European Committee
of the Regions

The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Achieving a European Education Area by 2025

idea

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List of acronyms

CF	Cohesion Fund
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CoVEs	Centres of Vocational Excellences
EEA	European Education Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ET	Education and Training
EU	European Union
HEIs	Higher education Institutions
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
LRAs	Local and Regional Authorities
NUTS	*Nomenclature des Unités territoriales statistiques*
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
VET	Vocational and Educational Training

Summary

This study identifies, analyses and categorises educational and training (ET) initiatives implemented by local and regional authorities (LRAs) across the European Union (EU). LRAs' responsibility in education and training varies importantly among Member States, but the evidence gathered through this study **tells a story of active contribution** of the subnational level to the achievement of a European Education Area (EEA).

The future path for the transformation and further growth of economies and societies by means of ET is rooted in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). Against this framework, **progress across the EU has been mixed**. Some of the targets set for ET 2020 have been achieved at the EU level but the EU27 average hides **asymmetries** across EU countries, and sometimes even across regions within the same country. This is the case, for example, for early childhood education and early leavers from education and training. Other ET 2020 targets have not been achieved at the EU level, but evidence shows that in fact, some regions performed very well and went well beyond the targets. An example of this is adult education. Hence the **importance of understanding the territorial breakdown of achievements**. The introductory part 'Setting the scene' presents the mapping of the latest available regional data related to ET 2020 achievements and to the current state of play of EEA 2025 targets.

Measurement of progress against a limited number of benchmarks is **important but not sufficient** to fully capture the contribution of LRAs to the European Education Area. With a view to better understand and **appreciate this contribution, qualitative information** is collected and analysed in Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the study. In particular, Part 1 presents an inventory of 36 initiatives in education and training from 20 EU countries. The majority of them are **led by LRAs**, or their agencies, at the local (LAU, NUTS3) and regional (NUTS2, NUTS1) level. Overall, these initiatives demonstrate how active the contribution of the subnational level to national policies, and hence to EU goals, is. LRAs are not merely operationalising the policies of higher administrative levels, but **strategically frame their interventions, contribute consciously to national objectives, and embed their action in the territory**. Throughout the initiatives, awareness of the mission of ET in forging the (knowledge) society of the future is evident. Also evident is the importance of making education and training instrumental to territorial development and socio-economic growth.

In Part 2, the initiatives included in the inventory are categorised according to the type of educational approach. **Six main approaches** are found to be used by

LRAs to pursue ET goals at the territorial level: 1) **Strategies** are very frequently used to frame local/regional interventions. They are a way to link to other policies, including those of higher administrative levels, and to pursue multiple structural objectives out of their ET intervention, as, for example, employment and innovation development; 2) **Action/implementation plans** provide a medium- to long-term structured framework for undertaking concrete ET-targeted activities. They are usually very detailed and often focused on one education type such as higher education or adult education; 3) **Project-boosted** initiatives are cooperation opportunities which are very often used to address specific local/regional needs. Although projects usually allow a short-term investment in ET, some initiatives demonstrate that they can become a structural instrument when, for example, chains of projects are created; 4) **Legislative/regulatory acts** represent the top-down approach by default which is used by regional authorities to transpose national laws; 5) **Institutionalisation of bottom-up initiatives** allows local and regional authorities to take advantage of citizens' creative/innovative actions which are successful and to structure these actions for the wider benefit of society; 6) **Education and training ecosystems** are complex environments, often based on a quadruple helix approach, whose aim is to create economies of scale and scope favouring socio-economic growth by means of ET.

Part 2 also highlights the contribution of the 36 initiatives to the EEA's milestones. Results shows that the most frequently pursued milestone in LRAs' initiatives is 'lifting quality in education' (61% of the initiatives). The other two milestones most frequently addressed by the initiatives are 'making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive' (58% of the initiatives) and 'supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training' (53% of the initiative). 'Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession' is only pursued by 28% of the initiatives, and 'reinforcing European higher education institutions' by only 8% of the initiatives. Notably, none of the initiatives address 'education as part of a stronger Europe in the world'.

Being embedded in civil society, education and training systems at the local and regional level are also at the front line in coping with unexpected disruptions of learning and teaching activities. For this reason, some of the identified initiatives (28%) provide **evidence of the type of reactions and/or supporting measures that were deployed in early 2020 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic**. These reactions range from the ability of schools and universities to switch to digital learning/teaching, to more structured interventions aimed, for example, at balancing staff surpluses caused by the COVID-19 crisis by increasing the education offerings to employees.

In Part 3, five of the initiatives of the inventory are developed as **case studies** to detail the type of intervention, the impact, the changes driven by the COVID-19

crisis, and the contribution modalities of local/regional action to EEA milestones. Insights from the five cases together with the evidence collected in the other parts of the study allow, in Part 4, the drawing of policy recommendations that may support the achievement of the EEA by local and regional authorities.

Digital skills are essential for community resilience and growth. It is therefore recommended to take action at the national level on several fronts, including the adaptation of programmes for compulsory digital education in schools and the upgrading of teachers' digital competencies. Furthermore, successful digital school initiatives at the territorial level should be used for replication and/or upscaling. Another recommendation stemming from the evidence relates to the opportunity of **greening education infrastructures** as a leverage to promote the green transition and the European Green Deal. Since language skills are a key instrument for inclusion and social cohesion and since it is noted that **linguistic integration** approaches at the territorial level are often project-boosted, national interventions to better structure local and regional interventions are recommended.

Against the evidence that **economic growth needs professional competencies and their recognition**, recommendations are made to strengthen VET interventions at the territorial level, to facilitate the participation in CoVEs by LRAs, and to **take action for the recognition/validation/portability of competencies**. Educational staff skills need to cope with the fast evolution of society and of quality requirements. If technical skills are taught, implementing **mobility** is recommended as a way to **improve the soft skills and motivation of educational staff**.

