_7).

Evaluation strategies

In a context as we described, where objectives and goals are not clear and the local implementation of EU policies seems to support a not shared and precise overview, it is not surprising that evaluation strategies are not a priority. For sure EU funds force the Regional Government to monitor and evaluate, but it is not clear if and how data, analysis and numbers are really used to implement and design policies. However in that frame there is also some experimentation, considering evaluation strategies as important steps forward. In Civic Service, there is a particular emphasis on the validation process of skills. Manager and decision makers seem to be very proud and satisfied about this initiative:

The Civic Service arrived at the right time, because it was the first measure on we can calibrate a system, beyond words, because it's easier said than done, isn't it? (...) Putting the system into practice is much more complex and onerous, there are huge costs from an administrative point of view. It was an enormous effort for us. (E_IT_G_1).

As stated by street level experts, this skill validation strategy seems to be time-consuming, and sometimes it was not well fitting in a six months length activity.

The proposal was to support the path of Civic Service 6 months with a path of construction of a dossier, where you can tell the service you are doing... it was aimed to identifying one or more skills, obtained during the Civic Service. (...) but, about knowledge, if you don't have an educational qualification, it is impossible to prove them. (E_IT_G_4).

I have followed it since the beginning, and it was a very time-consuming job, both from our tutors, that we had to make these meetings, to understand, follow the youngsters, and both from the youngsters, with a very strong rigidity of the system, and in particular on the identification of the profession, let's say, that they had to identify only qualification in the Regional Repertory and it is not so closed to what they really do. . (E_IT_G_5).

Target group characteristics

This section addresses research questions related to the way by which LLL policies construct their target group. To do that, it starts with the formal description of the characteristics of this group (age, threshold of achieved studies, etc.). Following this description, other characteristics of the target group are presented as they have been stated by different interviewed experts. Finally, it discusses the extent to which this particular construction has or could have effects on the (intended and unintended) impacts of the analysed LLL policies.

The target groups constructed by LLL policies are referred to a young adult not in education or training (NEETs), because if we consider in particular YG, the target group is constructed directly by EU. As we saw before this target group is not completely overlapped in the vision of experts: they are more focused on unemployment or on the mismatch between supply and demand of work, regardless of the age of the beneficiaries. In this perspective, Civic Service represents a good example of a local application of a EU measure: Civic Service, in fact, has been changed its own traditional target group (young adult with very high social capital stock, upper-medium level of education and income) to more disadvantaged young people. Experts considered this fact as a good challenge, even if all this is associated with certain problems:

the problem is that, especially with the Youth Guarantee, the weaker groups are ... that is, the percentage of very weak youngsters application is very high, and therefore not all the services are available to include so fragile guys (E_IT_G_5).

In the same time, expert seems to confirm the rhetoric of spoilt, choosy youngsters: many of them describes NEETs as fragile and unable to work or to be prepared to the real world:

If there is a little effort... They collapse! (...) Because young people are like that... I've noticed that... they have no flexibility (E_IT_G_5)

the rhetoric of the NEETs as those who are lazy, spoiled, weakened also affects the level of managers, but in this case some of them admitted that the economic context is hostile, unable to include disadvantaged people

today I cannot involve NEETs in this type of project. Today I have to accelerate the path to get infrastructure, fast trains, fast roads, so that it can then be an opportunity for them for an employment chance (WP6 E_IT_G_1)

So, on the one hand young people seems to be not able to the local context, but in the same time the context is unreceptive to them in any case: a vicious circle that can be solved by self-employment:

The first element that I see is to orient youth, since secondary education, to an independent approach, to have their own business (WP6 E_IT_G_5)

LLL policies and Young Adults

The objective of this section is twofold. Firstly, it intends to analyse the extent to which LLL policies design and implementation take into account the socio-economic difficulties faced by their beneficiaries. And secondly, it aims to explore if they foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty.

LLL policies and Young adults' life conditions

As we saw, street level experts are more aware of young adults' life conditions than the official design of LLL policies even if both share the same rhetoric of laziness and sluggishness. The professional training offer is in the traditional driving sectors (tourism, logistics, ports) where young people seem reluctant to participate, while the other initiatives seem to provide only a first experience of a protected job, because it is assumed that young people would not be able to do something more.. In this regard, even recognising that there are contextual or structural constraints that prevent young adult to have opportunities in the local labour market, the solutions seems to be too ambitious and general (great infrastructures, a new industrial fabric and so on). Street level experts seem to be coherent with this approach: they can offer an experience in the frame of public (and European) funds, following (more or less) political indication of the current Regional Council.

We did this experimentation because we needed to prove that Civic Service can give citizenships and transversal skills to youngsters. (...) Yes, maybe it is not useful for enterprises but for the weakest maybe It is something (E_IT_G_3)

LLL policies and Young adults' autonomy and uncertainty

It is not clear to which extent LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to deal with uncertainty. Indeed, we can say that in some ways it seems that autonomy is not a goal, because the basic assumption of experts is that young people would live with their parents. Paradoxically, on the one hand experts notice that young people are not autonomous, but policies do not seem oriented toward supporting autonomy.

There are courses on blue economy: Who calls? Who phones? Dad or mum, do you understand? Last Friday a father called me because he didn't find a professional course at merchant Navy Academy, (...) I started surfing the Net looking for where he had to go because we are running out the time, there were a deadline, and his son was wondering around" (E_IT_G_7)

Yes, in the Civic Service we give 433€ per months, and the Civic Service is six months long. (E_IT_G_1)

Many of them look only for the money (E_IT_G_5)

3.2. Analysis of interviews with experts in Milan Functional Region

Antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies in MFR

In Milan Functional Region a sample of experts was interviewed. Most of them were working in policies of the department of Employment and Training or they were involved in the private sector. In this functional Region, in fact, the approach is based on vertical and horizontal subsidiarity and it was very important to add some more interviews in order to go deeper inside a new kind of theoretical approach that conditioned all recent local policies. The main strategy consists on the centrality of the person: policies become tailor-fit, individualistic, personalized. The Regional Government with a strong support of private organizations leads the governance scheme. Not only those accredited one, but also those can decide policies and initiatives with a high impact, as Corporate Foundations or Banking Foundations.

Antecedents of LLL policies and political approach

One of the main changes in this area was developed in 2013 when the Regional Government started a new policy, the so-called Dote Unica. This policy is more than an initiative to finance training activities or orientation services: it is a sort of application of subsidiarity, where social policies, training and education policies and employment policies share the same model, focusing on the individual needs. As we explained in WP6 analysis, Dote Unica is a Re-Employment and Re-qualification endowment programme that overlap other policies and even Youth Guarantee was adapted to this model.

Experts at all level but in particular program managers and upper level policy managers seem to be very proud of that, and more generally they consider the regional models as one of the most interesting and effective at National level. Statistical data, as we saw in WP4, seems to confirm only partially this conviction (the average of NEETs in MFR is quite high, for example) but it is a fact that some other Regions (included GFR) are trying to apply the same model.

The Dote Unica was born to rightly respond to various needs. One of these was the freedom and the centrality of the person (E_IT_M_7 respondent 1)

Every Youth Guarantee targets comes from Dote Unica (...)through these two calls we are working with a person, to help him to re-qualify himself.

People are profiled by us, and 'profiling' means the range belonging to the unemployed person (E_IT_M_5)

Before 2013 Dote Unica was only an experiment for some target groups, but in these years the direction was to simplify initiatives insisting on labour market with a unified approach for all citizen in need of support.

with a single tool we tried to reduce the number of present interventions and then we wanted to strengthen the partnership network in a frame of horizontal and vertical subsidiarity (E_IT_M_7 respondent 2)

Experts seem to share a complete agreement about Dote Unica: if project managers are satisfied and proud of this approach, also street levels should take it for granted, and adapt their work on it.

The first point of this LLL approach is in fact the consideration that services can be contemporary public and private, differentiated and distinguished and continuously monitored by the Region is one of the bases of this functional region.

Another point that emerged from interviews is related to a mix of a paternalist approach and a strenuous attempt to social inclusion:

It is one of the tools that puts the youngster in front of reality; that is, the reality is made of a job seeking, often, that is, Dote is a job, the outcome is a job, but it is the job of one's life, if you do it well, you can choose, you have the possibility to change his choice, because Dote allows you, and you can find the work of his life. (WP5 E_IT_M_7)

Our case study, which greatly characterizes the interviewees' story, seems to highlight these aspects very well because it is a special project included in Youth Guarantee, reserved for youngsters who for diverse reasons left education prematurely, are excluded from the labour market and for a number of social/cultural causes are unable to activate or are not effectively reached by other current policies.

A Private Foundation, had identified a lack of the policies: NEETs with very high distance from labour market were still excluded, so the Foundation suggests to create a network of stakeholders in order to analysed and to solve this problem, financing innovative solutions. The Regional Government and other private partners as private employment agencies, third sector organizations with the scientific support of a research centre shared this idea and they constructed a big project: a complex mechanism for a very fragile target group:

We were wondering about the lack of representation of the taking charge of these young people within the Youth Guarantee Program and we pondered if, indeed, other instruments of interception and engagement could be more effective than those that were used by the Youth Guarantee (E_IT_M_1)

What I want to underline is that it is a really complex project, in the sense that the energies that have been put by all the protagonists are so many.

That is, the process may seem linear, but if you look behind it is really a huge job ... (WP5 E_IT_M_5)

Objectives and impact of the LLL policies

The interviewed experts, as we saw before, agreed upon the fact that Dote Unica is a great model, able to consider many target groups and different situations. It is a flexible model, potentially useful for all

Dote Unica is like a big collector, it is a model that we can manage every time in order to shape it, depending on what we need more or less. We have used it to fill, how can I say, this waiting period until the planning of the second phase of Youth Guarantee (E_EN_M_7 r3)

The main objectives of the LLL approach based on Dote Unica that emerge from experts are:

- The human-centeredness
- Spread of trust in the network of private and public organizations
- Possibility of inclusion of disadvantaged people

The centeredness is a leitmotiv that characterized all policies at local level: every local service, and in particular social services, try to respond to individual need, through a very diversified network of small and great bodies

This policy was born in order to put people at the heart, free to choose, free to choose an operator good for you, that you can evaluate by his job results. (E_EN_M_7 r1)

The trust, in that context is the value able to improve social capital, giving stability to the network, and strengthen the leading role of the Regional Government:

This policy was born in order to put people at the heart, free to choose, free to choose an operator good for you, that you can evaluate by his job results. (E_EN_M_7 r1)

The Regional Government proposes trust. It gives confidence and an occasion, the obviously performs the check, with a monitoring and evaluation process. (E_IT_M_7 r3)

The last objective emerged is a very strong orientation to the social inclusion:

We considered that the most fragile NEETs were not included in YG, so we want to give an occasion to very excluded youngsters. (E_IT_M_1)

We accept all. After the first interview, in any case, we try to include everyone. (E_IT_M_6)

Evaluation strategies

Project manager of LLL policies expressed the importance of evaluation with particular emphasis:

So, standard costs, some process, running costs, others linked to results, then still the evaluation ... not money a go-go for free, in the sense that I have to show that the person has found a job, and I'll tell you Region what kind of job must be, with which characteristics of stability or less (E_SP_M_7 r3)

About the case study project manager seems to consider not only a project evaluation, but also a wider approach, contemplating impact evaluation and the real effects of the personalized initiatives

what we would like is an even more impact assessment, we would like to understand later what happens next. The ex-ante evaluation a little more to define the eligibility criteria, the post part will be just to see the employment outcomes, especially to compare them with the control group and see if there is mobility even within these young people, what that we are going to verify that, compared to this vision so still, so 'lazy', as they have been defined, in reality we also begin to see a some quite opportunistic behaviour, so perhaps if we can compared we can notice if there is a real mobility, if they change something a mobility (E_IT_M_1)

A case like this implies a delicate evaluation: the target is very fragile and the percentage of dropout is very high:

the selection of the youngsters provide many dropout, I do not know if they then gave you the percentage of dropout ... it is very high ... many do not answer, others cannot get up in the morning, others have psychological problems (E_IT_M_5)

Characteristics of the Target Group

The description of target group seems to be not homogeneous even if the rhetoric of the laziness of NEETs is very strong (as well as a certain indulgence)

However, NEETs are normally special cases and if they are in that condition probably they have a series of personal difficulties that leads them to not succeed they are not able to hold little specific situations, for example stay at school or being able to maintain a job (E_IT_M_6)

my experience tells me that there are guys 'listless' in the sense that you really have to phone them 50 times, and they do not answer ... one guy once replied "I'm sleeping" ... it was about half past eleven "I'm sleeping, you can call me later ? "He did not even know who I was on the phone. So I could be, it could be Obama, could be any person, anyway ... I was shocked, and if you're not patient and you're not in the process and then ... let's think about if he was a client looking for a job, for me his file should be delete, ok? (E_IT_M_5)

The construction of NEETs' laziness is solid even if many street level experts consider the great differentiation among young people involved (single mothers, illegal workers, youngsters who are actively looking for a job)

"Sometimes there are great successes, and we are happy for those who get better ... but there is a percentage that at the end of the project turn back to its former status ... there is no way to make him understand that ... I'm a bit spoiled, they give me the feeling of being a bit spoiled, a bit empty..., they do not have big interests or hobbies, even when you ask them what they do in the afternoon, if they have a sport activity, if they have something to do, a passion .. no, no they trend towards to see friends and anything else. They live in a low socio-cultural level and actually they are not stimulated at home, in no direction. Then I have the cases... few ones, but someone I had, young mothers.. about twenty years old with children, many foreigners, actually it makes a little 'impression to see a twenty year old girl with two children and them ... but that is a bit of a separate discussion... (E_IT_M_6)

LLL policies and Young adults' life conditions

In general, street-level experts and local managers are not completely aware of the young adults living conditions. They recognise that some of them live in very vulnerable settings mainly economic and socio-affective, as presented in the previous section but the rhetoric of the lazy NEETs seems to be stronger than the narrative by themselves. For sure LLL policies analysed try to encourage young adult in a disadvantage condition, to have a chance, and a personalized one, but there are still many youngster completely out of this opportunities. As we saw in WP6 this circumstances seems to paradoxically be harder in MFR, where economic and industrial fabric is more dynamic and active: here there is a sort of silent but visible army of outsiders.

The problem is mobility, another element that these young people ... one of the ... of our criteria, as I told you, We have discarded those young people

who, without having been contacted, if they lived ten minutes away from the office of the non-profit organization, they are not available. The employment agencies told us "When we say that they have to take a bus and maybe they have to take the train, they already tell us they can't".(E_IT_M_1)

For some of them, the project represents a very important chance: some of them continue the training for other six months, others turn back to education.

These guys having no experience and having no training, are reasonably unapproachable to an enterprise (...) when I see them for the first times, during the first meetings, I try to understand first of all if there is not the possibility of an school of continuing education, or a professional one, if they manage to take a minimum of qualification, because the junior high school, guys, it's really little. But there are many, and perhaps increasing, exactly, the most troubling thing is that... (E_IT_M_3)

We did a series of evaluations concerning Y_IT_M_1's path, because since he arrived until the six month deadline, we also perceived from other colleagues this desire to reconfirm Y_IT_M_1... in fact, when the semester was about to end a part of our colleagues said: "Let him stay, let him stay, let him stay". We have seen that in any case the activity that Y_IT_M_1 was doing during the first six months was very useful for us, ok? Because it was ... you can say, something small but something missing in the organizational dimension. (...) There was his desire to ask what to do, and his willingness to work well, to make deliveries, and other little things. This is in my opinion, what we rewarded with a renewal of six months and other six months (E_IT_M_2)

LLL policies and Young adults' autonomy and uncertainty

An umbrella policy as Dote Unica seems to be useful for so many goals that is difficult to evaluate it about autonomy and uncertainty. For sure this kind of policy try to present public service as something effective, tailor made, successful for each person, even if the personal approach tend to give responsibilities only to the individual. But if we consider the case study for sure this policy seems to be more oriented to uncertainty than autonomy. The basic idea is that NEETs involved in NEETwork are too fragile for autonomy and in this first phase they can only have a protected frame where they can have a soft working experience. It is surprising indeed how the word "autonomy" does not appear in any of the interviews carried out: in fact, the premise seems to be that a NEET can not neither think of autonomy.

One thing that has emerged and that I find so nice is that everyone or almost everyone, even if there are difficulties, are happy to do something... They say: "finally I do something" and it is the thing that they scared, the thing that makes them a bit 'out of that catatonic state, "I get up in the morning I leave about 8 am.. because the majority, apart from a couple who have done full time, have only 4 hours per day, 4 / 6 hours, it's a regular appointment, I get up in the morning and I go, I do, it's nice. The thing that

really change them it is they can be out of that very negative circumstances, they can prove themselves they are able to do something because in my opinion they also have the doubt about themselves to be unable to do anything. (E_IT_M_1)

Actors and responsibilities

The actors who participate in the design and implementation of these policies are several and they are very different regarding nature, typology size and so on.

As we saw in WP6 the Regional Government has a leading role recognized by all the network. The role is based not only on the institutional (and financial) function, but also for the general approach based on subsidiarity. In that sense it was very interesting that all experts and in particular expert from private sector, consider as crucial the role of the Regional Government:

It was certainly a project conceived by (private foundation), but we asked for (and obtained) a deal with the Regional Government because, on the one hand, it reserved internal Youth Guarantee's resources for the for this project, and we had the promise that a part of the resources were really destined to the NEETwork project, as indemnity of the hosting organizations to be recognized to the youngsters and for the entire part also as a compensation of the promoters. The partnership consists of the private foundations, Private and Public Employment Agencies and all the third sector organizations involved (E_IT_M_1)

However, the different interviewees have pointed out that, the governance of the project was very complex, with many level of governance, from the street level, to the "control room". The effort was huge, especially if we consider that in a year and a half it has been possible to involve 160 young people.

the speed of the project is bringing out its own complexity, the initial idea was to start 100 traineeships per month, now we have started 160 in a year and a half, and if initially we were shattered, then we realized this is the right timing, because as long as I see the youngster, as long as I see the organization, as long as I do the match, the youngster can started but he needs to be followed and so on (E_IT_M_5).

Strategies to deal with multi-level "wicked problems"

The interviews with the experts have help us to identify which problems are specially affecting the development of these policies, and the big effort they try to do with a vulnerable as well as inhomogeneous target groups as NEETs are. One of the most

interesting point that experts suggest us is related to the fact that an individualized policy as Dote Unica can be very useful to improve a LLL culture.

The Dote Unica essentially means that the citizen has the right to training; this right can be exercised by opting for one of these professional training offers (or about other services concerning LLL), and this right is subsequently proposed in a continuous, permanent way during the other periods of his life. E_IT_M_8.

Conclusions on the interviews with experts

Policies of LLL in Italy were always considered as a big problem. Policy makers themselves, trade unionist, entrepreneurship representatives and public managers agree on the fact that young people are not able to work because of their weak education and their lack of professional training, which entail a mismatch with job market. This leitmotiv was supported by international researches as OCSE analysis (National Strategy for Skills, 2017) and Young Workers Index (2016) that show how Italy is one of the worst nation in Europe about improvement of young adult employability conditions.

During the last fifteen years, Italy's economic performance has appeared "*rather bleak*" said a public manager interviewed: even if the employment rate is improved, productivity has stagnated, due a weak demand for advanced skills and a limited use of available skills. For this reason, despite the Italian low level of skills, there are many cases where workers have higher skills than those required by their job, reflecting low demand for skills in our country. Over-qualified (11.7%) and overkilled (18%) represent a substantial part of the Italian workforce. In addition, about 35% of workers are employed in a non-related sector Young Workers Index said. In another report by OECD (McGowan, Andrews, 2015) Italy is confirmed, among European Union countries, one with the highest levels of mismatch between the skills that workers have and those requested by the job market.

In the same time the National Government, under a big pressure of UE has launched an ambitious package of reforms with long-term strategy in order to develop and implement of LLL policies in particular for young people. National Reforms try to improve flexibility of the labour market, cutting labour costs and providing enterprises to recruit young people by a hand and improving guidance to the work, counselling and more personalized services by the other.

The national strategy seems to be not effective at the local level: LLL are regulated by Regional policies, revealing significant differences between the North and the South of the country, as well as among district and territories (both in terms of social and economic context and public governance). This results in a fragmented patchwork of theoretical approaches, policies, impacts and opportunities.

In our research differences between MFR and GFR are evident and paradigmatic: MFR has a Unitarian political vision based on subsidiarity, while GFR has a disjointed vision among social, educational, professional training and job creation. The principle of subsidiarity used in Lombardia Region and in MFR prescribes that the Regional Government needs to play the role of guarantee of the common good, while the provision of services has to be devolved to lower level providers, with a public or a

private status. This implies that the activation of private actors becomes a condition for the achievement of the common good. In GFR, instead,

the Regional Government plays a leading role, negotiating time-to-time with different stakeholders in a frame where providers are mainly public. Only in the last two years GFR is (slightly) moving from a coordinated market economy to a liberal market economy.

The arrival of an European Policy such as Youth Guarantee has brought different consequences in the two FR. In MFR YG was easily adapted to the principle of subsidiarity, involving private and public bodies that carried out the acceptance, the counselling and the general taking charge of the citizen. Every policy, in this FR, is based on the centrality of the individual, on the recognition of his/her need, hence on the taking over by accredited bodies (public and private) in a so-called quasi-market system. In this way YG is an initiative under the umbrella policy of Dote Unica, that is the model for employment and training policies in Lombardia Region, designed to accompany individuals throughout their whole active life with the aim to increase the effectiveness of the welfare system in the Region. For each person in need of support, a number of services deriving from a defined set may be activated and YG is one of ones specifically related to young people. A demonstration of the inclusion of YG in Dote Unica is based on the fact, precisely described by an interviewed expert that, when National Funds of YG end, they keep up as usual with the Dote Unica funds.

In GFR the path was completely dissimilar: policies are more traditional and separated among different policies sector and almost always funded by ESF. There are no policies for young people, but policies for labour market, policies of education, for job creation, and social policies for precise targets: addicts, disabled, disadvantaged people and so on. In this context YG fostered a very interesting change: Public Employment Agencies had to transform their role, becoming more dynamic, effective, open to monitoring and evaluation. The political shift from the traditional parties of center-left to center-right push the policy system to consider the MFR and Lombardia Region as a model. Yet the socio-economic context is very different, as we saw, and so impact and organization are still far from being similar to MFR model.

One issue that many experts underlined is related to the attitude of young people to mobility and family life: in MFR many of them arrive from other regions (in particular from the southern Italy but there is also a presence from GFR) and they are used to live far from family, so they need to be more independent, while in GFR many of them have a low propensity to mobility. In this way an initiative as the Civic Service within YG (one of the Italian case studies in the YOUNG_ADULLLT project) in GFR is effectively a YG policy with a clear employability aim, and the Regional Government chose a skills validation path as an experimentation, while MFR is oriented to assimilate YG to Dote Unica. The same process involved professional training financed by FSE: in MFR training is referred to what individuals requests to upgrading their resume in order to seek a new job and improving chances for outplacement or reorientation. Furthermore Professional training is financed only if courses can release a qualification included in the Repertory. In GFR, instead, professional training are managed directly by the Regional Government that choose the main economic sectors where training course can support the development. For example in the last years it has been given priority to

port and logistics as well as to the entire marine sector and tourism, while in next months there will be a specific call for culture. Anyway the perspective is to overcome the sectorialization in order to have only open call: every accredited training agency will be able to request funds if they can guarantee the employability of participants. LLL policies, in GFR seems to be an umbrella policy: if we look at the Operative Programme of Liguria Region not every professional training proposal are really LLL initiatives, but they are still linked with a traditional approach. Some experts, at this

regards, notice, not without a point of malice, that professional training is programmed in order to survive some training agencies.

Before YG target groups were constructed according to the objects of policies: there were no youth policies at National level or regional level. In 2006 the Ministry for Youth and Sports was funded and introduced a National Youth Plan which aims to:

- facilitate the access to the labour market for young people;
- develop the youth's skills and knowledge;
- promote creativity and culture;
- encourage participation;
- stimulate inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.

The plan was still generic, with no precise targets groups policies and only few initiatives were effective: in 2008 the Ministry was abolished and was funded a new governmental authority, the Department of Youth and National Civic Service so in November 2011 the National Government adopted a package of measures entitled “Diritto al futuro” (Right to the Future). According to the 2011 briefing, the Right to the Future aims to “tackle the precarious conditions faced by young people”. It focuses on three key areas affecting young people's development and well-being: employment, housing, and family. As we can see by this first introduction, youth policies had no target groups before YG, but there were social policies as responses to labelled or supposed youth problems (young people at risk, drug addicts, with criminal records, disabled and disadvantaged etc). There were no specific gender bias policies for young people even if the country is still under (62.1) the middle average of EU (66.2) about European Gender Equality Index¹. YG seems to confirm this approach that considers target group as problem owners in this case the problem is NEETs population. This groups seems to have a different impact on the two FR: even if statistics show that in 2016 in Lombardy and in Liguria NEETs are respectively 20,1% and 20,8% our interviewees describes different impression. In the first case NEETs appear as a very problematic group, who needs specific project (and NEETwork, the second Italian case study in the YOUNG_ADULLLT project) is an important example of that), because they are very distant from labour market, and everyday life in a dynamic and busy city, while in GFR they are considered as young people too tied to their family, who are struggling to become autonomous or oriented to mobility, but they are not so different from who is studying or working and so they need only “soft or protected” initiative as well as CS.

The case of MFR instead, is quite different: as we saw before policies were not focused on problems, but on the centralization of the individuals: so it was not important to construct target groups rather than building a network of public and private bodies which could take in charge young as well as older people. This dissimilar perspective changes all of our consideration about local policies, even if, as we saw, statistics on NEETs, for instance, reveal a similar phenomenon (at least in numbers).

4. Analysis of interviews with young adults

This section starts with a portrait of the interviewed young adults' biographies in the Genoa and Milan functional regions. The research questions on life projects and expectations are answered for each region.

4.1. Young adults in Genoa Functional Region

Table 5 shows that seven young adults were interviewed in Genoa. Roughly, the sample included 4 males and 3 females. All the respondents and their families were born in Italy. Four of them came from a middle-class background, the others from a working class background. Generally, they have high level of education: two of them achieved a five-years university degree (one plus master), three young adults achieved a three-years university degree and one a three-years professional qualification. Just one of the interviewees has a lower level of education, completing the lower secondary school.

Table 5: Sample of young adults interviewed in the Genoa Functional Region

Code	Gender	Age	Socio-economic background	Autochthonous/Foreign-born parents	Achieved level of education	Life project	Expectation related to the Civic Service	Household condition
Y_IT_G_1	M	28	middle class	Autochthonous	Three-year University degree	Defined/explicit	Values sharing; acquiring professional skills but not useful for the stabilization into the labour market	With birth family
Y_IT_G_2	F	24	working class	Autochthonous	Three-year University degree	Defined/explicit	Remaining active on the labour market and acquiring soft skills	With birth family
Y_IT_G_3	F	26	working class	Autochthonous	Three-year University degree	Defined/explicit	Remaining active on the labour market	With birth family
Y_IT_G_4	F	28	working class	Autochthonous	Five-year University degree	Defined/explicit	Acquiring professional and soft skills	With birth family
Y_IT_G_5	M	30	middle class	Autochthonous	Three-year qualification	Undefined/unclear	Remaining active on the labour market	With birth family
Y_IT_G_6	M	24	middle class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary school	Defined/explicit	Values sharing	With birth family
Y_IT_G_7	M	30	middle class	Autochthonous	Five-year University degree + Master	Defined/explicit	Values sharing; remaining active on the labour market	Alone

Biographies of interviewees in Genoa Functional Region

The following paragraphs portray the main features of their seven biographies. Drawing on the interviews, these summaries start with their own narrative of their life story. Then the summaries highlight the key references to their school trajectories, their experience with lifelong learning policies, and their vocational education and training. Finally, the summaries sketch their life plans.

Y_IT_G_1 is a 28 year old guy who is also enrolled in Civic Service. He has a university degree. Since 2010 he has joined an association of Italian partisans and, since 2012, he has been a member of a left wing Party and of several other voluntary associations. After the university he began to look for work, but the research was not successful. Thus, after graduation he joined the Youth Guarantee project. He became aware of the call for the Civic Service, he joined and found among the other possibilities the Childhood and Adolescence Office within a Civic Service Body where he currently lends National Civic Service. He did 6 months, from February of last year to July; then he was offered to stay and accepted, partly because he had no other job opportunities. He considers positively the experience of the Civic Service, because it allows to acquire a professionalization in the field. His mother is a public employee, an administrative assistant in a classical high school, and his father is a freelancer. At the time of the interview, the local elections were closed: he was proposed to run for the election in his territory and therefore he was waiting for results in those days. He defines himself as a "professional unemployed", with a three-year university degree that is hardly expendable in the labour market and with an impelling need to work. He would like to settle up and to make his own family and to find some stability after years of uncertainty. From a professional point of view, he does not want to make political work, but his political commitment aims to help people, to do something useful for the community. It expresses great uncertainty for the future and a great concern, also being aware of the increasing instability that characterizes the lives of young people.

Y_IT_G_2 is a 24-year-old girl enrolled in the Civic Service Program. She has a three-year university degree. The choice of the university was a moment of careful reflection because she faced a crossroad: to choose a path that she liked or to choose one that could have guaranteed her more job opportunities? She chose the first option, however, going against the expectations of his family, who wanted to do medicine or law, as other members of her family. She defines the choice of the University as "a dramatic break with her whole family". During the University she did an internship (expected and compulsory according to her course of studies) at the Municipality of Genoa with great satisfaction. She wanted to stay and work there, but they told her it was not possible. Since the years of high school she has always done volunteer in institutions dealing with the protection of animals.

After graduation she started looking for a job, but she did not find it and before she started Civic Service she was home for 10 months, during which she refused the proposals of some jobs that she considered "slaving" or "tricking" because she did not have the need to work from an economic point of view, thanks to the support of parents. She sent many online curricula and enrolled in several private employment agencies, as well at the Public Centre for Employment. She did a lot of job interviews, but they never took her, without giving her a specific motivation and she never liked this. She applied to enter the national Civic service but she was not taken and she does not know why. At the moment of the interview she is involved in the Regional Civic Service in one of the Civic Service Bodies, an important Italian organization for social promotion and she works in prison with migrants and minors and deals with their documents and their administrative bureaucratic practices outside the prison (she had applied for Civic Service at the patronage, but there was only one available place,

another guy was taken and she went to the Civic Service Body where she's carrying out her traineeship, but she is happy with that now). At the same time, she gives scientific lessons to high school boys, it's a black job. She applied for the National Civic Service and she awaits a confirmation, that, if positive, would mean working for another year. She has a very positive evaluation of the experience of the Civic Service, during which she has learned many things and has learned to express her emotions, to open up more to others, she has acquired interpersonal skills. She believes that the Civic Service has given her so much in terms of personal / human growth, but it is not an experience that is useful for a career.

She says she does not feel mature yet to go and live alone; for this reason, she did not go to the university abroad, nor looking for job opportunities outside Genoa. Her fear of going to live alone also influences the difficult relationship with her mother, whom she defines as very "strong and hyper-protective" and with whom she says she has "a bond of hatred and love". Their relationship further deteriorated when her mother "discovered" that she is homosexual. The mother learnt this by reading a homework that Y_IT_G_2 had written for a school assignment (at the age of 14). This fact has been experienced by her family as an "incredible hardship". When she said this at home, her mother sent her out of the house, lived for three months at a cousin's house, then her mother got a cancer and Y_IT_G_2 returned to live with her mother. She has a girlfriend since 6 years and she has always been an important point of reference for her; she asked her to go live together but Y_IT_G_2 said she cannot think of living outside her family's home.

As future prospects, from a business point of view she would like to remain in the social sphere, continuing to work with his Civic Service Body or other associations or cooperatives aimed at protecting people in disadvantaged situations, such as prisoners, migrants, young people who need help in school environment. From a personal point of view, she sees herself outside her parents' house, living in the countryside with her long-time partner.

Y_IT_G_3 is a 26-year-old girl who is also enrolled in Civic Service. She has a university degree and, after her graduation, she was not able to find a coherent work, then she did something else: she did a paid internship as a shop assistant, she worked as a babysitter, she sent her cv to the various job agencies. She has been able to work consistently with her graduation only when she was contacted by the interim agencies proposing her very short contracts (usually lasting no more than two months). After a period of odd and temporary jobs, she became aware of the Youth Guarantee through acquaintances working in the Region. Now she is doing Civic Service in a community of young boys in the historic centre of Genoa (at the time of the interview she did the first three months) which houses troubled kids, with relational, emotional and behavioural problems. She has a good evaluation of the experience of the Civic Service, both for the relationship with the colleagues and for the relationship established with the kids. Two years before joining the Civic Service, she had participated in a public call for a fixed-term job in her field of expertise, and she was the thirtieth in the ranking and in a year they called her. Thus, she abandoned the experience of the Civic Service to begin this fixed-term job. In the meantime, the same public body has made a competition for a permanent contract, she has 30 people enlisted beyond her and she look forward to be called. At the moment she lives in her parents' house, she hopes to get a permanent job in order to "start her life alone", that is to live alone in her own home, to find a partner with whom to have children and being a family. From a working point of view, in about ten years she foresees herself always in the same place where she currently works, perhaps with the possibility of making a master in further specialization.

Y_IT_G_4 is a 28 years old girl. She graduated from high school science technology, having chosen this course of study because she wanted to be a biologist. She has

always liked scientific matters. At school she always went very well, she was always "the top of her class", thanks both to her abilities and to the opportunities for learning out of school, thanks to the family that stimulated her, to the different trips she made and to her curiosity (defined by her as a distinctive trait). She always felt she had to live up to the expectations of others, even in her family she was the eldest sister and she felt the expectation that others had in her for being responsible, good at school, not making trouble and when she was a little girl she has a bit suffered this feeling of having to always meet this kind of expectations.

Her parents separated when she was 8, the same year her grandfather died, she says she did not suffer much from the separation of her parents, who have always been very present to her. She loves travelling, in recent years she has often been abroad, she tries to learn from every occasion. After graduation, she decided to do Political Science, an interfaculty course in Letters and Communication Sciences of Journalism, both because she liked to write and thanks to the recommendation of a teacher who had suggested her this address; moreover, the idea of doing journalism pleased her because she could have made the foreign correspondent by traveling. Then, the Gelmini law (law n. 240/2010) changed the addresses, journalism disappeared and then she continued with a degree in Political Science, she liked it a lot and worked hard. After completing a three-year degree in Political Science, she went to Turin to take a degree in Development Cooperation. Between the end of the three-year degree and the beginning of the specialist degree there was a "sabbatical year", she had a breakdown due to the excessive stress accumulated, wanting to do too many things together; she does not remember well what she did in that period, but she remembers it was a difficult year, both because she felt failed in not being immediately enrolled in the specialist degree and for the end of a long lasting friendship with some people. The years of specialization were very intense and demanding: for all the period she spent three days a week in Turin at the university and the other three days in Genoa doing an internship as a volunteer at an international organization that provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. At the same time, she was attended a post-graduate course in human rights at the University of Genoa. She decided to start volunteering because she wanted to insert practical/concrete experiences in the curriculum. In 2014, after a master's degree, after a trip to India that she claims to have changed her, she ends the 8-year relationship with her boyfriend (with whom she should have had to go and live together shortly thereafter); the choice of the end of the relationship was her. The following months were difficult, she felt very lonely and without friends, but she said that it was a period of great change, also of change in the approach to life more generally.

She has done various jobs always in the social and educational sphere. In 2014 she started as a volunteer at a Civic Service Body in the educational field, she held workshops in schools and awareness events for children. In the same year, 2014, she graduated. The following year (2015) she entered the Youth Guarantee because she was proposed by the operators of the Civic Service Body: they told her to enter that program and then to work with them at the minimum pay. After a fixed-term contract, she was permanently hired by the such Body. At the same time, she attended a master's degree in the management of non-profit organizations, at the Sole 24 Ore Business School in Rome, for three days a week; it was a paid master, for which she has a 50% scholarship and the rest payed with a loan she made in the Bank. The Master allowed her to acquire many skills in the management of non-profit organizations; she asked to the Civic Service Body to take advantage of these new skills but the employers said no, that she should had to continue to take care of the school sector and so she resigned. She currently works with an apprenticeship contract at the Italian Association of no profit social enterprises dealing with social innovation start-ups. She is occupied in four sectors: communication, education, networking, cooperation and international exchanges. She defines herself as "a young woman satisfied with herself"; in the next few years she would like to progress in his career in

the same association where she is currently performing her apprenticeship and become a project manager, to "have a peaceful life", to be happy and to have children.

WP5 Y_IT_G_5 is a 30 year old boy. At secondary school he attended a professional institute for two years, then he did not like the school environment due to difficult relationships with teachers and classmates (he had some bad episodes that he did not specify in detail) and he enrolled in another institute. In 2006 he obtained the qualification. Then he immediately looked for employment, sending curricula, enrolling in the Public Centre for employment, in several private temporary employment agencies, looking for job offers on the Internet or newspaper ads; he did a lot of jobs, always with fixed-term contracts (even just three months) or undeclared, he worked in supermarkets, in a post office, he worked as a storekeeper, a gardener, also in restaurants, when there were events exhibitions. Then, in 2011 he did a year of National Civic Service in the Social Services Sector of the Municipality of Genoa and carried out activities of assistance to the elderly (recreational activities, assistance in small tasks). The following year he joined the Youth Guarantee and took a training course for chefs in the Youth Guarantee program and a cookery course with a training institution; he has searched work in this area by sending curriculum but he has never been recalled. At the time of the interview he is doing the Regional Civic Service at one Medical Aid Civic Service Body, doing office work and accompanying people by car where they have to go, for commitments or visits. He has always lived in his parents' house and he still lives with them. He is satisfied with the experience of Civic Service (both national and regional) above all because he was able to help people, which he always liked. Thanks to the training provided within the Civic Service he has learned many new things, including the office work. At the time of the interview, after a few days, the Civic Service experience would end, there are no opportunities to continue working at the same Civic Service Body, he foresees that it will start another period when "it starts all over again", by sending new curricula and by looking for jobs. He would like to find a job in a restaurant or almost a congruent one according with his studies, maybe as an agro-food operator, or even in institutions offering services to the person, because he likes to help others. As for the private sphere, he would like to form a family, to buy a house and to go to live with a person for life, and "to live a quiet and normal life", "a simple one".

Y_IT_G_6 is a 24 years old boy who was an addressee of the Civic Service and is currently permanently employed by the same ONG where he carried out his Civic Service traineeship. He declares a very ideological approach to work, since he's an anarchist who rejects any employment which might imply the unfair use of power to the detriment of other people (he uses the bank employers as typical example in this sense). Consistently, when Y_IT_G_6 comes back in Italy after some years abroad (he left Italy and school when he was about to get high school diploma to follow a girl he was in love with) and within the Youth Guarantee scheme the Public Employment Agency experts propose him the Civic Service, he willingly accepts it, because of its clear civic and social ethos. Furthermore, the specific environment of his traineeship within the Civic Service, namely the urgent medical aid, perfectly fits his attitude toward work, since its core mission is exactly the support to people in need. This allows him to commit very effectively to his tasks during the traineeships, gaining the opportunity to get a stable contract after its conclusion. As far as he is satisfied by his current job, Y_IT_G_6 maintains a different objective: we would like to become a videogame programmer and he is currently enrolled in a training course for acquiring basic programming skills. In his opinion his potential future activity as programmer might allow him to freely manage his own work-life balance, spending periods abroad and travelling a lot. Coherently with his ideological approach, he subordinates his future life

choices (for instance having a son) to the possibility to find the ideal community to live in, otherwise he would prefer to avoid establishing bonding connections.

Y_IT_G_7 has a high school diploma. He spent six months at the University of Law but then he left because it did not correspond to his expectations at all. He worked for 9 months through an Interim Work Agency in a hospital by withdrawing the dirty stuff, but it was a job he did not like and far from his expectations. After a fixed-term contract the employers would have proposed him a permanent contract, but he refused and decided to re-enrol at the university, faculty of Philosophy, where he brilliantly graduated. While studying at the university he did odd jobs (waiter in the evening, steward at events, etc.) He decided to do the doctoral contest but then he did not do it for relations within the University and it was pretty bad, but ex post he says that perhaps he has earned in health and he is satisfied with the path he has made. It was already volunteering by taking courses to teach Italian to foreigners and in this area he has come the opportunity to participate in the regional Civic Service in the field Youth Guarantee. He spent six months in a cooperative in which he taught Italian to foreign children and then they hired him, the salary was not enough and so he tried to round up with a job, through knowledge, in another social cooperative. This latter cooperative would have hired him full-time with a good salary and so Y_IT_G_7 he contracted with the first cooperative with whom he had done Civic Service. They offered him the same solution and he decided to stay also due to the good relations established with his colleagues. Immediately after he attended a master's degree at the University of Bologna on fund raising, which he attended with great enthusiasm and then he became a volunteer at the Italian Multiple Sclerosis Association (AISM). In this institution he begins a three-year internship planned by the Master, which is still finishing with satisfaction (he finished the first year) and the Director told him that at the end the intention is to let him to continue the experience there.

He remembers a "quiet" childhood and tells of an event that traumatized him after graduation, when he found a benign cancer, everything was positively resolved, he overcame the crisis even thanks to the support of psychologist and psychiatrist. He always went well at school. As for future projects, for the personal sphere he has nothing "solid", he lives day by day, he has a girlfriend but he is more focused on the working sphere. In the professional field he wants to "grow" and to become director of a fundraising office of an association and does not exclude the possibility of moving to another city in Italy or abroad.

Life projects and expectations of young adults in Genoa Functional Region

All the interviewed young adults had developed a 'defined/elaborate' life project. All of them framed their professional projects within their life story.

The majority of the respondents has started their story telling us about their schooling and university experiences and other training activities out of the formal educational path.

All the interviewed young adults had a lot of higher educational experiences after the university degree (like master and specialization) and they are characterized by a strong motivation for learning and developing their skills. The training experiences were lived with enthusiasm as an occasion for personal development and for acquiring skills useful in the labour market, skills which were not acquired in the schooling and university paths. This is evident from the interviews with Y_IT_G_1; Y_IT_G_4; Y_IT_G_7

In the last 3-4 years I have worked hard, I started to do so many activities, I also followed extra-university courses, post-graduate courses, many training courses of different institutions, with the aim to specialize, but then in fact I did not get specialized because I did so many things in several different areas, so in the end it was more due to this thirst for perennial curiosity to guide me and, therefore, for instance I followed also the photography course, rather than the language course (Y_IT_G_4)

The majority of the interviewees had voluntary work experiences (Y_IT_G_1; Y_IT_G_4; Y_IT_G_7), very often during the university studies, inspired by the principle of doing good for the community, of helping others. The volunteering is conceived also in different ways. For some of them, it is an occasion to put into practice some theoretical issue learned during the formal educational path or master (Y_IT_G_7); for others, it allows them to get concrete experience to put on the CV, before the university degree (Y_IT_G_4); for one interviewee, it is useful to acquire practical and technical skills relevant for the labour market and for this reason he considers the volunteering as an egoistic choice, rather than an altruistic one.

... I volunteering ...I have no curriculum, I just ... it's the year that I graduate... I wanted to graduate with a minimum of experience, at least in volunteering (Y_IT_G_4)

I began to volunteer in the Italian Multiple Sclerosis Association which ... and for, say, to try to put into practice what I had learned at the Master on fundraising in the provincial sections (Y_EN_G_7)

Volunteering ... is an element that one does because it feels to do it... but also for a selfish aspect that I think is natural, not only for personal satisfaction, but, at the same time, also for the search for skills, because they can be spent elsewhere and I think this is an absolutely useful thing (Y_IT_G_7)

In relation to the educational paths, the majority of young adults says they had a good experience. Some of them tell some difficulties during the secondary school's years. The difficulties are connected to bad performances in some subjects, or to bad relationship with some teachers (Y_IT_G_3).

I've never been clever at school, in the sense ... I worked hard, with effort, but I don't know why I was not the kind of girl who took all 8, 9 and 10...not even in high school, in fact, I took my 4, my 2, my debts, my postponements and everything else. I have some bad memories of the superiors, about a teacher in particular... a teacher in particular I was a little 'targeted by, the teacher of psychology, which was a main matter in my course ... at one point this thing created problems to me...really it was bad... it's ... those two years were pretty awful (Y_IT_G_3)

Two interviewees who did classical high school said they had doubts, even during their studies, on the appropriateness of the choice of school for their future employability, claiming that the classical high school does not provide you with useful skills for the labour market

Then... I do not know anything about everything...that is, I did high school, and at the high school you study everything but you do not learn anything at all (Y_IT_G_4)

Maybe if I would had done another kind of high school, maybe I would have something in hand ... There was a moment when I had a moment of crisis so that I had doubts about having chosen the classic high school address. And I said to myself: "But if I had done something else..." for example, I really like cooking, I am one who likes a lot to eat, drink and cook and now, maybe, I could be working in a hotel? So...who knows, I could have made a path doing the cook ... (Y_IT_G_7)

In relation to the choice of the University, three main aspects seem to be prevalent in the choice' processes of the interviewees: the advice of a high school teacher (Y_IT_G_3), the following the personal inclination (as in the case of Y_IT_G_7, who didn't like mathematics at all and he decided to enrol in the classical high school, or Y_IT_G_2) and the "family heritage" (both parents have made the same university, as Y_IT_G_7).

In terms of utility of the studies for the life in general and for the entering into the labour market, the life histories of different young adults provide different insights. An interviewed guy (Y_IT_G_1) expresses dissatisfaction for the artistic high school. On the contrary, the university studies gave him skills more useful for his life in general: however, he underlines the lack of utility of the university in terms of employability.

My leap from the artistic high school to the international and diplomatic sciences address at university comes from two reasons. The first is that the artistic school was not what I expected... at the time I was also 14-15 years. However, it was not a school where I learned to draw or where I learned to be, I do not want to say, an artist, but where almost I would have been given the basics (Y_IT_G_1)

The University has given me the elements to do it, that is, to know how the economy works, the three great branches of Political Science are economics, law and history. Knowing how the economy works, the small economy, the internal market economies, in the sense of the supply and demand curve, it made me understand many dynamics that were previously obscure ... from the human point of view the University has done a great job on me ...However, from the point of view of the world of work, it was an almost useless path ... (Y_IT_G_1)

In two cases the interviewees experienced a period of discomfort during the university years. In the case of Y_IT_G_1, the chosen university didn't meet his expectations and he left the university after 6 months; in this "transition" period he wondered what he wanted to do in life and very soon he enrolled to the University he liked.

I did only six months in law because it did not correspond to my expectations at all, to what I wanted to do (Y_IT_G_1)

In another case (Y_IT_G_3), the difficulties emerged at the end of the university, when the interviewee did not find immediately work, despite the chosen course of study would have to guarantee an immediate work placement. This has created many insecurities about the real usability of the degree as well as doubts about the future possibility to perform the work for which she had studied.

the Medical Director said: "Do not worry, girls, that sooner or later you will enter because the nurses are always needed". You arrive and you think "Okay, a year ... a month, okay it's early, two months, six months, a year ... After some time you say, well, but where are the competitions? ...not even around Italy, and you say, well, will I ever work? Will I ever work for what I studied for? (Y_IT_G_3)

The topic of the utility of the educational paths for the labour market has opened the space for more general consideration of young adults on the link between education and labour market in the current society. In two cases (Y_IT_G_1 and Y_IT_G_7) the guys underline how in the past the passage from the training path to the labour market was more linear: those who studied found a job. Nowadays, it is not like that anymore. Thus, the school has to teach to the new generation how to be more and more flexible, adaptable to different and every changing situation, rather than teaching a specific and professional skills set. The interviewees consider their fathers' generation as luckier than them, because after the University they had the certainty of finding work, now this certainty is gone.

Compared to the trend with which I grew up and all my generation grew up, that is, to grow, to study, and if you study you will become someone or, at least, you will have opportunities to find a job, those who do not study instead end up on the street ... how to say, at some point this trend has changed. My personal opinion is that it has changed in the various, varied school reforms, which then intended to change the way of interpreting the labor market, therefore, from, how to say, from a landscape where many 'labourers' were needed, but a, a situation where there was ... I do not like to call it the ruling class, but let's say where there was greater appreciation of the qualification, but that is, it is ... I think we have opted for a market that is much more oriented towards an instruction that teaches flexibility, therefore, rather than just a wealth of skills and professionalization, towards flexibility, the opportunities in the world of work (Y_IT_G_1)

That is...I hear the generation of my father, who said "Once out of the University, how to say, there was work", it was the job itself that was looking for you, because you were graduated at the University ... Those were other times, other generations, other ways of understanding life. However, the changes among the generations has not modified the education system, the system of approach to the world of work. That is what has remained since my father's age, while, instead, we have changed (Y_IT_G_1)

In today's society where often it is not as it seems ... Once, the path was all very straightforward as it was already there when you finished your studies, you found work and you were in the same job for 30 years. You were practically hanged in it, all very linear and flat at the same time... (Y_IT_G_7)

Job opportunities arrive late, that is, they are presented late to the boys. That is, to my personal judgement, for example, the middle school does not offer or denies anything from someone's formative path. Perhaps if we anticipate the times not in terms of expendability on the job market, but in terms of "what I want to do as an adult" maybe it would help to have people that at the age of twenty are not, as they say, caught out of what the world offers but they already have a clearer idea about what the world offer them (Y_IT_G_1)

In all the interviews the important economic support of the parents clearly emerged. It has allowed young adults to complete their university studies. All the interviewees have the awareness of this help and the willingness to "repay" the efforts of the parents. Also for this reason, they worked hard on studying, often working while studying.

However, in these years and above all, those spent at the University, where there is an important expense, I was on the shoulders of my parents, it was a period of general economic difficulty in my house, we went ahead only with my mother's pension ... My father was out of work at 50 years old. And we would go ahead only with my mother's € 800, with the university to pay. So, for such reason, when I finished university, I wanted to get busy and look for anything (Interviewer nods) to no longer weight them (Y_IT_G_3)

I gave since June until mid-October...8 exams, because I said "I do not have to lose a year...And, in fact, then I immediately wanted to start working anyway, or anyway to earn that little bit, keeping the children, those 50 euros, because I said I have to buy a pair of shoes? Enough, now, I have to do it. In fact, now I have been working since ... I have never asked my mother for a euro any more, not at all (Y_IT_G_3)

Generally, the parents seem to have never imposed choices about the children educational paths; this sort of freedom was appreciated by the interviewees.

My parents always told me "Do what you want" in the sense," Do you want to go there? All right". The same at the University, you want to do it ... in the end ... I always went well. I must say that they have been, they have always let me, let's say, free to choose what I want (Y_IT_G_3)

In relation to the professional projects all the interviewees seem to have very clear ideas about what they want to do. The years of studies and the experiences of higher education seem to have always been aimed at a specific goal: to be realized in the professional sphere. However, all of them had to deal with the precariousness of the labour market, facing the difficulties of entering in it. All of them have had experience in fixed-term jobs, even illegal work, often during university studies. Recalling the high motivation characterizing our young adult sample and their propensity to learn and to develop continuously their skills, for some of them the succession of precarious and intermittent work experiences has been experienced as opportunities to learn new things (Y_IT_G_4; Y_IT_G_7).

I have to say that I'm happy...In the sense that...with the idea of passage... here I can challenge myself at 360 degrees, also because, then, it's a time when there are a lot of things to learn in that area there (Y_IT_G_7)

In most cases, however, a strong dissatisfaction has emerged, due to the continuous precariousness: this is a condition that you accept because you have no other choices but you live badly and you feel that you are "a burden" even for the employer and the colleagues, because they do not invest in you, they do not teach you; for them it seems like "time lost" because they know you'll be shortly leaving.

And most of the time you realize you are a burden, for the people who work there, for the other colleagues, because, anyway, you've been there for a month, the time you start to understand how it turns ... that's the door, you have to go! It went on like this for a while (Y_IT_G_3)

You have been told, come on, it's right, well, you came to help but I need you to explain this, this and this because I know how it works, you ... four months and then take away, you leave and you go away. On the one hand I understand them, because now I understand them more, having worked for some time I understand this reasoning, the other not, because I say "Me too I'm there, I also want to learn" (Y_IT_G_3)

An interviewee complains about the continued precariousness and the condition of the "forever young" even when the age does not say it; being young to be exploited and suitable for an apprenticeship, but too qualified for a salaried job.

It makes no sense to think that at the age of 30 one is still young. I feel like a man and above all the labour market sees me as a man and not as a boy. Except when there is an exploitation, such as a free internship, instead ... that is ... there is a non-communication between what ... I mean... between the propulsive drive that brings a boy of my age to be like that today and that ... the propulsive drive that the labour market requires him to be. Because at the end of the day I find myself young, because you do not know what criteria, therefore 'trainee', exploitable until ... but at the same time too qualified for a salaried job, so I still have a degree, a degree, different experiences behind and so on, so ... that is, a situation in which it is not easy to extricate oneself (Y_IT_G_1)

In the majority of the cases (Y_IT_G_1; Y_IT_G_3, Y_IT_G_7), these fixed-term work experiences were found through personal contacts (friends, parents' friends, relatives) or temporary employment agencies.

Then, or through knowledge, I must say that the relationships were the resources that helped me to find more and more jobs ... or in some other cases the temporary employment agencies (Y_IT_G_7)

The orientation to optimize the skills acquired during long years of studies and throughout big sacrifices to carry out the desired professional project and to realize him/herself on the job doing what you like clearly emerges from the history of Y_IT_G_4 and Y_IT_G_7.

Y_IT_G_4 asked her employers to use the skills acquired in training courses changing the sector she was managing, but they told her "no". Thus, she decided to dismiss (it was a permanent job).

Y_IT_G_7 receives another advantageous job offer from another Company, tells his employer that he would leave and the employer offers him another advantageous solution; then he decides to stay also due to the good relations with his colleagues. This shows a good bargaining power based on the owned high skills.

It was not what I wanted to do, in the sense ... it was not my aspiration ... I resigned, I felt proud of myself, of this resigning from a permanent contract (Y_IT_G_4)

For a lot of the interviewees, the future plans for the professional projects refer to the career advancements, throughout always "reasoned" decisions, carefully "weighted" on the basis of cost-benefit calculation.

I would like to make a career. I think this is my good chance to do it, in the sense that there is a path of growth, there are also some things that they do not know to do, which they have never dealt with, that I could be the right woman to do it (Y_IT_G_4)

On the working dimension, yes, many, in the sense that the thing is ... the idea is that 99 out of 100, in short, to grow in that area. The dream, and that's what I mean ... I'll do everything to get it because I really want it, that is to become the director of a fundraising office of an association (Y_IT_G_7)

In relation to the private/personal life sphere, many of these young people had plans for the next ten years of their life. In most of the cases, these plans included events traditionally associated with adulthood such as getting married, buying a house and having kids.

I'm 28 now and in an average life expectancy one expects to ... set up home and a family! In 10 years I see myself with a family, for example, I am currently engaged, I would like to go to live together, to build the house (Y_IT_G_1)

To start my life, alone, that is in the sense, to live alone, take a home, for now alone ... then, maybe, with a partner. I would like a family, children, a dog (Y_IT_G_3)

In 10 years I hope to have children, maybe go to live abroad, in Spain or in France (Y_IT_G_4)

In one case (Y_IT_G_4) the end of the lovey relationship with a boy after 8 years was a moment of great change of self, of the way she approaches the life; she became awareness that we should not always have everything designed. Thus, she hopes to “be happy” and “have a relaxed life”.

My wish for me is to be happy, I stopped telling myself to be someone specific ... to do those things there, that is, to give myself a script, but my thing is to be happy. Sometimes I think about it, because then if you tie your happiness to a certain script, I learned this, and if that script does not happen, it's not that you can, you're not, you cannot be happy anymore (Y_IT_G_4)

I would like to have just enough to have a quiet, comfortable life, in the sense of not having the anxiety to get to the end of the month (Y_IT_G_4)

One interviewee underlines the great insecurity about what will happen, because there is a lack of security, there is too much instability.

What will happen is unknown, in my opinion, that is, I cannot realistically imagine what could happen, surely it will be very difficult to reach the ideal, because there is not, there are no prerequisites for building stability (Y_IT_G_1)

Just in one case (Y_IT_G_7), the interviewed says he has no project for the private sphere, because nowadays he is focused on his professional project.

Regarding personal projects, how to say, I have nothing solid, let's say, then, no, I would say that no, I would not put something like this. Here I would not put those projects in the personal area frankly. I already live quite day by day. I have no idea of a project ... I mean I'm engaged with my girlfriend, but at the moment, I'm more focused on the working aspect (Y_EN_G_7)

Referring to the Civic Service, the choice to enrol in the Program is based on different motivations.

For some of them, the motivation lies in wanting to do something for the community, for a kind of social utility.

And the Civic Service in all this it perfectly filled a void...how can I say?...Of social utility that I could/had to cover, that I liked the idea of collectiveness, of making a useful service for the community and learning of things, putting them into a system, reconstructing them (Y_IT_G_1)

In other cases, the Civic Service constituted the possibility of seeing other realities that you are not used to, testing yourself, getting involved, "giving yourself a challenge".

Why not? Let's do the Civic Service, let's try, let's get involved too...Anyway it's useful to see other realities that are not the ones you're used to (Y_IT_G_3)

In other two cases (Y_IT_G_4; Y_IT_G_7), the opportunity to enrol in the Civic Service Program was indicated by the operators of the institutions where the young adults were performing volunteer work, who tell them to join the program in order to work with them with a minimum pay

They proposed it to me, or, rather, they proposed it to me and they told me "Look, there's this thing here that might interest you". Because, practically, when I started to volunteer, they had a girl who would have moved to another organization nationwide, and I had the same curriculum, And then they told me "Look, we would be interested in including you in the Youth Guarantee: would you like to try?" So I was proposed by them (Y_IT_G_4)

Because, obviously, the logic was always that of saving and that was a good way to save money (Y_IT_G_7)

The Civic Service experience is generally valued in positive terms referring to the opportunity to gain new professional skills (see the 1.1.5. paragraph for the details). It is considered useful to earn money in the absence of other works, but it does not give anything in terms of continuity and stabilization in the labour market, it is not "an approach to work" (Y_IT_G_1) and it doesn't guarantee a career development (Y_IT_G_2).

Otherwise, it could be useful to make young people understand what can be for them as a job and what is not, because it puts you in the concrete conditions of work and you can immediately understand if the job is right for you or not (Y_IT_G_3)

The Civic Service ... it's a good thing because six months more from a business point of view, well, they help, in the sense, if one does not find ... a job, six months are six months of salary, reimbursement... it's not an approach at work, it is a palliative. But it gives a lot of cues from the ethical, human, moral, political point of view, if we want, but it's not an approach to work. (Y_IT_G_1)

I'm quite satisfied with this path; I realize that maybe it will not lead to many results in terms of stability in the long run, but I would go back and do it again (Y_IT_G_1)

It's useful ... yes, because in any case it makes discover what is more, what is

beyond things to people, to young people like me or in any case to younger people...in the sense, it makes you look beyond, it makes you understand, what, what you want to do. Because a boy who does the Civic Service at 18-19, does not know what he wants to do, it can make you understand, yes, this could be the work of my life rather than no, no I cannot do this (Y_IT_G_3)

What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand?

All the interviewees have a great awareness of the skills acquired during training experiences, such as masters, specialization courses. They recognize that are specific skills that can be spent in their working life and so they plan their professional life course according to their owned skills. In the case of Y_IT_G_4, the awareness of their skills is so high that she decides to quit her permanent contract job because her employers do not allow her to exploit these skills.

I said ok, I learned, I passed the information that, those that I could pass, I said okay, I do this master here, it also has cost me a lot and even the Institution is quite renown..."No, you do the schools" it was the very dry answer. I said no thanks and I resigned (Y_IT_G_4)

All the interviewees show a clear intention to continuously improve their skills, to learn always new things, to put him/herself to the test. To do it, they are continuously attending a lot of training courses and other formative experiences.

I always try to set the bar a little further and always to test myself (Y_IT_G_4)

I have always tried to give ... o make people understand that I was interested in the work, that I liked working, that I was willing, that I wanted to learn new things, in short, to be active...being willing enough to learn more and more in order to improve my skills (Y_IT_G_5)

Regarding the skills considered most important in the labor market, a lot of young adults refer to the relational skills, underlying the importance of being openness to others, of being 'diplomatic' in the relationships. They agree that such type of skills could be learned only by working on it; the school does not teach these skills, but they are learned in the working experiences. For Y_IT_G_7 the sport has been very important: it allowed him to acquire interpersonal skills, so important in life as well as in work.

The relational dimension, that I believe you learn only by working on it (Y_IT_G_3)

The opening towards others in a sense of adaptability, openness of mind, desire to discover, to get involved (Y_IT_G_4)

All the sports that I've been practicing it certainly has been an element that helped me to develop skills, exactly the relationship with others, which I must say is one of my major strengths and that I get good at work here in the relationship one to one (Y_IT_G_7)

The most transversal skills, I do not think they are acquired this way. You can find environments that help you to develop them, but either you have them or you do not have them, I am convinced of this (Y_IT_G_7)

Another skill judged very important for the labour market is the knowledge of the English language. Most of the interviewees did not learn English at school in a satisfactory way, but they learned the language through personal experiences abroad or by attending private courses, outside the formal educational path.

I did not learn English at school, in any of the institutes I attended, but thanks to trips and staying in London, in Sri Lanka ... (Y_IT_G_4)

Another important skill quoted by the young adults is the flexibility, the ability to adapt to different circumstances, the "problem solving" competence, the ability to be 'multitasking'

Being proactive, being enterprising, another ability is to know how to be a bit 'multitasking, that is, to know how to do many things together, because now there are many inputs and ... you need to know how to manage them. To be organized to be a little flexible, flexible at the level not only of movement, because that is not a competence, that is more a personal availability ... flexible just in the sense of being able to quickly understand how you can solve a question (Interviewer says "Yes, yes"), almost as a sort of problem solving (Y_IT_G_7)

But in the end, let's say that the skills that I have now and that allow me to do this job that I like, are also due to the classical training, because it is not true that the classical training gives you only essentially a great theoretical knowledge, because then in fact Greeks and Latins had a nice awareness of what was the reality and so this is the thing that you learn, you perceive and learn and that's what maybe you're left behind if you remember how it translates the Greek and the Latin. And then anyway the logical practice develops such competence (Y_IT_G_7)

I always try to show myself willingly, that I always want to do new things and if they ask me I'm always available (Y_IT_G_5)

The experience of the Civic Service is generally evaluated positively in terms of acquiring new skills, mostly personal and relational skills (Y_IT_G_2; Y_IT_G_5; Y_IT_G_7). It allowed young adults to improve their ability to manage the interpersonal conflicts as well as to be patient and to enhance the empathy with other people.

A luggage of skills regarding the ability to listen, to reflect, the ability to manage the debate, to be more sure of oneself without this leading to pure egocentrism, and therefore to managing oneself in relation to others (Y_IT_G_2)

The whole of all these activities certainly formed me more than I was before (Y_IT_G_5)

At the same time, the Civic Service experience allowed them to acquire also new professional skills (Y_IT_G_3; Y_IT_G_1; Y_IT_G_4; Y_IT_G_2; Y_IT_G_5).

It allows you to specialize, to professionalize in the field, in a non-competitive environment. For example, it has specialized on European projects or on the management of projects and laboratories with schools. In the latter case, the skill is considered very important because it shows that you can start and finish something, manage everything, you are autonomous (Y_IT_G_3)

The Civic Service offers you the possibility that normally a contract does not offer, that is to practice without any anxiety, to specialize, in short. That is, one builds a specialization, a professionalization in the field, but without or having, how to say, the ... the rush to be competitive and not, how to say, a real deadline (Y_IT_G_1)

In my Civic Service experience I specialized a lot in the construction of projects (Y_IT_G_1)

I specialized a lot and acquired many skills in the management of events, projects and laboratories with schools (Y_IT_G_4)

In particular, the interviewees agree on the effectiveness of the training courses within the Civic Service. They are judged very useful for acquiring new technical skills, also to be used in other working opportunities (Y_IT_G_2)

The training was organized very well, for example, those were very interesting and in my opinion very constructive meetings, also from the point of view of skills, that is, I think, ultra-useful (Y_IT_G_1)

An important aspect within the Regional Civic Service refers to the test of a skills validation and certification system. On this point, the majority of the young adults recognize the utility of such system in order to see “publicly” recognized their competence. At the same time, some difficulties related to the bureaucratic aspects of the process have been underlined. In particular, the “dossier” tool to be filled in is considered too difficult. Very often, even the operators of the structures in which they provided Civic service were not prepared to support the young adults in this task.

In my opinion, the path of the validation of competences has been poorly structured, the dossier of the competences in my opinion is a nonsense

document, structured as it is now, in the sense that it was proposed ... it's just bureaucratic, it is very confusing (Y_IT_G_1)

Even the operators themselves in the centre where I was working were not prepared to support you in the compilation of the dossier, nor on the general theme of the validation of competences.

It was clear to me that he had no skills to take care of it as a project. That is, many times, or rather they repeatedly told us, "We discover it with you" which is not exactly a reassuring thing to hear, let's put it this way. And so this part left me a bit ... even my tutor at the time did not have clear ideas, but not because he was incompetent, but simply because he did not have the means. there was no upstream preparation. This is something that we have suffered a lot (Y_IT_G_1)

Beyond the practical difficulties in compiling the dossier of competences, young adults recognize the importance of the skills' validation and certification system for the future, like the pieces that could be useful for future jobs' opportunities and to enrich the curriculum (Y_IT_G_5; Y_IT_G_7; Y_IT_G_1; Y_IT_G_2)

From initial doubts on the approach, precisely on the purposes, on how to quantitatively measure the skills, the ability to enhance the tool as a means to have the certification of what one knows or cannot do, the countless experiences and experiences that you knew only you to have acquired and in this way, instead, you have the opportunity to make it present to others. I have always been quite reluctant about these aspects here, in the sense of the validation of skills, because, how to say, sometimes it gave me the idea of quantitatively measuring skills that, in short, then it was difficult to really quantify, or at least to say exactly if you have it or not you have, it is very complex ... but then at the end of my dossier it came out the idea of what I had at least at that time...And it is always better than it was before, that maybe one did just Civic Service or did two thousand experiences of volunteering, then you arrived ... but nobody ever told you if you had done something right, if you had really acquired skills. You knew it (Interviewer says: "Yes") but you could not tell others (Y_IT_G_7)

I may have followed a European project ... yes, I looked at a very competent person who worked there, I may have acquired some skills but I have not been recognized (Y_IT_G_1)

it can help me because once you get a certification it's something you can add to your resume (Y_IT_G_2)

4.2. Young adults in Milan Functional Region

Before going into the introduction of the interviewed young adults' biographies, it is worth stressing that each 6 interviewees in the Milan Functional Region are addresses of the NEETwork project (our case study in the FR). Since the project is targeted to NEET people who did not get in touch with Youth Guarantee, all the interviewees might be labelled as vulnerable workers (for instance, none of them completed high school).

In terms of their relation with the NEETwork project, at the moment of the interview Y_IT_M_1 was carrying-out his second traineeship in the same hosting ONG, Y_IT_M_2 and Y_IT_M_3 had recently started their first traineeship, while Y_IT_M_4, Y_IT_M_5 and Y_IT_M_6 had already completed their path within the project.

Table 6: Sample of young adults interviewed in the Milan Functional Region

Code	Gender	Age	Socio-economic background	Autochthonous /Foreign-born parents	Achieved level of education	Life project	Expectations related to NEETwork project	Household condition
Y_IT_M_1	M	23	Middle class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary	Undefined/unclear	Acquiring professional skills	With birth family
Y_IT_M_2	F	24	Working class	Foreign	Lower secondary	Defined/explicit	Acquiring a certifiable work experience	With birth family
Y_IT_M_3	F	22	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary	Undefined/unclear	Acquiring soft skills	With birth family
Y_IT_M_4	M	22	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary	Defined/explicit	Remaining active on the labour market	With birth family
Y_IT_M_5	M	21	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary	Defined/explicit	Remaining active on the labour market	With birth family
Y_IT_M_6	M	22	Working class	Autochthonous	Lower secondary	Defined/explicit	Remaining active on the labour market	With birth family

Biographies of interviewees in Milan Functional Region.

Y_IT_M_1: is a 23 years old boy who's carrying out a traineeships within the NEETwork project. He has not completed his professional high school, and he perceives himself as particularly not fitting the whole school situation, starting from the stillness imposed to pupils, which collides with his need for movement and dynamism (playing sports is a core activity in his weekly routine). After the school drop-out, he has tried a Triennale class (3 years long educational/training path, see also Palumbo et al., 2016), but he has not finished it too. Afterwards, he has started job seeking, but in his opinion the global crisis has contributed to shrink his yet limited possibilities as a young not qualified worker. Then he has found just a few short (no more than six months) employments, but his rather low need for money (he's only child and both his parents have a stable employment) has not "pushed" him to spend great efforts in job seeking and maintaining. Furthermore, he wanted to save time for his social life as well as his sport activities. The phone call from the Private Employment Agency which managed his traineeship within NEETwork arrived when Y_IT_M_1 was almost inactive, and the declared potential future shift to a stable contract appealed him. The traineeships revealed a very positive experience, and Y_IT_M_1 was able to develop positive relations with his colleagues and his tutor, while obtaining good evaluations for his duties as handyman. All these factors led his tutor to propose him a further six months traineeship, which was quite disappointing (he was expecting to receive a full-time work proposal) but, at the same time, it was perceived by Y_IT_M_1 as a chance for strengthen his bond with a work environment he fully appreciates. Moreover, in his opinion his condition of unqualified worker does not allow him to negotiate better conditions on the market. Y_IT_M_1 depicts himself as particularly reliable on work, but his lack of specific skills (which he finds both in formal and informal skills) weakens his profile. About this latter point, his duty as handyman is considered by Y_IT_M_1 as too vague to effectively enhance his skills but, at the same time, Y_IT_M_1 considers his own indecision (in terms of job seeking strategy but also in terms of desires and aspirations) as the main reason for his skills lack. Y_IT_M_1 describes his working condition as basically driven by the random opportunities he encounters, with almost none acted choices. This also affects his planning attitude: even if a potential return to (an evening adult) school is not excluded by Y_IT_M_1 (now he feels mature enough to approach school in a more effective way), he strongly prefers to avoid looking to the future, while focusing on his daily routine. Thus, he does not declare specific professional tasks, while not renouncing to depict his future private life as very traditionally shaped (marriage, children and so on).

