

DRAFT

ELGPN Policy Briefing 3

Coordination and cooperation: learning from EU experience

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There is very little comparative activity in the fields of education, training, employment and social inclusion at EU level that could inform and enrich the work of WP3 Coordination and Cooperation. The national forum for lifelong guidance concept is more a mechanism for national policy partnership and development than an end in itself and is mirrored at EU level by networks such as ELGPN itself and perhaps above all by the use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)¹ that applies at all levels of EU policy development in education, training, employment and social inclusion and in the deliberations all EU representative committees for those fields.

It is thus worthwhile recalling some of the principles of the operation of the OMC and to use these as a lens through which the activities of any national forum can be assessed and developed. Indeed the OMC can be viewed as a review tool for benchmarking and for the development of national forums. The following are some salient characteristics of the OMC²:

1. Agreed common objectives that set out higher level shared goals
2. Agreed set of common indicators to show how progress towards these goals can be measured
3. Preparing national strategies, setting out how policies will be planned over an agreed period to meet common objectives
4. Developing and using/applying common European reference tools and principles to support national reforms
5. Evaluating and reporting on the implementation of the national strategies on a regular basis
6. Identifying and promoting the most effective policies and practices in the education, training, employment, and social inclusion fields with the aim of learning from each others' experiences
7. The lead role of the Secretariat (European Commission): developing staff working papers, collecting and synthesising reports, making recommendations, management of meetings, corporate memory

One of the possible future tasks of WP3 is to bring the focus of its work a step further along the road by proposing an evaluative and developmental framework for national

¹ European Council (2000) Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions, 23-24 March. For a discursive article on the operation of the OMC, see Zeitlin, J. *The Open Method of Coordination in Question* in Zeitlin, J., Pochet, P., and Magnusson, L. *The Open Method of Coordination in Action: European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies*, Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005

² http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm For an evaluation of the OMC as a Lisbon strategy methodology, view the Commission Staff Working paper: Lisbon Strategy Evaluation Document SEC (2010) 114 final: http://ec.europa.eu/archives/growthandjobs_2009/pdf/lisbon_strategy_evaluation_en.pdf

forums, encouraging its usage at national level, using the framework to explore the workings and experiences of the existing forums, and drawing lessons for the emerging forums. The OMC offers an excellent framework or template as a starting point for this purpose.

Secondly, given the new direction of ELGPN work programme for 2011-2012, part of such an evaluative and developmental framework should include a focus on sectors. This implies at existing national forum level a review of how lifelong guidance interfaces with policies for school education, VET, CVET, higher education, and adult education, and with overarching frameworks such as lifelong learning, employment policy/flexicurity, social cohesion/inclusion policies. In a sense what is proposed here is a mirroring at national forum level of what is happening with ELGPN as a network at EU level. It would be helpful in the next phase of ELGPN work to get one national forum that could undertake such a task and model its methodology and value for others.

Thirdly, attention should be paid to what happens in terms of coordination and cooperation mechanisms at regional level particularly in countries that operate with high degrees of regional autonomy. We need data on this for both intelligence gathering and awareness raising and visibility.

Finally, attention could be paid to the role of the national forums in using and/or testing the existing common EU reference tools for guidance (including the Policy Handbook) or in pilot testing a possible new reference tool.

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