There is evidence that the **achievement of the four missions of higher education institutions** (HEIs), namely education, research, innovation and service to society, **positively impacts on territorial development**. Therefore, collaborative projects and/or the development of education clusters/ecosystems should be supported where territorial strategies tackling this type of cooperation are lacking. The same support should be given to the international positioning of local and regional initiatives as it contributes to a stronger recognition of Europe as a reputed world player in education

Finally, it is recommended to introduce a **territorial development dimension** in the new framework for the measurement of progress towards an EEA by 2025 and to **deepen the understanding of regional differences**. This has the double aim of not leaving anybody behind and of better tailoring policymaking to the needs and challenges of territories for the development of quality education and training systems.

Setting the scene

The European Commission (EC) Communication on achieving the European Education Area (EEA) by 2025 (EC, 2020a) was published in September 2020 in order to strengthen the EU approach towards the achievement of the EEA in the next five years. The Communication sets the path for the transformation and further growth of economies and societies by means of education and training (ET), by also considering, among other aspects, the consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the policy response of the EU.

This study, commissioned by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), is meant to highlight the role of local and regional authorities (LRAs) in the accomplishment of the European Education Area by 2025 through the provision of **background information and evidence** on:

   o The territorial breakdown of the achievements of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) on which the EEA 2025 is rooted.
   o The territorial state of play of the targets set in the Communication on achieving the EEA by 2025.
   o The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on ET and the ability of local and regional education systems to cope with it.

This introductory part presents some key data at the regional level on ET 2020 achievements and the current state of play of EEA 2025. This quantitative information is complemented in Part 1 by the compilation of an inventory of initiatives undertaken by LRAs in the education and training domains. The inventory provides qualitative information that is further elaborated by defining a typology of the educational approaches of LRAs for territorial development (Part 2), and by developing five of the inventory's initiatives into case studies (Part 3).

This study is also meant to **elaborate on the above findings in order to provide reflections or suggestions** on the following:

   o Lessons that can be learnt from the implementation of the ET 2020 for the benefit of the future EEA.
   o Ways to ensure that no region is left behind in the achievement of EEA 2025.
   o Type of investment needed in the EU education system to make the digital and green transition a reality.
   o Effective policy reforms for the European Commission and Member States to achieve an ambitious EEA by 2025.

o Role of the Centres of Vocational Excellence in increasing the level of vocational training in the EU and the methodology of selecting the centres.
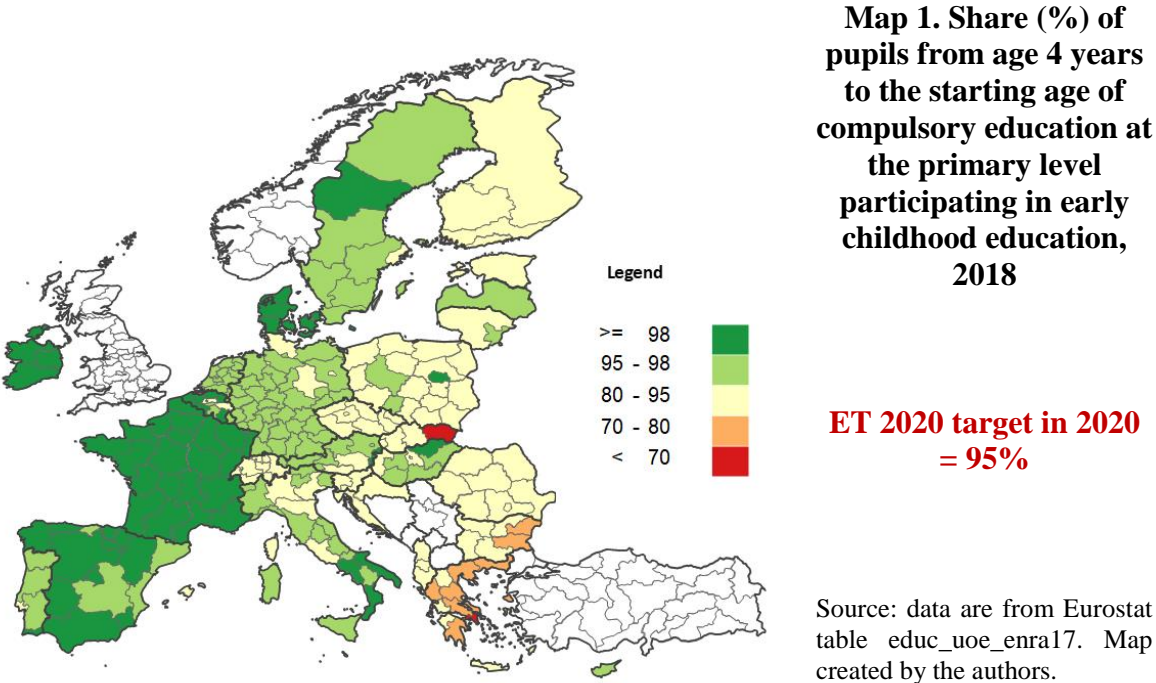
The elaboration of reflections or suggestions is presented in Part 4 of this study. ET 2020 had eight targets defined at the EU27 level for tracking progress (**Table 1**). Since 2017, the EC has engaged with stakeholders in an updating exercise of these targets with the aim of improving progress measurement. This exercise resulted in an outline of slightly different and fewer indicators for EEA 2025 compared to ET 2020.