Y_IT_M_2 is a 24 years old single mother from South American who is enrolled in Youth Guarantee. She's carrying out a traineeship within the NEETwork project. She has chosen to participate to the project aiming at overcoming the factor which she recognizes as the main lack in her professional profile: the absence of certified work experiences. This condition is strictly related with her low level of formal education (she has not an high school diploma, because she dropped out the high school because of her son's birth). In her experience, the absence of an high school degree prevents her from applying for job opportunities, even though she acknowledge a medium-high level of her actual skills. Indeed, she has strong competences as administrative technician, which she acquired partly when she was still attending the high school (with high levels of performance), and partly by her undeclared activity of tax return technician. This latter activity is run by Y_IT_M_2 in addition to other undeclared jobs by which she supports herself and her son, integrating low skilled undeclared activities which in the Italian market are "typically" assigned to foreign workers (e.g. elderly people care) with these

more advanced tax advice services. Through her personal network (which is mostly composed by people coming from her birth country), Y_IT_M_2 shares (nearly only) undeclared job opportunities, as well as mutual support services like baby-sitting and so on, leaning on a very cohesive and supporting community, which in her opinion could also be a proper starting point for her business idea. In fact, Y_IT_M_2 would like to launch a micro-credit service for micro-enterprises (which in the case of her network might be primarily related to ethnic food production and trade). Yet, before chasing her objectives for the future, she knows very well that the gap in her professional path must be fulfilled. Y_IT_M_2 looks very aware of both her actual skills (for instance, she considers her traineeship as secretary as lower than her competences) and the formal constraints which prevent her from acquiring an higher position on the labour market. Then, when she figures out her future, she's torn between her confidence in her own abilities (and their competitiveness on the market) and her conscious read of the her condition of young migrant single mother who has often to postpone future planning in order to solve more urgent present problems .

Y_IT_M_3 is a 22 years old girl, and she's carrying out a traineeships within the NEETwork project. After lower secondary school she chose a Triennale class because she has never felt comfortable at school, but she dropped out the class after a few months, mostly because of its aspects of theoretical learning (in her expectations, this kind of class should have been completely focused on practice). Then, since she was 15 she has occasionally searched a job (mostly by proposing her CV to Private Employment Agencies), but her daily life was been very monotone: waking up late, watching some TV, hanging around with some friends in the afternoon and going to disco on Saturday night. Baby-sitting is her unique (undeclared) job experience and working with children is the only perspective she sees in her professional future. In fact, she describes herself as too anxious to handle a job which implies direct contacts with other adults, in addition to a general acknowledgment her skill lack, which is something she recognizes but, at the same time, she does not wish to overcome, given her resolute reject for each kind of learning situation (starting from school which she evaluate as completely useless). When the Private Employment Agency contacted her proposing the NEETwork traineeship, she accepted it because of its connotation in terms of work environment: associations and third sector organizations are deemed by Y_IT_M_3 as a less stressful ambient compared to other environments (like for instance food services) which in her opinion are too hectic. Moreover, the actual activities she carries out in her traineeship, namely data entry and various secretary tasks, fit particularly good with her anxious approach, since they don't push her too much. This is also due to her tutor attitude, which is described by Y_IT_M_3 as protective, attentive and little demanding. She absolutely reject any future looking, especially in terms of professional life; thus, concerning her life in ten years, she just drafts a very general description of herself as a "normal" adult employed woman (namely married and mother of at least two children), potentially living abroad (in Greece, for instance). This depiction is, anyway, very little detailed.

Y_IT_M_4 is a 22 years old boy who was an addressee of the NEETwork project. Also because of an ADHD¹, his school experience started turning negative immediately after the conclusion of the primary school, leading him to drop-out after the first grade of professional high school. Y_IT_M_4 lives in a rural periphery of the Milan Functional Region area, and he belongs to a family which has always managed farms then, when

¹ Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

it comes to his professional profile, he defines himself primarily as a farmer and more generally, he narrates a number of different work experiences, giving the impression of a very active and committed worker. In his professional trajectory, there is a balance among undeclared and formal work, seasonal work and random opportunities for short employments. Consistently with some of his previous experiences, his traineeship in NEETwork has been carried out in an agrarian context. The call for the traineeships proposal arrived when we were living a (rare in his life) period of lack of work. During the traineeship, he faced some relational problems with the owners of the hosting farm (it was one of his first working experiences out of his friends or relatives network), acquiring at the same time new skills related to some crops which he did not know before. On the whole, this experience is positively evaluated by Y_IT_M_4, even if it did not lead to further collaborations. His long-term objective is to move to USA where some friends of him could give him an employment as construction worker (he has spent some months working there some years ago and he liked it very much). In his wishes, his mother and sister would follow him, because he can't even imagine to live without his family and he does not wish to create a new family.

Y_IT_M_5 is a 21 years old boy who was an addressee of the NEETwork project. His traineeships consisted in data entry activities, and after its conclusion he has started working in the same little firm of his father, who introduced him for a part-time position and taught him the basic skills for its execution. At the moment of the interview he's still working as unqualified technician with his father and he's enrolled in a private adult evening school. Indeed, he did not complete high school, since his choice, namely a professional high school focused on catering activities), revealed wrong for him, especially because of the impact of the catering jobs on the private life of the worker (considering, for instance, the particular work schedule of these professions). Y_IT_M_5 is quite satisfied by his current job, but his lack of high school degree might prevent him to get ahead with his career, and this is one of the reasons for his return to school. A second reason is instead related to his own self-perception: even if he considers school learning as too far from the actual pragmatic dimension of work, he wants to obtain an high school diploma for his own satisfaction, since the lower secondary title is somehow downgrading in his opinion. In terms of soft skills, he perceives himself as more resolute than a large part of his peers, especially because of his wish for autonomy, and in his opinion these are his main strengths, since they lead him to effectively focus on the acquisition of new (practical) skills. His evaluation of the experience within the NEETwork project appears very pragmatic too: he improved just a few new skills, he enriched his network and, above all, he saved enough money for his holidays, since he was (and he is still) living with his parents. When it comes to the issue of future, Y_IT_M_5 figures himself as a qualified technician in the same firm he's currently working in, and in terms of private life he aims to create a new family with his current girlfriend.

Y_IT_M_6 is 22 years old boy who was an addressee of the NEETwork project. At the moment of the interview Y_IT_M_6 has one main goal: finishing the high school. Y_IT_M_6 dropped-out the professional high school after the third grade, mainly as a result of some relational problems with his teachers. Dealing with these teachers became such stressful that he decided to leave school, starting to work periodically (mainly with a job-on-call contract which he still has and which is related to his strong interest for sports). After a few years, he has returned to school, enrolling in an adult evening school where he particularly appreciates the attitude of the teachers, who approach him as an adult rather than a passive kid who needs to be driven. This aspect is relevant to Y_IT_M_6, since he tends to describe himself as a self-

determined young man who is able to manage his duties by himself. Consistently, concerning his NEETwork traineeship where he was in charge with data entry activities, he has appreciated the possibility to freely manage the tasks, also because of the limited pushiness of his tutor, who gave him a wide margin of discretion. The general attitude of Y_IT_M_6 affects his professional choices and planning: even if he considers himself very little competitive on the market at the moment (mainly because of the formal educational gap), he does not feel forced to accept employments without any prospect of future growth (both in terms of career and in terms of his own personal enrichment), and this appears particularly relevant considering his declared need for more money, since his parents have asked him to become economically independent as soon as possible. Hence, completing the high school Y_IT_M_6's core activity, and it is aimed to get wider opportunities on the local market and, at the same time, make it possible to aspire to a potential career abroad. Y_IT_M_6 has a few relatives in Northern America, and the possibility to reach them is very appealing in his opinion. Focusing on his forthcoming task (finishing high school) also allows Y_IT_M_6 to postpone other kinds of planning, and he looks very determined in refusing the same questions about his future, stressing his full bond with the present issues.

Life project and expectations of young adults in Milan

The interviewed young adults in the Milan Functional Region share a common condition: none of them reached the high school diploma. Their low qualification level gets particular relevance in the local labour market of the FR, which is rather dynamic (especially when compared to other local markets of Northern and above all Southern Italy) and very competitive, even when it comes to low skilled jobs. Thus all the six interviewed people clearly stressed their qualification gap, as it is perceived as their main disadvantage on the market, apart from being a negative factor in terms of their self-esteem. Indeed, the relevance of formal qualification in the Italian labour market (see Palumbo et al., 2017b) is well known by these young adults, and this awareness derives both from their negative experiences of ineffective job-seeking, and both from the mainstream discourses which circulate about the issues of unemployment, crisis and the individual responsibility in reaching high level of competitiveness.

I've tried everything to find a job, applying on line and delivering my CVs wherever, but they have always replied: "Look, you're not our ideal profile". Indeed, nearly all of them were searching for qualified people or, however, workers with certified previous experiences, and I have a lot of experiences, but all of them are undeclared. (...) Anyway, reaching the high school diploma is my thing, because it's something I do want... I have nothing to prove to anybody, but I do want to prove it to myself, I want to be sure that the skills I have are formally recognised by my graduation. (Y_IT_M_2)

Being out away from school for 2 years, I've realised that diploma might help in something more... it might lead to something better, at least a better wage or a more interesting job, especially because a diploma might give you some more opportunities. I don't think it might be a real breakthrough, even because nowadays in Italy we are in a very difficult situation, we have very little chances to find a job the if, for instance, I would like to go abroad, with a diploma I would get some more chances. (Y_IT_M_6)

I've enrolled in the evening adult school in order to complete my education, 'cause having just the lower secondary qualification was not that satisfying to me, I did not feel comfortable with this. (Y_IT_M_5)

Very honestly...in 2017 on your CV you must have at least an high school qualification, even if maybe your qualification does not have anything to do with the job you are applying for, at least you can prove that you had the goodwill to complete the primary, lower secondary and high school, you can anyway prove your effort. (Y_IT_M_1)

Excluding Y_IT_M_2, who had excellent performances at the high school but dropped-out because of her son's birth, all the young adults have told a complicated relations with school and teachers, which lead them to early forsaking. Consequently, they share a common depiction of traditional school as basically exclusionary and meaningless, especially when it comes to the actual professional skills which, even in professional high schools, are approached by teachers by a too theoretical (and consequently fruitless) perspective.

The point might also be that my school did not completely satisfy me but, the real point is that I have actually been stopped (by failures) mostly for relational reasons with the teachers, who are not able to be fair, and they want to hinder you. (Y_IT_M_6)

It was a Triennale class, which I chose since I did not feel like studying, I said (to myself) "Let's try this, because it's all focused on practice", but it wasn't real, 'cause you however have to study a lot, it's very complicated! (Y_IT_M_3)

At the end my school... like every school... they are not able to teach you a profession, studying is something else at the end (Y_IT_M_5)

These experiences and thoughts affect their general confidence in educational institutions, in addition to the undermining of their self-perception as potential learners and workers. However, this does not necessarily imply an uncritical introjection of the stigma of incapable person, since not all the young adults described themselves as totally lacking of skills. On the contrary, some of them are very confident in their own capabilities, even if they are not formally recognized by qualification. Then, the interviewees might be ordered on a range which goes from the total denial of any actual skill

I have never worked, also because I can't do anything specific (Y_IT_M_3)

to the acknowledgment of soft skills which effectively apply to different working situations,

However here (in his traineeship) but not only here, I'm able to complete all my daily working tasks, I've always been able to finish what I've started. Furthermore I'm always on time and I'm able to organise myself, in order to avoid wasting time and potential repetitions of the same work. (Y_IT_M_1)

A positive aspect of my traineeship is that I've always had to manage my tasks by myself, there were a tutor, but he was not that intrusive... then since I was working on a computer, I managed my schedule, my breaks as I preferred. (...) Then I know I can rely on my willing to work, my wish for

learning new things (though, they must be useful in practice!), I want to get autonomous, achieving an independency from my parents. (Y_IT_M_5)

until specific skills which might be very competitive on the market, but are not currently fully because of their lack of formal recognition.

I can farm a lot of diverse crops, but I can also be a steel worker and do other things in that sector (Y_IT_M_4)

Anyway... I do acknowledge my skills! Even my brain is not that bad! (she laughs) Then... I hope I'll get some more opportunities thanks to this traineeship. I have administrative and accounting office skills, since until I attended school (where I got excellent evaluations) I've learned everything I could, afterwards (her drop-out) I've learned by myself, by making undeclared services of tax returns compilation for some friends. (Y_IT_M_3)

Starting from this varied combinations of formal qualification lack, actual owned skills and different degrees of training gaps, all the interviewed young adults appear focused on the present, which in most of the cases means looking for a tactic to overcome the more evident lack in their educational and training curricula. Obviously, these different tactics are in their turn shaped by the socio-economic background of the interviewees, and the related pushes toward economic independence from their families of origin. Indeed, even if all the young adults comes from middle-lower class families, and they still live in their same household, some differences in terms of urgency of earnings are notable. Y_IT_M_2 has in fact to equally contribute to the family incomes with her mother, since she also has to support her own son. Y_IT_M_4 started working very early and his economic contribution is somehow given for granted by his parents. Y_IT_M_6 is in-between, since his parents are asking him to get his autonomy, but the general condition of the family allows him to postpone this task in order to complete his education by an evening adult school. Y_IT_M_1 and Y_IT_M_3 feel instead a low (or null) pressure toward independency, both deriving from the moderately good economic situation of their families and the explicit request by their parents, then they have a potential wider degree of customisation of their own plans. Finally, Y_IT_M_5 is a part-time worker and an adult evening school pupil, however leaning on the economic support of his family. As a consequence, they express different low-term tactics: someone mainly focuses on the immediate spendability on the market

I'm carrying out this traineeship because, even if I've always been working, I've only got undeclared jobs, and I want to have at least one certifiable experience on my CV. In 10 years I'll also have a diploma, since my son will grow-up and I'll save more time to study. (Y_IT_M_2)

In my family, we all need to work, and when I have a lack of job (which is rare actually), I constantly seek for a new job. This traineeship occurred when I was not working, then I've accepted it, but I know I can always count on my seasonal employments and, for the moment, I'm ok. (Y_IT_M_4)

Maybe my father was less happy than my mother for my return to school, even if he was not very interested in this... the fact that I was not totally inactive was enough to him... anyway when I dropped-out school I've told them that I would come back sooner or later, then they said "It's good you are studying, but you also have to find something for your income"... at the end they are right, and I also feel the need for my independency. (Y_IT_M_6)

My parents were disappointed for my school drop-out. Then they got used to it, since it was waiting to drop-out for a long time, then they gave up and renounced. They were happy for the traineeship, because they say "You are finally awake!", because they think I don't feel like working at all, which is not true but... (Y_IT_M_3)

My parents' expectation on my educational path was that I would finish it and find a job which I like. I think this was their main expectation, but that's not what happened... and now I'm more mature and I'm sorry for them... anyway they spent a lot of money to help me with private lessons, but they did not work. (...) Also nowadays, my parents always repeat: "You have to learn a profession, otherwise you'll face a lot of problems", then my plan would be to return to school next year (at the adult evening school), in order to get this damn qualification, possibly while maintaining my work here (in his traineeships hosting association), because I need to keep my daily life busy, because it forces me to wake up in the morning, manage my own schedule and so on. (Y_IT_M_1)

Participating to the NEETwork project consequently gets different meanings and evaluations, especially according to the different subjective tactics. As already mentioned, for Y_IT_M_2 the main reason is the acquisition of a certifiable work experience (in the face of a null acquisition of new skills), for Y_IT_M_4, Y_IT_M_5 and Y_IT_M_6 the instrumental components of the experience (namely the monthly fee of 400 euros) seem to prevail, while Y_IT_M_1 and Y_IT_M_3 better reflect the official task of the project, since they actually learning new (mostly soft in the case of Y_IT_M_3 and specific in the case of Y_IT_M_1) skills, living this experience as a protected "debut" on the "official" labour market.

This experience (the traineeship) is meant to... (she laughs) to have something more... to learn how to make something new... a new job... anyway it's a bit early to assess these things to me, I think I'll learn other things which might be useful in my future (Y_IT_M_3)

Very honestly, I don't really know what I would like to do. Since being a school drop-out, not completing my education... the fact is that at the moment I can't say "Ok, I've completed this school consequently I know how to do this or that". Here (his traineeships) I've learned some handwork which I was totally unable to do before, now I'm not that expert, anyway they taught me something and I've learned it quite well (Y_IT_M_1)

When it comes to the future and the long-term planning, almost all the young adults explicitly rejected the same question of "how do you see yourself in 10 years?",

replying with a very widespread standardized answer: “I don’t even know what I’m going to do tomorrow, how can I figure out myself in 10 years?”, which might be considered as generational catchphrase for the so-called Millennials who became adults within the frame of the global crisis.

I'll be 34...I don't know... I've always avoided... the point is that I've always been someone who does not foresee too much, because if you try to foresee too much, then you threaten to realise that you have not accomplished your tasks, and it could be disappointing. Then I always prefer to plan day by day, or week by week at most, in order to avoid rude awakenings. Because... you know... you might also want to become an astronaut but then in 10 years you find yourself working in a fast-food... (Y_IT_M_1)

Anyway, some of them told a more clear project and, it is worth notice, they interviewees who were more able to define and narrate their own projects are the ones who had more concrete and continuative work experiences.

I want to get the diploma in order to get a specialization and have a career in my current firm. (Y_IT_M_5)

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

In 10 years I want a diploma, that's for sure! And a stable employment, my son will be already and adult! Then I'll be able to start my own entrepreneurial activity, finding my clients, I'll be able to conciliate my work, my son... I'll be able to give him serenity, and to myself too, stopping chasing jobs everywhere. (Y_IT_M_3)

Significantly, this general blurring of the future representations does not pair with alternative or at least unusual aspirations in terms of private life structuring. Indeed, excluding Y_IT_M_3 who has already experienced a complicated separation from her son’s father, all the interviewed young depict themselves in ten years referring to a rather traditional model (e.g. being married with kids), often stressing how these are the goals which everyone should aim for. Once again, are especially the more vulnerable ones in terms of their professional profile the ones who aspire to these normalised conditions, and this might relate with the experiences of exclusion (starting from school until their contact with the labour market) which characterise their life trajectories.

I don't even know how I see myself tomorrow... anyway I wish I'll have stable life, like a normal person, like everyone else... then married with kids, with a stable work, an house... maybe I could also leave Italy... (Y_IT_M_2)

I would never live alone, it's sad... I really dislike it! Instead, if I should find a girl to live with... I could figure it out... (Y_IT_M_1)

4.3. Conclusions on the biographies, the life projects and the expectations of young adults

As far as non-statistically representative, our young adult samples allow us to highlight some significant insights regarding the relation between the selected LLL policies and their addressees' life courses.

The interviewed young adults in the two Functional Regions belong to different social backgrounds, consequently they told very different approaches to life planning. In the Milan Functional Region, indeed, they are mostly working class while in the Genoa Functional Region the sample is more equally balanced between middle and working class. Anyway, there is a strong difference in terms of the achieved educational level: all the interviewees in Milan dropped-out school before finishing the upper secondary, while in Genoa all the interviewees achieved the university degree, just excluding Y_IT_G_6 who has a lower secondary school diploma and Y_IT_G_5 who has a professional qualification. These different profiles reflect on the young adults' approach to the educational and training issues which, in the Italian context, represent one of the main axes of construction of the individual trajectory. Then, the lack of qualification affects the capacity to plan of the vulnerable young adults in the Milan Functional Region, since they all feel the need for filling this gap in order to get more life chances. On the contrary, the Genoese young adults are on the one hand very aware of their actual skills (acquired both in formal and informal educational contexts), while on the other hand they complain for the low competitive value of their university degrees on the labour market. Nevertheless, they tend to rely on their high-educated and high-skilled profiles to define their life projects.

Given a common condition of general distance from the policy-making process (see also Palumbo et al., 2017b), which also reflects on a general scepticism about the effectiveness of the policies (especially when it comes to labour market policies), we can observe different attitudes in terms of activation. Then, in the case of the Milanese young adults the engagement with the analysed measure was totally driven by the experts who directly contacted the potential addressees proposing the traineeships. Instead, the young adults in Genoa applied a more pro-active behaviour, enrolling in Public and Private Employment Agencies, gathering information on the web, spreading their CVs through their networks and directly asking for the opportunity to join Youth Guarantee. Furthermore, in a familistic welfare state context like the Italian one, the families still play a crucial role in supporting their offspring, both on the economic and the emotional level. As a consequence, most of the Genoese young adults could wait for job opportunities which fit their expectations and interests, while the Milanese ones experienced different degrees of pushes toward their participation to the family incomes, which obviously affect their power of negotiation on the market. It is worth stressing that all the Italian interviewees (just excluding Y_IT_G_7) are still cohabitating with their parents. More generally, a common perception about the standardized models of life-course is observable in almost all the interviews, and this stresses once again the wide relevance of the family in the Italian culture. Even in the cases of more complex, de-standardized narrated life trajectories, indeed, the expectations toward future concerning private life are always related to the marriage, the purchase of an house and the parenthood.

5. Interaction between young adults and experts

Our interviews confirm that the CPE that informs European or national policies is embedded also in the interactions between street level implementers and young adults. In fact, a large part of the policies examined are based on the assumption that the young adult target of the policies have the deficits that the policy needs to compensate. These deficits are mainly related to training (inadequate qualifications to the labour market), motivation (hence the need for a not only informative guidance), or guidance (hence the necessity to customize responses according to their needs and not only according to the existing policies). There is therefore a certain vertical continuity between the assumptions of the policies and the perceptions of the street level implementers, which inform their relationship with the young adults. The operators therefore tend to assume that those who access the service have a deficit to fill, rather than having own resources that they can use to solve their problems. Then, operators tend to neglect thinking on what is the real reason for which young adults are addressing the service. They often listen to the needs, but do not think about the most useful answer, only focusing on what they can actually offer as service.

Therefore young adults are seen by experts and implementers as persons who must always start anew, giving no importance to the previous learnings, whether informal or non-formal, and sometimes even formal. Most of the experts seem to have a prejudice according to which the young person is not autonomous, also because they is often supported by his family,, that discourages his active participation in the construction of his life project. This attitude tends to produce a self-fulfilling prophecy, because when entering into a relationship with a service, young people feel compelled to start anew, not capitalizing their experiences and not enhancing the resources they have; therefore they end up really needing to be always accompanied. Even in the case of MFR, in which a policy of innovative subsidiarity is implemented through the Dote Unica scheme, the use of which is managed by the addressees, this is, however, forced to operate its choice within a pre-defined offer of services, which are not customizable in their delivery.

From the point of view of young adults, we must remember that in Italy they do not find a role in the definition of policies and even in their implementation, so the first moment when they come into contact with the policies is the one in which they access to guidance, training or job placement services. Young adults have differences among them, which are relevant to understand their interaction with operators and services, differences in the degree of acceptance/understanding of the objectives of the policies and pathways necessary to achieve these objectives ².

² According to Merton (1968), people conform to either the opportunities and goals defined by society or they engage in five types of deviance

1.Conformity: The individual conforms to the dominant culture, accepting both the goals and the means that society provides to achieve those goals. In our case, YA share the CPE that is embedded in the policies.

2. Innovation: Innovators are people who accept the goals of society, but they are aware that they cannot achieve societies' goals by legitimate means, so they are pushed to use illegitimate means. In our case, YA can try to use in an instrumental way policies to obtain the goal (e.g. a job) using in an innovative way the means (e.g. training course used not to learn more, but to use the internship as a mean to be known by a firm)

3. Acceptance (ritualists): People who ritualize have similar problems that the innovator experiences, but for ritualists the individual rejects the goals, but accepts the means. In our case there are a lot of behavior that can be classified in such way (e.g. people that participate in a passive way to a policy)

In fact, a first group consists of retreatists, i.e. people who do not seem (do not feel) able to support the weight of the construction of their own life project, assuming the responsibility to carry it out. These people in part are renouncers in the strict sense, i.e. people who come out of the different educational systems or guidance paths without presenting any form of resilience; in part (perhaps the majority) retreatists are instead people who accept the proposals of implementers in passive form and carry them forward without a specific motivation, with good chances to see them fail.

A category apart, which has in common with that of the retreatists the difficulty to understand and accept the rules of functioning of the market of skills and labour market and does not develop proactive attitudes towards its professional future, is made up of young adults who follow their own inclinations in their biographical and educational paths regardless of the effects on their future professional integration. An interviewed expert stressed the fact that this attitude often pertains to people coming from families wealthy enough to allow the young person to feel free to choose according to his preferences and inclinations, with the possibility to live without necessarily producing income, being able to enjoy family income. In other words, to lead a life not based on a professional choice, ensuring financial autonomy, but living without necessity, without a urgent need for self-supporting. So it's like saying, if you have the urgency to support yourself, you look at the job market, according to your needs; if not, you can take your time. This orientation leads to privilege educational pathways in the humanities, which often turn out to be dead ends from the perspective of employment.

This kind of young adults, quite numerous, often experience, according to the experts interviewed, very tortuous paths, with sequences of relatively random choices and with a (supposed) continuous reversibility of it. The acquired skills and the acquired learning are not capitalized, the individual experiences are lived for their intrinsic meaning and not for the contribution they can give to a life project. An expert tells about a subject who started doing the medical informant, having a degree in pharmacy, then he went to work in agriculture for one year in a farm and then he decided that he was interested in autism and now he is looking for a course which can enable him to work in this sector... and he is aged around forty!. Another expert states: "these are people who come to a working position not by vocation but for exhaustion of others, only for adaptation, for inability to pursue their preferred path".

These considerations are very interesting because they show the existence of a group of vulnerable people not for socio-economic reasons (family origin, income), but for biographical reasons, who are not able to build a project of life throughout (and by means) of their experiences, paradoxically, due to the excesses of family protection. The most disadvantaged people in objective terms usually feel more the urgency of activation, although they often make choices that are not consistent with their own needs or aspirations. Young adults at risk come from the middle class, who "cultivate the culture of the possibilities without the chance to really afford it" (WP5 E_IT_M_8).

Another group of young adults has the awareness of their skills, capabilities and personal resources, but is often lacking the social capital needed to find a path that allows them to put their resources to fruit. For this group policies can help to define their life project and to pursue it. It is the case for example of the graduates who follow

4. Retreatism: People who are retreatists reject both the means and goals of society. A good example is given by people that don't participate to the policies at all.

5. Rebellion: The individual rejects the culture (values, goals, norms). These individuals pursue alternative cultures and we partly meet this people in self-employment activities, pursued outside policies.

the path of Civic Service, which enables them to verify the expendability of their resources in the professional field and that significantly expands the network of relationships and opportunities. One of the respondents, for example, graduated in spite of some "biographical accidents", thanks to the path carried out in Civic Service within a NGO has acquired managerial positions in a rather short time..

Belong to this group subjects who use the training courses appropriately and progressively acquire the ability to build adequate job placement pathways; In these cases we could talk about acceptance of the CPE embedded in the policies, but also of instrumentalism, typical of the innovators, who are able to recognize the CPE of the policies but to use it according to their needs. The most solid young people, often interested in job creation and spin offs, should be cited, as well as people that continue their career abroad. Many of these excellences, which have well-defined life plans, do not find adequate policies, particularly those of financing innovative entrepreneurial ideas, also because they often clash with a gerontocracy that manages labour policies and support for innovation that sees as a handicap the young age: "The start-up tool in Italy did not go very well because it fails to find the necessary funding to activate them" (WP5 E_IT_M_8).

The most vulnerable groups are made up not only by retreatists, but also by particularly vulnerable people, who adapt themselves to policies, but that are not in conditions to use them. The young adults who are part of these groups, often made up of migrants, are often stuck in paths of mobility always horizontal and with large jumps in horizontal but not vertical, for example from precarious jobs to training courses that do not allow vertical social mobility. This poses a twofold problem. On the one hand, the dominant CPE according to which training seems to be the only way of access to work induces to wonder if it really takes so much training for a medium-low level work and if can exist different forms of access to work.

In this vein is interesting to consider the view of a decision maker in GFR, who said that the Liguria Region, in order to demonstrate that vocational training is not devoted to the occupation of trainers but of the trainees, funded only courses that could guarantee at least the 60% of occupation for addresses and, in the same time, funded courses proposed by firms on demand, also to shorten the time between the emergence of a need and its satisfaction. On the other hand, the trust of firms (often little firms) towards vocational training agencies is one of the main reasons for which apprenticeship is the entrance door to job for a number of trainees, sometimes regardless to the added value of training for the firms. In this case we could say that a divergence exist between CPE of training system (and agencies) and CPE of firms, that give more value to the trust in the capacity of agencies to choose the "right" person than in the capacity to give "the right" training.

Migrants, but also young adults with broken educational paths, could be helped by appraisal of prior learning, that in Italy is allowed by CPIA (Departmental and Regional Centres for LLL, see also Palumbo et al. 2016). An interviewed expert stressed the role of CPIA of enhancing the previous learning, even if not formalized, in order to be recognizable in Italy, significantly shortening the course of achievement of an educational qualification. This aspect is related to the fact that in Italy the skills are strongly associated with the possession of educational qualifications, although for some years is under construction the national system of certification of competences, which could constitute an important tool to strengthen the position in the labour market of migrants and in general of those who are undereducated.

However, some respondents observe that companies, especially small and medium-sized, consider certified competences as a source of a further rigidity for businesses, because they can influence the contracts between the workers and the firm. Firms

thinks that the certified competences should be used by the owner to shorten the time of achievement of an educational certification. The same respondent also stressed that the model of certification is attributable to a culture of work influenced by large organizations, while in Italy it is more reasonable to try to give stability and consistency to the relations between the educational system, employment system and the active labour policies system. This gives room to the dual system and to the role of apprenticeship, and in a broader sense to all the educational and training paths in which firms and educational agencies cooperate in defining the contents of the training and the related job opportunities (as IFTS – Instruction and Vocational Training Higher Education paths). Stronger interactions between the firms and the public agencies are considered also a good way to build effective vocational guidance.

In conclusion, the interactions between operators and young adults are therefore mostly governed by the CPE embedded in the policies and in the operators' behavior, and they are accepted or suffered by young adults.

There are cases of positive interaction when young adults really fit with this CPE, more for objective than subjective reasons; that is, while on the subjective level you are fought between hearing you failed and not having the strength to design your future, on the objective level the measure recognizes both your resources and your shortcomings and therefore supports you in a project that is not imposed on you, but that constitutes to a certain extent the natural development of your life project. A good example is constituted by the IFTS or by the apprenticeship well done. There are also cases where young people are strong enough in terms of cultural and social capital to be able to consider measures as opportunities within their own life strategy and therefore can "govern" the embedded CPE using it for the part that is useful For their project.

For the most part, however, from the interviews carried out it emerges a more or less passive acceptance of the models incorporated in the policies, almost in an unconscious and therefore apparently instrumental way (i.e. without an explicit adherence to these models). This doesn't mean that CPE is shared. On the other hand, people that don't share the CPE embedded in policies does not look for alternative strategies neither denies the embedded CPE.

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Work Package 5 Qualitative Analysis

Portugal National Report

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Executive Summary

The Portuguese YOUNG ADULLLT teams from University of Porto and University of Lisbon have conducted qualitative research in Vale do Ave and Litoral Alentejo functional regions, respectively. This report explores the impact of LLL policies on young adults, notify the place of formal and informal learning in their life projects, investigate potential barriers the policies may omit and potential conflicts they may able or not the mechanisms for policies to become effective.

The interviews' sample will include young adults and LLL managers and street level professionals. A sample was set in Alentejo Litoral with nine young adults and six professional experts and in Vale do Ave of ten young adults and 7 experts. Semi-structured interviews to the experts were focusing on the policy's design, implementation, target-group, actors and impact, stakeholders coordination and multi-level governance. Narrative biographical interviews were conducted to the policies' "beneficiaries" between 18-29 years old, focusing on their life story and plans for the future, their policy's experience and their own skills' perception.

Ethnic issues may not be addressed. Vale do Ave is not an ethnically diverse area and in spite of the presence of migrants in Alentejo Litoral they are adult workers or retirees. An equal number of male and female young people will be interviewed.

The same sample criteria were observed in both functional regions. At Alentejo Litoral, experts come from professional schools and training centres and in addition, in Vale do Ave also contacted a Qualify Centre, a Social Development Local Contract, and the National Education Board. In both regions, there were interviewed young adults who completed professional courses at least six months ago, who were unemployed and actually are enrolled in adult education and training courses, who dropped out from professional courses or adult education and training courses, and who neither working nor in education and training (in Vale do Ave).

This report starts by a brief overview of the living conditions of young people in both Portuguese functional regions. Then, it will be presented the methodological approach, describing the data collection, treatment and analysis processes, followed by the results section. First, it will be reported the findings on the experts interviews. After, it will be presented the results regarding the young adults' interviews. At the end, the interaction between experts and young adults' interviews in both regions will be discussed.

Introduction

1.1. Living conditions of young adults and Policies in Alentejo Litoral

Alentejo Litoral is situated in the Alentejo region, one of the most deprived Portuguese regions. Nonetheless, since 1995 and until 2010, it had 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.

Like a general tendency in Europe, Portugal is also witnessing an ageing process of its population, mainly in Alentejo. Alentejo Litoral presented in 2011 a percentage of youth population lower than the national average. This fact, associated with low population density and disperse settlement, influences negatively the living conditions of the young adults in the region, especially regarding access to education. The low rate of young people living in Alentejo Litoral influences the diversity of the educational and training offered at both upper secondary and tertiary levels.

Portugal has shown a considerable decrease in terms of early school leaving rate, making a great effort to keep youngsters at school, by increasing compulsory education up to 12 years. At the regional level, this indicator has also dropped from 38.3% to 18.4% in Alentejo between 2005 and 2014. In any case, it was greater than the national and EU28 average (11.2%) in 2014. In 2016, the percentage of NEET was almost the same in Alentejo (10,3%) and in Portugal. AL region shows an average lower than the EU27. However, this number is most likely greater than that which is displayed in the statistics.

In 2011, youth unemployment in AL, was 23,8% among people with 15-24 years old against 27,9% in Portugal (values with break in series).

The LLL policies under study in this report are the ones with which the interviewees work with at the AL region: Vocational Education Policies, which include *Cursos Profissionais* (professional courses) and two Vocational training policies, which according to specific target groups are also considered active employment policies. These are the *Cursos de Aprendizagem* (Apprenticeship courses), which provide academic and professional certification, enabling both the transition to the labour market and moving on to higher education; and the *Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos - EFAs* (Adult Education and Training Courses). All reflect the main concerns of lifelong learning policies with raising academic and qualification levels of the Portuguese population in general and young adults in particular; fighting unemployment, especially among youth.

Professional Courses are an upper secondary vocational education provision, an educational sector policy. The courses are offered by the schools from a list of possibilities designed by and approved by the Ministry of Education, and chosen from the menu offered to each particular region from the National Qualifications Catalogue (*Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações*). They combine an academic education with a vocational one and deliver an education certification of upper secondary education and a professional certification (level 4). They belong to a set of measures directed at competitiveness, growth and employment by adjusting the training offer to the priorities and needs of the different socioeconomic sectors and regional labour markets.

The measure is funded by the Portuguese Government and the European Social Fund by direct funding, as well as by indirect funding of the companies or other types of institutions where the curricular internships takes place.

Official data from the Ministry of Education and Science (DGEEC, 2015) for 2013-2014 show that 25% of the students attending vocational education in the functional region were at least 18 years old; 62,6% had parents with the 9th grade or less and only 10,4% had parents with tertiary education. The majority of these students were from working class families (79%) and 15,6% were foreign students. In what concerns their educational trajectory, 66,6% had failed at least once and 6,6% had dropped out.

The Apprenticeship Courses were launched in 1984 and have been subject to several reforms since then. These courses replicate the German dual system and a particular attention is given to companies since they are presented as training partners. These courses provide initial training in order to increase employability according to the needs of the labour market and, in addition, enable progressions in education and in the career. They combine an academic education with a vocational one and deliver an upper secondary education certification and a professional certification (level 4)

Apprenticeship courses are exclusively provided by public training centres. With the current Socialist government, Apprenticeship Courses became one of the most important instruments in fighting youth employment and the target group has been unofficially redefined. Currently, these courses are targeted at unemployed early school leavers who are registered in job centres and to NEETs. This measure is an education sector policy, as VET integrates the educational system. It is also a labour market sector policy, as it is considered an active employment policy. It is ran and funded by the State and executed by public training centres in association with companies and other types of private or public institutions. The European Social Fund also contributes with direct funding. The Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) approves the courses, also defining the training areas for each year, considering the labour market tendencies.

In Alentejo Litoral, apprenticeship courses are delivered by the sectoral public training centre, although an autonomous organization is also part of network of the Institute of Employment and Professional Training. In the school year 2016/2017, three courses were offered to the students attending the 10th grade, all oriented to the industry sector.

Adult Education and Training Courses (EFAs) were launched in 2000 and are a central instrument for increasing adults' qualification. They intend to decrease adults' qualification deficits, as well as to stimulate a more active citizenship and improve employability. Adult Education and Training Courses are a basic instrument to attain the aims of training and education policies, namely the generalization of upper secondary education as the lower academic level for the Portuguese population.

There are two types of courses according to the kind of certification delivered: the academic courses deliver an educational certification; the professional ones deliver an educational and a professional certification. Initially, these courses were conceived to raise the qualification of Portuguese active population and they were targeted at the

unemployed, in specific groups at risk of social exclusion; later on, the employed adults were also targeted. With the recent economic crisis and the rise of the unemployment rate, these courses became an active employment policy and a division of labour took place in this provision. Academic Adult Education and Training Courses are mainly located in schools; Professional Adult Education and Training Courses are mainly located in public training centres. This measure is both an education and labour market sector policy, as EFA is part of the VET system and these courses are part of an active employment policy, in particular those of double certification. It targets working age adults, employed or unemployed, with less than compulsory education.

This is a State run long-term measure, executed by public or private schools and VET centres. It is directly funded by the European Social Fund and the State, as well as indirectly funded by the companies involved in the in-job training. The Ministry of Education approves the courses promoted by regular schools, whereas the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) approves the courses promoted by public and private training centres. In 2013, 16,311 adults attended Adult Education and Training Courses. The large majority (88,2%) included unemployed adults and 90,8% had the 9th grade of school education or a lower grade. These data reflects how this policy is oriented to adults with low qualifications (POPH, 2014).

In what concerns Professional Adult Education and Training Courses, which are the ones in evidence in this report, eight courses were launched during 2016, located at the AL region public training centre. Five of these courses are for the industry sector, two for the services, and one for handcraft activities

1.2. Living conditions of young adults and Policies in Vale do Ave

Vale do Ave is one of the oldest and more renowned textile industrial hubs in Portugal, facing important challenges regarding low educational qualifications and unemployment. The strong Vale do Ave industrial vocation is confirmed by the industry's share in the total economic activity in terms of persons employed (48%), turnover (50%) and especially in terms of Gross Value Added (56%), percentages that are more than double of the national ones. Manufacturing and agriculture are the main economic activity. Despite its industrial vitality, the average monthly income of the region's active population is considerably lower than national average (INE, 2015a). In terms of GDP per capita, the Vale do Ave region is approximately 20% below the national average (data for 2013) (INE, 2015b).

This region has a rather young population, especially when compared to Portugal or even the North (NUTS II) of the country. Presently, 69.9% of the region population is between 25 and 64 years old and 16.1% is over 65 years old. The low level of schooling in the Vale do Ave is a historical feature of the region: for instance, in 1960, 71,1% of people aged 15 had no schooling and 27,2% had only the first cycle of basic education (4 years). Early leavers from education and training (18-24 years) were 19% in the North region in 2014, lower than in Portugal. In 2016, the NEETs represented 11,1% of the population aged 15-24 in the North region, a figure higher than Portugal.

According to Census 2011, Vale do Ave had an unemployment rate of 14.6% in 2011. Like what happens at the national level, female unemployment was more pronounced (16,1%) than male unemployment (13,2%). The distribution of the unemployment rate by age group shows that unemployment is more prominent among the population aged 15-34 (32,9%). Additionally, in 2011, there was a rate of illiteracy of 5,1% (6,7% in case of women and 3,4% in case of men), and 10,2% of people aged 15 or more do not have a complete school level (12,7% in case of women and 7,4% in case of men), 30,9% have nothing but the first cycle of basic education, and 77,4% do not have secondary education (79,5% in case of women and 75,5% in case of men).

The LLL policies at use in the VdA region highlighted in this report include *Cursos Profissionais* (professional courses) and the *Programa Qualifica* (Qualify Program) as a Vocational education policies, and *Contratos Locais de Desenvolvimento Social* (Local Contracts for Social Development) as Social and youth policies.

The major provision in Vale do Ave are professional courses. Public secondary schools offer most of the courses and training. The majority of the vocational courses students come from working class families (62,2%) and 5,7% are foreign students. In what concerns their educational life and trajectory, 6,3% are working students, 33,3% have failed the school year at least once and 2% have dropped out. The main reason for dropping out was getting a job and economic independence. These students' families have rather low qualifications, as 64,3% have only studied until the 9th grade, and are mostly factory workers, artisans and similar (DGEEC, 2015).

The Qualify Program (2016) was the current government's response to what it defines as a structural qualification deficit among the Portuguese population, with the creation of a network of Qualify Centers, which are offices specialized in adult qualification. This network follows the configuration of previous ones, such as the New Opportunities Centres (*Centros Novas Oportunidades* (CNOs) and the Centres for the Qualification and the Professional Education (*Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional* (CQEP). They focus their activity on the complementarity between prior learning recognition, career guidance and the compulsory attending of certified VET, according to the individual profiles and needs of the trainees. Among other goals, they aim at the benchmark of 50% of the adult population with the upper secondary education. They target adults aged 18 and above and, exceptionally, young people NEET. This is a state run measure, executed by recognized public or private schools, higher education institutions, local development organizations or VET centres. It is state funded through the European Social Fund.

The Local Contract for Social Development (CLDS) is a political initiative addressing regional development and the social inclusion of vulnerable citizens through a multi-sectoral and integrated action network that aims at enhancing employability, fighting extreme poverty and social exclusion in deprived territories, namely through the empowerment of communities and their institutions. It aims at reinforcing the complementarity between mandatory and non-mandatory actions, whether they are funded by the programme or not, through capitalising community resources and the partners' common responsibility for the implementation of the Local Contracts.

The CLDS programme is a Labour Market and a Social and Youth sector policy. This measure is ran by the State and implemented by local organizations, supervised by the municipalities. It has access to State funding as well as the Social European Fund.

The project at the VdA region runs from January 2016 to December 2018. It results from a contract established between city council of Vila Nova de Famalicão, the regional development agency of the Vale do Ave (Agência de Desenvolvimento Regional do Vale do Ave - ADRAVE) and the Portuguese Social Security. The project is organised in three axes. Axis 1 – Employment, training and qualifications, aims at creating agencies focused on promoting social inclusion through employment, professional training and qualifications, aimed at the unemployed and at the integration in the labour market of the youngsters with compulsory schooling. Axis 2 – Intervention in families and in parenthood in order to prevent child poverty aims at offering support and intervention agencies and models to children and their families. Axis 3 – Empowerment of the community and its institutions aim at the involvement of local associations (sports, cultural, youth, environmental, parents, etc.) in processes of community and organisational development.

1. Data collection, Treatment and Analysis

The Portuguese sample regarding the two FR of Alentejo Litoral and Vale do Ave was organized by the two teams, Lisboa and Porto, respectively.

At Vale do Ave, the sample of experts interviewed consisted of four managers, concretely a member of the National Education Council, a CDLS coordinator, a director of a school with VET offer, a pedagogic director of a professional school; and three street level professionals two teachers or trainers and one CDLS technician.

At Alentejo Litoral (AL), the experts sample includes board members of two Professional Schools, two training Centres and three street-level professional from the two Training centres. There was a tentative to reach the GIP (Professional Integration Office), which consists in an information and counselling office from the IEFP (National institute of Employment and Professional Training), which did not come to an effective end. After interviewing both elements of the Professional Schools and the element of Training Centre 1, it was clear that it would be difficult to find, in those institutions, trainees older than 18 years old with non-linear school paths.

As a consequence, we dropped the intention of interviewing the third Professional School present in the FR, as well any professional of those four organizations. On the other hand, the access to the training centre 2 was unexpectedly easy and the board manager interviewed was opening all the doors needed to reach the young adults and the street-level professionals. A list of potential YA interviewers was also gathered by one professional school element, but none was available. Therefore, as for the YA sample in the AL region, all nine interviewees come from training centre 2.

The access to the YA followed a specific procedure. There was a first contact with all the classes of the Training Centre 2, presenting the project and identifying the potential available interviewees. An administrative person from the organization became the contact person with the task of organizing the meetings' logistics. In two days 3 researchers went to the training centre and interviewed 7 YA and 2 experts. One of the YA got in troubles with a trainer for arriving late to the class, which intimidated the other potential interviewees. The contact person looked for other possible YA and their interviews took place outside the institution, two weeks later.

Almost all come from working-class families and two have foreign-born parents (see Table 1). The gender balance was observed although unable to be established. Ethnicity was not a sample criterion but ended up being present. All felt at ease and some showed particularly opened. The biographical approach proved to result in short initial narratives, with one exception and in a few cases the question-answer strategy started since the beginning of the interview.

Table 1. Sample of young adults interviews.

Policies	FR	Autochthonous middle-class		Autochthonous working class		Foreign-born parents Working class		Age
		♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	Average
Professional Courses	VdA		1	5	4			22
EFA Courses	AL	1		2	4		2	21 years
	VdA							
Total	AL	9						
	VdA	10						

The access to the experts was easy, made by direct contact of the national teams. All interviews went smoothly and covered all the previewed topics. The interviews were mainly conducted by two senior researchers, excluding one that was conducted by one senior and one junior researcher. The schedule was sent previously so that the experts could prepare themselves. To be noticed that in one interview, the team was asked not to transcribe one part mentioning a conflict within the organization relating to budget options. All the interviews gave great information on the LLL policies in this FR, only lacking the info related to the skills governance, which was already addressed in the WP6 National Report. In fact, WP6 interviews were crucial to understand the economic and labour market macro context of both regions. At Alentejo region, two upper level board members of the Alentejo Region in the training, employment and regional development sectors were particularly relevant. Each interview took between 40 and 90 minutes to be complete and was recorded.

Ethical procedures were followed as set by the WP10 YA project. Particularly, an information letter was given previously to all interviewees asking consent to the information use for researching purposes, observing confidentiality and anonymisation procedures. The lack of sequential numbers of the experts refers to the fact that the WP6 experts were included in the same coding.

Table 2. Sample of experts interviews.

Organizations	FR	Board Member	Street-level Professional
Professional School	AL	2	
	VdA	1	1
Training Centre	AL	2	3
	VdA	1	
Portuguese Educational Council (CNE)	VdA	1	
CLDS Famalicão	VdA	1	1
Qualifica Centre	VdA		1
Total	AL	7	
	VdA	4	

The quality analysis used a software tool considering the coding strategy collectively decided within the YA research consortium, ultimate by the WP5 core team. Afterwards, a discussion within the Portuguese team took place to check the need of further codes, which was not necessary. Those were the considered codes for the expert interviews: antecedents and objectives, approach, bureaucratic organisation, Conflict between policy actors, contribution of LLL policies to the autonomy of beneficiaries, implementation, living conditions of beneficiaries, multi-level governance, policy actors, policies accountability, policy evaluation, policy sectors and target groups.

As for the young adults' qualitative analysis, the following codes were considered: academic performance, concrete next steps, construction of life story, expectations on life course, life plan, participation of young adults in LLL policy, presentation of the self, professional orientation, school trajectory, teachers/trainers, skills, social network at school, relation school - out of school.

2. Analysis of Interviews with experts

3.1. Analysis of interviews with experts in Alentejo Litoral

3.1.1. Antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation

The three policies analysed in Alentejo Litoral FR – Apprenticeship Courses, Professional Courses and Adult Vocational Education and Training Courses (EFA) - are long term measures, run by the State and they all deliver an academic certification and a professional qualification. They are all funded by European Social Fund and have been recently integrated in the Youth Guarantee Programme. All three policies under analysis in Alentejo Litoral share the same underlying assumption: the improvement of young adults' employability through vocational education and training and curricular internships as the best strategy to fight unemployment. At the same time all of them contribute to what was considered, in the recent past, one of the greatest national goals: to increase the level of academic qualification of the Portuguese population. For this reason, the golden rule of these policies is double certification and the 'unofficial' policy orientation is to guide towards a vocational education and training provision the unemployed low academic achievers, beneficiaries of guaranteed social income, early school leavers (ESL), people not in employment, education or training situation (NEET) and young people at risk of dropping out. In Alentejo Litoral these three vocational education and training provisions are the most important LLL policies young adults can access.

Apprenticeship courses were the first to be created when the vocational training in Portugal was rebuilt in the mid-1980s. At the time of its creation in 1984, the main objectives were to defy youth unemployment, explained by the lack of professional qualifications, school attainment and dropout, before the completion of compulsory schooling of 6 years, at the time. As stated by several researchers (Grácio, 1991, Alves et al, 2001) the function of this policy was to tackle the problems the schools were unable to deal with: school failure and early school leaving. By assuming this function, the apprenticeship courses became the less prestigious provision in the Portuguese education and training system.

Strongly influenced by the German dual system, the curricular structure of these courses was always based on a strong in-job training component, considered by the interviewees as their main comparative advantage. The internships are distributed over the three years of training and correspond to about 40% of the total hours of training. The weight of the in-job training is considered the most relevant advantage of this provision by two of interviewees involved in it.

Opposite to the other VET provisions analysed in this report, the apprenticeship courses must be approved by the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) and not by the Ministry of Education. The functional dependency from the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security confers to these courses a particular place in the national and regional skills system. Firstly, they are mainly located at public training centres or other organizations supervised by the Ministry responsible for this vocational training; secondly, they are not included in the regional offer of the professional education regional network, supervised by the Ministry of Education were

the discussion and definition of the general and VET provision for each school year takes place.

Over time, the apprenticeship courses have undergone several changes, but their curriculum structure remains almost the same. At present time, these courses are an upper secondary education provision delivering an academic certificate and a professional certification of EU level 4.

According to the recent law¹ these courses aim both at promoting the young people's initial vocational education and training in order to improve their employability according to the labour market's needs and solving the problem of the early school leavers. Since 2015, they are part of the Youth Guarantee Programme under the scope of the educational measures, and they are expected to contribute to the government benchmark of having 50% of the students enrolled in upper secondary VET courses, in 2020. However, the lack of public funding in this LLL policy during the last two decades reduced its already small presence in the education and training system. With the present government apprenticeship courses have been elected as one of the most important policies targeted at NEETs. The funding has been reinforced and the pressure to deliver these courses increased, mainly within the training centres responsible for the implementation of active employment policies, known as training centres under the direct management of Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. Furthermore, an advertising campaign has been launched in the media in October. Named Geração Pro (Pro Generation) its main objective is to attract young people to these courses, but no mention is done to NEET.

When we focus on the aims, objectives and impacts of this policy we find different formulations and approaches according to the different sources and actors. In the law the main objectives are the improvement of young people's employability and to tackle the problem of the early school leavers, and the expected outcomes are: providing early school leavers with vocational qualification and certification, according to the regional and local labour market's needs, and reducing the youth unemployment.

For the national policy-makers of the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, currently, its main objective is to contribute to the reduction of the percentage of NEET since the Institute is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Youth Guarantee Programme in Portugal. Apprenticeship courses are expected to contribute to reduce the rate of NEET, reaching the EU average by the year 2020.

The managers and the street-level professionals involved in this provision have different interpretations of its objectives. For the interviewees from a training centre under the participative management of Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, with a long experience of apprenticeship courses the main aims are the academic and the professional qualification of the young people and to secure a better transition from school to work:

¹ Portaria n.º 1497/2008

To have qualified young people with and academic and a professional qualification and an attitude towards the world of work (....) To have happy citizens with skills, producing and paying taxes. (...) But one more important thing, is a path that will allow young people a better transition, once the course is over, to the labour market (E_PT_AL_1).

To prepare these youngsters for a level four, its what they have here, give them the possibility, if they want, to continue studies, or through the CET² or perhaps directly to the university, they give them this capacity, but also if they want to enter the labour market, they can do it directly (E_PT_AL_4).

These interviewees omit any reference to the role of this offer in combating school drop-out which throughout its history has contributed to its social devaluation. During the interviews they develop an argumentative strategy that aims at promoting the 'social upgrading' of this provision by presenting it as a first choice path for accomplishing upper secondary education.

For an interviewee from a training centre under the direct management of Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, the aims of these courses are to qualify the unemployed young adults registered at the employment centres and to attract the NEETs to the qualification process. However, the achievement of the second aim does not appear to be an easy task and it causes a tension between the old and the new assignments of this kind of training centres. These centres are responsible at regional and local levels for the implementation of the active employment policies, mainly vocational training, targeted at unemployed and 'at-risk' populations. During the financial crisis, with the growth of the unemployment rate, they played a significant role in the attempt of reducing unemployment by providing initial and continuing training to unemployed registered at the employment centres. The tension between this traditional assignment and the new one is expressed in the following statement:

There are still a few to signal [the NEET] and within the framework of the Youth Guarantee we have this work to do. We've been doing too little, that's true! But this is a very complex work that requires a lot of our effort, dedication and time, which we often do not have, because every day we have to respond to what is most urgent, which is to give a training answer to those who are already here [unemployed registered at the employment centre] (E_PT_AL_7).

The recent change in the policy – targeting the apprenticeship courses at the NEETs – along with a greater allocation of financial resources for its implementation had opposite effects on the two regional providers. In the case of the first training centre it was an opportunity to increase its initial VET provision and reinforce its presence in the regional skills formation system. In case of the second training centre, the policy change increased the work load of the professionals and the pressure to achieve two

² CET – *Curso de Especialização Tecnológica* (Technological Especialization Course) is a post-secondary course of level 5, provided by training centres or schools in a partnership with a Higher Education institution.

'conflicting' aims: to provide education and training to unemployed and identify NEETs and bring them back to the skills formation system.

Evaluation is a key issue in Portuguese society and there is a general complaint against the lack of evaluation of public policies' results and impact. Neither of these two training centres is responsible for carrying out any kind of studies on impact of the vocational education and training provision delivered but it doesn't mean they are not done. The studies on impact, which in Portuguese context is synonymous with employability rate, are carried out by national structures on which they depend in order to fulfil the European Structural Funds' requirements. It is worth mentioning that the results of these studies are one of the criteria used for the funding and evaluation of future applications.

In both training centres the national quality departments are responsible for implementing a survey to a national sample of graduates, 6 months or 1 year after completion the training courses. The results obtained are returned to the centres, but their analysis does not contemplate the regional level. These are national results that in no way contribute to assessing the effectiveness of the policy at regional level and its impact on the graduates' transition to work, in particular, and their life course, in general. The lack of data makes the interviewees use impressionistic evaluations even if based on their experience and knowledge of the field:

My feeling is that until now, in the past and now, companies are very fond of receiving them, they are permanently open to receive people from this Training Centre (E_PT_AL_1).

Professional courses were launched in 1989 and were exclusively delivered by professional schools. They are an upper secondary education provision delivering an academic certification and a professional qualification. Like the apprenticeship courses they also contemplate an internship but its weight in the curricular structure is considerably lower, corresponding to 13.5% of the total training hours.

After 2004, with the Secondary Education Reform Act, professional courses were introduced in public and private secondary schools. As upper secondary education became compulsory in 2009, professional courses become the most important provision to those students who do not want to pursue an academic education. In Alentejo Litoral professional courses are delivered by both secondary school and professional schools but the second ones are the most important providers of this vocational education and training provision.

The professional courses emerge in a broader set of vocational education and training provisions launched in the 80's, and they were legitimized by discourses demanding the modernization of Portuguese education from the qualification of human resources as a guarantee of economic and social development (Decree- Law No. 26/89 of 21 January). Since its launch, professional courses aim at being an alternative to the academic upper secondary education. They do not exclude the possibility of pursuing studies but they are predominantly oriented towards the transition to work, according to

the regional labour market's needs. Similar to apprenticeship courses, professional courses were integrated in the Youth Guarantee Programme under the scope of the educational measures. This inclusion reinforces the importance of another aim, which is implicit in the official documents, but explicit in political decision makers' public discourses and reproduced by a local manager: to fight early school leaving.

What I think is that vocational education is a great answer for many young people who would never study and drop out of school if there were no professional courses (E_PT_AL_5).

The interviewees involved in this policy have some characteristics that give specificity to their statements and that it is important to take into account in this analysis. They are managers of two of the oldest professional schools in Portugal, and have a long experience in these vocational education and training provision. By their nature, these schools are strongly anchored in the regional socio-economic system, seeking to respond to the needs of skilled workforce. For this reason, both managers consider that the main objective of these courses is to train qualified workforce that matches the needs of the companies and contributes to the economic development of the region:

Let's say that our matrix today, on the Alentejo coast, are two areas of strong economic position and I expect to contribute with qualified workforce to these two areas, right? (E_PT_AL_5).

I consider the offer of professional courses a very great asset for the industry and why? Because these industries are extremely complex. (...) This leads to the need to have technicians with capacity and knowledge and with critical ability to be able to operate these systems in some way, let's say, comfortable, other than just people who have practical knowledge (E_PT_AL_6).

By exclusively confining the objectives of these courses to their contribution to the training of skilled workforce, these interviewees are legitimizing one of the most severe criticisms of this policy: its vocationalist drift. In fact, several academics (Antunes, 2004; Alves, 2008) consider professional courses as a provision of a technical-instrumental nature oriented towards the production of skilled workers and the management of human resources.

The centrality that the formation of skilled workers assumes in the interviewees' discourses is undoubtedly the dominant tonic. For them, the function of this policy is exclusively the production of working people capable of responding to the challenges of the 'new spirit of capitalism'. Therefore, they value not only the technical training but also the development of soft skills that integrate the package of qualities required to a 'good worker'. It is within the framework of a technical-managerial conception of this policy that the critical thinking, the autonomy and the responsibility are valorised by these interviewees, and not as core skills essential to the integral development of the human being, the participation in society and the exercise of citizenship.

The following statements are paradigmatic examples of this conception of education:

This model of education prepares young people more autonomous, more critical, more responsible and I think this is positive, I think this gives them some baggage to work (E_PT_AL_5).

It brings them this critical capacity, it brings them this ability to question innovations, more efficient solutions of operation and maintenance of these industrial systems and units. (E_PT_AL_6).

During the last decades, the most important policy change reported by these local managers concerns the changes in the funding criteria that can jeopardize the quality of the training provided and its own survival.

Opposite to what was reported by the apprenticeship courses' local managers, the evaluation studies are compulsory and done locally by each school. The gathered information focus exclusively on graduates' employability rate and it is essential to ensure ESF funding. This type of evaluation based on the graduates' employability rates is widely criticized by the interviewees, although they admit that the values in their schools are higher than those required by the Ministry of Education and the ESF managers: over 50% of graduates employed. Criticism develops around two key ideas: corporate recruitment management strategies and the specificities of the regional labour market (seasonality and precariousness, see WP6). In general terms, they challenge the blind use of prescribed indicators by not taking into account the influence that economic factors have on the transition to work, irrespective of the quality of the training provided and its adequacy to business needs.

That's a very relative concept [employability rate], is it not? Because it's not us who create the jobs, it's the companies. And companies sometimes say they need X, but when it exists, then when they go to hire him/her, they prefer someone who does not have training because they pay less, so that's the problem! (E_PT_AL_5).

The companies, the work they have, it's a work, let's say, it's not continuous in the true meaning of the word. They have some continuous work, but it is, so to speak, perhaps continuous work is the greatest, but then here is a slice of work that is temporary. For example, we already know that X, next year, will have work, will have a stop of 3 months or so of the sort. At that time, there are not enough people, not at all. Everyone is employed at that time. If we do an inquiry, for the Ministry, at that time, everybody is employed (E_PT_AL_6).

The adult vocational education and training (EFA) courses were established in 2000 and were very much in line with lifelong learning guidelines of the European Union. These guidelines have stressed the individualisation character of forms of provision in education, the valuing of the training component and the relevance of (lifelong) learning. Additionally, training within the link between education and economic development was also stressed. The purpose was to have forms of provision that developed skills, namely hard skills related to traditional school disciplines, according to an innovative curriculum, but also soft skills that had not been traditionally provided

by school education and that were relevant for enterprises and existing jobs following neoliberal trends.

These courses are targeted at employed, unemployed and adults more than 18 years old as well as people at risk of social exclusion. As a basic adult education provision, these courses are targeted at all adults that had not achieved compulsory education and did not hold professional qualification, not entailing any kind of gender, race or age requirements. But due to these courses structure, based on a long-term provision (up to 2 and a half or 3 years), mainly unemployed people and those at risk of social exclusion (that were not working full-time) attend these courses. These adults are mainly on social benefits. For this reason, these courses generated a passive admission and/or an apathetic rejection by people in general and in particular by the stakeholders, owing to the fact that these courses were directed at those that were at risk of social exclusion, those that did not have any other kind of public basic education provision to attend.

Adult vocational education and training aim at the generalization of upper secondary education as the lower qualification level of the Portuguese population (50% by 2020) and the qualification of the workforce with double certification (law 230/2008 7th of March) in order to reduce the unemployment rate (Portugal 2020).

As with previous interviewees, the objectives set out in the law are not fully reflected in the interviewees' discourses. Effectively none of them refers the raising the level of qualification of the population as one of the main objectives of this LLL policy. To them, the improvement of individual employability is the main purpose to be reached, as stated by both, a local manager and a street-level professional:

qualify our unemployed people, who are primarily unemployed, in order to give them initial qualifications so that they can be integrated, (...) so that we can try to improve their conditions of employability (E_PT_AL_7).

The aim of these courses is to prepare a group of people, to give them, let's say a minimum training to enable them to pursue a profession (E_PT_AL_8).

The assessment of this LLL policy is made exclusively through information concerning the graduates' employment situation. The data collection follows the same procedure described when we analysed the apprenticeship courses provide by the training centre belonging to the Institute of Employment and Vocational Education and Training. Once again, the fact that the results of the evaluation are national and do not contemplate an analysis at the local level, is criticized by a street-level worker, based on the general argument that the lack of this information can compromise the quality of this LLL policy:

It would be a matter of strategy and I think it made perfect sense. We started by doing career guidance, we train and it was important to see if that training had effects, to make an evaluation, an analysis. Unfortunately, this work is not done. I think, like many other things in our country, it's a matter of strategy (E_PT_AL_9).

3.1.2. Target groups characteristics

The analysis of how do the LLL policies construct their target groups is based on a comparative analysis among their official description, the knowledge produced by social research regarding the beneficiaries' characteristics and the interviewees' social representations.

Apprenticeship courses are officially targeted in several governmental websites at young people aged less than 25 years old, holding an academic certificate of 9th grade and didn't accomplish upper secondary education. Curiously, in these websites no mention is done to NEET, ESL or unemployed young adults who are effectively this policy's target group, as stated by one interviewee of the training centre under the direct management of Institute of Employment and Vocational Training. These two different definitions point to the tension between a 'palliative' measure designed to deal with young people at risk both at the education and the employment systems and the attempt to overcome its stigmatised social representation. As shown by several researches (Grácio, 1991, Alves et al, 2001), the social and academic characteristics of the trainees enrolled in this provision has contribute to turn it into the most social disqualified VET provision in Portugal. The large majority of them are low academic achievers, with a school trajectory of failures, and come from working class families. The attempt to carry out a strategy to overcome apprenticeship courses stigmatization is evident in the formal description of the target group in the governmental websites but also in the words of the interviewees from a training centre under the participative management of Institute of Employment and Vocational Training. Both strongly deny that this is a second chance provision, aimed at working-class youths with unsuccessful school paths.

I think here is a choice and our teens come by choice and not by being the end of the line. If it was the end of the line we would have teens who failed many times in high school and we would have here many 20 year olds or more and we have teens here that arrive with 15 years, 16 years. That is, they finished the 9th grade and come directly to our courses because it was a choice made by them and because they think it is what it should be. We also have cases of 18, 19 years old who are seeking these courses because they have tried other courses and have seen that it was not what they intended and that they eventually found the profession that might be their profession for the rest of their lives. The vast majority we have are very young (E_PT_AL_4).

The interviews to local managers and street-work professionals engaged in apprenticeship courses show, on one hand, the existence of two different target groups according to the type of provider: training centre under participative management and training centre under direct management of Institute of employment and vocational training, responsible for the implementation of the public active employment measures. On the other hand, they indicate the carrying out of a strategy to promote the social upgrading of this LLL policy at a regional level, by the sectorial training centre who seems to be able to attract socially and academically different trainees; at a national

level by the State, according to the characteristics of the target group advertised in the official websites.

Professional courses are targeted at young people holding a certificate of 9th grade. Formally, no other characteristics are added to this definition. However, several researches (Pardal et. al, 2003, Pardal, et. al, 2007, Mendes, 2009; Machado, et. al, 2011) point out other attributes of the young people attending this provision. The majority of them are from working class and low middle-class backgrounds and low academic achievers, with at least one year retention and low scores in PISA.

Boasting a greater social prestige than the apprenticeship courses, but smaller than the prestigious path of access to higher education, professional courses are an alternative way to accomplish compulsory schooling.

The interviewees engaged in professional courses share a common definition of the youngsters enrolled in this policy and very similar to the one pointed out by the researches and the official data of the Ministry of Education. Most of them are 15 years old when they enrol for the first time; less than a half has one year retention and several come from families 'with difficulties'.

The profile of the student is the student who arrives with the 9th grade of regular education. Therefore, these are the criteria for integrating professional courses. And they enter the 9th year, 15 years. (...) There are many students, there are a large percentage of students that, say, about 30% of our students have already failed at least once ... so let's say about 60 to 70% have never failed, but 30 to 40% certainly have at least one retention (E_PT_AL_5).

unstructured families, young people living alone or with siblings or grandparents, economic difficulties (E_PT_AL_6).

They also share the idea that this provision is an alternative to regular upper secondary education sought by those youngsters disenchanted with the 'traditional' education. They agree that they don't get the 'best students', the high achievers, and regret that these young people do not choose these courses. They blame the secondary schools for guiding students with school failure to these courses and dissuading high achievers from choosing them. Based on his experience, one interviewee criticizes school guidance services for dissuading these students to choose professional courses, telling an example:

there is a great deal of pressure on the students. There have been cases that we know of who have arrived, who have come to call the parents, saying, 'No, your son should not go there for this reason, for another, I do not know what else. He must stay with us, we are going to prepare him, he finishes the 12th year, goes to university' (E_PT_AL_6).

By suggesting that this courses are not for high achievers, regular schools and career and guidance counsellors contribute to perpetuate the idea that vocational education and training courses are a less prestigious provision targeted, exclusively, at those who have not the skills and the competences to attend academic upper secondary

education. To those who are labelled by the regular schools as a 'little bit dumb' (E_PT_AL_6).

In general, all interviewees share a common opinion about the young people's lack of soft skills (responsibility, commitment, autonomy) and life prospects.

What is the problem with these young people? If I can say it this way. There is in fact anything that we sometimes feel in them that ... is a lack of capacity for commitment. To commit to something. And what we feel in the young people who come to us here, many of them already 16, 17, 18 years, therefore already with a certain human formation, is this difficulty of relation with the commitment (E_PT_AL_1).

They come with fewer and fewer skills. (...) They are very little responsible, they seem like kids (E_PT_AL_6).

I think the new generations, having a more precarious maturity, do not realize that at some point they will be alone, they have to have autonomy. They have to have the same capacity of survival and ability to solve problems from the autonomic point of view. And I do not think the new generations have that ability (E_PT_AL_9).

I would identify here the difficulty of setting clear objectives. It's a great common denominator of this audience I guess that's it. There seems to me to be some absence of well-defined objectives, life goals, and I will say that they are drifting here. Because when we do the presentation and when we ask people "what brings you here, what are your projects?" there are usually many difficulties in clearly pointing this or that as an objective (E_PT_AL_8).

Based on the deficit approach, commonly mobilized to characterize the public that deviate from the idealized model of white middle-class youth, the interviewees attribute the lack of transversal skills to the social context marked by unemployment, poverty, family disruption, emigration....

families are a little bit distanced from what their children's school life is. And for different economic reasons, because the parents have to work, because they are looking for a job because they are unemployed, they do not have the time to give their children, to dedicate to their children, and then ... often it is divorces, students are with the grandparents. They live with their grandparents, live with their uncles, let's say that the socio-affective domain weighs heavily today on a large part of the students here in the region (E_PT_AL_5).

