

“PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING IN TURKEY: PUTTING THE LLL STRATEGY IN PRACTICE”

Held in Antalya, Turkey, 12 – 13 March 2014

This workshop was organised and hosted by the Turkey Ministry of National Education (MoNE) with the support of European Training Foundation (ETF) and in cooperation with EU Delegation in Turkey. It is part of the long standing work of the Turkish Government to determine mid- term and long term policy reforms and measures with the aim of extending and improving Life Long Learning provision in Turkey.

At this stage of development, there is a consensus on what can be done to promote lifelong learning and how to go forward from concepts to implementation. Lifelong learning is a tool, and not a goal in itself to improve opportunities for personal and career development. Lifelong learning is a fundamental component in the fight against unemployment and social exclusion and in the efforts to foster economic competitiveness. Although the provision of lifelong learning has to increase to provide more opportunities for lifelong learning, it also has to be relevant to support individual and professional development.

New formal structures are coming into place to make lifelong learning more relevant while expanding lifelong learning. These include the Turkish Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning that provides instruments to quality assure and recognise lifelong learning. Hundreds of occupational standards have been used to develop relevant qualifications and training programmes for adults and young people and recognition of prior learning has been tested and developed.

The new LLL strategy 2014-2018 builds on work done during the previous years. The strategy moves from establishing a lifelong learning infrastructure with a focus of awareness raising, enhancing the opportunities and strengthening and coordinating the LLL system. The target of increasing LLL participating cannot be achieved by the public sector alone. This means that the partnerships with public sector, with the private sector, with local authorities, with private providers and with non-governmental organisations are gaining importance.

With this new LLL strategy Turkish institutions have moved from 16 to 6 priorities addressing, raising awareness about LLL, increase access to LLL, develop a lifelong guidance and counselling system, develop the system for the evaluation of prior learning and develop a LLL monitoring and evaluation system

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

1. Ensure stakeholders understand the implications of the national lifelong learning strategy
2. Strengthen ownership of the different priorities among stakeholders

3. Assist in translating the priorities into doable actions that can be used in building the provincial action plans
4. Identify next steps including support measures from the EU and the ETF

PARTICIPANTS

The 135 participants represented policy and technical level representatives from different ministries - education (central and provincial level), labour and social security, family and social policy, health, culture and tourism, science, industry and technology, development, finance, environment and city planning, youth and sport, transports, forestry - and from authorities in charge of vocational qualifications, higher education, public employment services, scientific research, SMEs development, international cooperation and media. Stakeholders representing employers' associations, trade chambers, education and training providers, municipalities' unions and non-governmental organisations are also invited. This included representatives of European Union Delegation in Ankara and the European Training Foundation who jointly with the Turkish counterparts provided input expertise on LLL in the wider perspective of EU HRD related goals.

Putting the lifelong learning strategy in practice

OUTCOMES

1. Identified key issues for the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy
2. Recommendations were provided for operationalising the guidelines for provincial action plans
3. Recommendations of the two days discussions will be further consolidated for actions to be supported also by EU support

From Findings to Actions

1. Everything is linked, lifelong learning requires an integrated approach
2. All aspects of LLL are being addressed in Turkey but often in silos
3. The strategy for LLL provides a framework to work with
4. There are issues that can be improved, but these can be dealt with in the rolling out of the implementation of the Action Plan
5. Moving from a participative to a collaborative model of cooperation: in order for things to happen participants agreed that cooperation is crucial from all involved
6. There is a need to understand the regional training needs
7. The diversified modalities for funding - need to be further elaborated
8. Recognition of Prior Learning tested, VocTest Centres lack demand
9. Initiatives under Vocational Qualifications Authority and Ministry of National Education need to be linked up
10. Guidance and counseling need integrated approach based on shared principles and concepts

11. Monitoring systems need – alignment with the Europe’s Strategy 2020 and the Education and Training Framework Programme for 2020, Employment and Social Reform Programme, Human Resources Development Operational Programme to be funded from IPA II, Bruges & Torino processes on education and training policy assessment (self of guided policy assessment).