Table 1. Progress against the targets of ET 2020

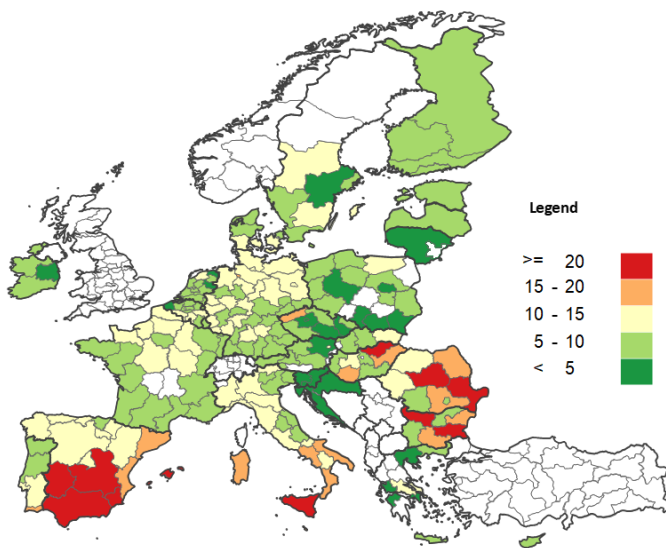| ET 2020	Progress	Comments
At least 95% of children aged 4+ years should participate in early childhood education	In 2018, this indicator was 96.2% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 1.**	This indicator has been modified in EEA 2025 to capture the +3 years age group.
Less than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science	In 2018, the underachievement rate in the EU27 was 22.5% in reading, 22.9% in mathematics and 22.3% in science. Data are not available at the regional level.	This indicator is also used in EEA 2025.
Rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 years should be below 10%	In 2019, this ET 2020 indicator was 10.2% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 2.**	Dropped in EEA 2025.
At least 40% of people aged 30-34 years should have completed some form of higher education (tertiary degree).	In 2019, this indicator was 40.3% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 3.**	This indicator is also used in EEA 2025.
Participation rate in education and training of adults should be at least 15%.	In 2019, this indicator was 10.8% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 4.**	Dropped in EEA 2025.
At least 20% of higher education graduates & 6% of 18-34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad (two indicators).	Total mobility (credit mobility + degree mobility) was 11.6% in the EU in 2017 (ET Monitor 2019).	Dropped in EEA 2025.
The employment rate of people aged 20-34 years with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago should be at least 82%.	In 2019, this indicator was 80.9% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 5.**	Dropped in EEA 2025.

Progress measured against the EU27 average is unable to inform on asymmetries across countries and/or across regions within the same country. This asymmetry is evidenced by mapping the indicators at the territorial level. This is done for those ET 2020 indicators based on latest Eurostat data available at the NUTS2 level.

Map 1 shows the territorial achievements of the **ET 2020 indicator on early childhood education,** according to which at least 95% of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education. In 2018, although the 95% target was achieved at the EU27 level (average of 96.2%), the map highlights that several eastern and southern European regions were below it. Overall, 86 regions, or 36% of the total number of regions, did not reach this ET 2020 target by 2018.

Map 1. Share (%) of pupils from age 4 years to the starting age of compulsory education at the primary level participating in early childhood education, 2018

Legend

| >= | 98 |
| 95 - 98 |
| 80 - 95 |
| 70 - 80 |
| < | 70 |

ET 2020 target in 2020 = 95%

Source: data are from Eurostat table educ_uoe_enra17. Map created by the authors.

The **ET 2020 indicator on early leavers** was dropped in EEA 2025 as it was considered to be more within the scope of the EU strategy for sustainable growth and employment. According to this indicator, the rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 years should be below 10%. The territorial breakdown of achievements against this indicator is shown in **Map 2**. In 2019, although at the EU27 level the target was almost achieved (average of 10.2%), several regions lagged behind. Namely, 95 regions, or 40% of the total number of regions, had not achieved the target by 2019. In particular, in 2019, a high share of early leavers characterised countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Spain.

The **ET 2020 indicator on tertiary education** measures the share of people aged 30-34 years who have completed some form of higher education. **Map 3** shows its values across EU regions in 2019. Achievements of the ET 2020 indicator are determined against the target level of 40%. In 2019, 139 regions, or 58% of the total number of regions, did not meet the target. This indicator is also used in EEA 2025 with the target level of 50%.

Map 3. Share (%) of people aged 30-34 years with tertiary educational attainment, 2019
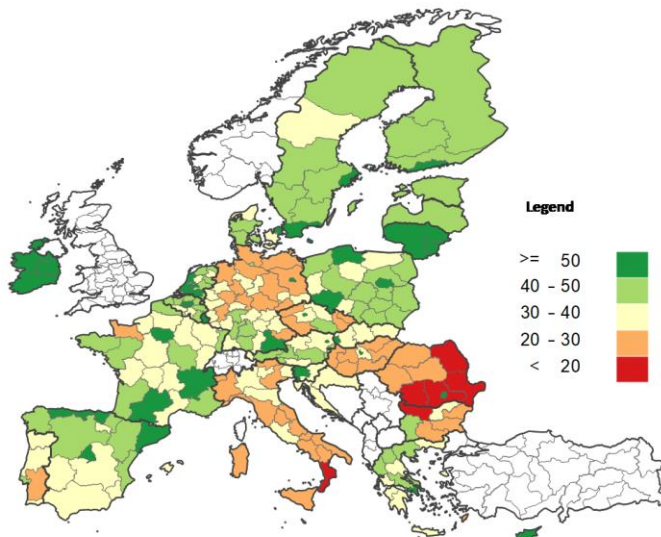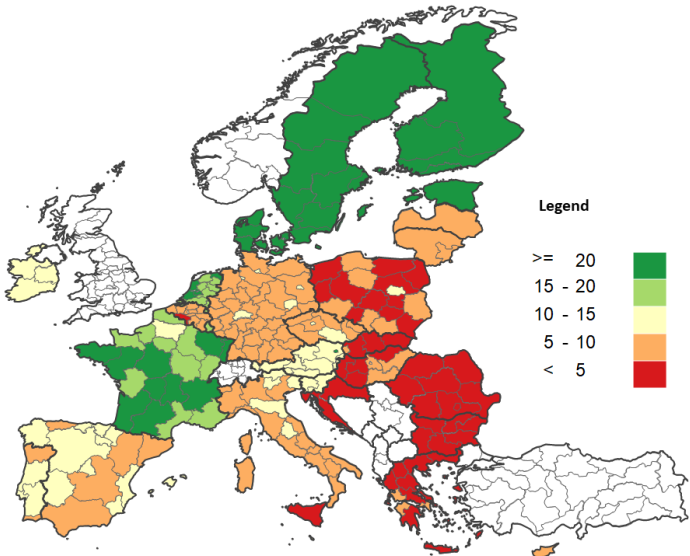
ET 2020 target in 2020 = 40%

EEA 2025 target in 2030 = 50%

Source: data are from Eurostat table edat_lfse_04. Map created by the authors.