Despite this negative image, most of the interviewees believe in the positive effects of the LLL policies in which they are involved. They argue that the type of training and guidance provided not only by psychologists but by all other street-level professionals (teachers and trainers), as well as the internships contribute to change behaviours and develop skills, turning young people into totally different persons.

the psycho-pedagogical monitoring is one of the aspects that we give our students and they have this opportunity to have specific classes in which these

things are worked, personal skills, leadership, interpersonal relationships are worked out, all this is worked with them, weekly, fortnightly, as the case may be. (E_PT_AL_4).

a much more, let's say, much more mature attitude when they finished the course. Mainly, after doing PAP work (E_PT_AL_6).

The teaching model allows more work to be done at project level, at the autonomous level of development and accountability for their own learning and development of tasks and development of a set of skills, the experience of passing through companies, with some responsibility, assuming some responsibility from a very early stage, I think this gives them some baggage (E_PT_AL_5).

3.1.3. LLL policies and young adults

In general, street-level workers and local managers are aware of the young adults living conditions. They recognise that some of them live in very vulnerable conditions mainly economic and socio-affective, as presented in the previous section. LLL policies design include some measures to secure young people's attendance but they are not enough to allow their autonomy, mainly when young adults are concerned. They are entitled to transportation and food allowances, training grant and child allowance, however these benefits do not provide them with enough financial resources to face their life expenses, or their desire for independence and autonomy.

even if they receive support it is not enough because they have autonomous life, family, they have to pay their expenses (E_PT_AL_7).

an argument of one of the trainees for me is that she wanted to live alone under certain conditions and the money that, the grant she received was not enough to live alone (E_PT_AL_8).

These allowances and the training grant are also not sufficient to cope with unexpected changes in some young adults' life course. Some cases were reported concerning young women who became pregnant and dropout, in spite of the child allowance, and young men who were obliged to get a job after death or illness of a close family member.

These cases are examples of the lack of coordination among different social policies at local level which contributes to increase the vulnerability of at risk young adults which was not mentioned by any interviewee. Somehow, their discourses express the acceptance of young adults living conditions and reveal a process of naturalization of some social problems. This attitude does not allow them to question the nature of social problems which are not related with their intervention field.

Some local managers develop strategies to deal with specific young adults' living conditions. One of them is to adapt the training schedule to the transport schedule. The dispersed settlement and the precariousness of the public transport network means

that some providers adjust the training schedule to public or private transport, in cases where young people use buses of companies to transport their workers.

our schedules are made to match the schedules of the companies' bus (E_PT_AL_6).

Another strategy is the one carry out by one training centre. Enjoying greater autonomy than regular schools, this centre is not governed by the official school calendar. In this case, the start of courses depends totally on the living conditions of the target public.

In Apprenticeship, we have practically no starting dates until September we do not do it. Why? Basically, Apprenticeship is an alternative to the regular school and to the professional courses and the professional offer of the schools. It makes no sense for us to be trying to do Apprenticeship courses in March, April, May, because they are in schools, in theory ... What happens and the practice is this: they sometimes drop out usually between the 2nd and 3rd school term, and then end up enjoying the summer and having temporary jobs and odd jobs in summer, in the bars, at the beach, at the restaurant and at the end of August or beginning of September they come to us.(...) we've usually started to work on them there, and the courses usually start in October (E_PT_AL_1).

However, the most common strategies are the ones that try to reconcile young people with learning and overcome some learning difficulties. On the one hand, the modular structure of the curriculum and the size of the classes allow for a more individualized teaching and a closer and more personalized guidance, helping young people to become good students (E_PT_AL_6).

As you know the modular structure allows the pedagogical differentiation and different teaching methods and techniques, giving much more attention to the students. A much more personalized teaching, which gives us immense work, to teachers, but also gets better results. (...) and there are many students who need this to continue, to gain the taste for study, to do something. Here, therefore, the student has much more attention. One knows exactly ... of course the classes are smaller, one can know exactly, make the correct diagnosis of some problem, if it is at the cognitive level, if it is at the socio-affective (E_PT_AL_5).

On the other hand, the more practical dimension of these vocational education and training provisions and the internships are elements often referred by local managers and street-level professionals as essential to motivate young people and involve them in the learning process.

As they are more practical courses, we necessarily have more interested kids, so we have necessarily better results, because these kids, as they have a very large practical dimension, end up filling in practice the difficulties they have in the theoretical or any difficulties they have in the theoretical part. They are enthusiastic about the practical part, the practical part is for them a stimulus (E_PT_AL_4).

In practical parts, they are more apt because it's easier for them to learn when it is materializations than the conceptual part of abstract reasoning. So, we try to connect the abstract with the concrete.... And then there are the internships, they like them very much. You see, it's the practical part. They like the practice! (E_PT_AL_1).

It is not clear how these LLL policies encourage young adults to deal with uncertainty especially when uncertainty is mainly caused by factors young people can't control. The characteristics of the regional labour market, mentioned in the previous section by several interviewees are the main cause of uncertainty in the region, however they expect the young adults attending their vocational education and training provision to be better able to cope with it, mainly those considered the best ones. The naturalization of the uncertainty due to the scarcity of jobs in some cases and the precariousness of the labour market is one of the dominant emphases of the interviewees' discourses. However, this idea is associated with another: only good students have access to jobs that minimize labour market uncertainty.

It turns out that the students leave here - the best, the companies employ them, stay with them. Then there are the others who are out there. And they walk a little in what is the job, unfortunately, in Portugal, precarious. Company X has a job here, needs a person for a month, is going to recruit and 'look, you know so and so,' and he's employed for a month. Then he is employed two months and is unemployed for a month. But this is our problem of precariousness of our companies. (E_PT_AL_5).

The widespread acceptance of the reproduction in the context of work of inequalities generated in the sphere of education and training is one of the most relevant data of the research. In a way, the interviewees adhere to the idea that in both the skills formation market and the skills use market there are winners and losers and that this is a situation where nothing can be done.

Young adults' autonomy is not an issue neither for the local managers nor for the street-level professionals and, as stated before when they refer to it, they reveal a minimalist conception of autonomy, exclusively focused on the future professional performance of young adults. They believe the vocational education and training provided fosters young adults' individual responsibility and autonomy and some strategies are carried out in order to achieve this goal. Some interviewees refer to the preparation sessions for the internships. In these sessions the focus is placed on the importance of soft skills, considered fundamental for a good integration in the company and for the socialization in the condition of future worker:

Now we always do prep sessions. I do prep sessions where I not only tell them what behaviour they should have, what is expected of them. The type of language, what ... is the language they use, cannot be the language they use with each other, when we are talking about how they greet the intern tutor or how they greet fellow interns, how they behave in the workplace, receiving orders with humility and simplicity, these are always things I ask them to be careful about, not using the mobile phone, because it is always a temptation,

the kind of clothing they take to workplace. This type of advice is important not only for the internship but also for the future when they are working (E_PT_AL_4).

For some respondents one way to develop the autonomy of young adults is to encourage them to look for companies to undertake the internship. Under the assumption that this strategy allows to respond to individual expectations, what is at issue is once again a process of socialization anticipated as a worker who is expected to be autonomous and able to initiative in the search for employment. In short, being capable of responding to the challenges of employability.

We are glad when they see us with a proposal from a company where they liked to do the internship. It is a good sign... it's a sign of initiative...of autonomy (E_PT_AL_1).

From the first moment we try to be the trainee, that the trainee has this initiative to look for places where he would like to do his workplace training. We give this suggestion ... and that responsibility as well, because we think it makes sense that the person is ... or rather that the person indicates the place where he would like to do it and to indicate the place and make the contacts. ... because we think it makes sense that the person has this autonomy and this initiative to look for the entities, because then also reveals much of what the person is, what the person is going to be and the capacity that the person will have to search for a job (E_PT_AL_8).

3.1.4. Actors and responsibilities in LLL policies

In WP6 issues concerning coordination and tensions among different national and regional actors have been analysed. In this section we focus on local actors' opinions concerning vertical and horizontal LLL policies' coordination. As stated in other reports, LLL policies are defined by the central state and supervised and monitored by the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training and by Institute of Employment and Vocational Training. In this vein, local actors are mere executors of policies and targets defined at central level.

Excessive vertical coordination is particularly criticized by professional school interviewees who complain about the methodology used by the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training in the annual definition of the vocational and training provision, the rigidity of the national qualifications framework and the potential effects on young adults' life course. One respondent explained the steps taken to offer a course responding to the needs of the labour market and the Agency's refusal on the grounds that it was not part of the priorities identified for the region.

With the XXX Association, we tried to open a very interesting course here for the region. It is a very interesting course, we think and in the perspective of them, with good professional exits. Last year, for example, we tried to open, we

proposed to open, and they said no. Not provided on the network. It is not planned in the network, has to be replaced by another They say it is not a priority course. Why? Because they limit themselves to going to the Qualifications Anticipation System, but that is often still unknown to employers. Employers do not know that they have to go to Qualifications Anticipation System, often do not even know what it is ... They have to go to the page, they have to go to Qualifications Anticipation System, they have to register and then they need a password to enter, and say what training area do they think they should be, right? So I think this process is very bureaucratic and not sufficiently publicized (E_PT_AL_5).

The central role played by the state in the definition and provision of LLL policies in the region is further reinforced by the refusal of the Intermunicipal Community in the coordination of these policies. Its absence is a fact reported by the large majority of the interviewees, but for which no explanations are advanced.

In fact, the absence of the Intermunicipal Community is even felt at the annual meeting to define the vocational education and training offer, promoted by the Regional Directorate of Education. This is, in fact, the only moment and space where a simulacrum of horizontal coordination takes place, although under the tutelage of a decentralized state body. In addition, coordination concerns only vocational schools and secondary schools. Training centres operating in the region are not required to attend and are not invited to participate in these meetings.

I know that the Ministry of Education does these meetings with schools to define for example the professional courses, the network. We are a training centre, we belong to the ministry of the side, to the employment, as we are from the ministry on the side we do not ... we should also participate ... (....) and with immense pity, we do not participate (E_PT_AL_1).

One of the most relevant characteristics of this region is the lack of horizontal coordination mechanisms created from the initiative of local actors. What exists are networks of relations built individually by each provider, in order to ensure the individual success of the institution, on the one hand and its survival, on the other. In this sense, relations with the companies on which they depend for the completion of the internships and to achieve the employability rates that guarantee access to the financing are privileged.

3.1.5. Multi-level “wicked problems”

All LLL policies analysed are developed under the scope of the Youth Guarantee Programme, but none explicitly elect NEETs and ESLs as official target groups. This means that only the interviewees from the training centre under direct management of Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, which is responsible for the implementation of both the Youth Guarantee and the active employment policies, refers to the NEETs and ESLs, but do not elect them as priority target groups. For them, and

according to the political orientations to which they respond, the priority is the unemployed. For the remaining interviewees and although they assume that the courses they offer can avoid dropping out of school, they refuse any association of their target audience with NEET (word they never use) or even with ESL. The invisibility to which the NEETs and the ESLs are voted in the discourses and practices of the interviewees but also of some politicians makes them a *non-problem* and therefore a socially invisible group for LLL policies, even for those that are formally intended for them. This means that LLL policies in region can be considered effective for those young adults who are included but rather ineffective for those who are excluded and difficult to reach '*because they are lost and out of the system*' (E_PT_AL_7).

Another aspect worth mentioning is the naturalization of the gender bias. Respondents agree that there is a differentiated gender distribution according to the courses. Courses aimed at industry and some areas of agriculture are predominantly attended by boys while those in services are mostly attended by girls. The main reasons advanced are cultural and relate to what is said to be the difficult change in traditional gender labour division in both the public and private spheres.

And so it is natural that this difference, shall we say. It does not have so much to do with us, we accept them, we do not discriminate, it was what lacked more. Now it has to do with the aptness and the perspective of life that they may have. In fact, the men who work in these sectors, both in maintenance and welders, circulate a lot, both in the region and outside the region. And they know it, even because they see the parents, they see the family, they go to Switzerland, they go here, they go there, and what can happen is often that they do not anticipate this kind of life. Therefore, in one way or another, poorly or well, women are still a bit the anchor of families, it is the mainstay, it is the one who supports the family (E_PT_AL_1).

this has to do with, perhaps, with ... I do not know why exactly, but the explanation I find is that, therefore, agriculture was much more man-oriented, was not it? And tourism, girls as hotel receivers, as tour guide, is always connoted more to the woman. I do not know why. But it's always been like that, has not it? Our society is very sexist in this aspect yet, we have not yet been able to overcome this barrier, have we? And maybe that's why families, we're in the province, it's still not easy to change minds, is not it? (E_PT_AL_5).

However, when asked about the existence of some strategy to increase the number of women in the more masculinized courses, the answer was always negative.

As with gender bias, the pregnancy dropout also seems to be a natural phenomenon and for which seems to be no solution. As mentioned earlier, several cases of young pregnant women who dropped out of school were reported, but there was no mention of the need to implement strategies to enable young mothers to pursue studying. Once again we are faced with a *non-problem*, which, because it is not, does not need a solution.

A problem reported by the interviewees refers to what we can name by competition for students, although mitigated by the young people who are the reason for its existence. This competition stems from several factors. One of them is the reduced birth rate. As one interviewee put it, *'if there are no more young people, if the birth rate does not abound, they cannot walk around, can they?'* (E_PT_AL_6). Another is a profound change in the strategies of regular schools. As one of the interviewees explained:

There were young people that the school, at the time, also did not want to keep, it did not give them way, (these youngsters) created problems to them and they even saw with good eyes they come to the training centres. And that too is over. So young people, regardless of not liking or not wanting to stay in school, now stay. And there was a rearrangement of the offers and the way the students worked, and they started offering more appropriate courses and this kept the students more in school (E_PT_AL_7).

A direct consequence of this change in strategy is the greatest difficulty in achieving the number of young people required either to start the courses, which vary between 15 and 22 or to ensure the viability of professional schools.

So, this year we already have 76 registrations. We need 100, 25 are missing. We are convinced they will show up. This is vital for us! (E_PT_AL_6).

3.2. Analysis of interviews with experts in Vale do Ave

3.2.1 Antecedents, objectives, expected outcomes and evaluation of LLL policies

Vale do Ave is commonly described by the experts interviewed as an industrial region with a long tradition of textile-based manufacturing. However, this economic activity has taken different forms across time. In an earlier stage, there was a huge need for factory labour:

A high percentage of the population, about 60% to 70%, who left in the fourth year of schooling, went to work in the textile industry. There were big textile companies that absorbed 3000-4000 employees. These people worked their lifetime eight hours per day, with repetitive work, and they did not need to have great knowledge (E_PT_VdA_5).

Under this scenario of a significant supply of factory labour, particularly in a context characterised by many families experiencing poverty and social exclusion, integration into the labour market was more appealing than investment in schooling. In a later stage, changes in the economic industrial sector due to globalisation and technological development brought new challenges to the labour market:

With the growth of production in other countries, the increase of technologies, and the economic movement itself, factories were closed, others opened and had a need for technical staff. Someone who does not necessarily have to be an engineer, but

who has to understand English, knows enough about computing to understand how a machine works, and is capable of producing 1000 pieces. Besides, only a fifth of the labour force that was necessary 10 years ago is needed today (E_PT_VdA_5).

Nowadays, the industry requires a smaller workforce; however, this workforce has to be more skilled than before and this is seen as problematic in a context of a lack of qualified workers. Furthermore, factories nowadays have advanced-manufacturing technologies that can boost productivity and competitiveness. Nevertheless, they also promote the transformation of the labour market, contributing to the rise of unemployment, which becomes an educational problem:

The current situation of the labour market, with this extreme destruction of work relationships and even the growth of structural unemployment, which will certainly continue to increase, and other changes that are occurring put very complicated challenges to initial training systems (E_PT_VdA_4).

According to Census 2011, Vale do Ave had a high youth unemployment rate, especially among women. Hence:

When speaking about the Intermunicipal Community of Vale do Ave, we are talking about a group of municipalities that were plagued by the crisis, particularly within the textile industry. Additionally, illiteracy still exists, and it is something that embarrasses us. Despite the so proclaimed equality of rights, the rate of illiteracy and secondary education attainment of women is still high. Also, the rate of students that do not complete secondary education is very high; so, with no certification, these people will increase the youth NEET's (neither in education, employment or training) rate. Therefore, we must invest in adult education with double certification - not only the academic but also professional - that is, to capacitate them for entry into the labour market (E_PT_VdA_1).

In a nutshell, school disaffection, illiteracy, absenteeism, grade retention, and early school leaving before achieving the compulsory secondary education certification, particularly among young people and women, and consequently unemployment, are among the most pressing and challenging problems to be tackled by lifelong learning (LLL) policies. The dominant political rhetoric tends to frame these problems by using an educational deficit framework; therefore, the main approach is based on the premise that investment in education and training will improve the qualification levels, reduce unemployment, and tackle social exclusion, particularly among young adults. So, LLL policies in the Vale do Ave region transcend the education sector and require the involvement of the labour market, the social and the youth sectors, in the definition and implementation of the LLL measures in three contexts, such as a Local Contract for Social Development, a Qualifica Centre, and a private school with vocational education and training, as illustrated below.

From January 2016 to December 2018, the CLDS project will be being promoted by the City Council of Vila Nova de Famalicão, coordinated by the vocational education and training school CIOR, developed and implemented by CIOR in partnership with

Engenho (a private social solidarity institution) and PASEC (a non-governmental organisation).

Each of the three intervention areas comprises a set of activities, the execution of which is based on an action plan developed by the Executive Committee of the Local Council for Social Action (CLAS) with regard to the Plan for Social Development, which *“was elaborated by inter-parish social commissions and validated by the CLAS (...), therefore, this a social policy that departs from the commissions and returns to the commissions”* (E_PT_VdA_2).

The first intervention area is “Employment, Training and Qualification”, and is mainly focused on youth’s transition to labour market. This is the most important axis, and therefore consumes more time and encompasses more activities, such as: employment and entrepreneurship workshops where, during 10 hours, divided into five sessions, groups of unemployed people have the opportunity to identify some issues on employment. The contents of these workshops are explored by the CLDS teamwork, in articulation with the Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP) the Professional Integration Office (GIP), and the PROEMP Office, which is a project to support employability in a more individualised way. In this office, people get help to create their curricula, prepare themselves for an interview, look for a job in social networks and electronic platforms, or develop an idea into a project; there are also short-term courses for camp monitors, specifically youths who neither study nor work, or who are finishing their studies, where they are trained to work with other youths. The CDLS also provided technical support to the organisation and dissemination of an Employment Market that gathered 40 enterprises from the four regional strategic sectors (textiles, metallurgy, metal-mechanical and agri-food), as well as all temporary-work agencies from the region, and unemployed people. Furthermore, there were keynote speakers talking about what has changed in the last years in each strategic sector, as well as the competencies required to get into the labour market.

The second axis of intervention is “Family and Parental Intervention, Preventing Childhood Poverty”. It is mainly dedicated to raising awareness and preventing violence and abuse. To do so, the CDLS works mostly in partnership with schools and the National Children and Youth at Risk Protection Commission (CPCJ). There are workshops in citizenship-related topics of particular interest to families, such as domestic management, nutrition, low cost healthy meals or self-medication, are explored.

The third axis of intervention is “Community and Institutions Capacity Building”. It comprises a set of activities directed towards people, civil society organisations and enterprises. Particularly oriented to the unemployed and disabled youth, it includes meetings on entrepreneurship, innovation and investment where existing incentives to support job and enterprises creation, such as the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ), Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP), or the city council initiative “Made IN”, are presented. Moreover, there are also one-week micro-business internships available to youths in secondary school who do not have any internship in

their curricula due to particularities of their personal and educational paths. Regarding the work with civil society organisations, for example, the CDLS and a local youth association called IUPI are developing a project together, where during five sessions, a school, a class, and a private social welfare entity (IPSS) are invited to develop a particular intervention. Briefly, the school chooses the IPSS, and then the IPSS defines the issue to be solved, and, finally, the students develop a project that must be presented to both the school and the IPSS, and then implemented.

The public school with vocational education and training (VET) was created in 1864 to fulfil the labour demands of the industrial sector, particularly of the textile manufacturing. Nowadays, this school still provides vocational education and training, namely professional courses, modular training units (e.g., informatics; English), and adult education and training (EFA) courses (school or double certification). Since the beginning of 2016, this school also hosts a Qualify Centre under the umbrella of the Qualify programme, which is an adult qualification program aimed at improving the levels of adult education and training, contributing to the improvement of the national qualification and the employability rates. This programme is based on a qualification strategy that integrates educational and training responses and diverse instruments that promote the effective adult qualification, involving a collaboration network between different public and private entities. In these centres, people aged 18 and over, who are seeking qualification, can find specialized information, counselling and guidance to vocational education and training courses.

The private professional school (EPR) has been providing vocational educational and training courses for 27 years, aimed at preparing qualified citizens for active life and students trying to improve or acquire skills to answer the demands of the labour market. EPR's main goal has been to raise the employability of young people through professional training.

Concerning their target group, EPR receives students from the age of 15 and under the age of 18, which means that sometimes they finish training when they are 20 years old. The EPR has always responded to adults, active employees and unemployed active people. The EPR is also part of the Qualify's network, responding to the educational needs of unemployed active people. Specifically, EPR offers courses in five training areas: production management, for all production units that have production processes; electronics, automation and command and industrial maintenance, which is very directed to the maintenance of industrial equipment; processing and food quality control, which makes perfect sense in the region since there are four clusters of economic development and one of them is the food area; and the plastic polymer processing area, which is a new area in the Centre and North of Portugal. Before EPR had this last area as an offer in professional education, there was only a transformation of plastic polymers course at the higher education level, at the University of Minho. EPR felt the need for professional training, and this need was also felt by some of the partner companies, mainly in the automotive sector, who work with plastic injection and did not have qualified technical staff.

When inquired regarding the LLL policies evaluation processes, none of the interviewees concretely identified any formal evaluation strategy, mechanisms or instruments developed to assess the impact of the LLL policies. In Portugal, there is a strong tendency in the political discourses to evaluate the impact of the LLL policies in terms of desirable outcomes. This means that the studies conducted on impact are carried out by national governmental structures and have largely focused on employability rate. At the end, the results of these studies are one of the criteria used for fulfil the European Structural Funds' requirements.

The interviewees constantly identify barriers to fulfilling the agreed and expected outcomes of the Qualify programme. This is mostly due to the low number of human resources, particularly admin staff and professionals specialised in adult education; the low number of available VET courses, which is a consequence of a decrease in funded training centres; and to the fact that the minimum number of people required to form a group in the various training and literacy programmes is too high: therefore, it is not only difficult to actually open those courses but, when they do open, it becomes quite hard to work efficiently with such large groups. The interviewees underline that these constraints emerge from the fact that LLL programmes depend entirely on European funding, without this financing there would be no LLL in Portugal. Therefore, the coordinator of the Qualify Centre argues that LLL provision should have the same political status as regular education; this means that the State budget should allocate, permanently, a much large share of funds to Adult Education.

The CNE is an independent advisory body on national educational matters, promoting debates between social, economic and cultural interest groups, to reach consensus on educational matters, as well as producing statements and recommendations with no binding character on these issues. As explained by the CNE member interviewed, the "governments are elected by voted proposals and, therefore, it makes no sense the existence of an entity with power to hamper such measures" (E_PT_VdA_4). In any case, the interviewee criticises the fact that the national governments do not request more often CNE consultation and evaluation services for the education policies they want to implement, as it would be expected. As the interviewee explained:

There are governments in a rush to do in four years [of their term of office] what others have never done in 40 years [of the democratic regime]. (...) Sometimes they do not even know if they will be there for four years, they want to do things all from one day to another and, therefore, they do not even listen to the CNE because they say it will take longer (E_PT_VdA_4).

3.2.2. Characteristics of the target groups

Finally, the target group of the CDLS intervention are *"the unemployed young adults and adults, the beneficiaries of the Social Integration Income [a type of minimum guaranteed income for the severely dispossessed] or young people with difficulties of school integration, therefore, (...) in a fringe of the population that, effectively, needs intervention"* (E_PT_VdA_2). The CLDS project, then, is mainly focused on acting

preventively, defining young adults as the main target group. Particularly, regarding the youths who neither study nor work, the interviewees working in the CLDS programme complain that there is no accurate and reliable information (number, location, or background) about them, making it quite difficult to reach this important target group.

There is a CDLS team focused on the prevention of early school leaving which, in partnership with a local school, works with problematic youths, mostly gypsies. This means youths with two or more school retentions, or with serious social and behavioural problems; they implement a weekly intervention based on non-formal methodologies. There is also the React Project, a mentoring programme for youths who neither study nor work, where each youngster is partnered with a CDLS professional who invites him/her to share his/her experiences and to become an element that helps in work with other youths. In a nutshell, the purpose of this programme is to *“understand a little what the youth wants, what the youth needs, and then, when we have actions with other youths, he/she is also an element who gives advice, because he/she has already gone through the situation, for example, school dropout, or an internship”* (E_PT_VdA_2).

The beneficiaries of the Qualifica programme are, as already noted, mainly people over 18 with a very diverse educational and professional background; for instance, people with or without minimum compulsory education (12 years), people who are illiterate, short- or long-term unemployed, at-risk or effectively employed, or retired. These people can contact the Qualify Centre by their own initiative or referred by other institutions (e.g., IEF, CPCJ). Again, likewise the previous LLL measure, the voluntary character of the participation in the programme is positively assessed. People are sometimes legally obliged to attend this programme, but even if they end up enjoying the experience, it would be much more desirable and coherent with the basis of the conceptual and ethical framework of LLL policies that they might be able to choose to enrol in it or not.

3.2.3. Policies and Young Adults

Specifically, the professionals at the field of vocational educational training interview the beneficiaries of the vocational educational training provision, who describe their personal, educational and professional paths and share their intentions and expectations. Then, according to the individual characteristics and backgrounds, different solutions and offers can be designed and presented by the professionals. Just to give some examples: if someone is illiterate, he/she is recommended to a literacy programme; if the beneficiary is a young adult who abandoned school early but is still within the age of compulsory education, he/she is oriented to integrate an Adult Education and Training course in a specific level and professional area, depending on his/her educational level and interest; alternatively, if the beneficiary is someone over 18 who did not complete basic education (nine years), or someone above 23, who did not finish secondary school (12 years), they may be guided to a Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences programme, which is an alternative for people who have life trajectories that enabled them to go through particular and valuable learning

experiences. Besides the previous education and training opportunities, sometimes recreational and cultural activities are identified by the professional and made available to all the beneficiaries.

In monitoring the process of the match between the supply and demand of competences and skills in the functional region, the managers are always looking to listen to entrepreneurs in order to identify their real needs and interests, as well as to understand what is missing in terms of qualifications to increase youth employability. Even if the main goal of the LLL measures is quite hard to achieve because integration into the labour market is an issue that goes beyond the increase in schooling and professional qualification. So, this LLL programme also contributes to create learning experiences where young adults and adults have opportunities to better interpret the world and take more sustainable decisions.

Finally, the interviewees consider that the LLL measures confront social inequality and discrimination, especially among women and minority ethnic groups:

For example, the people who for many years stood at the door of the school and are now adults can return, perhaps, to school's external offer. This is the case of women, who have a lower certification rate (...) [or the] Gypsy ethnic group, of which there is still a large group here in Guimarães, who do not know how to read or write, and therefore a way to reduce this discrimination is to make them literate (E_PT_VdA_1).

The interviewees consider that this LLL measure helps young people to carry on their everyday life, as can be perceived by the increased number of young people who complete compulsory secondary education or get into the labour market, and also that it empowers them to make better decisions. However, the CLDS team recognise that more significant results have been achieved when young people come voluntarily to the programme, contrary to what happens when they find themselves forced to enrol in it (e.g., the young people at risk channelled by the CPCJ).

On the whole, the interviewees believe it is very difficult to evaluate the impact and outcomes of this educational policy, since education processes have no immediate effects: *"maybe in three or four years, or maybe a bit later"* (E_PT_VdA_1). Notwithstanding, the interviewees working in this measure believe in the positive impact of this policy on the economic and social development of the region, as well as in the personal and social development of young adults, and their labour market integration, by *"showing them alternatives, and giving them instruments"* (E_PT_VdA_5), and *"enabling them with decision-making skills"* (E_PT_VdA_1). They also evaluate these education and training programmes as having a valuable effect on the self-esteem of the beneficiaries. While the ultimate goal of these programmes is to increase qualification to reduce youth unemployment, this is a very complex goal to achieve because more certification does not is not necessarily synonym with more jobs. This requires a systemic approach, as stated by one interviewee: *"it is not only about politics, it is also about a whole set of economic, social, and familiar conditions" that influence young adults' life trajectories* (E_PT_VdA_1).

3.2.4. Actors and responsibilities in LLL policies

The competences and skills defined as necessary in the different education levels are integrated into the key competences reference framework, *“which was elaborated by European references, and that is what defines what a 21st century adult is, even if it was elaborated in the 20th century”* (E_PT_VdA_5). The definition and implementation of the vocational education training provision *“is decided entirely in an office in Lisbon; it is ANQEP [National Agency for Qualification and Professional Learning] that chooses. We can obviously disagree with this, and we do, and sometimes even make formal expositions, but that is inside the Lisbon office”* (E_PT_VdA_1). Even so, on the ground, this initiative depends on a network of partnerships with relevant local and national actors and institutions (e.g., parishes and city councils, schools, training centres, priests, CPCJ, IEFP, GIP) *“due to the need to monetise resources”* (E_PT_VdA_5). The centre is part of a network that effectively tries [to apply] the SANQ (System of Qualification’s Needs Forecast) under the coordination of CIM Ave:

Here we try to integrate information from the training entities of the Qualify Centre, starting from the training courses requested by the adults themselves and the employers, and the information provided by IEFP. (...) the goal consists in articulating every new anticipation of needs defined at the national level to what is specific to this region, because Ave does have very specific characteristics (E_PT_VdA_5).

Thus, Policymakers have decided which competencies should be taken into account by this LLL policy after listening to the enterprises, that is, to what the economic sectors define as a priority. A case study is always made and defined in terms of what the sectors outline as a priority. The interviewees consider that the school has to respond to what the market actually needs:

That is why this work is done based on a diagnosis of needs, which is then confronted with the diagnosis of CIM Ave. Our advantage is the strength that our education and training network has already acquired and the prestige acquired with the Ministry of Education, which often allows us to counter some guidelines that come from the diagnoses made by the IEFP, CIM Ave, and that we locally managed to advance with training in areas that were not considered as priorities in diagnoses, but which are validated by enterprises. It makes perfect sense for us to work this way (E_PT_VdA_6).

The vocational education system contributes to the social and economic development of the region by creating human resources, which is what companies need to be productive. One manager states that the great source of wealth is human resources. Preparing students for the labour market is not only about technical skills, but also about many other skills:

Training employees is what enterprises need. As stated by the enterprises, the great source of wealth is human resources. It is not useful to have a very good sales agenda or high-tech equipment if you do not have the skilled human resources

ready to work. This preparation is not only about technical skills, but it also has to do with the other skills. Nowadays, the enterprises need people trained for mobility, for availability, and language skills (E_PT_VdA_6).

The experts working in the field of vocational educational and training have a very positive and strong perception of the social relevance of this LLL policy, which is similar to what happens in other developed European countries:

Therefore, I think that to go in the line of professional courses turns out to be an added value for the whole business fabric and looking at the examples of the countries out there, it is a bit this policy that is followed, namely by Germany. I believe that is an example to follow, likewise all the technical development that Germany has undergone and which has made it possible for enterprises to have skilled labour (E_PT_VdA_7).

The CNE member interviewed considers that, more than ever, the schools should enable young people to manage their lives, endowing them with a large spectrum of skills for life, going beyond the exclusive fulfilling of the labour market needs and expectations:

Because people will find themselves dealing with very different things in the future from the point of view of work, employment, and their lives. Therefore, the whole question of the production of qualifications in terms of initial training has to be rethought not only in the light of the region and the country, but in the light of this new reality that is quite global and that will affect everything and everyone (E_PT_VdA_4).

Moreover, this interviewee criticises the Portuguese education system, more concretely the “system of production of initial qualifications”, for creating rigid distinctions within the educational offer (e.g., general courses, professional, learning, artistic courses, etc.), therefore, more versatility is needed in order to answer to the educational needs and challenges of a rapidly changing world. To not neglect the specificities of the regional educational needs, the interviewee explains that is important to give more autonomy to schools to manage part of their curricula.

3.2.5. Strategies to face “wiked problems”

The establishment of partnerships is of the utmost importance to defining and implementing the CLDS project, since its “work methodology” is based on a logic of “networking, joining efforts and resources, and CDLS is a kind of a booster” (E_PT_VdA_2). Yet, while acknowledging the positive impact of the networking, the interviewees recognise that sometimes “it is difficult to articulate and to understand the logics of network functioning without being intrusive, because our goal is not to intrude, but rather to activate and to enhance” (E_PT_VdA_2). For instance, there is an overlap in some intervention areas between the CLDS and GIP.

Beyond the challenges presented by the labour market itself to the achievement of CDLS's mission and goals, the interviewees outline the need for effective investment in vocational training opportunities, and also more economic and human resources:

I think that, for the ambition of the project, for its objectives, it has a very small financing; it does not make much sense, it is not logical, there is no coherence between what is legally asked and the work we have to do. It is not easy, this methodology of working in a network, I want to stress it as well, it is not easy, it requires a lot of effort on our part, it requires a lot of persistence and the results will not be seen in the short term (E_PT_VdA_2).

Last year, for example, they had a huge demand for the industrial maintenance area, which is an area with a very high demand here in the region and there is no capacity from schools to make available a sufficient number of graduates. Thus, due to the close relationship that exists between professional schools and local enterprises:

A company became available to finance an entire action, a three-year course. This is unprecedented at the country level, there is no example, we made this proposal to the Ministry of Education, which granted the possibility of opening this action and the group is operating with its own funding. This means that there are three years of full training, all student allowances, all trainers, all the technical material that is required for training, and in these areas equipment is required, study visits, scholarships for on-the-job training and more, and these students have it all because there is a company that is replacing the government in funding. We are talking about an investment of about 300.000€ (E_PT_VdA_6).

Funding, bureaucracy, and timings are the main problems that tend to affect the implementation of the LLL measures. Many interviewees complained that they do not know what they will be able to do the following year, as due to funding issues they cannot do what they want and need, as they are only allowed to open a limited number of classes.

Just as previously described, the proximity and articulation with the local enterprises are valued and necessary to maximise the human and material resources available in the implementation of the LLL programmes:

This proximity enables us to be near the institutions and to have the human resources. At the moment, the school is empty because we have sent students for internships: an entire building dedicated to Continental [a tire company], in which they do training for the employees, and this training is being done inside the EPR facilities, with the participation of EPR teachers, who both giving and receiving training. This means that our technical professors have the possibility of integrating the training groups of the companies. Also, they give training to companies, there is sharing of knowledge here, which is very valid, because then they bring the knowledge and contents to the curriculum we have developed, to make it as close together as possible (E_PT_VdA_6).

At the moment, for instance, there are 25 companies associated with EPR and these are companies that have a stake in the school: they have responsibilities towards the school, and they are part of its governing bodies. In addition to these associated companies, EPR has a set of partners constituted by hundreds of enterprises. When the students of EPR finish their professional training, they either go to the university or get to work in one of the partner enterprises. In addition to actors from the industrial and business sector, other EPR partners include, for example, a private university from the Vale do Ave region that offers scholarships (fee reduction) for the two best students of each year. At the regional level, EPR is integrated into the local education and training network, in which all the schools and other training entities of the municipality participate. This network also includes those entities that are deemed as contributing to and enriching young people's education and training, like enterprises, IEFP, and the city council. When inquired regarding the conflicts that this LLL policy may provoke among the participants, the interviewees reported that, after so many years of successful networking, the participants already have the capacity to manage and overcome conflicts, and to arrive at decisions that are valuable to those who are involved in the process:

There is no point in having different interests, it's in everyone's best interest to be in the market, that each one does what they know best, according to each one's quality and skills, and the answers should be those that the municipality and the region need, both in quantity and in diversity. To arrive at this final proposal, obviously, there is discussion, I would not say conflict. The result is positive; if this discussion did not take place, we would possibly be here running over each other and maybe we could not do a job with the quality and assertiveness with which we do (E_PT_VdA_6).

4. Analysis of Interviews with young adults

4.1. Young adults in the functional region of Alentejo Litoral

4.1.1. Biographies of interviewees in Alentejo Litoral

In Table 3 it is possible to have a glance at selected issues present in the biographies of the nine young adults (YA) interviewed in the Alentejo Litoral FR (ALFR). The table also brings forward a proposed classification of the YA in terms of life projects and their expectations, which will be further explained when answering the first research question. Roughly, the criterion assisting the life project classification considers the cases where a connection between biography – school trajectory – vocational project was established or not. In the affirmative case, if an explicit life project was described, it was considered as Elaborate; in case of an undefined life project, it was classified of Uncertain. In the negative case, the life project was considered Blurred. As for the expectations, it relates to the next-step to take by the YA.

As seen in the table, the sample includes 3 females and 6 males, ranging 18 to 29 years old. With the exception of one, all come from a working class family; two of them have migration backgrounds on their direct families.

Table 3. Patterns of young adult interviewees biographies at the functional region of Alentejo Litoral

Code	Age	Gender	Socio-economic background	Life project	Expectations
Y_PT_AL_1	19	F	Working class	Elaborate	To get a job
Y_PT_AL_2	19	M	Working class	Uncertain	VET seeker
Y_PT_AL_3	18	F	Middle class	Uncertain	Wait and See
Y_PT_AL_4	18	M	Working class	Uncertain	Wait and See
Y_PT_AL_5	27	M	Working class	Uncertain	To accomplish 12th grade
Y_PT_AL_6	22	M	Working class	Uncertain	To accomplish 12th grade
Y_PT_AL_7	19	M	Working class	Elaborate	To get a job
Y_PT_AL_8	22	M	Working class	Elaborate	To get a job
Y_PT_AL_9	29	F	Working class	Uncertain	To accomplish 9th grade

Next, the summaries of the biographical interviews are presented, including the main elements of the YA life stories, school trajectories, experience with LLL policies and VET in particular, finishing with the life plans and next steps.

Y_PT_AL_1 is 19 years old and was born in City 10. Her parents moved often of place and so Ana attended 4 different schools in that region until the 8th grade, where they finally got a stable home in city 7, near the mother's family. In the meantime her parents got separated. Moving was only difficult from the school where she attended from the 5th to the 8th grade, as she never spent much time on the other schools. She now lives with her mother and twin sister in city 7. She only failed at the 8th grade, before knowing she were moving school again. She was more interested in drawing and nail fashion than in studying the school subjects. She failed Portuguese and Mathematics. Parents never worried much about school although wanting her to finish the 12th grade. Her twin sister went to a VET option in the 8th grade. She repeated the 8th and finished school at the 9th. She then was looking for a specific training on nail fashion, her great passion but all demanded the 12th grade, and she had only the 9th. When she was 18, looked for a job during the summer months to earn enough money to get her drivers' licence. While waiting for the Aestheticism Course to open at the Training Course 2 she still enrolled in the Receptionist Professional Course. It is the same course her sister is attending at the moment, in a private school in city 7, which she left as soon as the course she was waiting for finally opened. She takes 3 buses to

go to the Training Centre and come back, leaving at 6:30 in the morning. She learned drawing by herself, not at school. The drawing passion came first then the nails fashion. She was first initiated to paint at pre-school. She learned the nail painting technics with tutorials at the youtube. Her parents always supported her. Mother has the 11st grade and makes pizza in a restaurant. Her father has the 4th grade and is a truck driver.

Y_PT_AL_2 is 20 years. He was born in city 11 and then came to city 1 at the age of 2 because of his father's work. He lives with his mother. Father and mother were interested in the school and would like him to be above average and to study until the 12th year. He failed once at the 4th grade, as his mother and himself believed he was not ready to the 5th grade. He failed 5 times at the 6th grade due to attendance faults. He met new people and started smoking and a low life. He was only interested in one or two classes. His favourite's were Sciences, History, Informatics and Sports. He was more interested in Skating, Music. He believes his 1st flunk was a consequence of a tension between a teacher and his mother after a class situation. At some point he was tired of always hearing the same thing and kept failing until actually leaving school before the year finished, when he knew he would fail again. He then went to work in a carpenter shop, from a family's friend, at city 9, which went bankrupt and he did not find any work after that. He register in a training centre and he was forwarded to the training centre 2, and waited one year to the Wall Painting course to start. During this waiting. time he would go to the beach, write lyrics, do grafittis, shoot videoclips. He has already completed a level 2 course in Wall Painting. At the moment he is at the Welding course but believes it was a bad choice, as he did not adapted to the welding machines. He changed his attitude to a more responsible one after hearing some friends' and family advices. He stopped smoking when he met his girlfriend at this training centre, Y_PT_AL_3 . He would like to choose an Arts Course or even better Culinary but the course had already started when he first found this centre. Both his parents have the 4th grade, and both are from Angola. She is an Hairdresser and he is a maritime traffic controller. His sister is 29 years, has a high education degree in Health and Safety and works at an Oil Company.

Y_PT_AL_3 is 18 years old. She was born 100 km from the City 1, where she is living now with her mother and stepfather for 10 years, since she was in the 4th grade. Her father died when a baby. Her mother is a specialized kindergarten teacher and the stepfather is a business man with secondary education. She is the oldest of four sisters and one brother, only one of them from the same mother. One other sister is adopted. At weekends and holidays, returns to the home town, where her extended family is still living. She did pre-school. Failed twice, at the 8th grade and at the 10th. The first time was dued to personal reasons, which she now regrets. She changed school at the 4th year, when moving to City A, then at the 7th year, when entering the second cycle of basic education and when coming to the actual course at the Training Centre 2, outside the City 1. Her mother is present in the school path and at some point paid extra

teachers to support her in homework when started working but never insisted with her to study. Maria had many dream professions, such as hairdresser, marine biologist, fashion design. She also wanted to be a psychologist, therefore coursed humanities in the secondary school but she did not like to study every day, so she failed. She then started a professional course offered at the same school in tourism, which was going well but she dropped out when finding the actual course at the Training Centre 2, through a friend, thinking it had more to do with her interests: fashion, beauty and all that it is related. At this point the parents are disappointed as were expecting her to enter university and at the moment do not support her project of becoming an hairdresser, imagining that she soon will drop out. At the moment she spends the day at the training centre. She found a boyfriend who became a reason to continue, at a moment of thinking to give up the course.

Y_PT_AL_4 is 18 years old and was born in City 4, where he is still living. His mother is Portuguese and his father comes from Angola. He lives with his mother, grandparents and a younger brother. His mother has secondary education. She works at a charity for young girls. His father has the 6th grade works in the construction site and is now living in the Netherlands. Did pre-school and failed at the 4th grade, and was not sure if he had also failed at the 5th, failed at the 6th and again at the 7th for missing classes, miss behaviour and lack of interest. From then on, he passed all grades because was included in an alternative path. He was informed by the psychologist, and the mother agreed on, advised by a teacher. His mother has accompanying his school path helping with homework. When finishing the 9th grade he was 17 years old and was forwarded to the Training Centre 2 where his alternative path was not recognised and therefore had to repeat the path from the 6th to the 9th. His motivation to attend the actual course is to get the minimum qualification to get a job, as he believes it is impossible to get employed with less than the 12th grade. He asked for the course of Electricity or Welding but the only option at that centre was Gardening, which he does not like. At the moment he only misses the practice of Gardening and risks not finishing the module. When he was 16 he worked in a restaurant during summer holidays for almost two months. In continuation, he worked for the same time at a windows business. After that went back to the restaurant. He found the jobs by friends who indicated him to the job. His dream work is to sit at a desk printing sheets of paper or work at an office. Or to be a welder and work abroad and earn 1000 eur free of taxes, enough to sustain a family.

Y_PT_AL_5 has 27 years old and was born in city 11, outside de region of Alentejo, and came to city 1 because of the girlfriend. His parents got separated when he was 7 and his father cut contact which left him in a psychological tension which lead him to a psychologist. He moved school at the 1st grade and lost one year, doing again the 1st grade, not remembering way. He only failed on the 6th year and left school with the 8th grade. He abandoned school by his own initiative to get a job to help the economic situation of her mother and went to work in a restaurant near home. He came back to finish the 9th year. After finishing it he enrolled in an apprenticeship course in the

training centre from the same network of the training centre 2, in city 11. He ended up dropping out because he had to arrive 15min late due to the bus schedule, receiving an attendance fault each time and the training centre manager did not accepted this situation; he dropped out since he would fail anyway due to the attendance faults. Then he worked until now. He first worked in a supermarket, restaurant and grape picking. In the last three years he has been working in a company with industrial maintenance services to the termo-electric and nuclear power plants, in a temporary regime, of one, two months and after stopping for 2 weeks until being called again. This is a multinational company to whom he sent a spontaneous application. He enjoys this area of industrial maintenance. As registered at the employment centre, he has been called to attend some trainings, such as hygiene and safety at the work place or informatics, which he attended so not to stay at home doing nothing. Last year he received a postcard at home for an interview at the Employment Centre. He saw the opportunity to get the 12th grade, in order to get a better job since this activity he is doing does not allow a family life, for the amount of time spent away from home. He had already lost job opportunities because he didn't have the 12th grade. He even cancelled a work contract in order to attend this EFA course at Training Centre 2. At the moment he lives with his parents in law. His mother has the 5th grade and is an assistant at a charity. Her partner has the 12th and works at a Supermarket. His brother has 19 years old and has the 9th grade.

Y_PT_AL_6 has 22 years old was born in City 10 and lives in a farm outside City 12. He always lived with his parents. He went to school in City 12 and did it straight until the 9th grade, where it is time to change to city 5, where the secondary education is. Since he was 14 he helps at his father's agro-business. He likes to draw and chose Arts at the regular secondary school. He didn't find interest in study and was more interested in girlfriends, motorbikes and cars. He achieved the end of the school year with attainment and changed school, enrolling in Renewable Energies Course at the City 12 Professional School. Almost at the end of the second year was expelled by the director who did not like that he had taken a stand pointing out the lack of workshop material to study. His colleagues organised a petition to the Director to accept him back but was useless. Right after he started working with the chain saw, cutting wood, during some months under the hot Alentejo sun. Then at the City 10 vegetable greenhouses for other few months, picking fruit boxes all day and tagging them all through. Finally, he took part at the cork extraction campaign, that last for 3 months non stop, as a cork carrier. All these he found inhumane works. He also worked one year at a drugstore, indicated by a friend, filling little bags of nails and screws, spending hours in a row without seeing the sun, also not for him. His father never supported his working experiences, as he was wanting him working at the farm. Finally, he decided to stay at his father' farm business, sowing, harvesting, animal feeding, ploughing... for two years and a half until enrolling in this actual course. He decided to finish the 12th grade in order to get a job, go abroad, or create his own business project. He has already been in contact with his father's lawyer, to know how to put his own business.

He registered in the employment centre, earning the unemployment benefit and has been receiving the usual postcards for a meeting at the local government office to see about job and training offers, but he never accepted any. When he decided it was time to finish compulsory schooling he asked the same office about the existing courses. He chose electric installations because he likes it. He likes to weld to fix tools, to forge knives, to draw, to drive his motorbike, to go to the beach. He is now spending the week in City 13 and goes home for the weekends. His parents pay the expenses. His mother did the 12th grade in a process of prior learning and recognition and works as a supervisor at a fruit transformation industry. His father is a night security 9th grade.

Y_PT_AL_7 is 19 years old. He was born in England. His mother descends from Portuguese living in England. She married in Portugal and went back to England. Júlio came to Portugal with a year old. He was raised by his uncle and aunt until his parents came one year after. His parents got separated when he was 6 then came together when he was 7 and all went to England. It was difficult leaving friends and not knowing the language. The mother and father were working at the same hospital, she as a nurse position even though she did not study for it, the father he does not know. During this time the father became very aggressive towards him and the mother and they definitely got separated. With 9-10 years he had to walk 3,4 kilometres to school and come back, sunny or snow. In the free time he would read a 500 page book in a week. With 12 or 13 years old his mother and him came back and he joined the 7th grade. Since then, he lives at City 8 at his grandparents' with other 10 elements of the near family, among which his mother, stepfather and a 4 year old brother, in a set of small apartments lodging all family in the same property. It was not easy to learn again the language and specially to adapt to a new school system. In the first evaluation of the year he failed at 8 subjects and at the end of the year he passed all the subjects to the 8th grade. He did all through the secondary school until the 12th grade. His mother never got interested in his school path. Nonetheless, all his choices were made consulting her opinion first. First he thought of going to the university and at the end of the 12th grade he found out that he would like to be a hairdresser. The only economically viable option was to take a course at the training centre 2, which he thought he could not attend if had completed the 12th grade. Then decided to fail at the two main subjects by missing their final exams. He sings and dances hip-hop music giving concerts in cities 5 e 7. With 17 he worked in a restaurant during summer and fall in love with a girl from Lisbon. In September he went to Lisbon to work in a trendy hairdresser, by indication of a cousin also hairdresser. He then lived with his cousin one week, soon moving to outside Lisbon, taking one hour to reach his work. One month later he went away from this place because his boss did not like his accent from Alentejo and the working environment was not comfortable. He ended up coming together with this woman from Lisbon and stayed one year with his aunt near Lisbon to get a driver's licence and visit his girlfriend. After getting the license came back to City 8 and got a summer job to put up sun protection tarps at the beach earning 500€ a month to buy a car, which he did with the help of his mother, father, grandfather, girlfriend and his own work. After this time he found out the hairdresser course was to

open in November and he got in, as he always liked hair fashion. Until it started he also worked at a construction site with his stepfather. Now he attends the Hairdresser course at Training Centre 2, which he very much enjoys.

Y_PT_AL_8 is 22 years old. He was raised by his mother's parents together with his sisters. His parents were living at the attic room and when they got separated, the grandparents kept the parental responsibility of the children, when he was 4. His mother disappeared for two years and when came back was more dedicated to her partner's business than to her children. His father continued living next door. He started school at 6 at his little village, in the margins of the City 3 municipality, with less than 10 children. He failed at the 3rd year. From what his grandmother explained him, the teacher though it would be better for him, as the only one at the 3rd grade, to keep up with the only student at the 2nd grade, and then move together to the big city school. He learned to drive tractors with 7 and along his life did tractor driving at his stepfather business. From the 5th grade to the 9th he attended the school in City 3. When he was 14 his father passed away and he decided to change routine and moved to the professional school of city 5 from the 10th to the 12th in the Restaurant, Kitchen and Bakery Professional School. It was hard transition, as he did not know the town or anyone, ended up in a breakdown, His colleagues and teachers were able to held him and he was able to get professional help and overcame all. After finishing the course he went to the region 2 for a stage in a hotel. At the end he came back to his home town and worked at a fish conservation industry for one year and a half. During this time he quitted and went to a Restaurant to assure all the service, from grill, kitchen and table service as the owner wanted to have only one person and after 15 days he quitted and went back to the factory. He did not renewed his contract due to health reasons and poor working conditions. After, he worked during the high season of the kitchen of the naturist camping in the next village. After that he registered at the Employment Centre and chose the Hairdresser course, for which he waited from June to November. Now he is attending the Hairdresser course at the Training centre 2. Since very young he likes to braid horses and ended up exercising in people. He decided to quit the tourism sector because it is seasonable, it is not well paid, and does not allow to have a personal life. Her mother got pregnant very early and left school at the 5th grade. At the moment does the accounting of her partner's agro-business. His father is employed. Both her sisters did a level 4 VET course. His grandparents paid all the grandchildren's studies. He works at the city 3 municipality driving industrial machines. She works at the same fish conservation factory. Both with the 4th grade. At 4 he started learning to dance afro-latin dances an the Arts Schools of city 1. When he was 20 he and a friend organized a dance classes project for a few months with almost 300 students, which was impossible to conciliate with his job at the fish factory.

Y_PT_AL_9 is 29 years old. She was born outside the Alentejo region and moved to City 9 when she was 7, since the mother came to live with her partner. It was difficult to leave the grandmother back, with whom she had spent so much time. Her mother has the 4th grade and works at a restaurant as a kitchen assistant. The adaptation to school

was good but she failed at the 4th grade. Her mother used to control her homework until getting a job in a restaurant and since then she did not have much time to her children and the control ceased. She failed again at the 7th grade for missing classes due to lack of interest in the classes and in the colleagues. At that moment, with 13 she dropped out school and stayed at home. The mother and step father did not support her leaving school and tried to force her to go to school which did not change her mind and actually the family could do with her support with her younger brother. Soon after became pregnant. . At 14 years old she had her first child. She stayed at home for 4 years taking care of her little brother and daughter. Her mother and stepfather helped her raising her child. In 2005 she came to live in City 3. She worked at a restaurant with 17 during the summer months and after in a Hypermarket, with a contract for 18 months. She worked at the fruit section and as a cashier. Just after the contract finished she got pregnant of her second child, now with 8. and a third with 5 from the partner with whom she now lives. He has the 4th grade and works as temporary worker at the industry sector. Since the second pregnancy she stayed 8 years at home, due to lack of child care nearby. When all her daughters went to school she registered herself at the Employment Centre and came to attend a professional course to finish the 9th grade. She chose the course because she likes very much the Hairdresser.

At this moment we come to the point of looking at the data and the research questions. To be reminded that all interviewed YA were at the moment of the interview attending the Training Centre 2 (TC2), and were at the beginning of a training path on an EFA course.

4.1.2. Target group characteristics

As described earlier at the expert's discourse analysis, target groups' definition depend on the discourse of the VET provider, not necessarily reproducing the official discourse of the policy. This is particularly the case of the policies used by these young adults. The law states that the EFA courses aim at the generalization of upper secondary education and the qualification of the workforce with double certification.

For Y_PT_AL_1, Y_PT_AL_2, Y_PT_AL_3, Y_PT_AL_4, Y_PT_AL_5, Y_PT_AL_6 to have the 12th grade certification is part of the reason to be attending this course. In particular, for Y_PT_AL_2 Y_PT_AL_4, Y_PT_AL_5 and Y_PT_AL_6 their aim to attend a VET provision is to accomplish the 12th grade as the only guarantee to access a decent profession. As we will see later, they do not have defined life plans like Y_PT_AL_1, Y_PT_AL_7 and Y_PT_AL_8 have. Y_PT_AL_4 even states that he is at the training centre forced, because there is no other way to get a job if not with the 12th grade.

And I have to do it by obligation right?(...) Its an obligation. Not really an obligation. It is a duty, practically. (...) Because, for example, I want to go to work. 6th grade? With the 6th year noooooo! No oneeeeeeee takes me (Y_PT_AL_4)

Because..., because you need some, to go abroad or, if someday not, a guy does not know the day of tomorrow, today the 12th grade, like, it's necessary, And like I said a

while ago, to do, to ask for a project or make a project ... or have a company of mine, it takes 12th grade, is half way gone»(Y_PT_AL_6)

The case of Y_PT_AL_1 is quite particular. After the 9th grade she decided to follow her main interest in nail fashion and found out that the courses from the private providers required the 12th grade certificate, that she had not. Besides they were very expensive. In turn, the training centre offers a course with a professional and academic certification without paying the fee requested by the private providers. In the end, having left school was more profitable in order to reach her aim of making a living out of her passion on Aesthetics.

I think I could have struggled to pass every year and then have entered a course paid, but on the one hand, it was better like this, because I can take a course more in account, pay almost nothing and do, at the same time, the 12th (Y_PT_AL_1).

Y_PT_AL_9 has a main goal of getting the 9th grade certification.

The main objective was to take the 9th year, it was not any specific job, it was really to take the 9th year... (Y_PT_AL_9).

From all life stories but the ones of Y_PT_AL_7 and Y_PT_AL_8, we can see that the lack of interest in regular school led to a VET option. Both were the only ones having (almost) finished compulsory education and choosing a vocational education and training course to pursue their professional project. To be mentioned that Y_PT_AL_7 failed on purpose the last 12th grade exams so to attend the actual course, believing he would not be eligible in case of having completed the 12th grade.

I thought that here at the [training] centre, if we had the 12th could not enter. So I stopped going to school. I thought of everything. I did not go to school in the 3rd period. I spent in Psychology, I passed in Biology, I passed in Physical Education, I just did not pass in Portuguese and in Mathematics because I did not do the national exams (Y_PT_AL_7).

Y_PT_AL_8 chose the professional course in order to change routine after his father's death, finishing as a Cook/Baker, never mentioning lack of interest on his regular school path. Actually he is requalifying himself as he did not adapt to his profession high demanding schedules, making impossible his social life, he much appreciates.

It's like this: I've always really liked this area. (...) In professional terms, working at this time on restoration is very complicated. (...) Because it is seasonal. To go to work in the Algarve in the summer is possible, but then they opt for temporary companies. What do temporary companies have? The hotel has a team of 12 people, for example. When it has a larger flow of customers, it hires specific people by the hour, just for those days when it has the most activity and it's over. It's complicated. Then, to be working, a person has no life of her own. I'm 22 years old, I like to go out, to be with my friends, to fraternize, it does not work. Because we only have a schedule to enter the work, but there is no time to leave. The person leaves, but she takes work home because has to think about what has to do for the other day. (...) And it is exhausting. Then you only have one day off per week. It's complicated (Y_PT_AL_8).

In case of Y_PT_AL_5, having lost some job opportunities for lacking upper secondary education certificate, he prioritizes getting it. In order to fulfil this goal, he even

cancelled a temporary job contract previously undertaken, with the temporary job company with which he has been working with since some years but wishing to leave.

And now I wanted to choose to finish 12th, because this is not a life. You can do well, but, hey, man, we're a long way from home. It's hard to organize a life working like that. It's complicated. (...) They told me about a course that was going to open. At the time I even had a job to do at the time course was to open, I had already signed the contract to get the job done, I was still a bit undecided - Shall I go, shall I not" - because the course was to begin on a date, but it started a bit early and I could not go- I had to choose: either I continue and I'm going to finish the 12th grade or it's never, isn't it? I was 27 years old, it's starting to be a bit difficult ... man, and I chose to cancel the contract and come here (Y_PT_AL_5).

As for gender bias, the life story of Y_PT_AL_9 is an extreme example. She dropped out school at 13 years old and took care of her younger siblings. At 14 she got pregnant and became inactive until her 2nd and 3rd children went to school. At 29 years old, with very low academic qualifications and without a job, she was guided to a vocational education and training course.

I would enrol in school, but if I had already too many absences and if I showed that I had no interest in the classes, why would I be there? Besides, I was necessary at home to take care of my brothers. (...) Now my daughters went to school, both of them. My little one also went to school now, and I decided to sign up to see if I could accomplish the 9th grade (Y_PT_AL_9)

Y_PT_AL_2, Y_PT_AL_4, Y_PT_AL_5, Y_PT_AL_6 and Y_PT_AL_9 were called by the Employment Centre to a meeting, as part of the process to handle registered unemployed, and saw the employment service's proposal of attending a course as an opportunity to complete the compulsory education (Y_PT_AL_4, Y_PT_AL_5 and Y_PT_AL_6) or to change their NEET situation (Y_PT_AL_2 and Y_PT_AL_9).

Maybe I heard advice from more different people, my family and my friends. Friends who had already gained that maturity and opened my eyes a little. (...) They said to take a good look at their lives and to see their lives well and mine. Because we both went to school and he studied up to the 12th grade (Y_PT_AL_2).

Now there is an opportunity to take the 12th, which is an asset to me. I've already lost some jobs because of this and it's an area I like (Y_PT_AL_5).

It was because I asked ... I went to the parish council to present myself and asked if there was any course to finish the 12th grade and then they took me to this centre. I was too old to go to professional school again. And since I was expelled, they no longer accepted me. And I had to take 12th grade (Y_PT_AL_6).

We can see all women expressing great interest in stereotypical female professions, such as fashion, hairdressing and nail fashion. To be noticed two male Y_PT_AL_7 and Y_PT_AL_8 share the same interest in hairdressing.

From the socio-economic background presented by the interviewees, almost all come from the working class, with the exception of Y_PT_AL_3, whose mother attended the Higher Education. Actually, she is the only one reporting lack of support from her family over this decision of attending a vocational education and training course. Moreover, she even expresses as her own, the words she hears from her mother on the fact that probably this profession of Aestheticism does not give enough money, making her doubt her choice.

Then, I'm in the Beautician course, and they [mother and stepfather] say that the Aesthetician course does not yield a lot of money, in the profession, and things like that. And that they always thought that ... they always idealized for me that I was going to college and take a course and all this, so this was not quite what they envisioned for me. (...) I am increasingly afraid that this type of profession does not give ... for example, I know that aestheticians do not receive much. I end up thinking about it. Am I going to regret because of the money?(Y_PT_AL_3)

4.1.3. Life project and expectations of young adults

These young adults' life projects, in general, express some or all elements of a traditional plan of getting a family with or without children, getting a job with a salary able to support a house and a car.

So, I'll be, hopefully before, in Lisbon. I'm going to have a good, fixed job that has something to do with this. (...) A job that I enjoy and that, at the same time, give me the stability I need to have a good life. (...), not having difficulty to eat or pay for the house, to be able to buy everything that I think is necessary to live well. I think this is a good life. (...) It includes clothes, lots of clothes. It includes food, money to be able to take vacations, to be able to invest in other things independently if it runs bad, not to be with nothing, to have a home bought, to make sure I have a house. I think that's it. (...) So, I think that by then, I might already be raising a family (Y_PT_AL_3).

Being able to have a family, to guide me and my family, to spend more money with the house, more with my children and a little less with me. As soon as I get to live on unburden... I would not ask for more than 800, I think 800 was the ideal. (...) In ten years? I imagine myself in Coimbra, in the house that I have there, which has been left over from inheritance, I also have to work there, there is a lot of work, not special, I do not need to pay the house either, I have a house there, to pay water electricity, gas (Y_PT_AL_2)

As for the kind of professional project, we can find those who have it all figured out, whether is a beauty studio, a mobile beauty salon to face the high territory spread of AL region or a photovoltaic park.

I see myself in my [Beauty] salon with some people working with me, so much so that my aunt is a year older than me and now she is taking a massage course and she likes to join me and open a salon together (Y_PT_AL_1)

I thought of investing in agriculture, but no, now maybe my intention is to open a photovoltaic field, sell solar energy to EDP, but it is also a ... Because I have a friend of mine there nearby my house, he has ... that's a ... he made a, it goes to a row of solar panels, produces 14 kilowatts a day, I think, per month it was like they pay 300 euros ... they are ... and that, its maintenance, solar panels last 30 years. I've also been studying, I've been studying, each structure is more or less at 7, 8 thousand euros ... I already have people who help me, with a project, the architect, I have everything structured, yes (Y_PT_AL_6).

But there are many places here in our county, such as x, z, several locations that have nothing. And many of these have no access, etc. And my project consisted of what? In a mobile home, all reformulated, with a saloon. Because? Because my purpose is: the context is different, because if you have a physical space, it is the customer who searches for you and you having a mobile space is you who are looking for the customer (Y_PT_AL_8).

For those in the industry sector, like Y_PT_AL_5 and Y_PT_AL_6 the possibility of emigrating is expressed by both, as it is widely known how welders are particularly well paid abroad. Y_PT_AL_4, although coursing gardening, intends to choose welding for the nivel 4 and also considers this plan. Inclusive, Y_PT_AL_6 even considers leaving the girlfriend and staying 10-15 years abroad to earn enough to then come back and put up his own business.

I would go, I would go [abroad to work as a welder]. I would stay there for 10, 15 years, can you see what it'd be? Send, Sending 70 or 80 or 100 thousand euros to Portugal? It makes you think. Yeah, I would suffer 10 years but later I would come here and I could have a stable life, I could ...

YA: And the girlfriend?

Oh if she would to go, she would go, if she wanted, she wouldn't. First it is me, it is not with her money that I am going to live, it is with mine, it has to be for me, if I do not do it, it is not nobody else ... we have already talked about it, she says who does not want to leave here, but if I have that opportunity. And, and in electricity I will not, because the salaries out there in terms of electricians (Y_PT_AL_6).

Other than the entrepreneurs and the emigrating option, we can find those who just don't know what can happen:

I do not know [what will happen in the next 10 years], it depends on a lot of things. From my thinking, from what I'm doing, it depends on the work I get. It depends on some things (Y_PT_AL_2).

Sincerely, I do not know. (...) I seriously do not like to predict the future. When it's going to happen, it's over (Y_PT_AL_4).

Regarding the future, it's only after I finish the course that I can think of it. Now it's focusing on finishing the 12th year (Y_PT_AL_5).

Although Y_PT_AL_2 would not like it for himself, he sees himself working at the construction site or at a cafe the only options for him viable.

I did not want it, but it most likely will be, it's going to have to be. Or construction, or cafes, that's all (Y_PT_AL_2).

First Y_PT_AL_4 states any job will do as he cannot and do not want to make plans. At the moment he is coursing gardening but having interest in industrial maintenance or welding. When asked on his ideal job he refers to be sat at desk and print paper sheets. But because he believes work should evolve great effort, he states welding as an ideal job, with the possibility of emigrating for some years.

On the other side, Y_PT_AL_3 shows clearly not having a plan. In the middle of a discourse on having her own aesthetics' office after finishing aesthetics course she is attending at the moment, she answers that she could see herself in ten years doing something related to fashion. She considers that she might even do the Hairdresser course, after the present one and combine it all in her own salon.

For same interviewees is not easy to prospect the near future. For most of them accomplish the 12th grade, is the next goal to be achieved.

As I already said is to finish the tenth, make the 12th. Enter an aaa, an area I want. God willing, succeed (Y_PT_AL_4).

By being very sure on their life project, some know already what want to happen next, like Y_PT_AL_1, Y_PT_AL_7, in order to fulfil that project. Y_PT_AL_1 would like to deepen some areas that she likes more attending specialized training.

I would like to finish this course and then delve into the areas that I like best. The part of the nails, waxing, maybe even the massages, I still do not know if I will like it because I never did. I'm not sure how it is yet. I also liked the part of face cleansing, the peelings (...) Do other nail techniques, for example, drawing with watercolours on the nails, do the drawing of the eyebrow, make a tattoo, extension of eyelashes (Y_PT_AL_1).

Some want to get more experience working with other professionals before putting up their own business. Most feel more insecure as what will happen after finishing the actual course.

Do the project, right a way. First the budget, ... how much money is it needed, to know the companies, budgets, the cheapest, so... the normal procedure to open a, a, a company (Y_PT_AL_6).

Attending another course is a possibility for Y_PT_AL_2, Y_PT_AL_3, Y_PT_AL_4, Y_PT_AL_6, looking for an option more near to their interests.

I wish I had gone for electricity or welding. It was the areas I asked for (Y_PT_AL_4).

I've even thought about maybe going back to my first profession [whished for as a child] and still take a hairdresser's course ... [laughing] (Y_PT_AL_3).

To Y_PT_AL_6 the dream of going abroad as a welder for 10-15 years and earn enough money to make his own business is very present. Although he is coursing electric installations, his great passion is welding. He presents the next steps regarding the two projects: studying the costs and conditions of putting up a photovoltaic park

and if not interesting enough attending the welding course and work abroad for 10 or more years, bringing all the money to put up his own business.

Man, I'll inform myself about the project, I have to take more notes to , know, to know what it is, what the fees are, and inform me more deeply about this ... because, I don't know, why not? To take the welding course and go off. Even today I think about it and could be an option. It is an asset. (...) And open a company already with my money, not needing anyone else, a photovoltaic field (Y_PT_AL_6).

For Y_PT_AL_9 after finishing her course, her first idea is to find a job, preferable in the area she is being trained in or in other available. When asked about the 12th grade, mentions she had thought of complementing the Hairdresser qualification with the one of Aestheticism, which gives a level 4 double certification.

After the 9th year, if I do not get a job in this profession, I'll have to go look for something else. But the main thing would be in this profession. (...) I soon thought of complementing [the hairdresser course] with the aesthetic course. Because both, one complements the other. But I do not know. Time will tell (Y_PT_AL_9)

4.1.4. Young adults' opinions on their skills

The question about their own skills not always was understood and the interviewers ended up to translating it to “*whatever you have learned during the experiences in your life*” or “*what an employer values in an employee*”. Even so, Y_PT_AL_4 stated a few times he did not know what to answer, finally saying one must do the work. Adding that, for him, to have the 12th grade is what is asked for in any job and even those who have it need luck.

It's working. It's coming and doing my job. (...) First of all, in order to be in the labour market, it is good to have a good resume. Until the 12th. This is essential. (...) Only with the 12th. And there are people with 12th who do not work, for example. I think this has to do with a matter of luck. I think, at least that's what I think (Y_PT_AL_4).

The answers differ between those who have worked before and those who did not. Y_PT_AL_3 was the only that have never worked before. She mentions the personal skills such as inner strength, inner trust developed in psychotherapy and the technical skills she already learned and expects to learn more at the in-job training starting next year. On the other hand, those who have worked frequently mention compliance with schedules and with norms as the most important skills, naming it of *Responsibility*.

Y_PT_AL_6 claims knowing from those who work at the industry that schedule compliance is more important than work quality, as the companies give their own training, and so to be employed one just need to have private contacts. Therefore, external training is irrelevant.

They do not want anything, anyone can enter there (in the big companies). That is personal contacts nowadays. Because in these companies here, it does not matter if you're good, it's personal contacts, those who are here (at the training centre) do not learn to work in the sector, they only learn then when they're inside. They have someone

who helps them... (...) It's like us, we also do not learn 100 percent everything here, we have to go outside, to the terrain, to learn really» (Y_PT_AL_6).

