Learning among Regional Governments

Quality of Policy Learning and Policy Transfer
in Regional Lifelong Learning Policies

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Summary

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Presentation

The "Prevalet" research programme has been designed to investigate in what ways the regional governments can upgrade the quality of policies affecting vocational education and training, and, more generally, lifelong learning through transactional cooperation and mutual learning.

This initial volume contains the first part of the final results of the research and in particular presents a model for cooperation between regional governments, simplified in comparison with the Open Method of Coordination, yet still able to support policy learning and policy transfer. A second volume contains all the empirical material, the methodological procedure and a presentation of the support system.

The proposed model is the outcome of an applied research initiative which has, over a period of two years, directly involved the regional governments of Andalusia, the Basque country, Tuscany (acting as coordinator), Vastra Gotaland, Vidin, and Wales, under the direction of Earlall and with the support of three research centres (Florence University, Örebro University and the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung). Over this period of time (2005-2007), members of the regional governments, civil servants and researchers have established a mutual learning process dealing with the policies of lifelong learning (initially only dealing with the areas of informal adult learning and the drop-out situation) and from there they moved on to the actual and effective transfer of concrete measures for the activation of the policies. This process was planned, monitored and assessed using suitable backup and observation tools. This has made it possible to gather a large quantity of empirical material on both institutional learning pathways and on the more complex routes of policy transfer and innovation, based on transnational cooperation. The complexity and the time needed for the processes of policy transfer have lent support to the idea of including prior experiments undertaken by the actual regional governments involved in the research into the empirical material. This has been enormously useful, since it has made it possible to observe the phenomenon as it develops over the long term: cases occurring over a period of more than seven years have been reconstructed. However, the cooperative and voluntary transfer procedures turned out to be smoother than expected, which means that in some cases it has

been possible to directly observe the initial phases of the progress from policy learning to policy transfer over the course of the actual Prevalet project itself.

The research concentrated mainly on the forms of cooperative and voluntary policy learning and policy transfer between regional governments, and it has been thanks to this approach that a proposal for the Soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC) has been developed. The aim of this proposal is to arrive at a procedure described via its stages of progress, which will be backed by working tools used to analyse policy and interchange information between the institutions, as well as web-based support services.

The research has taken the purpose of policy learning to be the measures of the policy, understood as the way in which the ideas and objectives of a policy are put into practice. This choice has been motivated by the consideration that, apart from the ideas, it is the measures that can more easily move from one country to another, overcoming resistance to the voluntary transfer of other objectives. An example would be the difficulty of transferring public regulations or systems, particularly in the field of education and training. The approach through measures had already been adopted by a comparative research programme promoted in 2005 by Isfol – Comparative Research on measures and actions to foster participation in Lifelong Learning in four European countries (France, Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom). Following this, also on the basis of the positive results made possible by this approach, the same method was adopted by the Youth research programme (2007), the subject of which was youth policies in the 27 countries of the EU, which concluded by providing support for the European Commission in its drafting of the flexsecurity guidelines. The same approach was also adopted by the comparative research carried out on policies relating to the older worker in Italy, Ireland and Denmark (Senior at work, 2006-2007) and in researching policies on innovation transfer (Costa della conoscenza [The Coast of Knowledge], 2006-2007), both of which were promoted by Provincia Livorno Sviluppo [Livorno Province Development].

The results of the Prevalet research mean that they can now be implemented, and this will take place by way of a activating an inter-regional mutual learning service supported by Earlall with databases fed by members of the network. Inevitably a service such as this will have greater possibilities of usage and development if the European Union is able to and wishes to promote inter-regional cooperation in the area of lifelong learning policy as well.

1. Policy learning and transfer in regional lifelong learning policies

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1.1. Subject

The context of this research is the study of the processes whereby the effectiveness of training and lifelong learning policies are improved. This covers, in particular, the area of research into the policy-making procedure adopted by the regional governments. Regional policy-making is the outcome of formalised standards and procedures, and does not depend on legal, contextual or cultural variables, or combinations thereof, which differ considerably from context to context.

The first requirement of regional policy making arises from the fact that it operates within the framework of the relative margins of autonomy deriving from the institutional architecture of the State. Clearly, these margins also differ enormously according to the degree of centralism or federalism of the State model. Whether the regional governments can create independent policy-making procedures, or will merely implement national policies, depends on such characteristics. As a consequence, the term "Regional Government" itself may have a different semantic meaning. A study carried out by the Committee of the Regions (Europäisches Zentrum für Föderalismus-Forschung, 2002: 17 et seq.) made reference to four different classification types of concepts of 'regional government' present in the Europe of 15: federal states, regionalised states, decentralised states (all at three levels) and two-level states (lacking in a regional governmental level). In this research we shall restrict ourselves to regional governments understood as: *the level of government controlled by bodies democratically elected by the people, immediately under the national government and relatively autonomous (as regards politics, legislation – at least basic level norms –, administration and finance) with regard to building lifelong learning policies.*

From the point of view of the quality management of policy-making processes, there is a difference between the processes adopted by the governments for the mandatory transfer of policies established by the central government and the policies drawn up at a regional level, whether in the framework of standards or national guidelines. In the case of compulsory policy transfer, the quality models, the processes and procedures form part of the national policy norm and are imposed via incentives and disincentives normally of financial (rewards or penalties, etc.) and moral (fame and shame, etc.) types. This is all the more accentuated the smaller the degree of vertical governance and subsidiarity. In the case of autonomous policy making, the definition of the device to be adopted depends on the regional government itself, still in the framework of the institutional norms and procedures that regulate the general action of governing (the procedure of working out strategy and policy, of decision-making, planning, programming, implementation, monitoring, assessment, etc.).

Within this procedure lies an aspect which deserves careful study and management: the introduction of elements of change/innovation into the policies governing training and lifelong learning in general. How does it happen that new measures are introduced in the field of education, post-secondary training, for example, regionally? Or new measures facilitating the access of the unemployed to training?

Understanding how to support the development of the processes of change and innovation and how to ensure that the elements of change introduced are implemented in a framework of high-level management and effectiveness is one of the objectives of this research.

The lifelong learning policy innovation procedures may be generated either locally (in an in-house fashion) or in the relationship to a range of subjects and situations into which innovation is introduced (externally). In both cases consideration must be paid to the effect of the network of relationships, or of the network of dynamic learning which has accompanied the course of the innovation of the policies. There are basically two reasons for making this choice.

In the first place it must be borne in mind that the process of innovation is still influenced by external factors and that therefore the control and management of this variable confers a higher quality on the process itself. In the second place we can hypothesise that every innovation may be seen as the development or adaptation, albeit partial, of previous policies implemented by some government, in some part of the world, at some moment in the past. Therefore the control and

management of this variable also improves the quality of the actual process, in particular because it offers the possibility of making use of the results of prior implementations and increases the possibility of predicting the effect. This is the reason why we have adopted cooperation or coordination between various regional governments in our research as our field of study and collection of empirical material. The fact that these are spread out throughout different European countries will further enrich the study.

Since our area of study consists of regional autonomous policy-making, we should concentrate above all on the progress of political understanding within the institutions, which produce innovative intentions and ideas which then generate, in turn, the processes of transfer, adaptation and absorption of the innovations themselves.

On this basis we believe it is possible to work out a detailed model of the management of the innovation of training and lifelong learning policies in general which should be based mainly on voluntary and self-governing methodologies which are able to be adapted to the institutional norms and procedures existing in each regional government. It is for this reason that we proceed in accordance with the theory that the model of a soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC) between regional governments, permanent and concentrated on essential functions, may be what is required. This will help increase the innovative capacity of the regional governments, given the fact that "in this emerging global commons, the governments which are quickest on their feet, most willing to adapt and learn, will be the ones that serve their citizens best" (Mulgan, 2003:6).

1.2. Institutional policy learning

1.2.1. Definition of some key concepts

The first question to be tackled concerns the way in which the regional governments learn or identify the innovations to be introduced in their policies and build them into their compendiums of knowledge, which may ultimately reach a position in which they may be adopted. We move on from this type of question, since the research carried out confirms the fact that institutional learning is not exclusively connected to the moment of policy transfer, but, particularly in the case of autonomous policy-making, comprises different moments. In a linear perspective, the learning process begins a long time before the occurrence of the transfer, and, clearly, proceeds in a range of forms in this phase as well.

Some researchers propose the socio-constructivist paradigm to explain institutional policy learning wherein "learning is a way of being in the world and not a way of coming to know about it" (Nedergaard:10). This approach has caused a number of authors to see the two moments of learning and transfer as a whole. The approach is better justified if framed in cases of compulsory policy learning and transfer (for example, in the European policies connected to the admission of new members into the EU). What actually happens here is that learning is revealed by the changes effectively introduced into commercial and social policies relating to human rights, etc. The problem may be posed in a different way in our research where the "transfers of ideas or programmes are underpinned by deeper and prior processes of learning" in an unmistakable way (Knoepfel & Kissling-Näf, 1998: 346, quoted in Stone: 9).

In this respect it would appear more useful to refer to what is known as the 'new institutionalism' (for example, Radaelli 2000; Freeman & Tester, 1996) who "have adopted a processual perspective which goes beyond the mechanical transfer model". (...) This approach emphasises the aspects of political life, which are taken-for-granted where actors follow rules, shared interpretations, schema and meanings (Stone:3).

The concept of policy learning still needs to be gone into in greater depth in order to better understand the meaning applied to the specific context. The term 'learning' is not particularly clear when it is required to refer primarily to the biological and cultural processes which take place in the individual when in a training situation.

One way in which this is relevant to our area of study may refer to the outcomes in terms of (substantive) learning acquired by the individuals and institutions involved in policy innovation learning processes. As a consequence we should consider the learning outcomes achieved by the individuals who have taken part in the process (and who will go on to enrich their personal knowledge or the intangible background of knowledge possessed by the organisations) from a different point of view from that of the learning achieved by the regional institutions which, however, only exist if translated into political decisions expressed in instruments of various kinds.

The processes which lead to (or accompany) the attainment of these results are made up of a series of educational and training actions explicitly aimed at and structured by the fulfilment of predetermined learning objectives, or of actions of an informal nature, simply entrusted to the dynamics of political interaction. As a consequence,

the purpose of policy learning (and the detailed model to be constructed) does not comprise individual learning, but educational and training actions whereby the institutions acquire ideas while they are being translated into political action.

In our opinion this approach is more effective for the purpose of giving "legitimacy to recourse to knowledge in decision-making processes, whereby they become more open, transparent and responsible" (Liberatore e Funowicz, 2003, quoted in Vesan, 2006:5) and so that "the cognitive processes (...would be...) reassumed within a political process which, for this reason as well, becomes more transparent and inclusive" (Vesan, 2006:4).

1.2.2. The actors

In terms of governance and, in particular, of horizontal subsidiarity, the actors involved in policy learning are identifiable with all the other players in civil society. Mulgan fairly points out that "smaller entities are more attuned to their external environment, aware that it will shape them more than they will shape it, less attached to the illusions and complacency that scale breeds. (...) they are closer to the fields where much of the best innovation is coming from: the non-profit movement, social entrepreneurs, and the businesses in the new economy. The conclusion is clear: in looking for promising approaches to social care, or housing policy, for transport, it is vital to look beyond the large western nations" (Mulgan:4). As Stone states (21), at the source of the policy learning process we often find "a transfer broker or policy entrepreneur. International organisations, think tanks, consultancies, law firms and banks often perform this role". But at the heart of governance lies the role assumed by the primary players in institutional policy, or by those who are responsible for innovation in public policy. One study concludes with the statement that "one can say that the peer reviews, which are supposed to support learning processes, are not constructed so that a learning process could be carried through on an organizational level, that is within and across ministries and states, and not only for individuals. This is so because the dissemination of documents, experiences and approaches is not followed through in any systematic way and because people with decision-making power are largely absent from the peer reviews" (Kröger, 2006:13).

At the other end of the spectrum we may quote the case of Kawaji Toshiyoshi, "the 'father of the Japanese police' who, as head of the Tokyo force, was sent to Europe in 1872 to examine how the French model could provide the basis for reform in Japan" (Westney, 1989:40-43, in Page: 3)

At the institutional level the problem consists of involving the operators driving the process of institutional innovation who are directly responsible for policy making in education and training policy. This solution makes it possible to overcome the division, even the opposition, between individuals and institutions, and hence the nexus between policy learning and policy transfer.

The key players in a regional government who underpin this nexus are represented by those to whom the task and power of "thinking the unthinkable" (Bernstein, 1990) has been entrusted, or rather by the institutional innovation operators. The nature of the individuals in question varies depending on the subject matter in hand and the level of transformative impact attained and who are essential to the political heads and their first-level officials (directors general, advisors, etc.).

1.2.3. The transnational networks of dynamic learning

Policy learning and to an even greater extent the introduction of innovative elements is always the product of an action undertaken within a network of relationships. By this we do not mean solely the totality of entities obliged by law to participate in the decision-making processes (enterprise parties, associations, etc.), but rather the formal and non-formal networks of individuals, both inside and outside the institutions, which prepare the ground for the decisions. In this respect Crouch examines the function of lobbies, seen as a reality which undermines the bases of the current model of the democratic state (Crouch, 2003). As far as the specifics of policy learning are concerned, the problem for regional governments consists of participation in the networks which produce "political awareness" and which are able to energise joint actions capable of producing innovation. This necessity is seen as even more evident at the international level, in that what is concerned here is a dimension, which in recent decades has steadily increased its own influence on local policies. This has been taking place both at a normative and cultural level, in step with the political actions of the international organisations, and at the general economic level, since the moment when the capacity of a Region to create the conditions for development and economic and social growth was sanctioned by the international investors rather than by the evaluations of the superordinate institutions.

For this reason our research has dealt solely with the role of the transnational networks. Even so, the model of soft OMC is certainly suited to cooperation between the regional governments of the same State.

In regional policy learning, the networks consist of the players involved in the processes of institutional innovation directly involved in policy making. They are, however, networks of equals, the membership of which varies according to the subject in hand, the level of technical detail attained and the time. These networks are not, in fact, permanent in nature. Their existence is related to the learning project and they remain so related, according to need, until the project is completed. This by no means implies that there are no useful institutional networks that are permanent in nature. On the contrary, such networks may constitute the vehicle that encourages the creation of networks for policy learning. These latter, however, display other characteristics: they emerge among equals in response to a shared need to develop knowledge related to political action, and they last the length of time needed to complete the task of selecting the policies to be transferred. It is because of their tendency to support the dynamic of institutional learning and to be based on an exchange of knowledge that we define them as networks of dynamic learning (an expression already adopted from Reich).

In the first place, these networks base their operations on their ability to produce learning processes within the participants, meeting the specific needs of each one: "networks are a structural framework for policy oriented learning" (Knoepfel & Kissling-Näf, 1998: 347). This means that it is not only subject-based networks, characterised by common interest, which arise within the same political ambit (lifelong learning, in our case), but knowledge exchange networks on a range of subjects also appear. In this way all the members of the network determine their own spheres of interest and receive from their partners the support that is required to that end. The metaphor of policy learning like that of policy transfer may lead to error: in neither of the two cases is there necessarily a distinction between the teacher and the learner, or between the person importing and the person exporting. Given that we are operating in the field of learning oriented towards political action, we are, for the most part, dealing with co-operative learning situations. For this reason the networks should define and share a common 'discourse': a language, a method, instruments, and organisation, etc. In this sense political dynamic learning networks may also be seen as 'epistemic communities' (Haas, 1992) from the moment when, at least to some degree, they "are founded upon 'consensual knowledge' and learning is prompted by scientific knowledge advanced by experts", and which, at least temporarily and in part, they "have similar professional beliefs and standards of judgement and share common policy concerns" (Evans and McComb, 1999). At the same time it is possible to talk about 'discourse coalitions' (Hajer, 1993), which place considerable emphasis on shared constructs and a common policy language" (Stone, 2000:16), but we shall return to this in due course.

In the second place, political dynamic learning networks are, of necessity, focussed on action. These networks are a forum in which "a process of social learning expressed through policy" (Heclo,1974: 305-06)" occurs, and Stone (10) adds that "learning occurs when policy-makers adjust their cognitive understanding of policy development and modify policy in the light of knowledge gained from past policy experience". This means that political dynamic learning networks contain within their structure, or in the transfer of policy, the main indicator for measuring success, an element which distinguishes them from other types of network (directed towards seeking or training personnel).

It is this second characteristic which makes the existence of networks essential. It is not only policy learning for which they are indispensable. The literature, meetings of various kinds and consultancy already help to circulate new ideas. But the fact that they are necessary arises at the moment in which the intention is formed to move from knowledge to action directed at policy renewal. This is where benchmarking, knowledge of the details of the solutions adopted, first hand assessment, is useful. Hence, when study at last emerges as transformative action, the need to be provided with partners with whom the procedure and future practice will be built becomes even more relevant. In the field of training policies and of lifelong learning in general there are areas in which transnational cooperation is an integral part of the same policies. Examples are the policy of mobility for reasons of study or work, or cooperation in the field of distance learning or the production of open source software, regarding which this research provides concrete case studies.

Political learning via the networks has the power to upgrade the quality and effectiveness of the successive actions of innovation and change in local policies. Depending on the way in which this is assessed, or even because of the fact that it is not assessed, it is permissible to hypothesise as to whether the probabilities of success of a political action are greater or less. For this reason the activation of political dynamic learning networks and the associated processes should be seen as part of the policy-making processes, thus endowing the raft of knowledge which underpins the political decisions with transparency and legitimacy.

1.2.4. The political fields under comparison

Depending on the choice of the policy field to be employed to initiate the policy learning process, the results achievable may vary considerably.

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Here we have associated policy learning – learning directed towards political action – with the margins of autonomy in respect of policy-making by the regional governments. This decision helps to define a more precise field of work, free of the risk of reducing the range of the action to a simple upgrading of the skills of the individuals concerned, important though that may be.

A further variable arises from the type of policies under consideration, from the moment when, as we mentioned before, policies and fields exist in which policy learning processes orientated towards the introduction of innovations or simple changes are more feasible and where the added value of transnational cooperation is more significant. The problem is particularly significant for research such as ours, which focuses on the field of lifelong learning, one of the more complex areas and, not by chance, only marginally and partially touched on by the EU treaties from Rome onwards (Varsori, 2006).

In this respect we believe it is appropriate to adopt the distinction that Mulgan makes between the three difference types of policies:

Stable policy fields
"… composed of areas where knowledge is settled; governments broadly know what works; there is a strong evidence base; and the most that can be expected is some incremental improvement. (…) The professional bodies and leading experts can generally be relied on to give good advice; we can quite easily benchmark ourselves against the best; and good innovations tend to spread fairly quickly through formal networks".

Policy fields in flux
" … belongs to areas where most people recognise that things need to change; that policies which once worked are no longer working. In these areas – a fair amount of education, welfare and pensions, the organisation of public services – there is often a great deal of fertility and experimentation. However, evidence, which is by its nature backward-looking, is often not very useful. It may reveal the weaknesses of policy. But it is unlikely to give convincing evidence about what works. The professions in these fields are often as much part of the problem as the solution, and may be resistant to criticism. In these areas comparisons are essential, but they are more like explorations which provide insights".

Inherently novel policy fields
"… consists of areas of inherent novelty: biotechnology and its regulation; ego-vernment; privacy on the net; new forms of governance at the European or global

level. No one knows for sure what works or what doesn't because these are virgin territories; the pioneers are likely to make the most mistakes; the experts will only be just ahead of the amateurs. The task of good government is to keep a very close eye on what is and isn't working, so that we can at least reduce the proportion of mistakes we make" (Mullan, 2003: 3-4)

Mullan's realism regarding the problems of innovation in educational policy is understandable. However, it is assumed, despite the strong resistance shown by various stakeholders, that lifelong learning would also perhaps be included among the "inherently novel policy fields". It is certainly an area that is largely unknown, and in respect of which there are very few people able to, for example, calculate with any degree of accuracy the weight of the free market and the kinds of policies that can guarantee a governing role for the public institutions (consider, for example, the ignorance of the OECD data revealing the marginal incidence – never more than 15% – of public finance in encouraging participation in learning for adults (Ministère de l'industrie, Statistique Canada et Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economique, 2005)

1.3. Policy learning units

1.3.1. Two purposes

With regard to the processes governing policy learning of a voluntary nature the choice of the subject of study is defined by criteria established by the "importer" on the basis of assessments based on necessity, possibility and the will of the actual institution.

There is nothing to say that such choices will not be influenced by references to external reasons, such as a comparison with the performances of other Regions, for example. But benchmarking alone is not the central subject of the learning process; it can only be an additional motivation. Nor is the solution to be found in a collection of best practices: actions worthy of respect, but which are difficult to export, when they are not selected, because they are "the ones with impressive public relations but which don't actually work" (Mulgan, 5). The hesitant judgment expressed by Arrowsmith extends to the whole machinery of the technicistic tradition: "defining 'best practice' is no easy matter, especially when there are several and potentially conflicting policy goals. Data have to be collected and collated in comparable terms, and where benchmarking is cooperative, reaching agreement on the most appropriate

bases can be difficult, especially if it involves significant changes to existing reporting arrangements. Agreement must be reached on the definition of measurable variables that deliver comparisons of like with like; the contingencies and timing of the exercise; and allocation of responsibility for the initiative and its coordination. All this is to be resolved before the issue of implementation of findings can be addressed. The process is therefore costly in terms of financial resources and time, and with no guarantee of clear benefits at the end (Arrowsmith: 320).

What is paramount in policy learning is neither benchmarking, nor best practices, but a "complex mixture of ideas, issues, compromises and practices that go to make up 'policy," (Page:4).

Having stated the matter thus, the necessity still remains, however, to identify the formal components of policy learning, those upon which the subjects involved are based.

The problem has been solved by Dolowitz in his identification of the following types of category of objectives: (i) policies, (ii) institutions, (iii) ideologies or justifications, (iv) attitudes and ideas, and (v) negative lessons (Dolowitz,1997a). Mulgan simplifies this categorisation by identifying the components, or rather the units of policy learning with 'concepts': "What spreads is a concept – or, if preferred, a policy meme – that diffuses widely through example, and in due course through a rather blunt process of natural selection. These concepts are not the same as their application. All policy ideas have to be adapted to different cultural and institutional environments, improved and reshaped until sometimes their origins are unrecognisable. But it is the concept, often in a rather pure form, that spreads. In the past generation alone, there are some striking manifestations of this: monetarism; quasi-markets for health; public service broadcasting; equal opportunities; renewable energy; regulated utilities" (Mulgan: 2).

This definition reduces the components to two main categories: on the one hand are the ideas (the concepts, the ideologies, the policies), and on the other the examples thereof, or rather the way they are applied, the instruments used to implement them and which we will define with the term "measures".

The study of the policy ideas is a process which depends on the ability of the institution to locate itself within the world of development and research, in our case into lifelong learning policies. The ability of an idea to travel (Rose: 1993) must be combined with the ability of an institution to find that idea. The history of the spread

of the idea of "lifelong learning" is worthy of attention, an idea which appeared in the first half of the nineties, and then spread rapidly, at least at the level of an idea. This is a symbolic example of how the same concept appears to be present in all national and regional policies, but the application of which varied considerably from context to context, and not only because of matters concerned with political will, but also because of the different historical stage of the development of education and training itself. Other examples come to mind, such as the concept of employees' right to receive training and education, how it developed from the forties until June 5, 1974 when at the International Labour Office General Conference, session 59, when agreement No.140, converted it into a right and provided it with a standardised formula. There are further examples of the spread of an actual idea concerning adult education during the second half of the twentieth century, or of the idea of the 'policy of demand' in learning. These examples help us to understand first and foremost how, when we consider the question of political ideas in movement, we should bear in mind that a two-fold dimension applies: that of the history of the idea, and that of its terminological and semantic variation. We find ourselves, in fact, in a field in which, depending on the country, the same meanings do not attach to the same terms, or where identical semantic content corresponds to different terms, or again where some ideas and some terms are completely absent. This latter case is particularly relevant when it is difficult to proceed to the policy transfer of measures towards where the idea that these contexts are the implementation of such measures is absent (transferring the individual learning account in a context where the idea of demand policy does not yet exist is certainly difficult, if not actually impossible).

