

The MASON target group

The principle target audience of the MASON project is strategic policy planners and decision makers in the field of LLL at cross-national, national, regional, local and institutional levels.



<http://e-demos.iacm.forth.gr>

e-Demos is a portal dedicated to the generation, promotion, discussion and reflection upon new ideas for policies and practices promoting lifelong learning (LLL) in Europe

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Upcoming event

25th of January 2013

THE BARCELONA MASON SYMPOSIUM Promoting Place-Based Lifelong Learning Strategies in the EU

University of Barcelona, Campus Mundet – Faculty of Pedagogy, Palau de les Heures,
Passeig Vall Hebrón, 171, 08035 Barcelona



The MASON project suggests that the regional and local diversity in the EU across several dimensions such as demographics, geography, economy and education requires going beyond 'one-size-fits-all' lifelong learning policies towards integrated, place-based, approaches. Such approaches to policy making can strengthen the overall coherence and comprehensiveness of national LLL strategies, because they focus on specific regional and local community needs and problems and promote partnerships and policy ownership with regional and local authorities, economic actors, social partners and the civil society.

The MASON project stresses the importance of developing a better understanding of the capacities, challenges and dynamics of the regional and local lifelong learning systems as a means to empower governments as well as regional and local authorities to promote place-based policies. To facilitate this approach, the MASON project developed mapping tools based on composite indicators that help policy makers develop a more integrated understanding of the education position and dynamics at regional level, and methodologies that help local and regional LLL key stakeholders develop LLL Action Plans that are socio-culturally meaningful and relevant to the local community needs and problems.

A policy approach that takes account of specific assets that are by definition located in a particular place and seeks to co-ordinate the various sectoral policies affecting that place is more likely to achieve coherent, multi-sector policy outcomes than one relying on economy-wide policies that are 'spatially blind' (though not always spatially neutral).

OECD (2011), *OECD Regional Outlook 2011, Building Resilient Regions for Stronger Economies*, p. 17.

The MASON team invites to the Barcelona Symposium lifelong learning policy planners and implementers at national, regional and local levels, as well as experts and the research community in the field of LLL. **Participation is free of charge but early booking is required because of limited places.** For booking arrangements and more information about the MASON Barcelona Symposium (25th of January 2013) please contact Karina Olmedo Casas at kolmedo@gmail.com (+34-934031338, +34-638224611) or Dr Mario Barajas at mbarajas@ub.edu (+34-934037223).

The Barcelona MASON Symposium

The Barcelona MASON Symposium is dedicated to an in-depth presentation and discussion of methodologies and tools that promote place-based lifelong learning policies.



One of the major outcomes of the MASON project aimed at assisting the development of place-based LLL policies are the **interactive regional maps** which show the position and dynamics of the EU regions on a series of composite indicators, for example on education and information society attainments.

Such maps can be utilised together with a structured case study analysis to develop Action Plans for the promotion of socio-culturally relevant LLL policies at regional and local levels.

Axes for a Qualitative Profiling of LLL Dynamics of Regions/Cities

Axis 1 assesses the empowerment of regional/city level authorities to define and implement their own LLL policies and strategies.

This is linked to **Axis 2** of the financial capacity and autonomy of the region/city to invest in LLL.

Axis 3 considers demands for and accessibility of E&T for engagement in LLL activities in the region/city.

Axis 4 is focused on emerging or long standing socio-economic, cultural, technological and environmental challenges faced by the region/city and their implications to LLL.

Axis 5 has to do with the mobilisation of local LLL stakeholders.

Axis 6 is focused on the learning culture(s) of the region/city.

About the MASON project

MASON’s overall goal is to support the establishment and implementation of **coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning (LLL) strategies** and complementary policies at national, regional and local levels. More specifically, the MASON project seeks to develop frameworks, methodologies and tools anticipated to increase the coherence and comprehensiveness of LLL strategies at national, regional and local levels.

The MASON project is now in its second year (March 2011-February 2013). During the first year

the MASON project performed a comparative critical review of the national LLL policies of Finland, Greece, Slovakia, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland and Spain. It has so far organised two workshops, the first in Heraklion, Greece and the second in Sofia, Bulgaria.