Also Y_PT_AL_5 and Y_PT_AL_2 refer the working place as where they have learned their skills, not only the so called soft skills, like responsibility but also the technical ones.

Maybe when I started working I gained a bit of responsibility in some sort of things. Like, I started to think that the job was really, had to work, and I stayed, then I still lacked some things (Y_PT_AL_2).

Formal learning environments were the least mentioned as essential to the skills acquisition. Moreover, Y_PT_AL_1 even states that one does not learn anything in school relevant to work, as she learns by herself.

At school I never learned such great things that has more to do with the job. Usually you only learn about the subjects, you never learn any thing connected to life outside. (...) We learn more, like. more talking to other people than we do at school, at school it's more about writing (Y_PT_AL_1).

The Internet and the Internet tutorials were mentioned by Y_PT_AL_1 and Y_PT_AL_7 as the main learning strategy of nail fashion and male haircutting. Both young adults study with the tutorials and practice in themselves or with friends, learning with the mistakes.

Along my life I have been training with own fingernails and in myself and other people and I have always been seeing things on the Internet, like I was doing and when I get something wrong I can just take it all and do it again better (Y_PT_AL_1).

Yes, I started with my friends. The first time I cut it was to a friend. I was at home and I was like, 'Hey, let me cut your hair, you know?' 'Hey, man, go for it, I allow it.' And there he was and there was another. And I cut his hair and the other one liked it and said, 'Oh, cut mine too.' It was the first time I cut hair. Then I started to cut more and said, 'Look, let me do this, let me do that.' If he looked bad, I would say, 'Hey, man, I'm sorry' [laughs]. Then I started watching videos on YouTube. (...) I went to see in the Internet. [Laughs] When I finished the cut, 'Let me see how this is done'. Because I just ... make a mistake once, then I will see, and I do not make the same mistake again (Y_PT_AL_8).

Skills such as productivity, friendliness, perfectionism, tidiness are also considered valued at the workplace and are attributed to own personality or to the family background. Particularly, Y_PT_AL_8 refers that in almost all works he had (mainly as a cook or at a codfish conservation industry) he learned that productivity is more important than quality. Although one has to follow, otherwise loses the job, he acts differently, as he believes it brings customers.

In almost every place. In my experience, most is productivity. (...) It is not humility itself, but the fact that you let yourself downgrade. Because if you do not lower yourself, automatically, and nowadays, as this is, there are 20 other behind you, then you ... 'look, my friend, you can clean the store and you can leave because tomorrow there is another one in your place'. It works like this. In mine, for example (...). In restaurants, hey, man, it

works in this way. It is the faster the better. (...) So I, in my opinion, prefer quality rather than quantity, isn't it? So, I'd rather take longer to do one thing, (...) for example, now in this area (hairstresser), and even in the kitchen, works a lot like this ...(...), it may take longer, but that you leave there and say, 'look, it's beautiful, I like it'. And you come back, instead of doing ...(...). Then the person will not come back (Y_PT_AL_8).

The last question was about eventual skills the YA had but not valued by the employers. Only two of the interviewees had an answer. Y_PT_AL_2 had an interesting reasoning saying that all his skills are essential to life.

Most of the things I do know I think are essential for a person in life. Cooking, tidying up the house, the jobs I had too, carpentry, concrete dough, are things that without it maybe there was no life. Because to have a kitchen, you have to know how to make concrete, to start making food, to ... are things that interest me the most, is life (Y_PT_AL_2).

Y_PT_AL_9 mentioned the situation when she was working at a hypermarket at the fruit section, feeling she could communicate well with the clients, and at some moment was transferred to the cash-registers, where this skill was, in her opinion, wasted.

Some of the interviewees are very happy with their actual situation as the course they are attending was the chosen one in order to meet their professional plans, which is the case of Y_PT_AL_1, Y_PT_AL_3, Y_PT_AL_7, Y_PT_AL_8 and Y_PT_AL_9.

A friend of mine told me about this course and I thought maybe this had more to do with me, it had more to do with my interests, that I would prefer this one than the other, even though I was enjoying it. And then I came here (Y_PT_AL_3).

(...) I said, 'Do I want to go to the hairstresser [course]?' I used to like cuts and when I went to the hairstresser I would say, 'Look, do it like this, do like that.' Then I went 'hey, man, maybe I want to.' I started to see the courses and my mother had no chance of me going to take a course in Lisbon or here, which was about 3000 or 4000 euros. So, what did I think? And I went on my finalists trip, I came back, a bit stunted and I thought, 'Ah, I'm going to the training center (Y_PT_AL_8).

Since I really like hairstressing, the two things have been complemented [the aim of taking the 9th year and the course area]. And so far, I'm loving it (Y_PT_AL_9).

Others not quite, putting in evidence the skills mismatch between the wished area and the available offer. In some cases it is evident the great consequences for the affected young adults, under the risk of failing due attendance faults and therefore being excluded. Y_PT_AL_2 and Y_PT_AL_4 had other requests of courses but due to the existent provision, they had to choose what they do not like. Actually, these are the most extreme cases of skills offer mismatch, as the first wished for Cooking and is coursing Welding level 1 and the latter is attending Gardening level 2, having asked for Welding.

The other [course] did not interest me, it was gardening again. But I think I was wrong, I should not have chosen this one. I did not adapt very well to the machines, I have a little fear, at the welding machines I did not get very well (Y_PT_AL_2).

Because it was the only one (Y_PT_AL_4).

Although Y_PT_AL_6 is happy with the actual course he is at, his first choice was another one, more fitting with his main interest and making possible the dream plan of working abroad and be very well paid.

To weld, welding. A guy goes to Belgium, if he's a good welder, he's going to win 7, 8 [thousand euros a month] ... I'd go. Maybe if I had ... Because this is like this, I just think in, I also like electricity, but I'm here because the welding course did not open. What I really wanted was welding (Y_PT_AL_6).

Since Y_PT_AL_6 had also the experience of both regular Secondary and Professional Schools he could make a comparison, considering them more demanding than this training centre, which is much more easy because it is practical, and to him one learns more with the practice, not with the theory. That's why, in his view, the training centres are good.

Well, the vocational school is a bit more rigorous, here is a bit more (...) Man, is more, more like secondary school, it is more secondary, it is more demanding ... You have to study a lot, you have to study, you have to study too a bit. Here you also have to study but it is not so much ... but in the vocational school you have to study more ... to really understand... (...) Here is much easier. We learn is with practice, it is not with theories. You see, certain engineers, everyone says and everyone knows, theoretical, theoretical, theoretical. No, this is bad. This is practical. Theoretical is what it does, isn't it, but practice ... and that's why the training centres are good, because it is theoretical and practical, and more practical. I like it. (Y_PT_AL_6).

Also Y_PT_AL_3, that had a traumatic experience at regular school, choosing to live it at the age of 13, values the practical side of the lessons, which helped her to reconcile with school:

I did reconcile [with the school] [Laughs] ... The subjects are different. There are many things I remember, there are others that I am learning again. Then there's the practical part I like a lot, learning how to do the hairstyles, and the various kinds of things you can do with your hair. It is different (Y_PT_AL_9)

The maturity of the actual colleagues is noticed as a facilitator factor of Y_PT_AL_3's integration and even of Y_PT_AL_4's success.

They (the current colleagues) look like people who are not so false to what I was used to (in high school). Of course there are always those intriguing ones between them, but I think this has to do with age, it has nothing to do with places. But they look like good people (Y_PT_AL_3)

But it's also obvious that I do not have colleagues who are the same age. I have the older ones, the older ones are more focused. Sometimes they are more focused but they are also with their heads on the moon, [they are thinking of other things] (Y_PT_AL_4).

4.2. Young adults in the functional region of Vale do Ave

4.2.1. Presentation of biographies

Table 3 displays information regarding the sample of ten young adults interviewed in Vale do Ave. The sample included an equal number of males and females. In terms of educational and professional background, the sample is diverse. It consisted of a male who was neither working nor in education and training, one female and one male that are currently enrolled in VET, four young adults who had completed professional courses at least six months before (currently one female is in university; the other two females are working, and one male is also working), one male and one female that are currently enrolled in adult education and training courses at night and working during the day, and finally one male who dropped out from professional courses and is working nowadays. Table 3 also classifies their life projects and their expectations according to the criteria discussed below.

Table 3. Patterns of young adult interviewees in the functional region of Vale do Ave.

Code	Sex	Age	Educational/professional background	Life project	Expectations
Y_PT_VdA_1	M	28	NEET	Uncertain	VET and job seeker University as a future possibility
Y_PT_VdA_2	F	22	Enrolled in VET Part-time worker	Explicit	Qualified full-time work Constituting family University as a future possibility
Y_PT_VdA_3	M	20	Enrolled in VET	Explicit	Better position in the family company University as a future possibility
Y_PT_VdA_4	F	27	Completed VET Full-time worker	Explicit	To be in the same work context Having children
Y_PT_VdA_5	F	20	Completed VET Enrolled in higher education	Uncertain	Qualified full-time work
Y_PT_VdA_6	M	20	Completed VET Full-time worker	Explicit	University as a future possibility Entrepreneur
Y_PT_VdA_7	M	20	Enrolled in Adult Education and Training (evening course) Seasonal worker	Uncertain	University as a future possibility
Y_PT_VdA_8	F	28	Enrolled in Adult Education and Training	Uncertain	Entrepreneur

					Owning a house
Y_PT_VdA_9	F	19	Completed VET Enrolled in a professional internship	Uncertain	Full-time work Constituting family Owning a house
Y_PT_VdA_10	M	19	Dropped out from VET Full-time worker	Explicit	To be in the same work context Enrol in VET

The following paragraphs portray the main features of their biographies. Drawing on the interviews, these summaries start with their own narrative of their life story. Then the summaries highlight the key references to their school trajectories, their experience with lifelong learning policies, and their vocational education and training. Finally, the summaries sketch their life plans.

Y_PT_VdA_1 was born in Portugal in 1989 (28 years old). His parents were also both born in Portugal and, in terms of education, his mother finished the 12th grade (last year of secondary education), taking advantage of the New Opportunities Initiative (a Portuguese strategic plan to speed up the pace of secondary level achievement) and his father only finished the 6th grade (basic education). He was retained for a year in the 9th grade (last year of basic education), and he was not able to complete the 12th grade because he could not conclude the professional aptitude test (PAP). After an unsuccessful second attempt to finish secondary school, and in light of his parents' economic difficulties and of his lack of commitment, he finally decided to drop out of school. Then, he started working as an electrician with his cousin and working for six years allowed him to realise what he sees as his main life achievement: being able to buy and to pay for his car. Even though he recognises that work was very important in making him more responsible, he quickly regretted his decision of leaving school, and once he became unemployed, upon hearing about the experience of one of his friends in the school that he is currently attending, he took that opportunity to enrol and try to conclude his secondary education. Although he is still recovering from a knee surgery, he is committed to finishing his studies and to any other kind of training or job made available by the Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP). Although he never received any advice regarding his future educational possibilities, he has mainly focused on achieving his dream of being accepted into the University to study Music, which is one of his main interests since childhood (he plays the guitar in a band). He also believes that his past experiences contributed to enhancing his responsibility, which is important to finish a university degree if he gets the opportunity.

Y_PT_VdA_2 was born in Portugal in 1996 (22 years old). Both her parents are Portuguese; her mother finished the 5th grade, and her father completed the 9th grade, taking advantage of the New Opportunities Initiative. She usually achieved average grades throughout her regular education, following the area of socioeconomic sciences. She was able to complete the 10th grade without major difficulties but started

having problems in the 11th grade, especially related with the Economy and Geography subjects. Since she could not be approved in those subjects, she decided to repeat the year and try to improve her grades. Eventually, she finished the 11th grade but failed to complete the 12th grade. Immediately after failing to conclude the 12th grade, she first heard about vocational courses from a group of friends, and she decided to enrol in her current school. She originally thought about doing a Management course, but since that class was already full, she enrolled in the Food Quality course. Although her parents were initially hesitant about her choice, both her and her parents are currently very happy with her decision. In fact, she regrets not having decided to leave regular school for vocational education earlier in her life, which she sees as being connected to a lack of information about vocational courses in the Vale do Ave region. In fact, she does not remember having any educational advice while she was in regular schooling and this may have contributed for her to opt for a vocational course. Regarding educational practices, she sees a big difference in the relationship between students and teachers in regular and vocational teaching, with vocational teachers being more attentive and supportive to their students, probably because the classes have fewer students. She is currently also working part-time at a Macdonald's, which is her first job experience. She is very happy with both classes and work and is considering taking her parents' advice to continue to university, but only after she gets a full-time job related to her current vocational training.

Y_PT_VdA_3 was born in Portugal in 1997 (20 years old). Both his parents were also born in Portugal. His mother finished the 4th grade and his father concluded the 9th grade. He was an average student until the 10th grade but, in the 11th grade, his academic performance declined. Facing increasing difficulties in subjects such as Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, he started to question his ability to succeed in the national exams for those subjects, which led him to ponder if he should repeat the 11th grade or if he should switch to a vocational course. In a way, inspired by the fact that one of his cousins had recently finished a vocational course, he decided not to take the national exams needed for completing the 11th grade in a regular track and switched to a vocational course. He initially intended to enrol in an Automation and Command course but, after an initial interview with a school psychologist, he accepted the suggestion for attending a new course that had just opened for training technicians in the polymer transformation. His family immediately supported his decision, but he was, nevertheless, very apprehensive about it. He believes that there is a big difference between regular and vocational education, with a much closer and equal support given to each student in the vocational system. He also believes that a former social prejudice regarding the abilities of students who opt for vocational courses is slowly dissipating due to the growing demand by young people for this educational possibility. Now that he is almost finishing secondary education, he has already had two experiences closely related with professional life, since his course included two work internships. These experiences have shown he that the most important characteristics in the job market are commitment, loving what you are doing, and the will to always improve yourself. He has no intention of continuing to university in the

short-term, as right now he is focused solely on finishing his current educational track, and then start to work, taking advantage of a job offer that the company in which he completed his internships has already made him.

Y_PT_VdA_4 was born in Portugal in 1990 (27 years old). Both her parents were also born in Portugal, and both concluded the 6th grade (basic education). She had a regular educational path, entering primary school at five years old. She was an average student that never failed any school year. From very early on she decided that she would follow a vocational course because she wanted to start working as soon as possible. In spite of being confronted with some prejudice regarding vocational education from the people around her, after she finished basic education she enrolled in a Management Technician vocational course in the school in which she is currently working as an administrative assistant. She was lucky enough to start working in her current position shortly after she finished her course, in 2008. She identifies the ability to respect your superiors and to follow their orders as being essential to succeed in any job. Regarding personal goals, she is now focusing on getting married, having children and maintaining her current job. She still talks about her dream of attending a University degree, but she states that trying to achieve that dream will not be a priority for her in the foreseeable future and she even confesses that she may never have the courage to try it.

Y_PT_VdA_5 was born in Portugal in 1997 (20 years old). Both her parents were also born in Portugal. Her mother finished the 6th grade, and her father concluded the 4th grade. She started primary education when she was six years old and usually achieved good grades. When she finished the 9th grade, she was unclear about what she wanted to do in the future; even so, decided to continue her regular education in the field of Sciences. She quickly realised that she had made the wrong choice and that what she wanted to do was to work in activities related to Management, so she finished the 10th grade in her regular school and then decided to move on to a vocational course. She originally wanted to attend a Management course but, since that course had been closed in the previous year, she chose a course in Trade. Her parents and friends supported her fully, and then she started the course in which she would be responsible for organising speeches and seminars that helped her overcome her usual shyness. She also completed an internship in an industrial and commercial association that led her to realise the importance of being responsible and punctual in the professional context. Finishing her course allowed her to complete the 12th grade, which would allow her to carry on to University, but she was scared of taking the Mathematics national exam, so she decided to enrol in a professional course for highly qualified technicians (TESP) in Management. She believes that the prejudice about vocational education being for underachieving students is nonsensical because they also have to complete the course modules to graduate. In fact, because they are more practical, she believes that vocational courses prepare students better for their integration in the labour market. Regarding perspectives for the future, her main goal is

to get a job in Management, in which she can be in charge of taking care of administrative tasks in a company.

Y_PT_VdA_6 was born in Portugal in 1997 (20 years old). His mother was also born in Portugal and concluded the 6th grade. His father was born in France and has also finished the 6th grade. He was never really fond of school but was always able to achieve average grades. When he reached the 10th grade, he decided to choose a scientific course of studies but quickly realised that he would struggle to get good grades in this field. He asked for his class director and his father's advice regarding his educational options and, after consulting with them, decided that he would switch to a vocational course at the end of that year. He originally wanted to follow Management but, since that course had been closed in the previous year, he decided to attend a vocational course in Trade. During his course, he did two professional internships in two different companies, which enabled him to understand that responsibility is probably the most important feature when you go into the labour market; these internships have also prepared him for what he was about to face in his work. In fact, he started working almost immediately after finishing his course. In spite of recognising the existence of a general prejudice against vocational education (seen as being for people who do not want to study), he believes that vocational training is very effective in preparing students for their future jobs. Concerning prospects, he would like to continue his education in a field related to Advertising and Marketing, but that dream is currently on stand-by, and he is uncertain if he will ever try to achieve it. For the immediate future, his main goals are to achieve a stable life, to start a family and, in professional terms, maybe to start his own company.

Y_PT_VdA_7 was born in Portugal in 1997 (20 years old). Both his parents were also born in Portugal, and his mother completed the 11th grade, while his father finished the 12th grade. He had a regular school record, achieving average grades until he reached the 11th grade. By that time, his grades in Mathematics started to decline until, in the 12th grade, he was not able to complete the subject, preventing his entrance into University. To complete the 12th grade, he decided to enrol in an adult education and training course (EFA) and started working in part-time jobs. He felt a big difference between regular and vocational education, especially regarding the class schedule, since he is now having classes in the evenings. Nevertheless, he is enjoying the classes so far, especially because they include a broad range of topics about Science, Politics, Education, and Languages, giving the students the opportunity to increase their general culture levels. Since he only has classes at night, he is now working in a coffee shop during the day, and that experience has increased his level of responsibility. In personal terms, the major events in his life so far were a trip that he made by himself to a coastal region of Portugal and being in charge of the organisation of the Niquelinas local festivities in Guimarães. When analysing his significant educational experiences, he highlighted being president of the students' association for a year, in his former school. He is currently focused in completing the EFA course and

in going to the University to get a degree in Philosophy, and he can see himself teaching Philosophy after graduation.

Y_PT_VdA_8 was born in Portugal in 1989 (28 years old). Both her parents were also born in Portugal, and both finished the 4th grade. Coming from a disadvantaged family background (her mother was never able to work due to health problems), she never achieved good grades but was able to finish the 9th grade. After that, she felt the need to leave school and to start working. She was still able to do a level 3 vocational training as a computer technician but, since she did not find work in that field, she started working in a shoe-manufacturing factory. She worked in that factory for two years before moving on to work in a restaurant as a cook. She worked in that restaurant for eight years but, seeing that the business was declining, she started looking for training options that would allow her to move to another activity. After consulting with the Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP), she decided to start an adult education and training (EFA) course that will allow her to finish the 12th grade. She is currently in the last year of her training and, since she is enjoying it so much, she feels sorry that it is almost at its end. Even so, she does not consider the possibility of going to the University because she feels that she would not be able to complete a university degree due to her economic difficulties and to her limited knowledge in scientific matters. She is still unsure about what she will do once she finishes the EFA course. She is interested in languages, cooking and aesthetics, but fears that she is too lazy to complete proper training in any of those fields. Nevertheless, she sees herself working with gel nails or in any other aesthetics related activity. Her dream is to have her business and house in the future.

Y_PT_VdA_9 was born in Portugal in 1998 (19 years old). Both her parents were also born in Portugal, and both completed the 6th grade. She had had a regular educational trajectory until the 9th grade, when she started facing a decline in her grades, especially in Mathematics, which is a subject she has always struggled with. Although she has had vocational counselling with a psychologist in her regular public school, she thinks that those counselling meetings had the harmful effect of confusing her even more about her educational options. Even so, she has always been uncertain about going to University and was more inclined towards an educational model that would allow her to have a more specific training that would be more closely connected with work experiences. In spite of some teachers' prejudice regarding vocational education, after she finished the 9th grade in regular school, she decided to enrol in a Marketing vocational course. During that course, she had to complete two internships, one of which in Italy, working in a travel agency, which she described as one of the best experiences in her life. She believes that internships are very important in preparing young people to be integrated into the labour market, arguing that even higher education should provide students with that experience. During her vocational training, she maintained a close connection with some of her teachers but struggled to do the same with her class colleagues, saying that competition among them was very high. After she finished her vocational course, it took some time before she started working

in one of the companies where she had completed one of her internships. During that time, she has also completed a short vocational training in French, provided by the Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP). Since she does not know if she will be hired after the IEFP professional internship, she is considering other her training options, which may include doing a professional course for highly qualified technicians (TESP) in an area related with Physiotherapy and massages. Regarding her personal goals for the future, she wants to have her independence and buy a car, and she also wants to get married and start a family.

Y_PT_VdA_10 was born in Portugal in 1998 (19 years old). Both his parents were also born in Portugal; his mother finished the 6th grade, while his father concluded the 12th grade. In spite of struggling to cope emotionally with his mother illness, he recalls being a good student until the 6th grade, after which his grades started to decline. Nevertheless, he was able to finish the 9th grade and, pressured by his father, continued to study Sciences in a regular school. After failing to conclude the 10th grade, he decided to attend a vocational course for programming and management of computer systems but quickly perceived that he did not like the field and that he did not want to continue studying. He stopped attending classes and decided to start looking for a full-time job. He considered the possibility of working in a restaurant and in a shoe factory before finally taking the opportunity of working in the same textile factory as his father. He is now a quality controller in that factory, and he also works, part-time, in a catering company for wedding ceremonies. His work experiences have taught him that you should always do everything as soon as possible, to respect everyone that you work with, and have also led him to truly understand the value of money. Right now, he is trying to finish the 12th grade after his boss promised him that he would get a pay raise if he concludes it. He sees the moment in which he started working as one of the most important moments in his life, but is currently considering continuing his professional training as an electrician, which would enable him to fulfil his prospects of continuing to work where he is now, but doing something more significant.

4.2.2. How do LLL policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories?

VET constitutes the most relevant LLL measure in this region and is strongly oriented to fulfilling the demands of the local labour market. Therefore, unskilled and unemployed youths are the main beneficiaries of the vocational education and training (VET) provision. The findings provide evidence that LLL policies constitute viable and meaningful educational alternatives for young people who experienced difficulties to succeed and/or move forward in the regular education track, and are currently neither working nor in education and training.

I failed on the 9th grade, then I did it again and went to high school, but I did not finish it. I then got a job that was supposed to be part time, so that I could work

and study, but it soon became full time and I forgot about school. I was 18 years old and was in the 12th grade when I gave up school (Y_PT_VdA_1).

There was no evidence that LLL policies in this functional region entail issues of gender bias. Both male and female participants present similar perspectives about the measures in which they take part. Young people who opt for this educational pathway are commonly regarded as underachievers or as someone who is not smart enough and has low professional aspirations, compared to regular education students. Most of the young adults interviewed complained about the lack of information regarding the VET offer.

At the moment, I think they [professional courses] are actually well advertised, at least here in the Vale do Ave area, but at that time, a few years ago, I think there was not so much disclosure (Y_PT_VdA_2).

Even recognising the existence of social stigma around the VET offer, some young adults highlighted an increased and renewed interest in this educational alternative among young people, and they were globally very happy with their choices. The vocational education and training courses not only allow them to complete secondary education and to continue to higher education, if they wish to do so, but also allow them to obtain professional training and qualifications which might provide better opportunities to get into the labour market. As stated by an interviewee, through these courses young people have the opportunity “to finish the 12th grade, get into the labour market, work for a while, apply knowledge, and then go to university. The professional courses are in great expansion” (Y_PT_VdA_3).

4.2.3. What are young people's life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects?

Table 4 draws on the following criteria to distinguish two types of young adults' life projects. On the one hand, the first criterion clusters the codes of analysis into three more general labels, namely biography, school trajectory and vocational project. Interviewees posited 'uncertain' and 'explicit' life projects if they associated these three aspects. If they didn't, their projects were 'blurred'. On the other hand, life projects were either 'uncertain' if they did not really sketch any explicit plan, while the project was 'explicit' if they made an explicit statement of this plan. To accomplish this task, we also took into account other relevant comments made by the interviewees during the interview (not only their answer to the question of how they figure out their life in ten years' time).

Table 4. The life project of the interviewees in Vale do Ave.

Interviewees did not sketch an explicit life plan	'Uncertain life projects'
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	Y_PT_VdA_1 Y_PT_VdA_5 Y_PT_VdA_7 Y_PT_VdA_8 Y_PT_VdA_9
Interviewees sketched an explicit life plan	'Explicit life projects' Y_PT_VdA_2 Y_PT_VdA_3 Y_PT_VdA_4 Y_PT_VdA_6 Y_PT_VdA_10

All the young adults classified as having “uncertain life projects” were unable to expose their future goals and expectations with objectivity and clarity. Some of them because they simply do not know what the future holds after they finish their graduation, as one stated: “I have no idea, but I would love to work in something I like, right? In management, I would love working in a company, in the administrative part or so, doing something that I really enjoyed doing, that is what I wanted” (Y_PT_VdA_5). Others may have some particular interests or potential plans, however they could not choose or explore what they really want to their lives:

I want to move on, join the university maybe, maybe Philosophy, that is, I would like to be a professor of Philosophy, but that's not what I see myself doing ten years from now. Ten years from now, I see myself teaching surf lessons somewhere, because that's what I wanted, you see? But I'll probably be a boring teacher in a classroom (Y_PT_VdA_7).

I see myself with a business of my own and if possible in my little house ["laugh"]. I see myself as a businesswoman, I do not see myself as a doctor, or anything like that, a businesswoman with my own business (Y_PT_VdA_8).

Finally, a male participant presents his life project as a list of tasks to be performed, which are very commonly referred by other participants with a more or less explicit life trajectories planning:

In 10 years? Well I'm going to have 29, ["laugh"] already starts getting close to 30 (laughs). I do not know, but I intend to have my own things by then, and if I am not with someone or married, at least I will already be thinking about it, having a stable life to start creating a family. I think this is everyone's dream (Y_PT_VdA_9).

Contrary to the previous group, the remaining participants presented their life projects in a more explicit manner, even struggling to fully anticipate their future personal and professional landscapes:

I hope to see myself developed both personally and professionally. On a personal level I do not know yet what is going to happen, we never know, so we should not have too many expectations. But at the professional level I hope to have other requirements from the company, to have another role in the company. I guess, but mostly what I want to keep is the way I am today (Y_PT_VdA_3).

To have a stable life in this case, would be one of them, to build a family too and, who knows, if I can achieve this at the level of studies and then be able to integrate the two, I already have Commerce, Marketing and a little bit of everything ... but I still lack opening something on my own for example, which is also not far from my plans. But that would be it, to have a stable life above all else (Y_PT_VdA_6).

As can be inferred from the interviewees' comments, regardless they have or not an explicit project for their personal and professional lives, most of the young adults desire stability for their futures. In their visions, a stable life means owning a house and a car, have a pleasurable full-time job, and constitute a family, especially among the female participants:

I hope to be working in this area but doing something superior, not only technical skills but if you do a degree, who knows, a graduate in the area or engineering. Married with children, I hope (Y_PT_VdA_2).

Maybe I still see myself here, right? ["laugh"] Let's hope so. I see myself here, happy, I like what I do and I like to be here. Maybe already with one child or two, maybe one child. It is the way to evolution and growth in life (Y_PT_VdA_4).

4.2.4. What are young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course? (LCR)

All young adults, independently if they have a more or less structured plan for their lives, shared some expectations, even if in different ways, regarding their life courses. Only one female participant decided to attain a professional school before secondary education. For all the other nine participants, after failing in the regular education track, VET or EFA courses constituted a second choice and an attempt to complete compulsory secondary education and to get into the labour market.

Teachers put me down and every subject taught was not directed at me (...) [but], more specifically, to good students. Then, I felt displaced and I felt bad with some teachers (...) (Y_PT_VdA_2).

When I achieved 11th grade, my grades fell well short of my expectations, and it got to the point where I thought: either I must repeat the grade, or change to

another course, or the third option, which could be the best: to switch to a vocational course (Y_PT_VdA_3).

Even the male who was neither working nor in education and training regretted his decision of leaving school and starting to work due to his economic constraints, and once he became unemployed, he started to realise how much important is to invest in his education:

I think that my school time was peaceful, normal. But at the time, I did not want to go on. I wanted my independence, I wanted my car, I wanted to do my things and my parents could not afford it and my option was to go to work. It was more or less like this, but today I regret it, and I am enrolled now and trying to finish 12th grade, to who knows, maybe get into university (Y_PT_VdA_1).

All the ones, who do not have completed the secondary education, expect to do it sooner. They think that raising their educational certification will have a positive impact in their professional lives, because they can access to labour market, have a better salary, or go to the university and later get a qualified job:

I started wondering: what will I do if this goes wrong? This is what I do, I can't do anything else. And so I talked to a few friends to see if they knew of some course I could do. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I wanted to go back to school. And now I am finishing high school, to have some basis (Y_PT_VdA_8).

Because one of the big reasons why I came here for the year to finish the 12th year is to be better paid, was one of the conditions with the employer (Y_PT_VdA_10).

As shown Table 2, five participants considered the possibility to go to the university, some immediately after finishing secondary education, but others prefer starting to work before doing it. In both cases, there is a general idea that being a graduate could help to find a better and well-paid job.

I never failed, I was a reasonable student, I entered secondary school and opted for a vocational school because I had an interest in starting work after complete secondary education. (...) The university has remained on stand-by (...) (Y_PT_VdA_4).

Now, now, now, no, but maybe if I get a part-time or a full-time job and I manage to complete university at night, or doing it during the day and have a part-time. Because at this moment I started to part time work, outside of school hours, and if I can continue with this part-time, maybe I will later think of going to university (Y_PT_VdA_2).

For many participating young adults, especially those who are still out of the labour market or are in same precarious labour situation, the opportunity to get a full-time job, and particularly a qualified one, signify economic autonomy and a crucial condition to bring better living conditions stability to their lives.

I want to start working right away, get into the job market, start earning some money for myself, so, start building something already. And later, possibly, if I have that taste, which is something that I might even have an idea of, in some time to be able to deepen my knowledge in my area, and try to go up a bit and gain other responsibilities. Not only being a Polymer transformation technician, which is what I will be when I finish 12th, but possibly going to the university, to take a degree (Y_PT_VdA_3).

To be well, to be able to support myself, without having to get to the end of the month counting the change in my pockets, having some savings, starting to select houses, and at the end saying: "It's mine", I think, I like to feel that. Now, by the way, when I started the professional internship I started taking the driver's license, I paid for everything, and I want to, I worked for it, and I think there is nothing better than that. Because if my parents gave me everything I wanted, I might not grow so much, would I? (...) The next step is to buy a car, get some savings to buy a car. Arrive at 30 and have a car and then start getting things together more, I think that is anyone's dream (Y_PT_VdA_9).

Two participants also consider creating their own work, becoming entrepreneurs, however, they did not develop any concrete idea about what they will do. creating their own work

4.2.5. Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making?

The findings provide evidence that lifelong learning policies constitute viable and meaningful educational alternatives for young people who experienced difficulties to succeed and/or proceed in the regular education track. Even recognising the existence of social stigma around the VET offer, the young adults are very happy with their choices. They find themselves very pleased with the support and attention received within the vocational education system, contrary to what happens in the regular education system. The vocational education and training courses not only allow them to complete secondary education and to continue to higher education, if they wish to do so, but also allow them to obtain professional training and qualifications, which might provide better opportunities to get into the labour market. The results reinforce the fact that the young adults, who are perceived exclusively as beneficiaries of the LLL policies, do not have any kind of participation in the design and evaluation of the programmes.

4.2.6. What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand?

Many participants, particularly those who are or were enrolled in VET, recognise the significant impact of their education and training experiences in their personal and professional development. These opportunities are seen as sources of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are important to their personal growth, as well as to fulfil the demands of the labour market.

In the area of vocational education, we not only learn the necessary skills to apply in the labour market, but also we learn on a personal level. Because we, too, have the relationship, which is something that shows with the older teachers, they have another experience of life but also share that experience with us. As many teachers have passed through regular education and are now teaching in vocational education, or other teachers who were students in vocational education and now are our teachers. They have already gone through the same and tell us these stories and we learn from it. Then over the course of the three years, starting from the 10th to the 12th grade we evolve and we always end up learning a lot. The interaction between people, between students also helps a lot. (Y_PT_VdA_3).

It may be because it has more practical parts, I remember in classes, for example, Public Servicing, the teacher gave the material but later at the end of the lesson, it was a very funny part (laughs) because we had to be us, each colleague practiced servicing another. For example, the teacher would say "You have to play a very demanding customer and the salesman has to get is way. Because a person goes to a store and all kinds of customers will appear and I was not used to at the beginning. Here at school, we begin to see what can happen, how we can turn things around, the teacher later helped us to improve (Y_PT_VdA_5).

Therefore, the practical component of the vocational courses, which is materialized in the laboratory work and the internships, is extremely relevant and significant for the young adults who had these educational and professional opportunities, constituting the main difference regarding the regular education offer. Additionally, they find themselves very pleased with the support and attention received within the vocational education system, contrary to what happened in the regular education system.

They always have the concern for not letting us demotivate. If at any moment they think that we are unmotivated, they try to understand why we are not motivated and then motivate us again with more practice activity in the lab, more jobs and stuff like that. (Y_PT_VdA_2).

“A very strong monitoring that helps us to take better advantage of what we want; there is a very visible difference at the grade level (Y_PT_VdA_3).

Through their learning and professional experiences, they understood that are certain behaviours and skills that are socially valued. Ambition, commitment, responsibility, respect for your colleagues and superiors, and appreciation for your work are highlighted as very important values to succeed in life.

First, the commitment to the labour market, the commitment to the company because when we do an internship, we have to show that we are capable. (...) The owners of the company want someone who is committed to the work and who likes to be there. I am already mentioning the second point, which is to like what you are doing, what we notice is that, nowadays, we have to find work and often, we do not go for what we like, but for that which is available to us. It is much better to spend eight hours or ten hours working if we like what we are doing than if we do not like it. Third, I listened to it a lot there, is that we have to always think about development, we can never be stagnant in the same place. We start from the bottom, but we always have to be thinking of development, not only within the company but also at the professional level. I'm going to finish 12th grade now, I have no intentions of going to college right now, I want to start working, but my goal as well, is to in three to four years from now, if I have that in mind, to keep studying and try to develop academically as well (Y_PT_VdA_3).

I started working at a young age, that's when I finished high school. Sometimes the sense of authority is something that we can not distinguish and is something that stays with us throughout life, I think that only after starting our professional lives, we feel that we really have a leadership. She is our leader and we have to have that respect, (...) I think it is a fundamental value, to know how to distinguish hierarchy and to respect the hierarchy (Y_PT_VdA_4).

5. Interaction between young adults and experts

In this section we analyse the interactions between young adults and experts according to the 3 theoretical frameworks.

From a CPE viewpoint, young adults and experts reveal an apparent coincidence of views regarding the objectives of the LLL policies analysed. Indeed, the role played by these policies in raising the qualifications of young adults is widely reported by the two groups of interviewees. However, the difference arises from the differentiated importance attached to academic and professional qualifications. For the experts, professional qualifications are undoubtedly the most valued. These are qualifications that will enable young people to enter the labour market and combat unemployment while at the same time contributing to the development of the region by responding to the needs of enterprises.

In turn, young adults do not neglect the contribution of these LLL policies to the learning of a profession. But for them it is more important to obtain a school certification. The conclusion of the 12th year is the common goal of the majority of

young adults interviewed, even for those who are attending lower secondary education. The perception that the completion of upper secondary education is an essential requirement for access to stable employment that allows for the transition to adulthood results in some cases from their life experience and others from an anticipated experience. Some young adults have seen access to certain jobs denied because they do not hold a high school diploma. Others, although they have not been confronted with the concrete situation, are aware of the difficulties that their absence causes, anticipating the effects of the generalization of compulsory schooling of 12 years and the requirements of the companies with regard to the level of schooling.

On the whole, the Portuguese education system, more concretely the “system of production of initial qualifications”, for creating rigid distinctions within the educational offer (e.g., general courses, professional, learning, artistic courses, etc.), therefore, more versatility is needed in order to answer to the educational needs and challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Generally speaking, young adults do not share the instrumental conception of vocational education and training provision expressed by the experts. Indeed, in their interviews, references that establish a direct relationship between obtaining professional certification and the solution to unemployment and the uncertainty with which they are confronted in the labour market are very rare. The learning of a profession arises in its words imbued with two distinct meanings. For some, it is the opportunity to realize a vocation (*berufung*) that in some cases expresses itself very early in their life course and that in others reveals itself, as unsatisfactory professional experiences are occurring. In these cases, the choice of vocational education and training course is intentional and is at the service of a defined professional project, where personal and professional fulfilment takes a prominent place. The strategies they develop to materialize their professional project are endowed with strategic rationality and reveal their ability to take advantage of the existing opportunities structure.

For others, learning a profession is a *non-choice*. It was either the only one available or the least bad choice, given their academic qualifications. The mismatch between the desired profession and that offered by the skills formation system creates in young adults a sense of frustration about the present and uncertainty about the future. No one admits to coming to practice the profession for which it is being trained. The younger ones aspire to attend a new course that allows them the professional certification they want. The older ones, for whom the need for independence is more pressing, want a job whatsoever that assures them a salary that allows them to become independent.

The young adults' life stories confirm the social and educational characteristics that the experts attribute to the target groups of these LLL policies, but which, as we have seen previously, do not fully correspond to the official definitions.

The vast majority of young adults belong to non-traditional families where divorce has been a widespread event with diverse impacts on their life course: changes of residence, changes in school, changes in country, change of family context where parents are replaced by grandparents or other relatives. They are also mostly from working class or lower middle class backgrounds, with low economic resources. Although only one young person reports dropping out of school because he had to go to work to contribute to the family budget, there are several references to the indirect costs of education (transportation, food, school supplies). Situations of postponement of vocational education and training courses attendance were also reported. These

courses being only offered by private institutions, presented unbearable costs for family budgets.

From the academic viewpoint, the descriptions that the young adults make of their school paths corroborate the characteristics presented by some experts. Their trajectories are marked by retention, by more or less prolonged school dropout, and by inconstancy.

All interviewees failed at least once. The reasons for school failure are based on two distinct orders of factors: reduced school performance associated with learning difficulties and absence from classes. The interviews show the existence of a vicious circle, widely documented in the literature, where the first retentions due to learning difficulties are followed by retentions due to absences from classes and, finally, by drop out. The young adults' educational stories show how accumulating retentions leads to loss of interest and disinvestment in schooling. Missing the classes are, in this context, the symptom of a process of school disaffiliation that ends up leading to school drop out and for attributing to many of these young people the ELS label. Young adults whose school paths are marked by this vicious circle deeply regret the past behaviour they attribute to immaturity and bad company, and believe that if this had not happened, their lives would be totally different.

For the most part, these young adults are the losers of a meritocratic school that defines itself as fair but cannot ensure success at all (Dubet, 2004) because merit by definition cannot be available to all. But they are also a result of an effective process of ideological inculcation that convinces them that they are the only responsible for their school failure and for their vulnerable situation in the job market.

Although reversibility is not a dominant feature of the students' school pathways, it is still present and corroborates the opinions of some experts. In fact, the trajectories of some interviewees show their successive attempts to find the vocational education and training provision that corresponds to their expectations. In a process similar to that of trial and error some young adults have been experimenting different vocational and training provisions until they find the one that, even though it is not ideal, presents itself as the one that satisfies them most.

We have analysed in previous sections the way in which some experts try to take into account young adults living conditions in the operationalization of LLL policies. The problem of the mobility and the fragility of the public transport network is a theme present in the experts and young adults' interviews, which in some cases is felt at the beginning of schooling and in others, makes it difficult to participate in LLL policies.

Two other points worth mentioning are the impact of early pregnancy and poverty on the young adults' life course, which reveal the absence of measures to ensure that young people stay at school and compulsory schooling is achieved. Similar to what was reported by some experts, two of the young people interviewed also saw their school career interrupted by biographical events that found no response at the level of public policies.

For the experts, the impact of LLL policies on the autonomy of young people was confined to the exclusively professional dimension and expressed in the idea of producing workers with autonomy in the exercise of the future profession. For the young adults interviewed the role played by these policies in fostering their autonomy has a much broader meaning. They hope that their involvement in these policies will enable them to access a job or set up a business that will provide them with the necessary income for their financial and housing independence.

In this vein, their perception of autonomy is not restricted to a skill for the working life, but rather to an expected result with effects on their life course and transition into adult life. On the other hand, the lack of autonomy and initiative that some experts refer to is contradicted by the life stories of the young people interviewed. The autonomy and initiative that they reveal in the search for the jobs to which they had access call attention to the fragmented image that some experts show regarding young adults. In fact, for some experts, the young adults they deal with are only young people who do not have the skills needed to perform properly the 'profession of student'. By joining a deficit conception of young adults, built exclusively from school referrals, some of the interviewees show the difficulty in recognizing and valuing the skills that young people acquired and exhibit in other spheres of life.

A final aspect that should be mentioned is related to the role of these LLL policies in reducing biographical uncertainty. The experts interviewed very rarely mentioned this topic. The few who referred to it were to account for the inevitable character of uncertainty, associated with the characteristics of the labour market, where seasonality prevails, and the characteristics of labour relations where fixed-term contracts are becoming dominant. However, the naturalization of uncertainty is strongly contested by the young people interviewed. They yearn for a 'durable' job or for owning a business that allows them the security they need to realize their life projects. Thus, while some are willing to take the risk presented by various opinion makers and policy makers as one of the conditions of contemporary times, everyone rejects insecurity as a long-term way of life.

The rejection of some young people to become employees and the aspiration to self-employment or to the creation of a company is a data of the research that it is important to mention. These aspects, which were not mentioned by any of the experts, express the adhesion of these young people to the spirit of entrepreneurship as a professional project. However, the entrepreneurship they want is not presented as a solution to the shortage of jobs or to unemployment but rather as an alternative to exploration to which some have already been subjected and others anticipate as a real possibility. Non-participation of young people is not surprising if we take into account that the governance of the regional skills training system is strongly centralized, with the state playing a determining role and with local actors confined to mere executors of defined policies and goals at the central level.

The young adults interviews confirm their lack of participation in policy-making. The role assigned to them is more that of 'consumers' of LLL policies than the one requiring their involvement in designing the policies that are directed to them.

The interviews of the young adults also show how the way of governance of the skills formation system influences their life courses. The subordination of the vocational education and training provision to the National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training the Anticipation Qualifications System, referred to by some experts, and its regional distribution makes some young people unable to attend the training intended. On the other hand, the obligation to respect the minimum number of students contributes to the fact that some young adults are forced to wait long months for the courses they want to attend, mainly when they are the responsibility of the training centre under the direct management of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. In this vein, young adults lament in some cases the waiting time and in others the mismatch between the desired course and the course offered.

Finally, it is important to mention the skills that young adults and experts say are valued by employers. In the opinion of the experts, the skills valued by employers reproduce the importance attributed to transversal and social competences: autonomy, critical thought, initiative, commitment, respect for leadership, and fulfilment of orders. The skills announced by the experts are divided between those that are associated with the workers of the new spirit of capitalism and those that have always been expected of the subaltern working class.

Unlike other terms, skills are not yet part of the vocabulary of the generality of young adults interviewed. However, when asked about the aspects that they consider employers to value, of the 'new competencies' only the commitment is referred to, although with another formulation - the boss likes, who likes what one does. Their professional experience and that of those around them tells them that what is truly valued in the jobs they have occupied and are most likely to occupy is productivity - synonymous with working very quickly - humility, fulfilling orders without question and respect for leadership. It is perhaps because they anticipate access to low qualified jobs that several young adults aspire to take control of their work, refusing to be employed.

Emerging issues (optional, if relevant)

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Work Package 5

Qualitative Analysis

UK National Report

**Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning,
University of Glasgow**

Lesley Doyle

November 2017

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Executive summary

This report provides findings and analysis to comply with the ‘Young Adults’ Project, Work Package 5 (WP5). I have used the requirements and guidance in the WP5 proposal to select, carry out and analyse interviews with policy managers (Level 1), project managers (Level 2) and practitioners (Level 3), collectively known as ‘experts’ in the Project, and as far as possible with young adults aged between 18 and 29 associated with the policies. The template for the report has been specified by the WP5 lead. The individuals interviewed were all associated with the policies on education and skills, the labour market and social issues operating in two functional regions. The regions and the policies were identified from the work carried out for WP3. In the Glasgow City Region the policies are: Developing the Young Workforce (DYW); Working Matters (WM); Community Benefit Clauses (CBC). In the Aberdeen/Shire City Region they are: Developing the Young Workforce; Aberdeen Guarantees (AG); Opportunities for All (OFA).

Generally speaking, for each policy, one person at each of the three levels of experts was interviewed although occasionally policy managers and project managers wanted to be interviewed together. For one of the policies one person encompassed both these levels. Before interviewing began with the Level 1 interviewees, assurances were sought, and given, that young adults would also be accessible to interview. In the event, due to the difficulties in sourcing sufficient young adult interviewees for each policy, there was oversampling at expert level. Where experts were ultimately not able to identify individuals in the Project’s age group, or they were no longer in contact with them, further interviews were carried out with experts until young adults could be identified. Similarly, there is oversampling of young adults associated with some policies to compensate for a lack elsewhere in the sample and there were very few non-UK respondents identified by experts for interview.

Analysis

- All the young adults spoke enthusiastically about the support they received on employability programmes and through apprenticeships, to help them learn new skills. This corroborated with the policy and programme intentions as expressed by the experts, particularly the practitioners who had experience of working directly with the young adults.
- In contrast, whilst some young adults received good careers advice and guidance in school towards a vocational pathway, others were very critical about the lack of support they received and has also experienced pressure, even if only through lack of alternatives, to take an academic path when they had decided against this. The young adults interviewed had left school before Developing the Young Workforce, with one of its aims to promote vocational, alongside academic, pathways, had been fully introduced. Their experiences did, however, underline the need for the policy.
- Young adults reported that when they left school they spent time trying out different vocational options but often without success although other employability programmes (not part of this study) had helped. Those who had been contacted post-school by the Skills Development Scotland careers service, they assumed as a result of referral by their school careers officer, had found that very helpful. This suggests a well-connected school/post-school careers service, albeit not consistently so.
- For young adults, family was still a very important factor for their past, present and future plans and aspirations.
- It seems that the policies under consideration assume three main groups: those who will take an academic pathway with ease; those for whom post-school support is needed for training and employment, and those who require more tailored one-to-one employability support, for example to build confidence and help overcome a variety social, economic, learning and health barriers.
- No evidence came to light where young adults were involved in lifelong learning, employability or training policy-making.

- Where young people are in training and employment with aspirations for the future they clearly feel they have a stake and talked knowledgeably about the industry they were engaged in, which suggested that they might be willing to participate in policy-making if that was meaningful rather than superficial and box-ticking.
- The term 'lifelong learning' is seldom used by practitioners or young people though practitioners occasionally refer to 'life skills'.
- There are insufficient opportunities for young adults over the age of 18 with a seemingly 'black hole' of support and provision for young people in their 20s who had to survive the 2008 downturn. There was evidence that this has recently been acknowledged with a new and more inclusive approach from DYW being introduced.
- A condition for contractors carrying out work for the public sector is that they add community benefit clauses (CBC) for example to recruit young workers/apprentices from the locality. The contracts are often shorter than the length of an apprenticeship and there is no provision to help the apprentices to complete their training. Furthermore, subcontractors are not necessarily bound by the clauses. This means young adults' routes into work can be blighted although this had not affected any of those in the Project.
- There is a gender imbalance between training and job types which needs to be addressed with more males in eg construction and more females in city office work.
- There is a great deal of public funding for training. It is not clear from the enactment of the policies where the responsibilities of employers lie. The UK Apprenticeship Levy on employers which is now in place offers the opportunity for a clearer message to employers to engage in more training and sustainable positions for young people.
- Actual policies can sometimes be confused with re-badging or re-labelling or re-arranging of existing measures. Whereas Opportunities for All referred to a policy for vulnerable young people, Aberdeen Guarantees was regarded as a drawing together of available opportunities, including Opportunities for All, under the one banner and visible on the AG website.
- Partnership was often mentioned as key to effective delivery of services to young adults. Despite this, there were examples given of a proliferation of measures, or changes, of which experts had had little or no advance notice or consultation, causing some confusion and resentment.
- There was some evidence from the very small sample in this study that careers advice and guidance within- and post-school, has been more amenable to vocational pathways in Aberdeen probably because of the existence of manufacturing and related industries, but also because the downturn had meant a more pro-active response was required than in Glasgow, where the pressure to go to university seems to be stronger. Family pressure for university remains strong, however. Nonetheless, with such a small sample it would be unwise to draw any definitive conclusions.

1 Introduction

1.1 Young people in Scotland

The life chances of young people living in Scotland are well documented in a very recent report of July 2017 *The life chances of young people in Scotland: an evidence review for the First Minister's Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality*¹ following on from Naomi Eisenstadt's report, on Poverty and Inequality, *Shifting the curve*² which recommended a wide ranging literature review of the research concerning young people's life chances. The problem with both these reports for this Project is that, as is frequently the case, the age group covered is 16-24 therefore not covering the older young adults in the Project's age group who experienced the Great Financial Crisis of 2008 at a critical point in their lives. Nonetheless, these reports do tell us a considerable amount about the 16-24 age group and what follows draws strongly on the latter, *Shifting the curve*.

The report shows that the poverty rate for young adults aged 16 to 24 in 2015/16 in Scotland was higher than for other groups of adults. There is a tendency for them to have lower earnings, because they are more likely to be in entry level jobs but there is also evidence that this is worsening and exacerbated by accommodation problems, particularly in relation to home ownership. Homelessness figures suggest that young adults in particular may have difficulty accessing appropriate accommodation: younger age groups are over-represented in homelessness figures.³ The rate of youth homelessness in 2015/16 was 12.6 per 1000 young adults. Even though youth homelessness has been falling in recent years, and decreased by 9% between 2014/15 and 2015/16, there were still 7,762 homeless young adult households in 2015/16 – 28% of all homeless households.

The poverty rate for young adults in Scotland was higher in 2014/15 than a decade ago.⁴ Younger households are overrepresented in the least wealthy households. Accumulation of debt by Scottish graduates increased 12% over the year to 2016, and 43% since 2011. The average level of debt for young adults has nearly doubled since 2004.⁵

The full-time employment situation of 13.5% down to 11.3% between 2013-14 and 2014-15 indicated in the table below may seem encouraging but it includes those who are self-employed/freelance, doing voluntary or other unpaid work, developing a professional portfolio/creative practice or on an internship, all of which are highly precarious occupations (see Table 1).

The unemployment rates for young adults in Scotland have been consistently higher than those for other age groups, even though they have also seen the largest decreases in the last few years. This may be partly because young people are more likely to be in education and seeking flexible part-time work, which may be harder to find.⁶

In the labour market, women dominate low-pay sectors such as caring and leisure occupations. Gender segregation in subjects studied at school and beyond is associated with gender segregation in the labour market, with 'feminised' sectors tending to be low paid. The most gendered occupations for

¹ The life chances of young people in Scotland: an evidence review for the First Minister's Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality. 2017, Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

² Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality, *Shifting the curve: a report to the First Minister*. 2016, Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

³ Scottish Government, *Youth homelessness analysis 2015-16*. 2016, Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

⁴ Scottish Government, *Scotland's People annual report: results from the 2015 Scottish Household Survey*. 2016, Scottish Government: Edinburgh

⁵ Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), *Access to financial services in the UK*. 2016, Financial Conduct Authority: London.

⁶ Fraser of Allander Institute and Scottish Centre for Employment Research, *Scottish labour market trends, Vol 1 No 3*. 2017, University of Strathclyde: Glasgow.

young people are 'Skilled Trades' (89% male) and 'Caring, Leisure and Other Services' (82% female)⁷. Additionally, analysis of Census data found that for NEET young people who have previously worked, more young women have worked in 'administrative and secretarial' occupations and 'sales and customer service' occupations, whereas more young men have had experience in 'skilled trade' occupations.⁸

Table 1 16-24 year old college leaver destinations, all qualifiers, 2013-14/2014-15

Destination		2013-14	2014-15
f/t further study, training or research	↑	65.7%	68.3%
p/t further study, training or research	↓	1.0%	0.3%
Working f/t*	↓	13.5%	11.3%
Working p/t	↓	3.5%	3.3%
Due to start a job by the 31 st March	→	0.1%	0.1%
Unemployed and looking for work	↓	2.8%	2.7%
Temporarily sick or unable to work/looking after home or family	→	0.4%	0.4%
Not employed but not looking for employment, further study/ training	→	0.3%	0.3%
Taking time out in order to travel	→	0.2%	0.2%
Unconfirmed	↑	12.5%	13.1%

Scottish Funding Council (SFC), *College Leaver Destinations 2014-15*. 2016, Scottish Funding Council: Edinburgh.

Staying on at school is strongly patterned by deprivation. The evidence shows that the higher the level of deprivation, the lower the staying on rate. The proportion of young people staying on in school from the most deprived areas has increased more rapidly than in the least deprived areas for both S4 to S5 and S5 to S6. Pupils from the most deprived areas continue to be less likely to enter 'positive destinations' than those from the least deprived areas, although the gap has narrowed between 2011/12 and 2014/15. Young people from the most deprived areas are less likely to go onto HE and more likely to go onto FE than those from the least deprived areas. Those from the most deprived areas were also more likely to be unemployed than those from the least deprived areas.⁹

The Regional Context

Glasgow is Scotland's largest city with a population of around 600,000. The wider City Region has a population of 1.75 million. It is mostly urban but does have some farming areas.

A large proportion of the population lives in income deprivation compared to Scotland as a whole. In the Glasgow North West and Glasgow South sectors approximately one quarter of the population live in income deprivation. This rises to 29% in the Glasgow North East sector. In contrast, 16% live in income deprivation in Scotland as a whole. Population estimates for 2014 indicate that 197,000 Glaswegians (33% of the city's population) reside in the 10% of most deprived areas in Scotland. Almost half of Glasgow's residents - 287,000 people - reside in the 20% of most deprived areas in

⁷ Annual Population Survey, December 2015

⁸ 21. Scottish Government, *Consequences, risk factors, and geography of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)*. 2015, Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

⁹ The life chances of young people in Scotland: an evidence review for the First Minister's Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality. 2017, Scottish Government: Edinburgh.

Scotland, even though the level of relative deprivation in Glasgow has reduced over recent years. Twenty-one per cent of adults are claiming out of work benefits, 32% of children live in poverty and levels of deprivation are considerably higher than the Scottish average.

Although the region of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire currently has above-average incomes and low unemployment, the recent economic downturn in the oil industry, has resulted in job losses and economic flux, and more locally, differences in wealth and opportunity between some of the region's communities are seen as significant challenges.

The City Region has areas in need of regeneration including coastal communities of north and south Aberdeenshire as well as parts of Aberdeen City. Data on the downturn in the Region has not yet been collected.

While Glasgow Region faces greater challenges regarding employment and skills issues, Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire is undergoing rapid economic changes that will require particular policy and practice responses regarding lifelong learning and skills.

1.2 The Policies

1.2.1 Developing the Young Workforce (DYW Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and Glasgow)

This nationally promoted policy works with regional training providers, schools, colleges, universities and business to strengthen vocational skills, attainment levels and to encourage more apprenticeships. It was selected for the Project to provide opportunities for comparisons between Glasgow and Aberdeen/shire. It is a seven-year programme that aims to better prepare children and young people from 3–18 for the world of work. It provides a focus on improving work experience, careers information, advice and guidance and providing greater access to vocational learning, involving a vast range of partnerships through employer-led Regional Invest in Youth Groups.

In Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire, DYW is articulated with the 'Opportunities for All' policy and measures (see below). A small multi-skilled executive team carry out day-to-day activity. Seconded from the public and private sectors work with and are led by a small team of specialists appointed by the Regional Group. Work to date includes stronger School/ College links partnership with both Local Authorities. They report a significant increase in young people going from school to college and being involved in school link activity.

In the Glasgow City Region, an example of the Group's work is local employers working with other professionals in one of eight council of the region to engage with all 5 secondary schools in the area in a range of activities including offering employability placements. Many projects and programmes include DYW as integral to their purpose, including the Young Person's Consortium Employability Service¹⁰ funded by the European Social Fund.

¹⁰ The Young Person's Consortium is a new employability service run in conjunction with Action for Children, Barnardo's and The Prince's Trust, which works throughout Glasgow. It offers:

- One-to-one employability support to 16-29-year-olds in their local area.
- Contacts with various organisations who are helping to get young people into positive destinations whether that is college, apprenticeships or employment.
- Access to funding opportunities utilising all sources including internal access to best foot forward.
- Support to remove any barriers the young person may have on a one to one case management service with an employment adviser/case worker.

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/may-2017/young-persons-consortium/>

1.2.2 Community Benefit Clauses (CBC Glasgow)

Community Benefit Clauses are contractual requirements for those businesses working with the local authorities which deliver wider benefits in addition to the core purpose of the contract. These clauses can be used to build a range of social, economic or environmental conditions into the delivery of council contracts. These include: targeted employment and training initiatives, educational support initiatives and vocational training. Community Benefits clauses are requirements which deliver wider benefits in addition to the core purpose of a contract. Community benefits are a key component in maximising social, economic and environmental benefits within the City Deal programme. This includes impacts for groups of people in the community for example where a school is under construction.

1.2.3 Working Matters (WM Glasgow)

Working Matters is an employment scheme for individuals in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (ESA)¹¹ that works with 4,000 people, assisting at least 600 into sustained work. This policy is designed to tackle various barriers to employment for a client group with experience of long term unemployment. The focus is on the following goals: Equitable - targeted to ensure they meet the needs of participants; Effective at targeting identifiable barriers to opportunity and contributing to participants' action plans; Efficient in assisting participants to make progress along the employability progression pathway. Case Managers support participants on a one-to-one basis throughout the lifetime of the programme, tailoring support to assist them to gain sustained employment. The support includes building trusting relationships, providing a range of courses and support to address social, health, addiction and other barriers towards building confidence and work readiness, as well as preparation for work, job searching and up to six months of after-care once in work.

1.2.4 Opportunities for All (OFA Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire)

This is the national guarantee that all young people between 16 and 19 have an entitlement to participate in education or training. OFA promotes transition from compulsory education to positive destinations particularly for those groups who are most disadvantaged and is aimed at reducing youth unemployment. The programme is delivered through the development of one-to-one, individual Activity Agreements with a key worker.¹² The objective is to help the young person gain skills and confidence, and prepare for employment, training, education and/or volunteering. To engage the particular client group, Activity Agreements can include music, arts, sport or outdoor activities, as well as group activities with other local participants involved in community projects. While Aberdeenshire has relatively fewer of these groups there are particular areas where such support is required. The recent downturn in the oil and gas industry is likely also to have longer-term implications for those groups of young adults with multiple barriers which OFA supports.

1.2.5 Aberdeen Guarantees (AG Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire)

This initiative is 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. It provides enhanced information (including careers fairs) for students, parents and teachers about the job market and skills required across the Region. It aims to bridge the gap between education and employers. This is an umbrella policy which collects together all the ongoing employability and training activities and offers in the region on to a website or 'brand'.¹³

¹¹ ESA is a benefit for those with an illness or disability that affects their ability to work. There are two types: contribution-based ESA – for those who have paid enough National Insurance contributions; income-related ESA – for those on a low income, either on its own or in addition to contribution-based ESA

¹² <https://www.mygov.scot/activity-agreements/>

¹³ <https://www.aberdeenguarantees.com/>

2 Data Collection, Treatment and Analysis

2.1 Project sample

In this section, an account is given of the sampling procedure for both experts and young adults beginning with Table 2 below which shows that in total 10 experts and 8 young adults in Glasgow, and 9 experts and 10 young adults in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire were interviewed. Further details of the young adults' sample are to be found in Section 5.

Table 2 Number of interviews in Glasgow and Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire

	Glasgow			Aberdeen		
Policies.....>>	DYW	WM	CBC	DYW	OFA	AG
Experts						
Policy managers	1	1	1 (3)	1	1	1
Project managers	1 (2)*	1		1		1
Practitioners	2	1 (3)	2	1	1 (2)	2
Total	10			9		
Young Adults						
Male interviewee/parents born in Scotland	1	0	2	1	2	3
Female interviewee/parents born in Scotland	4	0	1	2	0	0
Male interviewee and/or parents born in countries where most immigrants come from (EU)	0	0	0	1 Poland	0	1 Thailand
Female interviewee and/or parents born in countries where most immigrants come from (EU)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8			10		

* numbers in brackets represents the number in the interview

2.2 Fieldwork Diary

All respondents signed a consent form to conform with ethical requirements.

2.2.1 Experts

In both the Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and Glasgow City Regions, policy managers (Level 1), project managers (Level 2) and practitioners (Level 3) were interviewed for each of the five policies as in Table 3 below. As can be seen, generally speaking, for each policy, one person at each of the three levels of experts was interviewed although sometimes policy managers and project managers wanted to be interviewed together. For one of the policies (OFA) one person encompassed both these levels. Before interviewing began with the Level 1 interviewees, assurances were sought, and given, that young adults would also be accessible to interview. In the event, there was some oversampling at expert level due to the difficulties in sourcing sufficient young adult interviewees for each policy. Where experts were ultimately not able to identify individuals in the Project's age group, or they were no longer in contact with them, further interviews were carried out with experts until young adults could be identified. Three interviews with project managers were not used as it transpired they were not able to locate practitioners or young adults for interview, so alternative experts had to be found.

Similarly, there is oversampling in young adults associated with some policies to compensate for a lack elsewhere in the sample.

Table 3 Experts sample: Levels 1, 2 and 3 interviewees

Level 1: Upper-level policy managers of vocational education and training programmes

Level 2: Policy managers of vocational education and training programmes

Level 3: Managers/street-level professionals & employers working in vocational education and training institutions or on projects

DYW: Developing the Young Workforce; WM: Working Matters; CBC: Community Benefit Clauses. AG: Aberdeen Guarantees; OFA: Opportunities for All.

The policy initials (DYW etc), interview codes (eg E_UK_G_4: G=Glasgow; E_UK_A_8: A=Aberdeen), and the three expert levels (L1, L2 and L3) are used throughout the report.

	Glasgow			Aberdeen		
	DYW	WM	CBC	DYW	OFA	AG
Level 1 (L1) Policy managers	Director E_UK_G_4	Working Matters Operations Manager E_UK_G_9	Procurement Development Manager/ Evaluation Manager (interviewed together) E_UK_G_3	Director E_UK_A_6	Manager Level 1 & 2 (same person) E_UK_A_8	Lifelong Learning Manager* E_UK_A_1
Level 2 (L2) Project managers	Industry & Engagement Manager/ Industry & Education Partnership Manager (interviewed together) E_UK_G_6	Operations Manager from ALEO ¹⁴ E_UK_G_10	Strategic Operations Manager from same ALEO as WM (interviewed with Level 1 above) E_UK_G_3	Schools & Business Coordinator E_UK_A_7	See above E_UK_A_8	Managing Director of engineering training Provider E_UK_A_2
Level 3 (L3) Practitioners	Employability counsellor E_UK_G_5 Owner/ director of small training provider E_UK_G_7	Job Sourcing Manager/ Case Manager/ Aftercare Manager (interviewed together) E_UK_G_8	Construction management company Senior Project Manager & apprenticeship supervisor E_UK_G_1 Construction company HR manager & apprenticeship supervisor E_UK_G_2	Engineering company apprentice- ship assessor E_UK_A_5	Activity Agreement worker/ Activity Agreement supervisor (interviewed together) E_UK_A_9	Project co- ordinator for employability training provider E_UK_A_3 Engineering apprentice- ship assessor with training provider E_UK_A_4

¹⁴ Glasgow Council has established a network of wholly and partly owned Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs) which provide services to and on behalf of the Council. This one has ‘the aim of delivering economic development activity on behalf of the city’

* The Lifelong Learning Manager (Level 1) is actually based in the Professional Learning Team, which is part of Education and Children's Services, and responsible for the Council's adult learning, youth work, and work experience for schools. The manager above her, the Service Manager for Professional Learning, explained that '(AG) does not sit with a single person' and that the website which hosted the policy was managed by the person who was also Level 1 and Level 2 for Opportunities for All.

DYW Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and Glasgow: It is important to note that at the time of the interviewing DYW had only been introduced into schools in the previous two to three years. This means that it is unlikely the young adults would have experienced DYW because at aged 18 most would have left school in the previous two years or before that. Similarly, the practitioners in the main had not had experience of DYW and were not aware of either the policy or its effects on the young adults with whom they were working. However, the issues they raised were highly relevant to DYW and as will be seen in the analysis in Sections 3, 4 and 5. One of the key elements of DYW is to encourage young people to consider vocational routes, especially apprenticeships, as one of their career options, and businesses to create more apprenticeships, although there are no DYW targets for the latter as these are driven through Skills Development Scotland (SDS)¹⁵.

For DYW in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire the policy manager, Director of the Regional DYW was interviewed. The project manager was working with schools and businesses and the practitioner was an apprenticeship trainer assessor in a manufacturing company.

For DYW in the Glasgow City Region, the Director of DYW as the policy manager was interviewed, two project managers (one for schools and one for businesses) were interviewed together. Of the two practitioners interviewed, one worked with young adults on an employability programme run by a third sector organisation, and the other was the owner and manager of a small training provider company who supervised her own apprentices within the organisation.

WM: For Working Matters, interviews were carried out with the policy manager for the Glasgow City Region, the next level project manager for the project's delivery agency in Glasgow City (one of eight local authorities in the Glasgow City Region), and three of her case managers who were interviewed together.

CBC: For CBC, the policy manager and project manager arranged it so they were interviewed together. Also present was the CBC Evaluation Manager. The policy manager ran the CBC policy for Glasgow Council to ensure that the clauses in the contracts awarded to construction companies and suppliers etc were clear and was also working on compliance and evaluation issues. The project manager worked for the ALEO that the Council used to source labour for the CBC clauses, including young adults. Of the practitioners, one was a senior project manager with a construction management company and the other a human resources and training manager for a construction company.

OFA: For Opportunities for All the policy manager and project manager were the same person. Two practitioners who worked with the young people devising and implementing tailor-made Activity Agreements, the name of the delivery model for OFA, were interviewed together. OFA comes under the policy of Aberdeen Guarantees.

AG: For Aberdeen Guarantees, the nearest to a policy manager who could be identified by the head of the Professional Learning team, to whom I was referred, was actually responsible for Lifelong Learning in the local authority. Although there are links with employability, 'lifelong learning' work is largely with older adults so, it transpired, E_UK_A_1 was not the person with responsibility for AG

¹⁵ Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the skills agency for Scotland. It is an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government.

as, it was explained, no-one had overall responsibility. E_UK_A_1 managed the Council's adult learning offer, the youth work offer (for under 18s), work experience for schools (ie up to 18) and what was called Community Learning and Development. Her background was in employability and European Social Fund projects. E_UK_A_8, the policy and project manager for OFA, was responsible for putting the AG website and the 'brand' together. The AG project manager was the manager of a training centre for engineers. Two practitioners were interviewed. One was an engineering lecturer/trainer (called an 'assessor') for apprentices at the training centre. He also worked with Employability Fund¹⁶ young adults coming out of school at aged 16 onto the 16 week Employability Fund Stage 1 'Skills for Engineers' course. The other practitioner was a project coordinator in a social enterprise activity centre.

2.2.2 Young adults

For details of each young adult interviewee see Sections 4.1 (Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire) and 5.1 (Glasgow City Region) Presentation and analysis of biographies

With regards to interviewing young adults, not all the particular sampling criteria of the project could be met simply because the interviewers could not be sourced by the managers. In addition, for two of the policies there were insufficient interviewees for the Project's age group.

DYW Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and Glasgow: Considerable liberties have had to be taken with interviewing young adults for DYW. In Aberdeen and Glasgow, there were difficulties sourcing practitioners and young adults over 18 for interview because DYW is delivered in schools only up to 18 and interviewing could not begin until after the exam revision period started at the end of April. Given the remit of DYW policy those following employability programmes and apprenticeships were identified through other channels although the participants include older apprentices who possibly had left school before DYW was introduced, or during its introduction. None of the DYW practitioners or young adults with whom they worked had any experiences of DYW specifically.

In Aberdeen/Shire strenuous efforts by E_UK_A_7 (the DYW programme manager) to trace people post school were unsuccessful. Eventually, he contacted the further education college and the person there in turn contacted an apprenticeship trainer in a company also working as an assessor for the college (E_UK_A_5). The assessor was not aware of the work carried out under DYW but through him, several young adults were identified for interview. Although they were within the age range of the project and some were aged 19 none of them knew whether they had experienced DYW in school, perhaps because they had left at aged 16 before the programme had started.

In Glasgow, for DYW two young adults were identified directly through DYW. One was as a result of the Glasgow DYW policy manager recommending contacting the manager of the Scottish Training Federation. He placed a notice in the Federation's weekly update and this was picked up by a training provider. The other was directly through one of the project managers (two were interviewed together). Eventually three further young adults were identified through one of the employability providers on the basis they may have experienced DYW in some way at school.

