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# KEY POINTS FROM EUROCITIES WORKSHOP ON "SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION"

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## Context

Education and training policy should enable all citizens to benefit from quality education and to acquire and update over a lifetime the knowledge, skills, and competences needed for employment, inclusion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment.

Inequalities persist in European education systems. Pupils from poor socio-economic backgrounds perform worse at school than their peers in all EU countries. For example, children from immigrant backgrounds, the disabled, and Roma children are among the most vulnerable groups affected. At the same time, there are large differences between and within countries to the extent to which family background influences learning outcomes.

Against this background, European cities are already engaged in implementing measures aimed at promoting more efficient but at the same time more inclusive and equitable education systems, which give access to quality educational provision.

## Format and objectives of the workshop

The workshop was organised by EURO CITIES and the city of Rotterdam in the framework of the high level event 'Skilling up for jobs in cities: making the most of the Urban Agenda for the EU'.

Attendees to this one and half hour technical workshop included city officers, stakeholders and institutions representatives. It aimed to encourage mutual learning from best practices and innovative solutions on skills development measures taken at local level for the promotion of social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

An initial presentation from a city representative kicked off the meeting, enriched by contributions from external experts, helping sparking the debate with the other city officers attending the workshops.

Particular attention was given to:

- exchanging views on effective measures taken at local level in order to promote skills development for vulnerable groups;



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- discussing ways to enhance the role of cities in this field and maximise the work they do;
- identifying fields of cooperation with major international initiatives from the European Commission, CEDEFOP, ILO and UNESCO.

#### *Contributors*

- Ronald Lievens, researcher from Reflect Tilburg University
- Irene Psifidou, expert in VET policy, CEDEFOP
- Sung Lee, project officer, UNESCO Institute for Longlife Learning
- Paul Comyn, senior Skills and Employability specialist, ILO

#### *Guiding questions*

- How can cities contribute to the promotion of inclusive educational and training policies?
- How can skills policies be a tool for social inclusion?
- What are the major issues related to inequality and discrimination in skills policies?

## City example- Competence Card for refugees, Tilburg

Tilburg has, in cooperation with the labour institute Reflect of Tilburg University, designed a 'Competence Card' for refugees. This card was tested in June 2016 with around 400 refugees at the reception centre Saint Joseph Care in Tilburg. The digital card enables refugees to create a profile including information and description of all training, work experience, personal skills and talents they have. This competency survey is more detailed than usual resume and gives potential employers a better understanding of beneficiaries' skills and competences. **The tool has been developed taking into account the usability needs of low- and higher-skilled refugees. It supports refugees in their insertion into the labour market and access to further education opportunities with aim a better integration into Dutch society.**

Mr Ronald Lievens, researcher at the Tilburg University and responsible of the initiative, gave an in-depth presentation of the tool stressing that the ultimate aim is providing a friendly platform for refugees to allow them to feel part of the community first and then to profile themselves as potential employees.

**Among the main features of the initiative is the role of volunteers who provide guidance to the beneficiaries and translation into different languages. Volunteers can also help them to use the profiling tool which is also conceived around the recognition on skills, competences and talents gained in informal and non-formal settings. A whole section of the platform is also dedicated to a profile based on the beneficiaries' personality profiling their attitude and aspirations.**

Beneficiaries are supported to fill in their profile and in looking at the job section containing job openings already filtered on the basis of their profile. At the same time employers and businesses can have access to registered and already completed profiles that might match with eventual openings they have.



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## CEDEFOP presentation on 'Early leaving and VET: putting the role of local authorities at the centre'

Ms Irene Psifidou from CEDEFOP presented the main results of the initiative 'the role of VET in combatting early leaving', as well as stressing the possible role of local authorities in this field. The research conducted by CEDEFOP spotted 350 different ways to combat early school leaving with 44 of them with a clear evidence of success.

It emerged that VET has a higher rate of early drop out compared to formal education but at the same time it represents a successful pathway for people that have already left formal education.

Thanks to the analysis of several best practices from different EU countries, the project identified the main roles of local authorities as follows :

- 1) **Contributing to comprehensive data collection and development of monitoring systems:** through early detection of distress signs of learners at risk of dropping out; reaching out in a timely way to those who have already left education. (See the regional platforms for monitoring and coordination of early leavers (PSAD) in France).
- 2) **Acting as agents of change:** boosting policy learning and communities of practice. (In Germany the QuABB project aims to build the capacity of students, companies and vocational schools involved in apprenticeship-training).
- 3) **Ensuring policy commitment over time:** supporting the transfer of successful practices and making them work in different settings as well as ensuring long-term support for the staff working on the ground. (In the Netherlands the so called 'drive to reduce drop-out' based on a strong coordinated system of data collection as well as on financial incentives to keep young people in schools works very well thanks to a continuous commitment from local authorities).

### What are the remaining challenges?

#### 1. To obtain conclusive evaluations on what works and why

A persistent challenge in Europe remains the absence of policy impact evaluation. From the 350 measures examined by CEDEFOP only 44 had some evidence of success. Often evaluations do not measure the ultimate effect of a policy on retention and qualification attainment, which can serve to inform policy making. In other cases, the indicators used are not understood by local authorities or the conclusions are not communicated to them. Evidence on success is crucial to informing policies, putting in place funding arrangements, and helping build the necessary capacities.