In 2019, adults' participation rate in education and training was 10.8% at the EU27 level, thus well below the target of 15%. For this **ET 2020 indicator on adult education**, only 53 regions, or 22% of the total number of regions, had

achieved the target by 2019. **Map 4** shows the high variation of this indicator across European countries. In particular, regions of Estonia, Finland, France, the Netherlands and Sweden have performed very well while eastern EU countries are characterised by the indicator's lowest values. The overperformance of Swedish regions is worth noting as all of them show values of over 30%. In addition, it is also noted that there is limited variation across regions of the same country for this indicator.

Map 4. Participation rate (%) of adults in education and training*, 2019

ET 2020 target in 2020 = 15%

Source: data are from Eurostat table trng_lfse_04. Map created by the authors.

* the reference period for the participation in education and training is the four weeks prior to the interview.

In 2019, the **ET 2020 indicator on graduates' employment rate** was 80.9% at the EU27 level, thus a little below the target of 82%. The target was achieved in 125 regions, or 52% of the total number of regions. **Map 5** shows that in southern Italian regions, Greece, Corse and Nord-Pas de Calais in France, and Extremadura in Spain, there are low employment rates (i.e. below 60%) of people aged 20-34 years with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago.
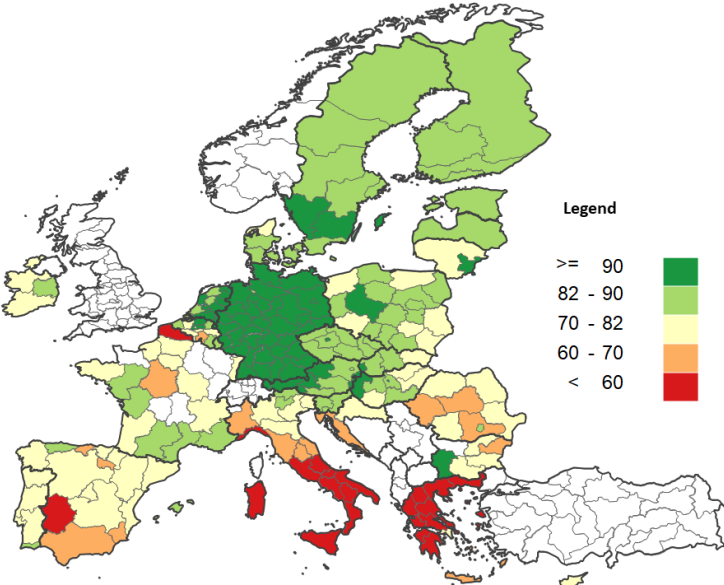
Map 5. Employment rate (%) of people aged 20-34 years with at least upper secondary education attainment, 2019

ET 2020 target in 2020 = 82%

Source: data are from Eurostat table edat_lfse_33. Several data gaps (white cells). Map created by the authors.

As mentioned earlier, the progress of EEA 2025 will be measured against five indicators which are based on internationally comparable data available at a sex-disaggregated level (**Table 2**). Importantly, although the achievement of the EEA milestones is expected in the next five years, the EEA 2025 targets are to be reached by 2030. In this way they have been aligned to the timing for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Table 2. EEA 2025 indicators

EEA 2025	Baseline
At least 98% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education.	In 2017, this indicator was 92.4% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 6.**
The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%.	See Table 1 for the 2018 baseline. The source is OECD PISA. Data are not available at the regional level.
The share of low-achieving eighth-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%.	The source is the International Computer and Information Literacy Study. Baseline is not available. Data are not available at the regional level.
The share of people aged 20-24 years with at least an upper secondary education should be 90%.	In 2019, this indicator was 83.5% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 7.**
The share of 30-34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 50%.	In 2019, this indicator was 40.3% at the EU27 level. Reference is to **Map 5.**

The ET 2020 early childhood indicator has been modified in EEA 2025 to capture the 3+ years age group. **Map 6** shows the new EEA 2025 indicator according to which at least 98% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education. The map evidences that, in 2018, Ireland, almost all French regions and several of the Spanish and Danish regions have already met this target.
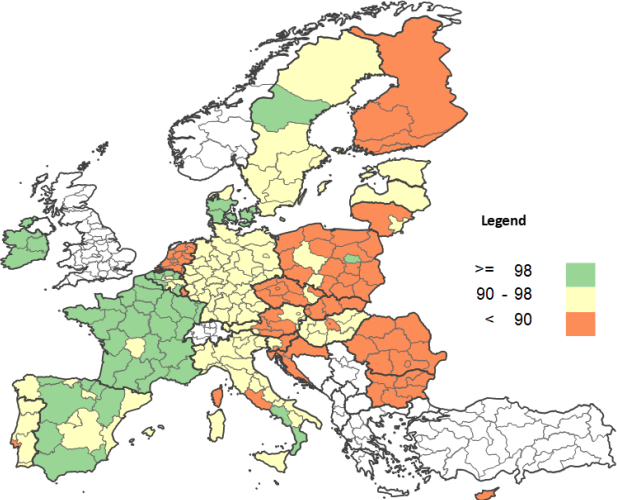

Map 6. Share (%) of pupils from age 3 years to the starting age of compulsory education at the primary level participating in early childhood education, 2018

EEA 2025 target in 2030 = 98%

Source: data are from Eurostat table educ_uoe_enra22. No data for Greece. Map created by the authors.