¹⁶ The Employability Fund supports services which have been developed to address the specific needs of local areas. SDS administers and manages the Employability Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government. It supports the Youth Employment Strategy by delivering 'over 9,000 new opportunities' across Scotland...by working with local employability partners, to maximise the resources that are available in their area and avoid duplicating existing employability services. 'By working closely with our partners, we make sure that the fund is aligned to local areas and maximises opportunities for individuals. Local training providers work with employers to understand their skills needs and help them find and train the right individuals'. <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/employability-fund/> The Employability Fund is paid for via the EU European Social Funds.

WM: For Working Matters, it was not possible for managers to locate anyone under 29 to interview for the Project. There is oversampling of young adults in some policies to compensate for the shortfall. When WM was selected for analysis, from the policy documentation, it appeared that young adults were part of the policy's client base as it is aimed at 16+ for whom other programmes had been unsuccessful and who had experienced multiple personal, social, financial and health barriers to employment. However, by the time this Project started it had for some time been focussing more specifically on 'hard to reach' adults most of whom are over 35. In the event, young people aged 18-29 were few and far between across the region and none could be identified in Glasgow City itself where the initial policy manager interview, project manager, and practitioner interviews were carried out.

CBC: It transpired that CBC policy managers in Glasgow had no avenues for access to young adults through employers or subcontractors. Strong representation to managers at Scottish Government level and the strenuous efforts of a very helpful officer produced links to a Partnerships Manager in the Construction Industry Training Board and through him to a Community Benefits Manager at Hub West Scotland Limited and eventually two practitioners and three associated young adults were located for interview.

OFA: For Opportunities for All (OFA) it was difficult for project managers, despite their best efforts, to identify sufficient young adults over 18 to interview in all the categories. Two OFA young adults were identified by managers for interview although one was not on the actual programme and the other one had particular learning needs. These issues were not made apparent pre-interview. In any event, OFA it seems, is another 'spoke' of the Aberdeen Guarantees umbrella, rather than being a separate policy in itself.

AG: For Aberdeen Guarantees it was difficult to unpick the management, as explained above and although a number of older adults were identified by the policy manager it was more difficult to find those within the age group. In the event, through an engineering training provider, two young adults undertaking Modern Apprenticeships were interviewed and two others were, or had been, on an Employability Programme with a social enterprise.

It has not so far been possible to maintain the hoped-for gender and ethnicity balance. For DYW four females and one male were interviewed in Glasgow, although for Aberdeen DYW there were two females and two males. For CBC, there were two males and one female. For AG and OFA all respondents were male. Only two non-UK participants were identified, one from the EU and the other who is half-Thai with a Scottish father, both with AG in Aberdeen.

2.2.3 Fieldwork notes

Approach to interviewers training: Interviews were carried out between March and August 2017, starting with the experts' interviews, by one single interviewer with the exception of three initial interviews. Beyond the basic information about the project, no training was required as the interviews were all carried out by a Project co-investigator with nearly 20 years' experience.

Adaptation of general interview guidelines: Interviews were carried out as directed, following ethical procedures.

Incidents: No significant incidents occurred apart from the difficulties in locating the appropriate experts and young adults for the policies identified for the Project.

Relevant observations: Respondents were happy to be interviewed in the main but the OFA young adults were quite troubled individuals and to be sensitive to this the interviews were kept short.

Quality of interviews: The interviews were recorded and transcribed. In general, all questions in the questionnaires were covered with all respondents although responses were sometimes provided variously during the interviews. This has been accommodated in the course of the analysis. Apart from truncating two interviews, as explained above, and some issues with sound due to two of the venues for interviews chosen by practitioners (a football club changing room and a boardroom with poor

acoustics) the interviews were of good quality. On the occasions when there were multiple interviewees in one interview (as for example OFA young adults, and CBC policy and project managers) these interviews were more difficult to manage but were ultimately successful.

2.3 Analysis

No adaptations were made to the guidelines. The analysis was carried out as recommended, using the codes identified for both experts and for young adults. The recommended codes were sufficiently comprehensive.

3 Analysis of Interviews with experts

The key focus of the analysis, employing the a priori codes provided by the WP5 core team, was the perspectives of the interviewees. There are some explanatory footnotes where the reader may need some background information or further explanation but at all times the responses of the participants were adhered to and as far as possible reported in their own words.

3.1 What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies? (Cultural Political Economy)

3.1.1 Antecedents (Origins)

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: This policy was the result of recommendations made by the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce which reported in 2014. As explained in its Terms of Reference, the report¹⁷ builds 'on the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (a policy which reformed the 3-18 school curriculum) and the extensive reforms of Post 16 Education now underway'. Its purpose was to develop proposals which engaged employers' commitment and investment; improved transitions; made young people work ready; and aligned VET and the apprenticeship system (called 'Modern Apprenticeships' in Scotland) with the Economic Strategy. The commission was chaired by Sir Ian Wood¹⁸, conducted extensive consultations with leading figures in education, business and equalities groups, and provided 39 recommendations intended to improve Scottish education. The report focused on learners who do not follow an academic pathway — those who leave school with little or no Highers¹⁹. It outlined the importance of vocational education and its role in the Scottish education system, and the recommendations reflect this. Following the report, the Scottish Government devised a strategy with an outline of activity 'to create a world class vocational education system by 2021'. The strategy set up twenty-one Regional Groups including Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and Glasgow.

These two DYW Regional Boards are headed up by the Chambers of Commerce (CoC). Both the Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW policy managers were keen to explain that earlier in the same year, as the Commission produced its final report (June 2014), their respective CoCs had already been producing an audit (Aberdeen L1 policy manager E_UK_A_6) and a report (Glasgow L1 policy manager E_UK_G_4) to explore how to: 'better prepare young people for work and align what industry and the region needed with what was being taught in school (which was) poorly co-ordinated'

¹⁷ Education Working For All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/4089/0>

¹⁸ Born and educated in Aberdeen.... in 1964 he joined the family business, John Wood & Son, and became the Managing Director in 1967. (The company) is now made up of two independent Scottish Business Groups. John Wood Group Plc is the UK's largest energy services company, employing more than 28,000 people in more than 46 countries. J W Holdings is one of Scotland's largest fishing companies, employing more than 400 people. He was awarded the C.B.E in 1982, and was awarded a knighthood in the 1994 New Years Honours List. See <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/about/governance/the-chancellor/the-chancellor/>

¹⁹ Highers are one of the national school-leaving certificate exams and university entrance qualifications offered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. 'Standard Grades' were Scotland's educational qualifications for students aged around 14 to 16 years, which were replaced 'National' exams.

(E_UK_A_6). They recognised that more action was needed to promote business/school collaboration, a view endorsed by this example given by E_UK_A_7, the project manager where: 'Earlier versions of school/business liaison were confined to young people going to a company on work experience for one week usually'. E_UK_G_4 (L1) said that DYW represents a cultural shift for parents who may have been the first generation in the family to go to university when it was really accessible and encouraged. Now, their children in secondary education are being told that apprenticeships are the route: 'There is a change in public attitudes and perceptions ... about what are successful post-school destinations for young people'. However, she also drew attention to those young people who went through the education system post 2008 and out into a less buoyant labour market without any of the current opportunities.

WM, the policy manager (E_UK_G_9) explained, had begun with discussions in 2013 when too many people coming out of the existing Work Programme, run by private training providers on two year contracts, were, in terms of going into a positive destination or into employment, 'potentially further away than when they started'. She emphasised that: '(WM) is the first time in a long time that our employability programme has been pulled together and delivered across such a big region' with case managers who know what works with the clients on their patch.

CBC had previously covered community benefits in works contracts but failed to include any community benefits in relation to services and goods contracts, according to the policy and projects managers. The revised policy now ensures that for any contracts that are put in place from the council's perspective, including goods and services over £50K and works contracts over £500K, they have to consider whether or not Community Benefits can be included. Past examples were cited of a private development in an area of deprivation in Glasgow where the local community wanted schools and houses whereas the developer wanted to build a £300,000,000 shopping complex. At the time, the local government Scotland Act of 2003 allowed public bodies to put in labour clauses to make a contractor support the local community with targeted recruitment and training, if they wanted to win the contract. Another example given was the 2014 Commonwealth Games (this was referred to frequently as a means by which CBCs became established) for which the contracts awarded had had built-in training and employment that matched Glasgow's KPIs for reaching a wide group of young people with different needs - apprenticeships, for example.

OFA: E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) explained that local authority OFA managers had been started in 2012 and were charged with developing Activity Agreements as a new post school destination for the most vulnerable. The term NEETs, seen as a deficit model, was replaced by 'More choices, More chances' and then by '16 plus learning choices', introduced in 2010 to ensure all pupils approaching school leaving age had an offering in place beyond school ie college, university or training. Post-school destinations were an important measure of success which meant working with schools, and careers advisors had to make sure that staff were focussing on those that were most likely to move into employment or unemployment straight from school or who had poor attendance at school or health issues etc. Aberdeen shaped their OFA from the pilot studies to fit with local provision that already existed in the region. It took a while to get started but over the last 5 years they have had about 500 young people on Activity Agreements, participating in led activities.

AG: Interviewees found it difficult to explain what Aberdeen Guarantees is or does now as it largely consists of a website and a brand. E_UK_A_8 (L1) agreed that it would be fair to refer to it as 'an umbrella'. Reference to the AG website showed that it was started in 2015: 'to build upon previous work within Aberdeen to promote the national 16+ Learning Choices & Opportunities for All agendas'. It was offered as 'a new citywide commitment to providing all young people between 14-25 year olds with opportunities to participate in learning, training and work'.²⁰ E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) explained that: 'Aberdeen Guarantees started off as a commitment. We were asked to introduce a brand that represents the collective training opportunities around there in Aberdeen to simplify things for people. This was before the Developing the Young Workforce had been published so we had

²⁰ <http://www.fsb.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news/2015/07/30/aberdeen-guarantees> 30th July 2015

started a lot of work for Aberdeen Guarantees. .. We asked businesses ..if they would offer more work placements. ... career talks in schools. We got about 80 businesses .. So we had kind of changed the focus of Aberdeen Guarantee because there would have been duplication.’ He maintained that: ‘It has been good. People seem genuinely happy with it’.

3.1.2 Objectives and expected impacts

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: In both regions, the policy managers were adamant that they would not be diverted from their focus by engaging in other, related activities, as this would not be productive. In this respect, the business approach was emphasised and the objectives clearly explained. For Aberdeen E_UK_A_6 (L1) the simple goal is engagement of business with Years 1-6 in schools and to broaden that out eventually into colleges and universities. He said: ‘We understand what the region needs in terms of skills for the future and we join it up making sure that the employers and schools are getting what they need. I think we need to keep it as simple as that to start with’. Glasgow policy manager E_UK_G_4 spoke with equal clarity about: ‘two primary objectives in DYW Glasgow: better industry links with education and getting more young people into work....We can’t be constantly drifting off around the next new thing’. E_UK_A_6 (L1) felt strongly that a ‘positive destination’ was not good enough – it had also to be what he called the ‘right’ destination for the individual person.

WM: The aim of WM for policy manager E_UK_G_9, is to ‘get them into work’ but that was only possible alongside what she saw as an equally important objective which was: ‘to try to engage with people (who have) a very challenging set of barriers’. Project manager E_UK_G_10 did not see WM as a policy but as a life support system, literally for turning people’s lives around.

CBC: The policy and project managers agreed that the objective of CBC was to get contractors and suppliers who engage with Glasgow City Council to write clauses into the contracts to include training and employment obligations and other benefits for the local communities where the work is taking place. There is also CBC funding: ‘(for) small suppliers or organisations on the basis that they help and improve the local area in some way eg help the community or take on young people for work experience’. For one practitioner, E_UK_G_1, the object was to fulfil the conditions of the tender by finding the appropriate people - apprentices or long term unemployed, for example but the other practitioner (E_UK_G_2) saw the objective ‘to create employment opportunities’.

OFA: The policy manager (who was also the project manager) of OFA saw it as: ‘almost like a safety net so that everyone has got some kind of activity that can keep them motivated, keep them confident and will hopefully link them into college or further training once they are ready’ (E_UK_A_8).

AG: E_UK_A_2 (L2) described AG as a collaboration of people that have been brought together to try and integrate some of the employment services for youngsters within Aberdeen City, so that they are aware of training opportunities. For practitioner E_UK_A_3 (L3), the main objective was to offer an advertising website, to give all young people a chance for a career: ‘I’d say its objectives are just to give the young people somewhere to go.... you’ve got all your different organisations advertising on it ... to get you down that right path.’

3.1.3 Approaches

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: For Aberdeen, E_UK_A_6 (L1), the approach taken starts with the regional economic strategy. This ensures the DYW teams know their priority sectors for engaging employers in a co-ordinated way so they are not put off by myriad people approaching them for the same thing. In practice, the teams speak to the school’s DYW lead to conduct an audit on the employability needs of the school. DYW finds companies who can support them in the sectors where they are lacking and to ensure that the work is curriculum-relevant. E_UK_A_7 (L2) felt there is a

definite commitment from both the business side and the schools to making DYW work. School engagement is evidence of corporate social responsibility for companies.

The important role of parents being party to careers information is also being recognised. E_UK_A_6 (Aberdeen L1) wanted to: 'enable young people to get access to employers to make the right choice and get to the *right* destination, not just a positive destination'. Project manager E_UK_A_7 (L2) talked about making sure that young people are aware that there are many different ways into the workplace'. Speaking as a practitioner working with young adults in the workplace, E_UK_A_5 (L3) said: '(Young adults) are looking everywhere for role models. They've just got to try and pick the right role model and they (will want) to achieve'. E_UK_G_4 (L3) echoed many of these sentiments for Glasgow, and emphasised the importance of ensuring young adults' aspirations are matched into the labour market. With some of the employers, they work to deliver programmes to the schools, and with others to recruit the right young person and identify any financial support that might be available. E_UK_A_7 (Aberdeen L2) explained they also now have 'Market Place', an online platform for teachers and colleges to look for engagement opportunities such as work placement visits and support for careers events.

WM: The policy manager E_UK_G_9 described WM as 'a very bespoke service' with case managers working with clients on a one to one basis for long periods because it takes months to win their trust and strengthen their self confidence to the point where they can consider entering employment. It might take three years for a client 'to progress along the pathway', beginning with personal development. The client-focused approach in part involved '(matching) clients to specific jobs that would suit their skills, needs and taking into consideration their health and other barriers' (project manager E_UK_G_10) including mental health and/or addiction issues, abuse, lack of skills, lack of qualification, very limited education, housing problems. WM have very good connections with a range of other agency and local authority staff which enable them to help and protect clients, for example if they are being bullied. Staff included a case manager, one who sourced placements and work from supportive employers, and another for after-care.

OFA: Under the 16 Plus measure, E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) goes into schools as part of a big push to get them to record information every 2 weeks on the electronic database to pull in information from the DWP, the Scottish Funding Council, SAAS and local colleges to give up to date information on what young people are doing at any one point in the year. At the same time, the 'Youth Employment Activity Plan'²¹, sets out a five-stage Employability Pipeline²². Provision for 16-24 year olds from over 30 organisations within Aberdeen and across Scotland is mapped on to that. They include programmes for care leavers and those with additional barriers. The provision includes Activity Agreements with employers and other providers for young people who have maybe disengaged from school, been in care, either at home or in a care home, or with other barriers to: 'give them that stepping stone to employability. The youth workers for OFA find out what a young person's interests are and try to add an employability agenda to help them boost their trust and confidence to engage in settings that otherwise they might not do: 'It's (a client centred approach) focussing in on the young person' (practitioner E_UK_A_9) trying to guide them towards formal learning, work experience, or a volunteering opportunity. Practitioners were adamant (without being asked) that they were not operating a deficit model. Instead, they were: 'nurturing very fragile and vulnerable individuals who've come out of the end of the educational pipeline ... not a deficit model – we're like a... a wealth model'.

AG: According to the website, Aberdeen Guarantees function is to express a partnership commitment to providing learning, training and work opportunities to all 14-25 year olds. Described as a 'brand', its approach consists of profiling the collective efforts of the public, private and third sector in assisting and enabling young people to progress towards employment. The opportunities are mapped

²¹ <https://www.aberdeenguarantees.com/attachments/Publisher-file-Youth-Employment-Activity-Plan-December-2016.pdf>

²² <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/employability-pipeline/the-employability-pipeline/>

along the Employability Pipeline. The Aberdeen Guarantees website complements the national Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) My World of Work website²³ which supports young people in choosing a career, learning and training, applying for jobs and making a career change. AG seems to be more of a collection point for activities which are on-going rather than a creator of opportunities in itself. E_UK_A_8 (OFA L1&2) explains: 'The AG newsletter puts everything in one place. It's allowed employers to put information on to the Aberdeen Guarantees website, into the newsletter. It's basically bringing everything together to ensure that young people within their city are informed about what is available.' An example is a 16 week Stage 1 'Skills for Engineering' training course available through the Employment Fund with a training provider. AG advertises this.

3.1.4 Implementation - policy challenges

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: According to E_UK_A_6 (Aberdeen L1), some of the DYW programme recommendations give rise to tensions within the DYW regional group in areas where the business sector: 'has no leverage...because the public sector will just do what they need to do'. They are, he said, constrained by living: 'in a world which is governed by politicians' and 'constrained by geographical boundaries that business doesn't recognise'. E_UK_A_7 (L2) was concerned at the amount of duplication of effort and crossover he comes across. For example, the local authorities have their own DYW leads, as well as those at the regional level, and they have their own DYW agenda as well. In Glasgow, E_UK_G_4 (L1) was concerned about policy challenges raised by the Minister around the new Apprenticeship Levy²⁴ on employers. For example, how to improve the apprenticeship figures in Scotland; whether it means more Modern, or Foundation, or Graduate Apprenticeships²⁵; what should be done around skills that are not apprenticeships, and how can opportunities be made accessible and employability and work force development addressed. E_UK_G_7 (L2), as a training provider, was of the view that Brexit may make a difference: '...in some sectors, the hospitality sector for example or even retail, (employers) say we'll not have as many - they rely on Europeans coming over and taking jobs, seasonal or whatever, (and) there is a bit of recognition for the members of the (Federation of Small Businesses that) they will have to fill the staff shortage and a school shortage, so they're recognising that we do need to really invest in our workforce here which should be an opportunity and could be an opportunity to really tackle the developing young workforce, so it could work, sometimes the strand around spending so much time and energy on a foundation apprenticeship and a graduate apprenticeship may take an eye off the ball around the DYW so it's kind of who's the hot potato just now, who's the one that's not sustainable'.

E_UK_G_7 (L3) was also concerned about employers' lack of engagement in creating opportunities for young people, despite the subsidies for apprenticeships, because of the longer term commitment this set for paying the living wage. Although schools should be doing more to increase young people's soft skills, and their maths and English, employers expected them to come as fully fledged workers when: "“modern apprenticeship” (means young people are) not ready. (Their) job (as employer) is to train them up until they become ready for that job role. But for whatever reason, and I do find this is a frustration of mine, ...a lot of employers will pay a fairly low rate but expect a full time qualified member of staff return and that's not going to happen'. Other concerns she had were around employers' lack of sensitivity to young people's nervousness as they started out in the workplace without the advice and help of parents who themselves may be struggling and unaware of what is required.

These wider issues – such as the Apprenticeship Levy, the impact of Brexit, and employers' attitudes to employing young people – have implications for DYW because of its strong vocational message.

²³ www.myworldofwork.co.uk

²⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/01/2588>

²⁵ There are two new types of apprenticeships being introduced. Foundation for in-school; and Graduate Level Apprenticeships up to Master's degree level for employees. They have been created in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sector.
<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/foundation-apprenticeships/>

Whilst there are sources of support available for young people, these are effectively subsidising employers, whether that is at European, UK, regional or local authority, level. E_UK_G_7 (L3) is expressing the concern, from her strongly networked position, that employers are not yet sufficiently committed to training and employing young workers, even with these subsidies, and that a cultural change is needed in their attitudes.

WM: The policy manager (L1) explained that WM has been fraught with implementation problems. At the same time as the programme started in 2015, the UK Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) began delivering a new pilot programme, sending very few referrals through. Then a change in benefits eligibility meant that WM clients had to undergo a work capability assessment or risk losing their benefits, again delaying referrals to WM. WM has only lately been able to get permission from the DWP to continue to work with clients whilst they are under appeal. Just recently, the introduction of the Scottish Government's new employability programme (to replace the unsuccessful Work Programme) includes a transitional programme 'Work Able', scheduled to start in 2018²⁶. Policy manager E_UK_G_9 (L1) felt that: 'it just seems to have been parachuted in'. It will come under the auspices of Skills Development Scotland and it could potentially reduce WM's potential pool of clientele still further as well as cause confusion around the appropriate programme for clients. Project manager E_UK_G_10 also emphasised the complexities the new employability programme changes will bring with them. WM is conceived as a work-related programme, on which basis it is assessed, when actually, because of the extreme circumstances of the clients referred to it, it has to operate as a social programme. Practitioner E_UK_G_8's experience is that mandatory referral clients are less likely to go into work than those who refer themselves voluntarily, suggesting that the wrong people are being sent or that the policy needs to be construed in a different way.

CBC: Whilst the policy (L1) and project managers (L2) (E_UK_G_3) were clear that: 'There is obviously a recognition that community benefits are almost part of a contractual obligation', there are a number of issues raising concern at the level of implementation. E_UK_G_1 was a practitioner (L3) from a construction management contractor which does not employ workers directly. He explained that their subcontractors would be trying to capture trainees and apprentices from their head office location ie not in the locality where the work is being carried out. Another issue is when the contract is shorter than the duration of for example an electrical apprenticeship of 4 or 5 years: 'it becomes difficult for me to say to you I will definitely take the guy on and I'll commit to his future for the next five years'. He felt that it was the subcontractors who should take responsibility but he did not know how they could monitor that process of delivery. Now, his company only take their own apprentices ie directly working for the company as trainee site managers. E_UK_G_2, a practitioner (L3) from a construction company expressed the same concerns about not wanting to let a young adult down by terminating the apprenticeship when the contract ended. She said that subcontractors and suppliers should be provided with incentives as they: 'need to buy into it as well'.

OFA sits alongside DYW currently but policy/project manager E_UK_A_8 thought that sooner or later it would be subsumed under it.

AG: The economic downturn in Aberdeen has presented major problems with reduced opportunities. There have been redundancies and fewer apprenticeships. There have been a number of jobs fairs through PACE²⁷, an SDS response to major redundancies. E_UK_A_4 (L3) goes into the companies and knows what is going on. They are a lot quieter at the moment due to the downturn in the industry

²⁶ For those with health-related conditions and introduced through new devolved powers under the Scotland Act 2016

²⁷ PACE was set up by the Scottish Government, and also includes the UK DWP (through Job Centres), local authorities, Citizens Advice, colleges and training providers. Local PACE teams '(help) companies and people who are facing redundancy' <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/partnership-action-for-continuing-employment-pace/>

itself, though he thought it was 'looking up again'. Previously they were overstaffed for the business they had.

3.1.5 Evaluation

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: From the website, the implementation of the Commission's recommendations for DYW is assessed against some key indicators eg the relative ratio of youth unemployment to 16-64 unemployment. Aberdeen policy manager E_UK_A_6 (L1) was concerned about the lack of evaluation of DYW: 'we've got a 7 year programme and as far as I can see, nobody is monitoring anything around impact' because public sector measurements (are) about positive destinations and: 'they might not be the right destination'. To achieve that, he wanted to see 'a longitudinal study on young people who are engaging with employers all the way through'. Project manager (L2) E_UK_A_7 explained that DYW had its own targets, which it is meeting, for setting up flagship partnerships with every secondary school in the region, as well as certificates of school engagement for businesses. E_UK_A_5, speaking from the perspective of an apprenticeship trainer in a manufacturing company, emphasised that apprentices and trainees are an important resource to the company and key to the success of its future including how they can fill skills gaps but he was not aware of how or whether this was evaluated.

E_UK_G_6 said there are figures to see how many young people have had training through the DYW project and that when a young person moves into a job with any element of training attached to it, the employer or the business tries their best to retain the person because they have invested a lot of time and effort.

WM: Evaluation of WM is partly based on whether it meets the targets of drawing 4,000 people to engage with it, including 600 starting work. At 15% this is relatively low, E_UK_G_9 conceded. The recent evaluation report had been understanding of the very particular problems WM had to deal with due to the nature of the clientele, with four needing to be engaged for every one person taking up the programme. Currently 1,400 people are with the programme and she expressed satisfaction with this. E_UK_G_10 (L2) explained they were 'nowhere near achieving the 15% because of how long it takes to 'get someone to get to the stage when they are considering work'. In Glasgow, where the problems were even more intractable than elsewhere in the region, they had so far managed to get 57 clients into work. New referrals were running at one or two a week. Another complication for reporting successes is that whereas one of WM's targets is 'barrier removal' and achievements with addressing a variety of clients' problems are recorded in detail on WM's own system, these are not recorded by the DWP which is only interested in outcomes.

CBC: Contracts and clauses are monitored through evaluation which asks: "How is it working? What are the stumbling blocks? What are the successes?". The Council is aware that more effective monitoring and evaluation of whether the CBCs are being delivered is overdue and so they are in the process of developing more effective systems. The ALEO they work with do not have the resources to track apprentices beyond the life span of the project. They are trying to establish a real job for the real life of the apprenticeship with the CBC. For example, working collaboratively, the CBC young person could be transferred from one company to another ie the new contractor has to take on CBC part-trained young people as a CBC condition in the new contract the Council awards. There was some confusion apparent as to what constitutes an 'outcome' for CBC and at which point in the process it could be said that an 'outcome' has been achieved. All the processes have a revision and review process. However, practitioners complained about the lack of evaluation because even though their companies: 'delivered every target'.... 'Nobody from that Government department has ever come back to say how are all of those seven apprentices that you delivered for me getting on in life' (L3, E_UK_G_1). Another wanted to know whether a company gets struck off the tender list if they do not deliver (L4, E_UK_G_2).

OFA and AG: E_UK_A_8 (L1&2 OFA) who also has responsibility for maintaining the AG website, carried out a survey evaluation of the information portal²⁸ (which includes OFA as one of the AG offers) with the Policy and Performance team: ‘People seem genuinely happy with it’. There has been success on positive destinations between 2009 and 2014/15 with the extra funding and focus on supporting young people into training and work. It has become more difficult over the last couple of years although they are more joined up with partners. The downturn in the local economy means fewer opportunities for entry level work, jobs and apprenticeships and there have been cuts in training provision funding. Their figure has not dropped but it has not gone up in the last year and a half. OFA practitioners reported that it is hard to track destinations of young people: ‘Even when they’ve gone into a positive destination they don’t tell us about it, and then we think they’ve gone into negative because we can’t contact them and then we find out later, after we’ve recorded it as negative!’ They try and encourage them to keep in contact but tracking over more than 4 months is very difficult. Bearing in mind, as explained earlier in 3.1.1, that AG had started before DYW was introduced, E_UK_A_8 (L1&2 OFA) had a different perspective: ‘We have not got huge capacity internally within the council so that extra help was quite welcome’. Nonetheless he acknowledged there was competition for resources despite efforts to coordinate and collaborate.

Generally speaking, the key objective, approach and expected outcomes of all the programmes seem to be aligned. These programmes aim at matching school pedagogies, young people’s life projects and the needs of employers. However, although the Employability Pipeline maps out the contribution of schools, training providers and companies as a coherent system it is evident that for some project managers, this ideal did not run as smoothly as they would wish. E_UK_G_9 (WM, L1) felt that some new measures for the unemployed had been ‘parachuted in’, and E_UK_A_2 (AG, L2) thought that DYW has had an impact on Aberdeen Guarantees resulting in ‘a lot of muddy water as to who’s doing what and where. I don’t think the formation of the Developing the Young Workforce is particularly helpful to Aberdeen Guarantees” ...there’s no joining up the dots’ resulting in both DYW and the contributors to AG all looking for placements. Both these perspectives suggest a misalignment between existing and new measures and that more consultation is needed at the various policy management and implementation levels.

3.2 How do the policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do the policies recognise social categories? (Theme of Cultural Political Economy)

This question is discussed in Sections 4 and 5 on the findings from the young adults’ interviews, and in Section 6 on the interaction between young adults and experts.

3.3 How do LLL policies take into account the living conditions²⁹, family responsibilities and civil engagement of young adults? (Life Course Research)

3.3.1 Living conditions

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: In Aberdeen, they were particularly aware of providing opportunities for those young people not taking the academic route but were also keen to attract those on an academic pathway to a vocational route. The oldest would be 17, maybe a few 18 year olds. Working

²⁸ <https://aberdeenguarantees.com/news/aberdeen-guarantees-year-2-online-communications-evaluation>

²⁹ The term ‘Living conditions’ is used in the European Commission sense as explained in this Eurostat link. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>. This is confusing as in the English language it is not the same as ‘working conditions’ or ‘social conditions’, which is actually what is being discussed, as is made clear here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/shp/britishsociety/livingworkingconditionsrev3.shtml>.

with young people in an area of multiple deprivation, with fourth generation unemployed parents, E_UK_G_5 (Aberdeen, L3) thought that the scope of employment opportunities needs to be widened into employment that does not encompass a Modern Apprenticeship in order: 'to try and upskill young people and make them more employable' and to source as many businesses that are willing to work in partnership: 'to help reduce the level of unemployment with young people in the city'.

WM: E_UK_G_10 (L2) said that the client-focused approach in part involved '(matching) clients to specific jobs that would suit their skills, needs and taking into consideration their health and other barriers'. She emphasised the importance of the after-care manager who worked with clients once they had been found a position and when they might need additional support. In particular they encourage those on Employment Support Allowance, who are allowed to work under 16 hours a week, to take on permitted work if they clear it first with the DWP (who pay the allowance). The compassionate and empathetic approach to clients was evident when she said: 'a lot of them have not worked for a long time. Some people have never worked at all and sometimes there are good reasons for that'. Devastating experiences which many clients had suffered, she said, included physical, mental and sexual abuse which could have profound and lifelong adverse effects. In order to address the multiple difficulties clients face, WM case managers, themselves experienced employability practitioners, establish links and coordinate activity with other agency and local authority staff.

CBC: The ALEO speaks to the employers to understand what a particular job requires. They help to match that with the client base they work with, who have potentially low or no skills, to assess whether they can do any pre-employment training with them beforehand: 'to give them an advantage and a toe in the door as opposed to someone just coming off the street and applying for the job'. Although E_UK_G_1 (L3) said that: 'once the Community Benefit comes in to the contract it is more about the company delivering on that clause, than worrying about the person's personal life' he also said that the manager in charge of the young person: 'should be giving a bit of leeway to whatever personal circumstances they have'. Practitioner E_UK_G_2 said that some of the places that her company builds in are: 'a wee bit more deprived so certainly you take that into account when you're interviewing all the apprentices.' She saw the company as teaching 'life skills' as well, such as the need to work with different people and learn to get on with everybody.

OFA: E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) said that businesses need support to offer work placements for vulnerable young people and that is an area that still needs some work. He said the Activity Agreements are for young people who have maybe disengaged from school, they might currently be looked after, either at home or in a care home. The purpose of the Agreements is to: 'give them that stepping stone to employability, whether they go back to college.' They find out what a young person's interests are and try to add an employability agenda to that to help them boost their confidence or to engage in a social setting that maybe otherwise they would not necessarily meet, in the hope that that it would lead on to a more mainstream or college programme or something like that: 'It's focussing in on the young person and trying to guide them'.

AG: E_UK_A_2 (L2) said young people come to the training centre on the Employability Fund with their key goal to complete their initial training course, hopefully get moved on into a work placement then an apprenticeship or a job. They do not get the ones with 'chaotic lifestyles'. As they only have a small number of places they select the ones who are going to be successful. The practitioner (E_UK_A_3) echoed this and said he would try and help them but at the same time would not go into their personal life: 'Sometimes they tell us and if they need to talk about anything then they can. I just try to get their mind more focussed on where they want to go'.

3.3.2 Feedback/engagement

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: As policy manager and working at board level, Aberdeen E_UK_A_6 has little directly to do with young people and perhaps because of this there are plans afoot to set up a 'mirror' or 'shadow' DYW youth board to consult them about creating an employer/work placement 'Tinder'-type dating app. He said: 'We need to think more creatively about how we engage with young people. Kids are not interested in 'developing the young work force'. E_UK_A_7 (L2) talked

about the good feedback they were getting from young people though he could not immediately evidence that well because the programme had only been running for two years. He was also seeing more and more employers looking at developing young people as being the future workforce.

WM: According to the project manager, feedback on WM from staff, including on the ‘wicked’ problems outlined below, is through the WM joint meetings (which policy manager E_UK_G_9 also spoke about) with all eight authorities in the region, but there was no sense that the feedback then impacted on WM in any way. Feedback from clients was not sought or provided for in any specific, structured, formal way.

CBC: E_UK_G_3 (Level 1&2) said they ask for feedback from all the stakeholders to see how it is working, though it was not clear whether this includes the young people. E_UK_G_1 (L3), on the other hand, said there was no opportunity for feedback. The trainees are automatically signed up to a set training and development programme with no way to feed into that or change anything of that because the course is run by a training body who help the company get trainees to the next level. E_UK_G_2 (L3), on the other hand, has a meeting with the apprentices every quarter... ‘it just gives them the opportunity totell us a bit about what they’ve been doing, talk about their college’

OFA: There are a number of pupil focus groups from school but the policy/project manager did not know if there were any for young adults.

AG: E_UK_A_1 (L1) talked in general terms about the importance of giving the young people affected by the employability programmes a voice. The youth work team are very much working from the young person and what they require. There are also youth forums that are being set up - two currently running plus they support the Scottish Youth Parliament members in Aberdeen City. With the downturn in the oil, gas and energy sector they are looking at different ways of managing people’s expectations as to what is available in the city at the moment. They also have the Youth Council, which is supported by the Youth Work team. E_UK_A_2 (L2), a project manager in a training centre, said there were no opportunities for feedback for young adults on AG.

Practitioners showed themselves to be very concerned with the very difficult circumstances and multiple barriers faced by those in their care and they are confident that their clients have a positive opinion of employability programmes and activity agreements (OFA). However, opportunities for recording feedback were sometimes limited by the very nature of the clientele with whom they are working. Practitioners in particular regret this feedback is not properly underpinned and therefore cannot be taken into account. It means that strengths of programme content and delivery are not being recognised through weaknesses in devising feedback procedures which align with the clientele’s circumstances and behaviour. In the case of OFA, the difficulties of evaluation of the programme is strongly reflected even in the efforts of managers and practitioners to source interviewees for this Project.

Experts report that the targets they have to meet do not properly reflect the crucial trust and confidence building, or the after-care, required to encourage their clients back into meaningful work, and then maintain them there. Instead, the targets are employment-focused which fails to adequately take account of the multiple barriers of their clients even though it is for these very people for which the programme is designed.

3.4 Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty? (Life Course Research)

Autonomy is also discussed in Section 6.2 under Interaction between young adults and experts

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: E_UK_A_5 (L3 in Aberdeen) thought that in secondary school young people were receiving very little information about routes into industry or about apprenticeship. For

example, they think companies take young people on straight from school but actually it is after their first year at college on a full-time Performance Engineer and Operation course. ‘if they have done a year at college and have a basic principle in what that industry is about and then they know that they are interested in that discipline so they take them on from the colleges’. What worried him about the apprenticeship transition is that: ‘sometimes individuals in the young adult stage are not taking their training serious enough for the future’. Although not directly part of DYW, E_UK_G_5 (L3 in Glasgow) said that the Young Person’s Consortium Employability Project on which she was currently employed, and from some of the young adults’ sample is drawn, works on addressing the multiple barriers of the young adults referred to them with the aim of getting them into Modern Apprenticeships, training and employment, or College, at which point the Consortium receives the final ESF payment.

WM: For E_UK_G_10 (L2), WM: ‘is about helping them to try and change their life’. For a lot of them it does make their life better and different: ‘maybe make it more interesting and maybe actually see that there is a world out there that they can get involved in. It stops them being isolated’. It was clear that for her part of the objective was to foster autonomy by addressing and if possible removing barriers to employment and independence so that clients could have some control over their own lives rather than being controlled by adverse circumstances.

CBC: E_UK_G_1 (L3) told of a long term unemployed young person brought in for work experience recently for whom they secured a full time position with a scaffolding company. But after two weeks he had left: ‘so that obviously wasn’t for him or (maybe) it just was harder work than he expected’. However, he explained that without Community Benefits then he would never have got: ‘through the door and found that out’. He said that the young adults seem very young and very naive when they join the business. It can sometimes be a difficult transition for younger people coming in being responsible for themselves and also continually listen to advice from their managers: ‘They always want to get to the next level quicker than they actually should be.’

OFA: E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) said they are listening to what young people want to do and try to set up activities based on their interests for maybe 3 times a week and just for a couple of hours an afternoon. It is not a full time training course but it does give them a chance to establish routines through activities: ‘It has worked to date’. There is an ongoing challenge of talking to young people about what careers are out there and to steer young people towards sectors that need new talent and new skills. That is quite tricky. E_UK_A_9 (L3) said the young people they see need: ‘the shiny bells and whistles to entice some of the individuals that wouldn’t have any aspirational, educational, or work ethic. But once you get them on that train, then you can add something else in there....we help them feel a bit more resilient so that they can start to entertain the notion of tackling things which they think are beyond their aspirations’.

AG: E_UK_A_4 (L3) explained that at the start of the apprenticeship there is a discussion with the training provider, the company, and the candidate as well: ‘So it’s not a case of, “This is what you’re doing, and that’s that.” They’re needing to develop their skills.....it’s a balance between the employer and the candidate as well.They do get a bit of a say in what’s going on’. Most know and they are told often enough that they are in control of how things work out for them: ‘I think most of them are quite in control of what’s going on’.

It is difficult from the findings here, to come to any conclusions on autonomy. It is addressed in a more concrete form in the findings from the young adults’ interviews.

3.5 Which actors are involved in LLL policies? How do these actors coordinate their activity? (Governance) related to bureaucratic organisation?

3.5.1 Policy actors

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: E_UK_G_4 (Glasgow L1) explained that for DYW the crucial policy actors are the local authorities, schools and businesses. She talked about: ‘a swell of appetite that is growing’. She had just been to a meeting with the Minister about the UK-wide Apprenticeship Levy (AL) and the ambition to increase apprenticeship numbers although in Scotland although is not yet clear how employers will see a return on their investment in training: ‘Apprenticeships are a great thing to some employers but they are not everything in terms of training and development of the workforce’, so £10,000,000 of the AL funding is going to colleges for the Flexible Training Fund. In addition, they have the Glasgow Economic Strategy, City Deal, Regional Skills Assessment, and the Regional Skills Plan and Sector Skills Plans from Skills Development Scotland. Some of these work at a *geographic* level and some of them at an *industry* level. There is also the Colleges Regional Outcome Agreement. DYW can facilitate that because colleges are being encouraged to keep better employer links not only for Modern Apprenticeships, Graduate Apprenticeships and Foundation Apprenticeships as they are not the only way that employers train people. More and more colleges, and universities, are now aligning their provision to employer need.

WM: Just as it came into being, changes elsewhere in the policy landscape, instigated by the UK DWP relating to conditions for receiving the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), left it with far fewer people to support than anticipated because they had been taken up elsewhere in the system. This means that: ‘the eight local authorities involved with (WM) now cannot find sufficient clients to get on the programme (and) the last 6 months or so have been a challenge’. Other new programmes such as ‘Work Able’ introduce further actors in the landscape for WM.

CBC: Some contractors find CBC difficult to understand because there are different parts of the council asking for them in different ways. They are trying to get a more uniform approach as to what they are asking the contractors for and also to engage all areas of the Council including suppliers. However, practitioner E_UK_G_1 (L3) thought that companies were: ‘at saturation point now with Community Benefits’ as greater and greater demands were being made by the tenderer especially as the construction industry is becoming less buoyant’

OFA and AG: E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) thought it was: ‘getting tricky because everybody has different interests and when it comes down to it, people are looking after their own interests and probably rightly so. They are probably protecting their own organisations. There is a will to try and work together and work closely. But there is that element of competition for funding’. E_UK_A_9 (L3) has seen a whole range of projects and third sector organisations losing funding recently because of the downturn and are looking for alternative funding streams through corporate social responsibility.

It does not seem to be the case that tensions between different actors undermine the general pattern of coordination but there may be some duplication of effort, and the illusion of more resources available to fulfil objectives than is actually the case but it is difficult to tell without more in-depth research.

3.5.2 Levels of governance

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: E_UK_G_4 (L1) said that DYW is a new policy operating at a regional level and coordinates with local authorities and schools to work with businesses. It is an integral part of the Youth Employment Strategy of the Scottish Government.

WM: With the Scotland Act (2016)³⁰ there is confusion about responsibility for and destinations of client referral and WM seems caught in the middle of the UK DWP and the Scottish Government. This

³⁰ Despite the result of the 2014 referendum against the separation of Scotland from the UK, the 2016 Scotland Act represents an example of significant powers continuing to be devolved from the UK to the Scottish Government, including extensive powers over welfare benefits such as [Employment Support](#) and [Universal Credit](#).

may resolve itself in the coming year not least because WM is scheduled to finish in August 2018. However, new programmes will not offer the same level of bespoke client-focused care.

CBC: The new policy of mandatory, voluntary and evaluative CBCs is only just being introduced. One of the practitioners (E_UK_G_2) said that with the Apprenticeship Levy coming in, the company will go through SDS more because SVQ³¹ levels 4 and 5 are now funded by them and that will be used for trainee assistant site managers: ‘I’ll just do the same but I’ll go down a different route when I’m looking at delivering training. I’m trying to tap into SDS more than I probably did before.’

OFA and AG: E_UK_A_8 (OFA L1&2) talked about lack of opportunities for example the construction site where the workforce were primarily from Hungary and Romania and the skills had been drafted into Aberdeen rather than looking at the local talent. However he also said: ‘I guess there is more emphasis now from the UK government and the Scottish government that big contracts that are issued to these large companies. There are stipulations that they must recruit local young people, local apprentices and train them. If they don’t do that then they get fined’. But the Community Benefits agenda does not seem to work because it is not being followed up and enforced so the big contracts are not adding anything to the local labour market.

3.5.3 Bureaucratic organisation and conflict between policy actors

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: In Aberdeen/Shire there are tensions around the City/Regional levels of governance, with the example given of efforts to coordinate careers advice and work experience across the region being thwarted because neither will encroach on the other’s work. Further governance tensions arise in the nexus between business and the public sector because whereas the former functions hierarchically, the latter is provided with guidelines by the Scottish Government, and these are then applied in different ways at local government and school level. The resolution, E_UK_A_6 (L1) said, comes either: ‘through collaboration or with a stick. Actually, we have got no stick so we will have to do it through collaboration’. That can only be done: ‘if there is a will’. Significantly, he thought: ‘this is going to have to be a cultural change programme rather than an enforcement programme’. E_UK_A_6 was disappointed that, although one of DYW’s KPIs is to promote the route of apprenticeships as a way into work, it was SDS’s responsibility and DYW were: ‘not really hooked in with them yet’. E_UK_A_7 (L2) on the other hand, said: ‘(SDS) are an organisation that we would do work with on a regular basis because of their responsibility at school and LA level for careers advice including developing a website with which DYW is involved. Generally though, DYW’s involvement is directly with the business, the school, and the young people.

CBC: E_UK_G_3 (L1&2) explained that the new mandatory CBCs may become an issue for employers because they are imposing a contractual obligation that ultimately would not have been part of the contract and they will absorb it somewhere. It is about trying to change that mind set where it exists and point out that lots of suppliers have a Corporate Social Responsibility policy that does not impact on the commercial bid. Another conflict is in construction. If the Tier 1 contractor makes a commitment to a number of jobs and apprenticeships but they are a management style contractor rather than a big workforce, then all of their future subcontractors have to fulfil their commitments. Therefore, one of the questions that they are now asking is “how would you make community benefit applicable to your sub- contracts”. This makes contractors and subcontractors buy in: ‘to the whole challenge’.

E_UK_G_1 (L3) thought his company was: ‘at saturation point now with Community Benefits’ as greater and greater demands were being made by the tenderer especially as the construction industry is

³¹ Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and other Scottish Qualifications Authority accredited qualifications are based upon national standards and provide evidence that learners can do their jobs well. Studied in the workplace, in college or with training providers, SVQs are available in many subject areas. (<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/2.html>)

becoming less buoyant: ‘...because we are signing up to more and more tougher numbers. (They say) “you delivered three apprentices the last time so now we want five” for example, but the construction industry particular in Glasgow is slowing down quite a bit’.

AG: E_UK_A_2 (L2) thought that DYW has had an impact on Aberdeen Guarantees: ‘there’s a lot of muddy water as to who’s doing what and where. I don’t think the formation of DYW is particularly helpful to Aberdeen Guarantees.’ She thought there were too many people going after the same thing eg organising work placements, going into companies and asking for work experience: ‘There’s no joining up the dots’. DYW and the members of AG are all looking for placements. The idea of part-time apprenticeships advocated by DYW is a very worrying concept. That, along with the Apprenticeship Levy and the way it is being implemented in Scotland as a tax on employers, together with the downturn: in her view ‘will kill the Modern Apprenticeship’.

3.5.4 Policy sectors - Labour Market Policies (LMP), Education Policies (EDP), Social and Youth Policies (SYP)

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: E_UK_A_6 (L1) sees DYW rooted in labour market policies in order to deliver a different type of education to that which usually sits within education policies. He was developing a ‘learning skills and partnership model’ between schools and employers at a local level. He thought that for effective planning for skills, a regional skills control economy is needed to achieve the optimum balance between supply and demand of labour.

WM: There is a contradiction in this policy between its role with regard to the labour market and its role as a social policy. Clearly the client base and their associated multiple health and social barriers should orientate it towards social policy yet the pressures exerted by the targets emanate from a labour market perspective.

CBC: This is a Social and Youth Policy (SYP) operating to influence the labour market through clauses added to Council contracts awarded to businesses.

OFA and AG: E_UK_A_8 (L1&2) saw the Scottish Government saying there are three main agendas: Getting it Right for Every Child, Curriculum for Excellence and Developing the Young Workforce. OFA and AG would come under all three in that case. However, AG is more of a catch-all ‘brand’ and a website for a collection of projects which belong under a variety of other policies but which have the general connection of being related in some way to employability and training. AG, according to E_UK_A_2 (L2), is all about employability. E_UK_A_3 (L3) saw it from social enterprise perspective working in partnership with AG: ‘on the community side, activity recruitment for Opportunities for All, and those needing basic help’

3.6 To whom are LLL policies accountable? (Governance)

Regional authorities are accountable to the Scottish Government and the UK governments as well as to the European Social Fund.

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: E_UK_A_7 (L2) explained that DYW is funded and driven by the Scottish Government through the local authorities to schools who are expected to be engaged in the programme. The Young People’s Consortium Employability Project, accountable to the ESF, is on a payment by results basis awarded by the European Funding.

WM: Accountability is ultimately to the Scottish Government and the ESF through Glasgow City Region and constituent local authority boards who are ultimately responsible for the delivery of the programme in the eight authorities, including the City of Glasgow.

CBC: The ALEO working with the Council CBC team helps with recruitment of young people onto the jobs created by the negotiated contracts. It has Employability Funding through the ESF. CBCs works with the Council Employability team and the funding they get for the Youth Employment Strategy.

E_UK_G_1 (L3), from the practitioner perspective, said there are certain elements of the contract where they can incur financial penalties if they do not deliver and as the company is there to make money they have to make sure they do deliver those benefits so that they are not getting penalised in any way.

OFA and AG: These are both funded by the Scottish Government and the European Social Fund.

3.7 How do LLL policies deal with multi-level ‘wicked problems’? (Governance)

There were three ‘wicked problems’ in evidence. The first involves lack of clarity over the application of the UK Apprenticeship Levy in Scotland, important to DYW because it is designed to increase the demand by employers for apprenticeships. The second relates to confusion and duplications from policy changes. Coordination between the UK Department of Work and Pensions, and past and new measures in Scotland at a time of UK/Scotland policy change is proving problematic. Though possible a temporary problem, it seems to be resulting in duplication of effort, and is causing staff confusion as to where they should be referring clients. Similarly, it may be that DYW has been layered on top of other existing and similar provision again resulting in duplication of effort and strain on resources available, in particular placements with employers. The third ‘wicked problem’ relates to the increasing demands on employers to create opportunities for young people through contractual obligation under CBCs. This is a problem when employers perceive that their capacity to meet these demands is both diminishing and becoming overstretched..

3.7.1 Lack of clarity over implementation of Apprenticeship Levy

E_UK_G_4 (L1 DYW) said that the Scottish Government is unhappy that the Apprenticeship Levy, developed by the UK Government, was carried out without consultations from the Scottish Government. They can do nothing about the raising of the Apprenticeship Levy because it is not a devolved matter, it is taxation. Employers are saying that this is not new money as it comes as part of the block grant from the UK. It is balanced out by any reduction that they see in the block grant. So although on the surface there appears to be £221,000,000 coming to Scotland, it does not come as a separate cheque. It sits in the block grant and this means that Scotland can make its own decisions about how it is administered.

3.7.2 Confusion and duplications from policy changes

The wicked problems associated with WM in Glasgow revolve around three key issues: the first is that around the same time that WM came into being in 2015 the UK Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) began delivering a pilot programme which resulted in very few referrals coming onto the programme in the first few months so it was slow getting off the ground and gaining clients.

Second, there have significant policy changes affecting eligibility for benefits and the conditions which have to be met in order for clients to receive them, although E_UK_G_9 (L1) was not sure of the details. She did draw attention to the way the DWP called people ‘customers’ rather than ‘clients’ which clearly signified to her a lack of care. As a result of the changes, WM clients had to include those who, with the change in benefits eligibility, now must attend the Job Centres, which are under the auspices of the DWP, and undergo a work capability assessment or risk losing their benefits. When the Job Centres realise they cannot help, they refer the clients to WM. Initially, only if clients successfully appealed a decision to withdraw their benefits was WM allowed to work with them. WM has only lately been able to get permission from the DWP to continue to work with clients whilst they are under appeal. However, if the appeal is unsuccessful, they are no longer eligible for WM.

E_UK_G_9 lamented the illogicality, saying it ‘flies in the face of the programme’ and clearly saw this as also socially unjust. It has resulted in fewer clients for WM and this is about to get worse.

The reason for this is the third issue of major changes afoot. To begin with there is the introduction of a new measure ‘Work Able’. This is a transitional programme to be introduced prior to the Scottish Government’s new employability programme (to replace the unsuccessful Work Programme). That programme is scheduled to start in 2018³². WM is scheduled to finish in August 2018. ‘Work Able’ will come under the auspices of SDS and it could potentially reduce WM’s potential pool of clientele still further. E_UK_G_9 felt that: ‘it just seems to have been parachuted in’. It was, she said, also an issue for the UK DWP: ‘because if a client comes into a Job Centre and is in receipt of ESA, where do they refer that person? Do they refer them to (WM)? Because we know the level of support they will get and it is a three year programme. Or do they refer them to ‘Work Able’ which will only help them up until December this year?’. It was not clear either where it fitted into the oft-mentioned ‘pipeline’ in Scottish Government documents, if at all. Unlike E_UK_G_9 (L1), E_UK_G_10 (L2) did not mention ‘Work Able’ in the context of a ‘wicked’ problem though through listing the programmes and providers she emphasised the complexities the new employability programme changes will bring with them. She said that referrals to WM will stop in March 2018.

Where for WM there seems to be a ‘wicked’ problem is the conception of it as a work-related programme, on which basis it is assessed, when actually, because of the extreme circumstances of the clients referred to it, it has to operate as a social programme. This ‘wicked’ problem was also identified by E_UK_G_8 (L3): ‘We’re an employability service. We’re here to help people get into work (yet) that is the furthest thing from someone’s mind who comes to us’. The mandatory referrals from the DWP, made once a person has completed the Work Programme, are less likely to go into work than those who refer themselves voluntarily, suggesting that the mandatory referral does not work well: ‘Is it the wrong people getting sent? I don’t know’.

In Aberdeen, E_UK_A_2 (L2 AG) thought: ‘(DYW) were sort of parachuted on the back of the Wood Review, and they’re all-singing, all-dancing’. The training company had to get accreditation with them: ‘but on the other side, we’re sitting at the Employability Forum and they are not involved in that!’ There are two camps with training provision caught in the middle. There was also a schism between SDS and DYW. The Chamber of Commerce is delivering DYW so there is another confusion between two functions. For example, DYW is advocating part-time apprenticeships when apprentices in Scotland are supposed to be in full-time employment: ‘not working for you one day, him, somebody, you know, on Tuesday – that’s never, ever been the ethos of the apprenticeship programme’. She said the CITB in particular are very keen on it because: ‘(if) you’ve got your own little joiner business and you can’t afford your own apprentice, ...you’ll take somebody when you’re busy and you’ll have him for two days a week. But then when that work dries up, you don’t need him anymore, so then what happens? It’s a very worrying concept’. She was concerned that there were going to be: ‘kids that are going to fall through the net...and who’s going to take responsibility for them? Is it going to be a DYW? Will DYW get the money to continue?’

3.7.3 Over-expectations of policy

The problem here is the drive to push contractors to add more and more CBCs to the tendering process when it is not clear whether companies have the capacity, although practitioners differed on this. E_UK_G_1 thought the company was: ‘at saturation point now with Community Benefits’ as greater and greater demands were being made by the tenderer especially as the construction industry is becoming less buoyant: ‘...because we are signing up to more and more tougher numbers. (They say) “you delivered three apprentices the last time so now we want five” for example, but the construction industry particular in Glasgow is slowing down quite a bit’. E_UK_G_2 on the other hand did not see taking on apprentices as conflicting with their business case. She said: ‘There’s a skill shortage of

³² For those with health-related conditions and introduced through new devolved powers under the Scotland Act 2016

bricklayers... and the 20 or so apprentices that we have taken over the last few years will replenish our skill levelwe're giving something back not only to the company but the industry. You know you've got to play your part in that.' She was concerned that housebuilders do not seem to have CBCs in their contracts.

3.8 Summary of findings from experts

The evidence from experts suggest that there are insufficient opportunities for young adults over the age of 18. This issue is expanded on in Section 6.1 in the discussion about target groups.

A condition for contractors carrying out work for the public sector is that they add community benefit clauses for example to recruit young workers/apprentices from the locality. The contracts are often shorter than the length of an apprenticeship and there is no provision to help the apprentices to complete their training. Furthermore, subcontractors are not necessarily bound by the clauses. This means young adults' routes into work can be blighted.

There is a gender imbalance between training and job types which needs to be addressed with more males in eg construction and more females in city office work.

No evidence came to light where young adults were involved in lifelong learning policies although there were some schemes (mostly for 16-19) which were tailored to suit their requests and needs to overcome barriers.

The term 'lifelong learning' is seldom used by practitioners or young people in relation to employability though practitioners occasionally refer to 'life skills'. 'Lifelong learning' tends to be associated more with Community Learning and Development and applied to older adults³³.

There seems to be a great deal of public funding being made available for training through all the policies examined. It is not clear from the enactment of the policies where the responsibilities of employers lie in this regard. The UK Apprenticeship Levy on employers which is now in place offers the opportunity for a clearer message to employers to engage in more training and sustainable positions for young people. However, there was evidence that this was not yet working well in Scotland and plans to implement it were unclear and had stalled (perhaps because it had come from the UK rather than the Scottish, government).

There is considerable proliferation of effort around the 16-19 age group and that area of policy is very crowded with projects and providers competing for employer engagement and in some cases for young people with the appropriate needs. This also causes resentment amongst those already working in the field. Actual 'policies' can sometimes be confused with re-badging or re-labelling or re-arranging of existing measures.

Whilst partnership was often mentioned as key to effective delivery of services to young adults there were frequent examples given of where this was less effective usually due to a proliferation of policy or measures changes of which the people running those already in place had had little or no advance notice or consultation. There was evidence where this caused not only confusion but also resentment.

4 Analysis of Interviews with young adults: Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire

4.1 Presentation and analysis of biographies

³³ For example, the Final report from the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce does not mention it once <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf>

Table 4 (below) shows that 10 young adults were interviewed in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire. The sample included 8 males and 2 females. All were born in Scotland except two males, one from Poland and one from Thailand (with a Scottish father). Most came from traditional working class backgrounds. There were two exceptions: the parents of one has a farm in Aberdeenshire, and of the other an engineering company. Both of these young adults plan to take over the family business. The socio-economic backgrounds of the young adults in terms of target groups, their life projects and their expectations are discussed under the appropriate research questions in Section 4.2.

The following paragraphs portray the main features of the young adults' biographies. Drawing on the interviews, these summaries start with their own narrative of their life story. Then the summaries highlight the key references to their school trajectories, their experience with lifelong learning policies, and their vocational education and training. Finally, the summaries sketch their life plans.

Y_UK_A_1 is a 21 years old YA who enrolled into the Training Centre offering Mechanical Engineering, Welding and Fabrication, Business and Administration and Logistics Operations Management. His father is an engineer and travelled so he was educated in International Schools in Thailand and then in Brunei. His mother stayed at home to look after him and his sister. Apart from this he had an uneventful childhood and education mostly in Thailand where he did the International Baccalaureate. He always had a lot of support at school. He lives on his own in a flat very near the training company but has cousins in Scotland who helped him adjust culturally and whom he sees sometimes. There is a family home in Braemar which the family use sometimes. He had few adjustment

problems. He sees his family at Christmas although his dad visits. He gets lonely sometimes but won't admit that to his family and finds talking to friend and family on social media helps. He moved to Scotland to come to university and applied to several but as his grades were not good he looked around for other options to get into engineering and his uncle, who lives in Aberdeen, helped him find the training centre which he had heard about from a colleague. He still plans to go to university but via the vocational route. He did the 16 week SVQ Level 1 Skills for Engineers Employability Programme and the training centre found him a company for the 4 week placement. He was taken on as an apprentice and came back to the Training Centre and to do his Level 2. The IB he had in Maths and English did not match the qualifications for the apprenticeship so he had to do some more qualifications. After 18 months the company he worked for folded in the economic downturn. He still socialises mainly with people from that company. After three months with no work he applied to another company who took him on and allowed him to continue his apprenticeship. He has wanted to become an engineer his whole life. He's stubborn but will listen to a good argument and change his mind. He's tired of Scotland and may go back to Thailand to look for work and a higher position there, and work off-shore. He said he's planned on staying 10 years originally - he had no problem thinking that far ahead. His social skills were excellent – he saw that as a life skill.

Table 4 Patterns of young adult interviewee biographies in the functional region of Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire

	Code	Sex	Age	Socio-economic background ³⁴	Life project	Expectations	Other significant issues
1	Y_UK_A_1	M	21	Scottish/Thai L4 (Skilled)	Troubled	Success (engineer)	Misses family
2	Y_UK_A_2	M	19	L4 (Skilled)	Troubled	Success (engineer)	

³⁴ Lower professional and higher technical occupations (L4) or Intermediate occupations (L7) Standard Occupational Classification 2010 Volume 3 The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification: (Rebased on the SOC2010) User Manual, p8 London: Palgrave Macmillan
<file:///Users/ld94c/Downloads/soc2010vol31amendedjanuary2013tcm77179133.pdf>

3	Y_UK_A_3	M	19	L7 (Less skilled)	Troubled	Worried/unrealistic	ADHD
4	Y_UK_A_4	M	23	L7 (Less skilled)	Troubled	Realistic (activity manager)	Family break- up, abuse, dyslexia, bereavement
5	Y_UK_A_5	M	20	L8 (farmer)	Clear	Success (engineer or farmer)	
6	Y_UK_A_6	M	18	EU L4 (Skilled)	Clear	Success (family bar or engineer)	
7	Y_UK_A_7	F	20	L8 (pump business)	Clear	Success (engineer)	
8	Y_UK_A_8	F	20	L4 (Skilled)	Troubled	Success (engineer)	
9	Y_UK_A_9	M	18	L7 working class unemployed	Troubled	Worried	Some learning difficulties
10	Y_UK_A_10	M	24	L7 working class unemployed	Troubled	Worried	Problematic home life

Y_UK_A_4 This young man is an 18 year old male in the second year of his apprenticeship as a 'valve-technician-slash-machinist' within a large engineering company. He is doing his classroom training one day a week at the Training Centre. He had an uneventful education, no crises of confidence, poor transitions or bad experiences of teachers. He enjoyed school but did not do well in his exams at 16 as by then he had lost interest in school. He wanted to leave and learn a skill so he went to see his career's teacher who suggested he applied to the Training Centre. She knew a few students before who had successfully worked through the 16 week SVQ Level 1 Skills for Engineers Employability Programme. He completed the 4 week placement for the course and was surprised and thrilled to be offered a 4 year contract by the company. He had to convince his mum about leaving school at 16 to take a vocational route. She had done well at school but only recently had gone back to do a nursing degree so she was keen he would attend university. He won her over by taking her to job fairs and when he got his job she impressed and excited. Though it clearly was troublesome for a while until she was convinced he was doing the right thing, he seems to have a good relationship with his mother now. He had not seen his father in a long while and was no longer in contact. His mother's newish partner is an engineer and seems to offer him some support and direct interest in his chosen path, as well as the opportunity for advice, even though he has now moved away from home to be more independent. He elaborated on his enjoyment of the training, the job, that he is earning. He enjoys the pressure of the work and the feeling that he is doing something important – the company has heavy health and safety responsibilities for the men working on the oil rigs which they maintain. He had a clear vision for the future, including promotion to a higher position with a lot of responsibility. He had plans to ask his employer about his prospects with the company. The young man raised an important, wider issue of the choices young people have at school and the difficulties that caused for him with his mum. He had to show her what the Training Centre was and what they do because she did not know and he felt it was wrong that vocational opportunities are so little known about in school.

Y_UK_A_3 is a bright, socially aware 19 year old on a 4 week placement found for him by the third sector organisation with which he had just completed a 12 week employability course under the Employability Fund. The placement was in a social enterprise indoor Activity Centre for eg skateboarding; climbing which was also used for therapeutic/rehabilitation purposes. He talked first about his difficulties at school mainly due to late diagnosis of his ADHD, lack of support, dislike of school subjects except biology, the lack of careers help and understanding of his interests from his

mum, and poor experiences at college following school. He dropped out of the social science college course which he had started on leaving school despite opposition from his mum. She thought he should get some proper skills first. At college, he hadn't liked the way the lecturers, one in particular, treated him and his views. He achieved some qualifications whilst there though he wasn't quite sure what they were. He then did some factory work for a few months before the Job Centre referred him to SDS who found him the 16 week course. He completely changed in his demeanour as he talked in glowing terms about the team leader he had for the course which he felt had transformed him and how really happy he is in his 4 week placement which he had just started. He was still living at home. He had gone through a lot of unhappiness and uncertainty and had lost confidence but now he was feeling a lot better and felt he was really understood and appreciated by the trainer, and the people at his placement where he was learning a lot and enjoying it. He was reapplying to another college which though further away he thought might be prepared to accept him. He had had an interview but was uncertain about how it went. He really did not want to do an apprenticeship despite encouragement from all around him because he thought it would be boring and he was interested the social sciences, although he had enjoyed his school work placement with a car mechanic. He's not interested in money but in doing a job he would enjoy, though he doesn't yet know what that might be. He worried about thinking ahead and making plans because he always is disappointed. Ideally, he'd like to be a marine biologist but thought that was unrealistic. He enjoyed physical activity.

Y_UK_A_2 is a 23 year old male employed by a social enterprise indoor Activity Centre for eg skateboarding and climbing, which was also used for therapeutic/rehabilitation purposes. Now living away from home, he explained how his parents splitting up upset him and affected his learning and that he rebelled against his stepdad. He put his school work on the back burner a lot. He had a difficult education history with various medical conditions, family issues, bullying and crisis. He was severely dyslexic, which was diagnosed in primary 4. He was in learning support and getting help with his school work. However, he has always been a resilient person and he has become better at writing and spelling as got older. When he left school he worked for his uncle for a while and then he was phoned by a career advisor from SDS and asked to join the courses at the Alternative Academy³⁵ which he enjoyed. The staff helped his confidence and he passed the course. After finishing his internship, he did not manage to get a job straightaway but when he applied for a job the centre manager at the Activity Centre recruited him as a member of staff at the Centre. He is currently on a 24 hour a week contract but hoped that would increase. He has been working there for 5 years. His job title is skate park supervisor, which involves coaching, keeping the park organised and making sure everything is running smoothly. He has been quite focused about wanting to do work in sports. Ideally, he would like to play golf professionally but he was realistic that he might have to work at the same place for a long time and wouldn't complain. He had been struggling with depression caused by childhood abuse from his stepbrother but then his stepdad got him into golf and that kept me him sane. He has been getting help from counselling services for his depression regularly. He is proud running the skate park and giving lots of support to his manager. He articulated his life story well and gave the impression he was being very reflective in his answers. He is an example of how confident a young adult is with a job and an identity through work.

Y_UK_A_5 is a 20 year old male working as an apprentice with a precision engineering company. A bright, happy, confident young man, he lives on a 4300 acre mixed arable/livestock farm in rural Aberdeenshire with his parents and siblings. He spoke warmly of growing up on the farm. His education was uneventful although moving from a very small rural primary school to a very large secondary school was a big shock. He was quite shy so it took him a while to make to make new friends there and the children came from a wide area including four large towns so there were some territorial issues to deal with. Nonetheless he quite enjoyed school, didn't need any learning support

³⁵ The Alternative Academy programmes are aimed at young people who are currently, or at risk of becoming, disengaged from traditional forms of education. These programmes aim to re-engage participants through aesthetic learning experiences with unique and dynamic activities over a 12 week period, increasing participants' confidence and motivation, and assisting them in progressing onto a positive destination.
<http://www.transition-extreme.com/alternative-academies>

and found that he preferred practical subjects, though his maths wasn't that good. His narrative demonstrated someone who has had good family backing and appropriate careers advice so that although he stayed on an extra year his decision to pursue a vocational route rather than university was encouraged. He didn't know whether this approach was as a result of DYW work with the school but a lot of his friends have also done the same. He had managed to plan his training and work, moving from a summer job with the company to an apprenticeship which he had planned to suit his own needs so that he had progressed more quickly than is usual. He had also won a prize at college for supporting his peers. For the future he had two clear choices: engineering or farming and thought he would combine the two by maintaining the machinery on the farm as his father was getting older. He was of the view that if you want to get something going you have to do it yourself because nobody else can do it for you, suggesting he was not particularly reflective about the consistent support he had received throughout his life.

Y_UK_A_6 is an 18 year old male who is an engineering apprentice at a company in Fraserburgh (Aberdeenshire). He presented as a very confident – but not arrogant – young man with a very clear plan. He moved from Poland aged 6 with brother (25), mother (hairdresser) and father (chef) and started primary school in Scotland. His education was unproblematic. In secondary school he chose science options over practical subjects but then struggled a bit in fourth year, although he passed most of his exams, and left secondary school at 16 to go to college. His work experience in school gave him the confidence to ask for a job. He was also influenced by what he read online about Modern Apprenticeships and it being better to go to college than to university. His friends did the same, and there was discussion at school (possibly part of DYW? He didn't know). Once he had decided himself what he wanted to do, he asked the careers advisor for more information. He went into a job straight from school and started his apprenticeship with the company when the college opened again at the end of the same summer. He had to do another (engineering) maths course – which was easy – as he failed his National which was very hard – everyone had said so. It didn't affect him being taken on as an apprenticeship. He felt work was much more of a change than the primary to secondary school transition. The job is at the same company as his father who is an engineer but was adamant got the job himself. He loves it and the complex machinery he is learning how to use. He was quite blasé about his migration experience and although he did experience some racism in primary school. He was the first immigrant in his class. There was no unpleasantness from parents, only from little children. Outside of work he goes surfing which he is good at. His long term plan is to go back to Poland and open a bar with his parents because he hasn't had a chance to live in his own native country. He will have his engineering qualification if that fails.

Y_UK_A_7 is a 20 year old female in the 3rd year of her mechanical engineering apprenticeship with an engineering company producing machinery for the gas and oil industries. She is now financially independent living in a rented house with her boyfriend. She did not enjoy secondary school and therefore did not work hard. She had a lot of support throughout from her brother (now at university) who is a lot smarter than her, she said. She stayed on an extra year to age 17 and did manage to get the Intermediate English and Maths grades she needed. She emphasised that throughout her schooling her preference was for hands on learning. She didn't get any careers guidance at school – no-one did. She has some friends (two) from school who are also doing apprenticeships. Her dad, who is an engineer, helped her. She has always worked for him including during college whilst taking her Performance Engineering Operations Level 3 prior to starting the apprenticeship. The transition to college went well, and the college offered good careers advice. She has always done stock car racing with her father which taught her mechanics knowledge. When asked about being the only female in a male dominated work environment she said she was treated equally – she had not expected this – by both the older and younger males she works with. The company were also supportive when she had a health issue. She plans to continue working at the company and eventually to take over her dad's company which produces bearings for the industry. She has always been involved in interests (stock car racing/engineering) usually associated with males and so is comfortable in that environment to the point where it really wasn't of great interest to her to discuss it. She was aware of this fortunate scenario and accepted it as normal. She had never heard of the Scottish Government's Developing the Young Workforce but it may be that her school had not started that yet as she left three years ago.