The study of measures is the concrete area of comparison of the actions undertaken and the results achieved. It is therefore the area where analysis, comparison and assessment are more feasible and the subsequent transfer simpler. This is because a measure may be seen as the specific ideal purpose of an exercise in "lesson drawing – 'searching' for sources of lessons, 'making a model' of how the policy or practice works in situ, 'creating a lesson' by assessing what can be extracted from the practice in the exporter jurisdiction to produce the desired results in the importer jurisdiction and 'prospective evaluation' of the way in which the policy or practice are likely to work in the importer jurisdiction and adaptations needed to make it work" (Rose,1993, quoted in Page: 9)

1.3.2. The concept of measures

The concept of measures is widely used in the field of labour policy to identify the instruments by means of which actions are undertaken for the purpose of impro-

ving the flexibility of the labour market and maintaining the income of the unemployed, etc. It is also used in the ESF Regulations and planning documentation where "measure" is seen as "the instrument whereby (a priority) is implemented over a period of years and justifies the financing of the operations".

It has only recently been adopted in the area of education and training. We have adopted the term "measure" here instead of its possible synonyms such as provision or stipulation. The reasons being that it refers in a more explicit way to a particular action intended to achieve an effect and to the objective of ensuring that the results achieved are measurable.

Measures are seen here as the components of a policy through which the policy acts on a range of factors upon which it is intended to act (the beneficiaries, the roles of the various players, the costs of the education and training initiatives, conditions of access thereto, the tasks involved in the systems concerned, the categories of activities accepted, content, instruments implemented, etc.). In this sense, measures comprise an action model which gives coherence to the various factors recorded. Hence study permits paid for by employees constitute an example of a measure, which defines in detail all the factors listed above.

The need to pursue more objectives gives rise to the addition of more measures, each of which aims at producing complementary effects. A study grant is a simple measure, but grows when, for example, it is incorporated into a complex of coherent and related measures (study loans, accommodation, etc.) which together comprise the policy of the right to university study. The specific effects of a measure are determined by the relationship it has with other measures.

As we said above, a measure is intended to determine the model of interaction between the various components of a situation, such as the type of training designed for the top management of a company, the payment of the direct costs, the bodies authorised to provide it, the research and innovation plans of the company itself and career development. To perform these functions, the measures operate on the pedagogical device acting in every type of context, whether formal, non-formal or informal: the place of work, the training centre, the employment centre (Bernstein, 1990).

With the concept of the pedagogical device we identify the explicit and implicit rules which precisely govern the relationships between the various components of a context (persons, training activities, systems, etc.) The rules which have a determinant weight over the others are those of a distributive nature. It is the

distributive-type rules that determine who can transmit something, to whom and under what conditions, and, moreover, who may have access to the "thinkable" and the "unthinkable", in fact within what period of time it will already have been reproduced and the effects are foreseeable and to what extent it assumes the nature of the probable and incorporates innovative processes within a company, an association, in whatever context. In the final analysis, the distributive rules, aside from access, "control the possibilities of the unthinkable and who can think it."

From this we can draw two consequences: in the first place we can state that the measures of the policy define distributive rules above all; in the second place that there are various categories of measure (classified here according to their function in allowing access to the "thinkable" or the "unthinkable").

Assuming the measure as the minimum unit for the study of a policy helps us to isolate the individual rules of the device of which the measure forms a part and should facilitate for our benefit the assessment of the effects, both at the level of the specific measures and at that of the combination of measures.

This is an approach the European Union has adopted in respect of new perspectives for the rational management of education and training policies (European Commission, 2005). And this has occurred in the wake of the initiatives taking place beforehand at UNESCO (Bélanger and Federighi, 2000), then within the OECD (1996 and 2005), the World Bank (World Bank, 2002), the ILO (2003) and then ISFOL-Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione dei Lavoratori – Institute for the Development of Worker Training, 2006).

1.3.3. The policy learning method

The problem arising with policy learning method immediately reveals a two-fold requirement: on the one hand, the need to adopt an open approach to the quest (rather than search), and on the other the need to guarantee a device that permits the communication, the collection and the organisation of results of use for political action.

The initial methodological orientation is a response to the fact that policy learning appears as a study that has been thoroughly completed: understanding how to improve one's own performance. In these cases what prevails in the final analysis is a kind of "Methodological opportunism (which) selects constructional tests that fit specific analysis, and ignores the evidence that can be provided by using other

criteria that do not match the expectations of the analyst" (Croft, 2001: 45). The policy-making players who form a part of the network for the purpose of understanding which ideas and which policies are worthy of consideration are not concerned with the formal coherence of their procedure, nor can they be constrained to operate within such a method, even if it is seen as the most suitable with regard to the subject.

The dilemma is not unlike that faced by Solow in Stockholm, on the occasion of his *Lecture to the memory of Alfred Nobel* (1987), when, on the subject of economic research, he noted that the gathering of historical data series "does not provide a critical experiment. (...) we have no choice but to take seriously our own direct observations of the way economic institutions work. There will, of course, be arguments about the *modus operandi* of different institutions, but there is no reason why they should not be intelligible, orderly, fact-bound arguments. This sort of methodological opportunism can be uncomfortable and unsettling; but at least it should be able to protect us from foolishness".

In our case it is the nature of policy learning – autonomous and voluntary and highly suited to the action – which inevitably displaces it into the area of methodological opportunism where, given any standard whatsoever, however "basic" or "necessary" it may be for science, circumstances always arise in which it is convenient not only to ignore the standard, but to adopt its opposite. For example, there are circumstances under which it is advisable to introduce, develop and defend ad hoc hypotheses, or hypotheses that contradict well-established and universally-accepted experimental results, or hypotheses the content of which is reduced in comparison with alternative hypotheses in existence which are empirically adequate, of, again, internally-contradictory hypotheses (Feyerabend, 1975)

The methodological orientation serves to offset the uncertainties of methodological opportunism via the definition of shared methods and instruments in the support of co-operative and transformational learning.

The starting point is the adoption of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) launched with the Lisbon strategy created "by avoiding centralised supranational governance, the OMC shall enable European politics to effectively deal with strong national diversity" (Commission, 2002). But at the same time, this search aims to define a "soft" model, one which is capable of supporting the policy learning and policy transfer processes between the Regions in a more effective way.

The OMC was defined by the Portuguese Presidency in its conclusions from the European Council as a method involving a specific set of elements:

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

As De la Porte, Pochet and Room claim (2001: 302) "The OMC can be characterized as a 'post-regulatory' approach to governance, in which there is a preference for procedures or general standards with wide margins for variation, rather than detailed and non-flexible (legally binding) rules". The establishment of the OMC is based on the practice of benchmarking, peer review, cyclical follow-up of results and built-in feed-back mechanisms.

Radaelli, one of the researchers who has contributed most to the development of this concept and the OMC model, locates it in the framework of the process of "Europeanisation" guided by "Soft law relates to rules of conduct that are not legally enforceable but none the less have a legal scope in that they guide the conduct of the institutions, the member states and other policy participants" and which advance a much more voluntary and non-hierarchical process (Bulmer and Radaelli, 2004:7-8). The comparison offered by the authors with other models of governance shows how the OMC is characterised by its orientation towards coordination, policy exchange, and the adoption of horizontal relationships methods (see fig. 1 from Bulmer and Radaelli).

However, the adoption of the OMC in intra-regional cooperation cannot be reduced to mere transposition. The initial problem derives from the fact that the way it is currently being developed is connected to experiments mainly involving the national levels, excluding in particular regional governments from the lifelong learning field, and including actual decision makers only in rare cases. This has certainly pushed it further in a technicistic direction (Delbridge et al. 1995; Tronti 1998; Schmid et al. 1999; Arrowsmith and Sisson 2001) and has not improved its relationship with policy transfer to the extent that some authors have described the

MODE OF GOVERNANCE	TYPE OF POLICY	ANALYTICAL CORE	MAIN MECHANISM
Negotiation	Any of those below	Formation of EU policy	Vertical (uploading)
Hierarchy	Positive integration	Market-correcting rules; EU policy templates	Vertical (downloading)
Hierarchy	Negative integration	Market-making rules; absence of policy templates	Horizontal
Facilitated co-ordination	Co-ordination	Soft law, OMC, policy exchange	Horizontal

Fig. 1 – Governance, policy and the mechanisms of Europeanisation

phenomenon in terms of the development of 'audit cultures' (Strathern, 2000) or even an 'audit society' (Power, 1997).

The solution lies in its diffusion and in its contemporary operational simplification to policy learning and to voluntary policy transfer between regional governments.

To this end research has aimed at the identification of the substantial elements of the OMC, that is, those which are essential for achieving the objective of voluntary policy transfer. This choice does not exclude the study of best practices – including with the contribution of ethnographic methods – and does not even exclude recourse to the most refined method of benchmarking based on historical series of data. Since learning OMC is not an end in itself, it needs to be subjected to a process of simplification to increase its functionality.

We hypothesise that the essential components of OMC in the policy learning phase may be identified in the following:
- regulatory mechanisms related to knowledge and meaning-making (Jacobsson, 2002: 14). These components refer to those social mechanisms which regulate the possibility of producing shared learning practices, mechanisms of the argumentative or analytical type, cooperative discussions and analytical practices which involve the various players and which go beyond epistemic communities (Vesan, 18), understood as communities of experts. "The discursive regulatory mechanisms I will look at include joint language-use (...); the working out of common classifications and common operationalisations

(indicators); the building of a common knowledge base (...); the strategic use of comparisons and evaluations; the systematic editing and diffusion of knowledge and evaluation results, combined with social pressure (...) and time pressure. The effectiveness of the non-binding regulatory mechanisms increases if combined with various types of pressure" (Jacobsson, 15). Furthermore, "language-use is important because it functions as to steer thought and focus attention, i.e. to frame conceptions of reality. The establishment of common language use and an interpretative framework is an achievement at the level of policy thinking" (Jacobsson, 17).

- the identification of some key steps by means of which it is advisable that the process be revealed. In the case of policy learning, we can hypothesise that the essential phases correspond to those appropriate to the political response to a social demand for education and training (Federighi, 2006), in other words:
  - expressions of the policy learning demand based on possibility, need and the will to make innovations in regional policy
  - access to the policy learning opportunities and in particular to dynamic learning networks
  - management of co-operative learning relationships within the networks
  - application of the learning outcomes in terms of modification/innovation of regional policies
- the availability of instruments which can be used to orientate and organise one's own course of knowledge and action. This is the weakest aspect particularly in the field of training and lifelong learning in general, because of the low level of investment in specialised research into the policies in the sector. The essential instruments in support of policy learning may be limited to the following:
  - Updated databases which allow online benchmarking on some specific indicators. With good reason Koellreuter holds that "Regional benchmarking and continuous comparison with the competition require a collective readiness to keep on learning at all levels. It helps if changes in the relevant environment of the Region, and particularly those in competing Regions, are perceived. This improves the Region's ability to develop a vision of its own and to put the framework conditions called for by that vision in place with the necessary speed. Finally, it makes monitoring the effects of the decisions taken that much easier" (Koellreuter: 9). The problem is that this type of service does not exist at European level and all that is available are some regional networks, and even they exist only in a very limited way) for example, the IBC database dedicated to the European Alpine Space Regions).

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– Databases which can be updated in an acceptable period of time on the outcomes of policies and the individual measures adopted by the various governments at the different levels. Defining standard or reference points with respect to different aspects, objectives and effects of certain measures or policies (De La Porte: 25) is an essential component of OMC. Instruments for "monitoring and "exchanging information publicising performance", "monitoring mechanisms" and on policy measures" are also seen as crucial by other authors (Héritier: 6 and 12). At the methodological level a number of researchers have striven for years to create instruments which aid comparisons (such as the ISCED research programme). The problem is that these indicators are not used for the systematic collection of statistics and the assessment thereof.

Rose (1993) Lesson drawing	Owen (2002) Process benchmarking steps	Héritier (2002) Development and implementation by voluntary accords	Jacobsson (2004) Discursive regulatory mechanisms	Prevalet (2007) Soft OMC
"Searching" for sources of lessons	Deciding what to benchmark	**Instruments:** target development plus timetables;	**Joint language-use** (key concepts and discourse)	Policy learning Institutional motivation
"Making a model" of how the policy or practice works in situ	Who to involve	Definition of contributions to reaching the target;	Working out of **common classifications and common operationalisations** (indicators)	Selection of pathways for institutional learning
"Creating a lesson" by assessing what can be extracted from the practice in the exporter jurisdiction to produce the desired results in the importer jurisdiction	Understanding the existing process	Monitoring mechanisms;	Building of a common knowledge base (including collection and standardisation of statistics)	Selection and analysis of measures
"Prospective evaluation" of the way in which the policy or practice are likely to work in the importer jurisdiction and adaptations needed to make it work	What information do you need? Devising your questionnaire	Sanctions in case of non-compliance.	**Strategic use of comparisons and evaluations**	Choice of the model for policy transfer

Rose (1993) Lesson drawing	Owen (2002) Process benchmarking steps	Héritier (2002) Development and implementation by voluntary accords	Jacobsson (2004) Discursive regulatory mechanisms	Prevalet (2007) Soft OMC
	Choosing a benchmarking partner	**Actor involvement and participatory structure:** targets and contributions set solely by private actors (self-regulation);	**Systematic editing and diffusion of knowledge and evaluation results,** combined with social pressure (peer pressure) and time pressure	**Policy transfer:** Setting up of institutional conditions for policy transfer
	First contact, Before the visit	Targets and contributions set jointly by private and public actors (co-regulation).	**Review, evaluation and control and temporal disciplining** ('deadlinification of practice')	Policy transfer implementation
	During the visit, Collating, analysing the information and planning			Institutionalisation and follow up
	Making changes and Review			

Fig. 2. Main components in some pathway models of policy learning and policy transfer

1.4. Policy transfer between institutions

1.4.1 Two complementary definitions of voluntary policy transfer

The scientific literature contains a number of terms referring to policy transfer, such as 'band-wagoning' (Ikenberry, 1990), 'policy borrowing' (Cox, 1999) or 'policy shopping' (Freeman, 1999) and 'systematically pinching ideas' (Schneider & Ingram, 1988), or 'rational shopping', among which everybody chooses that which best meets their needs. (Bennett 1991; Westney 1987). From a historical perspective, policy transfer accompanies all the actions of colonial expansion or the widening of the borders of a country; this was what powered the spread of Roman Law throughout all the cities taken

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over by ancient Rome and which made it possible for an Iberian or a Celt to declare *Civis romanus sum.*

It would seem that the process of Europeanisation has something in common with this past. The concept of Europeanisation refers to the progressive process of convergence and complementarity which should guide the institutional logic of the European integration process. The EU's institutional impact on national policies, politics and policies is a modern and diffused form of policy transfer exercised in an intensive way in respect of the countries, which are candidates to become members of the Union. In those areas in which member countries have reached an understanding in favour of convergence and complementarity, policy transfer becomes compulsory. It is not by chance that a study of the Czech Republic's process of becoming a member of the Union reads: "from all we know about the pre-accession strategy, the European Commission is certainly the dominant agent of transfer in this adaptation process (Schüttpelz, 13).

In our field, however, it is impossible to speak of the Europeanisation of training and lifelong learning policies in general; "the Europeanisation of social policy does not seem to lie in the institutional logic of the integration process" (Schüttpelz, 2). It is also for this reason that our research only deals with voluntary policy transfer, that is, transfer decided freely and rationally, in our case, by the regional governments concerned.

Before adopting a definition of the concept, we should, however, again consider the fact that "the policy transfer metaphor implies a direct exchange process between exporting and importing countries. However, there can be transfer agents that are not based in or identified with either the importing or exporting jurisdiction but which facilitate the exchange between a number of politics" (Stone, 21).

On this subject our research has shown how policy transfer undertaken in a co-operative way, carried out via the shared creation of policies and measures so far not in existence in any of the partner governments may constitute the most effective and rapid form of transfer.

For this purpose, the definition which we adopt in this research makes reference to two types of voluntary policy transfer. The first relates to policy transfer understood as "the transposition of policies and/or practices *already in operation* in one jurisdiction to another" (Page, 2). The second is understood as *co-operative policy transfer,* connected to the introduction of innovation in the policies and measures of a regional government, with a view to their total or partial incorporation, carried

out by means of joint planning and implementation, peer monitoring and the harmonisation of the progressively introduced changes.

1.4.2. The specific components of policy transfer

The components of policy transfer, in theory, are the same as policy learning: on the one hand the ideas (the concepts, ideologies and policies), on the other, the measures (how they are implemented, the instruments used in implementation). In actual fact, however, we should bear in mind the fact that these components change their connotations the moment in which they come into play, that they move towards the innovation of a political system.

"In the study of transfer, ascertaining precisely what was borrowed is far more difficult to determine *(...we are again faced with a)* complex mixture of ideas, issues, compromises and practices that go to make up "policy" (Page: 4). Including in the case in which we are dealing with a simple case of the transfer of a policy from one country to another, the imported object loses many of its original characteristics because of the way it is slotted into another economic and social context. The example is given of the opposing functions, which the introduction of a measure such as the training voucher may assume depending on the context: democratisation of individual rights of access to training, or abandonment of the citizen to the dynamics of the free market in education and training.

Turning to the concept of the pedagogical device (Bernstein, 1990) we may take into consideration the *rules of recontextualisation* by means of which is determined the process whereby the learning content is grafted "onto a regulatory discourse which dominates it, recontextualises it within a predefined order, relationship and identity." This order corresponds to the system of roles and powers that govern the process of the transfer of measures (the rules, the relationships with local authorities, etc.).

This statement leads us to the consideration that, in reality, the object is only formally the same. In reality it has changed. In policy transfer the real object consists of the policies and measures of lifelong learning of the country into which the innovations are being introduced. The idea and the original measure disappear and are replaced by the policy decisions, the institutional, managerial and administrative decisions, the ideologies and constructed justifications, the attitudes and ideas that accompany the introduction of innovation in the regional and local context.

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This consideration also has consequences for the identification of the subjects of policy transfer. Here the main players change and go back to being those of regional Governance, the management of the systems and of the services which may come to be incorporated, if and when necessary, by the transnational partners. The main policy transfer players are those who should share and participate in the choices to be made regarding the adoption of the new policies and measures (local governments, business partners, regional institutions) and those who should acquire the skills required by the implementation of the innovation introduced.

1.4.3. The process and the instruments

The process of policy transfer is essentially a process whereby an innovation is introduced into a political system. It is only in compulsory policy transfer situations that we find an object assumed to be unchangeable and where the political system into which the innovation is being introduced is called upon to adapt. In our case, however, the original, pre-defined object loses its centrality and attention comes to focus on the process of regional policy making.

In this respect Rose (1993: 30) proposes a categorisation of five different types of learning: at the one extreme is direct copying, where the programme or policy is transferred lock, stock and barrel from one jurisdiction to another; at the other extreme is "inspiration" according to which a policy in one jurisdiction is based on an idea identified in another. In between these two extremes come "adaptation", "creating a hybrid" and "synthesis", where "hybrid" implies that the innovation is preceded by aspects of policy or pre-existing measures, "synthesis" that the question is partly of copying, partly adapting policies or measures, and "inspiration" that all that has happened is that some suggestions have been garnered from the experiences of others, and that the policies or measures have then been created without further interrelationships.

To these five types we have added the "co-operative policy transfer", relating to a method of transfer in which all the governments involved cooperate in the synchronised introduction into their systems of a new policy or measure.

As we have stated previously, in all these cases the process is identified with that of normal policy-making, with the sole difference in respect of co-operative policy transfer that a direct participation of the partners from outside the Region must be involved at some stage in the procedure.

For these reasons we have highlighted the following components of the transfer process as essential:

- Creation of institutional conditions for transfer
- The choice of the process for the transfer (Copying, adaptation, creating a hybrid, synthesis, cooperative model)
- Decision-making process of the transfer
- Implementation of the transfer
- Institutionalisation and follow-up

In Chapter 3 we shall come back to all of the above to provide detailed analysis and empirical references.

Regarding the duration of the process it is important to consider that "policy transfer may take place over more extended time periods. One of the most significant instances of transfer for the modern European state, the "reception" of Roman Law took centuries (Koschaker, 1966). More recently, the adoption of trends such as liberalisation and "new public management" are observed over many years rather than a single point in time (Lawton 1999, Wright 1995). In this respect, Page notes that "the shorter the time period, the more likely an innovation is likely to appear as an alien import; over a longer time period the innovations become domesticated as the relationship between established institutions and policies shapes their development" (Page: 5).

Obviously, all this depends on the complexity of the innovation introduced in the light of the stage of development of the context in which it will operate (eg. demand policy or one of its measures may be imported only if there exists a sufficiently developed supply policy). In our model we entrust to regional policy making the function of protecting the local system from unsuitable transfers, and, at the same time, we have entrusted policy learning with the task of "understanding the conditions under which policies or practices operate in exporter jurisdictions and whether and how the conditions which might make them work in a similar way can be created in importer jurisdictions" (Page:2).

In the matter of the instruments of policy transfer we consider only those directly connected with the function of creating of moral obligations or reciprocal duties of cooperation.

In the European experience of obligatory transfers relating to the pre-access stage of the EU membership candidate countries one of the instruments adopted in labour policy, is, for example, the *Joint Assessment of Employment Policy Priorities (JAP)*. The JAP represents the short-term priorities while preparing for accession,

"an agreed set of employment and labour market objectives necessary to advance the country's labour market transformation, to make progress in adapting the employment system so as to be able to implement the Employment Strategy and to prepare it for accession to the European Union. The signatures of the JAP represent the main organizations involved in this adaptation process – the DG Employment of the European Commission and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs" (Schüttpelz, 2004:15).

The Regional Action Plans prepared by the regional governments responsible for the planning of the European Social Fund have similar characteristics in the sense that they constitute the planning instrument subject to acceptance on the part of the European Commission, which is able to implement the actions and resources provided at the regional scale.

This, however, lies within the framework of compulsory policy transfer, while as far as voluntary policy transfer is concerned, the instrument that may take on a specific supporting function comprises the bilateral or multilateral agreements stipulated between two or more regional governments. The function of this type of instrument is to define reciprocal duties in respect of: a specific policy or a specific measure, the objectives to be sought, the reciprocal tasks which each of the parties assumes, the process that will be followed to implement the agreement, the validity and implementation periods.

Our research suggests that these agreements give rise to successive implementation plans though which the specific reciprocal duties are defined in terms of the support that each party must offer the other, shared tasks (monitoring, assessment, etc.) and the implementation times foreshadowed. Both cases concern instruments that have demonstrated their validity, particularly in the framework of the category types of co-operative policy transfer.