This is where we could see a stronger role for local authorities on one hand to contribute to the collection of data, and on the other hand, in its analysis and follow up actions.

#### 2. To empower the role of local authorities

National policies provide the framework, but the regional and local levels are where strong partnerships take place: partnerships between the education and training sector, social partners, employment services, youth, and social workers can support learners, vocational



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schools and companies in helping more young people acquire not only a qualification but the right qualification to increase their employability.

### Potential follow up

CEDEFOP will continue supporting member states in this field and in 2017 will launch an electronic toolkit of guidelines, good practice examples and tools to address early school leaving for policy-makers, professionals at provider level and policy evaluators. Some local authorities have already been contacted for the pilot phase. EUROCITIES and CEDEFOP will cooperate in order to involve cities and invite them to use the toolkit.

## ILO contribution on the role of local authorities in skills policies at local level

Mr Paul Comyn from ILO gave an overview of several interesting practices on employment and skills taken at local level, all those featured showed the local authorities playing a major role, as well as having a certain level of flexibility and/or devolution from national and regional institutions.

- In Turkey the employment and education boards are working together with a labour observatory. In regards to refugees there are questions around the demand in the labour market. There is an inter-departmental cooperation that proved to be particularly useful.
- In Sri Lanka, where there is high grade devolution to local authorities, the role of PES local offices is strengthened and they work closely with cities.
- In the UK there are apprenticeships hubs at the local level. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, therefore cities can shift and adapt the guidelines to suit the local labour market. They are also allowed to fund activities and policies in different departments which can play a relevant role..
- There are a lot of apprenticeships in developing countries, in Bangladesh for instance, where local employers come together with the support of local authorities to identify apprenticeships opportunities and play a genuine role as facilitator and address the structural skills gaps.

### Key messages

- There is evidence at global level that the role of local authorities is crucial in employment and skills policies and in particular in designing and implementing effective measures at local level in strong cooperation with PES and national, regional authorities.
- There must be more engagement with employers. There can be a mix of incentives; it remains to be seen what kinds are needed and to what extent. A various set of tools are in cities hands when it comes to working with employers: joint profiling tools, mixed technical groups looking at skills forecasting, co-design of specific VET courses and many others.

### Potential follow up

ILO and EUROCITIES are engaged in a pilot action on building holistic youth employment strategy at local level with a specific focus on NEETS and low skilled youth.



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# UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning - Learning City programme

Mr Sung Lee from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning presented the main features of the Learning City Programme and the main points of interest for EUROCIITIES members.

Since 2015 the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) has been aiming to support and accelerate the practice of lifelong learning in the world's communities by:

- Promoting policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities.
- Forging links.
- Fostering partnerships.
- Building capacities and developing instruments to encourage and recognise progress in building learning cities.

More than 130 member cities from 5 UNESCO regions have joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) since membership opened in September 2015.

The UNESCO Guidelines for Building Learning Cities launched in 2015 provide cities with strategic approaches for building dynamic and sustainable learning cities.

The guidelines specified six key areas of actions that should be tailored to every city's unique context, namely:

- promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education
- revitalise learning in families and communities
- facilitate learning for and in the workplace
- extend the use of modern learning technologies
- enhance quality and excellence in learning
- foster a culture of learning throughout life

The key features of 'Learning Cities' can serve as a comprehensive checklist of action points to help municipal governments and other stakeholders in cities in their efforts to build learning cities that promote lifelong learning for all.

The key features and related indicators focusing more on social inclusion are:

## **A) Providing support for marginalized groups, including migrant families, to ensure access to education**

A.1) Support for disadvantaged groups: measures adopted by the city authorities to support learners from linguistic/ethnic minorities and disadvantaged backgrounds

A.2) Support for senior citizens: measures adopted by the city authorities to support senior citizen learners (aged 65 years and older)



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## **B) Providing appropriate learning opportunities for unemployed young people and adults**

Youth involvement in education and employment: total number of young people (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training as a percentage of the total population (official data provided by city authorities)

Migrant workers' participation in education and training: existence of initiatives and strategies adopted by cities to support migrant workers' participation in education and training.

## **C) Developing and implementing well-grounded and participatory strategies for promoting lifelong learning for all**

Public policy and strategy: legislation, public policy and strategy for promoting lifelong learning for all adopted by the city council.

### **Potential follow up**

Some cities, such as Bristol, are EUROCITIES members and are also part of the Learning City Global Network, these cities could present their experience in the next relevant meetings of EUROCITIES working groups.

## **Links to the European Commission New Skills Agenda for Europe**

- Local authorities are cited as key actors in the implementation of the forthcoming Skills Guarantee announced by the European Commission. This scheme is meant to help young adults to improve their literacy, numeracy, digital skills and develop a wider set of skills therefore offering them the opportunity to upskill and increase their chance of obtaining an upper secondary education qualification or equivalent. Offering people the opportunity to acquire the right skills needed to access the labour market could serve as an effective way to break the circle of poverty and offer equal opportunities.
- Integration into society and access to the labour market for third country nationals is of the utmost importance. A necessary step to this end is the early identification of migrants' skills to help them determine the steps they will have to take to integrate. The European Commission is proposing a 'Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals', which would assist services in identifying qualifications and experience of newly-arrived third country nationals. As migrants often settle in cities where they are offered more opportunities for jobs, this tool could be of particular importance for local authorities to aid migrants throughout the whole process of integration.



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