

# New Policy Instruments for Education and Training in Europe: Generating Productive Tensions (ECER, Sept 2021)

**Do smart city policies  
produce synergies with VET systems?**

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# Research question

To what extent do the prevailing spatial structures facilitate that local and regional governments, employers' associations, unions and the third sector coordinate VET and lifelong learning policies across European regions?

# Coordinating VET and LLL

- VET =  $\Sigma$  (edu- training- skills development; levels of education; scope of skills; national and local contexts)
- Local VET and career guidance policies are necessary due to uneven distribution of social capital across localities
- Learning cities can facilitate coordination between business, gov., edu-training, civil society and so on.

# The 'black box' of local coordination

- We can hardly derive hypothesis from the literature on strategic coordination between business, government and unions at the national level.
- Local spaces are social fields where agents meet one another with disparate resources.
- Agency operates through (and is constrained by) structure (including norms and resources).

# Spatial structures

- Constitution of space recursively incorporated in institutions regardless of place and point in time.
- Constitution of space:
  - Spacing, i.e. positioning goods or people
  - Operation of synthesis, i.e. amalgamating goods or people to spaces

# Methodology

- Corpus of soft law, grey literature, interviews, statistical scoreboards. Analysis: coding, discursive 'indicators', intertextuality ????
- Interviews with 128 educators and professionals working on 54 lifelong learning measures across 18 local regions in AT, BU, CRO, FI, GER, IT, PT, SP and UK (Scotland). Conducted in 2017.

# Spacing of VET policies

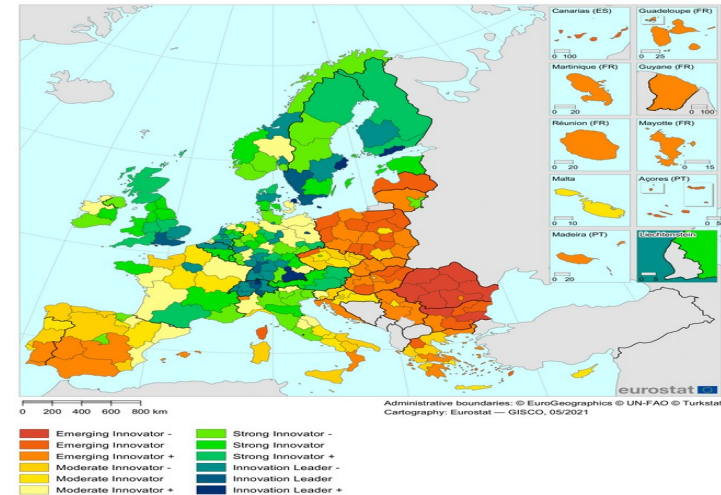
- Territorial polarisation of 'knowledge societies': concentration of professionals and the wealthiest, virtuous circles of innovation and on-the-job learning in most innovative regions.
- In Euro zone, asymmetric relationship: (export-based) coordinated market economies 'versus' Med. economies (depending on internal demand).
- Convergence of regional NEETs rates in CMEs, but persistent divergence in Med. Es (2005- 2018)

**VET policies  
as operations of spatial synthesis  
in the European Union**



# (1) Lifelong learning policies (LLL) in EU regions

- Youth Guarantee
- ‘innovation eco-systems’
- Skills Agenda
- Pact for Skills
- Regional Innovation Scoreboard



For Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg and Malta, performance group membership is identical to that in the RIS 2021 report. For these countries, the corresponding colour codes for the middle sub-group of regions have been used.

## **(2) Comprehensive LLL for the low-skilled youth**

- Apprenticeship schemes aligned with recovery programmes (recovery after industrial decline) in Bremen.
- Universal (“education... essential cornerstones of Smart City Wien”) + Selective approach (multi-stakeholder training, guidance, transitional jobs).

### **(3) Emerging LLL for the low-skilled youth**

- In Girona, a 2-year guidance + training program attempted to enlarge local, shorter initiatives. But, weak transport network reduced its reach. Local training providers complained.
- In Plovdiv, HE bachelors piloted short internships, a big company set a training centre and welfare benefits catered to the worst off. Officers blamed welfare beneficiaries for developing a 'culture of poverty' instead of undertaking LLL.

## **(4) Smart VET in BCN?**

- Official programmes for school education (STEAM BCN) and challenged-based contest for upper VET schools (Metròpolis FP Lap).
- Vocational training: local public employment service (BCN Activa) IT programme.
- Vocational training and leisure education: 3-D production in public and community Fab Labs.

## **(5) Smart VET in LIS?**

- Adult Education programmes: Digital Literacy, Hour of Code.
- Robotics Cluster fosters social and environmental uses of robots
- Local transport authority runs SOL Mobility for start-ups, with a strong digital component.

# Coordination in disparate spatial structures?

- Uneven spacing of knowledge societies.
- Initial evidence of multi-level operations of synthesis:
  - EUROSTAT and ESF construe regions.
  - Local stakeholders construe regions.
  - Smart city- VET construals in BCN and LIS.

# **Contradictory spacing and operations of synthesis?**

To the extent that policies do not easily tackle regional disparities, some regional construals may inspire self-defeating coordination.