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2. Trans-Regional policy learning and policy transfer in practice

Carina Abréu

Introduction

This chapter describes the steps involved in achieving knowledge-driven development and change in a trans-regional perspective. The chapter's different sections describe the process leading from learning to transfer, which concerns how, when and by what means the transition can be made from policy learning to policy transfer. The case illustrated concerns collaboration between regional administrations and their actors in a European perspective. The chapter is divided into sections in order to clearly illustrate the steps taken, the tools used and the results obtained. The case studies from various regional governments that took part in the Prevalet research are presented as exemplifying steps in the process. The utility of the tools identified through the research and which aim to make the learning and transfer process more effective and quality-based has been confirmed through the research itself, and we believe that they may be applied to the learning and transfer process of both content and results in a wide range of areas.

The methodological framework follows the statements made in chapter 1, which give an overview of how collaboration between institutions on regional levels and those on local levels such as municipalities can be enriched by letting them share experiences, ranging from simple ideas to whole packages of measures and parts of systems designed to deal with various activities and policy changes in the field of lifelong learning, in a way systematically guaranteed to be effective and deliver good quality.

The first part of this chapter describes the basic conditions identified for institutions, such as regional governments for setting up policy learning processes in practice and how to incorporate new priorities. The second part focuses on how the transition to policy transfer takes place.

The basic purpose of the project as a whole is to strengthen regional collaboration within Europe and to make it more flexible, qualitative and effective by allowing different Regions to share with each other the factors of their success in carrying out the tasks laid on them by their citizens and by society.

All the empirical data on which the description rests are extracted from the experiments implemented during the Prevalet research itself. Some data come from case studies on previous experiences made by the participating Regions.

The participating Regions in the Prevalet research were the Region of Tuscany, The Vidin Region, The Region of Southern Denmark (Vejle County), Wales, the Region of Andalucía, the Region of Västra Götaland and the Basque country. We thank them for all the work, commitment and for the results, some of which are presented in this chapter.

2.1 Policy Learning

2.1.1 Institutional Motivation for Trans-Regional Policy Learning

a. Definition
The concept of institutional motivation refers to the elaboration and communication of reasons inducing an institution to initiate a process of policy learning. Institutional motivation describes the background and the intentions, which, in our view, constitute necessary and fundamental conditions for initiating a process to establish a partnership network for learning and transfer between institutions on regional and/or local levels that aims to define and develop learning priorities. The definition of learning priorities in accordance with the expectations of regional government based on a process of policy learning and policy transfer is a function of the institutional motivation as well as its outcome.

b. Factors
Institutional motivation is influenced by factors that directly affect a regional government's entering into a process of policy learning and transfer.

On the basis of our empirical material we may distinguish three factors:
- Internal
- External
- Unknown (the X-factor)

Summarily, the organisation needs to make a two-way analysis:
- From the outside in (environment, inhabitants, users, clients and interested parties)
- From the inside out (vision, goals, ideas, culture, staff and professional and political leadership)

b.1 Internal Factors

The internal factors imply that the results of decision-making and management are the regional governments' responsibility. This means that the regional system is working and possesses the following functions:

1. The institution is results-oriented and goal-oriented.
   This means that the institution has well-developed instruments for evaluation, follow-up and analysis of results obtained in various areas of policy. These form the basis for future budget priorities and use of resources. It implies focusing on results and on the human, financial and organisational resources required.

2. The institution has a vision for the future.
   A well-developed and documented vision of a desired future situation in a longer-term perspective includes definite expectations based on the results of earlier achievements. Expectations can also be expressed as effects of policy and be followed up through results analyses.

3. The institution has a well-developed strategy aimed at its vision.
   Political will and professional skills within the institution are fundamental to the development of feasible and innovative strategies based on factual situations, results achieved and the degree of accomplishment of goals. A strategy is an intent on the basis of which priorities are defined and resources are collected. The strategic plan is essential, which also forms the basis for realising the vision and defining the steps by which it is implemented.

4. The institution is flexible, creative and inquisitive. It is prepared to make exceptions and to implement unexpected solutions for achieving its goals.

5. The institution has the knowledge and the ability enabling it to see complementarily in apparent incompatibility.

This last point relates to a leadership and management tool that concerns own collection of data and other sources, implying a systematic monitoring and analysis of the environment. In recent years, authorities, businesses, municipalities

and Regions, as well as certain politicians and elected representatives, have shown increasing interest in such 'environmental scanning'. Environmental scanning implies gathering information from various sources and drawing conclusions from it with the aim of orienting oneself in the present in order to become more competitive in the future. On the basis of and with the help of such information the organisation is able to understand and prepare for what will happen in the future. The question is what information politicians and civil servants need in order to promote development. How is it found and how are observations interpreted? Finally, what decisions can be made on the basis of the information? We hold that political as well as professional commitment in several areas is required in order to orientate ourselves in our complex environment.

The method we suggest takes into account differences of location, language and culture, which are often experienced as obstacles to the learning and transfer of systems, content and possible results from other nations/Regions in Europe and the rest of the world.

The institutional tools corresponding to this process can be of a general or of a specific kind. The example below comes from the "Piani di Indirizzo" (Regional Guideline Plans) of the Tuscany Region, approved by the regional parliament on the basis of a process of concertation involving all social partners. The document, covering a period of three years, states that trans-national cooperation is embraced as a goal of regional policy in the field of lifelong learning, labour, and research (see Box 1).

Box 1

Policies for Trans-Regional Cooperation Opted for in the Regional Plan of the Tuscany Region – General and Specific Aims

General Aim – To develop the international dimension of education, training and labour policies with the aim of contributing to the construction and enlargement of the European Union and of facilitating the mobility and exchange of citizens and of players in the integrated system.
This general aim is being pursued through distinct lines of intervention deriving from the following specific aims:
Specific Aim 1
To promote, to both educational and professional ends, the international mobility of individual citizens and of players in the integrated system and to promote the construction of networks for the sharing of knowledge.

Source: Tuscany Region, 2006

Carina Abréu

b.2 External Factors

By external factors we mean input coming from the national and international context. The empirical data drawn from the Prevalet research enables us to distinguish between four specific factors (leaving aside general factors such as economic competition):

b.2.1 Legal and Financial Incentives

The new regulations for the 2007-2013 ESF (European Social Fund) programme involve a very special prioritisation of collaboration between Regions within the EU. In article 6, the trans-regional dimension is also considered, and this will naturally have great impact on further regional collaboration in Europe. Article 6 of the new programme is quoted below, (see Box 2).

Box 2

REGULATION (EC) No 1081/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999

3.6. The ESF shall also support trans-national and interregional actions in particular through the sharing of information, experiences, results and good practices, and through developing complementary approaches and coordinated or joint action.

Source: www.esf.se

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b.2.2 Information, Research, Statistics and Benchmarking Services in the field of Lifelong Learning Policies

The definition of priorities requires data set within historical, present-day and future perspectives. Information, research results and statistics obtained from lifelong learning are, just in part, available on both the national and the European level. That's probably why, in our research, there isn't empirical evidence about the utilisation of these kinds of sources (probably due to the lack of comparable data at regional level). In any case, we cannot exclude that an awareness of the existing elements of information and knowledge have had an influence on the institutional motivation to cooperate (see Box 3).

This kind of service must be systematised and managed if it is to serve as a tool for policy makers and decision-makers to modify priorities. In order to facilitate policy learning and policy transfer, Earlall through the Prevalet research is constructing its own website in the form of a database and specialised research engine that

Box 3

LIFE-LONG LEARNING PARTICIPATION RATES 2005 AND EVOLUTION

Life-long learning. The percentage of the population aged 25-64 in education or training.
Life-long learning refers to persons aged 25 to 64 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question 'participation in education and training'

**Life-Long Learning Partic.Rate
Total 2005**

Region	Rate
PAIS V	12,65
ANDAL	9,50
EU-25	10,23
TOSC	6,91
VASTREG	32,42
WWALE	24,42
EASTW	27,21
DENM	27,40
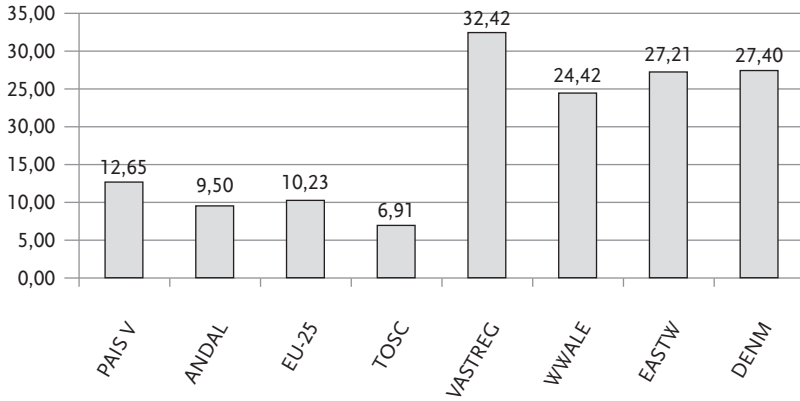
European objective for 2010. 12.5 %
Note: *Break in series 2003 Västrag, Wales, Denmark, 2004 Toscana, 2005 Basque, Andalucia due to methodological reasons.

Source: Josu Sierra, Prevalet research 2006

includes and finds data from all the participants in the network of Regions, which can be used for learning in the home Region.

Comparable research about the future and future trends in the regional dimension is nowadays a missing support for policy learning. The vision expectation of the future of the Region is an important part of institutional motivation.

b.2.3 Network of Regional Governments

Institutional motivation is a result of interactions taking place in formal and informal networks developed for the sharing of ideas and of network marketing, possessing functions designed to develop the institutions involved through processes of learning from others.

The network built through Prevalet has been an informal network created inside a formal network called Earlall. The network has its own statutes (see Box 4), which facilitate the transfer of measures between the Regions as well as the actual learning process.

Box 4

Statute of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning, (Earlall)

Art. 3
The Association, which has no lucrative purposes, aims to reach a high degree of collaboration between its members in the field of the lifelong learning policies and to establish close cooperation with European Union institutions and with other international organisations and public institutions throughout the world.

Source: www.Earlall.com

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b.3 The X-Factor

The third factor influencing institutional motivation is the so-called X-factor, a factor that takes the unknown and unforeseen into account but which may lead results in a highly unexpected direction. This means that the X-factor should be taken into account and that unlikely, unforeseen and sometimes entirely unthinkable ideas should be allowed entry into the process at an early stage. The so-called X-factor implies that account should be taken of the unaccountable, or unforeseeable. The unknown is – in an increasing number of contexts – becoming a factor that simply must be taken into account. This chapter is not directly concerned with the X-factor, but it openly accepts the fact of unexpected outcomes of change. This also means that a knowledge of economics is not sufficient for conducting analyses of the environment based on the unknown and the unthought-of, and that knowledge of structural change, historical conflict and war, consumption patterns and demand for products, touching sociological, educational, pedagogic and psychological domains, is also needed.

In Prevalet research the empirical evidence is based on the fact that the policy learning and transfer planned could shift between fields (see Box 5).

Box 5	
Differences among planned and implemented actions	
Planned Policy learning	Implemented Policy transfer
1. Drop out 2. Non formal adult education	1. E-Learning 2. Mobility 3. Entrepreneurship
Source: Prevalet research, 2006	

Conclusions

These three factors (internal, external and the X-factor) influence regional governments in their definition of priorities concerning learning and learning objectives.

According to the Prevalet research, the main outcome of this typology can be described as follows:

1. Improvement and modernisation of vocational and educational training.
2. Cost reduction through economics of scale (such as trans-regional cooperation in the field of shared investment or sharing of the learning object in the field of distance learning).
3. Implementation of appropriate policies where trans-regional cooperation is inevitable (trans-regional mobility for learning or work purposes).

2.1.2 Selection of a Pathway for Institutional Learning

There are different ways to learn from others and to transfer systems and content. In our view, there are three different options for selecting a pathway for institutional learning: the unilateral, emulative and cooperative pathways (see Box 6). These involve various degrees of cooperation, and the defining difference lies in whether the exchange is mutual or one-sided. The three different pathways also embody three different perspectives on what constitutes the motivation for and the legitimacy of a concentrated and focused effort for change. The consequences concerning both competitive and innovative power are also different, of course.

a. Unilateral Process

The unilateral expression of interest takes place when an institution unilaterally defines the policy object to be investigated with the aim of transferring it to its own

Box 6				
Petways for institutional learning				
Models of expression of interest:	Object	Tools for communication	Network	Partnership
Unilateral	Policy measure	Information	Information	Not needed
Emulative	Results/Impact	Benchmarking	Collaboration	Not formalised
Cooperative	Policy measure	Agreement	Coordination	Formalised
Source: *Prevalet research, 2006*				

system. Unilateralism implies a one-way transfer of parts of or of the whole of the policy. It usually takes place through various forms of collaboration between institutions, but it can also take place through studies of the policy and of the single measures carried out on one side.

In this case the definition of the object is based on internal processes influenced by a policy maker's knowledge, analytical abilities and priorities for change. We may call it a unification of the information, knowledge and analysis contained within a given system.

In the unilateral perspective the functioning of a network, to which the policy maker may or may not belong, becomes useful only through the knowledge the policy maker already possesses. In collaborating with the network, new pathways and openings will appear allowing further knowledge and information to be acquired about the learning object given priority, but it is a one-way importation.

The construction of a partnership is not crucial in this model. It merely affects access to basic information concerning the policy object.

The tools required are those that can meet the process's needs for documentation and development.

The outcome of a unilateral process is simply the analysis of what others have done and achieved and learning from it. Increased competitive power is aimed for without taking an innovative attitude. The focus is not on creating or participating

in a network or on creating partnerships, but on the institution's need for change. The motive behind the process is often the need for a short-term solution in order to address a problem or an unexpected and undesirable outcome of policy. The aim is to remedy weak and ad-hoc procedures by administrative monitoring without the explicit goal of enhancing learning.

b. Emulative Process

The more emulative expression of interest consists of a regional government's defining the policy object to be investigated on the basis of a comparison of the results of its own policies and the results of other regional governments' policies in the same field.

The aim is to enhance learning processes leading to change.

The object is defined in a benchmarking process, or a structured and systematised process of comparison. We refer not just to benchmarking in the strict sense, but also to a process that places discourse about quantitative indicators inside the political debate and thereby supports the decision-making process.

The emulative process is initiated by a preliminary decision made by the regional government or administration to compare the results of specific policies in order to bring about a possible change of priorities.

Another way of expressing interest in institutional learning consists in the systematic comparison of one's own organisation with others in order to develop one's knowledge of a specific field. In this case the existing network requires enlargement, and it is the scope of the research itself that is focused on, facts being studied from other perspectives and measures being analysed with the aim of reaching different and better results.

The outcome is that the search for knowledge in itself is seen as leading to increased competitive power and innovation, without an analysis of the organisation's needs in relation to a change in policy having been carried out. Innovation as such is seen as implying competitive power, so to speak, without the connection having been established.

c. Cooperative Policy Learning

The third pathway for learning from others in order to develop the organisation's policy is the establishment of and participation in a network of dynamic learning based on relationships for cooperative policy learning, as mentioned in chapter 1.

This type of learning is based on a partnership where interest for the policy object is shared and where one decides to develop one's knowledge of the object and to learn more and to compare policy content between institutions in the partnership. A shared process is established, with definite steps to be followed, involving policy makers from each participating institution. The result is that competitive power and innovation are united through the extra effort involved in adapting one's own organisation and in transferring and adapting new policies.

The learning process also involves a shared definition of the field under consideration and of existing policy with the aim of constructing shared discourse and thereby of increasing the understanding of the object's content in a synchronised learning process.

This approach also implies that the network and the partnerships are extended to include the other actors within the institution and in the respective Regions, who thereby are made to drive the process and the learning forward. It promotes the participation of social actors and requires political monitoring at the highest level, with EU and national/regional policy areas.

The concepts of knowledge, learning and innovation are in this context to be understood in a broad sense. The concept of innovation is often made to refer to investments in research and development and high technology, but learning and innovation are also decisive in what can be seen as low-tech activities. In other words, it is just as important for traditional sectors and activities to be innovative in the way they handle their regular and everyday activities.

In such developed network collaboration the desire to learn from each other is established in a shared declaration of intent in the form of a letter of intent or similar document. A declaration of intent to collaborate in the field of life-long learning on the regional level is drawn up, perhaps even stipulating a specific policy area.

For the purposes of collaboration each partner produces a document we call a background report concerning the state of the art within the area of collaboration. The background reports are all produced according to the same process and are all drawn up in a similar way in order to be comparable.

The outcome of the establishment of a cooperative policy learning process is the creation of a trans-regional partnership for dynamic learning.

2.1.3 Selection and analysis of measures

At this step a sort of organised study starts. Actors that are involved are committed to define a common discourse, defining the value and meaning of shared concepts. This is the first task approaching the selection of policies and measures of common interests. In the Prevalet research this process started with a background analysis about the main policy field selected. This kind of analysis does not need to be exhausted, as it represents only a means to assist actors in finding a common focus (see Box 7).

Box 7

Background documentation for non-formal Adults Education in Andalucía

Index
1. Glossary of abbreviations
2. Main policies at national level
3. Role of institutions (State, Regions, Counties, Commune): competences, financial power
4. Organisation and structure of the system
5. Suppliers
6. Programme and activities
7. Services
8. Policy of demand
9. Personnel

Source: Prevalet research, 2006

The next step of the process concerns the choice and analysis of the measures/policies the involved parties decided to learn more about. A measure is a basic tool for policy learning and continued policy transfer. The term measure as used here is defined in Chapter 1 as *"…a planning document where 'measure' is seen as the instrument whereby a priority is implemented over a period of years and justifies the financing of the operations"*(see Box 7).

It is important for a network to agree on what a measure is and how the information and calculations on which a measure is based should be handled.

In a cooperative network or a network of dynamic learning, the group works with measures in the relevant policy area, which are previously defined by the group. Each member of a network or partnership uses a similar definition of possible

measures that can be learned from and transferred to their own institution regardless of the cultural context, and which can be used in implementing a new policy within an institution. These measures in themselves describe different ways and methods for achieving a similar effect in a given area, informal adult education or distance learning for instance, and the need for new learning objectives in these areas.

This way of learning how different tasks are carried out in other Regions and institutions provides a tool that can be applied in various thematic policy areas.

The selection of measures follows five main steps:

1. Selection of measures from partners or others
2. Evaluation of transferability
3. Analysis and preparation by experts, evaluation of social and regulative impact
4. Validation process by policy makers in the region, evaluation of effectiveness
5. Analysis of quantitative data from different information systems and case studies
6. Planning of visits

A systematic description of all of the policy elements – from the target group, method and funding to the expected results – is used as a starting point to evaluate whether to import a new measure for the purpose of strengthening or changing a policy in a specific area.

A common system is required to describe a policy's content in a systematic, comprehensive manner. A measure analysis grid is the instrument used for this purpose (see Box 8).

The choice and the understanding of the transferability of a new policy depend on this systematic description of a policy. Naturally, the choice also depends on the interest, needs, influence and sustainability that a new policy is deemed to contain and contribute in a new institutional context, as well as a risk analysis.

Each component or descriptive part of a measure can determine whether or not a policy is judged to be transferable. Consequently, strong emphasis is placed on the various elements of a measure and on the network's commonly agreed definition of the measure and description of its various elements.

Box 8 – Measure Analyse Grid
A. General information about the measure
Measure:
1. Main policy
2. Beneficiaries
3. Abstract
1.1. Definition 1.2. Goals 1.3. Content
4. Expected specific effects and outcomes
5. Institutional levels involved and respective functions (national, regional, local)
6. Access (description of the procedure)
7. Suppliers
8. Cost analysis
B. Instruments
9. Instruments of the measure
C. Information about the context of the measure
10. Costs of the measure
11. Complementary measures
D. Information about the evaluation of the measure
12. Results and effects evaluations
13. Documentation
14. Research (references):
Source: Prevalet research, 2006

2.1.4 Evaluation and adaptation of measures

A possible policy transfer is based on an in-depth evaluation and analysis of the content of the measure that has been chosen to correspond to a particular activity

area. In the preliminary process about policy learning, the institution will have identified both its motivation and its need for changing and developing its learning priorities and learning objectives, and will have embarked on the process of evaluating how it can capitalise on policy results originating from outside the current reach and orientation of one's own institution. The "importing" Region also analyses the types of adaptations required to change all or parts of a measure to suit its own conditions.

The overriding questions are: "Is this a correct political and financial prioritisation?" and "Will it enhance the results of the financial and personal resources invested? How and to what extent does it meet the target group's needs?"

Thus, the process entails evaluating the content and impact analysis, as well as the changes that are required. Preparations are made in the importing institution to receive and incorporate a new policy. The importing institution performs a cost analysis, and various political and professional agreements are reached to implement a new activity. Various levels of the importing organisation are involved, and the groundwork is laid for political decision documentation. Preparations may include:
• Documentation for political decisions
• Negotiations with social partners
• Information and staff training
• Budget prioritisation
• Internal and external marketing

Another dimension of the method for preparing to implement a new policy is to study the effects of the policy in the place where it is employed. In this case, thorough preparations are required on the part of both the receiving organisation and the institution planning to import a new measure.

Study visits can be useful to provide a reference framework, consolidate existing contacts, and learn about one another's policies. Study visits can play a determinant role in clarifying which parts of a policy can be transferred to another organisation's administration and activities.

The study visits should be formal in character, and the visiting delegation should include both political and professional decision-makers. In some cases, it may also be useful for researchers and those responsible for evaluation and follow-up to also act as organisational representatives at operative middle management level.

A cooperative network also benefits from developing common guidelines for the preparation and implementation of study visits to help ensure maximum return on the time and money invested in studying various parts of a measure in situ.

The quality of the study visit and the effectiveness of the planned meetings can wholly determine how a measure is perceived and analysed prior to the final stage of concrete transfer.

The benefit of putting the study visit at a political level is that it takes the process closer to political responsibility and decision-making in the later stage. Another benefit of including study visits in the preparative process is that it makes it easier to identify complementary measures and adds complexity and solidity to the overall picture.

It is also necessary to have a manual or guidelines for reporting and evaluating the results of the study visit. This helps to systematically document experiences and compare results on the basis of similar processes – particularly if one is interested in studying how the same measures are undertaken in different ways in different contexts (see Box 9).

A policy includes both written text and practical implementation – an administration and an activity linked to a budget with goals and strategies. The communication between these two aspects depends on the control systems used, while the success of a supply or service within a particular system depends on how it is requested and applied in practice by the intended target group. The target group's needs vary depending on other measures applied by different systems, in the field of education for instance.

Box 9

Bilateral visit – Andalucía to Tuscany

Measure involved: TRIO Project
Dates of the visit: 4-5 October 2006
Participants: General Director for VET and Lifelong Learning, and, Head of the Department of Lifelong Learning Education.

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

- How is the project financed and what means are offered to the users for accessing and using it?
- Who coordinates the courses offered and how are they coordinated?
- To what extent are public and private institutions involved in the project and what financial and/or human resources are put into it by each of these institutions?
- Who is in charge of keeping the courses up to date?
- What is the role of each institution taking part in the project?
- Is there a fixed timetable for the videoconferences or web-based conversations in real time?
- How is the tutoring and monitoring done? What about course certification?
- Where tutors do their work? (from home, from a school, etc.)
- Who finances and runs the learning centres?
- Is there any data on the number of students per course, level of satisfaction, number of early leavers?