The EEA 2025 includes a new indicator monitoring upper secondary achievement according to which the share of people aged 20-24 years with at least an upper secondary education should be 90%. **Map 7** shows the state of play of this indicator across EU regions in 2019. The map evidences that regions of Croatia, Ireland and Lithuania as well as several regions of France, Greece, Poland and Slovakia have already achieved the target. Conversely, several Spanish and German regions appear to significantly lag behind.
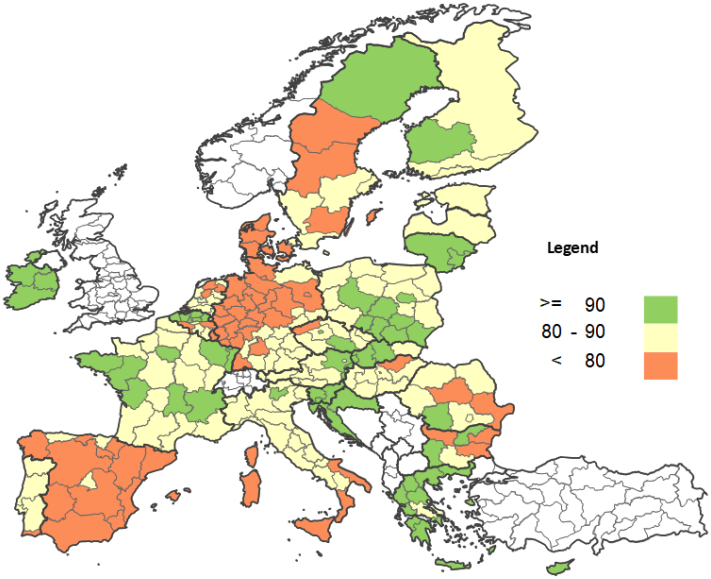
Map 7. Share (%) of people aged 20-24 years with at least upper secondary education, 2019

EEA 2025 target in 2030 = 90%

Source: data are from Eurostat table edat_lfse_04. Map created by the authors.

The **EEA 2025 indicator on tertiary education is shown in Map 5 as it coincides with the ET 2020 indicator.** There, its state of play is determined against the target level of 50%. Map 5 evidences that, in 2019, some regions had done so well as to have already met the new EEA 2025 target of 50%. It is worthy to note that, overall, this indicator shows a high variation across EU27 countries and even across regions within the same country.

The above is a preliminary assessment of the achievements of ET 2020 targets because data related to 2020 will not be available until late 2021 or even later. In general, the most critical areas appear to be the education and training of adults and the employability of people with at least a secondary education attainment. With the exception of some excellent performers, tertiary education attainment is also challenging for many European regions.

Measurement of progress against a limited number of benchmarks is important but is not sufficient to fully capture the contribution of LRAs to the European Education Area. In order to enhance the understanding of this contribution, initiatives undertaken by European LRAs in the domains of education and training are investigated further in the following sections.

Part 1: Inventory of local and regional initiatives

The inventory of local and regional initiatives presented in this part aims at providing an overview of interventions undertaken at the local and regional level in the domains of education and training (ET). Each initiative is matched against the milestones of the European Education Area (EEA) which it addresses. In this way, the inventory provides evidence of the LRAs' contributions to the achievement of the EEA by 2025. In addition, some of the interventions presented point to short-term reactions as well as to more structured measures which were implemented at the local and regional level in order to guarantee continuity and increase resilience of ET further to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The inventory includes 36 initiatives from 20 EU Member States. Out of these 36 initiatives, five are developed as case studies under Part 3. Information on the initiatives was collected through desk review, analysis of documents, and web-based research. Literature, EU-funded projects and online platforms were also screened.

The majority of the initiatives presented are **led by LRAs** or their agencies at the local (LAU, NUTS3) and regional (NUTS2, NUTS1) level. In some other cases, LRAs are among the participants. The majority of the initiatives are **ongoing** or have been recently concluded. In addition, selection of the initiatives was carried out guaranteeing a **balanced geographical coverage** across the EU; **representing the various devolving structures** in education and training in Member States; and taking into account **different typologies of interventions** as defined and detailed in Part 2. **Map 8** shows the location of initiatives and case studies.

Initiatives are described using a format which includes the following elements:

- Progressive number of the initiative.
- Country label (the country where the initiative is implemented).
- Title of the initiative.
- Milestones of the EEA to which the initiative contributes, as outlined in COM(2020) 625 final on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, and namely: 1. Lifting quality in education; 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive; 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training; 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession; 5. Reinforcing

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European higher education institutions; 6. Education as part of a stronger Europe in the world.

- Involved public authorities and/or agencies.
- Target groups of the initiative.
- Type of approach, according to the typology defined in Part 2.
- A description of the initiative.
- Sources[1] (websites/webpages included in the sources were all accessed over the period December 2020-February 2021).

