

**Euromontana contribution to the Stakeholder Meeting on
An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: A European contribution towards full employment.
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To the Committee of the Regions rapporteur M **Denis LANDY** (IE/PES)
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Priorities

Do you find the priorities of the Commission text to be appropriate/balanced?

Euromontana agrees with the 4 key priorities chosen by the Commission and is looking forward to seeing them implemented at EU level. We do consider that the general approach of interventions at Member States level is relevant for the realisation of the 2 objectives but we call for a greater involvement of **local and regional authorities to implement these general objectives** .

Is there sufficient attention accorded to addressing the huge disparities between regions in terms of basic skills problems, access and incentives to training and upskilling, preventative measures for early school leavers?

Euromontana **would welcome references to regional aspects in the EC document. We consider that this role could have been stronger given the heterogeneity of the EU territories and given the art 174 of the EU treaty** stating the objective of territorial cohesion.

In that respect, we thank the CoR rapporteur for underlining the need of recognition of regional differentiation within the European Union.

As clearly identified within the CoR discussion document, the objectives of:

- > 75% employment of 20-64,
 - < 10% school drop and
 - > 40% of tertiary education residents
- can be seen as ambitious for some regions.

Mountain areas for example suffer from permanent disadvantages, such as fragmentation of communities and enterprises, difficulties of access and communication, too low population density to allow an economic diversification. These often combine with other structural problems, such as lack of access to higher education, slow access to Internet and on-line services.

Within the INTERREG IVC project Euromontana is currently carrying out with some of our members (PADIMA - Policies against depopulation in mountain areas) we have noted some interesting facts.

For example, **the education level in the 7 European mountain regions studied in the project is lower than the average in their country**. Especially, people with **higher education are less represented in the research areas than in the countries**. The Italian and Spanish studied areas have a majority of people with only basic school/ground school education. In the Scandinavian regions, people with Upper Secondary School are in majority. .

In that respect we encourage the CoR rapporteur to underline the need of recognition of regional disparities? at EU level and to stress **the fact that development should be looked at also within regions, at NUTS 3 and 4 levels**. Because mountain areas being often less populated than lowland areas, we see a danger of focusing on cities and agglomerations only to reach the EU qualitative targets. We would like to see all communities, comprising rural, mountain areas, islands and sparsely populated areas, included within the Commission Agenda.

However mountain areas are not powerless and suffering from their disadvantages when it comes to employment and skills. Good practices have been developed in mountain areas where regional & local stakeholders have been able to tackle specific problems through adapted solutions. Therefore we would like to highlight that 39 good practices have been gathered within the PADIMA project and are available on www.padima.org.

What are the implications and potential impacts of re-balancing of the components of the flexicurity model?

2. Contributions by Local and regional authorities

How can local and regional authorities best contribute to Making labour markets function better?

Local and regional authorities should :

- **take advantage of EU structural, social and cohesion funds** to develop a well-targeted training and lifelong learning offer. Special attention shall be given to rural, mountain and sparsely populated areas where people have more difficulties to reach diverse formation offers within acceptable distance & time.
- **use the opportunities given by the above-mentioned funds** as well as local incentives to support the training of skilled workers, in relation with market needs and trends
- **Encourage businesses to put the stress on training and lifelong competences achievement** through incentives, and support the spread of diverse and high quality trainings to small business scale business, from rural, mountain and sparsely populated areas

Much has been said about the necessity of linking academic institutions with local industry, what role can local/regional authorities play in bringing together these linkages and sustaining them, are there successful examples available?

Local and regional authorities should:

- **maintain an on-going dialogue on one side with (mountain) businesses** regarding their needs and ideas of development, and on the other side **with high schools, training institutes and universities** from the areas
- **put representatives from both sides at the discussion table** and address together their needs and opportunities to create targeted courses, to have representatives from businesses visiting schools, etc.
- **use the opportunities given by the EU national and local funds/incentives** to support the training of skilled workers, in relation with market needs and trends

Example of PADIMA good practice: **Regional competence platform - Action for Training in Dalarna**

Aim of the initiative : to establish a regional platform for cooperation between education providers, industries and labour market partners in order to improve the match between education and labour market requirements, i.e. that the training level, content and scope is consistent with the demand for labour.