For more information about the MASON project visit: <http://mason.iacm.forth.gr/>

The MASON Indicator Mapping Approach

The aim of the MASON indicator mapping approach is to offer an interactive map tool to facilitate a comparative overview of the position and dynamics of EU regions in the general areas of education, information society, science & technology, labour market, economic accounts and demographics. Relevant data from Eurostat were clustered to composite indicators in the following four dimensions:

- [Education](#)
- [Information Society](#)
- [Socioeconomics](#)
- [Science and Technology](#)

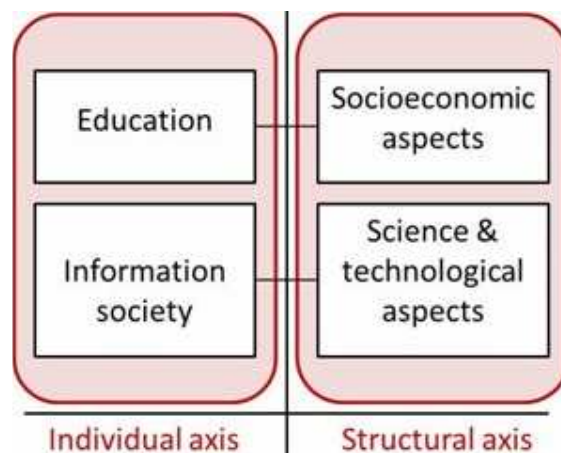
For most of the simple indicators which were used to construct composite indicators, Eurostat data were available for several years. This gave plenty of information to analyse the current position of a region with respect to one composite indicator, but also with respect to changes during a fixed period of time.

For the current position, the latest year with data available by Eurostat was used for analysis.

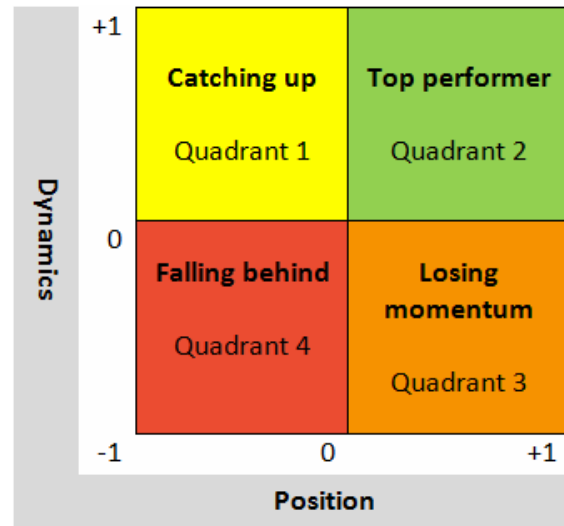
To get information on changes over a certain period of time, a dynamics score was calculated for each indicator. The chosen time span was ten years.

Individual and Structural Axis

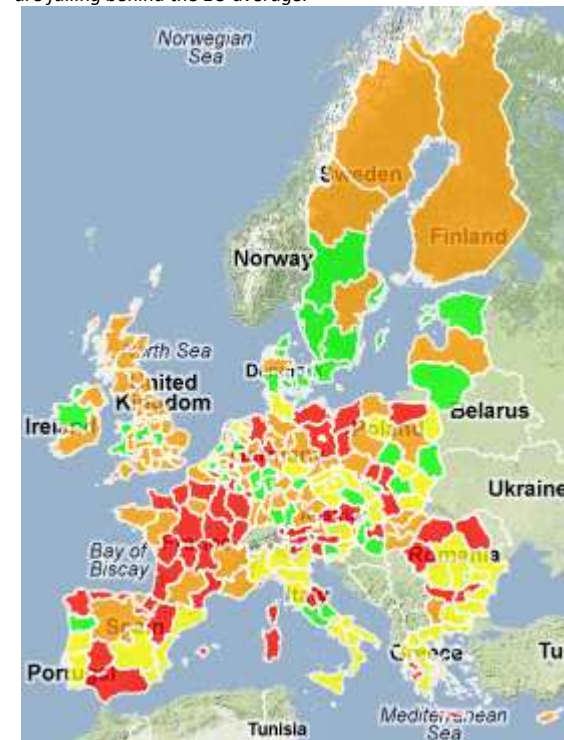
Based on the four dimensions, two axes were built: one focusing on the **individuals living in a learning region** – this included the dimensions of *education* and *information society* – and the other focusing on the **structure of the learning region** – this included the *socioeconomics* and the *science and technology* dimension. The following figure visualizes the development of the different axes:



Based on values for each of the different composite indicators, the result charts (scatter plots) allow for the identification of four quadrants, with the value zero indicating the average of all regions providing data for the respective indicator. The four quadrants are labelled as follows and describe the situation of the regions located in each quadrant for the [Position/Dynamics](#) of each composite indicator:



Mapping of EU regions according to the MASON composite indicator 'Education'. The regions in red colour are those which are falling behind the EU average.