AREAS OF INTEREST FOR TRANSFER TO OUR REGION

- Information Technology
- Languages
- Health and social services
- Environmental studies
- On-line tutoring

SUGGESTIONS FOR VISITS

- A learning centre
- The centre from where the whole project is run (if there is one as such)

During the visit, there was a chance to ask further questions in order to get to know the project in more depth. The description grid was used to make comments regarding the possibility of transferring the measure, or part of it.

Source: Prevalet research, 2006

2.2 Policy Transfer

2.2.1 Creation of institutional conditions for transfer

The transferability of a measure and a new policy between different institutions in various contexts is determined by motivation, demand and various prioritisations as mentioned earlier. Once these basic conditions and aspects have been met, implemented and incorporated in the administration, focus should be placed on intensifying the preparatory work in the importing organisation. How this should be done depends on the management chain and the decision-making system applied. In order for the management chain to work efficiently in such cases, a well-organised reporting system is required between the various levels of the system. The need for information will naturally vary depending on the level, and this aspect must be carefully evaluated, as must the reporting processes used. Excessively detailed information can be counterproductive, detracting focus from the essential issues. Reports should be brief, simple and purpose-adapted. Let us assume that consensus has been reached, and that all elements to be implemented have been adapted to a new system and new administrative routines.

The initiative for this final step in the process must come from the political and professional management structure. The activity managers are responsible for ensuring that the project is implemented. These managers should refer the matter to the activity representative, and the new measure and policy should be referred to a higher level and incorporated into the following year's unit plan, which in turn is based on a politically adopted budget with overriding goal formulations. The whole process is normally initiated after a revision of the politically adopted governing documents and the politically formulated goals with the vision, strategy and funding for the area concerned – i.e. the whole measure as defined by means of the measure analysis grid described earlier. Defining the new policy by describing how one or several measures are structured enables the whole process to be initiated. By using our suggested method for describing measures, the network can continue working on new measures that derive from previous cooperation's. We thus create a spiral of actions that rationalises the institution's change processes and makes its adapted measures more productive. All lead times for carrying out the changes are shortened, and several levels are involved. All this preparatory work is also facilitated by the fact that the political level has been involved right from the earliest stages of the process. This guarantees both the efficiency and the quality of the continued development of a policy in a completely new context, or by a new organisation in another culture and a different language area.

Besides the control and goal structure, issues need to be prepared in the following areas:
- Information – dissemination
- Communication – marketing
- Accessibility – users
- Security and vulnerability – risks
- Right-of-access and confidentiality – laws and guidelines
- Need for new administration – adaptation

Another relevant question is whether the 'importing' organisation should implement an activity internally or outsource all or parts of it, or if it should adopt PPP (Private Public Partnership) – i.e. private funding of activities traditionally funded by the public sector. In many European countries, work is underway to find new forms under which public authorities can collaborate with private companies and voluntary organisations. It is no longer a foregone conclusion that development and change in traditionally public sector areas should only be carried out by public actors. This naturally complicates the picture and calls for measures involving systems for procurement and quality control, risk and vulnerability analysis and relationships to laws and regulations. Any opinions in favour of or against different contractors should also be taken into consideration.

2.2.2 Choosing the process for the transfer

To transfer a policy between contexts, whether these contexts are similar or different, requires making a number of choices about the process ahead. At this stage of the transfer, there is a need to build up internal achievements in the 'importing' Region. Each step is important for the quality and effectiveness of the transfer. The main three choices we are referring to are (see also Box 6):

1. To copy and import (unilateral)
In this first choice, the concerns are more oriented towards measures that have previously been experimented with in another country and whose transfer implies re-contextualisation that is too expensive. Consequently a partnership does not add any specific value (see Box 10).

2. To adapt and implement (emulative)
This second choice can be adopted when one of the partners is interested in the results of the policy implemented in another country (see Box 11).

Box 10

Report from Visit in Wales by The Region of Southern Denmark

One of the purposes for the visit was: *"2. To favour the transfer of innovation among different regional governments in Europe reducing the transfer time".*

"We have much to learn in the Region of Southern Denmark as far as this is concerned. Maybe a regional "copy"of an organisation like NIACE Dysgu Cymru would be very effectual in promoting regional growth in a learner-centred way, so the unique combination of a bottom-up and top-down approach could be transferred to a Danish regional context" (page 17).

Source: Horsdal, 2007

Box 11

Policy transfer analysis
From the Basque Country to Andalucía

Title of measure:
Project for establishing a Registered Quality Management System
1. Policy that has been transferred
2. Inspiring policy
3. What kind of official document from your Regional Government gave legitimacy to the measure.
4. Description of the institutional process that followed how information and data about the inspiring policy have been treated and used, for which purpose, etc.
5. Involvement of other national/local institutional actors in the policy transfer process and promotion of synergies among different actors.
6. Which kind of changes the inspiring policy had after the policy transfer process was implemented and the contribution it made to quality in the educational system.
7. To whom and how the measure has been implemented.
8. Results obtained after the policy transfer and impact analysis on the policies involved.
9. Sources (internet, websites, bibliography).

Source: Prevalet research, 2006

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3. To construct a new policy content from external learning and internal conditions (cooperative network)

The third choice is adopted when both partners are interested in a new measure or in a measure that is new in both Regions and when the measure adopted can produce at trans-national level an added value (scale economy – as in the case of e-learning, management of trans-national fact – as in the case of mobility), examples are illustrated in the three boxes below (see Box 12, 13 and 14).

Box 12

Mobility of students, trainees, researchers and workers. Policy paper

Instruments for the support and implementation of mobility
Three essential instruments can be identified to support the implementation and generalisation of the mobility projects aimed at VET students and apprentices:
- Participation in European Programmes, mainly LLP, and in the activities covered by the ESF and ERDF trans-national co-operation lines.
- Participation in regional administrations networks on VET subjects.
- Establishment of bilateral co-operation agreements between regional administrations for the enhancement of mobility.

Organisation and management of mobility
For the regional administrations to be in a position to carry out such functions of support and encourage mobility, the necessary instruments must be at their disposal:
- Legal instruments: basic competencies in the management and organisation of VET in their territories.
- Economic instruments: specific budgetary items for the funding of mobility.
- Technical instruments: human support teams for the promotion and development of the mobility projects in the training centres."

Source: Farriols Xavier, Policy paper, 2007

Box 13

Bilateral agreements for mobility

To all the Partners
Of the Mobility Agreements:

Region VästraGötaland
Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament d'Educació i Universitats
Junta de Andalucia
Gobierno de Las Islas Baleares

Within the framework of the bilateral agreements for mobility signed by our Regions, I take the opportunity to inform you that our Unit for Mobility is working on selecting the schools that will be involved in the European Programme, Comenius.

This is a student mobility action and, it is not, of course, the only action that can be planned in this field. It is, however an opportunity to avail of immediately.

Source: Regione Toscana, 2007

Box 14

Trans regional cooperation around lifelong learning for the promotion of entrepreneurship

Promoting entrepreneurship is one of the key activities to achieve the objectives, which were set up in Lisbon in 2002. Training in entrepreneurship contributes to developing the personal skills that are necessary both for acquiring key competences in young people and for raising the levels of business activity in the European Union.

The European Regions, very often holding full competence in education, training and employment, are closer to the problems that arise in their environment and they are also the ones who know better the resources and the most adequate solutions to the problems related to training, employment and economical growth. In this context, developing and implementing policies from the Regions will produce more direct and better results in business and job creation and growth.

These policies are very often developed in parallel in different European Regions, without knowing the strong and weak points found on the way by each of them. Establishing relationships between the regions in this field would allow us to share best practice and benefit from each other's experience, while at the same time encouraging the mobility of students and workers if some specific actions are developed jointly.

In order to promote entrepreneurial attitudes in our Region, the Andalusian Government has set up a number of actions starting at Primary school and up to University level. The Plan for developing Entrepreneurship began in 2002. It includes:
– Introducing entrepreneurship in all education levels in order to foster capacities and skills such as self-esteem, taking initiative, risks and rewards, taking responsibility and independence.
– Creating a society that values entrepreneurs as generators of wealth growth.
– Getting students to consider self-employment as an option for their future.
– Involve the families in supporting entrepreneur attitudes in their children.
– Training teachers and showing them how important the idea is and how it will bring about important changes in society.
– Building stronger links between schools and companies.
– Promoting mobility through entrepreneurship-related projects with other European Regions.

Source: Speech by Candida Martinez Lopez, Junta de Andalusia, 2007

2.2.2 Decision-making process for the transfer

The decision-making process regarding the introduction of a new measure policy in an organisation or, as in our case, in a politically controlled institution requires going all the way from the local municipal council to, in some cases, a regional parliament. Bringing the issue to the political agenda requires thorough pre-

paration, and the process is facilitated by the fact that in our model the political level both governs and is involved from an early stage.

The process normally starts with an internal evaluation to determine the need to increase or change one's results in a certain policy area. The type of goal category is examined, and the processes that lead to results and delivery are evaluated and the financial assets that govern budget management in the area concerned are activated.

That makes the regional government to start up an institutional commitment with the partner Regions. The specific tool that has been adopted at this moment is different kinds of bilateral agreements. Through a bilateral agreement the partners state their inter-institutional commitment to coordinate and adopt a common policy measure and to cooperate and support each other in the implementation process (see Box 15).

Box 15

Cooperation Agreement between the Region of West Götaland and the Region of Tuscany Concerning Mobility within Lifelong Learning

Signatories:
The signatories, one, _____, signing in his/her capacity of Regional Councillor for Education and Regional Development in the Region of West Götaland, and the other, _____, signing in his/her capacity of Minister for the Region of Tuscany, hereby each declare that he/she has legal right, in his/her respective roles and functions, to sign this agreement.

Declare:
That the Region of West Götaland and the Region of Tuscany are already collaborating successfully within trans-regional cooperation in the framework of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (Earlall).

That both parties judge that it is of special importance that they conclude cooperation agreements on education, vocational training and educational policy for young people.

That both parties have the intention to formalise in this agreement their intentions concerning such cooperation.

Source: Prevalet research, 2006

After the agreement, the ongoing process of feasibility starts and a plan of implementation is created and decided. Both institutions start up the planning process of their coordination. The implementation of the agreement is now taking

shape and all arrangements regarding who and what has to be involved is clarified. The plan of implementation is now to be signed (see Box 16).

Box 16

Implementation Plan of the Bilateral agreement on mobility between the Region of Tuscany and the Region of West Götaland

The Plan will concern the following sectorial actions:

students 15-19 enrolled in high school;
apprentices under 29 years-old
young trainees (under 32 years-old and having completed their final university exam less than 2 years ago) in the field of research and innovation
operator of adult learning working in the field of study circle

Aim
To establish a forum between regional and local representatives of Swedish and Italian partners in order to exchange experiences of regional and local liberal adult education.

The Swedish representatives will contribute their experiences and knowledge of liberal education, particularly the study circle as a method, the pedagogic required and the administrative/technical factors/rules, on which the study circle is based.

Italian representatives will contribute their experiences and knowledge of local and regional work in order to carry through, support and develop different actions of independent education and cultural activities targeted at adults living in Tuscany. The cooperation and the project described will contribute to the development of the study circle as a method and tool for individuals and their role as citizens.

Source: Prevalet research, 2006

Through the local and regional decision-making processes, both policy learning and policy transfer are brought to a local level. In this phase, the whole issue of policy transfer takes on a new, local dimension.

Policy changes often lead to restructuring and adjustments. In some cases the opposite is true – changes lead to new activity orientations. Reforms and changes of orientation have financial, organisational and didactic consequences, in the area of education for instance. In some cases, there may even be changes that effect economic growth, labour market conditions and a Region's power of attraction. Many European Regions and municipalities today are governed by means of goals rather than rules, as was previously the case. This has lead to a decentralisation of the responsibility for goal formulation and the development of both methods and

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strategic tools for following up and evaluating activities. One effect of this is increased responsibility for the delivery at several levels in organisations, which clearly plays a determinant role in the introduction of new policies or changes in existing policies. This gives local or regional political decision-makers strong reasons for creating broad consensus regarding all types of changes they wish to implement.

Other aspects include citizens and active citizenship, as well as the user's perspective and dialogue regarding this dimension. A change process with broad consensus is an important success factor for all political decision-making in a modern democracy. Strong expressions of dissent should be given top priority, and forms of communication as well as policy content should be reviewed. Different interest groups, users and customers have a strong interest in key policy changes, and space should be allowed for broad dialogue and far-reaching participation.

2.2.3 Implementation of transfer

Four basic tasks have to be considered in this phase:
1. A local platform has to be established. Regional and local actors build the organisation together for the implementation of the new measure.
2. The allocation of economic and human resources has to be set up. Budget and personnel for the action of the measure are made available by the institutions involved.
3. The institutional organisation has to be activated at a local level and a chain of activities organised. An administrative management is set up.
4. Trans-regional networks among local actors have to be promoted. This chain consists of, for example in the field of mobility, a municipality of the Region that organises education at secondary level and which is interested in internationalisation through the mobility of students and teachers. A single school and the managers of the school board now represent the local dimension, as well as the trans-regional organisation.

The whole process from policy learning to policy transfer has the purpose of formulating a new policy and preparing it for implementation in a new context. This phase is experimental, and allows different parts of a measure to be tested in a new context.

The normal system of monitoring, follow-up and result evaluation kicks in at this stage of the process. The local or regional level where the new policy has been in-

troduced will probably have required significant change, almost impossible to predict or even demand without a dynamic trans-regional network (see Box 17).

Box 17

Agreement proposal on trans-regional co-operation in the field of e-Learning

The role of the Regions in the implementation of European strategies for education and training to support the Lisbon objectives regarding Growth and Jobs
The **European Regions** have a responsibility for professional training and adult education. Regional and local authorities can and do play a key role bearing in mind:
– The responsibilities that they have in education and training
– Precise knowledge of their citizens' needs for education and training
– The needs of qualified professionals in the various productive sectors in their vicinity
– Their proximity that enables them to promote and disseminate policies and the appropriate management of the available resources according to needs
– Their closeness to the various training and productive agents in order to facilitate cooperation between networks and create synergies between the various parties involved in this process.

In this context cooperation between Regions can significantly help to achieve the aims that have been set as they all face the same challenges and similar problems with similar methods and similar concerns.

As a result, within the framework of Earlall we need to strengthen internal cooperation among its members along the lines that have already been drawn up:
– Working in stable networks according to areas of interest and priorities
– Improving the exchange of information and good practices
– Promoting study visits to analyse specific issues in depth
– Establishing indicators for appropriate benchmarking that reflects the situation in member Regions

To be more precise, as far as interregional cooperation was concerned, the following requirements were stressed:
– Promoting events in order to disseminate good practices
– Preparing a set of indicators that enable appropriate contrasting and in-depth knowledge of policies regarding e-Learning and the various regional experiences
– Establishing working groups and networks for specific issues

Furthermore, in October 2006 within the framework of the Prevalet project and as a result of the visit that representatives from the Basque Country paid to the TRIO project in Toscana, it was noted that there were common problems in the field of e-Learning, which made it possible to Tuscany the conclusion that it would be to everyone's advantage to provide a collective response to the challenge of e-Learning, if possible based on joint solutions. This resulted in the document "3 axes for courses of action based on pre-projects in the field of ICT/e-Learning", which was presented at the General Assembly of Earlall held last October.

Source: Report from Basque country, 2007

2.2.4 Institutionalisation and follow-up

After the experimental phase has been completed and all the necessary adaptations made, it becomes clear whether the new policy will have the desired effects. This last phase includes disseminating the results to other Regions in the same country. It also concerns possible legislative changes, which must and can be addressed. From an overall perspective, the legitimacy of the new policy is tested in the final phase. New learning priorities also generate internal competition, since other institutions can share the effects and results of the change.

The fact that a policy has found its way inside an institution's learning priorities does not necessarily mean that this policy will be adopted forever. Various ways of handling and administering a system of measures require constant review and re-evaluation of the activity and its various orientations.

Efficiency, quality and productivity are the processes that should be kept under constant focus and should determine how good an activity is. The purpose of our contribution here is to highlight exactly how such processes improve the management of and demand for an activity. The effects of different policies in the area of learning can be followed up in many ways, and that is exactly what we are concerned with here. In today's society, the markets where policies are applied are highly changeable and affected by factors that usually lie beyond the reach of one's own institution. The very ability to look ahead and take part in networks that offer faster opportunities for ongoing change and improvement gives all the parties involved a competitive advantage.

The positive spiral that was initiated in the Regions involved in Prevalet shows us that there are still many discoveries to be made. The boundaries for what is possible have been largely eliminated, and there are no limits to what we can achieve.

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3. Quality management during learning and transfer

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Learning and transfer are also becoming ever more important factors in the control and design of political systems as well. The first chapter cited the political context in which these two 'forms of achievement' of political system development exist, while practical examples from Prevalet practice were described in Chapter 2. In the European context in particular, in which twenty seven countries with the most varied history, structure, size, language and economy co-exist, such shared, but also 'weak' political design strategies (compared with 'hard' laws and power structures) are gaining in importance. Among other things, the different sizes and structure of European national states have actually meant that the focus has become directed at political action by manageable units (Regions). A regional view not only means a stronger orientation towards action, but also greater com-parability (size, political structures). On the other hand, regional competencies are often regulated very differently, and Regions act in varied national contexts with different degrees of leeway.

Despite all the divergence of competencies, training issues are either directly embedded at regional level or at least anchored there, as closeness to people and institutions, an important factor for training, is only available at regional level (cfr. European Commission, Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Message 6): 'Regional governments are responsible for defining and implementing part of the policies that drive the operation of education and training systems throughout the whole course of life. This involves creating a circular flow of information that allows the individual regional governments and the operators of the system they manage to take advantage of the positive and negative results achieved in the different European regional context before the experiences are finalised'.

In this sense regional cooperation is a prerequisite for learning about political problems and the transfer of measures, which should contribute to control and improvement in the educational system. A political process of this type can only occur

in reciprocal cooperation or, as has been defined since Lisbon, in an open coordination method. 'The open method of coordination may be applied where the Union has no legislative powers, or where the Union has powers to establish minimum requirements through European framework laws'. This is why this method has 'to coordinate national policies and otherwise to achieve union objectives'. To do so it is necessary to have quality management, which makes sure that the process is effective and efficient and the outcome is sufficient, applicable and sustainable.

This chapter therefore involves designing the contours of a quality management model for learning and the transfer of political measures between Regions. The elements from a concept of this type of quality management were obtained from the analysis of the consultation process in the Prevalet project. The individual activities before, during and after the reciprocal visits were tested for common ground and results, and generalised conclusions were drawn from these. This means that the quality management indicators system presented here was obtained inductively from the project's experiences.

As the regional cooperation in Prevalet and finally also in Earlall involves network construction, quality management in network configurations is also dealt with here in general.

3.1 Network and governance

The importance of institutional networks has risen enormously in nearly all social areas in the past ten years. They are propagated, requested and promoted as new forms of cooperation and co-ordinating action. The Lisbon conclusions on open coordination are only the tip of the iceberg here.

This development in the political reality is also reflected in the scientific debate. Thus, a proposal is made to grasp networks as a central part of a new arrangement structure in critical contributions on modernising the administration and new control models. It is also observed here that network strategy is an expression of economic rationalisation, especially of social sectors. And that a new mix of competition, cooperation and hierarchy is created through it (cf. Dahme/Wohlfart 2000). Competition and networking are viewed as two interlinked, correlating modernisation strategies. Put another way, networks are viewed as an alternative form of political coordination of action 'between' or 'next to' the 'market' and 'hierarchy' (D. Fürst 2004). Networks in politics are increasingly viewed as a tool to

increase the government's capacity and rationality while making political decisions and implementing them (cf. Kickert et al. 2000). Mixed networks of public and private players are deemed optimum here today. This also applies increasingly in more closely defined, formerly pure state policy sectors, such as the social and training sectors. Network-style forms of governance can be found ever more frequently in areas where an increased need for innovation (as in the concept of lifelong learning) is recognisable. If problems that are extremely complex and thus lack a simple standard solution have to be coped with, networks act as a promising format for learning about models and the transfer of new approaches.

The current development of political action by Regions in Europe, (also due to the specific development since the 16th/17th century), thus reflects a form of 'governance', which is combined in a new rationality of different power technologies, procedures, strategies and tactics. It is 'the whole made up of institutions, processes, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics, which permits the exercise of this legally-specific, albeit also very complex, form of power' (Foucault 2004, 162). State authorities take over coordination in this system, and there is less of a hierarchically defined authority that controls the exercise of power.

The idea of the political network also contains the concept that optimum (and thus qualitatively best) solutions to problems can be achieved, if all the involved and interested parties are involved where possible in the decision-making process and reach a consensual solution. An approach of this type among different players ('stakeholders') does not develop itself, but must be created deliberately on a planned basis. Following on Foucault's considerations it is assumed that this governance in networks is made possible by a set of different technologies, rationalities and standards (cf. Triantafillou 2004). A decisive factor here is that the individuals and organisations are positioned as free, active players that are competent to act, a changeover is made from state control to activation and empowerment, and the framework for participation is regulated and safeguarded. However, this simultaneously requires certain governance techniques by the agency, performance and quality management, which create, broker, communicate and implement the ability to act.

3.1.1 Interaction in the network

The concept of the network has existed in the (training) policy sector for over a decade, whereas the term cooperation in terms of training systems is significantly 'older'. Regional training cooperation initiatives contain four main elements: goals, partners, content and forms.

As a rule, the goals of cooperation derive from the Regions' strategic goals, which not only cover marketability, but also politically justified areas. In Prevalet this occurred with respect to the goals of reducing the youth drop-out rate and improving involvement in training.

The question of which partners will be selected is always of central importance. In Prevalet the partners are made up of the Regions involved in the project, while this configuration develops very differently depending on the training issues being dealt with. Two types can exist in principle for the selection of partners: structurally analogous partner Regions of comparable size and with comparable problems and structurally divergent partner Regions with different assumptions.

The contents of cooperation initiatives are to be determined and agreed as a rule; this is done in Prevalet by defining problems of shared interest.

The forms of regional cooperation are very varied and range from the simple exchange of information about joint activities (such as workshops, consultations) to joint problem solving. The forms of communication, responsibility and 'liability' are also configured differently. In Prevalet the form concentrates on bilateral visits and a systematic exchange of information ('grid') about relevant measures.

In principle, networks are a further development of cooperation initiatives – both historically and systematically. Compared with cooperation initiatives networks are initially characterised by a larger number of cooperating institutions. The image of cooperation is determined by the 'pair', while the profile of networks is determined by the 'group', even though this difference is not always very clear.

An important difference between cooperation and a network also lies in the definition of the goal. As a rule, cooperation initiatives are implemented relative to a defined, concretely agreed goal. Whereas networks also define goals, change and reflection on the goal form the subject of the network assignment itself. Networks are therefore more open, more flexible and more dynamic as regards their objectives. Goals can often change in networks through the departure or arrival of partners.

A third difference lies in the type of communication. In cooperation initiatives, bilateral and trilateral agreements are usually negotiated; in networks communication occurs as a rule via group consultations that are supported, prepared and post-processed The communication in cooperation initiatives is frequently more binding more quickly than in networks, where motivation and participation are an equivalent-value aspect of the communication interest.

However, the most important difference between networks and cooperation initiatives lies in the control of the cooperation structure. In cooperation relationships the partners involved directly control their cooperation, make agreements and monitor respect for these (evaluation, monitoring). Networks have a cross-partner control mechanism – whether as network management, or as a superordinate participative network authority. The network thus has its own identity compared with the partners involved, which is usually also expressed by its own logo and presentation.