Bodies involved in the implementation:

representatives from the Dalarna Region,
representative of adult education associations,
Dalarna University,
the employment office

Gysam (cooperation between secondary schools in six municipalities).

Private training providers

Budget : 100% public regional funds for the training provided

Is there any role for local authorities to feed into the work of the new sectoral councils at the EU level?

3. Equipping people with the right skills for employment?

What future skills needs will emerge in response to future globalisation, demographic and environmental pressures?

The knowledge and use of ICT will be spread among so many sectors that it will become almost compulsory for somebody's integration on the labour market.

Research and technical skills to favour innovation, as well as greener skills, will be highly needed within mountain regions, as well as within others regions.

Are local and regional authorities ready to respond to such changes?

What greater role, if any, should be accorded to authorities in areas of profiling of existing skills, mapping of future skills demand and direct intervention particularly for low skilled and vulnerable workers and the unemployed?

Greater attention should be given to rural, mountain and sparsely populated areas that have proven to have greater problems in offering attractive & diversified training and education offers within acceptable distance. The diversification of training offers shall be done from a bottom-up approach, conforming with field needs. It shall be considered not only as an opportunity to reply to labour market but also as a territorial development tool, to avoid rural-urban migration.

Padima good practice: **DalarnaWux project Dalarna, Sweden**

Aim of the initiative :

- Conduct competence analyses of 1000 workplaces and some 5000 individuals
- Interact concerning implementation of requested courses according to implemented analyses.
- Actively contribute in making more people employable in agreement with employment office forecasts and the county's demographic development.
- Adjust the county's adult education to the objectives of the Dala Strategy (a regional development strategy) which emphasises the importance of business change and competitiveness and promotes skills that meet the needs of industry and society.
- Through collaboration, increase accessibility to adult education throughout the county.

Bodies involved in the implementation:

a non-profit association (DalaWUx)

adult education departments in Dalarna's 15 municipalities.

Funding: Financial framework: The DalaWux association is funded through an annual membership fee based on the municipality population.

4. Improving job quality and working conditions

Local/Regional authorities are major employers in their own right, what role can they fulfil as employers in enhancing the quality of the labour market within a region and in meeting short term supply and demand needs?

Local and regional authorities can first of all support an ambitious digital agenda to ensure timely access to latest technologies to all citizens and especially to those for which ICT plays a key distance-shrinking role, such as workers located in remote areas.

5. Discrimination issues

Is the issue of discrimination in the labour market sufficiently addressed?

Should there be common targets set down on reducing unemployment within particular groups, such as young people, women, migrants?

How well does the Commission text address the issue of integration of migrants, both socially and economically?

Migrants represent a potential for the EU demographic challenge and their issues shall be better tackled within the Communication. In mountain areas, we have successful good practices of repopulation thanks to migrants, for whom adapted training courses have been designed. That favours their integration, on social and professional level.

PADIMA good practice: **Continued educations for adults**, province of Teruel, Spain

The province has developed an internet platform and physical courses given to people from mountain areas in a broad offer, connected with the regional employment offer. Some courses are targeted directly to immigrants and they include a strong focus on language, in addition to skills.

Bodies involved in the implementation: the regional and local authorities, schools

Financing: 100% public funds

6. Financing

How should the relevant EU financial instruments be reviewed to better support the objectives of the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs?

EU funds shall better:

1. Stress the need to reinforce the proximity of the training/education offer to all EU inhabitants (ESF, ERDF, CF),
2. Ensure that rural, mountain and sparsely populated areas SMEs (of small size – difficulty to reach targeted training) can benefit from some regional proactive and moving training/education institutions
3. Promote a bottom-up design of the content of the regional training offers, in regards with the EU skills panorama
4. Encourage regions to diversify their inhabitants skills (ESF, CF)
5. Request a qualitative training offer rather than quantitative

And above all the **rules applying to the use of EU financial instruments should promote**, via the Common strategic framework and the Partnership contract for development and investment envisaged in the future cohesion policy and which should embrace other policies, **the financing, in a multi-fund approach, of integrated strategies for territorial development including the issue of skills**. These strategies should be developed in a bottom-up approach, building on local needs. To this end the ESF should remain in cohesion funds and be managed regionally.

See our position on the Vth Cohesion report for a more detailed description of our approach on www.euromontana.org.