Map 8. Location of initiatives (red dot) and case studies (blue dot)

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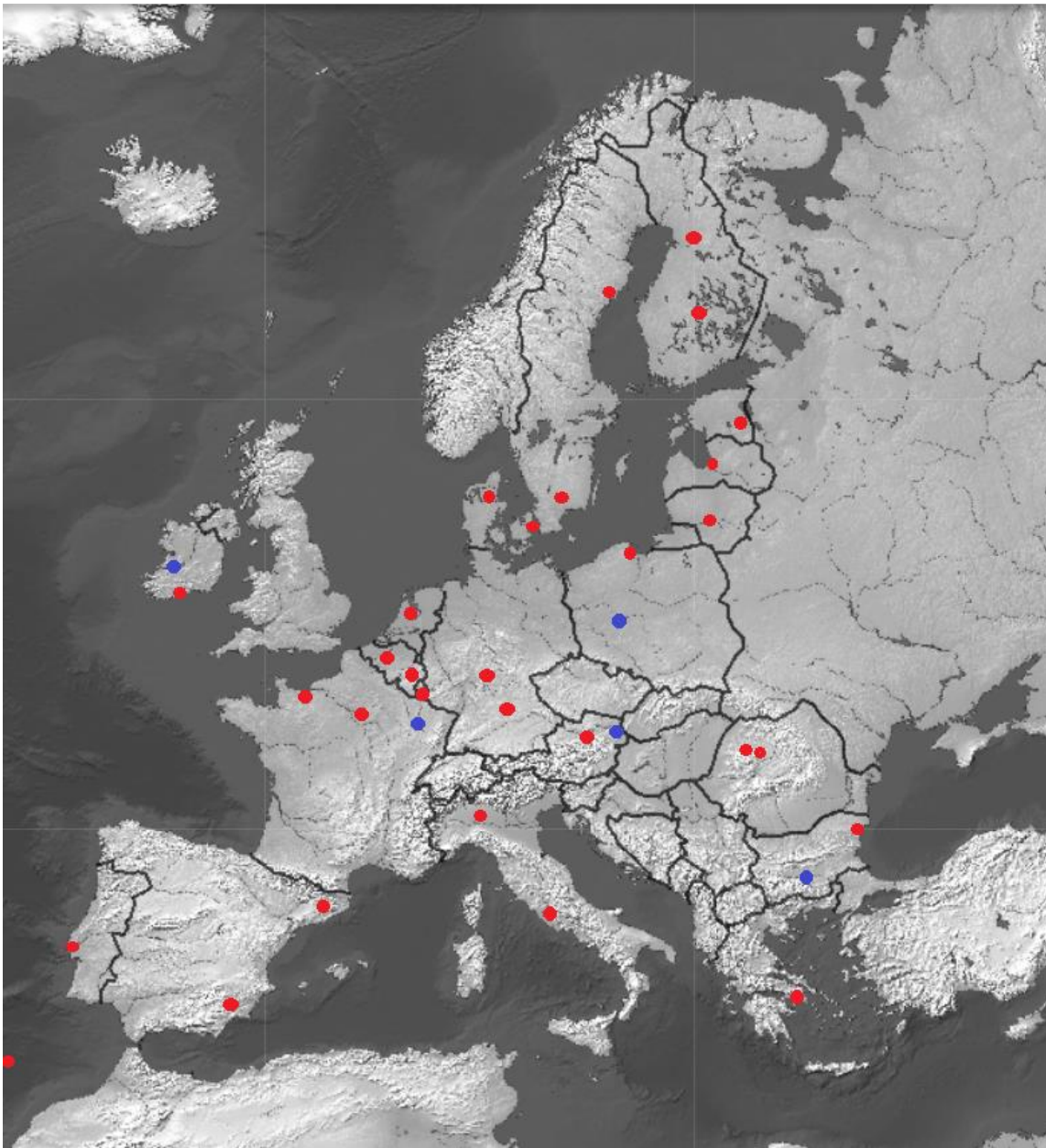
[1] The sources of the initiatives presented under Part 1 are indicated at the end of each initiative and are not included in Annex I - List of references.

01_AT: The 'Science goes School' project in Lower Austria

EEA milestones	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Region of Lower Austria
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Students
Type of approach	Strategy, Project-boosted

In 2016, in Lower Austria, digitisation topics were handled by cross-departmental, and topic-specific working groups and through the initiation of projects. In the spring of 2017, an 'Office for Technology and Digitisation' was set up in the Department of Economy, Tourism & Technology at the Office of the Lower Austrian State Government in order to network, coordinate and activate the various initiatives of the Region related to digitisation. The recently released digitisation strategy (July 2020) includes three goals, three impact directions and eight action fields. Of particular importance, given their connection with the EEA 2025, is the impact direction 'Digital Fitness' and its fields of action: awareness-raising, training and continuing education. Among the activated projects, 'Science goes School' has the objective to help school children gain an early understanding of the potential and themes of science and research as well as of future technological options. In this project, schools and students have free access to 21 different webinars covering a wide variety of disciplines including natural sciences, technical sciences, health sciences, humanities and social sciences. Each webinar lasts two teaching units and webinar dates can be chosen flexibly by the schools.

Sources: Digitisation in Lower Austria website; Digitisation strategy of Lower Austria webpage; Webinars webpage.

02_AT: Training packages and grants from the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund

EEA milestones	2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Vienna
Education/training	VET
Target groups	Viennese citizens and employees, Viennese companies
Type of approach	Strategy

This initiative is developed into a case study in Part 3.

03_BE: The digital strategy for education of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

EEA milestone	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	The Wallonia-Brussels Federation
Education/training	Schools, VET, higher education, adult education
Target groups	Students, teachers, citizens
Type of approach	Strategy

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation is the competent authority for the domain of education in the French-speaking provinces of Brussels and Wallonia (with the exception of the German-speaking communes). In late 2018, the Government of the Federation adopted a digital strategy for education aligned with the guidelines adopted under the Pact for Excellence in Education ('the Pact'), a major long-term systemic reform of the education system which is being implemented gradually. The digital strategy for education, which is currently available in its

updated version of March 2019, outlines five areas of action which cover a period up to 2022: 1) definition of digital content and resources for learning; 2) provision of support to and training of teachers and school leaders; 3) definition of modalities to equip schools; 4) sharing, communication and dissemination; and 5) governance development. The strategy cross-cuts several of the areas addressed by the Pact, for example the evolution of the teaching profession. It also complements the federal and regional initiatives towards the vision of a digital society. The strategy is meant to be operational and therefore it outlines priority actions, their operationalisation and timeline. It also indicates each action's links to the other areas of the strategy and to the objectives of the Pact as well as the action's implementing stakeholders. The steering bodies of the Pact are in charge of overseeing the implementation of the digital strategy for education and its monitoring indicators will be integrated into the monitoring activities of the Pact. Funding is also foreseen through the budget provided under the Pact.