This character as an independent subject for cooperative contexts no longer makes networks the sum of the cooperation that occurs within them – it defines networks as a political steering tool. This also applies for networks between Regions, as in the greater context of Earlall and in the specific cooperation in Prevalet. In principle the following aspects apply to networks:

1. Networks are a transitional form (organisationally mixed or hybrid form) between the market and hierarchy; they combine characteristics of both forms.
2. Networks are an own type of social structure or an own type of organisation.
3. Networks are a new type of solidarity community and belong more in the tradition of ousted forms of social integration such as clans.
4. Networks are formal structures, which describe the link between actions and consequences of actions (relations between individual players or organisations).
5. Networks are viewed as a social meso-level and thus classified between micro and macro-processes; micro-processes are tied to the acting player, whereas the reproduction of social institutions occurs at the macro-level.

From this perspective, networks are suitable as a steering form in a regional political arrangement, especially in the training area. However, they can only work effectively and optimally if the players develop reciprocal acceptance, produce a balance of interests and make participation possible.

When political action via defined instruments (measures) is considered as the object of cooperative and network-style structures, a high affinity between 'political learning' and networks can be observed, whereas on the other hand a high affinity is noticeable between 'political transfer' and bilateral cooperation. The more binding and consequential the transfer of a measure in a different context, the more exactly the measure must be clarified and checked as regards its context, assumptions and effects. In the construction of the Prevalet project with a network

of Regions aiming at individual regional training policies, a micro and macro structure then follows, which differs in its approach to learning and transfer.

In a network of Regions, learning comes from experience, there is a shared exchange and communication about problems, problem-solving strategies and experience of their solutions. In this sense it is a network of 'learning regions', which learn from and with each other.

Specific cooperation initiatives exist within this network of learning regions (bilateral as a rule), involving the transfer of measures or political instruments from one Region to another).

The above typology developed in chapter 2 of increasing intensity (cooperation – collaboration – coordination) is transversal to this. Divergent intensive forms of cooperation occur both in the network and also in bilateral cooperation.

3.1.2 Cooperation as a process

Communication processes occur in all levels of intensity of cooperation in political activities between Regions. Various steps and decisions must be taken into account

Diagram 1

Cooperative transfer and network learning
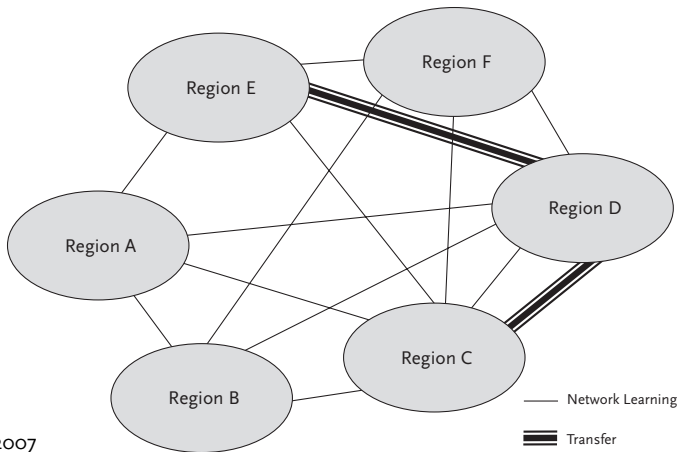
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in these processes, which are important in each case within the Regions but also in the communication between the Regions. These are the steps that must be particularly considered in quality management (as the path from input via throughput to output, cf. diagram 1).

The following steps are important within the Regions in this process:
– Decision on the cooperation/network assignment: this involves determining the motivation, defining the players' interests and fixing the regional decision-making process. The goal of cooperation is also an object of the decision.
– Selection of the partner: this involves selecting the partner or partners for regional cooperation, with whom cooperation is most meaningful as regards the pursued goal. In an existing network (as in the Prevalet case) this is based on the potential partners' knowledge and the measures found among them.
– Communication with the partner: this involves determining a shared co-operation goal with the partner or partners, determining the rel-evant players involved, agreeing on the shared process, the binding nature of the rules, as well as clarifying the targeted documentation of communication.
– Ensuring the result: this involves defining the co-ordinates of the pursued result, determining how to approach the pursued results, as well as planning and implementing a monitoring process between the partners, as well as within the Regions involved.

The quality management of interregional cooperation is essentially directed towards these four stages of the cooperation process. Indicators are created for these, dealing with learning on the one hand, and transfer on the other (cf. Nuissl, E. 2005).

3.1.3 Quality, indicators, benchmarks

The most general definition of quality is a 'neutral value' description of an object's character. Even when 'quality' in common parlance is usually synonymous with 'good quality', the term initially lacks a value assignment like this. However, the definition of quality is always in a particular context, in which the following factors have to be taken into account:
– The quality indicators always have an interest relationship; depending on which perspective a thing is viewed from (players, interests, etc.), the indicators by which quality is measured differ.

- The criteria for quality mostly relate to different levels, i.e. the inter-action level, the organisational level or the society level; the indicators defined vary accordingly.
- The criteria for quality always have a different valuation context; depending on which angle quality is viewed from, the measurement result for the same indicator can be valued and weighted very differently.
- The criteria for quality always have an historical relationship; concepts of what is good development over time and change.
- The criteria for quality always have a social context, which is specifically particularly important in learning between Regions: what is viewed as 'good quality' in one context may certainly not be good at all in a different context.
- And: quality criteria are always oriented to different reference systems, such as effectiveness, professionalism, scientific method, sustainability, validity or fulfilment of needs (cf. Hartz/Meisel 2006).

The determination of quality criteria and thus also indicators to measure quality is not an objective process, but rather a question of negotiation between the partners involved. This applies to process quality, product quality, and the quality of learning, as well as the quality of transfer. In the Prevalet project it turned out that the Regions concerned fixed their own quality indicators – involving the tailoring of a known measure to their own regional conditions (as in the Wales – Vejle case) or use of stepwise introduction options (as in the case of Tuscany-Andalusia).

In the 'Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council' of 12 February 2001 on European cooperation in Quality Evaluation in School Education' such indicators of quality evaluation were seen more or less on the following levels:
- Supporting and, where appropriate, establishing transparent quality evaluation systems,
- Supporting the involvement of school stakeholders in the process of external and self evaluation in schools,
- Supporting training in the management and the use of staff evaluation instruments,
- Supporting the capacity of schools to learn from one another nationally and on a European scale,
- Fostering cooperation between all the authorities involved in quality evaluation in school education and promoting European networking.

Within these process-related defined quality indicators benchmarks must be defined, which imply goals and make a comparison possible: 'benchmarking is, first

and foremost, a learning process structured so as to enable those engaging in the process to compare their services/activities/products in order to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses as a basis for self improvement and/or self regulation' (The University of Sydney 2005).

These benchmarks also have to be negotiated and agreed on (within the Regions when learning and transfer are concerned, between the Regions if collaboration and coordination are also required). An example of this was the open coordination process in the training area in the European Union (cf. above Chapter 1), in which indicators are determined and benchmarks worked out jointly. If they are to be effective, such benchmarks must start realistically from the actual situation, reflect existing interests and poss-ibilities and first and foremost be measurable and verifiable.

It is not possible to determine such measurement and verifiable benchmarks for all indicators. In this case the agreements are restricted to rather general goals.

The criticism is often raised that an almost inadmissible reduction of the field's complexity occurs in the determination of indicators and benchmarks with a specific application to the training sector. Thus, the indicator for 'participation in further education events' and the '12.5% of the adult population' benchmark (Lisbon objective for 2010) inadmissibly do not contain any details on content, the learning result, the social structure of the addressees and social qualification. All of these aspects are important and have varying weight in different regional contexts. We must therefore always be conscious that the reduction in complexity involved in the definition of quality criteria, indicators and benchmarks, can also lead to different evaluations and results in different political contexts. The issue of binding and unified indicators is less pressing in the 'SMOC' process introduced and tried in Prevalet; softer forms of commitment are appropriate here due to the regional interfaces, as well as the participative regional structures.

3.2. Quality Management

3.2.1 Definition

Quality assurance is a system for checking enforced and verifiable standards. In practice quality assurance is oriented towards professionally indisputable criteria, which are negotiated and also institutionally clarified. Moreover, quality assurance

entails technical, formal and administrative components. The standard quality assurance repertoire includes regular evaluations, systematic error analyses and regulated problem handling.

When the quality assurance system is extended to include the players involved and their determination of criteria and indicators, this is referred to as quality management. Quality assurance is rather static, and related to ex-post control determined criteria, while quality management refers to the determinable aspect of quality.

The concept that quality can be produced and influenced systematically by certain forms of management lies at the heart of quality management. Through quality management, procedures are introduced into organisations and structures (like Regions) that should put players' actions onto a certain path in advance. Quality management therefore has a prospective focus. It explicitly includes the social and structural dimensions surrounding quality assurance and can be characterised as a management concept.

The goal of quality management is to develop quality. This in turn describes a process, which takes account of continually changing environmental and influencing factors. Quality development aims for continuing reflection on the conditions for quality and perpetual improvement.

An essential prerequisite for successful quality management is the definition of the central player, the 'leading person' or 'leading institution' in the learning and transfer process. In learning and transfer between Regions the development of quality management therefore depends on the players involved also being explicitly defined in their role in quality management. In this case in particular, responsibility for quality management within the individual Regions and in communication between the Regions must be determined. This means responsibility not only 'for something', but also responsibility 'to whom'. The legitimisation of quality management essentially depends on this definition of responsibility.

Finally, the fact that the binding nature of the steps in the process are determined and respected is a pre-requisite for successful quality management. Precise agreements are specifically required in the public coordination process, which works without hierarchy or compulsion. These are entered into freely, but are binding for the partners involved when they have been made.

Such binding agreements always affect two areas: the standards and process (see diagram 2). With regard to standards, agreement should be pursued in the

dimensions of selection, measurement dimensions and weighting, and with regard to the process, in the dimensions of responsibility, scheduling and process rules.

Diagram 2

Dimensions of quality management

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                        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                        │   Quality management     │
                        └──────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
│        Standards         │          │         Process          │
└──────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Selection/       │                  │ Responsibilities │
        │ Definition       │                  └──────────────────┘
        └──────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Measurement      │                  │ Scheduling       │
        └──────────────────┘                  └──────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Weighting        │                  │ Rules            │
        └──────────────────┘                  └──────────────────┘
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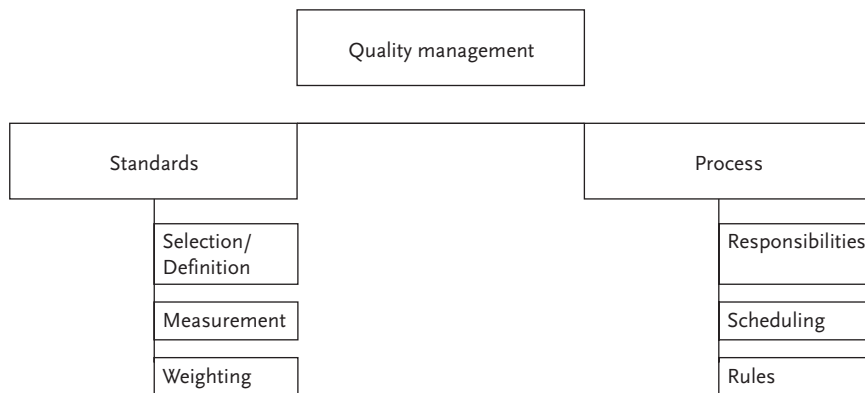
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3.2.2 Process and product

Quality management includes both the product, whose quality it tracks, and the process of its creation – this also applies to learning and transfer in cooperation among Regions. In the training system this is not just described in the three dimensions input, throughput and output, but also in the individual process and product-relevant description on all three levels. Thus in 'input' it is not just the statement of the resources for the training process that is defined, but also the process in which these resources are developed and allocated. The main quality management systems used in the training sector (ISO 9000 f, EFQM, TQW – the latter has only existed so far in Germany) interlink the product and process-related indicators here into an overall system, in which individual factors are also weighted (i.e. with the learner satisfaction higher than the scientific method of the planning). The indicators listed in diagram 3 (diagram 3) appeared in the common quality management grid in the comparative synopsis of cooperation and consultations in Prevalet.

Diagram 3

Interregional transfer quality management		
Input quality (before the transfer process)	**Throughput quality** (during the transfer process)	**Output quality** (after the completed transfer)
Motivation for transfer: ● Resilience ● Consistency ● Durability Interests of transfer: ● Institutional interests ● Regional policy interests Transfer planning: ● Participation ● Questions ● Information Transfer players: ● Structure of players ● Acceptance	Contextualisation: ● Framework conditions ● Influencing factors ● Players Measures: ● Elements ● Instruments ● Experiences ● Goals/benchmarks Transfer process: ● Duration ● Milestones ● Monitoring	Impact: ● Effects (impact) ● Successes Problems: ● Coherence ● Context ● Resources ● Acceptance Sustainability Evaluation

In the case of inter-regional learning and transfer of training policy instruments there is a matrix, in which process and product related factors are linked to each other (see diagram 4). The four steps in cooperation development are defined here as process-related steps (see section 2.1.2), while the central categories to describe the measures as used in our surveys are defined as product-related factors. Both process and also product related components are by necessity defined abstractly and structurally, as they are to be applied to diverse measures and different forms of cooperation (learning and transfer).

3.2.3 Definition of Measures

The measures, the political instruments used, are the actual core of political learning and political transfer and thus also the core of quality management. The

Diagram 4

Quality management in product and process

Product / Process	Aim/Function	Actors	Applicability	Costs/ Resources	Nutzen
Decision					
Selection					
Communi- cation					
Outcome/ Impact					

learning and transfer process not only involves defining the specific measure, but also an exact definition of the factors that belong to the measure. The smallest definable training policy unit is selected as a training policy measure in our concept – called the stipend as an example above in chapter 1. The imminent aspects of the measure itself firstly belong to the description of the measure and its components, as was also asked in our survey questionnaire:

– *Goals of the measure (what should be achieved?)*
– *Addressees of the measure (who was the measure thought out for?)*
– *Content of the measure (what is regulated in terms of content with the measure?)*
– *Players in the measure (which persons and institutions are involved in implementation?)*
– *Costs of the measure (which direct and indirect costs are linked to the measure?)*
– *Documentation of the measure (how is the measure itself and its implementation documented?)*
– *Analysis of the measure (are evaluations and monitoring reports for the measure available?)*
– *Results of the measure (what did the measure produce in terms of effects and outputs?)*

The analysis and exact description of the individual components of the measure are an important pre-requisite for learning and transfer to occur on this basis. The examples in Prevalet (e.g. TRIO) show that the measures are usually extremely

complex systems made out of multiple elements. Then, if the measure is to be taken over step by step (as in Andalusia's case), the question of 'natural growth' development under different conditions arises.

An example of occurring problems here was the transfer of training vouchers from the Anglo-Saxon model to German conditions, where banks involved in issuing vouchers fixed the threshold to be overcome by disadvantaged addressees too high and the desired implementation could no longer be realised.

3.3 Quality management in learning

3.3.1 Definition of learning

Learning is usually tied to the concept of people who acquire knowledge and skills to organise their life. The very simplest definition of learning is therefore also a humanistic definition: 'learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills with the goal of a change in behaviour'. In particular in the past twenty years learning has been increasingly frequently linked to super-individual systems like companies, technologies and also Regions.

The concept of 'learning regions' has organisational theory, economic-geography and training-policy roots. The impetuses primarily come from the labour market and the professional training debate. The concept of 'learning regions' arose in the early 1980s. At that time a regional policy dominated the pursued external business investment success (exogenous development strategy) through an improvement of the regional infrastructure (business park development, road construction, etc.). With the lapse of the economic growth dynamic it began to focus on the endogenous task of maintaining or improving the quality of the location (cf. Nuissl 1995). The professional training system is of high value here, as it supplies the regional labour market with qualified employees. The idea of the learning Region actually arises from the context of qualification and regional development.

There are two accesses in the concept of the 'learning region': on the one hand, the approach that sees regionalisation as a reflex to an increasing national state weakness, pressure from growing economic and cultural problems and displacement through globalisation, and on the other hand, an approach that views the 'learning society' category as a response to increasing uncertainty given the failure of technocratic action in the debate. In this respect the learning Region is

not a clear cut term, but a thinking approach, a line of orientation – where Regions discard a passive role and actively outline their interests.

The regional development policy thrust sets the agenda for the concept of the learning Region. In questions of lifelong learning this concerns the development of the labour market and the innovation potential of regional economic structures. In this case, the concept of the learning Region incorporates an understanding of learning that is less derived from the pure transmission of already codified, centrally held knowledge, than from the development of learning or adaptable organisational, institutional, cognitive etc. structures. Training in the learning Region therefore also has the task of promoting collective learning processes including reflection on standards and rules for social action. Regional learning processes depend decisively on which relations exist between individual players, the degree to which these players mutually communicate and the content of this communication. Not least this decides the scale and form in which knowledge is used and reintegrated (cf. Maskell, P./Mallenberg, A. 1999).

In the inter-regional network learning occurs as an interaction and communication process that develops bilateral or multilateral contacts during the process and facilitates extended knowledge and altered behavioural potentials in the Regions concerned as a result. These communication and interaction activities describe the learning process in the super-regional network, while the extended knowledge and behavioural potentials are the product.

3.3.2 The learning process between Regions

Quality management in the learning process among Regions pursues the goal of discussing suitable measures and instruments to solve important problems through and with correct partners. Quality management therefore particularly means ensuring that the partners are suitable, the instruments are suitable and usable and the issues and problems concerned can be solved.

The most important shared steps were undertaken for this in the Prevalet project: the definition of the questions and problems to be tackled including the considered target groups, exchanges on available measures using a shared grid and a general understanding of the procedure and the interest in reciprocal consultations.

Under the quality management aspect it emerged that the following aspects in particular are important for obtaining substantial results:

Decision
- Which motives in the Region justify the pursued learning process?
- Which interaction in the Region exists to clarify the motive?
- Which players/institutions are involved regionally, are important players/institutions missing?
- Was the decision for the learning and cooperation process made explicitly and settled on a binding basis?
- Is a procedure for the processes defined in the decision?

Selection
- Is sufficient information available about potential learning partners (Regions or their measures)?
- Is the information systematically evaluated and analysed with a view to the Region's requirement?
- Does an understanding exist concerning the weighting of potential learning partnerships?
- How does the context of the potential regional partners (size, structure, etc.) relate to the Region's own regional system?
- Are potential 'best practice' quality instruments available in the considered Region?
- Are the learning partner Region's contact partners, institutions and structures defined?
- Do contact partners and binding structures exist in the considered Region?

Communication
- How is communication with the other regions planned/introduced?
- Who is involved in the communication, with what role?
- What rules and steps does communication follow?
- Are clarifying questions for communication formulated (by whom) and transmitted to the cooperation partners?
- Are the formulated questions answered and processed systematically and openly?
- How is the communication held/documented?
- What obligations exist for the parties involved in the communication?
- How is the result defined as a reciprocal learning process?

Outcome/Impact
- How is the result of the shared learning process kept?
- What level do the learning results lie on (institutional, structural)?
- How are the results of the learning process communicated?

EKKEHARD NUISSL VON REIN

- Who is involved in determining the learning result?
- How is the further use/exploitation of the learning result negotiated?
- Who is involved in the follow-up communication?
- How are learning results evaluated?

The questions named here are to be set as a checklist for the learning process and verified regularly. This means that it is also possible to recognise and determine learning results beyond the user's own approach, for example the different canon of values in the Regions of Wales and Vejle, which generated some 'aha' experiences for the Danish Region (despite having 'better' benchmarks for participation, etc.) with respect to its own standards. The goal of quality management is therefore also to make the gradually improved process more transparent overall, to arrange the components of the process more consciously and to expand the 'narrow' view of the measure, as well as to re-contextualise the measures.

3.3.3 The product

Labelling the results of learning as a product is often problematic. The learners produce learning results themselves, as they are not consumers of a training course. This also applies in particular in mutual learning processes between super-individual structures, e.g. companies or Regions. The product of learning is therefore essentially linked to the process and depends on it. The label 'prosumers' is therefore frequently used rather than 'producers' and 'consumers'.

In the framework of quality management questions are therefore also closely linked to the process, as regards the learning result. The process-related grid must therefore be supplemented by the following indicators:

- Which goal is linked to the learning result?
- Which players are involved in implementing the learning result?
- Is the learning process applicable to underlying issues/problems?
- Is the learning result affordable with the resources available?
- What utility does the learning result have and for whom?

'Benchmarks' (specific to a given Region) that make a statement about the quality of the product can be made for the 'learning result' product via the indicators defined by questions. Such benchmarks primarily include:
- In the case of 'function': absence of conflict with existing political, legal, economic and demographic factors in the Region.

- In the case of 'players': the involvement of the most important, most numerous, biggest and most effective players in the Region.
- In the case of 'usability': adaptation to regional structures, authorities, administrative processes, interests and retention of value.
- In the case of 'costs': the scale of the costs, affordability, financing capacity from defined cost items, absence of conflict with existing budget stipulations.
- In the case of 'utility': the definition of quantitative utility (share of address group), and qualitative use (innovation, progress).

As learning, unlike transfer, mainly involves knowledge, understanding, recognition and reflection, the product-related benchmarks are rather thinking and discussion aids in the Region rather than binding and applicable rules. They must then be verified individually to make the learning result exact and sustainable.

3.4 Quality management in transfer

3.4.1 Definition of transfer

With the transfer of political measures from one Region to another, not only the components of the measure, but also all relevant context conditions are always affected. In general, transfer can be defined as 'the application of tested solutions to problems, which were developed in a specific institutional and personal context, to problem areas in similarly structured areas' (Euler 2001). Various distinctions have been introduced into the scientific debate in order to describe and define transfer empirically. If transfer is defined as a handover or transmission, then it is clear that at least two participants are involved, namely the transferring party and the potential transferees in various fields of transfer. Transfer between Regions is an 'external transfer' per se, which means that the distinction from an 'internal transfer' (within a defined organisational unit) does not have to be dealt with further.

An analysis of the transfer process has shown that products, processes and insights can be transferred, where different conditions for a positive or successful transfer must exist in each case. An important insight from analysis so far is that the success of a transfer is always process-oriented. Debate on success and impeding factors during transfer also leads to questions about its theoretical basis. From the viewpoint of constructivist knowledge and learning theory, products being transferred always represent a potential for information which, when the

recipients impart a corresponding sense, can lead to an extension of their ability to act. These products being transferred always compete with a multitude of other possible variants and theories, which query the sense and process of the transfer. Transfer therefore cannot be understood in a schematic transmitter-receiver model, but takes place in a current exchange process between the recipients and producers about possibilities and needs for modification relating to other factors. As a rule the product changes during the transfer – it is adapted, modified and aligned.

In the training area, a distinction is made between five product types, for which a transfer is possible and meaningful:
– transfer of services to addressees outside the network/Region, i.e. information and advisory systems, databases and information platforms;
– market transfer: the development and dissemination of saleable products in another regional market;
– transfer of innovation, the transfer of innovative products (e.g. a new categorisation of training concepts), which are 'unsellable' in the intrinsic sense;
– transfer of experience, which essentially entails an exchange of experiences on problem solving in learning between the Regions (see above section 2.3), as well as
– instrument transfer, whereby measures and tools especially of a political type are transferred to/from one (regional) system to another.