The Mason project partners

Project coordinator: Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (Greece)

Universitaat der Bundeswehr Munchen, Faculty for Education (Germany)

Catholic University in Ruzomberok, Faculty of Education (Slovakia)

Paideia Foundation (Bulgaria)

University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow, Institute of Economics (Poland)

Joensuu Regional Development Company JOSEK Ltd (Finland)

Universitat de Barcelona, Department of Didactics and Educational Organization (Spain)

Results of the 2nd MASON workshop on ‘Socio-cultural Dynamics Influencing Progress in Lifelong Learning Systems: From National to Regional Perspectives’ (28th of September 2012, Sofia, Bulgaria)

The 2nd MASON workshop was dedicated to discussion of evidence-based methodologies and tools for promoting LLL strategies in a manner which is context-sensitive.

The workshop discussions focused upon:

- 'Learning region/city' approaches and initiatives.
- Case studies of comprehensive LLL strategies and initiatives at regional/city level.
- Relationships between regional/city LLL capacities and socio-economic and cultural realities.
- Action Plans for widening engagement in LLL at regional/city levels.

Co-creating and Evaluating Learning Region Platforms Supporting Lifelong Learning

According to Mr Rauli Sorvari of Estele Ltd, Finland, factors that promote regional LLL are:

- **Unity in Leadership, common vision and wide ownership in implementation projects:** To be able to implement changes or development strategies requires encouraging leadership, clear and inspiring vision on the core objectives and a wide ownership and interaction in projects connecting Key Players in the region.

According to Mr Rauli Sorvari (photo below), the learning region is the platform to cultivate the different natural, human, social and financial capitals – to co-create capabilities and competences, educational innovations and to empower lifelong learning.



- **Strong learning and innovation networks:** building something new, it is all about People – key players and visionaries.
- **Breaking operational and cultural borders of organisations – brokers:** Utilisation of brokers paves the way for changes, interprets the different expectations and interests and connects people of different sectors and organisations.
- **Mastering timing and having courage to pro-act:** The region and local actors should be able to foresee the future trends in markets, recognize their own strengths and act accordingly.

The Role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to Regional LLL

According to Dr Klaas Vansteenhuyse of the Leuven University College, Belgium, HEIs need ‘**policy hooks**’ i.e. national or EU policies and legislative frameworks; this would legitimize HEIs’ strategic LLL actions at regional and local level.

Dr Vansteenhuyse (photo below) argued that HEIs need to have a clear understanding of the professional development policies of local businesses in order to be able to promote closer partnerships.



The political and legislative context can become more favourable when the HEIs also have strong connections to other regional stakeholders which may ‘push’ them to make better use of the political and legal possibilities. For example, there is a huge potential in the development of partnerships between HEIs and businesses. Especially at a regional level it is crucial to better understand the needs of nearby companies. On the other side, employers in general seem not to be aware of the role (or possible role) of HEI in LLL. Hence, in **developing partnerships with businesses** a HEI should tailor its offer and information strategy to both the needs and professional development policies of specific businesses. Furthermore, HEIs need to **identify which type of lifelong learners they wish to cater for**, as this choice will influence the policy, management and structure of the institution and organisation.

The LLL Needs, Capacities and Potentials of Vratsa Municipality, Bulgaria

According to Dr Boyko Todorov, the Bulgarian municipality of Vratsa had to cope with a fair share of disadvantaged families whose access to quality education requires local government intervention. Municipal policies have prioritised the integration of special education needs and ethnic minority children, and the development of cooperation among the stakeholders, including partnerships between VET and business. The delivery of LLL policies that address local problems is complicated by the still centralised system of education governance and financing in Bulgaria. An important feature of the local LLL culture is **the tradition of merging culture and education into the same framework**. Current LLL practices originate from the traditional community centres where theatre and teaching, libraries and schools were combined in the same institution. The lessons from Vratsa suggest that **municipalities of limited budgets have to prioritise some aspects of LLL over others**. Furthermore, while a number of LLL aspects are best addressed nationally, the local level can be particularly relevant in improving transitions from school to work through flexibility of the local provision of formal VET.

MASON’s contribution to EU policies

MASON actively supports the realisation of a European area for Lifelong Learning through the development of frameworks, methodologies and tools anticipated to increase the coherence and comprehensiveness of LLL strategies at all levels and stages of education and training from socio-economically and culturally-sensitive perspectives.

In particular, MASON looks at socio-cultural dynamics and learning traditions affecting the effectiveness of the implementation of LLL strategies in diverse contexts. This perspective is highly productive towards the promotion of inclusiveness in education, training and informal learning opportunities to all, irrespective of gender, age, race, ethnic/cultural background, religion or belief, health, and socio-economic status.