Proposed Action

- *Adopt LLL strategy, establish coordination mechanisms, work on clarifications, prioritise and move from strategy to action plans*
- *ETF will support with clarifications of issues*
- *EU will provide Technical Assistance to public institutions and grants to the private and non-governmental organisations*
- *Lasting Turkish solutions require cooperation between Turkish stakeholders and commitment to common objectives.*

From national to provincial and local level- findings

1. LLL strategy provides a common framework but cannot be implemented top down
2. Implementation of LLL strategy needs a provincial and local approaches
3. There is a high priority to understand provincial needs and priorities, to raise awareness and to understand better how to make effective provincial action plans.

Proposed Action

- *EU will ensure that the next EU funded LLL project will include a substantial grant scheme to support appropriate local solutions*
- *Further preparations needed.*

Financing Aspects

The LLL strategy is perceived as an important governmental initiative that raised concern and interest among a wide range of institutions both governmental and non-governmental, from central and local level, policy-making and policy-implementation responsible bodies, state and private sectors, and representing both employers and employees structures.

The implementation of the strategy is therefore a very complex task for the Turkish government, which requires not only the participation of all those interested parties, but a cooperative and collaborative approach that will allow each of the entity involved in a form or another to fulfil its role adequately and contribute efficiently and effectively to the implementation of the action plan related to the strategy. The workshop helped very much in identifying the main stakeholders, their position vis-à-vis the designed measures of the strategy, and their potential role during implementation.

Given this complexity, the workshop debates focused on identifying the institutional and administrative arrangements that will allow each actor to take part actively and effectively in the LLL implementation. Less attention was paid to the identification of financial mechanisms to be used for putting in practice the strategy measures. LLL financing was therefore much less debated because of several reasons:

- *Other aspects are considered much more important, in particular the coordination during the implementation phase, the design of implementation mechanisms, the legal changes needed to make the strategy successful, the results to be achieved (mostly related to the accreditation aspects);*
- *The general perception is that LLL is a governmental strategy and therefore the government is responsible for finding the necessary resources to implement it. The concept of a state-driven process in LLL implementation, with relatively modest role given to the private sector (employers and training providers), prevailed during the workshop discussions, which made the financing elements almost redundant in participants' interventions – as the state has to find the financial means for implementing the strategy.*

Skills Foresight

The emerging vision for “Turkey Skills 2020” seems to be that of a national skills-related Foresight system, that will help Turkey achieve its goals outlined in “Vision 2023” that contains the following features:

- *Technology Foresight initiatives to update the original work of Tubitak for Vision 2023,*
- *Skills Foresight initiatives that focus on how new technology is changing the nature of work and demand for new skills, and impact on LLL*
- *Regional Foresight initiatives that localizes the results of these activities so as to optimize the system for LLL at the level of the various regions of Turkey*
- *Foresight initiatives targeted to specific populations such as the female, to ensure that the system provides a complete solution to their particular employment challenge.*

A series of sectorial Foresight actions have been carried out in collaboration with the federation of employers and other business oriented bodies. Foresight is being or has been employed at regional level in Turkey. It was suggested that in addition to skills related foresight, it would be useful for Turkey to introduce Foresight that focuses on specific populations, to ensure that complete solutions exist addressing all factors necessary to optimize the employment opportunities of the targeted populations. In these case the inactive female population.

The final point is that economic development happens at regional level, especially in large, highly diverse societies such as that of Turkey. It is in the region that all the actors involved in LLL - employers, job seekers and service providers, come together and interact subject to conditions on the ground. This is where problem solving and networking need to take place, not only for policy and strategy but for operations too. Turkey stakeholders might consider the introduction of skills related Foresight initiative at regional level, perhaps drawing upon and adding value to technology foresight, skills foresight, and population specific foresight done elsewhere.