

EsF CoNet Project on International Learning Models.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations
for:

Autonomous Province of Trento

and

Podlaskie Voivodship

Autonomous Province of Trento

Pro-Active Policy Environment Achieving Significant Progress in Key Areas of Lifelong Learning

Autonomy in education policy and investment and pro-active policy initiatives have led to:

- sustained investment and systematic improvement in initial education system
- rapid increases in youth participation rates (no “NEET” problems)
- substantial improvements in youth qualifications
- overall increases in participation in LLL.

Participation in Lifelong Learning

- Total participation in LLL in PAT has increased rapidly during the past 20 years.
- According to the composite index based on Eurostats data PAT scored 1.6 in 1999 and 8.6 in 2006.
- On this measure participation is better than in Italy as a whole (6.1 in 2006) and had nearly caught up with the EU 27 average by 2006 (9.1)

Performance in PISA

- Students from PAT performed relatively well in PISA 2006, as should be the case given the relatively high levels of spending on education in the region.
- The mean score of PAT 15 year olds tested was 521 ie higher than those in most other regions and above the OECD average (500).
- PAT had 10.8% scoring at the highest levels (5 and 6) – a larger proportion than in most other regions.
- Only 10% scored at the lowest level, a smaller proportion than in most Italian regions.

Policy Strengths

A diverse and inclusive post compulsory E and T system with:

- a strong VET culture
- an apprenticeship system with good progression routes
- an innovative systems of skills standard setting based on robust social partnership
- a successful demand led voucher system for skills training
- significant centres of high level expertise and research centres (such as Bruno Kessler Foundation research centre)
- improving IAG services and facilities

Challenges

PAT still has some important challenges in relation to:

- Adjusting to demographic changes
- Increasing labour force participation rates, particularly amongst older adults
- The evaluation and monitoring of performance of institutions
- Inequalities in learning outcomes
- Stocks of skills and qualifications amongst adults

Stocks of Qualifications amongst Adults

- Qualification rates amongst young people in PAT have been improving but the stocks of qualifications amongst the adult population are still low by comparison with EU27 countries.
- Only 11.2 % of adults (15-64) in PAT have qualifications at ISCED levels 5 and 6. This is a slightly higher proportion than in Italy (10.7%) but considerably lower than in the EU27 (20.6%).
- The proportion of adults in PAT with a highest qualification below level 3 (48.6%) is smaller than in Italy (56.5%) but considerably higher than for the EU 27 (32.7%)
- The major problem here is with the large proportion of low skilled adults in the 45+ population.

Distributions in Performance

- PAT students had a wider distribution of scores than in 10 other provinces. However, the PAT distribution was narrower than in the OECD as a whole (at 94.8% of the OECD average).
- Between school variation in performances was higher than in most regions, and markedly high than in PAB.
- Student background explains little of the variation in PAT students' performances. But school peer effects seem to be very strong.
- Early selection into high schools which are strongly differentiated by social class will be partly responsible for this.

Recommendations

1. Improve evaluation and evidence base
2. Further simplify and further develop a clear provider/supply side strategy
3. Widen voucher/learning account mechanism to broader choices
4. Build a greater connection between education systems and industrial/economic strategy
5. Continue and further develop focus on older workers in education and employment systems.
6. Improve overlaps with enterprise policy (self-employment, business start-up, etc.)
7. Improve “connectivity” within and beyond the Province
8. Make explicit links to social capital, community capacity and active citizenship
9. Focus on comparative cities and regions

Podlaskie Voivodship

Contexts

- Rapid growth in Poland since 2004 – still in growth during global recession
- Rapid decline in unemployment – until recently
- Protected by large domestic market
- Low population density and migration of young people
- Declining population and rising age dependency ratio – ratio of working age to total pop likely to decline from 72% on 2010 to 68% in 2020
- Uneven regional employment – with unemployment varying between 6 and 18% in Podlaskie and still averaging at 11%
- Proportion of adults with full US education in Poland (79.6%) higher than EU27 average (67.3%)
- Low skilled declining and high skilled increasing - rising at double EU27 rate
- High proportion of low skilled older adults still, though less than in many CEE states
- Labour force participation still low

Rapid Improvements in LLL

The overall impression formed of Podlaskie was of rapid improvements in lifelong learning, particularly in initial post-compulsory education, training and guidance but with major challenges still arising from continuing high unemployment Rate and low skilled older adults.