Our context involves the fifth type of transfer, the transfer of training policy instruments from one Region to another, in particular. By definition what is to be observed here initially is the process character of the transfer and the relevant bilateralism, i.e. the avoidance of a 'one way street'. However, this is already a question of quality. In interregional transfer it repeatedly emerges that the discursive bilateral approach is not implemented, and that virtually a 'unilateral' transfer occurs: a Region inquires about a measure in a different Region, analyses it and implements it (usually with some modifications) without a related dialogue taking place.

3.4.2 Quality management in the transfer process

In the quality management of the transfer process, clear exact interests and concepts underpin which measure will be transferred and for what goal as a rule. The four process steps (see diagram 4), therefore, particularly deal with the question

of how the individual elements of the measure are exactly understood and analysed and in which conditions they can be transferred. In the individual steps this means answering the following questions:

Decision:
– What problem/issue is a measure being sought for?
– What is the goal of solving the problem?
– Which players/structures will be involved in implementing a measure?
– What existing measures should not be altered/affected?
– What leeway concerning scope and costs of the measure being implemented exists?
– How is the responsible management of the transfer measure determined?

Selection:
– In which cooperating Regions do similar problems exist?
– What measures are used there?
– What implications of the measures are known?
– What readiness/competency is available for a transfer process?
– What stage is the use of the measure at? Is experience of effects already available?

Communication:
– How is the communication on the measure being transferred arranged?
– Which players are involved in the cooperating Regions?
– How is experience relating to the creation, use and the impact of the measure exchanged?
– How are the components of the measure captured and documented?
– How are the communication processes and the transmitted experience documented?
– How is the context of use of the measure communicated?
– How are adaptation and modulation issues handled?

Outcome:
– How is the transfer process documented?
– Which criteria are formulated for a successful transfer?
– What is the time and resources expenditure in the process?
– What process is used to evaluate the transfer?
– How are the evaluation results processed?

The transfer process between the Regions took place in Prevalet in particular in the form of reciprocal visits, which were agreed on the basis of a previously exchanged

and jointly argued selection of measures. It was possible to typify the steps in these bilateral visits:

a) Information and analysis of measures in the network of Regions (meeting of the Prevalet project partners, exchange of grids)
b) Consultation on interesting measures in the relevant Regions and a decision on the Region to be consulted and the relevant measure
c) Composition of a small delegation with the relevant players, determination of the questions to be clarified, and transfer of these to the regions being visited
d) Planning of a programme of visits in which the questions set would be answerable and moreover context details could be transmitted
e) Undertaking of the visit, documentation of the findings obtained
f) Evaluation of the visit in the Region visited and (with a view to possible transfer) in the visiting Region
g) Consultation and decision making about the transfer of all or a part of the measure.

These seven steps represent the typically ideal progress of the bilateral visits. Difficulties arose primarily in the documentation of the findings obtained (classification, completeness, levels) and in the process to re-contextualise the visiting Region. However, this also included 'off-target' experience transfer processes: "Maybe the measure as such is not possible to transfer due to the wide contextual differences concerning geography, infrastructure, educational specific need, present problems etc. But may be instruments or smaller elements may be transferred. [...] But, we were also inspired by something which is bigger than instrument or measure, something which is difficult to capture in a category and in a way which is more fundamental. This has to do with some underlying understandings within the policies, cultures, values. [...] Maybe this level – which is extremely difficult to categorise – is one of the most significant elements of policy learning from other regions" (Horsdal 2007, Prevalet-Paper).

This means that even if a transfer cannot occur for good reasons, a learning process that allows the Region's own training system to be considered from a different perspective can be success.

3.4.3 Quality management in product transfer

A complete measure with its implementation tools such as the TRIO platform in Tuscany or the Adult Learning Campaign in Wales counts as a product here. These are examples of measures that bring together various components, which can each be transferred.

As regards the products that should be transferred, quality management refers to the five essential aspects named in diagram 4: goals, players, usability, costs and utility. The following quality aspects are to be checked here individually:

Goals:
– What problem/settlement area does the measure target?
– Does it target the entire settlement area, only a part or more than the settlement area?
– What level are the goals formulated at: general, pragmatic, practical?
– Are the goals mutually agreed by all of the parties concerned?
– Which modifications of the goals should be planned, compared with the original measure?

Players:
– Which players are involved in the implementation?
– Are all of the important players involved?
– Do formal or informal hierarchies exist among the players?
– Are the players able to play their role (resources, responsibilities, etc.) during the implementation?
– Are the players familiar with all of the aspects of the measure?
– Is the measure being transferred already known to players in a different Region?

Usability:
– Have the responsibilities for implementing the measure been clarified?
– Have the processes for implementing the measure been settled?
– Is the measure also known to the addressees in their administrative performance?
– What impediments exist to implementing the measure?
– Which process is agreed for problem solving?
– Are the operational elements of the measure (e.g. target group definition, cost items.) suitable for the regional structure?

Costs/resources:
– Which costs arise during the implementation of the measure?
– For which cost items do these occur (institutions, people)?
– What type of costs will be recorded during implementation of the measure (staff costs, material costs, administrative costs etc.)?
– What resources are available for implementation of the measure (staff, means, structures)?
– How is access to resources and the flow of resources regulated?

- What 'management control' has been set for costs and resources?
- What is the relationship between the management control system and the implementation agency?

Utility:
- What is the expected result of the measure?
- What further results can be predicted?
- Who derives direct utility from the measure at what point?
- How is the utility determined (evaluation process, management control)?
- Which process does the utility evaluation occur in, based on what criteria and at what intervals?
- What decisions are planned in what time frame regarding the utility evaluation?

Ever new adaptation and modulation steps occur during the transfer of the measure. They must be handled in a systematic mutual relationship and in accordance with a transparent procedure. Adaptation steps must be documented and analysed.

Account must also be taken here of political/pragmatic aspects. Even when the intention is to transfer a measure completely, structural or economic grounds can mean that such a transfer will be embedded in a stepwise construction, as in the case of the transfer of the TRIO platform to Andalusia. As the example shows, implementation must be designed and checked in accordance with quality management criteria.

3.4.4 Quality prospecting

The transfer of political measures to settle problems or to achieve goals implies a change in the training policy reality in the Region (whatever the degree). To be able to assess this change in quality management in advance and to make it definable, a 'prospective study' is required during transfer. A prospective study of this type is a forward-looking estimate of consequences concerning the possible direct and indirect effects of implementing a measure.

A prospective study of this type is performed in different phases, which occur within the transfer Region, but also in communication and cooperation with the Region, from which the measure is transferred. The difficulty of the prospective study grows with the scale of the measure's innovativeness and complexity. The

more innovative more complex the transferred measure is for the Region, which wishes to implement it locally, the more extensive the prospective study phase.

Estimating the consequences of a new measure occurs in four phases (see diagram 5).

Diagram 5

Prospective quality management
Transfer

Design phase
- Trigger/problem
- Analysis of the settlement area
- Definition of the settlement goal
- Clarification of alternatives
- Development of scenarios

Transfer phase I
- Selection of partners
- Analysis of measures
- Selection of measure

Prospective study phase
- Estimate of consequences process
- Adaptation variants
- Implementation planning

Transfer phase II
- Transfer analysis
- Evaluation
- Feedback

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In the initial phase (design phase), the triggering factor (a problem as a rule) underlying the transfer process being introduced is defined. It is important here to define precisely what the fundamental problem is, e.g. low participation levels by young people in training measures or too few offers in a certain professional training sector etc. The next step involves analysing and defining the area in which the transferred measure is to take effect (area here refers to people, institutions, and structures). Finally it is up to the players to define the goal that should be reached with the transferred measure. Consideration must also be given here to whether alternatives exist relative to the pursued goal (e.g. an increase in the participation rates) that are embedded on a single goal level (e.g. extension of training time) and finally scenarios must be formulated on the basis of different entry and process steps.

The first part of the transfer phase, as described above in Section 2.4.2 then occurs on the results of the design phase, i.e. the selection of the partners, analysis and the selection of suitable measures. The actual prospective study follows in a third phase. A structured, rationally progressing estimate of consequences is undertaken based on the selected, proposed measure in different processes (see diagram 6). Adaptation variations relative to the measure are also discussed in the estimate of consequences. Finally, the implementation is also planned in the prospective study phase.

The steps relating to the transfer of a political instrument that are defined in terms of process (see above section 2.4.2) are completed in the concluding fourth phase: analysis of the transfer processes, evaluation of the transfer product in the Region as well as feedback in the cooperative network.

The estimate of consequences process at the start of the third phase of prospective quality management can be undertaken in various ways. Quantitative, qualitative or systematising processes are available depending on the measure. They are summarised in Diagram 6:

An *expert discussion* is held in particular with a view to examining the standards and goals involved and to assess the consequences available to the experts. *Utility analysis* can evaluate arrangement alternatives as regards the estimated effectiveness against the background of a mostly multifaceted goal (some sub goals) in an orderly and qualitative way; assessment is usually made by issuing rating points in an open system. It provides a ranking of goal achievement depending on the measure. The *science court process* is a process that is frequently used in the US, which is suitable for debate on unclear evaluation situations. Scientific witnesses

Diagram 6

Quality prospective study tools

Qualitative processes/instruments
- Expert discussions/workshops
- Utility analysis
- Science court process
- Effectiveness/cost estimate

Quantitative processes/instruments
- Delphi questionnaire
- Standardised questionnaire
- Exploration

Systematising processes/instruments
- Consequence-oriented system analysis
- Computer simulations

(according to Böhret/Konzendorf 2001)

adopt positions for or against individual alternatives of planned measures and take particular account here of potential consequences. They are also 'cross-examined' by 'lawyers'. The *effectiveness cost process* is used because the prerequisites for a cost-benefit analysis are usually not fulfilled on a prospective basis (the corresponding data is not available). It is a simple process in which the effects and costs of individual components of the measure are recorded and assigned individual consequences using qualitative and quantitative surveying methods. The assessments are balanced and can be displayed, e.g. in a radial diagram.

The *Delphi questionnaire* is a special form of a standardised survey, which occurs through multiple-layer identification of group opinions on an anonymous basis and an absence of personal contact with the participants who are mostly experts. Potential consequences of instruments can be ascertained with their help. This also applies to the *standardised survey* (verbal or written), which is adopted more

with users and affected parties, and less with experts. An *exploration* is also a questionnaire that contains quantifiable data, but does not start from standardised factors yet. Instead it analyses the situation in the field on a 'soft' basis.

Consequence-oriented system analysis puts the measure being transferred in its relevant context and permits the debate of different scenarios for the consequences of measures (including on a visualised basis). Finally, *computer simulation* allows the emulation of processes that represent the consequences of current decisions subject to complexity conditions. Simulation models can be used under laboratory conditions, where several (precisely defined) variables are captured in their reciprocal context and monitored and verified during their development.

Prospective quality management is a process that is increasingly being used in the political area to identify undesired ancillary effects in advance and to allow optimisation of the adaptation process of a measure in a different context.

3.5 Quality management in the political process

Quality management during learning and transfer in inter-regional dialogue is a process in itself. The quality management process as well as the underlying standards, indicators and benchmarks are each in a development that should be verified discursively. The analysis of the overall process and the arrangement of quality indicators that can be influenced are linked to systematic personal reflection by the quality management process.

An essential factor in the personal reflection is the defined subject of the quality management. There is no quality management without the central player, who plans, implements, evaluates and communicates it. Returning to the starting point, quality management requires a binding authority in both cooperation and the network, which is responsible for these and implements and monitors quality management in practice.

As in Prevalet, this can be a project group which monitors the process discursively, virtually as a steering group. It can also be an institution that takes on this task. What is important is that the link between the reflection and the learning and transfer process is made in a practical and transparent way.

A quality management cycle can be imagined in this context that uses eight stations to implement inter-regional cooperation (see diagram 7).

Diagram 7

Quality management cycle in Prevalet
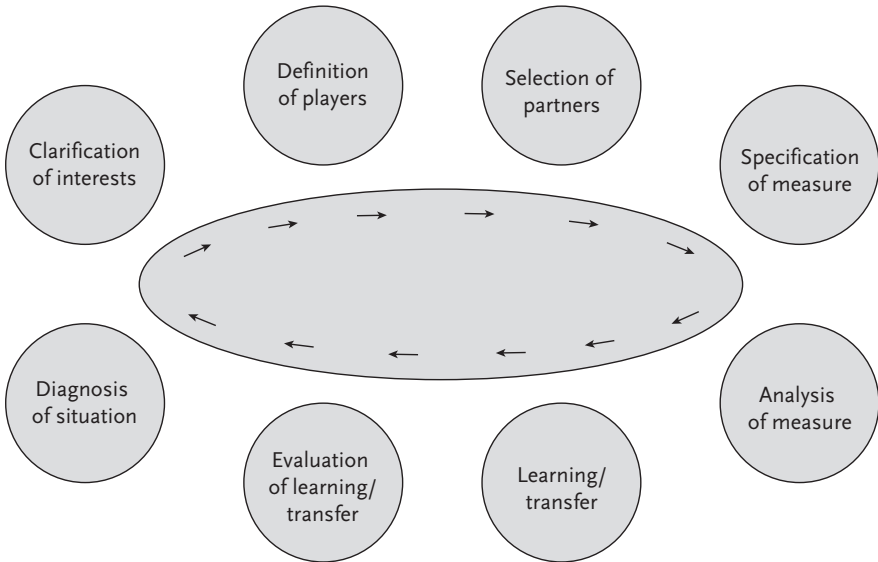
E. Nuissl 2007

The cycle begins with the clarification of the interest of cooperation, moves from there to a definition of the players in the cooperation process (players within the relevant Region), leads to the selection of partner Regions, with which cooperation will take place, and finally involves specifying the measure for which learning or transfer is to occur.

Finally, in a practical stage, the measure is analysed, defined in its components and considered with regard to the underlying and available effects. These are linked to the decision on whether learning or transfer should occur, which take place in the later sequence. The process of learning and/or transfer must then be evaluated and fed back, and the ultimate situation diagnosed. Interest can unfold again from this – from a developed new complex structure.

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4. The Trans-Regional Soft Open Method of Coordination

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4.1. A definition

The Soft Open Method of Coordination is a method whereby regional governments cooperate to improve the quality and effectiveness of their policies whereby they introduce new ideas or new policy measures within their systems.

The difference between this and the original Open Method of Coordination is that it is self directed in nature, trans-regional, is adopted in an ongoing way and completes the natural procedures of policy innovation.

The self directed nature of the method lies in the fact that when it is activated it is the outcome of an independent decision on the part of the regional governments involved. The motivation for the choice is based on needs and priorities defined at regional level, in the framework of the actual dynamics of the institutional learning of the Region in question. These dynamics are determined, by regional specificities and by state-level and European-level strategies.

The trans-regional aspect is based on a willingness to coordinate and cooperate between the regional governments, which directly enter into relationships with each other in response to shared interests or the interests of one of the partners. In this sense it is based on direct bilateralism or multilateralism, whereby the Regions activate networks and each of the partners themselves directs and manages the actual process of institutional learning, or policy learning and hence of policy transfer.

This is normal and ongoing, in the sense that it is not activated solely within the framework of actions aimed at implementing strategic political objectives connected to national and global strategies. The process is ongoing and horizontal in nature in the sense that it supports the whole of the regional lifelong learning

policy and particularly those components which may be the object of improvement when compared with the pre-prepared solutions and the results achieved by the public policies of other Regions or States.

The process is soft because it is not intended to introduce innovation or change processes by 'forced marches'. Rather it supports and enriches the processes of institutional learning, based on the actions and wishes of the regional policy makers. In this sense, the Soft Open Method of Coordination is mainly based on building self-directed cooperative and transformational institutional learning processes, backed by a permanent framework of support and facilitation.

4.2. The reasons and the results expected

Direct cooperation and coordination between the Regions in the area of education, training, work, innovation and research policy is necessary for a variety of reasons.

4.2.1. Trans-regionalism

The growth of the regional economy is strongly influenced by the capacity of public policy to manage the intellectual development of the population and to strengthen the capacity of each territory to organise itself as a knowledge hub. This is because regional development depends, among other things, on factors such as the quality and quantity of the human capital available and the quality of the action of the regional government on a range of drivers, plus the outcomes of education, training, work, innovation and research policies (Martin, Ronald L.:2006).

Managing economic growth requires policies incorporated into lifelong learning that cut across sector divisions and direct the reciprocal interdependence between economic growth, improvements in working conditions and the development of know-how by means of the distribution of the means of producing them.

Local economies develop because of the presence of favourable territories and their capacity to attract investment and skills and to transform themselves into knowledge hubs. At the same time, it is not only the large and medium enterprises, but also the small businesses that operate in markets at a global level, certainly as far as selling and buying is concerned, but also when it comes to choosing a well-qualified and less well-qualified workforce, which involves research, the exchange of know-how, and the transfer of product, process, marketing and organisation innovation.

Managing regional economic growth therefore calls for a policy which can develop synergies between the various drivers and at the same time support real processes currently operating at a trans-regional and global level in general. For this reason the aim is to develop a regional policy, which will support the globalisation of the economy and of society via measures which favour cooperation and coordination between the various territories involved, in the different Regions of Europe (Federighi, Cornett, Ljung:2007).

4.2.2. Areas of cooperation: coherence and horizontal effect

The importance of the objectives introduced by the Lisbon Strategy and the way in which they have been converted into benchmarks is that they offer all institutional and social players goals to achieve in building a knowledge-based society and economy. The benchmarks are used to identify the indicators whereby progress achieved by the various countries can be measured (Council of the European Union,2005). The adoption of impact indicators implies an intention of moving on to a new generation of policies seen as "intelligent", in that they are justified and orientated by the development of the effects they are capable of producing.

In the specific case of education and training policy the benchmarks selected constitute a reference point not only for the member states of the Union, but also for each of the territory levels of government (Region, Province, Municipality), which have the relevant responsibility and expertise. The differences between territories within the States are such that they require strategies and policies, which are differentiated in order to reduce the distances regarding the benchmarks and to approach Europe at a more advanced level of coherence. Uniformity of approach and policy, typical of forms of government in which responsibility is centralised, "build on generalisations which make the response to local needs less precise and work against commitment and accepting individual responsibility. Local responsibility strengthens the influence over the individual's own 'welfare' and increases the chances of mobilising commitment and resources" (Committee of Regions, 2003:2.3). The challenge contained within the benchmarks acts as a reference point to measure the effectiveness of the policies of the Member States. Analysing and comparing the results achieved in each individual territory in the Union is a measure of the level of distributive fairness and retention, or of the development of their competitive capacity.

The improvement of the position of the various territories with regard to the education, training and employment policy benchmarks is the outcome of the

totality of the actions undertaken in a framework of governance based on the complementarity between vertical and horizontal subsidiarity.

As a consequence, moving on to the analysis of the specific function that the regional governments must undertake to improve the European benchmarks, in every case we must consider the role of the complementarity of the various institutional players. In actual fact, current differences between the territories must be explained by factors other than national policies and international dynamics, since they are also a result of the various forms of regional and local governance, and hence can be improved through the actions of the regional and local governments.

If we restrict ourselves to only those Community benchmarks that are related to education and training policy, approved by the Council of the Union in the session of May 5 and 6 2003, we see how the role of the regional governments, and in particular those with legislative power, is essential for the achievement of the stated objectives:

1. Halving the student drop-out rate is impossible without local action of an integrated nature operating on the individuals and the families, and also by means of social polices.

2. Raising the EU average of twenty-two year-olds who have completed secondary education requires, including in those countries where the level of education is not the responsibility of the Regions or Municipalities, direct participation by local government because the phenomenon is not related to the quality of the teaching alone, but also to the building of training courses and courses that alternate between school and work, which only local government can provide.

3. Cutting the percentage of fifteen year-olds with low reading skills depends partly on curricula and the quality of the teaching, and hence on decisions and investments made at national level, but it also depends on the integration between school and territory, on the existence of opportunities for reading aimed at the parents (or the existence of local libraries open to the public of all social levels), and to the accessibility of cultural opportunities to all strata of youth, or local youth policy.

4. Raising the average EU level of participation in learning throughout life to at least 12.5% of the adult working population aged between 25 and 64 is an objective that can be supported at national level, but which can only be achieved at regional and local levels. This objective is based on the possibility of extending the population's access to all types of training provided by companies, health systems, associations, cultural infrastructure, churches and schools. This can be sought on the condition that all the operators able to pro-

vide training for this target group are fully involved and on condition that policies are in place, which are able to encourage and support the willingness of families and enterprise to invest in training (a willingness already strong if we consider the act that public funding covers participation costs for only 15% of adults who undertake training (Ministère, 2006). In any case, what is at issue is action based on a synergy of public, national, regional and local policies, according to which level of government is most appropriate;

5. Reducing the level of disparity between the sexes as regards mathematics, science and technology graduates is possible if suitable policies exist of the type driven by choices of the various institutional levels.

What matters in any case are objectives that can be achieved only on the condition that action is taken on the various components of local development via the incorporation of the various policies.

However, aside from the role and powers of the institutions, another argument of a distributive nature must also be taken into consideration. The reduction in drop-out numbers, the increase in lifelong learning participation, in reading skills, etc., are objectives to be pursued at regional and local levels other than just European or national levels. It must be possible to measure each level according to the challenges established by the Lisbon Strategy. Each Region and each municipality must be able to define its own objectives in relation to each of the benchmarks and be in a position to take on greater responsibilities and to understand how to activate regional and local policies, which will improve the economic and social well-being of these territories. Only an advance on a broad front towards the Lisbon objectives will avoid the risk that such results can be achieved by increasing the imbalances between the territories (European Commission, 2006).

In this respect, as restated by the Committee of the Regions (2003/C66/01), the problem does not lie in achieving uniformity among all the Regions of Europe ("equality is not the same thing as uniformity").The solution does not lie in centralising responsibility and generalising uniform solutions. The solution is rather to be found in allocating responsibility at local levels with a view to mobilising and freeing up the resources and will be required to achieve growth.

This means that the meaning of trans-regional cooperation is that development must be achieved over all the benchmarks, thus achieving a horizontal nature.

Hence, reinforcing the Copenhagen process and the priorities stated therein (strengthening the European dimension of education and training, developing in-

formation and orientation services, promoting a common system of skills and qualifications, developing the qualities of the systems), and also achieving the benchmarks of the Lisbon strategy is possible only by the direct involvement of the regional parliaments and governments. As the Helsinki communiqué of the December 5 2006 Council of Ministers states: "The success of the Copenhagen process relies on the active involvement of all stakeholders in the field of VET", starting, in our opinion, with the institutional stakeholders. This means implementing what has already been stated in the White Paper on European Governance in the field of VET policy as well, so that "all the levels of power responsible for the implementation of European legislation should be involved fully in its preparation and in the development of EU policy". Increasing the quality of VET and developing common instruments requires the direct involvement of the Regions in the mutual learning process.

As the Helsinki Council of Ministers communiqué stresses: "A more systematic approach is needed to strengthen mutual learning, cooperative work and the sharing of experience and know-how. This should be facilitated by (among other things) a systematic and flexible framework to support peer learning activities in the field of VET. The framework should also support decentralised peer learning".

4.2.3. The Regions' institutional powers

The role taken by the regional governments in the implementation of European strategies is supported in many European Union states by clear institutional powers and responsibilities as regards education, training and employment policy.

Because of the various levels of devolution, the powers vary considerably depending on the institutional arrangements of the countries and in accordance with the Statutes of the Regions.