Y_UK_A_8 This 19 year old YA was a bright, confident young woman on a hydraulic technician apprenticeship with a company that provides asset support to the energy and infrastructure sectors. She has a large and supportive family. She left school at 16 with very good National grades including sciences. She had wanted to be a doctor but couldn't face the stress of further exams and decided also she wanted a hands-on job so went to FE college to study mechanical engineering. Whilst at college, she found out about a traineeship through a family friend and started on that but discovered from the other apprentices once she started there was no college course with it so she asked the company to put her on an apprenticeship instead, which they did. They started her on at 2nd year, as she had already done one year of college. Most of her friends had gone to university but she thought that apprenticeships were good and approved of them becoming more known about. She found careers advice at school useless and knew nothing about DYW though thought it sounded like a good thing. She was very appreciative of her supervisors and their recognition of the value of her initial college course straight after school. She had now finished with the college element of her apprenticeship, starting her fourth year and a Level 3 NVQ where the assessor comes into the workplace. So she will be qualified in a year's time. She feels she has made the right decision and could go on to university as well as working if she wants to. Her dad as a technician is a big influence and used to take her to work with him. To her, breaking all the stereotypes is normal. She is very happy with her situation and wouldn't change any of it. She has even been working abroad (in Korea) and plans to do offshore training as well. A big part of her leisure and social life is her sport – everything from black belt Tai Kwando, to Athletics for Aberdeen and Scottish Women's Premier league football which she gave up when she started work though she still coaches a team. Her supervisors are encouraging her to go into project engineering. Long term, she thinks she will always have a job in the oil industry, seeing things pick up after the downturn. She would love to work abroad as well. When asked about working in a male environment (she did not raise it), she said the young ones accepted it as normal. Older ones had more difficulties but she was able to deal with that.

Y_UK_A_10 This 24 year old male is a member of the football club which is utilised by the OFA Activity Agreements though was not following one himself. He is unemployed and no longer living at home. When asked about his schooling he said his secondary school was awful and he never turned up. He had clearly had a troubled childhood as the reason he gave for not attending school was that were too many problems at home. After he left school at 16 he went to college but then he dropped out. He's had a number of jobs, such as working in a warehouse but they hadn't led to anything and he had never been offered training by employers. He just went into job after job – none of them lasted very long.

When asked he said he would like to do something with computers because he like them. He hadn't looked around for any courses or had any support from for example the Job Centre or SDS. He was adamant that he didn't want to go back to working in a warehouse. What he was absolutely clear about was that he loved football. The others around him in the group interview said he was very good. Leaving school in 2009, he is an example of an age group that has been affected by the 2008 financial crisis. He seems to have completely fallen through the net for support – or maybe that support has only been introduced relatively recently and with very little for his age group now. Even in an area that has employment opportunities for those who have, or are able to get, family and school support to pursue a qualification and hold down a job, for those who do not life is difficult. He came across as angry and depressed and was unhappy about being asked questions about his difficult life. Interestingly, when he went out on the football pitch even though it was raining heavily so no-one else wanted to go out, he knew we could all see him while he was confidently and expertly practising his ball skills.

Y_UK_A_9 This 18 year old male was 'on an Activity Agreement' that is, a tailor made programme to meet his needs and interests, which come under the 'Opportunities for All' programme. He was living with his mum and dad. His parents were unemployed. He was rather diffident about school and said he enjoyed just half of the classes - PE, home economics and woodwork. When he left school at 16 he went to college and followed a drama course. He enrolled to do sports and fitness at the college because he liked to keep himself busy. He had tried working in a hotel when he left school, because of his interest in home economics but it wasn't the job he was looking for. He then did some volunteering

at the Aberdeen City football club and acted as ball boy for a time. This was really good because his main interest is football. Then, under an Activity Agreement with the programme he came to the small local club called 'Street Soccer' and started to coach the young children which he enjoyed and thought he was good at. He didn't like being inactive and wanted to keep fit. He had also been on a number of courses to give him employability skills such as CV writing and computer skills though he didn't have his own computer and found it difficult to get on one. He currently attends a course with the Workers Education Association (an old and very well-established network of learning clubs mostly for adults) 'Reachout' for walking and cooking and they also do a football session on a Friday afternoon. He also does painting there. However, for him, although he attends all these other course, it's the football that's important and especially coaching children. He wanted to increase the number of days but for that, and to coach at higher levels, he had to get the next level of qualification. That was his long term goal. He had already passed one level through the Scottish Football Association and got the certificate. He had to wait to get on the course because the classes had to have a minimum of 12. At this point I decided to stop the interview and I think he was glad as it seemed as if it was becoming a strain for him.

4.2 Structured comparison according to thematic categories related to the research questions.

4.2.1 How do LLL policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories? (Cultural Political Economy & Life Course Research)

This question is discussed in Section 6.1 on the interaction between young adults and experts

4.2.2 What are young people's life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects? (Life Course Research)

As they were asked about their biography, things about themselves, their schooling, school performance, social life, the programme they were, or had been, on, and their skills, this is what they talked about. Importantly, though asked less about their family specifically, this was mentioned a great deal in a variety of contexts. The main focus of most of the DYW and AG young people's 'life projects', meaning their future career plans, was their school to vocational/technical education and work transition. The transition they described was 'Troubled' (See Table 4 above) and involved the struggle for their vocational voice to be heard (by school and in some cases parents as well), paucity of vocational careers guidance in school, and subsequent floundering as they tried to find a pathway to training and work (Y_UK_A_1, Y_UK_A_2, Y_UK_A_3, Y_UK_A_4, Y_UK_A_8, Y_UK_A_9, Y_UK_A_10). Of key significance was their desire to work at practical subjects, and be in practical work, that is, working with their hands. Whilst some had found solutions by the time of interview, for example an apprenticeship, for others the trouble persisted, particularly where there were additional barriers, such as mental health, and behavioural or learning issues.

Y_UK_A_8 had battled with pressure from school to go to university when she wanted to work but thought she was now seeing a change in attitudes towards apprenticeships:

I knew apprenticeships were a thing, it just wasn't – nobody really ever recommended it as such it was always go to University or go to College it was never what about an apprenticeship which I think is getting more common now.

Y_UK_A_2 had suffered from a range of issues including family break-up and this was with him still, affecting his resilience:

I wasn't properly diagnosed with depression until secondary, but I had a lot of issues when I was younger, 'cause I was abused by my older step-brother. That made me feel pretty shit, so I got very depressed..... (my uncle) saw me as lazy, so when I started applying for jobs and all that, he was like, "oh, I bet he's hoping that he doesn't get a job, 'cause he's a lazy so-and-so," and all that. So that kind of gave me a big knock-down, for about a year or two.

Then through the post school SDS careers advisor he heard about a new employability course (at the provider where he now works) where he would also get Education Maintenance Allowance because it was classed as a college course. The role of the SDS post school careers advisors, who receive the names of those who do not have a work, training or education destination, was mentioned by several of the young people as being important, as were the Job Centres. Both of these agencies have information about employability programmes, apprenticeships and work. With the intensive OFA programme programme, staff were able to focus their efforts on the most vulnerable. These experiences contrasted strongly with those who felt they had not received good careers advice at school and this had impacted strongly on their lack of direction, such as Y_UK_A_3:

I'm not going to lie - it was a bit shit. They didn't really care much. Like, after we did our work experience at school, they like, disappeared, basically. You'd see them like, once every... I don't know. Then they just disappeared. Gone.

By contrast, others did get good careers support at school and it made a significant difference as Y_UK_A_5 explains:

I had a careers day and that was where one of the engineering firms nearby us came in...I think a few people did come in and speak to us about going to college, just because a lot of people were going to uni and a lot of our guidance teachers were like it is ok to go to (FE) college, obviously just because a lot of people were going to Uni doesn't mean you have to go to Uni as well so.

Y_UK_A_4 also had a good careers advice experience:

I went to my career adviser, and I said, "I want to do engineering." And she was like, "I've got an idea," and it fit. I thought she was just going to tell me, like, "Can't really do much about that." She said she knew (about the Training Centre) because she has already put people through it before and it's been successful. She did used to visit this place every once in a while.

Of great significance for nearly all of the young people as they talked about their lives is the ongoing importance of family, whether positive or negative, which is also often quite complex as the above citation reveals. Y_UK_A_2 also had a very supportive mother and stepfather. The influence of fathers on girls' wanting to pursue an engineering career was also evident as Y_UK_A_7 explains, echoed by Y_UK_A_8:

I always had encouragement and knowledge about the industry from my dad. He helped me with the idea of going onto the PEO (Performance Engineering Operations) course at College.

My dad is a technician. He's a big influence and used to take me to work with him. I just thought if my dad can do it I can do it.

Parents and extended family were also important sources of information and connections. It was Y_UK_A_1's uncle who alerted him to the Training Centre, and Y_GU_A_DYW_2's alerted his son to vacancies where he himself worked, and also as to when was the right time to approach his boss to ask about an apprenticeship.

Another concern is the seeming lack of interaction between school and family which caused trouble for Y_UK_A_4 but also illustrated here is the sense of determination to leave school that some of the young people demonstrated:

...it was quite a struggle to... to get this whole thing started with (the Training Company).....(My mum) was sceptical, obviously. It did take a while but I convinced her..... there was like a young apprentice thing where, like, all these companies were there, and the Training Company was there, and I would go to a few of them and find out more and more information.... With my mum... to show her that this is what it achieves, and this is what I was trying to do. If I'm being honest, I didn't believe in too much of it, but I didn't want to be at school. So I just went with it, and it worked out, so.

When questioned about the influence of past experiences on their current situation, the effects of hobbies on the girls' aspirations to apprenticeship has already been mentioned. Others perceived of their past activities rather differently. Y_UK_A_3 spoke of his difficulties at school, in the factory jobs he had had, and then at college as impacting negatively on his future plans. Y_UK_A_6 whilst ambivalent about his experiences as an EU migrant from the age of six, planned to return to the country of his birth because he wanted to experience living there. He would take his engineering qualification and keep it as a standby while he set up a bar restaurant with his family. Y_UK_A_1 who is Thai/Scottish also saw himself as returning to Thailand although this may have been more to follow in his father's peripatetic footsteps as an engineer, or perhaps because he was feeling lonely in Scotland despite having extended family within reach.

4.2.3 What are young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course? (Life Course Research)

Here 'expectations' is taken to mean future plans rather than what the young adults 'expect to happen'. In Aberdeen there was a strong similarity between most of the respondents who, now out of their 'troubled' phase were undertaking engineering apprenticeships or other work they enjoyed and were really happy with their choices, as these examples demonstrate. They wanted to qualify and embark on engineering careers for the foreseeable future:

I've really only wanted to be an engineer my whole life (Y_UK_A_1)
I don't know how I would be if I wasn't an apprentice or doing a different job, like I love my job and I love learning like I love going to college... I don't think I would have it any other way (Y_UK_A_8)

Y_UK_A_2 wanted to be a professional golfer but was also realistic. He said:

now I'm in a job that I get to do a lot of sports, so I'm quite happy

Ideally Y_UK_A_9 wanted to be a football coach and was waiting to get on the next level of the qualification but he was worried he would not be able to achieve this.

Others were also still in a state of confusion, worried and clearly needing further support. Y_UK_A_3, now doing a 4 week placement at the end of a 16 week employability course, had just applied to FE college again, having dropped out the first time:

(My tutor) tried his hardest to get this placement for me, and he got it for me, and I couldn't be more happy...(but) I don't really know what to do next, to be honest. Hopefully I can volunteer here (at the Activity Centre) maybe afterwards.....

Ideally, he wanted to be a marine biologist but there was little connection between that aspiration and his current qualifications or immediate and concrete next steps.

Respondents did also talk about their time at school. In Aberdeen most were positive. Y_UK_A_2 felt he had been supported in his learning though did not seem to associate the bullying he experienced from being overweight to be the school's responsibility. Y_UK_A_3 did not fare well and felt that even once his ADHD was recognised he was seen as a 'annoying' and he did not enjoy school.

4.2.4 Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making? (Governance)

The short answer to this question is 'no'. There is not one example from either Aberdeen or Glasgow where any young adult was participating in policy-making. I will elaborate on this further in Section 6 on the interaction between young adults and experts. Here, I will first explain the policies from the young adults' perspectives and secondly, I will take a generous approach to the meaning of policy-making to include participation, although even within this interpretation there are complications to consider.

There was a surprising lack of awareness even of the existence of the policies. Perhaps because DYW is still relatively new in schools and none of the young adults were aware of it, even those who had left school only two years ago. None mentioned it until questioned. One or two thought they may have heard of it but could not be sure. For example, Y_UK_A_5 had had good careers advice and help with his vocational decision – the only one who expressed satisfaction. He explains:

Ahh I maybe heard of (DYW) maybe, but I don't think so..... I had engineering in my head but that was only because of the 'day a way' (at college) kind of idea. I don't know if that was to do with the (DYW) thing as well, as they let us go away on a trip to the college....and they put you into groups and ... show you around the college, just to like show off what they had to offer. That was good, because then again you saw what you were getting to be coming to and I thought well, it's not just stuck in a classroom I will actually be making things and that was good.

4.2.5 What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand? (Governance)

Every young person interviewed felt that their skills had improved as a result of the intervention in which they were involved. The most obviously rewarded in terms of practical skills for work were those on apprenticeships, as expressed here:

So, I've done my Level 1, so that's basic, really basic stuff. , they just to get you to know all the basics, getting trained up. You do your Level 2, which is a similar thing. Apprentices who have got signed on from their company, , who didn't come through (this training company), they all still come here and get training for the likes of your health and safety, all that sort of thing. It's pretty similar, Level 1, 2, and 3, but it's just more complicated, add more layers to it (Y_UK_A_2).

And so, I came here and the first four months over here, I think, was doing our SVQ Level 1, which is pretty much the basic engineering operations and machine usage. So learning how to use the milling machines, and using the lifts (Y_UK_A_1).

Those on employability courses benefitted in other ways, particularly from increased levels of confidence and learning to enjoy learning which in the latter years of schooling had become difficult:

It's a lot of fun. It's so much fun. I enjoyed it. I really did. They really make you bring out the person you didn't think you were. Like, you feel a lot more confident, speak a lot better. It just really brings out the true you. They try to focus on making you come out of your shell. Really good (Y_UK_A_3)

the course was good. It strongly built my confidence up, because I was doing a lot of stuff in the skate park – that was the main thing that I wanted to work on, was up in the skate park.

Others with learning barriers had also greatly improved their skills levels and found something they were passionate about. For example, Y_UK_A_9 who had been working as a volunteer football coach and had passed his first level of qualification:

I passed that (football coaching course) and then I got a certificate....so I'm just waiting for the next (course) to come. I like to coach the kids and that. I do coach practice, it's just something that I would like to do.

Their ability to have control over their own lives was of considerable importance so as not to be dependent on family and even to be able to fulfil responsibilities towards their parents, even where they knew this was not expected:

so if I get a job and a life for my mum as well and everybody around me I could just help out a lot of people so I would like to get that sort of job (Y_UK_G_1).

Where university might have been an alternative option because of their academic potential, respondents argued strongly against their schools' academic focus and in favour of the equal promotion of vocational pathways and more support in gaining training and work straight from school whether at 16, 17 or 18. This is precisely what DYW is for and so is completely in tune with young people's demands as expressed in earlier sections here.

Similarly, respondents were glad when apprenticeships were available and again, whilst none of the young adults knew about Aberdeen Guarantees, it resonated with their demands because, though not designed to create apprenticeships, it did make sure those available were publicised.

It was not possible to get a sense specifically of how Y_UK_A_9 regarded OFA but it is certainly the case that without it he would not have had the opportunity to volunteer as a football coach with children at his football club. Football was his passion and he had found he was good at coaching and really enjoyed it.

The impression gained is that after leaving the academic environment of school, the new practical environments were so much better that they felt little could be improved except greater availability on leaving school rather than having to waste time trying to find training and work. The real question is whether sufficient employers can be engaged to offer more training and jobs.

5 Analysis of Interviews with young adults: Glasgow City Region

5.1 Presentation and analysis of biographies

Table 5 (below) shows that 8 young adults were interviewed in the Glasgow City Region. The sample included 3 males and 5 females. All were born in Scotland. All but one, with a car mechanic business, came from working class backgrounds, and of those two were skilled. The table also classifies the sample's 'life projects' and their expectations according to the criteria discussed in Section 5.2.

Y_UK_G_8 is a 21 year old female who had just completed her apprenticeship in IT and digital media with a training provider company which she had found very interesting. She lives with her mother (parents are separated but now she is now looking for a flat with friends because she felt that she was at an age now where she needs her own space. She had loved her Catholic primary school, and after an unproblematic transition, she went to what she called ‘quite a good’ school, also Catholic, which she enjoyed in the main because she had a lot of family and friends around her. She had stayed until 18 as she was unsure of what she would do next and thought she would get some qualifications until she had some idea. However, as she was academically able the school put pressure on her to go to apply to university and that really unsettled her as she wanted to go out to work. As a result she did not do well in her exams and she was tired of studying. She had careers advisers at school whom she went to see quite a lot but it was only when she left school and was passed on to an SDS advisor that she made progress. She started working for her present employer through the Employability Fund, temporarily, but then was taken on and subsequently started her two year apprenticeship in creating digital media. She had wanted to work on cruise ships either in the bar or waitressing but needed 5 start hotel experience first and this was difficult to find. When her apprenticeship ended she was offered a permanent job as a tutor in the company. Most of her friends went to university. She is very knowledgeable about the apprenticeship system. She had a very bright outlook on life and an open personality. For now, she had put her travel/cruise ship working plans on the back burner and thought she might do her travelling with Interrail instead. She has new career plans to do take an (apprenticeship) assessor’s qualification. She couldn’t imagine working anywhere else now as she was so happy in the company. There was no evidence she had experienced DYW at school and in fact the school acted quite the opposite to the aims of DYW.

Table 5 Patterns of young adult interviewees biographies in the functional region of the Glasgow City Region

	Code	Sex	Age	Socio-economic background	Life project	Expectations	Other significant issues
1	Y_UK_G_8	F	21	L7	Troubled	Success (apprenticeship assessor)	
2	Y_GU_G_DYW_2	F	20	L7	Troubled	Success (marketing)	
3	Y_GU_G_DYW_1	M	29	L7	Troubled	Worried (chartered engineer)	Depression
4	Y_GU_G_DYW_3	F	24	L7	Troubled	Worried (shopwork)	Some learning difficulties
5	Y_UK_G_7	F	29	L7	Troubled	Success (science teacher)	Bereavement
6	Y_UK_G_1	M	25	L4	Troubled	Success (plumber also off shore)	
7	Y_UK_G_2	F	18	L4	Clear	Success (plumber)	
8	Y_UK_G_3	M	19	L8 (owns car repair business)	Clear	Success (construction site manager)	

Y_UK_G_5 is a bright, articulate and friendly 20 year old female undertaking her apprenticeship in small digital marketing company, referred by the DYW project manager. She was keen to come to my university office for the interview – she was curious! In the interview, she revealed her stories of her childhood and previous education experience, and shared her opinion on each phase of her education.

She grew up in a very traditional and family-oriented Catholic family. She was the only child for eight years before her three siblings were born. She admitted that although she loved her family deeply, she felt it can be so overwhelming and affected her personal space during her primary school time. She went to Catholic schools for both primary and secondary education. There was a strong religious presence in the schools, but it also tackled taboo issues and engaged with non-Catholic students. She said she enjoyed her time in her primary and secondary education and their way of teaching helped with her learning. She felt there was some pressure from the school to go to university and she didn't think she got good careers advice. Apprenticeships were targeted towards the kids that were leaving in fourth year because it was very working class area and if you were studying Highers then you were expected to continue in education. After she finished her Highers, including music technology, in secondary school, she decided to study radio in the City of Glasgow College. However, she did not make it to the end of the course because they had resources issues as well as an environment which she found was discouraging. She did not see herself getting a job after finishing this course. She worked part-time at a sun tanning place and in a shop after she dropped out of college. She found a music course she really wanted to do but couldn't due to funding issues. Being able to learn and work in what she loves and is essential for her, which is the way she looks at her current apprenticeship. She is very keen to stay on with the company after her apprenticeship and 5/10 in years' time envisages herself working in the marketing industry. She had come across DYW through her job but not at school.

Y_UK_G_4 is a 29 year old male attending a one-to-one employability programme offered by a well-known UK employability provider. He had not experienced DYW but is an example of the kind of support that DYW promotes. In the interview, he revealed his stories of battling against being bullied at secondary school and depression. He was bright but in the deprived area where he lived he was unusual in doing well at school. He coped with the bullying by joining the school drama group and therefore could socialise there but the bullying continued outside of that. He had good careers advice at school and was advised to go to FE college to start his degree, where he would be in smaller classes, rather than university. After he started though he experienced serious depression and health problems, and it took him around 4 years to get better. Although there were services to help him, the one thing that really made him get himself together again and back to (a different) college was the help from his grandmother. His grandmother's cancer and dying became a big motivation for him to overcome his illness. He finally got back to university from college having changed his course to mechanical engineering. He also managed to work part-time at a call centre, which was also a way for him to handle the stress and depression. After he graduated from university, he was referred by the Job Centre to the provider for help in finding more job opportunities. He has found the provider really helpful with job applications, CV, and his confidence and he got on well with the advisor who spoke to him like an equal. He feels that over his life he has learned about teamwork and leadership also how to be a good communicator and being adaptable. He didn't want to just concentrate on finding a job, because he wanted a career as an engineer. That was what he wanted for this future.

Y_UK_G_6 is a 24 year old female attending a one-to-one employability programme offered by a well-known UK provider which she found out about through searching on the web. She was born with a slight disability but it has not impeded anything she wanted to do. She had a rather uneventful primary and secondary education experience. When she moved to secondary school, she was a bit slower in some of the classes and so had learning support. After secondary school, she was given a work experience placement in after-school care for six months arranged through a training provider. When that finished, she managed to get another placement for a retail job which she enjoyed after the initial nervousness of meeting new people and came to feel comfortable and confident in the work. She has been in college doing childcare courses working towards to be a qualified childcare worker. She said she got her NQ in childcare. In childcare she also liked being with the staff and the children's parents. Although she had support from her friends, she did not have much help from the college. With her current support she thinks she has learned more about transferrable skills. When she was asked where does she see herself going next, she didn't seem to have a concrete idea or specific plans for what she would do. Her interest is in retail. She hoped she could get a job, which could be 'proper' and 'paid' work. She has been on the programme for several months and found her support worker

helpful for her confidence and discussing different opportunities. Her story indicated that in the main she has let things happen to her and others have supported her to find placements but this is not altogether the case as she says she found the provider herself on the website. However, she may have been pointed in that direction. It was not clear.

Y_UK_G_7 This 29 year old female is attending a one-to-one employability programme offered by a well-known UK provider. She has a partner whom she is about to marry and their little girl aged one. Whilst she hated primary school and got into fights she had a good transition to secondary school which she loved academically and socially. She stayed on until 18 and got three Highers and then had a good transition to college for HNC business administration and IT but then her gran died so she didn't do all the exams. As she had not enjoyed the previous course anyway she switched to engineering, encouraged by her dad, to whom she was very close. She finished her HNC but didn't have any funding for the HND (2019 ish). At that time 19 was too old for an apprenticeship so she decided to go out to work. This was probably the pivotal point because after this her life became troubled and muddled through the illness and death of her dad. She worked for over 5 years in pubs and shops and then made it to a supervisor position at Scotmid until she had to leave to help her mum take care of her dad. It was that experience and seeing what went on in hospitals, including the technology, that inspired her to look into nursing and sciences. She started a chemistry course but had to drop out when she found out she was pregnant. She had been a full-time mum for the past year after her daughter was born. She has been considering going back to work and accidentally found out about the provider via Facebook. She applied and has found her case worker really helpful in deciding about taking a science degree but much more easily via an access course. She has really thought it through and decided that it would also fit in with looking after her daughter, be well paid and perhaps enable her to live abroad later with her soon-to-be husband.

Y_UK_G_1 This 25 year YA is an apprenticeship plumber with a company that supports CBC. He considered himself to have been average at school except a bit slow at writing and maths. His school was supportive but he left at 16 after Standard Grade as he believed it would be better to work with his hands. He had help getting on to an employability programme when he left school. His first 4 year apprenticeship in heating and ventilation, which his grandpa found for him through a friend, terminated in year 3 when the company crashed and this was very upsetting for him. His family including his mum - with whom he lives and who had cancer at the time - have all helped him a lot over the last few years and he was very appreciative of that. He took a big pay cut and worked on building sites as a labourer so as to keep himself in the same sort of trade. He was very keen to continue his training and when he was offered the current opportunity through a construction company he was labouring for (NB this must have been through CBC but he was not aware of that), he was really pleased and jumped at the chance. He is now in his second year. He is influenced by his grandpa who is a heating engineer and really he would like to get back into that. He was enjoying his apprenticeship but still feels disappointed when he meets up with those from his first terminated apprenticeship because they have all finished now whereas he had to start again. However, at college he is well respected because of his previous experience and given extra responsibilities to work with his peers and he's proud of that as an achievement. His family life affects how he sees his career development and earning a living as he is too old to ask for support from his mother. He keeps up with people from nearby areas to see what opportunities occur with other companies. He prefers commercial plumbing as it involves more thinking and problem solving but he's proud to be working in a profession which can help people. After his apprenticeship has finished he would like to stay on at the company before working on offshore rigs. This career goal seems to again stem from his family's careers as both his older cousin and grandfather worked on rigs, who have told him it is a good opportunity with good pay.

Y_UK_G_3 This 19 year old male YA was very confident, clear-headed and driven by his career and interests. He is a trainee construction site manager on a day release course in college in his second year. This was through CNC though he was unaware of that. He comes from a large, supportive family, which he acknowledges and appreciates. His father owns a family-run business. He identifies his levels of success by the amount of responsibility he has, rather than through academic

qualifications, often comparing himself to others who chose to go to university instead. He had stayed on and got his Highers but then wanted to leave. Student debt accumulated through not earning was a large part of his decision not to go to university, despite the pressure from school, which presented him with few other options than an employability programme, *Working for You*. Through this he learnt about CVs etc and after about nine months was offered the interview for his current position. He took his time to find out about different training programmes and a career, rather than just a job, that might be available. The training is for 4 years, during which he takes his SVQs, attending college, and expects next to do his HNC also whilst working. He is very pleased with how he got the job and how it has turned out. Though it was difficult at first, he is learning a lot. He aims to finish by 22 or 23 years old and he will have no debts. It was against school careers guidance at school, which he says pushed people into higher education. His brother had graduated just before the recession in 2008 and has debts. He did not want that. A big part of his life is his success in football as a player and as a captain and manager during and since school and he has used this experience both to get his job and working in it, mentioning the leadership and management experience he acquired through it. Looking to the future, he will finish his traineeship, do his HNC and possibly university then maybe travel with what he sees as a qualification he can use all over the world. to allow him to travel and see the world.

Y_UK_G_2 This 19 year old female YA had very recently started her apprenticeship as a plumber with a construction company, although she wasn't aware of it being as a result of CBC. She lives at home with her family and has always lived in Scotland. Both her parents are employed. She had recently left school at the time of the interview. She had a positive view of her school and the support she received. Her decision to follow her career path seems to have predominantly stemmed from a disinterest in wanting to study further at university although it was clear that she was also not strong academically and this was probably picked up by her teachers as early as Year 5. In the final 18 months of school she did a work experience programme for two days a week set up as a pilot scheme for her class through the local Community Trust and this really suited her. They were supposed to get an SVQ qualification for it but it didn't materialise. For the other three days in Years 5 and 6, she did Highers (Design and Manufacture was her favourite) and retook the subjects she had not passed such as Maths. There were opportunities to find out about careers and she had good careers support, including jobs fairs and *My World of Work* (online careers guidance) with her teachers. She had really enjoyed her work experience and it had prepared her well for when the Trust told her about her current apprenticeship. Reflecting on her experience of the interview and getting the job she said that not having the SVQ did not seem to bother her current employer, who gave her an interview and assessment, and accepted her for the job. She was only in the third week on the apprenticeship but feels she had found her niche and sees her skills growing. She has a female mentor, 4 years her senior. As her work can be male dominated, she says it took time to gain confidence and for her co-workers to settle in to being comfortable about working around females. However, this is slowly improving and she feels that she is treated equally in regard to her work, particularly as there are other women who are working on projects with her. Due to her gender, she does see herself to be quite untypical of the type of person who is hired for this work.

5.2 Structured comparison according to thematic categories related to the research questions.

5.2.1 How do LLL policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories? (Cultural Political Economy)

This question is discussed in Section 6.1 under interaction between young adults and experts.

5.2.2 What are young people's life projects? How do they elaborate their professional projects? (Life Course Research)

In Glasgow, the picture with the respondent sample was not dissimilar to that in Aberdeen. Again, in line with the interview questioning, the focus of concern was on the school to work transition, unwanted academic pressure and lack of effective careers information and support. A combination of these factors resulted in rather complicated, confusing and therefore troubled post school destinations (for all the DYW, and two of the CBC, respondents). Y_UK_G_8 explains that as she was academically able the school put pressure on her to apply to university when she wanted a job where she could travel. It took her several false starts to get to where she is now. Y_UK_G_5 had a similar experience. After she finished her Highers in secondary school, she decided to study radio (at) College. However, she did not make it to the end of the course because she found it discouraging. Next she worked part-time at a sun tanning place and then in a shop. She found that there was a music course she really wanted to do but in the end did not manage to finish it due to funding issues but then her boyfriend made a helpful suggestion:

so I decided OK back to the drawing board and I re-applied for (another College)... the lecturers ... were absolutely spot on that's just when I was like I can't not have a full time job and still keep up studying and it was such a shame and I was actually quite disheartened and sad to leave but I thought right I'll leave and see where I end up and for the moment in time I had nothing planned, and then my boyfriend was like, listen I went and done an apprenticeship why don't you go, he was like this is basically the last year to fit in for it as I was 19. I was like well I'll go for it then

Y_UK_G_5's story is typical of the element of serendipity that affects the career pathways of young people without a steer either from home or from school. CBC seems to leave less to chance as the employability programmes are known to the ALEO which sources the young adults to ensure companies comply with the contract clauses. CBC picked up Y_UK_G_2 at the end of the work experience she had started whilst still in school and Y_UK_G_1 who had completed 3 of his 4-year apprenticeship when the company folded. He had clearly been very upset and struggled with having to start all over again but through CBC was able to do that. Only two had had a relatively smooth pathway between school and their apprenticeships although not in paid employment during that time.

Some young adults also drew on activities they engaged in which they said had greatly helped them progress. For example, Y_UK_G_4 spoke about his drama groups in, and post, school which he had started attending to remove himself from situations where he was bullied. He had learned teamwork and adaptability. Y_UK_G_3 was a good footballer and had moved on from school to also successfully captain a team and hold gym classes from which he had learned leadership skills.

Family was again of significant in that mention of made of helpful information and connections gained through parents or extended family. For example, the grandfather of Y_UK_G_1 found him his first apprenticeship, and Y_UK_G_7's father had convinced her to take an engineering course.

Some spoke about their schools' level of learning support, apart from careers advice. Generally, respondents were positive about this:

I would say my school was good it helped me and people with maybe learning difficulties or maybe just weren't as bright as other people, my school were good for that (Y_UK_G_1).

Of her experiences working as a plumber in a predominantly male environment, Y_UK_G_2's has a different perspective to the two females in Aberdeen:

It's ok - it's not as bad as people imagine once you're there and doing stuff you get used to it so

When asked if she felt she was treated equally, her answer was interesting and indicated there was perhaps a certain level of respect shown to her (which she found amusing) but that did make her different:

No not equally, maybe equally when it comes to work but sometimes I feel that they might have to watch what they're saying!

Unlike the other females, Y_UK_G_2 did not speak of male influences in her family suggesting she did not find being in a male environment 'normal' in the way the others had.

5.2.3 What are young adults' expectations regarding the phases of their life course? (Life Course Research)

In Glasgow, as in Aberdeen, those on apprenticeships were clear about what they wanted for their future. They had found their niche, as Y_UK_G_1 explains:

In the next 5 years I will obviously finish my apprenticeship but once I finish my 4th year I would like to stay with this company if they keep me on for another year for a bit more experience and then my goal is to go away and work offshore or in a different bit, that's my goal and that's where I would like to see myself because I think I could make a really good base for myselfI think I would thrive in the industry.

Others, even though they knew what they wanted to do, were finding it harder and were worried, as Y_UK_G_4 explains:

I don't want to put all my eggs in one basket, so I don't want to just concentrate on finding a job, I also want to look at because for me my biggest goal is to become a chartered engineer.

The support he was getting through the employability provider was really important for his future: when applying for graduate jobs mainly (it's) very competitive. You have to go through all of these different tests so with the (provider) ... they can provide connections and things like that... it's really just like things I can do to try and better my chances of finding a job.

Y_UK_G_6, on the same one-to-one programme, was worried too, although she was on a very different, and less skilled, trajectory:

I think I'm hoping just to go down the retail route and hopefully get a job in a shop. (In 10 years' time) for me it's just to be in a proper job and paid work.

Significantly, the distinction was made between a 'job' and a 'career' as Y_UK_G_4 intimates above, and also expressed by Y_UK_G_3 who was living with this parents and therefore supported:

I didn't want to get a job in KFC or McDonalds I wanted a career, so I wanted to get a job that I could see myself doing for the rest of my life, so I waited quite some time I think I waited about 9 months looking at different jobs and applying for only a select few that I thought would be worth my time and this was one of them.

5.2.4 Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making? (Governance)

The references to young people's knowledge of and participation in DYW under the equivalent section for Aberdeen apply to Glasgow too so they will not be repeated here. None of the young adults in the Glasgow sample had heard of DYW including Y_UK_G_8 who had been recommended through the policy manager for interview. Of significance, however, is that Y_UK_G_8, although she had no personal experience of DYW whilst at school, in her current job, she had become aware of it and its role in schools through her work. DYW works to develop relationships between schools and businesses:

No. I didn't get anything like (DYW in school). The first time I heard of the DYW is when I started work for (this company) because they support them or work in conjunction with them.

Although three of the respondents were on apprenticeships as a result of community benefit clauses I did not ask them if they were aware of the policy. There were two good reasons for this deliberate omission. Firstly, I had been informed by the practitioners that the apprenticeships were indistinguishable from any others in the companies as they were just part of the whole quota for each company and not earmarked as CBC. Secondly, extra apprenticeships were allocated because of the deprived area in which the young people lived and I did not think it was appropriate for me, in the interview, to impose on them labelling of which they were almost certainly unaware and which may be unwelcome. I made this decision partly for ethical reasons and partly to avoid the 'Hawthorne effect' whereby researchers influence the research setting).

However, there is no question that the young adults were benefitting from the policy. On this they were very clear, even whilst they were unaware of the source of their apprenticeships:

like I said I think was very lucky (Y_UK_G_3)
the interview and that went really well so I was hoping that I had a shot but didn't want to get my hopes up in case I didn't (Y_UK_G_2)
so then when I got the job just at the end when my mum was getting better so it just made like everything had been lifted off my shoulders (Y_UK_G_1).

5.2.5 What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand? (Governance)

A similar picture to Aberdeen emerges in Glasgow with regard to the skills gained by young adults. The CBC apprentices spoke with sincerity and commitment about their on-the-job learning:

it's a lot of technical things that you need to do and that's where my college comes in, I go through a day release course in college and right now I'm on my second year and that helps, it does help but I think being on site helps better and because I'm at a college environment everything is perfect (Y_UK_G_3)

They were very satisfied with, and also excited by, their learning as Y_UK_G_8 demonstrates when talking about her Employability Fund work placement:

(I thought) I'm comfortable. I know where I'm coming I know where I'm going....I done my work experience and I enjoyed it and I kind of just felt like part of the team and at the end of it they offered me a job.....I love it we're a small company I think it's great because you get to

and she went on to describe at length and in detail, with great enthusiasm, the various aspects of the subsequent apprenticeship she undertook.

Y_UK_G_6 described her experiences with the one-to-one support she was receiving and her wider learning:

I think now I've learned more about transferrable skills. I could take the skills into different places.

The same points were made in Glasgow as in Aberdeen regarding the need for DYW but also availability of opportunities. Probably the best example of school to work transition to training and work was Y_UK_G_2 who had started work experience whilst still at school as a submarine pipefitter

and subsequently through CBC was taken on as an apprenticeship plumber by a construction company:

The interview went really well so I was hoping that I had a shot...The (work) experience definitely helped, especially if you're going into plumbing and you say you've got pipe fitting experience.

In general, the young people in the sample, as in Aberdeen, wanted to see a more balanced focus on vocational as well as academic learning in the last years of school rather than pressure to stay on and a sense of failure if the right number of Highers at the right grades for university were not achieved:

That's the sort of culture that we're in – in that you've not done well unless you get 5 Highers, ... I'm in a better position now than some people that have had 5 Highers but speaking to teachers now that I had in school they're very impressed with what I'm doing but yes, there's that sort of stereo type that you have to go to Uni or you're not doing well.

6 Interaction between young adults and experts

The different perspectives of young adults and experts are compared and contrasted under the three most pertinent research questions which allow discussion of the themes of Cultural Political Economy, Life Course Research, and Governance.

Although the comparisons revealed differences between the policies in respects of expert and young person perspectives, it was more difficult to identify any between the regions apart from the different economic conditions outlined elsewhere. These impacted inevitably on the opportunities available to young people but there were no significant differences that could be discerned pertaining to level of governance as these were subject to high levels of central policy-making control as demonstrated by the experts' responses. This was most clear with Developing the Young Workforce as that was a policy common to both regions though the others were also similar – Community Benefit Clauses resonated with elements of Aberdeen Guarantees, as Working Matters in Glasgow, with Opportunities for All in Aberdeen. There may have been some differences in the quality and type of careers advice and guidance with more focus in Aberdeen perhaps in response to the downturn but good and bad experiences were had by the young adults in both regions and with such a small sample it would be unwise to draw any definitive conclusions.

6.1 How do the selected Aberdeen/shire and Glasgow policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories? (Cultural Political Economy)

This question is approached from the experts' and the young adults' perspectives together beginning with the experts' perspectives. Reflections on these are presented using the perspectives of young adults presented through the findings derived from analysis of the interview data.

Aberdeen and Glasgow DYW: In the Aberdeen/Shire region, experts explained that the focus is on secondary school years 1-6, although degree apprenticeships were also being introduced here as elsewhere in Scotland. At the time of data collection, as explained in Section 2.2.2 there were no young adults identified for interview who were both directly engaged with DYW, and within the Project's age range. Those recruited to the Project on our behalf were apprentices and located via practitioners (apprenticeship assessors) the project manager knew through the further education college the young adults attended on day release. Nonetheless they fitted the target group of DYW in so far as they were pursuing a vocational route. They were also evidence that DYW work in Aberdeen was being carried out beyond the schools, in the colleges even though the policy manager had said their focus was on schools/business relationships at the moment.

It was to be expected the young interviewees had not experienced DYW in schools as it is still relatively new and they had left two years before at age 16. They were all engineering apprentices who had not had any major problems with school but either had not achieved the grades for university or had wanted to follow a practical, rather than an academic, pathway. They had useful stories to tell about the problems they had experienced, and which DYW has been introduced to address.

Currently DYW in Glasgow are looking at what they deliver in schools and how they can: ‘flip it ... for older young people looking for work’. E_UK_G_6’s (L2) role as Industry and Engagement manager with the Developing the Young Workforce team means that it is her: ‘responsibility to bring on board as many new small to medium businesses in the city who are willing to engage with education and young people to improve employability skills and to maximise their opportunities to gain sustainable employment’. Glasgow DYW have started: ‘targeting 16-24s just now (rather than just the 16-19) to encompass ... job opportunities that...don’t sit under a modern apprenticeship framework’. Currently she deals with schools: ‘We don’t deal with an awful lot of colleges just now. But that is something that we hope to move into in the near future’. Although E_UK_G_6 said that: ‘There is a lot of other (DYW) work that is going on that is not actually stated in black and white...that involves young people over the age of 18’, it was not clear whether those in the sample were either directly involved with, or benefitting from, DYW. As explained in Section 2.2.2, only two individuals, both in apprenticeships, were identified through the policy and project managers for interview. The other three, who also were too old to have experienced DYW but whom it was thought would have useful insights into the vocational route, were identified through a well-established UK employability programme provider. The provider works with a very wide range of young people some of whom might have a degree and some of whom have very few qualifications, hardly any work experience, a lack of support, confidence and lack of direction. The target groups come from a wide range of referral courses such as Job Centres, from other parts of the provider’s work, from voluntary organisations, local authorities and also self referrals.

The DYW young adult findings suggest beyond doubt that DYW is needed - even though they could not of course comment on whether it is being effective - and aligned with both policy and experts’ perspectives. Y_UK_G_8, though she was settled on a pathway now, was one of those contacted through Glasgow DYW and she had had the typically erratic vocational experience of working class young adults, caused at least in part by unfocused careers advice without market knowledge before and after leaving school:

(the school careers advisor) was like this place and this place are doing that and you could do this option and that option and I’m kind of like that’s not really what I want to do...(Later) I explained to (the SDS careers advisor after I left school) that I wanted to get into hospitality it was really proving quite difficult so I was like quite disheartened that I didn’t get (an interview with) a hotel.

There was also expert evidence (L1 E_UK_G_4) that the target group was widening to both an older age group, and to those less qualified for, or interested in, modern apprenticeships. Of key importance to note here is that apprenticeships are more difficult to promote with employers for aged 25+ apprentices because funding for their training is not guaranteed, unlike for 16-24 year olds. This could not be corroborated by the young adults in the sample. There was no evidence of gender bias in recruitment to apprenticeships but in Aberdeen fewer young women than men applied for manufacturing and engineering apprenticeship, as evidenced by fewer being available for interview, even though a balance was achieved for the Project sample. In Glasgow, there was a predominance of young women interviewed in office-based apprenticeships and another was looking for work in retail. That said, the other two interviewees, a male and female, were both looking for STEM-based qualifications and employment.

CBC targets communities in deprived areas including young people in need of training and jobs. This can be more specific still. For example, ‘Action for Children’ works with the construction industry and

targets 16-19 year olds coming out of the care or criminal justice system. They are given priority for construction jobs. E_UK_G_1 (L3) explained that a company might have a very tight geographical selection point for recruitment in order to give back to the local people in the area. This was not easy as few young people wanted to go into construction. E_UK_G_2 (L3) said schools do not promote enough what is available for those who do not want to go to University or college. Construction has a bad image as being a dirty job. The company does not advertise however because: 'historically folk know that (the company) takes apprentices on....and they write in'.

As explained in Section 2.2.2, it was difficult to locate CBC interviewees. Nonetheless, they were all on apprenticeships earmarked through local authority-awarded contracts. Clauses in the contract were designed to support those living in the deprived areas where the contract was based for eg construction of a school. The young adults were not aware of this and were indistinguishable from the companies' other apprentices.

OFA and the Activity Agreements are very targeted, partly because they do not have a large capacity and the work is very labour intensive, at young people (up to the 20th birthday but usually younger) who maybe cannot manage a full time course, or college, or working in group settings. They have a lot of barriers, maybe have left the family home at 16 without parental support and in temporary accommodation, be involved in criminal activity or drugs issues. It changes all the time but they will have 30-40 people officially signed up at any one point in the year, E_UK_A_9 (L3) explained: 'It is that kind of hardest-to-reach cohort that primarily would have just fallen into that black hole when they're due to leave school.' They come to OFA through schools, psychologists, the police, criminal justice, SDS, social workers, the care system, even word of mouth from other youngsters. Sometimes they even 'gatecrash' because they like the sound of the activities even though they are working!

As explained in Section 3.1.1, Opportunities for All started in 2012 as a new post school destination for the most vulnerable and even the name is an attempt to move away from a deficit model, replacing earlier references to NEETs, then 'More choices, More chances' and '16 plus learning choices'. OFA is an employability programme³⁶ for those whom clearly the school system had failed but who also had learning, social and economic barriers. Of the two young people interviewed Y_UK_A_9 was actually on the programme and had a one-to-one 'Activity Agreement' which was tailor-made for his needs, and managed, by the practitioner, in the way explained by the OFA experts. The Activity Agreements' purpose and construction are explained in Section 1.2.4 and its antecedents in Section 3.1.1. Following Green and Haines (2011)³⁷ work on assets- and deficits- driven approaches to community development, it is argued here that OFA has identified the young adult's strength (his passion for football) and through the programme's one-to-one approach has identified an opportunity (coaching) related to that young adult's strength which has led to him acquiring a qualification (in coaching) and developing a new and meaningful goal (to coach children in football). As explained above, practitioners saw themselves as providing 'a wealth model'. Y_UK_A_10 was part of the same football group to whom I was introduced by the practitioner, is unemployed, and is actually an example of someone not picked up by any of the programmes. However, he may be an example of the group of young adults described by the practitioner as 'gatecrashers' because they like the activities. At the same time, he is an example of a young adult not properly catered for because of his age. He was aged 24 and OFA only takes young adults up to their 20th birthday unless they have learning difficulties.

It was regrettable that there were no young adult interviewees from the Glasgow-based Working Matters with which to compare experts' perspectives and also for comparison with the Aberdeen-based OFA. Like OFA, WM targets those for whom other programmes have been unsuccessful

³⁶ They are not called 'lifelong learning programmes'. When I searched on the Aberdeen Guarantees website for 'lifelong learning' there were no matches. The term is occasionally used in connection with 'Community Learning' and in the UK is more associated with older adults.

³⁷ Green, G. and Haines, A. (2015) *Asset Building & Community Development*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. For a useful summary see: <http://www.memphis.edu/ess/module4/page3.php>

although WM clients are people who have not worked for a very long time. By definition this tends to mean older adults, with the average length of unemployment for people on the programme being about 13 years and the longest being 48 years. None were within the Project's age group, the youngest being 35. Given observations earlier in this report from the Glasgow DYW policy manager that those older young adults affected by the immediate post 2008 were not catered for, this was surprising and regrettable. The social category is those with the most entrenched and intractable unemployment record and eg mental health and/or addiction issues, lack of skills and qualification, limited education, housing problems and homelessness. There was no bias evident, with a variety of activities provided which would appeal to all genders, and which brought them together as well, for example a walking group and desktop publishing for a newsletter. However, when it came to movement into employment, at the end of the long process, E_UK_G_8 said that: 'the majority of clients that go into work are female'.

E_UK_A_1 explained that AG is meant to be inclusive and that different projects and programmes target specific groups. For example, 'Pathways'³⁸ work with people who are very distanced from the labour market, with multiple barriers to sustaining employment. Y_UK_A_10 mentioned above is an example of one who would benefit from this but he said he had been getting no support, clear evidence that young adults are slipping through the net. E_UK_A_2 (AG L2) explained that the Stage 1 course 'Skills for Engineers' at the training centre aims at engaging young adults under the Employability Fund programme. She emphasised however they do need maths at National 4 so they are able to move on to a Modern Apprenticeship if they wish. 'Life skills maths' is not good enough and if they come with just that: 'they would be told to go back to the (SDS) careers office because the 12 weeks (+4 weeks for work experience) is not enough to teach them maths as well. E_UK_A_3 (AG L2) explained that the target group for her (more general) employability projects was very wide, including young offenders for example. They also take on people for internships and a lot of their staff come from the Activity Agreement participants - they are 60% male.

The AG young adult interviewees were a mix of these different employability approaches. Two were apprentices and of the others, one was on the general employability programme, and the other had experienced, and then became an employee, of the provider of that programme. Both had had problems at school due to poor mental health and to lack of interest. The other two programmes clearly were effective. Y_UK_A_3 explained:

I was kind of one of those people (at school) that's like 'why am I doing this I'm not going to use this'...(but my programme tutor) I seen him ... like an authority figure that wasn't this condescending, demeaning kind of person. He really opened my eyes. It was cool... As in like if you didn't feel really like doing something he would get you to the point where you would do it.

As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5 those on apprenticeships tended to come from highly skilled working (L4), or newly middle (L8), class backgrounds, Those on employability programmes were more likely to come from less skilled working class (L7). Those in L4 and L8 tended to be clearer about their careers and expected to succeed. Those on CBC did not come from deprived backgrounds, even though they were living in deprived areas.

The assemblage of LLL policies - or employability policies and programmes, as they are more usually referred to in the UK - in Scotland construct target groups in a particular way. Since the 1990s, in the wake of the destruction of manufacturing industry in the two decades before, and the subsequent loss of apprenticeships, young people have been driven into higher education. This was encapsulated by Prime Minister Blair's 'Education, Education, Education' speech in 1997³⁹, and the 50% university entrant target. Now, young people are being encouraged through DYW and the strong promotion of

³⁸ <http://www.pathways-online.org/>

³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz2ENxjJxFw>

Modern Apprenticeships to either enter an apprenticeship (if one can be located) or go to university (with a SAAS subsistence loan⁴⁰). Those who are not able to follow either of these pathways, including those who have suffered in the years following the 2008 downturn, or who cannot finish an apprenticeship, either because they did not enrol or because the company closed before they completed it, are considered vulnerable and to that extent constitute a target group. There is a measure for all those who have been made redundant (PACE⁴¹) which is not one of the policies covered here. However, new measures introduced for the vulnerable categories which cover the 18-29 age range are generally less in evidence. Although DYW has extended its remit past the age of 18 this may change but at the time of the interviews it had not yet made itself felt. Similarly, apart from those with special needs, OFA stops with the 20th birthday. Projects under the auspices of Aberdeen Guarantees, apart from Modern Apprenticeships, seemed to cater mainly for either under 18s or older adults through community learning opportunities. Working Matters, although it appears to cover the age range for the project, in fact has very few in the age range and managers could source no-one for interview.

From the interviews with experts and young adults a distinction is made between three main groups. First, young people aged 16-18 are, through DYW, being increasingly encouraged to go from school into further education college and or straight into work, and find an apprenticeship. Second, academically able young people continue post school to go to university and, despite DYW, there is some evidence that schools are evaluated more highly from more of their pupils taking this route. Third, there are those who are unable to follow either of these routes, or who start on one or other but subsequently find themselves unemployed or simply unable to maintain engagement due to social, financial, health and other barriers. These young adults form a vulnerable, or potentially vulnerable, group.

Gender is an identified issue for all the policies and although the sample is too small to make any generalisations to a wider population, in the Aberdeen sample there were marginally more young women employed in manufacturing than in the Glasgow sample of office based apprentices in Glasgow, though also in that sample were both a male and female pursuing a STEM pathway. Respondents were asked about gender during the sampling, and whereas it was clear efforts are made to recruit females onto courses traditionally associated with males (eg the project manager for AG) no mention was made about the gender imbalance for males. Working Matters experts, dealing generally with long term unemployment noticed that women tended to fare better, and self-referred more often, than men although these observations do not apply to the age range for the project who are absent from the sample for reasons already explained.

6.2 Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty? (Life Course Research)

In the interviews, experts assessed to what extent the policies fostered the autonomy of young adults. Young adults elaborated on their life projects and expectations. In both functional regions, from the experts' interviews the general conclusion is that young people's autonomy is improved by all the measures under consideration, although practitioners also noted areas where they wanted to see improvements, and in both regions the life projects and the expectations of the young adult interviewees reflected this contribution to their autonomy. The relation between the policies, or measures, selected for the Project, and the reported experiences of interviewees is not linear but rather complex. In the course of the discussion on the interaction between the findings from the two sets of interviews, I will also summarise what is being referred to by the respondents in the interviews.

It is important to remember that the young people in both Aberdeen/shire or Glasgow had not had direct experience of DYW because of their age. What their experiences pointed up clearly were that

⁴⁰ <http://www.saas.gov.uk/>

⁴¹ <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/partnership-action-for-continuing-employment-pace/>

measures were needed to encourage young people to take a vocational path, and to make it easier for them to do that. Where the young adults in the sample had received this support - whether in school, or post-school - it was greatly appreciated and very effective, though for most this targeted support arrived post school which was bad for their confidence as they wasted time trying to find a pathway which suited them. DYW is potentially, then, an appropriate policy though whether it will work or not has to be the subject of further research. Important to note is that autonomy was inextricably tied up with training and work opportunities and this 'economic' theme was apparent in expert interviews at all levels, and those with young adults. This follows Butler's (2010)⁴² warning of the paucity of agency theory that leaves out 'the economy' however that is construed (p161).

In Glasgow, E_UK_G_4 (L1) argues that DYW promotes young people's autonomy with its aim of getting 'more young people into work'. She goes on to explain: 'The expansion of modern apprenticeships is probably the thing that we do that impacts most on the learning and training opportunities for young people. That is where our focus is just now. So we support employers to recruit young people and where we can we try to influence them to do that with some level of training, learning and development'. E_UK_A_6 (L1) expresses a similar sentiment: 'we've been interested in seeing how we could better prepare our young people for work' but underlined he also wanted the 'right' destination for the individual rather than just focusing on 'positive destinations', an oft chanted phrase in the Scottish Government policy rhetoric.

In their elaboration of their life projects and their future plans, young adults demonstrated the value of DYW intentions as well as how large a part serendipity was playing. Y_UK_G_5 offers an example that resonates with responses of others in the sample: 'my boyfriend was like, listen I went and done an apprenticeship why don't you go, he was like this is basically the last year to fit in for it as I was 19. I was like well I'll go for it then'.

The DYW practitioners who, like the young people, had no direct experience of the policy, also wanted to see advice given in schools that was aligned with employer expectations, for example the value of a year spent in college before applying to a company. As then: '(companies) know that (young people) are interested in that discipline so they take them on from the colleges'. What worried him about the apprenticeship transition is that: 'sometimes individuals in the young adult stage are not taking their training serious enough for the future' (E_UK_A_5).

E_UK_G_5 said that the Young People's Consortium Employability Project works on addressing the multiple barriers of the young adults referred to them with the aim of getting them into apprenticeships, training and employment, or FE college. This was not only confined to the vocational routes, thus emphasising the overall policy aim of Education for All and the need for young people to be able to switch between vocational and academic pathways. This was corroborated by Y_UK_G_7: 'I've had a look and I found a quicker way to get to University than the way that I was going to be going. ... (Instead) a SWAP Access (FE) course will allow me into University next year'.

The CBC experts and the three CBC young people all had direct and current experience of the policy although it is important to note that the young people themselves were not aware of the connection between their apprenticeships and CBC as a policy, as discussed in Section 5.2.4. The CBC experts explained that the policy was designed to ensure that companies profiting from work commissioned by local authorities directly and expressly benefited those living in deprived areas.

From the experiences of the three young people in the sample, this has largely succeeded from their individual perspectives as they had apprenticeships. Important to note is how the autonomy of a young person can be completely undermined by the early termination of an apprenticeship, as experienced by Y_UK_G_1 before the one he now had with CBC. Relevant here is the warning note from E_UK_G_1

⁴² Butler, J. (2010). Performative agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 147–161.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2010.494117>

that companies with subcontractors cannot guarantee the full life of the apprenticeship although the CBC policy manager was aware of this issue and attempting to address it. For the young people's autonomy that was clearly crucial because they were all planning ahead on that basis.

It is regrettable that there were no Working Matters interviewees. At all three expert levels, the focus on developing the autonomy of clients was paramount, as expressed here by the policy manager: 'It is a very individual programme and it is the first time that anything has been done like this where their journey is their own and it is about the case manager supporting them along the way...I think that it is a great programme. ... I have been involved in employability probably for about 20 years in various guises and I have had a lot of experience of delivering the training that comes along with this'.

OFA and AG experts' conviction that their policies promoted young people's autonomy also resonated with the young adults' responses. In addition, as in Glasgow, they also drew attention to the help they had received post-school particularly from the SDS post school careers advisors. SDS advisors apparently receive the names of those who do not have a work, training or education destination from the schools, for subsequent follow-up⁴³. Job Centres were also mentioned by several of the young people as being important sources of help. Both of these agencies have information about employability programmes, apprenticeships and work. The intensive one-to-one approach of OFA allowed staff to focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable of young people were supported and encouraged to become independent, and the experience of the young adult interviewee chimed entirely with that purpose so that he was given opportunities for expanding his strengths, which would not otherwise have been available to him. The AG project manager's perspective aligned closely with that of the young people that they were put into boxes in school – mostly the same 'university' box whether they fitted or not. She also underlined another theme – the important role of parents: 'School...wants to keep them there as long they possibly can; parents, because they always want to think that little Johnny or Jenny are going to go to university ..they don't realise that they can go into an apprenticeship, complete an apprenticeship, and then if they're smart enough and good enough, they can still go on to higher education, degree education, or whatever, if that is what is required'. Autonomy for young people from the perspectives of the experts meant offering an array of opportunities for young people with different needs which would both serve the economy and ensure young people from all backgrounds and with a variety of needs are included. They were also clear that this should start in school, and be especially focused in the final years when career pathways had to be decided on. This was entirely in tune with the expressed needs of the young people as they explained their past and current experiences and their future plans.

Better still for young people's autonomy would be greater buy-in to the futures of young people by companies guaranteeing a job at the end of the apprenticeship and that, sadly, still seemed to be only a pipe dream in the Employability Pipeline despite the efforts of policy makers and those implementing the policies.

6.3 Do young adults participate in LLL policy-making? (Governance)

There was no evidence in this study that young adults were participating in policy-making related to the policies under consideration so here I draw on references to civil engagement made by the experts and some related observations from the young adults. From the young people's perspectives, not surprisingly they corroborated in there being no opportunity to participate in policy-making though a more generous interpretation of 'participation' makes it possible to reflect on their engagement with the policies.

⁴³ Mysteriously, evidence of this very productive referral system is not evident on the SDS website, suggesting that this form of 'targeting' is either not being well-publicised or is concealed perhaps to avoid criticism of promoting a deficit model – which would in my view be unwarranted, given the positive feedback from interviewees who did not regard themselves as targeting but as supported.

Young people were in the main unaware of ‘policies’ and were instead very much the subject of them. One or two thought they may have heard of DYW, probably not started in schools before they left, but they may have said that just to please me, the interviewer, rather than a flat ‘no’ which I received from most to this question. As explained, the CBC interviewees had no knowledge of the policy either, though this was because of the nature of the policy, as explained elsewhere.

The nearest recognition from the experts as to the contribution they could make was from the Aberdeen DYW policy manager who in his role had little to do with them, although he made sure he visited schools frequently so as to keep in touch with them. There was evidence he wanted to draw young people into DYW decision-making through plans for a ‘mirror’ or ‘shadow’ DYW youth board.

For Working Matters, Feedback from clients was not sought or provided for in any specific, structured, formal way. The CBC policy manager said they asked for feedback from all the stakeholders to see how it is working, though this did not seem to include the young people who, as noted above, were not aware of the role CBC played in creating more apprenticeships. Furthermore, the apprentice training was run by the appropriate sector boards. One of the CBC practitioners (E_UK_G_2) did make sure she met with the apprentices every quarter although that was to get feedback on their experiences rather than for them to input on policy, or even on its implementation.

There was no evidence from OFA or AG experts of young adult feedback, consultation or participation in policy making currently. Emphasis was placed by E_UK_A_1 on the importance of giving the young people affected by the employability programmes a voice in relation to their requirements. However, the experts did speak of new youth forums being set up - two currently running plus they support the Scottish Youth Parliament members in Aberdeen City and there is also the Youth Council, which is supported by the Youth Work team. E_UK_A_2, a project manager in a training centre, said there were no opportunities for feedback for young adults on AG.

Where young people are engaged in programmes and apprenticeships they are very positive about the benefits and spoke eloquently about their lives being turned around by them. With sound aspirations they were able to feel they have a stake for the future and talked knowledgeably about the industry they were engaged in, which suggested that they would be willing to participate if that was meaningful rather than superficial and box-ticking or simply to make them feel they involved without any real outcomes – ie more apprenticeships and jobs. Those without such hopes for the future are cynical and feel excluded (eg Y_UK_A_10).

6.4 What do young adults think about their skills? What skill formation services do they demand? (Governance)

To compare and contrast the perspectives of experts with young people on the question of skills, reference was made to the policy objectives as espoused by the experts, as well as to young adults’ responses to these two particular questions.

The overall objective that united all the policies in both regions was, as expressed by the Working Matters policy manager: ‘to get them into work’. This was achieved through helping those with multiple barriers gain more confidence, acquire more skills, think about what they would like to do for a job, and at the very least find volunteering opportunities as a precursor to training and employment. For those choosing between higher education and, whether leaving school at 16, 17 or 18, the pursuit of a vocational pathway, then work experience on leaving school (as for Y_UK_G_2), and an apprenticeship was the aim. As mentioned, the view was also expressed (by E_UK_A_5) that a year in further education college before an apprenticeship was preferable. Aberdeen Guarantees had the objective of pulling together, and advertising through the website, all the available opportunities for skills development, training and work.

In both Aberdeen and Glasgow, every young person interviewed felt that their skills had improved as a result of the intervention in which they were involved. The most obviously rewarded in terms of practical skills for work were those on apprenticeships. Those with learning or social barriers on one to one programmes (OFA in Aberdeen and DYW in Glasgow with the training provider) all said they greatly improved their skills levels and also helped to find found something they were passionate about.

In general, the criticisms from young adults were aimed at the academic environment of school, lack of vocational guidance and information before leaving, and post school the confusions they had experienced due to the lack of availability of options to help them find their way or to help them realise their ideas. They had experienced difficulties in looking for training and employment opportunities. The SDS school/post school referral system was highlighted as very helpful in this regard. At the same time, others had had very positive experiences of careers advice and guidance in schools, and there was evidence of good in-school/post school connections with SDS.

The analysis of interviews with young adults suggest that in the main their experience of the training and employment policies in Scotland was positive though the sample is small and unrepresentative of those for whom the policies, on paper, are intended because managers found it so hard to identify where the young adults were at whom the policies were aimed. Those benefitting were either under 18 or over 29 and therefore outside the scope of the study. The target group varied from policy to policy but apart from OFA in Aberdeen and WM in Glasgow (policies for which young adult respondents were difficult to find) they were not particularly targeted at young and vulnerable groups. These two programmes were for the most vulnerable with multiple barriers and highly tailored to meet individual needs. However, OFA post-18 destination records were poor after the programme as they were very hard to track. WM in practice was focused on the much older long term unemployed. AG is an umbrella included programmes for vulnerable groups and OFA came under that umbrella, CBC was aimed at deprived communities where young people also lived. Gender is noticeable insofar as all but two respondents in Aberdeen were male where there are still opportunities in oil and gas, and most in Glasgow were females in office-based work. All came from ONS class groups L4, L7 or L8.

It is difficult not to raise the question of employer engagement and the way in which the experts had to work so hard to get them involved, and young people's experiences of lack of opportunities. Experts refer to the need for more employer engagement and competition between project/policy managers involved in other parts of the policy landscape vying for the same work experience opportunities for their clients (eg E_UK_A_2). At the same time there appears to be duplication of effort for one particular client group in Glasgow – those older hard-to-reach adults – and few opportunities for those hit hardest by the 2008 Financial Crash now in their mid to late 20s.

The real question is whether sufficient employers can be engaged to offer more training and jobs, as well as work experience to meet the current and future needs of the 18-29 age group.

7 Emerging issues

There were a number of emerging issues, although some might be seen as existing issues which are still inadequately recognised.

7.1 Opportunities for older young adults

As the difficulties with achieving adequate sampling in both regions for this Project testifies, and the evidence from Glasgow DYW, and WM demonstrate, there are insufficient opportunities for young adults over the age of 18 and there seems to be a 'black hole' of support and provision for young people in their 20s who had to survive the 2008 downturn. By and large, the younger end of the 18-29 age group are not well catered for outside of the apprenticeships and there was nothing evident in

place for those older. Currently, provision is focused on the 16-19 age group except for those with particular learning needs where the age goes up to 24. There are apprenticeships for those who achieve at school or who are successful on short post-school Employability Fund programmes. There are some traineeships. During recessions, apprenticeship opportunities are reduced and there are redundancies. There is a scheme which supports those whose apprenticeships have been interrupted.

7.2 Parental role

It is clear from the findings that the parents, and extended family, are of immense importance to young adults. This extends well past the age of 16 when many leave school. The two 29 year olds mentioned their parents less except when specifically asked about their lives or their current situation, for example where they lived or in relation to childcare. For the others, their parents were still central to much of their thinking about their current situations and their futures. This occurred in several ways: first, emotional attachment and feelings of responsibility; second, dependency for information and advice; third, for contacts and finding training and employment; fourth, the need to bring their parents along in their project. Finally, some were still trying to resolve familial problems which impeded their sense of self esteem and caused them worry which was debilitating.

These issues suggest that policies relating to career pathways, skills, development, training and early employment may need to strike a careful balance between regarding young adults as full adults, and a subtle recognition that even in the early twenties adulthood is still emerging and familial dependency continues at different levels and in different ways.

7.3 Employer engagement

There are a number of elements here, which are discussed in turn and which also relate to the four wicked problems discussed in Section 3.7.

7.3.1 Shortage of training and employment opportunities

Whilst young people in school are being encouraged and supported by DYW to take a vocational path, the experiences of the young people themselves post school indicated a shortage of training and employment opportunities. It is also not clear what will happen in the future to the most vulnerable young people whose learning and other barriers prevent them from engaging in apprenticeships or other training leading to full employment, and whether they will always only be able to undertake volunteering roles.

7.3.2 Proliferation of overlapping initiatives

At the same time, experts (for example with AG) report concerns about competing with other similar programmes for work experience opportunities for young people, and see DYW as duplicating existing efforts and programmes. Other experts (WM) note that whilst there are too many programmes for older adults, it is only through careful negotiation and relation-building that kind-hearted employers are persuaded to take on clients with poor employment histories.

7.3.3 Policy exoneration of employers' responsibilities

The issue then is the role of employers since policy makers cannot expect to exonerate employers where they are not providing enough opportunities for young people. The new Apprenticeship Levy may be useful though early signs are that it is not yet bearing fruit⁴⁴ and employers are avoiding taking

⁴⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-42092171>

on more apprentices. Clearly, a change of culture is needed whether this is carried out with the carrot or the stick as referred to by the Aberdeen DYW policy manager. Here it is suggested that the carrot might mean more state sponsored incentives through policy; a greater focus on Corporate Social Responsibility, and the stick to be penalties for non-compliance with more regulation designed to compel employers to employ more young and vulnerable people.

Clearly, policy cannot be seen as a long term substitute for employer engagement in training and employment for young people as this means working people subsidising employers via taxes earned from their wages, in order for young people to have a future.

7.3.4 Employer perspectives

At the same time, practitioners expressed differing views. One practitioner (L3 E_UK_G_1) thought that too much was being demanded of employers through CBC, for example, as they did not need the number of apprentices they were being asked to take on. Further, it was sometimes restrictive to have to take young people from a narrowly defined geographical area. Another view expressed (L3 E_UK_G_7) was that a lot of work was being done through employers' federations to get employers engaged with schools. However, the view was also expressed that whilst: 'it's raising profile of youngsters ... there's still a perception from a lot of employers that young people are not job ready, so they are less likely to take on younger people than they will take on someone who is older, I have also heard it in relation to graduates coming out of University, where employers are equally saying "they're not ready for the workplace yet, what is going on". Now part of that might be a disconnect (between) ... current employment and what ... skills you need in employment today rather than 10 years ago, but there is definitely a perception that they're not quite ready for the workplace' (L3 E_UK_G_7).

There was also concern about employers' lack of engagement in creating opportunities for young people, and their lack of sensitivity to young people's nervousness as they started out in the workplace without the advice and help of parents who themselves may be struggling and unaware of what is required.

Whilst part of DYW's purpose is to engage employers more with the curriculum, even leaving aside the argument of whether schools should be for education or for training for employers, it might be argued that work preparation is more effectively carried out by employers with young people in the workplace.

7.3.5 Brexit

Finally, again expressed by the small employer (E_UK_G_7), was the view that in the UK Brexit may make a difference, because in some sectors, such as hospitality and retail, employers have relied on Europeans coming over and taking jobs. She is seeing recognition from small businesses that they will have to fill skills shortages by investing in the workforce in Scotland and the UK. Her view was that this represented: 'to really tackle the developing young workforce'.

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Working Paper



Work Package 5

Qualitative Analysis

Report on Girona and Málaga (Spain)

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Executive Summary

YOUNG ADULLLT has conducted qualitative research in the 'functional regions' of Girona (Catalonia) and Málaga (Andalusia). The project aims at spelling out the clues of lifelong learning policies in local contexts as defined by (functional) connections which may be observed empirically in the areas of mobility, labour market or education.

In Girona, 10 professional experts and 12 young adults were interviewed. In Granada, 5 experts and 11 young adults were included in the sample. Experts were asked to elaborate on policy design, implementation and impact, taking coordination between stakeholders and multi-level governance into account. Young adults were invited to narrate their biography as much as they wished. Then, they were asked a complementary set of questions on their participation in the policy and their perception of skills.

This report focuses on the discourses of the interviewed experts and young adults in Girona and Málaga. However, it compares their responses systematically so as to highlight the similarities and the differences between the two functional regions. A further section explores how the interaction between these two social agents has provoked some effects.

Very similar samples of experts were interviewed in each region. They were contacted at the regional Department(s) of Employment, the Chambers of Commerce and vocational education schools. In Girona some practitioners who worked at a local level accepted to talk to our research team. They were mostly engaged in facilitating YGS as well as running training programmes (TP24 and TP12). In Málaga local experts were contacted in vocational training institutions.