Sources: Wallonia-Brussels Federation webpage on the strategy; Digital Strategy for Education document.

04_BE: KlasCement: the official teachers' platform in Flanders	
EEA milestone	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Government of Flanders
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools
Target groups	Teachers and pupils
Type of approach	Bottom-up initiative

KlasCement is a free open educational resources (OER) platform where teachers support each other by sharing resources for students of all ages (kindergarten, special needs, primary and secondary education and teacher training). KlasCement started as the project of one teacher and his students in 1998 and grew with the support of many teachers and of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training into one of the most successful OER-networks in Europe. At the end of 2012, the non-profit association EduCentrum and the Flemish Government signed an agreement and as a result KlasCement is now part of the Agency for Education Communication under the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training. KlasCement enriches and facilitates the educational practice of every teacher by means of a network of connected teachers and their resources. It stimulates the willingness to share and to respect the singularity, the freedom and the rights of all concerned. The content is adjusted to teachers from the Netherlands so that they can also use the portal, and the interface is translated into English, which makes its use possible by a much wider international audience. Today, the initiative continues to grow incrementally by generating new thematic platforms such as the 'De lat hoog voor talen' dedicated to learning languages.

Sources: Klascement website; De lat hoog voor talen website.

05_BG: Varna's municipal strategy for cooperating with higher education institutions and consolidating into an international university city	
EEA milestones	5. Reinforcing European higher education institutions
Authorities	Municipality of Varna
Education/training	Higher education
Target groups	Students of higher education institutions
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan, Project-boosted

In 2015, the Municipality of Varna defined as its Local Action Plan the *'Municipal Strategy for cooperation with the institutions of higher education and consolidation of Varna as an international university city'*. The strategy was developed as a result of the city's involvement in the project *'Partnership between Cities and Universities to Develop Sustainable City Economies and Societies'* (EUniverCities), supported by the EU URBACT II Operative Programme over the period January 2013-April 2015. The rationale behind the strategy's development was the importance assigned by the city to the knowledge economy and to the skills generated by higher education institutions (HEIs) with their 35,000 students. The Local Coordination Council of Varna Municipality was established during the implementation of EUniverCities in order to design the municipal strategy. It included representatives of the Varna Municipality, the five universities located in the city, business organisations, students, companies, and NGOs. Beginning with the identification of 35 points of weakness, the Local Coordination Council identified five strategic areas to be addressed: *'orientation of the local economy towards a "knowledge economy" as the main economic priority of the Municipality of Varna; internationalisation of the City of Varna and the student community; resolution of the professional, cultural and domestic problems of students and their inclusion in the political life of the city; increasing the attractiveness of Varna and popularising Varna universities; integrating science in the public life of Varna'*. At the end of the project two strategic objectives (SO) and related expected results (ER) connected with the economic development of Varna and with its consolidation as an international university city were identified. These objectives/results were: *'SO1. Development of the international identity of Varna and the Varna community, ER1.1. Cooperation between Varna Municipality and the institutions of higher education is intensive and covers a wide range of matters related not only to education but to the problems of the city, and ER1.2. Varna is a large student city with an attractive environment and with internationally famous universities; ER1.3. Students participate in the resolution of the professional, cultural and domestic problems of the city and in its management. SO2. Assistance in orientation of the local economy towards a "knowledge economy" as the main economic priority of Varna Municipality, ER2.1. Establishing conditions and motivation for the development of high-tech activities within the territory of Varna Municipality, ER2.2. Integrating science in the public life of Varna; ER2.3. Creation of incentives for the development of student entrepreneurship and the development of innovative products by students; ER2.4. Creation of preconditions to keep talented students in the city after the completion of their higher education'*.

Sources: Local Action Plan link.

06_BG: The comprehensive development strategy for education of the Municipality of Plovdiv	
EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Municipality of Plovdiv
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools, VET, higher education
Target groups	Students until higher education and teachers
Type of approach	Strategy, Action/implementation plan

This initiative is developed into a case study in Part 3.

07_DE: The investment-led education and integration programme of Nuremberg	
EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Municipality of Nuremberg
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools, VET, adult education
Target groups	Students of schools and migrants/refugees
Type of approach	Project-boosted

Nuremberg, the second largest city in Bavaria, has about 47% of its population with a so-called 'migration background'. In addition, about 25% of its citizens (Nuremberg has a population of half a million people) are immigrants, originating from more than 170 countries, part of which are non-EU refugees (a third of these were minors when they arrived). In recent years, education and integration have been key priorities for the city. In December 2018, the Municipality of Nuremberg and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) signed a financial agreement aimed at supporting the city's education investment programme and the effective integration of refugee and migrant families through education. As part of the agreement, a loan of €80 million was provided to finance the construction and renovation of 50 school sites, including early childhood care facilities. Financing was also aimed at increasing the capacity of nursery school, day care and after school programmes; at enhancing the quality of existing school facilities; at supporting a digitalisation programme for schools; and at creating more places in schools to meet increased demand for education. In addition, a grant of €600,000 from the Migrant and Refugee Fund (a grant-based facility established by the CEB in 2015) was assigned to the not-for-profit municipal employment agency Noris-Arbeit for a training project addressed to migrants and refugees and aimed at facilitating their integration in the local community and at easing their access to the labour market.

Sources: Le-Mi Cafè webpage; Council of Europe's Newsletter – January 2019; Council of Europe Development Bank news dated 19/12/2018.