This diversity has caused the European Union to reflect on a basic level of difference to be found between the regional parliaments, which hold legislative powers and other forms of regional government (Comitato delle Regioni, 2005). In any case, however, the majority of European citizens live in countries in which institutional establishments entrust the task of governing the component parts of the education, training and employment systems to the regional parliaments and governments according to a logic of vertical subsidiarity; these systems sometimes also include policies relating to economic development and research. In some countries it is the municipalities that play an important part in managing primary and secondary schools, and adult education.

This leads to the confirmation of the fact that the Lisbon strategy in the field of education, training and employment, as with the directions approved by the Copenhagen Conference of Ministers, implies a direct participation by all institutional players with legislative and management powers deriving from their national regulations. Cooperation and coordination between these players accelerates the process of modernising policies and systems in the European framework and reduces the inefficiencies caused by "mimesis" phenomena, deriving from obligatory forms of policy transfer of European or state origin.

In this framework voluntary cooperation and coordination between regional parliaments and governments with similar powers is not necessarily limited to Regions with similar institutional status. However, cooperation and coordination between regional parliaments with decision making power may produce effect on a scale in which, in relationship to the duty to govern, they may decide upon changes and innovations in the systems within their powers.

4.2.4. The ongoing and dynamic nature of the Soft Open Method of Coordination

The adoption of the Soft Open Method of Coordination increases the quality of the actions of government and governance of the regional policies. The regional governments are involved on a day-to-day basis with building and improving policies and measures aimed at increasing human potential. It is in regard to these processes of innovation that the added value of trans-regional cooperation may produce its own added value. In the Soft Open Method of Coordination, policy learning and policy transfer are of use if they are designed to increase the quality of the choices made by the policy maker at the time when he is creating policies and measures for the development of lifelong learning in support of economic growth and the creation of new jobs.

If it is true that all of the Regions are involved in these types of tasks, it is also true that they are not concentrated on the same objectives at the same moment and in the same way. It is for this reason that the centralised subject-based planning found in the Open Method of Coordination is poorly suited to this type of cooperation. Central-level planning of areas in respect of which the establishment of cooperation procedures between the Regions and deciding upon modalities and timing is possible and useful in extraordinary cases, but will not provide a solution to the need to increase the quality of the totality of regional political policies whereby, in theory, a comparison between the Regions at any time and in any area is possible.

For these reasons, what is required is a policy learning and policy transfer procedure that is open to the specific requirements of any individual regional government and which continues from there in the process of progressive extension to new areas of regional policy.

4.3. The basic components of the Soft Open Method of Coordination

4.3.1. A multi-focus policy in support of the spread of policy ideas

Each regional government is both a source and recipient in the field of the production of new ideas and practices in regional policy. Each regional situation, whether more or less developed, is important in understanding how to proceed toward the achievement of a European strategy of economic growth and job development.

In this sense all regional governments can be seen as the 'hubs' of ideas on lifelong learning policy, or as players which, albeit in different ways, are at the centre of the processes of producing, distributing and exchanging information. These are processes that already today have a transnational dimension, but which are differently distributed, structured and qualified according to the Region, and do not stand as a specific point of attention.

To upgrade the quality of policy, each European regional government with powers in the matter of lifelong learning should be able to tackle ideas, information and data, which place it in contact with the international panorama of the policies, measures and results obtained by others, in other parts of the world, at any moment in time. Unlike other approaches, the Soft Open Method of Coordination locates the regional governments within international channels of distribution and interchange of knowledge about policies as primary factors for implementing the procedures, which modernise the policies themselves. The direct peer-to-peer relationship between the Regions is necessary for institutional learning both for its greater effectiveness in respect of the modalities mediated by other institutional levels (only in this way can synchrony exist), and because only through direct relationships can forms of cooperative learning between the institutions be established. These factors reinforce the spontaneous and voluntary motivation to improve one's own policies and the conditions under which the regional population can be intellectually developed.

The quality of implementation depends on the regional governments' abilities to place themselves independently within world-wide networks where institutional political experience is developed at the regional dimension.

To guarantee that this condition exists a multi-focus and specialist (open to the world) European system is required, which will ensure the circulation of information about regional policy on lifelong learning. The necessary support services are as follows:

– Virtual benchmarking, based on the collection of comparable statistics concerning the various aspects of regional lifelong learning policies. The minimum level would be the comparison of statistics relating to the Lisbon benchmarks. However, a more systematic service should be extended to the collection of data on the results achieved by the systems, the assessment of the impact of the individual policy measures adopted, and also aspects of a management nature (see Web site references).
– A network database and open source information services, passing through no intermediary and highly specialised as regards content, which would process information on the policies and measures adopted by the individual governments. Such a service should not be limited to what are known as best practices. It should be extended to all types of policies and measures, regardless of the kind of assessment to which the results are subjected. A peer-to-peer type information service is needed to cut down the time required to spread the information and to facilitate the distribution of data in languages other than those conventionally adopted in information of an official and centralised nature.
– A comparative research programme on regional lifelong learning policies to fill the absence of knowledge and to work out and distribute assessment tools, a reflection above all on the new ideas, which may inspire the process of modernising policies and systems and which help to foreshadow possible future scenarios and the strategies required to influence them.

4.3.2. Defining learning priorities

In the Soft Open Method of Coordination, each individual Region independently defines its own objectives for institutional learning in the framework of the national and international context and strategies. What is not required here is a planning centre for the content, which the regional governments are required to learn. The general directions of the European and national strategies have already been fixed by previous institutional acts. Their implementation in the various territories is determined by the planning instruments adopted by regional and

local government. Furthermore, the definition of the demand for policy learning on the part of a regional and local government depends, apart from on macroeconomic factors, on its ability to define the areas in which it excels and to select weak points which need building up. It is inevitable that each Region will express a specific policy learning demand.

This component of the Soft Open Method of Coordination is entirely self-managed but also depends on some external factors.

The actions which characterise it are as follows:

- *Definition of the area to be opened up for a policy learning process*
  By the final moment of choosing the areas of regional policy learning, all the players upon whom policy transfer, should it eventuate, will depend, should all be involved. It is possible to consider implementing various policy learning models according to their level of connection with the time, distant or close, and the range of policy transfer. A policy learning model which has no immediate prospects of policy transfer may also be restricted to involving only those actors belonging to the regional parliament and government sphere. In other cases, policy learning should also involve the other levels of the vertical subsidiarity dimension and also those of horizontal subsidiarity. Fig. 1 shows the various levels of involvement of the governance players and in particular those in a horizontal subsidiarity relationship; they are arranged in two concentric circles depending on whether they are players taking a direct part in policy making decision processes, or in the wider area of policy implementation.
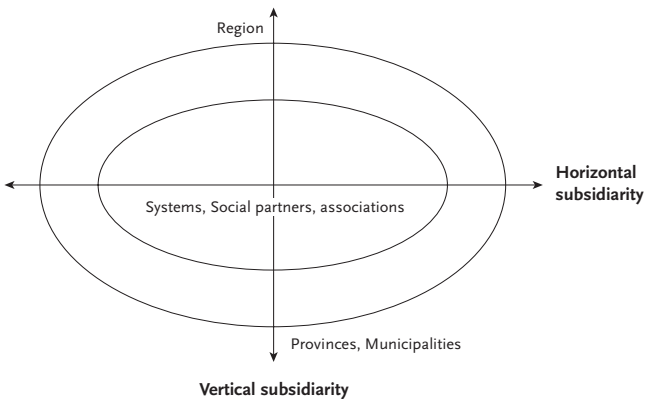

Fig. 3 – Players involved in the areas of policy learning

In cases where shared regional policy planning and assessment documentation exists relating to the actual institutional procedures of each Region, the choice can be justified by the priorities contained in these institutional documents.

- *Feasibility analysis, existence of sources*
Following the choice of priorities, efforts are made to sift the possibilities of defining policies (ideas and measures) adopted and implemented by other Regions, in other EU countries. The outcome of this stage should be an identification of the sources and of the aims of the subsequent policy learning process. The essential task is the predisposition of the conceptual bases to construct a personalised reading key (in reference to the Region in question to activate the process of institutional learning) for the objects which will be considered. The construction of such a reading key is necessary because, particularly in the area of lifelong learning policies, the differences between various national and regional realities are profound: identical words have in reality different semantic references, identical objects can be named in completely different ways, different words can correspond to concepts which do not exist in other countries.

This diversity, which is not only terminological but also conceptual, does not, however, constitute an impediment, but can be converted into a factor that enriches the learning process. This does, however, call for the observance of some basic conditions.

In the first place, the powers have to be organised, possibly mediated by support services, to seek the conceptual correspondences of the actual choices made with those activated in other countries. The identification of the correspondences between systems (between the various levels of a training system, for example) or between the various strata of the population is a convenient starting point from which to build a comparison base. However, when policy learning is orientated about elements that concern the ideas, which direct the working out of the policies or measures or the components thereof, the conceptual differences require a further building of comparable languages.

In the second place, an awareness of the differences in existence between the various regional situations must be constructed rather than attempting to create in any case impossible correspondences. Policy learning focuses mainly on understanding the most effective policies and measures for the achievement of better learning outcomes in view of the need for training found in society. The fact that in various countries different policies, systems and

measures may be adopted aids the understanding of the range of approaches which may be adopted and possibly assists in the process whereby they are partially or wholly adapted and transferred.

- *Analysis of the desirability and transferability of innovations*
  The following procedure is dedicated to an initial analysis of the desirability and transferability of the policies and measures identified. It means examining, even if merely preventatively, the results produced and the effect achieved. However, in actual fact the most relevant task is to foreshadow the significance which that policy or measure in question may assume if it is transferred. Transfer always implies a process of adaptation and improvement of the model adopted. Because of this, relevance is determined not only by comparison with the results achieved in the source country, but also in the destination country and as a consequence of the modification which may be introduced.

  Furthermore, the significance of a measure is determined in relationship to the interactions that are established in the new context into which it is being transferred. In the case of a regional government, this depends on the degree of desirability of a policy and a measure when assessed with its coherence with the objectives of the regional programmes factored in. It goes without saying that we are interested here not in 'disinterested' policy learning, but in that which continues on to policy transfer.

  At the end of this stage the choice must also be made of the type of relationship to be established with the Regions in which policies or measures to be studied or transferred have been identified.

  In the case in which the process of policy learning and policy transfer do not require a cooperative relationship with the partner government, the policy learning process will proceed in a unilateral fashion via the importation of the idea or the measure, and the adaptation and testing thereof. If the need to activate institutional forms of learning of a cooperative nature is encountered, the process moves on to the partnership construction stage.

4.3.3. Ad hoc cooperative learning networks

Institutional learning is based on the capacity to, and possibility of, arranging relationship networks created on demand, or in response to the specific learning requirements. This is facilitated by the existence of stable networks between regional governments.

Each individual Region can come into contact with the partners from whom it will learn. To achieve this it is necessary to place each Region in dynamic institutional learning networks. These are the networks that should be set up deliberately to promote forms of mutual learning. This is a type of function, which is complementary and not alternative to the role of the Committee of the Regions (which is largely responsible for institutional functions, and is intended to help local and regional governments participate in the decision-making process of European policy in the field of the institution, based on the Maastricht treaty, and of occupational training, on the basis of the Amsterdam treaty). The existence of specialised regional government networks guarantees the possibility of using participatory channels operating mainly in the area of producing and distributing new forms of knowledge via the innovation functions of the lifelong learning policies.

The specialist nature of the networks refers above all to their need for inter-institutional cooperation. Institutional learning can be generated by any player, public or private, and by any type of event. The activation of a Soft Open Method of Coordination process, however, which is characterised by cooperation between institutions concerned with the joint construction of policies and measures, where relevant, in the field of lifelong learning. From this point of view, the specialist nature of the networks constitutes a requirement given that only a partnership between players with similar institutional prerogatives and similar powers can initiate cooperative procedures in the building of policies and the associated policy-making processes on which the transfer of policy depends.

Institutional prerogatives refer to the powers granted via national regulations to the regional governments. Where decentralisation is not accompanied by a suitable process of devolution, participation on the policy learning processes terminating in policy transfer becomes complex. This is because decisions on the subjects in hand cannot be taken by the partners. However, aside from the partnership relationship between similar institutional levels, for the purposes of the Soft Open Method of Coordination, the existence of similarities in the area of competencies regarding the various material possibilities is more relevant. These are the subject of the cooperative arrangement. As a consequence, in the wake of the institutional legislation of the various countries located in the focus of policy learning and policy transfer, it is possible to foreshadow a partnership between regional and local governments.

This raises the problem of the difficulty of extending the advantages of mutual learning to the countries with weak institutional decentralisation. It is a question, however, which can be answered only by the national governments in those coun-

tries and the identification of forms of full participation, or participation with policy transfer powers even if only in respect of certain aspects, extended to the representatives of the local communities.

The question of the relationship between the dynamic learning networks of the regional governments and the role of the enterprise partners can be dealt with from two points of view. On the one hand, consideration is given to the need for the collaboration of the specialist transnational networks of the Regions with the social partners participating in the building of and the implementation of the European strategies in the field of lifelong learning. On the other, consideration must be given to the role of the social partners and the other players operating in the areas in question.

In this matter, a distinction must be made between the prerogatives of the regional governments and the role of the social partners and the other players in civil society. It is up to the regional governments to promote and make use of the dynamic learning networks between Regions and it is up to them to build partnerships around the priorities identified at institutional level. The relevance of the choices made is the responsibility of the Region. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the regional governments to define the policy learning and policy transfer procedures, which lead to the choice and preparation of the innovations to be introduced into the system and into regional policies. The result of this process is the definition of a transfer hypothesis the implementation of which necessarily requires a framework of governance, or the participation of a range of social and institutional players. Participation such as this takes the form of the following functions:

– assessment of the choices made
– participation in defining the necessity of adapting policy and measures for the purpose of transferring them
– co-involvement in the transnational cooperation activities connected to the implementation of the mutual learning process as defined.

4.3.4. Policy transfer

The definition of policy transfer which we have adopted in this study refers to two types of voluntary policy transfer. The first is policy transfer understood as "the transposition of policies and/or practices already in operation in one jurisdiction to another" (Page,2000: 2). The second is understood as cooperative policy transfer, related to the introduction of innovations in the policies and measures of a regional

government, with a view to their total or partial incorporation, achieved by joint planning and implementation, peer monitoring and the harmonisation of the progressively introduced changes.

Implementation thereof is entrusted to the establishment of the institutional conditions required to initiate the foreshadowed innovation via the prior policy learning stages. This is based on the outcomes of three types of actions:

a. the choice of the transfer model to be adopted. Basically, this means choosing between a unilateral transfer model (in which the importing institution is inspired by, copies, adapts or hybridises an idea or a measure taken from the practices of other regional governments) and a model we have defined as cooperative transfer (in which the innovative measures are progressively constructed by the partners and progressively adopted);

b. the adaptation of the institutional apparatus to the management of the innovation to be introduced. Depending on the range of the choices made, they may have an effect on the regulatory situation (standards, planning documents, financial documents), and on the actual organisation of the regional institutions. Transfer depends primarily on the analysis of the regulatory and organisational effect and on the decisions taken with a view to bringing the systems into line;

c. the implementation of the governance processes whereby the various institutional and enterprise partners take part in the process or assess the innovation choices made. In the first instance this concerns their approval of the objectives motivating the choices made, then of their approval of the type of measure adopted and the pre-planned introduction process.

The implementation of the process is followed by an experimental or 'conditional adoption' stage regarding the measures introduced. The purpose of this stage is to verify the area of transferability of the measure. This may take place via a pilot project limited to a few sectors of the training system (a type of school), to some territorial areas (several municipalities), to various individuals (apprentices, young learners), and will also be of limited duration.

This is followed by the technical assessment:
of the results produced,
of the potential effect,
of sustainability in economic terms
and, at the political level, by an assessment of the desirability of the measure under test. The result will be the decision regarding the adoption of the measure introduced as a part of the regional policies.

The implementation of a new measure into the regional lifelong learning policies varies in complexity depending on the relevance of the measure adopted, or the type of changes this brings about (in regulations, organisation, methodologies, etc.).

At this time a new procedure begins whereby the innovation is stabilised, a procedure that will continue to have an effect on the configuration of the measure and its component parts.

From the point of view of the system, the possibility of success of an innovative measure is related to two factors:
– firstly, to the activation of policies and processes, which lead to the expansion or shrinkage of the measure in all of the systems in which it can be activated. The principle of coherence and incorporation of the training and employment systems has an effect on the measures adopted. The adoption of measures shaped by the policy of demand will not be easy in parts of a system dominated by a supply policy, even if characterised by funding by the public services alone;
– secondly, regional policies require a process of contamination at the national level in order to be justified in state planning. This requires the activation of inter-institutional and inter-regional cooperative actions at a national scale both to promote forms of policy learning and policy transfer between regional governments, and to ensure a level of political coherence between national policies and the innovations positively consolidated by the activities of the regional governments.

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5. Postface

5.1. "This type of initiative could be a suitable format for institutionalising cooperation between the Regions which would tend in the direction of a formula for establishing multilateral agreements"

Carmen Fernández-Salguero Suárez – Andalucia

Human beings have established relationships with others of the same species in different ways at different times and in differing circumstances. It could be said as a generalisation that since the beginning of human history the tendency has been to cooperate with those nearest to us and to confront strangers, who could represent a threat.

As the horizons within which humanity has developed have expanded, the ways in which we relate have changed, slowly to begin with, and then with increasing speed to an extent where we can now witness the changes themselves in our own lifetimes. From a situation of fierce competition where nothing but absolute triumph is of any use we have progressed to the establishment of a much more human cooperation situation where all can be winners, as regards both results and at the level of personal and social satisfaction. The yuppies, who burned up their energy and youth concentrating on being the best and getting the best results, paid quite a high personal and social price.

At the everyday level it is cooperation that helps us make progress and achieve better results for the benefit of the democratic, pluralistic and multicultural society we hope to build in Europe.

Cooperation means establishing relationships based on effectiveness and collaboration from a prior selection associated with proximity and closeness, which ultimately becomes internalised as the framework for future action. Whenever we have to tackle a problem, we try to seek help from our peers, people who have already been through the same process, since their experience will help us assess our own situation and make the most suitable decisions for our own case.

Even so, we are not obliged merely to follow the same pathways as before. It is important for us to seek new ways to find creative and alternative responses to the situations that arise. When we share different ideas, from different cultures, we are witnessing the birth of genuinely innovative alternatives.

The Regions see the problems and potential of their citizens in close focus, and this is why they are in the best position to propose suitable solutions in a direct way. Collaboration with other Regions provides us with an opportunity to expand the range of possibilities at the precise moment when a response must be made to the citizens' needs in a specific field, which in our case is lifelong learning.

Of course, the noble aim of cooperation between equals can all too easily become a utopian dream in the absence of appropriate structure and organisation. This is precisely what we are striving towards at Prevalet with our proposal of the Soft Open Method of coordination (SOMC) as an inter-regional cooperative work method.

Although all the steps suggested for the development of the SMOC are relevant, in our experience two are of particular importance, since the success or failure of efforts to transfer a given policy measure or a concrete portion of the measure depends on whether those steps are undertaken satisfactorily or not.

What is essential in the first place is good advance preparation for the visit to the Region implementing the measure we want to know about in greater depth so that we are fully aware of which aspects we need to understand more thoroughly, and can see how it works in practice in the Region in question. This does not, of course, imply that we are likely to be taken by surprise by unforeseen aspects, which will turn out to be of greater interest to us than we had previously anticipated. Even so, it is very important for us to leave a door ajar in such a situation if we want to make the most of our visit. The fact is that the situation has already occurred where another Region became interested in a measure that had not been considered before and which may possibly lead on to a transfer which had not initially been foreseen.

The second step, which we see as decisive once all the details we needed to know have been assessed, is to carry out an accurate 'transferability' analysis. We need to establish the real possibilities of transfer, which can be defined as follows:
1. Transfer is impossible (the differences are too great; measures already in existence are incompatible; no pre-existing conditions are in place, etc.)
2. Transfer of the measure in toto is impossible, but some aspects are certainly susceptible to transfer.

Carmen Fernández-Salguero Suárez

3. Transfer of the measure can be achieved, always assuming that the actual reality on the ground in the Region is factored in.

Even in the worst-case scenario, where we have decided that no type of transfer is possible, we will still have learned something, and the possibility remains that the information we have received may at some time be of use to us in developing initiatives in our own Region.

As we have stated previously, we would like to stress the key aspect of flexibility as regards the areas which form the subject of the analysis. While never losing sight of the wider field of lifelong learning, it is important that we never close off those areas on which we are focused, since other equally interesting areas, different from those originally put forward, may emerge. This was the case with Tuscany and West Götaland in comparison with Andalusia, Regions which had revealed an interest in areas not originally chosen, e-learning and the business culture. This flexibility of method means that in a very simple way we are able to incorporate a new description of the measure requested by another Region.

Even so, what is of utmost importance at all stages of the procedure is the involvement of players with the power to take the political decisions which lead to the final stage of transfer and the subsequent implementation of the chosen measure. For this to be achieved the preliminary work of the technical staff is essential. Based on the description of the measures, the technical staff must undertake their analysis before they present it to the government who will need to be provided with solid information and established situations on the basis of which they will be able to take well grounded decisions.

The technical staff also play an important part in developing the analysis which follows the visit.

On the one hand it is essential that an overall picture of the measure applied should be provided, while it is also important that a satisfactory study be made of the options of transferring the measure to a different environment and locking it into a different system, while measuring impact and foreseeable outcomes. From this we will derive the keys to the possibility of undertaking the transfer of some aspects or of the totality of the measure described.

The institutions, too, play a decisive part, since they are the permanent factors in the procedure. The mobility of personnel should not be a hindrance to the

continuity of the initiatives in play. It is the institutions that will provide a sound, ongoing character to the projects that have been generated.

The European Association of regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (Earlall) has chosen to use a model based on bilateral agreements that are encouraged within the association itself and which are being used by a number of the member Regions. This type of initiative could be a suitable format for institutionalising cooperation between the Regions which would tend in the direction of a formula for establishing multilateral agreements.

The interest and positive attitude expressed by the Regions through this project certainly deserve the support of the institutions at the European level. It is essential that initiatives that are certain to strengthen this cooperation by encouraging direct action from and between the Regions should be supported.

The new framework governing the Structural Funds for 2007-2013 establishes an important framework for inter-regional cooperation. As articles 3 (6) and 8 of the ESF regulation state, this should:

"also support transnational and interregional actions in particular through the sharing of information, experiences, results and good practices, and through developing complementary approaches and coordinated or joint action"

In this context we must work to respond to the offer made to us and ensure that this precept is satisfied.

5.2. "Mutual learning between member Regions of the OMC can be a valuable medium for the improvement of the quality of the services offered to the citizens and of the effectiveness of the education and training policies"

Rosario Díaz de Cerio, Basque Country

The regional governments hold full powers in the area of education and training throughout a large proportion of the European Regions. This means that the Lisbon objectives laid down for 2010 will be achieved as long as they are attained at the regional level.

The Open Coordination Method (OCM) proposed at the Lisbon summit as a new framework of cooperation between the Member States for arriving at a position of convergence between national policies aimed at the achievement of the aims laid down in the "Education and Training 2010" programme is based on:

– identifying and defining the common objectives to be achieved;
– jointly defined assessment tools (statistics, indicators) whereby Member States can evaluate their own situation and move towards the achievement of the objectives set;
– comparative cooperation tools designed to drive innovation, quality and relevance in teaching and training programmes (distribution of best practices, pilot projects, peer monitoring, etc.).

The principles upon which the OMC is based for the Member States are perfectly applicable to the regional level, always assuming agreement has been reached as to objectives, assessment tools and inter-regional cooperation tools.