The analysis of the interviews with experts produced the following findings:

- A number of disruptive problems defer the implementation of a common qualifications framework at the local level. In fact, the split of powers between the departments of education and employment as well as an underground competition between private providers generate an intricate institutional system. This is a further challenge for young adults who want to look for training and can hardly rely on the skills they have previously acquired.
- Active labour market policies have become the prevailing approach to lifelong learning in both Girona and Málaga. Programmes are evaluated on the grounds of how many beneficiaries find a job. Professionals mostly focus on the employability of beneficiaries.
- Local governments have become a very weak but crucial component of the institutional structure of lifelong learning policies in Spain. They are weak for many reasons, but these policies may also exacerbate their weakness. The point is that the central ministry established how the Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS) would be finally understood in Spain. Regional governments adopt this design with some variations. For instance, in Catalonia management is more decentralised than in Andalusia. But local governments are responsible for catering to the needs of their population. Central, regional and local governments pay the wage of the street-level professionals who work at this local level. Significantly, although coordination is hard to find at the upper levels of management, the interviews detected some relevant and very helpful local networks of informal coordination among these street-level professionals.

Most young adult interviewees came from a working-class background. Some of them had also had a previous experience with international migration. A larger number of males were contacted and interviewed in lifelong learning policies in these two regions. This sample integrated a number of 'vulnerable' respondents for two reasons. Firstly, many of them had left school but had not achieved the accreditation of compulsory secondary education. Secondly, many of them also had experiences of long-term unemployment, or at least reiterative spells of unemployment.

The analysis of these interviews produced the following findings:

- In Spain, 'vulnerable' young adults struggle to define their life project. They use lifelong learning programmes for this endeavour. Most of them notice the pedagogic approach of these programmes is friendly insofar as trainers, tutors and counsellors are responsive to their particular needs.
- Defining a life project is a demanding challenge for some 'vulnerable' young adults. It is hard for them to figure out a reliable life course out of education and employment. These youth are quite attentive to the potential of counselling and personalised active labour market policies to respond to their needs.
- Vocational training opens two types of opportunities to 'vulnerable' young adults. On the one hand, training is a good occasion to review their experience with schooling, and if necessary, to take academic education seriously. This is a widespread dilemma. On the other hand, some training programmes also give them official qualifications on the grounds of practical skills. Many of them had not realised this opportunity in advance.
- Middle- level vocational education also opens interesting opportunities for them. In fact, all the interviewees who mentioned academic education had this possibility in mind. However, it is worrying that some respondents reported they could not afford the vocational education programmes they wished.
- Although this report can hardly posit general conclusions with regard to gender, it clearly indicates that both further research and policy evaluations should look at the different experiences of men and women. Males are more exposed to 'vulnerable' social positions as far as early school leaving and unemployment are concerned. However, it is plausible to conclude that professional stereotypes and the difficulty to simultaneously cope with motherhood and training also affect the opportunities of women.

A further section of the report explores the interaction of experts and young adults in the context of lifelong learning policies. Remarkably, these two types of social agents continuously meet, make decisions, experience new situations and elaborate their discourses in a variety of interfaces. Diverse social agents are involved in designing programmes, training people, counselling 'vulnerable' young adults, coordinating the stakeholders of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, formulating one's personal biography in the midst of current policies, and making decisions on either further education or employment. But all these activities are clearly interactive.

In this report the analysis of this interaction yields the following conclusions:

- The expectations of professionals are often aligned with the experiences of young adults. The former think the beneficiaries of lifelong learning programmes need to compensate for their shortcomings in both education and the labour market. Many of the latter feel they made the wrong choices during their adolescence and have to correct the course of their life. These two views strongly contribute to set a 'social norm' whereby lifelong learning policies are the appropriate resource to cater to the needs of those young adults who failed to reach both middle- vocational and tertiary education.
- Three approaches to vocational training were detected. In Girona, TP24 articulates counselling with training on the grounds of a systematic tutelage of young early school-leavers. In the same region, the youth workers of a municipality have developed a community-based approach of TP12 that reaches young adults in the midst of their personal social networks and keeps a long-term ongoing conversation with some of them. Both in Girona and Málaga the training programmes that award an official qualification are an appealing alternative for low-skilled people who frame their professional strategy within an explicit life project. Although in Girona these programmes were not included in the sample (because the experts estimated that most students were older than 30), the bulk of the young adults who were interviewed in Málaga were taking these courses.
- Neither in Girona nor in Málaga young adults participate at all in the design of lifelong learning policies. Although the Young Guarantee Scheme particularly stresses participation and partnership, the current programmes which are implemented in these two 'functional regions' do not meet this requirement.

Finally, the report captures some emerging issues which should be researched and discussed more extensively. The point is that the Youth Guarantee Scheme is a component of the European Union Europe 2020 Strategy. This Strategy aims at promoting inclusive, smart and sustainable growth. In Girona and Málaga, lifelong learning policies contribute to inclusive growth indirectly to the extent that they increase the number of young adults who have some sort of professional qualification. This contribution is slightly more significant when some beneficiaries of the policies become aware of their transversal and social skills. However, the available evidence strongly suggests that in these two regions lifelong learning policies do not comply with the tenets of either smart or sustainable growth.

1. Introduction

In Spain, the Young Adults National Briefing Paper on the quantitative analysis of young adults' living conditions depicts a bleak picture but also detects some remarkable signs of contrast (Scandurra & Rambla, 2017). Thus, the qualitative analysis of interviews captures to what extent experts are in charge of programmes that cater to numerous targets. On the other hand, it is noticeable how the 18- to 29- year- old beneficiaries of the main lifelong learning policies face important constraints when they want to define their life projects.

The population pyramid is fashioned by an array of factors. Low fertility rates and high life expectancy put some pressure on dependency ratios, which are increasing at the same time as in most EU member states. Although the financial crisis sharply interrupted a decennial trend of increasing immigration, the later weak recovery reduced the number of recent immigrants who were leaving in the hard times. As a consequence, a significant point is that foreign-born young adults outnumber those who were born in the country.

Educational statistics indicate a polarised distribution of ISCED levels. In the whole of Spain, in Andalusia and in Catalonia the share of 30- to 34- years- olds who at most achieves ISCED1-2 levels scores between 30% and 50%, while it hardly achieves 10% in either Germany or the UK. In this vein, the rates of early school leavers and youth who are not in employment and training rank above EU averages. However, in the whole of Spain and in Catalonia the 30- to 34- years- old population who achieves ISCED5-8 levels largely exceeds the score of Germany. This disparity in school pathways is not reproduced on academic and skills performance. While many youth drop out of school too early, PISA did not record very low scores for 15- year- olds while PIAAC did not either record very low scores for 20- to- 30 years- olds.

The labour market does not open promising opportunities for the cohorts of young adults in the country. Over time, low employment rates and high youth unemployment rates eventually indicate that jobs are scarce. At the same time, the fact that labour productivity increased exclusively in the years of the most severe economic downturn strongly suggests that many available jobs do not guarantee a sufficient quality.

Income statistics also report that many young adults are exposed to significant poverty and material deprivation. In fact, at current market prices the ratio of euros per inhabitant has not yet achieved the level of 2007. In addition, not only minors and youth are the age groups who suffer a higher risk of income poverty but the gap with the elderly is increasing.

Nevertheless, compared to the average European Union, in Spain so far young adults do not answer standard questions on life satisfaction in a particularly pessimistic way. Despite the disparities and shortcomings captured by the previous picture, the population aged 25- 34 shares similar perceptions of finance, accommodation, jobs, commuting time, time use, recreational and green areas, living environment, the meaning of life and personal relationships.

In Girona and Málaga, Young Adults fieldwork reached a sample of experts and beneficiaries from an array of programmes. The Catalan Employment Service (SOC) is introducing a longer time schedule than the bulk of vocational training programmes in Spain. It is also attempting to underpin the role of local stakeholders. In Málaga, the Andalusian Employment Service (SAE) proceeds in a more centralised and tightly monitored way. Thus, vocational training

programmes are much more homogeneous, not least because the main providers are official institutions.

The following descriptions portray the programmes whose beneficiaries accepted to be interviewed.

- The design of 24-months Training Programmes (TP24) basically includes counselling support and short-term training programmes for low-performing students between the age of 16 and 24. SOC opens public calls so that consortia of firms and non-profit organisations run regional TP24 centres for a period. TP24 officers choose the beneficiaries, who are endowed with a grant for their transport costs.
- The 12- to- 15 months Training Programme (TP12) is the main programme of the SOC targeted to young adults. It also delivers a counselling and a set of short-term training courses. SOC opens yearly tenders where local administrations and public local agencies compete for TP12 bids in most localities. Young AdultIt interviews were conducted in a municipality where this programme was run by the youth work department. This organisation contrasts with most local governments, where the TP12 is managed by the department in charge of active labour market policies. In that locality the officers of TP12 were continuously in touch with the beneficiaries through social networks. They explicitly aimed at creating an open space where the youth could go at will.
- The Girona network of the Youth Guarantee Scheme facilitators also responded to Young AdultIt interviews. Although these professionals could not disclose any personal data of the potential interviewees, they were very helpful in outlining the dynamics of the different organisations who ran the scheme in the urban area. In essence, SOC funds city councils, country councils, Chambers of Commerce, employers' boards and trade unions so that these professionals deliver key information to any young adult and start with some initial career guidance.
- The Málaga Chamber of Commerce runs the Qualification and Training Programme (QTP). Drawing on the contribution of the European Social Fund, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security of Spain collaborates with the Chambers of Commerce to implement the National System of Youth Guarantee through QTP. The programmes helps young people between the ages of 16 and 29 to find a job. The beneficiaries are supported by counselling services which guide them to choose the appropriate training and entrepreneurship schemes for them.
- In Málaga a public provider of vocational training was visited (VT1). This institution was allowed to explore local needs on its own and has a greater level of autonomy to make decision about its own programmes, although the proposals that they do have to be approved by the Department of Employment. Compared to private providers, they are not exposed to competitive tendering procedure.
- A local School Workshop was also included in the sample in Málaga (VT2). Its main objective was to improve the employability of young people between the ages of 16 and 25, In essence, students could enrol in nine trades, which were mostly related to civil construction and in-home support services.

2. Data collection, Treatment and Analysis

Table 1 outlines the sample of interviews in the two functional regions selected in Spain. Generally, 15 experts and 22 young adults were interviewed. Young adults came from varied social backgrounds, but most of them were working-class. In addition, 8 youth had migrated to the country. In Catalonia, the age of TP24 beneficiaries was clearly below to the age of TP12 beneficiaries.

Table 1
Sample of interviews

Policies	Experts	Young Adults						
		Autochthonous high- and middle-class		Autochthonous working class		Foreign-born parents (often, interviewees too)		Age
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Average
Girona								
VET institutions	2							
YGS facilitators	4							
Public Employment Service officer	1							
Training programme (TP24)	1	1		3		1		18,6
Training programme (TP12)	2			1		3	3	23,8
Total	10	12						
Malaga								
Chamber of Commerce	1	1	1		1			26
Vocational training provider (VT1)	1			4		1		23
School Workshop (VT2)	2				2			25,5
Career guidance expert	1							
Other young adults			1		1			22,5
Total	5	10						

In Girona, three Interviewers were researchers, one was a master student. Two of the researchers are faculty members at UAB, while the third one is a research student whose PhD focuses on the life trajectory of non-traditional students in higher education institutions. The

interview schedule was meaningful for all these conversations. The list of topics also proved to be exhaustive.

All experts were easily available and actively helped with the research. A member of the advisory board gave crucial information to reach the local Chamber of Commerce. Another one helped to contact an officer of the youth department branch of the Catalan Government. This officer outlined the main services and documents as well as suggested the key criteria for sampling. Generally, the interviews took between forty and seventy minutes.

Reaching young adults proved to be challenging, particularly female young adult who benefited from lifelong learning policies. Finally, TP12 officers were extremely helpful in contacting a sample of female potential interviewees. Although some of them declined the invitation because they were too busy, three of them accepted to participate.

Notably, some interviewees were not very talkative when asked to develop their biographical account. For this reason, they were asked to answer more precise questions regarding the main themes. Although they became more confident during the interview, some did not make sense of the whole theme.

In Málaga, fieldwork developed without remarkable incidents. Respondents were allowed to choose the place of the meeting so that they felt more confident. Initially, experts were contacted either by phone or email. Then, a snowball strategy was deployed so as to reach other stakeholders of lifelong learning policies. Eventually, experts helped researchers to find young adults. So, the final sample was diverse enough to favour an analysis of the relevant interactions between both types of agents.

In both regions all participants signed a consent form which had been developed according to the general guidelines of Young Adultht. The former names of the programmes have been conveniently transformed to guarantee confidentiality.

Quality analysis software was used to code and interpret the interviews. The codes were defined according to the criteria established in the WP5 Proposal. Thus, the following codes were applied to the interviews with experts, namely: antecedents and objectives, approach, implementation, evaluation, target groups, living conditions of beneficiaries, contribution of LLL policies to the autonomy of beneficiaries, accountability, multi-level governance, policy actors, bureaucratic organisation and policy sectors. The following codes were applied to the interviews with young adults, namely: presentation of the self, construction of life story, life plan, expectations on life course, school trajectory, social network at school, academic performance, teachers, relations out of school, professional project, participation and skills. A further code was added to account of the work conditions of the elder interviewees, who sometimes had a job.

3. Interviews with experts

In this section we analyse the interviews with experts conducted following the proposal of the core team of the WP5. The research questions were presented in YOUNG ADULLLT Deliverable 2.1.

The section firstly analyses the interviews with experts conducted in the Functional Region of Girona and secondly in the Functional Region of Málaga. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented regarding common and diverging points of both Regions.

3.1. Analysis of interviews with experts in Girona Functional Region

3.1.1. Antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies in GFR

In this section we aim to analyse which is the understanding of the interviewed experts on the approaches, objectives and impacts of the LLL policies. We understand that their opinions and discourses are key elements to understand how these policies are designed, selected, re-contextualised and implemented at the local level; and they are also a first necessary element to take into account in order to comprehend how these policies are shaping young vulnerable adults' life courses.

Antecedents of LLL policies and political approach

Most of the analysed LLL policies are framed under the Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS). Based on that, they define reducing youth unemployment rates as their main objective, and take for granted that it can be achieved by increasing youngsters' skills, qualifications and real experiences in the labour market.

All the improvements and reforms in the development of the analysed LLL policies are oriented to improve these individual skills. Thus, the lack of success of previous initiatives is explained by their incapacity to correctly guide youngsters' training strategies. In this regard, the reforms developed or under development in this field pursue an increase on the length of the interventions that allows to stablish closer relationships between young adults and street-level workers. They also seek to arrange the institutional deployment of regional, national and supranational strategies both to improve their accountability and efficiency, as well as to increase the opportunities offered to the potential beneficiaries. However, the interviewees hardly mention labour market regulation, except when they highlight the rigidity of the procedures that the companies have to follow in order to receive fiscal benefits for hiring of YGS beneficiaries.

Most discourses assume responsibilities are individual. Even though they recognise that the situation of crisis has worsened the conditions and opportunities of young adults, the majority of the interviewees consider that the solutions have to be sought in the individual ability to overcome the situation. Thus, they focus on those strategies that can empower young adults by providing them with training but also with psychological support and guidance.

We help them a little to see, to be empowered on what they have to do, we do it through some working plans, we look to which life objectives they have, which professional aspects can we work in, which training we think is better so they can go ahead (E_SP_G_2)

Because the companies at the end they have also an opportunity to have cheap manpower, just as clear, it is cheap manpower which they can train themselves, because these youngsters have (-), yes, these youngsters many of them haven't had any employment, so, moreover they have a guarantee behind them, that is ourselves, and we say, ok, if it doesn't work, don't worry, we will look for another [youngster] (E_SP_G_2)

Objectives and impact of the LLL policies

The main objective of the analysed LLL policies, as stated by almost all the interviewees is to improve the employability of young adults in order to curb youth unemployment rates. This goal have to be achieved by different means, depending on the particular policy that we analyse. However, all the measures aim at providing young adults with skills and abilities to better perform in the labour market and build on their own life trajectories. Complementarily, some programmes also want to bring their participants back to formal education. Many experts encourage beneficiaries to get the Secondary Education Certificate.

The particular impact of these measures is assessed mainly through information on the labour market insertion of the beneficiaries, showing the subordination of education to employment goals. In this regard, it is important to stress the differences between the Catalan Public Employment Service (SOC) evaluates through reports issued by local agents, on the one hand, and what the experts who are in charge of the implementation of the programmes and policies do actually evaluate, on the other hand. These experts consider that SOC exclusively asks for labour market insertion information, but they notice that some programmes have the explicit objective of easing the return to formal education (as an alternative to the immediate incorporation to the labour market). In fact, they point out that they have had to make important efforts through the different editions of the programmes to be able to include "non-standard" insertions as indicators of the impact of their initiatives. In addition, these street-level workers do collect other information about the beneficiaries, not only related to the official objectives of the programmes but also linked to other aspects of the participants' life courses such as familiar changes, relocations, health issues, etc.

When they [SOC] ask for numeric data they are occupational, they don't ask never for that [education] (E_SP_G_11)

These differences between what is stressed by SOC and what by the local actors show the variability in the understanding of what the objectives of these LLL policies are. They also show how disparate understandings can lead to very different conclusions on how policies impact on the young adults to whom they are addressed. Although in the following subsection we will focus on evaluation strategies, it is worth highlighting at this point the logics behind the relationship between the objectives and the impacts of the selected programmes.

SOC is mostly concerned with reducing unemployment rates, particularly affecting young adults who either are vulnerable or suffer some risk of exclusion. So, they collect labour market insertion indicators. Conversely, street-level professionals present both the objectives and the impacts of the programmes with many more nuances. In fact, many of their formal objectives

are reformulated and contextualised under different approaches. In this vein, even when respecting the main objectives declared by the programmes, street-level workers and local managers share a broader view on the eventual purposes and the measurable impact of the programmes. In their view, the programmes are spaces of reliance and guidance, that is to say, these spaces are located in places but also provide services whereby young vulnerable adults can find not only labour market related skills provision but also support for their everyday life situations.

TP12 rather than a programme is a service and is a service because the programme, contrary to other programmes funded by SOC allows the technician to continue and overlap work level programs (E_SP_G_11)

TP12 has this positive thing. Since the street-level professionals have been working in the programme for long, they have been providing continuous counselling to those youngsters who have been catered for since 2012. We track the results, what is going on, if they are employed or not, if they have continued or not. They pass through here, they visit us and even when there is a municipal employment agency in the locality. For them their job bank is here (E_SP_G_11)

Evaluation strategies

As already mentioned when addressing the perceived impact of the analysed policies, there are two main elements to consider in order to analyse the evaluation strategies.

On the one hand, a type of vertical evaluation strategies determine the funding of the policies. As stated by different interviewed experts, these strategies are increasingly time consuming and sometimes imply overlapping and even contradictory assessment of indicators. Local information is transmitted through regional, national and European authorities. Depending on the results of the evaluation, the different administrative levels receive funding for the following year's activities. Briefly, local administrations gather different types of information and report it to SOC. These indicators are mainly related to the outcomes of the participants in the labour market. According to this information, SOC sets the number of beneficiaries that the programme can enrol in each local administration¹. Besides them responding to these direct demands, local agents have also to gather other types of information (e.g., attendance lists both of beneficiaries and of workers, activity schedules, contacts and contracts with employers). As a consequence, they spend more time in bureaucracy tasks than in guiding and mentoring the beneficiaries.

The truth is that it is very procedural, it has become a programme very controlling and currently the technicians spend more time to the administrative issues, of control, managing, documenting, signatures, bureaucracy, than to the youngster, sincerely (E_SP_G_11)

¹ As we will develop when addressing the actors and responsibilities (3.1.4), the critiques to this way of evaluating and allocating resources have had an impact on SOC strategies and have widen the list of indicators considered to fix the amount of resources that the programme receives. They have also improved some of the programme requirements as well as the policy framework within which SOC is currently starting to work with.

For its part, as analysed in WP6, SOC has also to report different sets of indicators to its funding institutions, namely the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the European Social Fund. Both these organisms follow different monitoring and evaluating strategies. At the regional level, this implies multiplying the accountability activities. Moreover, for SOC as well as for the local interviewed experts, these monitoring is not perceived to be effective in improving the programmes in order to increase their match with the local needs.

On the other hand, another type of horizontal evaluation strategies has been increasingly institutionalised recently. In order not to overlap training courses and fill gaps, different local agents started they had built an informal network. Through this network they shared practical problems in the implementation of the programmes as well as they coordinated their own supply by evaluating overlaps and gaps from previous editions. This strategy was positively perceived by these agents as far as they considered that it had a direct impact on the quality of the service they provided. Looking at the regional level, they thought that it had increased the opportunities for the young adults to choose among more training options. Additionally, local agents developed internal evaluation strategies aimed to improve their knowledge about the participants' trajectories, beyond their experiences in the labour market. These were more informal, internal practices which helped to improve training and the counselling for their beneficiaries.

Moreover the non-profits have been collaborative. We have developed a network where we share information about monitoring and selection process. We are in touch. Thus, the fact that street-level professionals have a stable job really contributes to give a good service to the youngster (E_SP_G_11)

We need the help of the city councils, for example, the city councils, the province, well, we could talk about many other actors, County Council, all public administrations and besides all the companies, which are very important for our project. (...) It hasn't been easy, it hasn't been easy. Then, County Councils too, for agreeing with different programmes they have, for not overlapping, we have had to have many meetings, "look, these youngsters' profile we believe that it is better for this programme or maybe this youngster s/he to go through this resource first and then to the other", well, we have communicate with one another so as not to overlap and squash among us. Thus, the youth can follow its path and may also decide. (E_SP_G_2)

3.1.2. Target group characteristics

This section addresses research questions related to the way that LLL policies construct their target group. To do that, it starts with the formal description of the characteristics of this group (age, threshold of achieved studies, etc.). Following this description, other characteristics of the target group are presented as they have been stated by different interviewed experts. Finally, it discusses the extent to which this particular construction have or could have effects on the (intended and unintended) impacts of the analysed LLL policies.

The target groups constructed by LLL policies are not homogeneous as they are rooted in diverse elements linked to the different characteristics of the administrations that promotes them (organisation, tradition, bureaucracy, culture, etc.), and also to their different political orientation. The interviews conducted for WP5 show two different groups of beneficiaries

related to the type of LLL policy they are enrolled in or candidate to. On the one hand, the *students*² of intermediate VET courses provided by the administration of Education are mainly youth people from 16 to 19 years-old who have reached the Secondary Compulsory Schooling Certificate. During the interview with a Principal of the VET track of a High School, no reference is done neither to their academic performance nor to their socioeconomic characteristics. However, as stated by the informant and also reflected in the enrolment data, the distribution of the students among specialities is clearly influenced by gender. Although many VET students have been also working, they could not maintain the necessary flexibility when the job market was shaken by the economic crisis.

Years ago this training used to be special. While Santa Eugenia vocational school offered it in the morning for 16- year- olds who had just left secondary education, we had a night shift for active electricians who looked for their official license. What happened? However, they disappeared because jobs were scarce and they could not say: “sorry, I quit earlier because I’m going to study”. Since this profile of student simply vanished, we decided to move the course to the morning (E_SP_G_4)

On the other hand, *beneficiaries*, *youngsters* or *participants*³ of the Employment administration depending programmes have to accomplish other conditions to be considered as candidates.

In the following lines we are going to focus our attention in the later initiatives because they are more clearly centred in young vulnerable adults. For this reason, most interviews were conducted with experts in this field. We found the local network of YGS facilitators, which is funded by SOC and implemented by unions, the Chamber of Commerce, employers’ boards and the County Council. We also contacted the training programmes that these stakeholders and some private training providers implement in some localities. Most of the beneficiaries had to meet the YGS requirements, namely: being under the age of 29⁴ and not in employment, education or training. Additionally, the employment programmes established a threshold of studies above which the youngsters were not eligible. This threshold varied from lacking the Compulsory Education Certificate (ISCED 2) to dropping out from intermediate VET (ISCED 3).

According to the interviewees’ opinions, the employment programmes beneficiaries lacked of basic and transversal skills (discipline, motivation, commitment). Therefore, this target group was clearly defined by its deficits more than by its potentialities. In accordance, the beneficiaries were expected to learn these skills through professional training and career guidance. Street-level professionals and YGS facilitators (i.e., experts) and employers shared this opinion.

It comes to you a kid of 16 and says “I want to work”, but s/he doesn’t have no experience or nothing, well, they need some guidance, to see the needs, also to help them a lot in the labour issue, they don’t even know what a curriculum is, they think that it is about distribute 4 curricula to the shops (E_SP_G_4)

2 Students is the term used both by interviewees and policy documents to refer to the target group of intermediate and advanced VET.

3 These three terms are the ones used both by interviewees and policy documents to refer to the target group of the Employment programmes analysed within the YOUNG_ADULLLT project in Girona.

4 While the EC sets 25 years-old as the maximum age to be registered under the YGS, its implementation in Spain widen it until 29 years-old in 2015.

The profile is of a frustrated youngster. For some reason, many of them disengaged from the educational system. Other youngsters have problems at home or participate in some typical transgressive practices of teenagers. Many had made some incorrect decision, then got lost. So, they don't know where to go, nobody is guiding them in this process of changing. So, we work both in mentoring groups and individually. Thus, they develop their personal skills in this difficult stage, when they have to make an important decision about "what I'm going to professionally do the rest of my live"(E_SP_G_11)

This "deficit" approach has to be nuanced by the opinions expressed by some street-level workers and local managers, for whom, even if the beneficiaries lack of some skills, they have many others that the programmes can reinforce and promote in front of the employers. They consider, in this vein, that the aim of the programme is not only focused on improving the participants' skills but also on improving the image that the employers have of them. These opposing understandings about how the target group is are reflected in the claims of these street-workers regarding the level of qualification that their trainings provide. In this regard, they disagree with the limitation imposed to the level of qualification that they are able to offer as they consider that their youngsters deserve and could achieve more training opportunities than what is provided.

There are companies that say, "no, I'm not going to interview this [youngster] because s/he has bad references", that someone else has told them and they have believed and they don't call no matter how much you tell them, "listen, the kid has made a process, first look at him and let's see what you think", "no, no", I mean, it is a very closed mentality, they label them and that's all (E_SP_G_9)

In the visits we try to change this perceptions the companies have, explaining the competences [name of the city] youngsters' have, yes, even with all this intercultural difference, racial and of religion, this youngster has born here and they have linguistic competences that maybe the rest don't have, that they are youngsters that have adapted themselves to and environment, to a life-style, to peers with different nationalities, life-styles and religions, that has become accustomed to coexistence with all these differences, that is a youngster who speaks languages, that is a youngster that respects rules, that is a youngster that wants to give positive things (E_SP_G_11)

Both the YGS facilitators and the local managers consider that YGS overlooks a target group. Although it is not conditioned to the level of qualification of its beneficiaries, the fact is that the ultimate actions and programmes cater to early school leavers. Only few initiatives respond to the needs of those youngsters who have a higher level of skills.

3.1.3. LLL policies and Young Adults

The objective of this section is twofold. Firstly, it intends to analyse the extent to which LLL policies design and implementation take into account the socio-economic difficulties faced by their beneficiaries. And secondly, it aims to explore if they foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty.

LLL policies and Young adults' life conditions

As a rule, experts are more aware of young adults' life conditions than the official designs of LLL policies. These policies recognise that some young adults are especially vulnerable and are at-risk of being long excluded from the labour market and from other central dimensions of the social life. However, the organisation and targeting strategies of the analysed policies do not include important measures to address their situation, apart of them being provided with trainings that are intended to serve as tools for them to deal with their situation. In this regard, even recognising that there are contextual or structural constraints to the success for the young vulnerable adults (mainly in the labour market), it seems that this recognition is limited to political declarations as the proposed solutions (in form of programmes or services) clearly place the responsibility of overcoming the situation at the individual level. Even when some of the programmes imply little financial assistance for the participants, or they provide them with free transportation, it is insufficient for covering their life expenses.

In contrast, many experts regret they cannot really respond to the real needs of the youth. Significantly, they deal with education and training but are unable to do anything in the areas of housing, public health (e.g. mental and sexual issues), and leisure. So, they claim for a closer coordination among so that all stakeholders adapt their actions to the particular needs of their cities and population. We will be back on this topic when talking of Actors and responsibilities (2.4)

Here, TP12 was just been renewed this year. After 4 years, we allowed participants in the municipal youth session to vote on the priorities of the programme. In the first place they asked for a Psychology or Psychiatry service. The rest of municipalities I don't know how are they doing this, but here we have this problem (E_SP_G_11)

When the local social services send a person to us, we must be aware of a complex situation. Family problem, low income... That's our common point: "Yes, but the solution is not to enrol in this programme to have an income, because then you will add another failure to the family. This is not in the best interest of kids who need to find some stability" (E_SP_G_9)

LLL policies and Young adults' autonomy and uncertainty

It is not clear to which extent LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to deal with uncertainty. On the one hand, the interviewees support those initiatives that encourage the beneficiaries to make their decisions. In this regard, they broadly agree their role should not be paternalistic at all. In their perspective, participants have to make commitments and assume responsibilities. Thus they realise they have to improve their skills and qualifications in order to be included in a competitive labour market. In the middle term, experts consider that on-the-job training, guidance and assessment eventually empower the beneficiaries so that they learn how to deal with uncertainty.

Many youth are over-protected. They come with their mother, and she decides, "you are going to do that, you are going to do this" (E_SP_G_10)

Yes, the problem is that we want to climb the mountain but we don't know how. We'd better deliver strategies to them. "If you do this course, you will take the certificate you need to do that". Some people see that. But for me, it is often difficult to put myself in their shoes. But someone has to tell them because they don't see it. Maybe a 16 years old kid will

look for a job in a storage and he won't be conscious that he is not going to be hired because he has not the training, he has not the experience (E_SP_G_10)

I explain him/her the things. I explain him/her where to go, but I'm not going to call, "listen, have you been here or have you been there?". There is this weak motivation, they cannot see, maybe they don't know how the world is. They are not aware of how necessary the Secondary Education Certificate is (E_SP_G_10)

On the other hand, important difficulties hinder young adults' to adapt their training activities to their particular needs and desires. Some examples of these difficulties are the short length of some of the programmes, which reduces both the opportunities of increasing youngsters' skills and the possibilities for the programme workers to reach their confidence. In our local case, the Adult School indirectly contributed lengthen the courses addressed to take the Secondary Education Certificate because it only offered a part-time shift. Some training programmes do not deliver official qualifications either. Providers often cannot meet the requirements to issue the credentials. Time schedules are completely alien to family responsibilities. Finally, local providers had to compete for beneficiaries in order to sustain its funding (see WP6 report). Then, the beneficiaries were subordinated to the vested agenda of an intermediary.

3.1.4. Actors and responsibilities

Some issues surrounding actors' coordination practices and conflicts have been broadly analysed in the WP6 National Report. However, it is interesting to include some elements in this report, as they contribute to shape the life course pathways' of young vulnerable adults. In this regard, this section addresses specifically those questions on actors' involvement and coordination practices that can be directly affecting the objectives of LLL policies, and that can be related to vertical and horizontal coordination and evaluation.

First, as already mentioned when analysing evaluation issues, the growth of monitoring practices produced by the coexistence and sometimes overlapping of financial channels have dramatically increased the time that all the interviewees have to spend to accomplish accountability procedures. This has a direct impact on the service they can provide to youngsters, as their time for them is drastically reduced. However, they all detect and positively assess the shift in the SOC's funding framework. As developed elsewhere (WP6), this shift gathers both local feedback on the implementation of the programmes and European recommendations to decentralise LLL policies in order to improve their fit with local needs and to get a commitment by local agents that should ensure their success and sustainability in the mid-term. In this vein, we have witnessed the emergence of new programmes that are longer than its precursors and that intend to reach all of the dimensions of the youngsters' life course pathways, and not only those affecting their direct entrance to the labour market.

Be aware that currently there are, if you have seen it and have spoken with SOC, there are 50 thousand programmes, thus, it is about doing like an umbrella (...) and any programme for youngsters, as a background, as something that all the technicians will always betting on them ending up their trainings, for them to continue studying and because life-long learning... (E_SP_G_9)

Second, and related with the above mentioned shift, local agents have clearly taken the initiative in improving the coordination among them. They consider that public and private agents'

cooperation is needed if the aim is to place youngsters' needs in the centre of their practices. In this regards, this seems to be a transition period in which competence among local providers for recruiting as many beneficiaries as possible coexists with growing efforts (from both the bottom and the top) to subordinate organisations' interests to those of the youngsters', and not the opposite.

"Since you took the youth from us, this year we cannot comply with TP12 requirements. You have all of them" Then, I reply, "What do you mean that we have all the youngsters? Don't you think that these youngsters have to be able to decide?" (E_SP_G_2)

Finally, the lack of complete information about all the courses and programmes developed in the region hinders the effectiveness of the YGS Facilitators, particularly as far guidance is concerned. In their own opinion, the enormous amount of resources invested in the YGS is not efficiently distributed among those who needed more, but benefiting different providers and public and private organisational structures.

It's hopeless because you have to do a function and you can't do it properly because you have not all the information, the information arrives to you dropping, the channel you think that should be, the one who has to explain you the things doesn't explain it (E_SP_G_7)

3.1.5. Strategies to deal with multi-level "wiked problems"

The analysed LLL policies, as stated more or less explicitly by all the interviewees are addressed, in the first place, to decrease youth unemployment rates. Regarding this objective, their effectiveness is questioned because of them leaving many potential beneficiaries out more than because of them being ineffective for those who are included. In this vein, they point out funding issues⁵ but also difficulties to reach some social groups (interestingly, they mention middle-class skilled youngsters who don't usually use social or employment services). Moreover, they highlight the broader political framework in which these initiatives are developed. In this regards, many of them criticise the lack of control over the suppliers and the lack of effort in achieving higher commitment from the employers by providing them more information and fiscal benefits, and by relaxing the procedures they have to follow in order to be part of the programmes.

It is hard to respond to many short-term changes. If students have to do 30 hours instead of 20, we must change the contracts and do all the paper work. Besides, you must always have in mind that you have a subsidy behind. Take care of what you change because they can tell you that this change is not accepted (E_SP_G_9)

Secondly, NEET youngsters as well as ESL are targeted by the analysed programmes. As we have already seen, these both are conditions to be eligible for participating. However, many of the interviewees consider that the structure of the programmes is not optimal to stimulate the return to the formal education of their beneficiaries. Additionally, they highlight the YGS'

⁵ See WP6 National Report (p.31s) for a detailed explanation on the cyclic characteristics of the funding mechanisms of the Autonomic Employment Services.

temporary solutions for the NEET, as it is mainly focused on short courses or at most 6 months working experience.

You register to the Youth Guarantee, and maybe you enter in a programme that subsidises a 6 months employment and you get a job for 6 months, and this is very good for your curriculum, for what you learn, and for the money you earn. But, after these 6 months, they probably won't be able to renew you, and then what? (E_SP_G_7)

Thirdly, these initiatives don't seem to promote any specific action regarding ethnic or gender discrimination. In fact, as stated by some of the YGS Facilitators, those migrant youngsters with irregular situation are not allowed to enrol at all. In addition, some hints strongly suggest that the Department of Education is not eager enough to recognise educational qualifications and certificates if not obtained in non-European or Western countries.

Finally, we haven't detected any action aiming at either increasing the enrolment of women in mostly male courses (nor the other way round) or providing with alternatives to young mothers and other women with familiar responsibilities.

These years we have included commerce for including more girls (E_SP_G_9)

3.2. Analysis of interviews with experts in Málaga Functional Region

3.2.1. Antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies in MFR

In Málaga a sample of experts was interviewed. Most of them were working in policies of the department of Employment. In general, vulnerable social groups are the target and employability is the main goal. The main strategies consist in promoting employment, vocational training, guidance, proper registration and labour market intermediation.

Antecedents of LLL policies and political approach

One of the main changes in this area was developed at a national level in 2007 and 2008 when the Employment Administration standardized the Vocational Training subsystem and the professional certificates⁶. On the one hand, Vocational Training subsystems, aimed for unemployed people, and Continuous Professional Education subsystems, whose objective was updating workers' professional skills, were integrated in a single system called VT (Vocational Training). On the other, professional certificates started to be developed as an official certification for professional qualifications of the National Professional Qualification Catalogue in the labour administration, which can also be recognised by the vocational training and education system of the education administration.

These changes allowed to modify and improve professional training, although there is still a significant duality between the education administration, responsible for the official vocational education, and the employment administration, in charge of the vocational training. These

6 Royal Decree 395/2007 of 23 March and Royal Decree 34/2008 of 18th January.

changes of VT has been seen as an improvement by the interviewed experts. Most of them highlight the value of these certificates for the integration of young adults. Even the expert that works in “Andalucía Orienta”, that doesn’t offer VT courses, sees that change as positive.

Well, now with the professional certificate has totally changed as well. It is true that has changed the... It has improved a lot in the qualification, for that is the certificate "(laughs)" of professionalism, and there is an age-old demand of... Of all the professionals, no?, so much of employment how of orientation, that qualify you for an occupation; and besides, not only in Malaga, because that is another issue... That we had. It's that the... You were doing a course in Malaga and it did not serve you in... In another community [...] now they have state recognition. (E_SP_M_4)

It is true that the certificates of professionalism, in my opinion, did indeed intend to bridge the two systems, right? Which is one of the most important characteristics. (E_SP_M_2)

Since 2012, vocational training offers have been brought to a standstill due to problems related to the justification and control of the grants given to the organizations. This situation has been widely criticized by the interviewed. Although they did not mention the reasons for their “paralysation” they highlighted the serious consequences it has had for the people who could have benefited from this courses, those who are now living in precarious conditions.

Although the interviewees have been very cautious approaching this problem, one of the experts has been rather more explicit referring to this and tells us that even as at that time, along with other professionals, joined forces to mobilize so that mismanagement by the administration did not affect the VT.

In the 2011, six years ago... Predicting...well, seeing that... That the public administration does not... With the theme of... The corruption cases of the training and to... And for... And we saw that subsidies were going to be paralyzed and this type of training programs, we created among the different professionals of the APET, here in Malaga, of the province, an association that is called "Association of Professionals of Workshop-schools ", of which I am a founding partner. Eh... We have been seven years, precisely in that two thousand and eleven were the last projects that were approved and... And we have been fighting... In an active way... With confrontation... A. ... Through demonstrations, or ..., or through written press, with ..., with the public administration, with the Andalusian government to continue promoting this type of projects.” (E_SP_M_5)

Moreover, Andalusia has recently published the Resolution from 11 April 2017 about the selection of students for the vocational training activities, which are aimed for unemployed people. The interviewed experts point out that this resolution meant a series of important changes in past regulations.

Among these changes the interviewed highlight the implementation of the competitive tendering procedure for the management of the vocational training courses, which have led to a greater involvement of the Regional Government and has forced to institutions to get an authorization if they desire to grant these professional certificates, something that according to E_SP_M_5 not all institutions can afford:

Also a thing that... What is happening, what is going to happen, and what is happening, that many municipalities do not present, not... Or have not presented project, or if they have submitted, they will not be given it, Why? Because in the regulations they ask you to ask for a project, you have to... They ask that this council, to be approved in that... in that

professional certificate. [...] So a city council cannot make an investment, and less those small councils [...] that are the ones that need it the most, in need for this type of training. That small town councils is where perhaps the most school failure - maybe - exists. Eh... City councils cannot make a large investment in... buying material, machinery, to certify a certificate of professionalism and then what if it is not given to them?

E_SP_M_5 underlines the serious consequences that this may have for the most vulnerable groups in the least central areas of the MRF, and criticizes the apparent lack of interest in these policies:

I do believe that there is a... An ignorance on the part of the administration. Eh... A... At a political level... What are the Workshop-school, the results they produce. [...] These projects should work, fulfil a very important social work. But they really do not know them, they do not know them, then they cannot defend them, they can not... We have tried to... That they see it, we have invited... To Workshop-schools to... To politicians of... but, perhaps, they are more interested in formal education, they want to modify the vocational education, rules, they want... They occupy more their effort in... [...] There is not a great interest, even if... If it is lost... It's okay, right? That is to say, no, there is no vision for that type of people that it is necessary that they do not enter into the formal education, they do not enter and I much miss that sensitivity, on the part of the administration, even inside the city council, because in the town hall there is no... Yes, if there is a workshop-school, well, but if not, nothing happens, no... [...] It also shows that there is no interest in that social layer.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that recently, July 2017, the Labour Department developed a general regulation which shall be applied in all the country (Law 30/2015, 9th September), which standardizes the Vocational Training and Education System.

With this regulation we observe how the development of Vocational Training and Education at a national level is being implemented two years after the Law was published. This highlights the asynchrony with the Vocational Training and Education policies of the different regions.

Objectives and impact of the LLL policies

In a general way, the interviewed experts state that the main objective of LLL policies in which they participate is the promotion of employability through training and/or professional counselling among those population sectors identified as “critical”, i.e. unemployed young adults or unemployed people over 45.

As we will see thoroughly in the “Target Group” section, experts linked at VT (with the exception of E_SP_M_4) agree upon the fact that at their institutions the greatest and most critical collective is those formed by young people who abandoned prematurely the official educational system, although we will show that this is not the only group who benefits from these policies.

The Workshop Schools have been programs for the formation of young people, in which they have been mainly young people who had failed in the educational system, although also they were coming from another sector, that was ...young people that although having obtained the Graduate in secondary, viewed it as a training option. (E_SP_M_3)

Although they share some general objectives, these policies have implementation differences. On the one hand, the schools where courses are implemented, follow these objectives through theoretical and, specially, through practical lessons about a profession.

What we are giving are VT courses, for vocational training. And now with the new law, are all the courses we are giving, is the certificate of professionalism of different levels. (E_SP_M_2)

On the other hand, “Andalucía Orienta” centres, carry out small training activities, specially focused on job counselling activities. The first (VT) are wider and general policies of training for a specific group that provides a certification , and “Andalucía Orienta” is a specific program which aims to achieve a particular objective related to counselling to all Andalusian people that is unemployed.

People are derived from the employment office, they are derived from the employment office. In... Some occasions there are... Are the job seekers who request the service and at other times, are the offices themselves, when they are offered...mainly because of the purpose of Andalusia Orienta, that is the fundamental purpose. Then when it is detected by a... By the managers of employment, by the staff that attends the office, that the person... Does not fit the... To the demands, to seek for employment, to the offers of work... and consider that they would need better... to improve the employability, they offer our service. (E_SP_M_4)

In this sense, we must highlight the role of the Chamber of Commerce that, in addition to training courses framed in the PICE program, performs actions of guidance and sometimes acts as an employment agency.

Well looking at the training, we..., all the chambers, each chamber and our chamber...what we have done is a study of needs. With companies, we have asked them what needs they have when hiring, how they hire, what kind of profiles they require... And with that we have designed a catalogue of courses, which is flexible, we move it because we have continued asking the company, and... we have a catalogue of courses in which the boys and girls we attend are enrolled in the one they want, with our advice as job counsellors, then they sign up. (E_SP_M_1)

Evaluation strategies

Regarding the strategies for the assessment of the policies which are carried out by the different actors, it is necessary to take into account that some experts question the current assessment system. This is because the assessment of the policies is a responsibility of the Regional Office for Employment, Business and Trade. This leaves local centres and experts out of the process. They can contribute only by sending improvement proposals, which normally are not taken into account.

If I had power and money, I would change... The current regulations would change almost entirely, I would leave the certificates, that is to say...professional certificates for free, but I would change a lot of things. In fact, at the level of association and federation, we have made many proposals, as it says... There are about sixty-six proposals for change... There would be many more workshops-schools, that is... I would devote a lot of money and time to... And I would have meetings with professionals, to improve the program and the project, because I see it as necessary. (E_SP_M_5)

However, informally, some institutions take initiative to carry out an assessment of the satisfaction and follow the incorporation of the students to the job market. That is why, some

of the experts assess the execution of the policies according to the incorporation of the receptors to the job market.

Because after the six months when the course ends, we do a mailing to see in what situation is like, mainly to know about them. We use those results to know where we are going to route. (E_SP_M_2)

E_SP_M_1 reports that this situation is different in the Chamber of Commerce, which depends directly on the Chamber of Commerce of Spain and has greater autonomy, which allows them to do its own study of needs and make changes in the implementation of the policy at the local level.

Well that actually... We are who decided it, us through a needs assessment, we knew how the labour market in Malaga is going, so we say this type of course could be useful [...] the content, we with the academy hired, they decided with us. We have now been two years working with [name of local institution], because they have a lot of experience in training, so they proposed the contents, we also adapt to the, to the [...] the centre that we hire is the one that imparts the training, then we made a meeting, with all and we decided the contents. (E_SP_M_1)

Besides, some of the institutions, such as the workshop school, carry out an assessment of the staff, as the faculty who is part of these services is not hired by the state, but by each of the companies, institutions or entities.

"The management, requires the monitors to submit monthly programming of the month, what will form... But that is not registered anywhere, that is not in regulations. That operation that we have been learning with the experience that the monitors... so they do not... so that they do their training well, the management asks them for a monthly schedule and goes to see if it is being done or not "(E_SP_M_5)

It is significant that despite the cessation that has taken place for the problems arising from the management of these policies, some respondents make a special mention to the process of resource management of the institution and policy transparency around these. Emphasizing the existence of an external evaluation of the expenditure and income of the institutions:

"It worked very well. We had some technicians, at least here in Malaga, who followed us, who were giving us guidelines and guiding us, who followed a great track. When they were finished... uh, the first six months, we already had the justification for those six months closed. We said "yes". Invoices, all controlled: expenses that could be charged to the subsidy, which are not. "(E_SP_M_3)

3.2.2. Target group characteristics

We have already mentioned in the introduction that the interviewed experts in MFR belong to three different type of institutions, with a different function in the strategies for promoting the employability. This diversity creates three different categories in the target group.

Characteristics of the Target Group in the institutions that teach VT

In 2017 a reform introduced two crucial changes in the admission procedures of vocational training in Andalusia. On the one hand, the Andalusia Public Employment Services explicitly

established that early school leavers and NEET youth were the main priority. This criterion underpinned a goal that that public vocational training institutions had unofficially pursued.

"Public vocational training institutions have mostly addressed the youth, particularly those who had failed during their compulsory education. However, they have also accepted a few students who had achieved their Certificate of Secondary Education but see these institution as an interesting opportunity for them (E_SP_M_3)

On the other hand, this change in the students' admission has left out the local institutions and experts, which were normally in charge of this admission process and carried out personal interviews which, according to themselves, were also a way of guiding the prospective students. For this reason the interviewees disagree.

"Now what is done, is that it is taken... A public call is made and the one that wants presented himself and then its make a selection. Now we cannot do an interview, but before we did an interview, and of course, and there we could remove the deficiencies because they were presented... and others, but it is a public call and can be presented whoever wants to. "(E_SP_M_2)

Characteristics of the PICE Target Group

The PICE program, and therefore the Chamber of Commerce, has its own access requirements. These are determined by the youth guarantee system:

Once they register under guarantee, they can access our program PICE or other that there may be. (E_SP_M_1)

As we see, it could be understood that the target group of these policies is the young NEETs, as it is indispensable requirement to enjoy these policies not to be working neither to be in formation or education program. E_SP_M_1, in view of this, affirms that the profile of young people who enter is diverse, there are young people in situations of vulnerability, as well as young people with less vulnerable profiles and with higher level of training and education, which helps us to get an idea of the heterogeneity in the composition of this group in the MFR:

No, but let's see... NEETs... we have a university student who has just finished working and studying and does not have... He does not have to be in training or working to participate.

Target Group in "Andalucía Orienta"

"Andalucía Orienta" program is aimed for those people who are looking for a job in Andalusia. Although, as well as with VT, the regional administration prioritized the attention for those groups with greater difficulties to find a job in the market, i.e. long-term unemployed people, disabled people, young people, women and groups who are vulnerable to exclusion.

Andalucia Orienta is a program, as you know, of the Ministry of Employment, and...? How does it work in practice? The... People are derived from the employment office, come from the employment office. In... In some cases, they are... It is the job seekers who request the service and in other occasions, they are the offices themselves, when they are offered, mainly because the purpose of Andalucia Orienta, that is the purpose fundamental, then when it is detected by a... For the managers of employment, for the staff that attends the office, that person... Does not fit the... To the offer to look for work, to the offers and they felt that they would need better to improve the employability they offer the service. Lately

they are also doing it with... As part of other programs... Because there is one that is activation program for employment, do not know if you know it? What is known as PAE, activation program for employment. (E_SP_M_4)

When talking about the characteristics of young people E_SP_M_4 says that they have a lack of motivation, and sometimes they present attitude problems, especially those young early leavers, who sometimes she helps to prepare the tests of the Adult High School. In addition, she asserts that one of the biggest difficulties she faces is that young people do not have a clear vision of the labour market and its characteristics.

Of course and also because there is... That's why not... Do not know the reality of the market, when I want to work as a warehouse, but is no longer loading and unloading, occupations have changed, is that you need to have knowledge computers at least to check in and out, to make an inventory, is that... We need a carpooler card, because if nothing else you want to work in a... I do not know, in a fast food center, yeah we need a food handler certificate. Many times, they look young and say good, that I can work on what... Also, it is very common, right? That when they come that he wants to work on whatever, that's a... That's... Yes.

In this sense, the counsellor, as an expert of the program, states that, although the people who ask for their services is assorted, she normally spends more sessions with underqualified young people. However, she also explains the importance of this service for overqualified young people. They need less attention and guidance, but they present a greater interest and are a big challenge, as they are constantly demanding information about programs and activities that may benefit them.

Normally... of course, they have a service here because... they make use of it, we also have some niche [...] I have a person with a university degree on the schedule. Of course, in general, with all my respects, you cannot compare the attitude of... Of a person with a high training who also has a... More expectations, because it is logical, that guy who... He has little... Low... Low qualification. [...] Of course... Because... Yes, for example, you have a person with a university degree, he should have seen a lot already. I do not know... if he is a social integrator. You work with sources of information, where there are entities, where they work with social integration, that is, it is always individualized. The attention is individualized because obviously does not have the same need one person to another, but it is true that these basic tools, for example of Computer science, that he does not have to work, but also to the best of... he demand more information than a person less qualified. [...] For higher expectations, he is not that... he is more demanding, simply that it has a need, that he already handles it.

3.2.3. *LLL policies and Young Adults*

LLL policies and Young adults' life conditions

When talking about how LLL policies change local young adults' living conditions, we could say that these are taken into account, as, according to the experts, their design is more flexible than the one of the official vocational education and they try to provide a training which is more focused on the professional practice.

However, when these policies are put into practices there are not structural adjustments allowing the conciliation of the training with the students' family and/or personal lives. The flexibility of their implementation depends on the participation of the institution and, specially, on the particular practices and attitudes of the teachers and training responsible.

Besides, the experts point out that, as a great amount of the students that come to VT centre and programs, no matter the type, have abandoned the official educational system, the professionals try to create a friendly environment, which contrasts with the one in official schools.

It's just that... the [Workshop] Schools were... decisive and there was a lot of people that significantly change. Others... they were left on the road ("laughs"), but the... the least. The majority... To take a child out of a Workshop-school, we would give him many turns and, at school (formal education), at the first exchange, "this one is giving the can... to the street 15 days (expulsion)" [paraphrases the staff from high school]. In a School... it was given many opportunities and everything is very reasoned. (E_SP_M_3)

Although this specially depends on the teachers of the different modules. The number of students per group is significantly smaller than the one in the official education. There are 15 or 25 students per group. It is also considered as a significant factor by the experts, as it allows a more personalized guidance.

In a high school class where there are [25 or 30 students it is impossible. [You... A teacher does not stop to ask a child why he is bothering, because maybe what he wants is to get attention... And in the, in the 15, when you have 15... You already see by where does each one go and say: "What do you want? A little bit of affection? What are you calling attention to? What do you want, a little love? Come on, I'm going to give you a hug" (" laughs "), and they stay... [...] It's different. In a high school you can not ask: there is no time or no resources. Maybe if there was someone, that when there is disruptive behaviour, I would take it outside, because I could do something, but... as there is not. (E_SP_M_3)

LLL policies and Young adults' autonomy and uncertainty

Generally, experts highlight that these policies somehow play a "social and educational compensation role", as they shelter and give training and guidance to young people who have been excluded by the system. In this sense, most of them point out that the implementation of these policies increases the autonomy of these people, as, not only do they develop professional skills, but also social, attitude and motivational skills which will contribute to improve their self-esteem and, thus, reduce their uncertainty about the rest of their lives, increasing their chances to access to the working market.

In fact... To enter the workshop schools, for a student, or a student to enter school workshop... is... punctually, favourably, that they do not have ESO and that... and that... who is unemployed, that... So... That... That it is, that it is socially disadvantaged, or that it is the best woman mistreated or... or that is disabled. It is... It is scored favourably, that is, it is focused... The program as such is focused on people with difficulty... With greater social difficulty. So, a little social justice or... is created with this kind of programs. (E_SP_M_5)

One of the stronger points of these policies, according to the experts, is that they focus on the practical training. This encourages students' interest and participation and helps them get into the educational system again, which means a completely change in their lives.

For that we are (VT), the administration, to have a job and a training, because many times in schools (formal education) they get bored, why...? Here it is, as it is real theory-practice... we give it, we are giving motivations to them always, so that they leave there... But I am one of the people who, the child or the young person, too. (E_SP_M_2)

Specifically, the interviewees told stories about disruptive young people, with drug abuse problems or NEETS, addressing that these policies have changed their lives completely.

They change a lot, it's more, you see the change... You see the difference very much like... any Professional can tell you:" In a year and a half, in two years, the boy who entered is... he totally changes his mind. " Eh... you find a kid, when he comes in.. aggressively, but we're talking in general terms, or... I mean, every single... Each individual is... It's different... There are... Kids who are aggressive, kids who are very shy... With very mu... Almost all with very little self-esteem, training in workshop-school and who daily realize that they are able to do something, they are learning something, especially practical, what they need is practical, and see that... what they do, and see, they have built it [...] That, motivationally, at the level of individual self-esteem. [...] At the level of personal growth, there is an incredible change in that... in that year and a half (E_SP_M_5)

Experts point out that one of the key factors in changing these young people is not in the theoretical, if not the work done to achieve an improvement in soft skills, as their professional experience and contact with employers, has taught them that it is a basic requirement for labour insertion.

And it is also what we tell you many times that companies are what they always tell us, that they do not want as much knowledge as aptitude... I every time I go to a day, the ones we are talking about always end up telling them the same thing, is the aptitude, is the aptitude, because it is the aptitude, and the desire, and if you are working that will be notice. And that's what I believe. That's what companies demand. That the person has interest and has a good aptitude. (E_SP_M_1)

Besides, it is important to highlight that, as a mechanism to reduce uncertainty in students, some institutions help them to continue their training. A students who enrolls a level 1 professional certificate, can obtain a level 3 certificate. This means that this vocational training is complete.

3.2.4. Actors and responsibilities

As we state in WP6, the actors who participate in the design and implementation of these policies are several and they belong to different levels (local, regional, national and European).

We can affirm that there is a hierarchy in the responsibilities of the actors. The ESF provides the money which is used for the development of policies and establishes a series of objectives. The Spanish Government distributes this money among the different Autonomous Communities and makes the objectives more specific in the design of programs with the Council of Vocational Education and Training, the Andalusian Regional Government, through the Regional Business and Trade Department, which establishes the courses (according to a study of the needs), assign the courses to a company or entity (City Council, Labour Unions...) taking their project into account and establish the access criteria, selecting the critical groups.

Hey.... These programs are financed by the... Fundamentally by the European social fund, by Europe, that... Transfer... Money to the ministry and the ministry gives to the

autonomous community, within the autonomous community in Andalusia, therefore, independently managed with these European funds; and are what justify Europe. Eh... As the... As in the field of employment is... In Andalusia, in each autonomous community is divided, because in Andalusia who carries these programs are, is the Ministry of Employment. Through it, grants are given to entities that request them. [...] But that the... The policies of training for employment are fundamentally determined by the Autonomous [...] Administration. The town councils or non-profit associations, present the project and... And they put... And they determine a series of specialties so that they can approve it. Then the Board, who are the ones who approve the... The final projects, because they tell you this specialty, yes, it is not, or this will change, it makes a request... (E_SP_M_5)

This institutional hierarchizing and peripheral centralization gives a relative autonomy to local actors. The experts do not agree with this situation, as it leaves institutions as mere executors of the policies, the information given by the experience of local businesses is not taken into account and young people are just the receptors of the skills.

One thing that we have also seen, that is necessary and that the administration does not leave us, is to improve the program (E_SP_M_5)

However, we should not underestimate the role of local actors, specially of the teachers in charge of these courses as, according to the experts, their participation and the informal ways of communication that they develop with the local market actors affect the development and results of the policies.

The success in a large part depends on the professionals... But not the professionals... I am a principal... I do not attribute it... I do not attribute it to the principal, I attribute it to the monitors. I always say that if a monitor is good and wants the module to work, the students... That is the one that implement, to good implementation... The Workshop-school... If a principal is bad and the monitor is good, the students are engaged with him and the students are going to learn. But if a monitor is bad and does not... and does not get involved, the students do not... Fail. Remember it! They fail. So much of the success is thank to the monitors, the professionals who are teaching and motivating students daily, teaching them (E_SP_M_5)

However, the different interviewees have pointed out that, despite the importance of this teaching staff, and the implication in many of them, this staff is in a situation of precariousness, motivated by some processes (subcontract, temporary contracts...) and questionable recruitment criteria and changes in VT policies.

3.2.5. Strategies to deal with multi-level “wicked problems”

The interviews with the experts have help us to identify which problems are specially affecting the development of these policies. These problems mostly arise in the division of administrative responsibilities among the different participating actors and in the lack of communication among them. In this sense, most of the interviewed identify the distribution of the responsibilities in the policies design as one of the aspects to be improved during the implementation of these policies. Apparently, their current development breaks the relation between the local level and the rest of the levels, but there is a greater communication between the local and the regional actors. That is why they suggest the creation of communication spaces where their proposals, based on their professional experience, can be heard.

Specifically, some of the interviewed actors are reluctant regarding the new competitive tendering procedure process, which has been established for the allocation of the VT courses. In this process, the autonomic administration is in charge of selecting the different professional certificates which can be offered in each Andalusian province. It takes into account a study carried out through ARGOS. This fact is questioned by the local actors, as they believe that the skills they are providing the young people do not always match the local needs. Although, they think that the authorization process which the entities have to go through to offer the VT courses has some limits and the problems they find when they propose new courses – see WP6.

Besides, some of the interviewed people state that the existent division in Spain between work and education departments is detrimental, as it creates a duplication in the necessary resources between Vocational Education and Vocational Training. Moreover, due to the speed and dynamism of the changes in the working market, the educational system falls behind. On the other hand, the vocational education area is more reactive to those changes.

Education is very slow to change. That is, I see that the education system by definition is very slow, to adapt to the changes that are occurring, the part of employment, since... There is already a... One of the most important difficulties, at least in Spain that is not known in any of the European contexts, is the division so strong that, in Spain there is over... Between education and employment. There are formative actions, but that are somehow... divided...
(E_SP_M_2)

Another problem they mention about the relations among the different actors has to do with the admission process for the courses. The experts believe that a public call for access organized by the Andalusian Regional Government leaves out young people, and also people from other population groups, who deserve an opportunity. They claim this did not happen when local institutions had more power.

Regarding the young people, the experts state that there are other accessing problems, as there are courses that do not cover all their vacancies because they are not advertised enough and young people do not know about their existence. Some of the interviewed experts point out that they have tried to find other ways to advertise the courses on their own. In other cases, they establish communication channels with other local institutions in order to broaden young people's training. For instance, in the University.

Besides, these young people find problems to access the courses as they have to go through some paperwork which has to be done online and which seems to be quite difficult for them.

Another problem they report is directly related to those young people. As we have already mentioned, those policies have been thought and designed for young people who have failed in the official educational system. Thus, there is no room in this kind of policies for those young people with a greater education, although they also have problems to find a job.

Also, some of the interviewed people also disagree with the selection of the professionals that participate in the training programs. Specifically, the Andalusian Employment Office selects candidates who match the profile from the list of unemployed people. Consequently, once the training program is finished, these professionals have to find another job and they will not have the opportunity to participate in a vocational training program, unless they continue unemployed, losing all the potential of the experienced professionals of the sector.

3.3. Conclusions on the interviews with experts

The interviews with experts in lifelong learning policies were analysed according to the research questions and the codes that patterned the previous sub-sections on Girona and Málaga. This final sub-section outlines some general conclusions as well as some significant differences.

The Government of Spain has developed a qualifications framework in the vein of the corresponding European framework. The regional governments basically draw on the same common legal provisions for the whole member state. The actual implementation of this framework to the sampled regions has proved to be problematic in two ways.

On the one hand, in Spain the VET system is split into the areas corresponding to the education and the employment departments. This pattern was established by the central government in the eighties, and has been replicated by the regional governments afterwards. Only a few municipalities are struggling to bridge this gap. As a consequence, training programmes often respond to quite disparate time schedules and rationales. Remarkably, while education departments target to the general population, the bulk of the training programmes which the employment departments run are exclusively tailored to the needs of early school leavers and the youth with a NEET status. The WP6 report highlights the perverse effects of this approach for skills development. Here, it is crucial to notice that low-skilled young adults face a very complex institutional system when they decide to improve their skills.

On the other hand, many providers of training are not fully accredited to deliver the official qualification. The problem is clearly exacerbated in Girona, where many experts argued the requirements are too strict. The sample of experts which were interviewed in Málaga worked in a less diverse environment of institutional providers. Probably, the need of strict budget inspection constrains this diversity in Andalusia. Whatever the institutional rationale, the point is that the validity of the credentials is compromised. In the end, the beneficiaries have to cope with an unexpected bureaucratic problem to carry out their projects.

Active labour market policies have become the mainstream approach to the Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS) in the two regions. In accordance, the bulk of action consists of coaching, training and counselling the most vulnerable young adults. The official policy expects that this personalised support will eventually help them to strengthen their weak skills.

Regional Public Employment Services are in charge of evaluation in both Girona (which belongs to 'autonomous community' of Catalonia) and Málaga (which belongs to Andalusia). However, local governments and street-level professionals have a greater say in Girona than in Málaga. In the former both managers and street-level professionals notice their feedback is taken into account by the central headquarters. On the contrary, in Málaga the interviewees complain on the lack of relevance of their opinions in shaping the policies. Additionally, both regions weekly and/or monthly monitor the activity of the street-level workers. The interviewees attribute this requirement to the European Social Fund in Girona, while it apparently fits much better with the organisational culture of some vocational training providers in Málaga.

Thus, unsurprisingly, the local stakeholders have developed their own evaluation systems. In Girona, they attempt to broaden the central scope so as to take the personal circumstances of the beneficiaries into account. In Málaga, they are much more concerned with the effective entrance of them into the labour market. Everywhere a general consensus emerges on the need

to think again on some programmes for young adults with middle and high skills. They face huge problems too.

The experts perceive that the beneficiaries welcome lifelong learning policies. A few points outline their common opinion. Firstly, practical training stimulates their curiosity and interest and, occasionally, leads them to return to the formal education system. Secondly, contact with the labour market is extremely helpful for these youngsters. They neither have work experience nor any reliable knowledge on the labour market. Last but not least, these experts think that these policies change most of the participants' lives, if not in the short, in the mid-term.

Nevertheless, a substantial flaw severely weakens the potential benefits of lifelong training for the autonomy of the beneficiaries. Although employment-led schemes are slightly more flexible, none is really adapted to the challenges of labour conciliation. Further research and policy evaluation can no longer neglect the perverse impact of this bias. In Girona gender disparities intersect with differing ethnic family patterns at this point.

There are important differences between the two regions regarding their institutional organisation, the role of the involved actors and their responsibilities. These differences are mainly related with the centralisation of the policies depending on the Employment administration. In Catalonia, local governments were more successful in putting some pressure on the Catalan Public Employment Service so that it opens some room for local variation and allows for some local initiatives. In Andalusia, massive fraud plagued many vocational training schemes until it was denounced in 2011. So far the official reaction has been centralisation and tight budget inspection. Apparently, some problems regarding the division of administrative responsibilities and lack of communication aggravated because of this new institutional arrangement.

All experts agree on two further observations regarding the work of street-level professionals. First, these professionals are often working on fixed-term, low-wage contracts. That is, they cannot develop their professionalism, and young adults do not have counselling on a stable basis. Second, street-level professionals both in Girona and Málaga have created systems of informal coordination at the local level.

This wicked problem of multi-level governance has a further impact. The prevailing systems which allocate students to courses are blind to many emerging problems. Some courses lack students, while other actions do not reach the neediest. Central monitoring systems which monitor (and condition) funding have not been able to manage these problems so far.

4. Analysis of Interviews with young adults

This section starts with a portrait of the interviewed young adults' biographies in the functional regions. The research questions on life projects and expectations are answered for each region. Finally, the section develops a common conclusion for Girona and Málaga.

4.1. Young adults in the functional region of Girona

Table I (see above) shows that twelve young adults were interviewed in Girona. Roughly, the sample included 9 males and 3 females. While both 4 respondents and their families were born in Spain, 7 had a migration background, and 1 come from a Roma family. One of them came from a middle-class background of native-born small-owners. But the bulk of respondents either were working-class or had a middle-class origin in an African country.

4.1.1. Biographies of interviewees in Girona

The following paragraphs portray the main features of their twelve biographies. Drawing on the interviews, these summaries start with their own narrative of their life story. Then the summaries highlight the key references to their school trajectories, their experience with lifelong learning policies, and their vocational education and training. Finally, the summaries sketch their life plans.

Y_SP_G_1 is an 18 years-old boy who is enrolled at TP24. Although his parents are divorced, he meets both of them regularly because they live in neighbouring towns. In the interview not only he constructed a narrative of his life story but he also discussed the consequences of each phase. In his view, he learnt to cope with different social networks due to frequent mobility when he was a child. Since his mother cared the elderly at their home in Central Catalonia, a new job normally required moving to a new locality. Then he had to change school. He considers this mobility provoked a problem because schools used different methods to teach languages. In fact, he was better at maths because all schools taught this subject in the same way. In secondary education, he joined a peer group who smoked too much hash. They were older boys who rejected school, but he didn't want to leave his school friends. Trust is crucial for him, mostly because he sorted out those problems thanks to both his mother's and his father's understanding and support. In addition, he felt betrayed because the families of his old school friends persuaded them to leave him because of his bad behaviour. But he managed to find new friends at school and got his secondary education certificate after repeating a year. Now he wants to have some more education but does not know whether to undertake a baccalaureate or some vocational courses. He is able to report on what many of his cousins are doing but does not feel like making a decision right now. At the time of the interview he was looking forward to a meeting with his counsellor the following week in order to discuss this topic. Family is an important cornerstone of his life plan to the extent that he wants to have children. He knew of TP24 after leaving the first course of a vocational education programme in mechanics. There he got qualifications as a porter and a warehouse labourer.

Y_SP_G_2 is an 18 years-old boy who is enrolled in TP24. He narrates his life experience as a list of activities he carried out previously. He made friends at school. He got his certificate of

secondary education. Then he decided to start a programme on electric equipment. A sixty-year-old friend actually convinced him to start with this course. However, after a few months he felt it was not good for him and dropped out. Looking backwards, he came to the conclusion that nobody can actually do a trade that he does not like. At the end of the day, he was proud to have learnt to make decisions. He spoke a lot about his family. His parents were extremely supportive and helped him with every difficult decision. His father and his grandfather really taught him to enjoy sports. They often view television altogether. The more he spoke about himself, the more important football became. This sport is a hobby that establishes a deep bond with his father. He learnt lots of things there, not least because he enjoyed a nice and very effective coach. The core of his peer network is related to football. Significantly, he skipped all the questions making reference to the future. He cannot envision himself in ten years' time, not even two years. TP24 is a continuation of schooling for him. Everything is about tutors, teachers, exams and getting credentials. A particular benefit of TP24 was teaching patience. He got a professional qualification in catering in the TP24 training. He is quite satisfied because he could be an apprentice in a real kitchen and see that world from inside. He feels he was selected among a number of mates. Since this entails a responsibility, he cannot let his tutor down. Since the age of 12 he plays football with the local team. He was proposed to be coach and accepted. He plans to take the official training that provides the professional qualification, but it is really long and difficult. Football teaches people to work in teams— for this reason, it is really important to play that sport. He also got the county council (Consell Comarcal) credential to be a referee. In his view, it is extremely difficult to envisage the future, even in two years' time. He doesn't want to think if he will be studying, he will have an intimate partner, or anything. It is very difficult to know.

Y_SP_G_3 is an 18 years-old boy who is also enrolled in TP24. The main theme of his interview was discussing his past emotions and his future expectations. His spontaneous narrative basically highlighted suffering at school as well as new optimistic professional expectations. Firstly, he migrated from Morocco to Girona at the age of 9. He had started to learn French down there. It was hard to cope with such a dramatic school change. He struggled to adapt to a Catalan school. On the one hand, he felt so bad because of his academic shortcomings, but he didn't dare to ask for teachers' support. On the other hand, he engaged in disruptive behaviour during secondary education. Life was not easy for him at that time, even he felt attacked by teachers sometimes. He reports a denigrating comment of a teacher, but he didn't feel like reporting that problem to the principal. It took time to learn how to behave, and he is currently learning to. Since he was unable to gain his certificate of secondary education, his teachers encouraged him to enrol in TP24. Secondly, once he started to participate in TP24 activities, he really felt relieved. He claims he experienced counselling and training as a sort of therapy. As a consequence, now he feels able to work and contribute to the economy of his family. It is important to report that his father was unemployed at the time of the interview, while his mother did not work. But he refused to comment on these circumstances in more detail. In TP24, not only he undertook some training in cooking but he is quite fond of this trade. In fact, recently he applied for a position and got it. The following week after the interview he was about to start working in restaurant. Although he was frustrated because he could not afford the 12.000€ vocational programme on cooking he wished, he planned to become a celebrity as a chef. In his view, his future would be a progressive, continuous process of small improvement until become the owner of a famous

restaurant. He said he was aware of the huge professional and economic challenges of this project, but he was confident he could accomplish this goal.