Strengths

- Strong and sustained focus on improving human capital, particularly at school level
- Long term planning- Podlaskie Vovoidship Development Strategy 2020. LLL at the Centre.
- Rapid expansion of education and training participation over last decade after major investment at all levels of provision. PISA 2006 suggests that schooling is relatively effective in science and maths.
- Delayed selection in US helping to avoid educational polarisation.
- Expansion of training and employment infrastructure for young people and adults (diverse mixture of public and private bodies and types of provision, teacher training, etc.)
- Strong technical and general learning culture in US education
- Internships and adult apprenticeships providing employer led opportunities
- Effective guidance system – through a Powiat network with good links to the education and training system
- Innovation through the voucher system – user led reforms driving and co-creating new types of provision
- generous and well targeted enterprise/self employment schemes

Improvements in Skills Stocks

The skills profile of the workforce in Podlaskie has improved markedly over the past 20 years.

- Proportion of adults over 15 with only elementary education or less dropped from 54.4% in 1988 to 38% in 2002
- Proportion with secondary education or higher grew from 26.2% to 41.6%
- Percentage with higher education grew from 5.3% to 9.5%
- Data for 2008 suggest that the proportion with higher level skills has now risen to 16.5% (a remarkable jump).
- The proportion with low level skills has continued to shrink but still relatively high

Unfortunately the data don't allow us to compare with the rest of Poland.

Participation in LLL

EU data shows that over 90% of 20-24 year olds had completed upper secondary education in 2007 which puts Poland way ahead of the EU 27 average (78.1) and suggests extremely high rates of upper secondary participation.

How ever, this is not matched in terms of adult learning and EU analyses show Poland falling further behind the EU 27 on adult participation.

The data for Podlaskie are based on GERs which inflate age-based enrolment rates and are not comparable with data for Poland or the rest of the EU. However, certain regional trends are apparent.

- High rates of participation in upper secondary education and training (virtually universal)
- High rates of enrolment in higher education – with slight increases between 2005/6 and 2007/8.
- Declines in adult participation in school level evening classes probable due to plateauing of need.

Challenges

- Expansion of HE participation not matched by growth in graduate level jobs in region. Graduate unemployment could deteriorate with recent declines in migration.
- Increasing but still relatively low proportion of adults participating in LLL in Poland - 4.4% in 2007 compared with 9.7% in EU27.
- EU sees Poland as 'falling further behind' in adult learning whilst 'moving further ahead' in 'early school leaving and 'upper secondary participation'.
- Rises in adult training in Podlaskie but decline in adult participation in school programmes – perhaps due to plateauing of demand for this type of education?

Challenges

- Need better data and understanding of how skills and education is deployed and utilised amongst local firms
- Need to track impact of training investment better – that is, through employment and wage returns to individual (and productivity returns to firms/public services)
- Poor infrastructure in region²⁴
- Low skills equilibrium visible in some sectors and occupations in region
- Skills investment may be fuelling outward migration (within Poland and beyond) – over education could be fuelling a regional “brain drain” at a time when human capital should be better used to drive growth in the regional and national economy
- Need stronger links to other drivers of productivity²⁵ (see UK economic framework in summary and recommendations)

Challenges

- Still high proportion of unskilled adults.
- Low skills amongst 55+ group
- Declining LF participation of older group
- Returns to training low for this group

Recommendations: Areas for Consideration

- Demand side thinking
- Human capital and economic development
- Supporting entrepreneurship
- Understanding impacts of migration
- Increased efforts to mobilise older (and unskilled) people into labour market
- Relationship between education and lifelong learning investment and social outcomes
- Greater co-ordination across ministries and between state and regions/localities
- Watch for deadweight/“creaming” effects in labour market policy

The “Knowledge Lift”: The Swedish Adult Education Programme

Adult education programme in 1997 to 2002 , delivered through municipal adult education system (KOMVUX) in areas of high demand and co-funded by state to a total USD 350 m. More than 10% of workforce participated.

- Aim : to raise the skill level of all low-skilled workers to at least intermediary skill level7, focusing on those workers with a low level of education and/or no formal qualifications, and to improve firm productivity.
- focused on the enhancement of general skills (for example, English, Swedish, and maths), as opposed to specific technical skills needed for particular professions. However, part of “Knowledge Lift” could be spent in vocational courses and work placements too – providing a context for learning basic and generic skills.
- Program designed to be demand-led – participants had a wide range of choices.
- Recruitment through TU’s and local employment offices.

Financial support for participants:

- Financial support through “special education support” (UBS) equivalent to unemployment insurance or special adult study assistance and funding are available as a combination of a grant and a loan.
- At the end of 1997, 538,004 individuals (out of a population of 8 million) were aged between 25 and 55 and participating either in training or active job search whilst unemployed.
- About 220,000 participated in “Knowledge Lift” and/or KOMVUX, and of these about 56,000 received UBS. About 35,000 “Knowledge Lift”/KOMVUX participants were registered as unemployed, and another 5,000 participated both in “Knowledge Lift”/KOMVUX and in employment training.

Relevance

Successful measure to raise skills of least qualified adults.