EARALALL, the regional and Local Authority responsible for lifelong learning has available to it all the actors responsible for applying education and training policies in the Member States of this association, in most cases equipped with full powers in the area in question.

This is why OMC at the regional level is seen as being relevant and surprisingly useful for upgrading education and training policies in the various Regions and in making a contribution from the regional zone towards the achievement of the objectives set in the "Education and Training 2010" programme.

This working programme should be taken as a reference point for measuring the situation as regards regional policies, and is sufficiently broad and ambitious for the Member Regions of Earlall to attempt to test the OMC at the regional level.

For the highest level of effectiveness, testing should:

– concentrate on the objectives to be achieved in the light of the political commitment that must be achieved regarding the precise duration and definition of the objectives to be sought;
– clearly establish the objectives that are common with a view to attaining greater benefit from the interchange of experience;
– jointly examine matching problems and appropriate solutions;
– undertake a rigorous follow-up on the advances made using reference levels and indicators.

As a result of the experience developed in the framework of Prevalet, the most significant components of the SMOC concept are:
– a common model for collecting information on policies and measures;
– a common model for internally and externally evaluating policies and measures;
– peer monitoring.

With regard to reference levels and indicators it is essential to adopt those established for the "Education and Training 2010" programme.

This experience not only has been useful to exchange practices, know more about others policies and measures but has also been produced to exchange of different ways of facing similar problems by similar or different means and comparing the results obtained.

Trans-regional cooperation has turned out as a key element to continuously improve the policies and measures that are at citizens' disposal in order to answer to their needs and requests concerning education and training. To achieve trans-regional cooperation, which offers positive results to the Regions involved, initiatives must be based on agreement arising from shared interests, among which the following must be defined with clarity:
– the objectives of the cooperative action;
– the policies and measures in respect of which joint action is planned;
– tools whereby information can be exchanged;
– indicators and references for the evaluation of policies and measures;
– the results sought from the cooperative action;
– the assessment procedure and the cooperative method.

For the learning society to become a reality, all the players involved in the education process must be prepared to learn so that mutual learning between member Regions of the OMC can be a valuable medium for the improvement of the quality of the services offered to the citizens and of the effectiveness of the education and training policies.

A wide range of human and economic forces are set in motion in each Region for the purpose of meeting the demands society places on its training and education systems. In many cases common problems of a similar nature are solved in similar ways, which implies that there is no doubt that, had effective cooperation been in existence between the Regions, a response of a higher quality and more efficient character could have been achieved.

Rosario Díaz de Cerio

It is undeniable that making use of the best practices tested in other European Regions could save considerable financial outlay and upgrade the flexibility of the implementation of the policies and measures, which help improve education and training systems.

At the European level we are currently running a working programme entitled "Education and Training 2010", using some reference indicators and levels which define the objectives to be achieved by the year 2010 and whereby the Member States can position themselves in relation to the reference levels and to the other States.

Both the programme and the reference indicators and levels are perfectly well applicable at the regional level since, as was stated in point 1, the Lisbon objectives will not be achieved unless they are achieved at the regional level.

In order to achieve this, and for purpose of driving and strengthening trans-regional cooperation, the following must be upgraded:
– tools that facilitate the interchange of information on policies and measures, based on common parameters;
– the circulation of experts and officers appointed by the regional governments, including study visits by them;
– inter-regional subject-based networks dealing with questions related to the "Education and Training 2010" working programme;
– participation by the Regions in assessments and surveys at the European level (PISA, etc.).

5.3. "The smaller size of the machinery and the relatively reduced complexity of the internal relationships, compared with the State organisation, mean that positive results can be achieved within appropriate periods of time"

Elio Satti, Regione Toscana

The principle according to which there is a recognition that the Regions of Europe have a capacity for inter-relationships and relationships with the Commission itself regarding actions that can be incorporated into the Union's programmes would seem to have been accepted, not only by the European Commission, but also by the Member States, even though the latter remain perplexed to some degree about it.

Historically, the process connected with this European principle of subsidiarity is relatively new.

In response to the requests from the individuals operating in the territory expressed on the occasion of the consultation on the white paper on European governance – COM(2001)428 def. of July 25 2001 – , the Commission undertook to *"[...] set up a more regular dialogue with the European and national associations as a first stage in policy design."* This commitment was confirmed in the act of adoption of the report on European governance – COM(2002)705 of December 11 2002 – and in the communication "Towards a culture of greater consultation and dialogue" – COM(2002)704 of December 11 2002 , the day when the Commission made it known that it would have adopted a communication intended to define the framework, range and terms and conditions of the dialogue with the associations of the local and regional organisations.

Bearing in mind the growing responsibilities falling upon the regional and local authorities in implementing Community policy, the Commission stressed the fact in the white paper that *"[...] at Community level, when the Commission works out its proposals, it must factor in regional and local situations and experiences. To this end the Commission should organise a dialogue with European and national associations involved in regional and local administrations in a more regular way, while at the same time respecting the constitutional and administration provisions of each Member State . [...]"*

Thanks to the funds and structural instruments 2007-2013 (ERDF – ESF – and Cohesion Fund), European regional policy is at last becoming a reality and is moving towards achieving solidarity in the Union, supporting economic and social cohesion and reducing the differences in development between the Regions. By adopting a specific approach, European regional policy is supplying "value added" to the actions being implemented on the ground and is helping to finance sound projects for the benefit of the Regions, the towns and the citizens. The purpose is to create a potential, thanks to which the Regions are able to play their part to the full in guaranteeing greater growth and competitiveness, while promoting the interchange of ideas and best practices.

It is in this framework that the Prevalet project finds its home and in which new types of tools are being tried in the interchange of ideas and best practices via the use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The methodological structure of the Open Method of Coordination provides, among other things, specific policy learning and policy transfer actions that cannot work at State level, and can only succeed in more restricted geographical areas, such as the Regions.

Elio Satti

The two main aspects of the OMC methodology are indeed possible, as Prevalet has attempted to show, only if the administrative organisations to be analysed are considerably "lighter" and more flexible.

The decision to become involved in the analysis of specific regional policies being implemented in other Regions, for the purpose of assessing their effectiveness and transferability to one's own administrative area is the responsibility of the regional political power, which, thanks to the fact that its organisation is more flexible than that of the State, turns out to be more effective.

The political decision, however, is the outcome of a process of establishing a "need", something normally undertaken by the regional bureaucratic/administrative team, which is not always available to seek outside of itself solutions to its own internal problems through the well-known self-referencing system that distinguishes it, but the smaller size of the machinery and the relatively reduced complexity of the internal relationships, compared with the State organisation, mean that positive results can be achieved within appropriate periods of time.

The same consideration should be factored in as regards the possible transfer of an "external" policy in the regional normative apparatus.

Once the political authority has verified, within the source normative system, the effectiveness of the measure that is to be transferred into its own regulatory system, it applies to the technical-administrative the function of verifying transferability by also assessing how well the measure itself balances out.

These delicate phases of the OMC are possible only in political and administrative structures of regional dimensions.

The Prevalet project has shown that the feasibility of the actions such as those examined meet with justification and effectiveness if they are conducted at a regional level.

Prevalet has also contributed by simplifying the OMC methodology itself after having tested its effectiveness in a regional milieu.

What the Prevalet proposal actually suggests is the implementation of a Soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC), which is more adapted to regional political and administrative realities (the OMC began as a system of cooperation between the States) by accentuating the twin aspects examined above (policy learning and

policy transfer) and simplifying, the process of peer pressure for example, as well as that concerned with the joint preparedness of the instruments for measuring and evaluating policies.

The results achieved by Prevalet, which can be seen in some Regions that are taking part in the project where the two stages on which the focus of the project is concentrated have been completed, lead to the assumption that the methodology applied is valid, the costs extremely limited, the assessment of the results very positive and, once acquired as a normal practice by the political and bureaucratic machinery, herald developments that have not yet been dreamed of today.

The Prevalet project also makes it possible to identify some aspects that can be useful in the new stage of the European programmes.

As is well known, the regional convergence, competitiveness and occupational programmes that call on the funds of the European cohesion policy of the ERDF and ESF are managed in a centralised fashion, in full adherence to the principle of subsidiarity. The choice of investments, which will benefit from ERDF and ESF joint funding in the 2007-2013 period will be made not only by the Member States, but the Regions will acquire increasing importance.

The Prevalet project, although it was developed when the new programmes were still being studied, has identified a role which the Regions can play with the new planning system, in a completely independent manner, moving towards the achievement of the objectives set by the Union for itself.

The reference is to the effectiveness of the experiment with the Soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC).

The experience has revealed the need to establish a fixed nexus between the pilot projects, which are developing new ideas and the programmes of the European regional policy supported by the ERDF or the ESF, which comprise the major part of the balance sheet for this policy. This element will be fundamental for the rapid and wide-scale spread and application of new ideas.

Provisions that are being introduced at the European level, which allow the Regions that have developed ideas, which are proven to be examples of best practice (within the framework of the programmes within European regional policy supported by the ERDF, the ESF and by other EU national or regional programmes) must therefore be able to be assessed and disseminated throughout the whole of the European Union.

In the second place, the Regions, which are part of European cooperation networks (a specific reference is to Earlall – the European association of regional and local authorities for lifelong learning in which Prevalet participants are involved) must be able to demonstrate that they have established a link between their work in the framework of the networks and their major internal policies in such a way as to present examples of trans-regional cooperation, which makes for a speedy assessment by the other Regions, and, as a consequence, a rapid spread of their policies and ideas promoted by the network forming the subject of the study.

This "bridge" between the two types of regional development activity could be underwritten by various easily-applied provisions, for example by including a priority into the ERDF, ESF or other EU programmes.

5.4. "We have also been inspired by something that is bigger than 'instrument' or 'measure', something which is difficult to capture in a category and in a way much more fundamental. This has to do with some underlying understandings within the policies, cultures, values"

Marianne Horsdal and Helle Knudsen, Southern Denmark

Prevalet is a valorisation project aimed at the exploitation and dissemination of good practice and innovative educational policy among European Regions in the context of Earlall. It is also an ambitious project in so far as the objective is to find methods and ways of exchanging information and experience and transferring innovation in educational policies across the different local and regional European contexts. The project is applied to the valorisation of regional policies concerning the reinsertion of drop-outs in the labour market or vocational training and increasing participation in activity in non-formal adult education.

Many Regions are facing similar challenges regarding the number of people in the labour market with little education and training and the significant number of young people who leave school without any further education or training. The Regions handle these challenges in diverse ways due to their respective strategies and working methods. Also, the Regions have different competencies within their educational policies.

At a conference following the Maastricht Communiqué in December 2004, it was highlighted that at present 80 million EU citizens are low skilled, and the majority of these are expected to be unemployed by 2010, as only 15% of jobs will be for those with only basic schooling. The summary and main conclusion of the work of the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium Partners state: "This means a dramatic decline in job prospects for the low skilled. Therefore, a better acknowledgement of the importance and value of learning, knowledge and competence is required."

If the Regions can learn from one another, exchanging and exploiting the different approaches and creative ideas and strategies, there is much to be gained. As the OECD has pointed out (2001), the "path-dependency" of Regions – traditional ways of thinking and doing things – may be an obstacle to innovative thinking.

It seems so easy and obvious seen at face value: You look at strong practice elsewhere, identify best practice, transfer and implement in a different context. And through the process of measuring, assessing and evaluating your performance and by comparing your results/achievements/performance to others, you get a strong incentive to improve in order to be on a par with others or, preferably, better.

However, it is not that easy and simple. To quote the authors of a working paper "All Benchmarkers Now?" (Sisson, Arrowsmith and Marginso):

> "Defining 'best practice' is no easy matter, especially when there are several and potentially conflicting policy goals. The result is that performance benchmarking rarely becomes process benchmarking, let alone strategic benchmarking. Instead of being about learning and continuous improvement, in other words, benchmarking tends to be concerned exclusively with quantitative measure. 'Focusing on the numbers', as Elmuti and Kathawala (1997:236) put it, is so much easier than analysing the reasons for the differences behind them. For the same reason, instead of being a force for change, benchmarking can amount to little more than a lemming-like copying of (yesterday's) best practice, which may be unsuited to different circumstances or times. The playing of catch-up benchmarking encourages putting a stop to a serious analysis of problems and/or experimentation with their solution (see for example, review in Longbottom, 2000)." (p. 16)

Several important issues are mentioned in the passage quoted: This significance of context, of analysing problems in depths, of experimentation and of the risk of

copying yesterday's practice instead of innovating. Innovation understood as the emergence of radical new knowledge implies a collaboration between partners from different organisational cultures, who do not just exchange what is already known. The concept of the emergence is referring to paradigmatic new knowledge, when the new that emerges during collaboration between partners from different professional and institutional contextual frameworks has qualitative elements that were not previously contained in the pre-understandings between the partners involved. "Through our actual interplay we are creating a new reality that cannot completely be captured by the pre-understandings of the participants or through simple discussion or negotiation between them" (Gleerup, 2004:207, Horsdal 2005: 157).

Yet, the not quite as ambitious goal of learning from others and implementing successful initiatives, theories or methods elsewhere is, however, of crucial importance. The homely conviction in institutions, organisations, systems and Regions, that *"we are the best, and we'll follow traditional pathways of doing things"* is one of the greatest obstacles to learning and development. Openness towards other ways of thinking is the main challenge today.

Another issue, concerning transfer is that, sometimes, the most successful policy learning will be **not** to copy what they did elsewhere, in order to avoid repeating severe mistakes. According to the learning theory of Benner (2005), we mainly learn from negative outcomes, we learn what we should not do. Furthermore, the quotation above also points to the issue of measurement.

You can compare numbers and rates. Numbers of participants in lifelong learning, rates of unemployment, but you cannot compare the learning experience.

> "Investments in human and social capital are unlike other forms of investment in that they are in-separable from the borrower. Within the ream of lifelong learning, where there is virtually no public control over the outcome of learning processes *except through measures delimiting the learning experience*, the return of investment is very uncertain as it is subject to decisions made by individuals regarding the type and level of learning sought and – importantly – the actual utilisation of the learning acquired." (ASEM, 2002:34)(my italics)

As discussed in the article on the discourses of lifelong learning (Horsdal 2007) investment in lifelong learning is absolutely crucial, but investing in people is an insecure business. This conflict is also clearly expressed in the OECD publication *Cities and Regions in the New Learning Economy:*

"However, knowledge in itself does not contribute to economic growth. Crucially, it has to be incorporated into the production of goods and services. Hence, educated and skilled individuals not only have to be produced (via the education and training system), but also their knowledge and skills have to be used." (2001:11)

This report deals with the transition from the individual learner to the learning organisation and the learning Region. Interaction with others is a precondition for organisational learning. As individual learning and organisational learning is a necessary input into the innovation process, both human and social capital plays a significant role. The individual control of human capital changes the power balance between employers and employees; if suitable jobs are not available, the individual may go somewhere else. The OECD speaks in favour of learning Regions and the development of regional innovation systems. Acknowledging that spatial proximity may facilitate organisational learning and trust between different agents, a regional system of innovation may increase the possibility of interaction between different agents. Low social capital entails a low degree of interaction and may imply low organisational as well as individual learning. Unemployed people are excluded from participation in workplace learning, not just further workplace education, but everyday learning-by-doing and learning-by-interaction. Furthermore, a lack of employment possibilities may reduce incentives for learning.

Consequently, educational policies too narrowly focused on employability in order to avoid investment in individual learning that cannot directly be incorporated into the production of goods and services and thus be directly transformed into economic growth, will widen the educational gap in a Region and entail a low social capital and other problems.

If we are to look at the problems and considerations above in the light of the Prevalet experience, we may acquire some rather important insights.

If we just compare the numbers, figures and rates (of employment, participation in adult education etc.) from one Region to another, we cannot immediately acknowledge what we may learn from going to another Region and how we may strengthen our own achievements by transferring some of the other Region's ideas to our own context.

As mentioned previously, path-dependency is an obstacle to learning and innovation. So we ought to challenge our traditional ways of doing things by

seriously trying to capture other ways of thinking and different approaches to similar issues.

In our view, it is convincing that so much can be gained through local and regional collaboration, and coordination. We have much to learn in the Regions as far as this is concerned. It is above all a question about the level of transfer. Maybe the measure as such is not possible to transfer due to the wide contextual differences concerning geography, infrastructure, educational specific need, present problems, etc. Maybe a regional 'copy' of a certain organisation could be transferred to another Region. Maybe other instruments or smaller elements could be transferred.

But, we have also been inspired by something that is bigger than 'instrument' or 'measure', something which is difficult to capture in a category and in a way much more fundamental. This has to do with some underlying understandings within the policies, cultures, values perhaps: How do we look at learning? What is the purpose of engaging in learning? How do we look at the learner? How do we look at people deprived of learning? What is legitimate? What is celebrated? Maybe this level – which is extremely difficult to categorise – is one of the most significant elements of policy learning from other Regions.

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5.5. A regional perspective on SMOC from the West Götaland Region

Göran Fock, West Götaland Region

The vision of West Götaland is built on sustainable development with three dimensions: economic, social and environmental aspects. Four general perspectives should permeate everything – the cohesive Region, Equality, Integration and Internationalisation. To obtain this, one of the focus areas is a leading position in skill and knowledge development.

The social dimension including education and training, working life, health, earnings, participation, culture and creativity, is fundamental for a good life in our Region.

Western Sweden has been highly internationally dependent and open to the surrounding world for many years. Foreign trade, international communication and other contact with foreign countries have been important factors in its development and prosperity. Increased internationalisation and economic integration mean a dependence on the surrounding world also grows. This is true of trade and industry, as well as of other sectors and activities.

West Götaland has developed alliances and partnership to represent its interests in European affairs. There is active participation, in teamwork, on the global arena. The task is to prepare the citizens well for international activities. For this the intercultural and international competences in the Region must be excellent.

Regions with well-educated populations are attractive to investment and develop faster. Well-educated people contribute to sustainable welfare. Rapid development in working life and technology requires a fast pace in competence and knowledge development. A high level of education and research is of paramount importance to West Götaland's long-term development. Schools respond to stimuli from working life, and produce pupils who are well equipped for a future professional life and lifelong learning.

There is regional cooperation in education to achieve higher quality at lower cost. Compulsory schools, universities/colleges and adult education are organised to encourage students to go onto further studies.

To take part in international and European networks means to focus on the learning and transfer dimension of the development of different policy fields.

To improve the quality and lower the costs West Götaland took part in the Prevalet project.

Prevalet is aimed at policies in the field of lifelong learning and learning and transfer from other Regions of Europe. To develop the method of OMC at regional level and to take part in the creation of SMOC has emphasised the quality management of the policy-making process in the field of lifelong learning.

The field of lifelong learning in all its aspects belongs to the regional and local level and the performances, results and activities are done close to the citizens. The individual demand of learning and training challenges all educational actors and suppliers in a way that can be met just close to the learner in a borderless perspective both in its nature and in European co-operation. The idea of SMOC, and now the results of Prevalet maps out the direction for the future that includes a trans-regional cooperation at policy level to ensure the best service for the citizens of Europe. To strengthen the trans-regional cooperation in the field of lifelong learning, as we have experienced in Prevalet, a more structured and systematic way of cooperation is needed. Learning from the best practice of the Regions in Europe has made it possible for West Götaland to ensure a good life for all its inhabitants.

The role of regional government from the point of the municipalities with regard to the development of the lifelong learning policy is a crucial one from the perspective of the Prevalet research.

Closeness to the citizens becomes real from the point of the municipality's, it is the municipalities within the Region that have the role and the characteristics to make suitable arenas for lifelong learning activities.

Regional governments could play an even more crucial role in the development of lifelong learning strategies in Europe. The SMOC could enhance and strengthen the policy learning and policy transfer for innovative actions to be realised at regional level in education, training and labour market issues. The local governments have an impact on the fairness efficiency of the national systems and cooperation. This leads to the opportunity to involve all Regions of Europe in the process of modernising EU policies.

Within the framework of Prevalet we have learned that the forms, need to be developed in various lifelong learning because of their positive effects, closeness to end users and impact on a local, regional and national level.

Through regional governments, as key actors of their institutional learning, can accelerate the inclusion of their local territories in the process of modernisation and global growth in the policies of lifelong learning. The connection between regional policies, European benchmarks and the priorities stated in the EU Council of Ministers the area of action where SMOC has been introduced the policies and the systems can perform better. In this regard, trans-regional cooperation and the SMOC could be developed even more and help to improve the quality of lifelong learning policies in our Region.

5.6. "Coordination and cooperation among regional parliaments with similar powers must not only be restricted to Regions with a similar institutional status"

Aneliya Vlahovska – Vidin District

We are in favour of the approach to follow European models for organising interests. The endeavours of governmental institutions, the local authorities and civil society involve finding a more efficient way of participating in decision-making at the European level – that is, through participation in European training courses. One of the key priorities at the regional level is the development of trans-regional cooperation.

A key component of the SMOC idea is the implementation of a multi-focus policy supporting the popularisation of policy ideas. According to this component, regional governments branch out and re-arrange life-long training ideas.

Specifying educational priorities is the task of every individual Region and is a key component. Every Region specifies independently its objectives for institutional training. The motivation in making a choice is based upon requirements and priorities specified on a regional level, as well as on the basis of regional specific characteristics.

The transfer of policies is a component which enables the various Regions to exchange valuable experience, to apply and adapt measures which have already been implemented with success.

Aneliya Vlahovska

Ad hoc cooperative networks are only applicable where decentralisation is accompanied by a suitable self-governance process, otherwise participation in transfer policies is becoming more complicated. In Regions that are not decentralised, this component is not applicable.

The mild coordination method that has been discovered must be matched to the process of training of institutions and participants that participate in the implementation of the respective policy; only in such a case is the method going to have dynamic character.

Coordination and cooperation among regional parliaments with similar powers must not only be restricted to Regions with a similar institutional status. On the other hand regional parliaments with legal powers are in a position to change and propose innovations within the systems under their control.

Regional parliaments improve policies and measures aimed at increasing human potential, but the Direct Mild Coordination method that has been discovered is only useful where it is designed to improve the quality of choice of the party which is applying the policy whenever it develops policies and measures for the development of life-long learning in support of economic growth and job creation.

Regions included in the same tasks cannot concentrate on the same objectives at the same time. For that reason centralised planning, proposed via the open mild coordination method, is not very suitable for this type of cooperation.

Some aspects of the trans-regional cooperation should be considered and strengthened at the political, institutional, scientific and operational levels, in particular:
- Specific organisational form of trans-regional cooperation and a degree of formalisation of relationships, as well as the types of membership have to be specified independently by the organisations without having to follow an ad-hoc pattern. Practice shows that there is a multitude of formats from which one can choose, taking into account the specific characteristics of the respective sector.
- Trans-regional cooperation should be regarded as a conveyor of information. European Regions and their networks serve as additional channels for the European Commission, ensuring that information about the European Union and European policies gets across to a large public affected by the policies.
- Financing activities implemented by various European Regions within the community and outside it, which contribute to the implementation of European policies.

- Trans-regional cooperation must be regarded as a key factor for the implementation of the community's programmes and projects.

The policy initiative needed to strengthen the cross-regional cooperation at European level is:
- Stimulation of the development of public dialogue on a Europe-wide level and strengthening civil society as an objective of programmes for cooperation with the new EU Member States.
- Dialogues/discussions and consultations among the separate governments within the context of policy formation.
- Stimulation of trans-regional cooperation among physically detached Regions.

Aneliya Vlahovska