Y_SP_G_4 is a 19 years-old boy who is currently enrolled in TP24. Significantly, he reacted to the general question about his biographical experience by stating he was not good at speaking for long. Although he did not want to tell a long story, by simply listing the school years he clearly portrayed the most relevant facts of his life. He was shocked by his parents' divorce during primary education. But currently he is happy to live with his mother and her new partner. A crucial series of partial memories had to do with his disengagement from high school for a number of reasons. He claimed he did not remember those years. The point is that school life was boring and he made a fool of himself. Afterwards, he realised that during this last period he used to smoke hash too much. In the interview, he regretted teachers did not provide neither information nor any other tools to cope with those problems. In addition, he felt very bad about school performance. Occasionally, he had an adapted curriculum in some subjects, but he was unable to learn even in these exceptional conditions. Then, he perceived that teachers decided the course had to go on and left him behind. In TP24, he got some qualifications to work in a warehouse. His life plan foresaw being independent and having a job, but he argued he did not want a very demanding job.

It was notorious that Y_SP_G_5 was learning to be confident and was proud to show how much. She was a user of the TP12 programme in a city close to Girona. Although she presented herself as a very shy person and did not speak much, she did her best to show she was fluent in Spanish and comfortable with the situation. The interviewee clearly distinguished different moments of her life, at least her childhood with her grandmother, the process of migration (staying in Dakar, arriving to the city, staying at home while her daughter was very young, learning Spanish on television), and finding a job. She had found that job a few months before. This change was really a hallmark for her. In her view, that job taught her to be independent. Besides, she developed the array of necessary skills to clean hotel rooms at the right speed. Learning how to use chemical cleaning products and managing risks for health were important skills too. She elaborated on her biography as soon as she realised I was interested. In addition, she was reviewing her life and assessing her experiences. Thus, she thought she had been too naïve to quit school in order to undertake informal training as a hair dresser in Senegal. She also contrasted her current attitude to her previous reluctance to leave from home when she arrived a few years ago. Despite this wide-ranging review of her biographical experience, she did not want to elaborate on her future. In her view, all of us depend on destiny.

Basically, Y_SP_G_6 remembers he suffered continuous, severe bullying at school. Not only he told the interviewer how that experience hindered his learning and his academic progressions, but that suffering was also a recurrent theme when comparing his latter trajectory and the trajectory of his bullies. He knows them because they all live in a small town. Some of his school mates mocked him because of his over-weight. At the age of 8 he told his parents and they talked to the teacher. But anything really changed and he had to endure that bullying until leaving school at the age of 16. Eventually, his reaction aggravated his food disorder. Secondary education entailed a very hard change due to both a more strict academic discipline and such a violent everyday life. For him, the worst experience was waking up knowing he had to spend the whole day at school without doing anything. He felt relieved when his teachers recommended him to start an initial vocational training outside the school. It was focused on cooking, which he

realised he loved. He had an internship in a hotel and was offered a job there afterwards. Although the time schedule was hard for him, because he could not meet his friends for three months, he persisted and made some money. At the same time, that training entailed preparing some exams to get his secondary education certificate. And he did. Afterwards he used the money to enrol in vocational training and pay for books and a computer. However, when he had to take his exams by spring, he felt overwhelmed and quitted. But the following year he insisted and finally got this certificate in vocational education. Then he got low-qualified jobs. He was not renewed in the first one, which consisted of washing dishes in a hotel. Then he went to work to a camping but left that job because the labour and health conditions were very bad. He moved from small job to small job. Since he felt fed up with everything, he joined friends who smoked hash and spent their time drinking beer in a public park. His family asked him to leave this life, but he couldn't for a while. Now he is 19, he has a fantastic girlfriend and a nice family. He cannot complain. He would like to undertake a bachelor but he feels unable to. In addition, he argues opportunities are gone, and speaks of some friends having trouble to find a decent job although they have a bachelor.

As Y_SP_G_5, Y_SP_G_7 was looking for training and guidance at the TP12. When presenting himself, this boy stressed he wanted to follow an academic pathway but was not allowed due to his migration status. Since he arrived at the age of seventeen from Senegal, and his previous education was not recognised, he was only allowed to undertake part-time adult education courses. His narrative evolved naturally from his own situation to a wider description of his family, that is, father, mother, an over-20 brother, a 14-year-old brother and two girls below the age of 10. Unlike him, his older brother did not complete basic education. The younger ones did, but they were allowed to enrol in a school in the city. His gesture was tense when telling the interviewer about this frustration. He also felt uneasy when reporting on another adversity, namely his family enduring economic hardship at the moment. So, he decided to leave home and share a flat with some friends. That was independence. He also looked for a job to give back to the family. Then he approached TP12, and the service became one of his main social bonds in the city. He openly expressed his satisfaction. Here, he could develop one of his most esteemed skills, respect. He wants to socialise so as to develop this ability. In addition, he thinks employers really praise his capacity for respect. In his view, destiny makes sense of everything. Destiny is the way life comes, for instance, destiny transformed him into a foreigner both in Catalonia and Senegal.

Y_SP_G_8 also joined the activities of TP1. His family lived in Morocco, Catalonia and France. When he was fourteen, after a family trip from Morocco to France he decided to stay with his brother in the city. He wanted to widen his horizons. After completing compulsory education, he also did a middle VE programme on IT. He got this credential and the corresponding jobs, but afterwards felt he had to learn about software development to improve. Although his narrative reproduced the pattern of a professional bio, he added a very relevant personal issue. In essence, his father inspired his decisions to look for his own education and profession because he was a really self-made man. He was born from a poor family, travelled on his own to France, learnt to be independent there, and finally could go back home as a middle-class civil servant. In accordance, Y_SP_G_8 presents his experiences and plans as a professional project. Firstly, he found out his potential while working at the sales department of an IT firm. There, he engaged with technical discussions during lunch times. Since his manager told him he would have an

opportunity if he was able to learn more, he found a highly specialised vocational training in this area. Secondly, although he does not make any specific statement on the next step, he will take learning, mobility and making a family into account in order to make his ulterior decisions. Thirdly, he met a girl whom he likes but they are knowing each other. Certainly, something can happen in two years' time. However, mobility is the main priority, friendships and girlfriends will not stop him from moving. His training and previous work experience reflected this commitment, not least because he reported a varied set of skills. First, he insisted on his technical skills regarding IT. Secondly, he pointed out he was able to speak Arabic, French, Catalan, Spanish and English, and learning from many circumstances. Thirdly, he was a sports coach, provided support to other TP12 users, and was a technician for health emergencies. Finally, he had some training as a waiter but rejected this profession because local employers were degrading the concept of waiter's responsibilities he had learnt.

In answering the initial questions about his life story, Y_SP_G_9 highlighted his will to be independent at the same time as he provided economic support to his parents. His narrative started with his migration from Gambia to Catalonia at the age of 10. He attached his account to listing facts on education, family, work, housing and so on. Apparently by saying "y ya está" [*and that's all*] he underlined some of these facts. Thus, he listed the steps of his school trajectory. He did two initial vocational programmes, one on electricity and the other one on customer services. There he obtained his secondary education certificate. Afterwards, he left a vocational education programme on electricity because he had to find a job and earn money. Then, TP12 youth workers helped him to look for a job in a fuel station that really met his aspirations. As he reported on his many small jobs, he elaborated on his search for a satisfactory one. Apparently, his current job at the fuel station was fine because he was busy six days a week, but also because he was in charge of the whole shop. He prioritised finding a job but he undertakes training if he doesn't. He also claimed the mosque was an important space for him. As a Gambian, he is a Muslim. The mosque was an anonymous place where he went to pray and did not speak to anybody. He shared a flat with some friends. They squatted it because it was owned by a bank. In fact, bank offices normally accept to make an agreement with the people who settle in their empty flats. He lives his everyday life with this group. Although he did not state his life plan directly, he took the following steps for granted. His religion required that. Both his father and his sisters thought that they had to find a job instead of undertaking further education. His main skill was his capacity to look for support. In fact, this was more than a skill since he highlighted this capacity when presenting himself. In addition, he also pointed out he could speak English, Spanish and Catalan. But he felt that he lost one language when he learnt another one.

Y_SP_G_10 is a 25 years-old TP12 user who presented a straightforward portrait of himself. As a consequence of a family problem, he had to look for a job and lacked any education. But fortunately the vocational training institutions contacted him, and there he found nice opportunities. Certainly, the narration of that problem already hinted his background was Roma, but he took some time to state it explicitly. School was crucial for his independence. He started in the neighbourhood school, where he met all his cousins. But then his parents changed him to another school, where he was the only Roma. There he learnt how to cope with life on his own. After school, he joined his parents as a street vendor in weekly popular markets (outside Barcelona, this is an established and legal practice in Catalonia). At that time, he married his wife

at 17. He also became a popular guy who distributed drugs among his network. But the whole arrangement felt down because of that conflict. He had to move. He could not see his wife for more than a year. He lost his driving licence. At that moment he realised his friends were not true friends. But fortunately his parents were on his side. Then, he found TP12, the officers helped him, and he discovered a new 'order' in his life. Basically, it consists of having an official job and looking for his vocation. This order sharply contrasts with his parents and his wife's views. For instance his father is unable to save money. And his wife is extremely reluctant to look for a job. When the interviewer asked him about his future he added two crucial aspects, namely having two children and booking a mortgage. Currently, he, his wife and 20-months-old baby were squatting a flat. They waited for the dispute with a bank to be settled, but he aimed at booking a mortgage on the guarantee of his pay roll. In addition, achieving his secondary education certificate had become a new challenge. With his family, he had learnt to deal with perfumes on a daily basis. When he changed that life, nobody believed he would be able to keep the discipline of a normal job. But he did, and his family is proud of him for that. He was able to transfer his skills in the local market to a job in a fish shop. Then he realised his vocation was being a professional seller but he had to change to something else. Since he loved cars, the best option was selling cars. When taking the interview, this was his job.

Y_SP_G_11 presented herself as a student, but she was not properly enrolled in education at the time of the interview. However, since she only made reference to her personal life while discussing her trajectory at school, vocational education and vocational training, it is reasonable to understand she was really stressing how important education was for her. In fact, she insisted on an unfulfilled desire of taking courses at the local school of hospitality. She could not afford them. On the other hand, she talked about trips to her original country occasionally. But she was only explicit about her family's origins in Gambia when asked about her parents at the end of the interview. She remembered her primary school with some nostalgia. After completing compulsory education, she undertook a vocational education programme on administration, but she dropped out when she realised these jobs mostly consist of sitting with a computer. Leaving administration was controversial at home because her older brothers wanted her to go on further education, even undertaking a bachelor. But she argued (and keeps arguing) that any speciality is not good by itself. She needed to feel that trade was meaningful for her. So, she contacted the Catalan Employment Service. She was offered a counsellor. Although she declined at the beginning, afterwards she asked for one. At the moment she was discussing what to do with her counsellor. Besides her frustrated vocation in hospitality, she made a further remark on her professional projects. In her view, home-grown ways of being eventually become the main professional skills. At the end of the day, however, he had a long-term project, namely: opening an intercultural restaurant.

Y_SP_G_12 has attended some courses at the TP12. She presents herself as a young mother who enjoys a strong family support. She laughed at the open question of the interview on her life story. Then she answered by commenting on her school trajectory, and basically listing her transitions. Although she stayed for a while answering the questions, in fact her answers were extremely short. When asked, she compared her education in the Atlas Mountains and Girona. Girona is calm and students receive more support. But her main problem was understanding the language. Once she is able to she feels confident but has not enough time for everything. She took initial vocational training as a non-graduate of compulsory secondary education. Then sat

for her exams and got her certificate. Afterwards she started a vocational programme on administration but left it. Apparently, pregnancy was an important reason but she did not tell anybody. She replies that she is always asked about her future plans in many recruitment interviews. She always answers she was a work and a home for her family. She learnt about the YGS by means of her teacher of Catalan, who is precisely one of the local youth workers. She was lucky in his internship because her tutors certainly taught her mistakes so that she learnt by doing. But calm is another crucial skill, which is also taught during the training.

4.1.2. Life project and expectations of young adults in Girona

In Spain, a high score of early school leaving and a high rate of youth unemployment inspired popular political slogans during the financial and the currency crises between 2008 and 2012. These historical circumstances certainly impinged on the projects of the twelve persons Young Adullllt interviewed in Girona. At that time, many of them were nine years old —only a few were teenagers. Some of them were living in Gambia, Senegal or Morocco, but their families were already thinking about moving abroad. In the interviews most respondents were thinking about their personal projects, but a few had already chosen their most important projects. Most of them drew on their knowledge of the school system and the labour market to present these projects. Half of them did not have defined an explicit project, while the other half had clearly elaborated one.

Although labelling peoples' projects is a tough task, this section eventually had to use some labels to distinguish different types of projects. The point is not what interviewees said but how they got those statements about their concerns, wishes and goals. Thus, keeping the inevitable biases of wording in mind, in the following paragraphs three types of projects are discussed, namely: 'elaborate', 'blurred' and 'uncertain' projects. Doubtless, these terms are not faithful enough to the complexity of the life of these people. But they are helpful for the analysis insofar as the labels map out a space of possible options for young adults in Girona.

Six young adults had developed an 'elaborate' life project. They were Y_SP_G_1, Y_SP_G_6, Y_SP_G_8, Y_SP_G_9, Y_SP_G_10 and Y_SP_G_11. All of them framed their professional projects within their life story. They were five boys and one girl. All of them stated they wanted to build a family and have a job in accordance. Four of them had identified their vocational field.

To start with, a very young boy associated the construction of his life story with his experience at school and widely elaborated on it to present himself as a reflective person.

If I find my real vocation, it is much better. But I want to try before I make any decision.
Things are either nice or ugly from outside, but everything changes when you are inside.
When you do something every day, you really learn if it is interesting for you. Of course, you may also realise it is boring. The point is you have to find the middle ground (Y_SP_G_1)

Another boy referred to his long-term exposition to bullying at school so as to frame his current professional experience and a rich array of reflections. Certainly, he only hinted which field was appealing for him. However, it is reasonable to understand his project was elaborate because he posited a qualified argument on his meagre future opportunities as a low-skilled worker. While he had thought about his previous labour experience quite systematically, he expected TP24 to help him to draw some conclusions.

I wish I had my own flat. A house and a family. I am very traditional on this topic. My girlfriend, a child too. My top professional preference would be working with computers and games. It is very difficult to get into this trade. Some training programmes teach modelling and software development, but they are very expensive. I can also play music in a group. But you cannot make a living of that. I also see I will get my secondary education certificate (Y_SP_G_6)

The story of his migration as a teenager was quite meaningful to make sense of the professional experience of another male young adult.

For sure I want to become a software developer, perhaps an analyst. A software developer may achieve the analyst status after five to seven years. This is my professional plan. They I want to have a house and children. And life life. That's what I love (Y_SP_G_8)

Y_SP_G_9 accounted for his biography as a list of facts, but he made a more specific point. He claimed respect was his main skill and presented himself as a person who was able to respect others.

I will work to save and then get a flat or a detached house. I will keep looking for a job. The more you are in a firm the more they increase your wage. That's what they told me. You can improve (Y_SP_G_9)

The borders between Roma and non-Roma life projects inspired the whole account of the biography of another male young adult. His vocation and his confidence on his own skills fully depended on that.

[How do you see yourself in ten years' time?] Buf. Look. Now I have a child. I see myself with two children and a mortgage. I am struggling to get a mortgage. So far I lived as a squatter. When the court rules out the final judgement, probably I will have to deliver the keys. Because now I am not at-risk of housing exclusion as I used to be. Now I have my payroll, my income. I have to look for a mortgage (Y_SP_G_10)

Finally, a female interviewee hardly tackled her school trajectory but strongly associated her life plan to her general vocational project. She was learning about cooking to become the owner of a multicultural restaurant.

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

The life projects of the respondents were classified as either 'uncertain' or 'blurred' when they did not sketch an explicit life plan. These projects were 'uncertain' when young adults did not sketch an explicit life plan but associated their biography with either their school trajectory or both⁷. Y_SP_G_2, Y_SP_G_5 and Y_SP_G_7 constituted this type.

7 The codes of analysis were clustered into biography, school trajectory and vocational orientation in order to classify young adults' life projects. Thus, biography makes reference to "construction of life story", "presentation of the self" and "life plan". School trajectory makes reference to "school performance", "school social network" and "school teachers". Finally, professional orientation makes reference to "contact with lifelong learning policies", "experience with lifelong learning policies" and "skills".

Thus, 'uncertain life projects' emerged from the feeling that young adults were unable to figure out their life in ten years' time. Thus, a young boy constructed his life story as a list of activities he had carried out. He struggled with his current doubts to outline a project.

[Now you are 18. What will you do when you are 28?] It is hard to say. Maybe I have a family, I am working, I am studying. Who knows? It may be so many things. It would also difficult to say what I will do in two years' time (Y_SP_G_2)

But similar projects were conveyed in terms of destiny. Two interviewees thought destiny intermingled with their agency. For an immigrant female, her life story was her self-presentation. Vocational experience was important as a stage of that story, while school was a marginal theme.

[How do you imagine yourself?] (Laughs) Let's see where destiny leads me. I believe in destiny. Let's see. I wish I was a nurse or an auxiliary nurse. Let's see where future leads me. Let's see if it helps me and leads me there (Y_SP_G_5)

A male young adult was frustrated because his previous education in Senegal had not been recognised. This aspect of his life permeated his vocational project. But the whole experience did not yield any explicit but an uncertain life project.

[How do you see yourself in ten years' time? Will you be here or will you be in Senegal?] It is hard to know how life comes. Nobody knows his destiny. I may say I will stay here but destiny is what comes. It depends on your situation (Y_SP_G_7)

'Blurred' life projects did not associate biography with school and lifelong learning experiences, and additionally, did not make any explicit claim on future plans. Y_SP_G_3, Y_SP_G_4 and Y_SP_G_12 constituted this type.

Although a literal interpretation of Y_SP_G_3's narrative has to notice he stated his life plan, it is more reasonable to understand this plan was not certain because it eventually consisted on becoming a celebrity by learning to be a waiter and saving money. Other two respondents followed a very similar pattern.

[How do you think you will do in ten years' time?] [I will be] a great chef. [Do you think this is feasible?] I think so [What should you do to achieve this point?] Growing as a chef. Working. Upgrading my job. Improving my wage [Would you think of opening your own restaurant?] Yes, it's costly but I will [It's a lot of money] Yes [Do you expect to acquire the expertise and earn the money you need to open a restaurant?] Somehow [What do you mean?] Well, money, you need many years to work and save. I will also help my parents. But it will work (Y_SP_G_3)

I don't know. Sometimes I am more active but not always [Will your situation improve?] Now I know I love sports. Sports can become my goal. I didn't know some time ago [Did counselling help you?] Yes, personally. But sports also helped me (Y_SP_G_4)

[How do you see yourself in ten years' time?] They always ask this question to me [Who?] In interviews. When you start a course. I don't know. I hope I work and have a house [Do you always answer the same?] Yes, that's what I want (Y_SP_G_12)

In Girona, the analysis grasped the complex articulation of young adults' personal projects with their expectations regarding the phases of their life course. All interviewees commented on their deliberation regarding the next steps of their life as well as their view of themselves in the middle term.

Four respondents presented themselves as active seekers of vocational education. Among them, only Y_SP_G_2 had not been specific on his life project.

Some friends of mine are currently studying to get the qualification of a football coach. Over time, if you have experience as a coach, you can also become a Physiotherapist. I cannot become an elite sportsman. But I can achieve these other goals (Y_SP_G_2)

When you get some experience as a software developer, you can create your own software and sell it. For instance, you develop something for a private school. Then, you earn some money for keeping it updated. But some families may also become interested in your services. I see some professionals got good positions. And firms are looking for juniors (Y_SP_G_8)

Right now I need money rather than training. I attempt to keep my course while I am working here. But it is hard. It depends on my shift, but shifts change and my time schedule varies each week. I try (Y_SP_G_9)

I keep searching online. I am aware my training is too short. But I have to try. If I could choose, right now I would rather keep training instead of taking the first job I find (Y_SP_G_11)

In contrast, five respondents preferred to wait and see before they assessed any specific expectation. None of them elaborated on their life project either. All of them declared they were aware of the importance of education but they were very vague regarding their preferences. Y_SP_G_3 and Y_SP_G_4 were very young beneficiaries of the TP24, who had just found out they had been too disruptive in the previous years. But they didn't know what the alternative was.

[Question: So, you realised you liked that] Yes [Do you see yourself working in a kitchen for ever?] You can do your best. I don't know [But it is difficult to enter a first-rank restaurant] I don't know what to say (Y_SP_G_3)

I already took the training to be a porter and a warehouse labourer. That was the employment option. But my counsellor also told me I have to study. He says I have a potential. I can go on to get my secondary education certificate. He insists I do something (Y_SP_G_4)

Two female young adults, Y_SP_G_5 and Y_SP_G_12, decided to postpone their educational projects due to motherhood.

I want to learn more. I am happy with my job but anybody always wants to improve [What do you want to learn?] Catalan or Spanish. Whatever. I want to read and write well. It would help me to find a good job. But now I am working. Step by step. I also want to take the driving license exam (Y_SP_G_5)

[What do you want to do when you finish your current training?] Sewing. I love sewing at home. But I don't know. Now I am looking for a job. Afterwards we will see (Y_SP_G_12)

A male young adult felt trapped in a part-time adult-education programme. When he arrived as a 17-years-old immigrant, his previous education in Gambia was not recognised. So, he was not allowed to undertake further education. For him, adult education was not the right option, but he didn't know what to do.

I would love to go on with my education. I finished my secondary school in my country. But here I am not allowed to go on. I don't like the adult school because they only teach my course three or four hours a week. It is not enough (Y_SP_G_7)

Finally, Y_SP_G_1, Y_SP_G_6 and Y_SP_G_10 had elaborated their life project but were not looking for any vocational education at the moment. Probably, Y_SP_G_1 was to discuss the issue with his counsellor. Y_SP_G_6 was pessimistic because the necessary vocational education for his project was too expensive. For Y_SP_G_10 education did not make sense in the short term.

4.2. Young adults in the functional region of Málaga

The following paragraphs portray brief biographical summaries of the ten young adults who were interviewed in Málaga. Then a sub-section analyses their life projects and expectations.

4.2.1. Biographies of interviewees in Málaga

YA_SP_M_1 is a 28- years- old woman from Málaga. She is a highly qualified person (with a Bachelor Degree in Psychology and Postgraduate studies), who comes from a high socio-economic context. Her parents also took graduate studies. Her mother works as a counsellor and head teacher of a Secondary School and her father is a professor in the University of Malaga. At the moment of the interview she was living with her parents, but this has not always been like this. In fact, in the past she was living and had a temporary job in a city of the United Kingdom.

She considers that education is important, but she believes there is no link between it and the real working world. According to her career, she has acquired more and better skills and competences at her different jobs, and also during internships and voluntary services.

By her discourse, we can infer she has been quite influenced by her family, both in her career and in her choices (educational, working...). Thanks to the economic support of her family she can have what she calls an "own plan". Nevertheless, her education and career has been affected by the current situation or, especially, by the opportunities and her own interests.

Although she has not figured out her career path yet, she is quite satisfied with her life and with her education and past jobs. However, she seems she has resigned in some way, because until now, and although she has tried different things, she has not been able to find a job. Besides, although she admits her future is unclear, as she does not know if she will end up working for the public or the private sector, she is thinking about taking an official exam to work as a public servant, due to the bad opportunities offered by the private sector.

Y_SP_M_2 enrolled in a National Youth Guarantee Program and turned to the Chamber of Commerce on Malaga in order to know PICE (Economic Integration and Cooperation Program) and get information about the offer of courses and services.

He got into the working world in 2015, when he finished his Secondary Education studies in an adult school. He has neither looked for nor found a job since then. He feels he is the main

responsible for his education. He repeated a year three times and he changed schools three times. He wanted to study in the University but he desisted, as finds studying a really hard task.

He lives with his parents (his mother is unemployed) and one of his brothers, of whom he believes he will have to take care in the future, as he claims he “has problems” that will cause him great difficulties in his studies or job, unless he is offered a “special job”. He has two older brothers who are already emancipated. He personally believes he is responsible for his family’s well-being and that is why he wants to find a job. For that reason, he has registered in PICE, but he has not decided if he will take the courses yet, as he claims he is tired of studying and disheartened. He wants to have a break from the pressure he felt during his education, something he constantly repeats when he talks about himself.

Lately, he has considered himself as NEET sometimes and this upsets him. Besides, he has trouble when trying to identify his main skills as employee, but he highlights his ability to develop and finish tasks, even difficult ones.

Y_SP_M_3 is 22 years old. At the moment of the interviewed he is taking a course for working as a gardener. Although he states that gardening is the job he always wanted to do, before this he enrolled in other types of educational programs, but he abandoned them.

His experience in the official educational system was not linear. He dropped school at 18, after being held back a year several times. Although he is young, he has had many lay jobs (as caregiver), most of them without an employment contract (construction worker, plumber, lifeguard).

Not knowing who his father is, he talks really well about his relationship with his family, which consists of his mother, her partner and his aunt (who is a gardener and the person who inspired his professional aspirations), and his uncle-in-law, who is married to the latter.

He is interested in vocational training only because he wants to find a job to have his own family and to stop studying.

YA_SP_M_4 is a 19-year-old man from Malaga. He did not have success at school as he reckons he was not a good student. After he finished Compulsory Secondary Education studies, he started Baccaulaureate, but he abandoned it as he was not passing the courses and he did not feel supported by the school as a student. Later, he started medium level vocational education studies on electricity, but he did not finish them. He insists that he is not a good student but he does not consider himself stupid. He states that the dynamic of schools has not helped him as there was not a good atmosphere.

He had a casual job as a hammock boy in the beach, earning 5€ per hour. This experience forced him to think that he had to study in order to have a better job, because he realized that without proper training there were little possibilities of finding a job. He was helped by his stepfather, who informed him about all the vocational training courses, and he enrolled one vocational training course on electricity. He chose that speciality because of two reasons: first, because he had acquired some knowledge in the previous vocational education course, and also because he has an uncle who is a freelance electrician and perhaps he could work with him.

Although he wants to get training to be an electrician, since he was a kid he has dreamed about being a police officer. He knows he must bear the Baccaulaureate certificate and pass some

physical tests. The second condition is not difficult, because he likes practising sports, and at the same time he finds it useful to lose stress. He hopes to finish his electrician studies, pass the exams for obtaining the Baccalaureate certificate and take the police officer exams.

Young adult Y_SP_M_5 is 21 years old and was born in Malaga, although she lives in Estepona right now. She and her family are Spanish. Her father has primary studies and works as a gardener nowadays. Her mother has a graduate certificate and is a primary school teacher. Her only brother, who is 18, is starting University.

She had many health problems during childhood, including epilepsy and scoliosis, and she had to take surgery to control both illnesses. Besides, she was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome.

She is quite interested in taking undergraduate courses related to literature. Specifically, she dreams of studying library sciences, as she considers this would be the ideal profession for her. These are undergraduate studies, only offered by the University of Granada in Andalusia. However, her diseases do not let her leave her family home, unless she is assisted by a caregiver, but this does not seem effective nowadays. Due to this, she decided to study a medium level vocational education course on business management in her town, hoping this would help them to get a job. But, due to the label imposed by her illness, she has not been able to get into the working world, although he has registered in several job searching programs.

Y_SP_M_6 is a 27-year-old young woman who comes from a family with several issues. When she started talking about her family, she teared up. With a drug addict and ex-convict father and a former drug addict mother, her life has been complicated. Nobody cared about her school grades and she dropped out at the age of 16. She started working in lay jobs, in order to bring money to her home.

During all the interview, she defines her past self as “awful” and “lost teenager”. This situation affected her studies, personal and family relationships and working life. However, she considers she has got on track. Nowadays she is working in a hotel and helping one of her sisters with her business. When her family situation got better (specially, when her mum left the drugs) she started studying again and obtained her secondary school certificate. She also took several training courses.

She is quite satisfied with her current life and believes life has paid her back for all the negative things she went through as a child. However, on the other hand, she reckons that change is in herself and that she can get anything she wants.

Y_SP_M_7 is a 24- years- old woman who had problems to pass school subjects. It took her several sittings to pass the exams. She was able to finish her Compulsory Secondary Education studies and started Baccalaureate. She was held back the first year several times. She remembers, with sad eyes, that she barely had friends back then, and that she got home unmotivated and feeling like doing nothing. She was bullied in the secondary school, and this was one of the reasons which led her to drop Baccalaureate studies. She had two sessions with a therapist, and she considers this was very helpful for her. When he dropped her studies he enrolled a course in a Workshop School and she was there for two years.

She feels happy for having started in the Workshop School, because of her classmates and teachers. Her brother advised her to register in the Andalusian Employment Office and had

several meetings with the counsellor. She remembers she was called for an interview and she went there with her brother. He was not chosen due to his age, but she was.

She considers herself an introvert, he has difficulties to make friends and she is not really talkative. That is why she bravely enrolled a course for being a sport instructor, in order to get rid of her fears and get a job. She says the Workshop School is the best thing that happened to her. She feels really proud about the big step she took.

After finishing the course, she has had some jobs, but none of them were permanent and they were not related to her studies. She also admits that money has been a problem for continuing with her studies.

Y_SP_M_8 is a 30-year-old man. He was born in Lima (Peru) and he had a difficult childhood. He was separated from his mother since he was a little boy and his relationship with his parents had some ups and downs. He remembers happily his Primary and Secondary studies, although he highlights that it is more demanding than Spanish education. He was never held back a year and he has a Compulsory Secondary Education certificate. However, he had to change schools in his Secondary school years because he had some problems with a street gang. He emigrated to Madrid when he was 16 and he lived on his own for 10 years because he wanted to start a new different life and help his mom and his siblings. But he came with a resident seeking reunification card and he could not work, so all his jobs were temporary and without an insurance. His situation changed when he obtained his Spanish ID card. He was hired as a waiter. Then, he moved to Malaga with his partner.

He says he would have liked to continue with his studies. He would specially want to study Art, photography... But he did not have the chance because he could not get his former studies recognized and he has had economic problems. However, he could access to a first level wood works course in Centro Rafael Salinas in Malaga, as having Compulsory Secondary Studies was not a requirement there. He is quite motivated, he loves the course, and he is planning to start his own company.

Y_SP_M_9 is a 24-year-old woman who thinks about her start in school as a satisfactory moment and remembers her schoolmates and teachers in a positive way. However, she states that when she was studying the sixth year of Primary Education, she took some bad choices and her motivation started to drop when she started the third course of Compulsory Secondary Education in a class full of repeaters. He says he had some trouble to adapt to this new stage of Secondary Education, but she finally could finish. Once she had gone through these bumps on the road, she was not sure about what to do next. She decided to study Baccalaureate in order to start undergraduate studies on Physiotherapy or Teaching later. She moved to another school and started studying in Castro. She did not like the experience and was held back a year several times, so she gave up.

She tried to get into several official vocational education courses, but she was not selected. Thus, she decided to start Baccalaureate again in Córdoba. She felt more mature and she had a clear mind. She remembers happily that she was able to pass all the exams and even get great grades. Those were happy years for her. Once she finishes these studies, after all her comings and goings in the educational system, she did not feel prepared to study at the University, so she decided to move to Malaga and start a vocational course on dietetics, as she believed this was what she wanted to do. He had some problems trying to adapt to her new life and she lost motivation

when she realized she was not fulfilling her expectations. After Christmas, she dropped the course and moved back to Cordoba. She wants to continue with her studies because she believes this will grant her with more working opportunities. Nowadays, she is trying to get into a course to be a pharmaceutical assistant and continue studying. If she fails, she will try to find a job, but she reckons this is quite hard as the only experience she has is the two months she worked in a supermarket. She believes she has always been supported by her parents, who have cared about her education, and this means a lot to her.

Y_SP_M_10: He is 21 one and he has the Compulsory Secondary School Certificate, which he got after a lot of trouble and being held back several years. He tried to study Baccaalaureate and a medium level vocational course on electricity but he dropped his studies due to their difficulty. Although he considers himself a “bad student”, he believes that some of his teachers are also to blame, because he was not professionals and they did not care. His dream is to get into the army, but he has discarded this due to the great level of difficulty of the admission tests, as he feels he is not ready for them. He has had some jobs, as he felt pressured by his family. But his has not gave them a lot of future expectations as these were uncertain jobs, in supermarkets or stores, hourly or just during the weekends. She did not have a good experience with counselling services after all his unemployment periods. He is taking a gardening vocational training course, following the recommendation of a friend of his father. He has a partner and they live together in his grandmother’s house, taking care of her.

He likes the gardening course he is taking nowadays. There are good teachers and he is acquiring practical knowledge. Besides, he hopes he can work as a gardener in the future, as there is a lot of demand in Malaga. At least, he could work as a freelance and emancipate.

These biographies can be clustered drawing on the socio-economic background, the previous educational trajectory, the formulation of the interviewees’ life plan and the next steps that they envision.

4.2.2. Life project and expectations of young adults in Málaga

Ten young adults were interviewed in Málaga. Table 1 shows they were enrolled in a variety of lifelong learning programmes, mostly vocational training and career guidance. The analysis explored a classification according to the socio-economic background, the school trajectory, and the definition of life projects and the views of young adults on the next concrete steps. In the end, some of these classifications proved to be more salient than other ones. Since all of them overlap somehow, it was unclear to state that background and next steps added further information. For this reason, the definition of life plans and the linearity of school trajectories were adopted as the main criteria to distinguish two clusters of interviewees. The former included the young adults who had either elaborated their life plan and/ or followed a linear school trajectory. The members of the latter group had neither elaborated a plan nor followed a linear school trajectory.

The first group included Y_SP_M_1, Y_SP_M_6 and Y_SP_M_7 because they elaborated on their life plan. One more respondent, Y_SP_M_8, shared some features with them because his school trajectory had been linear although migration had disrupted his plans.

A high-class overqualified woman, Y_SP_M_1, understood youth as a time for experimentation. In her view, both leisure time and learning were important. She observed that younger people were quite naïve and uncertain with regard to the job market. Since employers were aware of this fact, they forced these people to work in very precarious conditions. She pointed out that she availed of her unemployment benefit to think about her opportunities without the pressure of immediate economic risks. In addition, she reflected on the circumstances of her generation. For them, seeking a better job abroad and learning languages in other countries had become a cliché. In addition, she noticed that her parents enjoyed more job opportunities and were required less when seeking for a job. Young generations felt uncertain and scared in this sense.

What I really do notice is the generational gap with my parents, no... no (they have) finished studying, huh... at the age of 24; you are an official, and then you have no idea what is going on today. Not bad, but it's just funny, because I say to my mother, "have you ever been unemployed?" [Herself responding to that question], "never" (tongue-click)). This is the difference, "you left, you began to work and you never had to... to pose anything" [as if addressing his mother]. You have raised millions of things within your work but I say as soon as my parents do not know about job search, they do not know all this... all this world of offices, helps, I do not know what... (1). So then... (1) I think we have had quite a different time, have not we? (Y_SP_M_1)

Another member of this group, Y_SP_M_5, suffered from the Asperger Syndrome. Although she looked a job during youth, she reduced her expectations because she was less autonomous.

As the thing does not improve, of this of the job offer for the handicapped, I do not know what will become of me [...] When I am 35 I have been told that I present myself to oppositions, or no longer, or the job does not want know nothing. (Y_SP_M_5)

She had been able to cope with school transitions satisfactorily, but had to adapt her further expectations to a narrow scope of opportunities

Well, I see myself at home with someone taking care of me and I do not know if I would have a job, a job and if I had it then it would be part-time. If the economy does not improve, people with disabilities will have a bleak future. I do not know what will become of me [...] I have been told that, at 35, either I sit for public examinations to become a civil servant for life or the labour market will completely neglect my prospects (Y_SP_M_5)

Interviewee Y_SP_M_7 had problems adapting at school. She remembered herself crying every day because she did not want to go. She attributes that suffering to both bullying and social isolation. She was not alone in underlining the importance of peer groups in youth. The outcome was that she blamed herself for her current insecurity in undertaking education. However, she had elaborated her life plan so much so that she was able to compensate for these feelings with her long-term projects.

Because the fact that it took me so long to get to Baccalaureate and get it, e-eh gives me insecurity to do a course, because if for whatever it...it costs me, or if it happens I do not know that maybe for whatever... if... I can not finish it or so... (Y_SP_M_7)

Another young adult, Y_SP_M_8, shared some projects with this group. He had started his education in Peru and then moved to Málaga. Since his previous credentials were not recognised in Spain, he was overwhelmed by these unexpected problem. However, vocational education became a hallmark of his life, because there he realised he could learn.

The other six interviewees contrasted with this group. The point is that neither their life plan was elaborate nor they had followed a linear school trajectory. All those who had previously dropped out of the educational system felt the reason was their own poor motivation. They attributed this shortcoming to a number of factors. Most of them mentioned lack of family involvement and disruption of their peer group due to movement from one school to another one. For instance, Y_SP_M_4 commented his disruptive behaviour at school was a normal expression of peer groups: "I had fun with my classmates, as little kids do". Y_SP_M_9 reminded that it was crucial that classmates were the same every year. When they all passed to the next year, this meant something joyful for him, as there was a confidence atmosphere in the group. However, friends also introduced some respondents into disruptive practices such as smoking cannabis. Y_SP_M_3 and Y_SP_M_10 hinted this problem.

This group of young adults shared a similar view of secondary education, namely: it was as a big challenge for them. Furthermore, they claimed that further academic education was unattainable. It was not uncommon they blamed themselves for their failure. Thus, Y_SP_M_2 and Y_SP_M_7 reckoned they did not continue with the official education studies because they did not have the necessary skills or because they were not able to do it. Y_SP_M_3 and Y_SP_M_6 disengaged from school in the last years of primary education, when they already felt the standards were too demanding.

Man, me, me, never, as I said before, I never liked to study... [...] from the fifth grade I say: I do not like this, as before things were easier since fifth, fourth, third grade and everything, because things were easier, but when I get to be... I came to sixth grade and I said this... I am not good for studying, okay. I saw that the others were graduating and I say good, I have to look for another opportunity if it does not flow because I will have to work or whatever or anything that comes out... (Y_SP_M_3)

In this sense, Y_SP_M_2 noticed how tired he felt during all the secondary education stage. This problem made him unable to continue his studies and still affected him at the time of the interview

Uhm, removing, maybe, that I've been with my friends, everything has been very, I do not know, stress, tiredness, little rest (1). Removing that, I remain very tired every time that I have to study something, everything was okay (Y_SP_M_2)

Teachers were a factor of disengagement, as Y_SP_M_5 and Y_SP_M_10 pointed out. The latter mentions that teachers did not put an effort so the students with the worst results could learn, and they even ignored them sometimes.

I also do not like to study very much and there were teachers in the high school who did not reach you very well. There were two or three old men who were... It is for the teachers. They neither encourage you nor tell you anything (Y_SP_M_10)

However, all interviewees admitted that during their secondary education they already knew how important the credential would eventually be when they had to get a job. Many (e. g. Y_SP_M_6 and Y_SP_M_9) only started to think on future plans when they finished this stage at school.

They also discussed the role of parents. For Y_SP_M_3, they were an important support during this stage. However, since Y_SP_M_6's parents had problems with drugs, she missed their support. This interviewee emphasized that that parents should be demanding and strict during

that stage so that children really become aware of important education is. Despite disparate experiences, these two respondents coincided that family support is fundamental for succeeding at school.

Many of these young people had plans for the next ten years of their life. In most of the cases, these plans included events traditionally associated with adulthood such as getting married, buying a house and having kids. We can see a clear example of this, although it is not the only one, in the following extract from the interview with Y_SP_M_3:

So my future plans include having a house, having a partner... Create a family and retire (Y_SP_M_3).

These interviewees were quite pessimistic about their own professional opportunities in the long term.

I hope I have a job at least, because I believe that you can live... always in absolute instability. I must keep my current job in the public sector. But you have to accept you cannot work according to your qualification (Y_SP_M_10)

Some gender differences proved to be relevant. On the one hand, some female young adults were more active in tackling their uncertainties than most males. Thus, although Y_SP_M_9 had attempted to enrol in a vocational course for years, she had been unable due to the difficulty of the admission tests. On the other hand, some male respondents often said they were thinking in traditionally masculine trades. In fact, most of them made reference to becoming a carpenter, police man or a gardener.

A few more remarks are important to account for the discourses of young adults in Málaga. First, Y_SP_M_1, Y_SP_M_5 and Y_SP_M_4 aimed at taking public exams to become civil servants for life. Second, Y_SP_M_6, Y_SP_M_7, Y_SP_M_8 and Y_SP_M_10 were thinking about setting their own businesses. Third, some interviewees considered their training was only an instrument. As an example, Y_SP_M_9 made a telling point.

So, what I'm looking for... some study that I like or, even if it is not... like maybe the passion of my life, try to do something because, if you have studies, you have a better chance in the labour field (Y_SP_M_9)

Despite these differences, both groups shared very similar perceptions of youth and adulthood. When the expectations of interviewees about their youth were analysed, it became apparent that many of them saw this stage as an uncertain period. Some of them argued this was a risky period. Not only employment became a challenge, but they also felt they were exposed to consumption of toxic substances. Y_SP_M_10 narrated how he had decided it was the right time to leave drugs behind.

Many young adults talked about maturing and settling down. Often, they reported they enrolled in education and training in order to get the necessary qualifications for availing of more job opportunities and eventually earning a wage that allowed them to settle down. Some references complained of the fees of vocational courses, because they could not afford them at all. Y_SP_M_10 noticed that he enrolled in a course because ultimately he wanted to live with her girlfriend.

They also pointed out the importance of training and experience. They considered those are key factors to improve employability. In this sense, it is necessary to highlight the opinion of

Y_SP_M_3, who claimed that vocational training courses are more useful than university courses. He stated that “university students are studying all the time and they do not know how to work as they do not get working experience”.

Besides, all of them point out that they found this necessary as they wanted to bring money to their homes and get autonomy and independence progressively. In this moment, their own partners achieve more importance.

Although social, family and working conditions have changed significantly through the last years in Spain, it is remarkable that the expectations of adulthood of all the interviewed young people were similar to the traditional ones. Thus, many of them were thinking about buying a house and they all talked about a permanent job, which may help them achieving economic stability. Excepting Y_SP_M_1, Y_SP_M_2 and Y_SP_M_3, all interviewees mentioned having their own families. For instance, Y_SP_M_4 said he would have a “normal” family, with his partner, kids and a dog.

4.3. Conclusions on the biographies, the life projects and the expectations of young adults

In both Girona and Málaga, the bulk of lifelong learning policies are targeted to young adults. About twenty beneficiaries of training programmes and vocational institutions were interviewed. The analysis of these interviews has noticed that these policies are meaningful for them insomuch as they find some instruments to define their own life plan.

A number of respondents elaborated on their plans by linking their experiences with their school trajectory and their vocational projects. This group amounted for about half the sample in Girona, and was slightly smaller in Málaga. They also had envisioned how to take the next steps. Either they were seeking for the appropriate vocational courses or they planned to take public exams to become civil servants for life.

In contrast, many other young adults were uncertain on which their ideal plans were. They could not foresee their future either. Counselling services were working with them in order to develop some more explicit projects. However, an array of adverse conditions, past experiences and pessimistic observations hindered them to speak on their life in the long term. In order to tackle these circumstances, they also had to cope with the official split of TVET into courses run by the regional departments of education and employment. As a consequence, it is remarkable that they were not comfortably operating in the official common qualifications framework.

In addition, these young adults were not passive in making their decisions. For them, uncertainty was a bigger obstacle than feeble determination to choose a specific option as well as to pursue a course of action. In fact, not only they looked for opportunities in training, but many also felt that training was a good occasion to review their past trajectory and change some practices. They made sense of their current education in terms of guilt for disruptive behaviour in the past and wishful expectations regarding their own psychological development.

The interviews also reveal that, in Spain, economic hardship constrains both the labour and the educational opportunities of young adults. In both regions a number of respondents told how they had to adapt their vocational goals to a very low income. In Girona, so many young adults

are interested in the hospitality sector that public institutions cannot train all of them. Those who are not lucky to get a place in them are often unable to afford the fees of the many private institutions which provide training in this speciality. In–Malaga, some interviewees also complained about fees. Particularly, a number of them declared they wanted to take some training in arts but could not pay for the fees at all.

Although the samples of interviews in the two regions are not large enough to account for subtle differences regarding age and gender, the report concludes that these social categories need further research. The emphasis of all young adults on maturing and psychological development, strongly suggests that their evolution between the ages of 18 and 25 should be more carefully observed. On the other hand, the data indicate some complex interactions between gender and social class. Particularly, immigrant female young adults are more interested in having children than the autochthonous population. Males normally report on how they engaged in disrupted behaviour in the midst of gregarious feelings and behaviours during their secondary education. Choice of professions and occupations also seems to be gendered. The present sample is not wide enough to generalise, but at least these findings suggest more specific questions for ulterior inquiries.

Finally, the report realised that most low-skilled young adults are exposed to future subjective suffering in Girona and Málaga. The point is that they portray their own life course in terms of standard and linear stages and pathways. Certainly, any conclusion on their personal relationships would incur in over-generalisation. However, it is extremely worrying to find out that many of them identify a stable job with buying a house and serving a mortgage. These beliefs led many people to live a real nightmare after financial crisis that burst in 2008.

5. Interaction between young adults and experts

The routine of lifelong learning policies eventually requires that experts and young adults continuously meet, make decisions, experience new situations and elaborate their discourses in a variety of interfaces. When policy actors design a policy and coordinate with varied stakeholders, they have to establish some social interaction. Experts also interact with young adults when they engage in training and counselling. On the other hand, the youth formulate their personal biography through social exchanges with some professionals. They also make their decisions on either further education or employment in this way. Policy designers and managers, as well as YGS facilitators, counsellors, tutors and trainers work with the youth who normally enrol in vocational training.

This section attempts to reach some significant conclusions by comparing this interaction in the 'functional regions' of Girona and Málaga. The theories that suggested the research questions of Young Adults also guide this analysis (see YOUNG ADULTS Deliverable 2.1. for further details). The Cultural Political Economy (CPE), the Governance (GOV) and the Life Course Research (LCR) scholarly stances shed light on the main findings of this report.

Let us remind of the general hypothesis. CPE and GOV spell out how institutional arrangements construct a particular collective image of the target group. LCR explores the gap between this image and young people's experience. This is not a one-dimensional effect whereby institutions shape biographies. On the contrary, the mismatch between some factual beliefs that institutions endorse and the reality of people's life course have eventual repercussions on the effectiveness and the review of the policies.

Essentially, a theoretically sensitive analysis of the interaction between the experts and the young adults who are involved in lifelong learning policies in Girona and Málaga yields two significant findings. These findings have to be interpreted as a continuation of the previous partial conclusions regarding the interviews with each type of agent. A first finding has to do with the making of a social norm. CPE and LCR propose the clues to spell it out. A second finding emerges from the interaction of tutors and trainers with the beneficiaries of lifelong learning policies. The previous sections report enough evidence to distinguish three pedagogical modes in the two regions. GOV and LCR make sense of this finding.

To start with, it is plausible to notice that the interaction between the stakeholders of lifelong learning policies in Girona and Málaga eventually establishes a social norm on who are the appropriate beneficiaries of lifelong learning. Policy-makers, professionals and training providers actively contribute to make this norm. Young adults are not alien to the process, but their role is clearly secondary. However, the norm has apparently become an indisputable fact for them.

The norm sorts out the youth into three groups or three pathways. The first one enrolls in tertiary education at the age of 18, the second one is about to finish middle vocational education at this age, and the latter could not achieve any of these levels of instruction. This latter group gathers at-risk, 'vulnerable' youth who are in need of an emergency intervention. In the same way as the social services cater to the urgent needs of needy minors and the low-income elderly, the interaction between the experts and the young adults has coined and legitimised a set of beliefs on this target group. Most programmes and most professionals understand that counselling,

training and qualifications cater to the urgent needs of the 'vulnerable' young adults. This norm transforms the general meaning of lifelong learning in very substantial ways. Instead of a societal asset for economic prosperity, cultural creativity and sustainable development, lifelong learning is reduced to a remedial instrument that may keep the risks of social exclusion under control. Similarly, instead of subjects of an array of rights, the beneficiaries are portrayed as the subjects who have to prove they are really involved in their own future.

Two strands of theory shed light on this finding. On the one hand, Cultural Political Economy (CPE) spells out the multiple meanings of policy. Not only policies are grounded on specific statements of fact (e. g. on how labour markets work), but they also set which behaviour is acceptable. On the other hand, Life Course Research (LCR) makes sense of the complexity of biographies in particular institutional settings. Thus, institutional pathways do not generate life courses but certainly impinge on the course of action that young adults follow.

The outcome of fieldwork shows that the experts widely shared similar professional judgements on the young adults who enrolled in lifelong learning. They believed the beneficiaries of vocational training suffered from some deficit which had disrupted their previous school-based education. This hard assumption was qualified by a number of street-level professionals. But eventually most programmes had to select the beneficiaries on the grounds of educational disadvantage. Besides, evaluation criteria did not allow for taking other personal circumstances into account. When compared with the discourse of young adults, it is plausible to conclude that the beneficiaries of these programmes had internalised this view. They saw themselves as the subjects of a cultural deficit.

In Girona, the beneficiaries of TP24 and TP12 talked about their personal circumstances in their own way, but they were similarly satisfied with the programmes. Although it is hard to sketch a single pattern of their previous life course, all of them referred to the programmes in positive terms. Generally, they drew examples from their biographical account in order to report that the programmes had eventually changed them. So, these programmes eventually constructed a group of youth who were reviewing their vocational project with the help of a professional counsellor. They had reviewed their school trajectory and their previous labour experiences so as to find out how they could get the most out of their present conditions.

The main commonality between the interviewees who were using TP24 was their young age. Since all of them were around 18, they often remembered and reviewed their school trajectory. Some had engaged in disruptive behaviour. Some had also realised that their initial choice of a vocational education option had been wrong. All of them were happy to discuss these issues with their counsellor.

[Now I am 19. When I was 16 and 17] (...) I was with my friends the whole day. Looking backward, I realise I did nothing (...) [The officers at my local youth centre told me about TP24] It is a good opportunity for the youth struggled with their school time. You chose a course and you have tutor who supports you (Y_SP_G_4)

Here they know how to deal with be. I have been well treated me well. The led me to the right way. I learnt. It is a good experience (Y_SP_G_6)

The beneficiaries of TP12 contacted the programme for a variety of reasons. In contrast with the users of TP24, they did not link training with their previous school trajectory so directly. In fact, they framed training within a wide array of experiences. For some of them, it was a good

instrument to cope with migration. Thus, it had become either a sort of welcome programme or a valuable resource to organise their life after some trips to their original country. Two female respondents also reported on how they were simultaneously dealing with training, job search and motherhood. A male respondent had looked for help in order to enter the mainstream economy after a long period working as a street vendor. Only a male interviewee claimed he did not really need the programme because he had already his own vocational project. But he said he enjoyed participating in group discussions and was happy with the officers' support in his continuous job seeking.

I chose a course on professional cleaning. When I finished my tutor was great. I am very shy but she taught me how to interact with people (Y_SP_G_5)

For anybody who wants a job but lacks an academic background, [the training programme] is very helpful. They introduce you to the professional world, you learn how to write your CV. Me and those who lack education really don't even know how to start (Y_SP_G_10)

In Málaga, Y_SP_M_1 and Y_SP_M_5 considered that vocational training policies were not adapted to their needs. One of them was looking for alternative professional opportunities to her speciality.

For me, there is the field conflict resolution thing. I already have an expert certificate about that. However, I will not do more in this area (laughs). I have university extension diploma on mediation. Well, although I am overqualified, maybe I come up with a repetitive job in this area (Y_SP_M_1)

However, those young people with a lower qualification welcomed the existing training opportunities. For instance, Y_SP_M_10, Y_SP_M_8, Y_SP_M_6 and Y_SP_M_7 shared this perception

To be honest, I felt useless. I felt that it was not worth of anything. I went to seek for work and everywhere they asked me for a high school certificate, and I had nothing (Y_SP_M_6)

Other young adults praised the hours of practical work that many courses included in their schedule. Thus, Y_SP_M_2, Y_SP_M_3, Y_SP_M_4, Y_SP_M_6, Y_SP_M_7 - Y_SP_M_8 and Y_SP_M_10 felt this approach guaranteed that teachers were really aware of their progress, listened to their needs and adapted their methods to their learning pace. Thus, those young people who did not succeed in compulsory school-based education were encouraged to learn by doing, whether it be for adjusting the development of the class or the help they offer them.

I would say it was progress, because I arrived without being able to speak, and now I speak so much, but hey ..." (laughs). So much companionship, then... the teachers, very close to us. It's not like a high school. I did the courses with less people, because we were ten per module, like they are closer to you, they help you more, you... They reinforce you more... I do not know, like that... You learn more, okay? In my opinion (Y_SP_M_7)

Y_SP_M_10 was quite satisfied because his vocational training institution provided the necessary garments and tools for each trade.

And it's very good, it's very good. They give us enough materials, they give us our clothes too and it's fine, it's fine; We are given facilities and teachers; I like the way they explain and the way they treat us and that (Y_SP_M_10)

The second finding is the consequence of varying social interactions depending on the type of programme, the age of the beneficiaries, and probably, the ethos of the institutions which provide training. Drawing on the sections on the interviews with experts and young adults, three distinct pedagogic approaches are noticeable. Despite their particularities, all these approaches were appreciated by the interviewees.

The analysis of institutional pathways and life courses also underpins this finding. Life Course Research (LCR) is quite insightful in this sense. LCR has explored how the youth read their opportunities and the institutional pathways. The GOV approach also suggests crucial questions in this sense, not least because partnerships are ultimately expected to bring about institutional and pedagogic diversity.

TP24 and TP12 illustrate these different approaches in Girona. Some vocational training providers complete the picture by suggesting observations on another pedagogic strategy in Málaga.

Firstly, TP24 was mostly in charge of early school leavers in Girona. Actually, some appointments did not produce a research interview because the youngsters were minors. These beneficiaries were offered counselling services for two years. In the meanwhile, they took some training so as to get a new basic qualifications. Counselling mostly focused on reviewing their previous experience, particularly their experiences with the school system. Clearly, TP24 expected its beneficiaries to think carefully on their opportunities to sit for the basic credential of compulsory secondary education. Then, they were encouraged to explore vocational education seriously.

Secondly, a municipality implemented TP12 as a community development programme. Here, street-level professionals were continuously in contact with the youth through Whatsapp. They attempted to bring all the local 'vulnerable' youth to meetings where they met other types of people. The whole group was stimulated to discuss some of their chances. These experts also supported the applications of their beneficiaries to some jobs. They claimed they campaigned for the recognition of their skills, for instance, by showing the hospitality sector that French-speaking young adults (many of whom had been educated in Morocco) were a key asset for the local industry to provide quality services to tourists coming from neighbouring countries such as Belgium or France.

Finally, in Málaga the sample of interviews included institutions whose training programmes led to official qualifications. The beneficiaries reported how they had made their mind to choose those courses. They were especially happy with the learning activities that required them to behave in situations which were quite similar to real professional contexts.

These pedagogies conveyed a personalised approach to social vulnerability in slightly different ways. Significantly, counselling was the cornerstone of TP24, while TP12 relied on community reach, and vocational institutions ultimately promised official qualifications in Málaga. However, a deeper similarity aligned them with a quite individualistic understanding of education, labour markets and life courses.

In this vein, LCR and GOV suggest quite relevant questions on participation. Lifelong learning allegedly intermingles with meaningful biographical moments. Adult (or young adult) students actually learn because they realise some training is meaningful for their projects. However, it is

extremely problematic how the policies ask for the opinion and the assessment of their young adult beneficiaries.

Insofar as they enjoyed the experience — and most of them did, the youngest users of TP24 felt that now they really belonged to the real world of adulthood. Even if they had already entered the labour market, reviewing their previous jobs with their counsellor helped them to find their way. Accordingly, they were reluctant when they perceived any similarity with normal school-based teaching. Most of them thought that any programme could be improved if it was capable of fitting much better with the personal needs of the youth.

I will not spend a f... year here doing a training which may be useless. Now I take it because I don't have anything else. If you have some small jobs, at least you earn some money. But I am happy. They help me and pay my train tickets (Y_SP_G_6)

Since I enrolled in TP24 I saw an opportunity for me. I followed this way. One has to work to go on and have a future (Y_SP_G_3)

The older users of TP12 were happy to report on their conversations with the street-level professionals of the organisation. They had established quite a personal relationship with them. When discussing how to improve the programme, some of them mentioned labour opportunities and preventing disruptive behaviour.

For me, three months of training is too short [How would you improve this programme?] I would conduct a survey so that everybody decides which trades are more useful in each city. For example, Madrid and Girona may not be the same (Y_SP_G_11)

Many youth are rambling in the street. They need these courses not to become too aggressive (Y_SP_G_7)

In Málaga, it was remarkable that vocational training providers did not have multi-stakeholder boards. Unlike secondary schools and universities, here students did not have a say on institutional decisions. However, in this region young adults agreed with the interviewees from Girona with regard to the pedagogic approach of vocational training. For instance, Y_SP_M_4, Y_SP_M_6, Y_SP_M_8 and Y_SP_M_10 were quite satisfied with all the activities that in their view were tailored to their own needs. Any commonality with schools was widely resented.

The classes, right now hum... As we are saying, if we want to do theory and we see that outside it is very hot; "Look, Pepi, we can go in and see more theory or we give ..." That the teacher is... what I say, she molds to us. If we are very tired after the recess, "Pepi look, we can learn... yes... we have to study a module". We have to learn, I do not know if there are nine modules or something and do a test, now how we want to distribute. (Y_SP_M_10)

Remarkably, neither in Girona nor in Málaga the interviewees made any explicit reference to collective affairs. Many remembered a negative experience of their schooling. Thus, Y_SP_G_6 was shocked because he had suffered from bullying at school for ten years, but teachers did not do anything about that. Y_SP_G_7 really regretted he was not allowed to pursue his academic projects because his previous education was not officially recognised. Despite long welcome courses, some immigrants had not understood what schools expected from them. For instance, Y_SP_G_3 complained about a denigrating comment a teacher had addressed to him. Y_SP_G_4 reported he felt his teachers left him behind.

Except for the younger ones, many interviewees reported on their experience with labour. Some of them complained of exploitative, low-quality jobs where their previous training was not taken into account. Others were optimistic about the potential of their career despite precariousness. Many also stated they were squatting a flat, but even these ones expected to service a mortgage in ten years' time.

All of them figured out their life in a very linear way. The interviews reproduced reiterative comments which tightly connected stable jobs with a stable couple, having children and buying a house. In the midst of a devastating financial crisis that severely constrains the opportunities to carry out this life course for even the middle classes, it is quite telling that vulnerable young adults expected lifelong learning would help them to pursue this way of life. None of them was aware that the whole of their generation suffers from some of these problems regardless of their skills.

In conclusion, a closer look at the interaction between experts and young adults is quite telling for two substantial reasons. First, a determinant feature of the target group is defined through this interaction. Although lifelong learning is allegedly universal, in both Girona and Málaga it has become almost exclusively a remedial pathway for the low-skilled youth. Second, this interaction configures varied pedagogies, which at least seem to respond to the most immediate needs of 'vulnerable' young adults. In accordance, apparently the mainstream understanding to participation in vocational training is extremely narrow.

6. Emerging issues

Two emerging issues were identified in analysing the interviews with experts and young adults in Spain. On the one hand, although the official qualifications framework enshrines a tight connection between qualifications and skills, the youth were quite aware of their soft skills and some of them widely elaborated on the issue. Since this perception of skills links WPs 5 and 6, the report discusses the topic as an emerging issue. On the other hand, if the mainstream understanding of lifelong learning policies is framed within the Europe 2020 Strategy, the analysis can spell out some hidden issues. This is an emerging issue for two reasons. First, this order of priorities is not a direct consequence of the interaction between experts and young adults. Second, by unveiling these hidden issues, the analysis can also point at some very salient frontiers of lifelong learning in the EU.

Skills are “a bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learnt and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning” (UNESCO International Centre for TVET, 2017). Young Adults It approaches skills through the lens of governance theories (GOV), particularly looking at the impact of policies are concerned. Remarkably, the following paragraphs report on an important impact of lifelong learning policies. The point is that ‘vulnerable’ young adults become quite aware of their soft skills when they undertake vocational training in both Girona and Málaga.

In Girona, only Y_SP_G_4 replied to the explicit question on skills with a so vague and cursory answer that did not reflect any familiarity with this concept. Admittedly, the researchers expected this line of answering to be much more common, since the said relevance of formal qualifications raised suspicion that skills were likely to be overlooked. But it was not.

As a rule, most young adults made reference to their attitude regarding work. These comments elaborated on the importance of personal attributes for carrying out a given task. The younger interviewees often contrasted their experience and learning after they had left school with their disruptive behaviour at school.

An employer basically looks at your attitude and your will to learn. If he sees that in you, he takes you (Y_SP_G_11)

[How do think employers assess workers like you?] Work and behaviour. They look at how you are. If you are calm and well mannered. That’s what we are taught in all training courses (Y_SP_G_12)

But personal autonomy was also an important attribute for some young adults. They associated this concept with real work. Their capability to make decisions was also a step forward in their personal development.

I learnt a lot along my life because decisions teach you. Basically I learnt to make decisions on my own. Otherwise I would have pursued that vocational education programme on electricity. But I said no. I don’t like this (Y_SP_G_2)

Work is a way to become independent. Previously, I only had my husband. Then I found a job, earned my money, and did what I want. That’s what I love from my job (Y_SP_G_5)

Interestingly, in two occasions interviewees elaborated on the articulation of generic and technical skills. That depended on the job. For instance, some ability to socialise was important in the hospitality sector. Foresight was also a sort of framework skills to operate a petrol station.

I found out I enjoyed socialising. That's what this training gave me. Then, I am satisfied with my new skills. I know how to take a knife, cut an onion and do what I am expected with a knife (Y_SP_G_6)

Putting gasoline is quite automatic. You choose the type, select how much, and then you do other tasks. When I leave the shop to throw the garbage, I must be careful to keep the doors closed. I have to care because there is a lot of money here (Y_SP_G_9)

It is significant that two respondents at least claimed that learning took place in a variety of settings. In their opinion, travelling or playing football posited excellent occasions for learning.

When my mother was 20, she went to the Netherlands and learnt a lot of English. It was not at school but living there (Y_SP_G_1)

Football is a responsibility of all the players. The guy who scores more goals is not more important than the other ones. Everybody is a part of the team (Y_SP_G_2)

Finally, a few young adults drew on their intercultural experience to underpin their own skills. A telling illustration of these experiences was the following story. A respondent reviewed how he transferred his selling skills from the Roma common economic activities to more standard and mainstream activities.

I came from being a street vendor. In local markets I face the public the whole day. I had to be nice and amusing to appeal buyers. That's what I did in a fish shop when I got a formal job. There I realised I am good at selling. Then, I asked myself who do I like. It is cars. So, I have to sell cars. I made my CV, looked for this job, and I got it in two months' time (Y_SP_G_10)

But the variety of learning environments was also associated with the collective family experiences of moving from one cultural context to another. Thus, Y_SP_G_8 and Y_SP_G_11 claimed they had learnt these soft skills in their own family. Another interviewee, Y_SP_G_7, retrieved traditional Moroccan wisdom in order to argue that all circumstances were good occasions to learn.

Notably, TP12 officers vindicated the intercultural skills of the local youth. In some interviews they noticed that their previous knowledge with French and English entailed a big potential for the hospitality industry. In addition, they argued previous experience with migration strengthened their social skills too.

In Málaga, interviewees reproduced a very similar pattern. In fact, only Y_SP_M_2 and Y_SP_M_6 were doubtful about their skills. The former defined himself as insecure and an introvert. The latter could hardly list her main skills. However, both of them claimed they were willing to work and thought that this attitude would eventually help them.

All the other interviewees mentioned they were willing to work. They also expected this attitude would contribute to find a job. Most of them went on by arguing that jobs would eventually be necessary to buy a house and have a family.

The ability to learn was another skill. Specifically, Y_SP_M_1, Y_SP_M_3, Y_SP_M_7 and Y_SP_M_10 claimed they were able to learn how to perform in many jobs, even without previous training.

Skills... is that I... I do not know. To me, I make you feel like it, and that I make a commitment to you; That my parao will not see me, I will not stop, even if it is sweeping the corner even

if it is. That and that to me... what I do not know, I learn it fast, to me if they put me to, I learn fast. Of course, there will be things that do not, there are things that you have to know well, that have... But that to me normally I everything I swear; I do it, rather or very badly, but I end up doing it (Y_SP_M_10)

Most students of training programmes assessed their training as appropriate to find a real job, not least because they considered the courses delivered practical lessons which responded to the requirements of the labour market.

In Málaga some young adults praised their own art skills, although none of them had planned to get some training in this area. The main reason, as they pointed out, was that artistic education was quite expensive. However, they did not rule out trying to work in something related to art in the future. Specifically, Y_SP_M_10 considered himself a better DJ than some of his friends who had had specific training. But he was pessimistic about finding a relevant job because he lacked a formal qualification. The price was an issue.

Yes, but the training for at least... are the classes... 80 euros each class. Musiluz for example, or for you to have a DJ certificate that does not mean that it is better or worse; because I have a colleague who has the certificate and not... and gets understood or not; and I know how to do the same. He knows how to connect one... you know what I want to tell you. But you have to have it, that today is not the same, now I go and I... I do not go anywhere you say, someone needs to go with the "thing", it is not the same. He goes... my friend, I go, and they catch him before, nothing else... without seeing him... because he has the certificate of Musiluz (Y_SP_M_10)

Although she felt useless when she did her first job search without any previous qualification, Y_SP_M_6 overcame that feeling when she enrolled in vocational training.

I felt useless, you know? I felt I wasn't good for nothing. I wanted to get a job and they asked for my ESO certificate, and I had nothing... (Y_SP_M_6)

Most of the interviewees highlighted that experience is one of the most important facts to enter working life. They were particularly concerned with the hours the programmes required students to engage in learning by doing. In this vein, Y_SP_M_1 made a very relevant point from her background as a master's student. She noticed that real learning mostly took place when doing a job, but the real requirements of jobs were changing all the time. For this reason, she thought adaptability was indispensable to acquire skills. The problem is that many hours of specific training do not guarantee the youth eventually had this experience.

Some young adults added that language entailed other important skills. Thus, Y_SP_M_1, Y_SP_M_4, Y_SP_M_6, Y_SP_M_7 and Y_SP_M_9 were worried about their knowledge of foreign languages because they envisioned a few opportunities in the hospitality sector. Except for Y_SP_M_4, they were women. Gender clearly impinged on this opinion, since male young adult students of carpentry and gardening seldom discussed languages.

To sum up, in both regions young adults had become aware of their skills. They were undertaking courses that led to specific qualifications, but they thought they had to be able to perform in a wider set of skills than those formally required for the qualification. They were aware that soft skills such as readiness to work and autonomy were necessary. But they also made some sophisticated points on the potential of intercultural experiences and mastery of foreign languages. Street-level professionals emphasized this issue in Girona.

Analytically, this general perception indicates that lifelong learning programmes have some effect on the regional skills ecology (see WP6 National Report for further details). In this vein, it is plausible to notice that practical activities that stimulate learning by doing contribute to match the perspective of young adults with the changing requirements of the labour market. This point posits a significant finding if read from a governance stance (GOV). However, it is also reasonable to argue that this effect may be constrained if it is only low-skilled young adults who are aware of this skills ecology. Although this report cannot account for the perspective of other young adults, the point is that this awareness may become a self-defeating asset if employers mostly assess the qualifications of the candidates to a given job. Then, if only the candidates with low qualifications stress their soft skills, this strategy may become a stigma instead of an asset.

Finally, this national report of WP5 may conclude with a more general observation, which definitely retrieves a hypothesis of the cultural political economy (CPE). This theory highlights that policies operate in the midst of constant variation of political discourses. It inquires how policy-makers select some discourses and then deploy strategies to consolidate their retention (see YOUNG ADULLLT Deliverable 2.1 for further details).

In the European Union, lifelong learning policies are a component of the European Union Europe 2020 Strategy. This Strategy is stated as follows:

“The Europe 2020 strategy is the EU's agenda for growth and jobs for the current decade. It emphasises smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity and underpin a sustainable social market economy” (European Union, 2017).

Nevertheless, when these policies are to implement the Youth Guarantee Scheme in Spain, it is noticeable that their main goals are aligned with inclusive growth but fail to contribute to either smart growth or sustainable growth. In the country smart and sustainable growth are vindicated by some local social movements but seldom associated to lifelong learning policies. Girona is a very relevant illustration. For a long time the region has staged territorial movements who challenged the economic model based on mass tourism and the extensive urban sprawl of second homes (Casademunt et al, 2006). Recently, newer social movements campaign for the need of a green economy that tackles such problems as water poor management and decarbonisation. At the time of the fieldwork, the debate was particularly intense concerning water management in Girona, Salt and Sarrià de Ter (Plataforma Aigua és Vida, 2017). However, neither the stakeholders of skills development, nor the experts in youth work nor the young adult interviewees hinted any direct or indirect connection between lifelong learning and vocational training, on the one hand, and any policy or innovation related to sustainable development, on the other hand.

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