08_DE: Digitale Schule Hessen programme	
EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Region of Hessen
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Teachers and pupils
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan

Based on an agreement between the federal and state governments (the 'DigitalPact'), the Hessian State has developed the 'Digital School Hessen' programme to promote young people into the digital society. The programme aims to ensure basic digital equipment that fits the pedagogical concepts, and well-trained teachers. The programme consists of four modules: educational support measures for schools, responsible media use by pupils, teacher training courses, and technical equipment and IT infrastructure. The Region supports the schools in the creation and revision of media education concepts and provides technical advice. All schools are expected to further develop school portals and their use. Moreover, an increase in training for teachers (in 2018, 830 courses took place with 8,500 teachers attending) is also expected as well as the creation of a new concept for training pupils to become 'digital student guides' or 'media scouts'. Finally, the programme foresees the establishment of a service point for responsible media use and an IT infrastructure that will be continuously expanded and

adapted to educational needs. Funding is from the budget agreed under the DigitalPact, to which the regional school authorities and the Hessian state have increased their contribution (raising their co-payment from an agreed 10% to 25%) and reaching a total of almost €500 million over five years (2019-2024).

Sources: Digitale Schule Hessen website; Schulportal website; DigitalPact webpage.

09_DK: PLF Nord project - Development of professional learning communities

EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Municipalities of Brønderslev, Frederikshavn, Hjørring, Jammerbugt, Læsø and Mariagerfjord
Education/training	Schools, adult education
Target groups	Teachers, educators, school leaders
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The PLF (*Professionelle Læringsfællesskaber* - Professional Learning Communities) project supports the education and professional development of teachers, educators and school leaders. It is supported by the AP Møller and Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller Foundation for General Purposes, a Danish fund established by Arnold Peter Møller in 1953. An initial project (PLF Nord 1.0) ran from 2016 to 2019 with a budget of DKK 10,970,000 (approx. €1.47 million). It was participated in by six municipalities and developed professional learning communities where teachers, educators, school leaders and staff from the municipalities collaborated to enhance the learning experience of students. In this initial project, about 1,500 teachers, educators and school leaders were trained. The second project (PLF Nord 2.0, 2019-2022), participated in by four municipalities (Brønderslev, Frederikshavn, Hjørring and Mariagerfjord) with a funding budget of NOK 10,151,250 (approx. €0.98 million), is structured around five courses, out of which four focus on specific target groups (leaders within schools and municipalities; managers of employees; selected key employees; and new key people across municipalities) and one is to facilitate interaction and networking across the municipalities.

Sources: PLF Nord website.

10_DK: IT strategy for Tårnby Municipality's school system 2017-2020

EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Municipality of Tårnby
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools
Target groups	Children, young people, teachers
Type of approach	Strategy

The Municipality of Tårnby has developed a vision for its school system which pursues the goals of the 2014 *Folkeskole* reform ('Folkeskole' refers to public municipal primary and lower secondary education). It has also adopted several other strategies for its schools among which is the IT strategy 2017-2020. This strategy covers the age range of 0-18 years and is based on the belief that schools have a central role in children and young people's IT and media education. Besides basic skills related, for example, to the use of IT and social media and to the critical retrieval of information, the educational proposal aims to develop critical consumers, active users and producers of knowledge through the new opportunities that are,

or will be, made available by information technologies. In practice, the strategy promotes personal growth, development of professional competencies and innovation. The strategy is aligned to other relevant local and national strategies (i.e. the Joint Municipal Digitization Strategy 2016-2020) and identifies four focus areas: network, equipment, service and administration; digital learning and education; competencies and skills for employees; and communication and collaboration.

Sources: Tårnby Municipality webpage; Tårnby Municipality IT strategy.

11_EE: Internationalisation of Tartu Vocational Education Centre	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive.
Authorities	Municipality of Tartu
Education/training	VET, adult education
Target groups	Students, adults
Type of approach	Project-boosted, ET ecosystem

There are two municipal vocational educational institutions in Estonia: Tartu Vocational Education Centre and Kopli Vocational School of Tallinn. All the other vocational institutions are either state-owned or private institutes. Tartu Vocational Education Centre is administered by the Education Department of the city's government. It is described on its website as the largest vocational and in-service training centre in the country with more than 2,700 students in tertiary education and more than 3,000 students in adult education. Since 2002, the institute has been involved in cooperation initiatives at the local and international level, including EU-funded initiatives which have contributed to its strengthening. The Centre has a project unit with dedicated staff although heads of departments and teachers also contribute to project management activities. In 2016, the Centre acquired the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter and this further strengthened its internationalisation strategy. The Centre has several ongoing projects funded by Erasmus+, the European Social Fund and Interreg.

Sources: Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia webpage on vocational education; Tartu Vocational Education Centre website.

12_EL: 'Curing the Limbo' in the city of Athens	
EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Athens
Education/training	VET, adult education
Target groups	Refugees and migrants
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The 'Curing the Limbo' project, led by the municipality of Athens, is an Urban Innovation Action granted €4,999,748.80 from the ERDF over the period 2018-2021. The project has a two-fold objective: to address the inactivity of its refugees (more than 13,000 refugees are living in Athens) and to increase its citizens' quality of life. The project helps refugees who have been granted asylum in Greece since 2015 in finding housing solutions and job opportunities. In turn, refugees are asked to support public and social services which address the needs of the Athenian community. The project favours refugees' social integration through the provision of skills for employment. Training is based on a curriculum developed by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, one of the partners of the project, and is delivered through innovative teaching methods specifically designed for minority groups. In addition to language skills (English and Greek) and technical competencies in audio-visual and ICT, training relates to

financial literacy, requirements to be met in the work environment, skills needed for daily activities such as finding an accommodation, and competencies for interacting with the public administration and private companies. Tourism, logistics, and e-commerce are some of the areas covered by the vocational training. One-to-one counselling sessions are used to develop a self-sufficiency plan on which to base refugees' professional development. The project has involved 280 refugees in its activities.

Sources: Curing the Limbo project webpage in the UIA initiative website; Curing the Limbo website.

13_ES: Regional Plan for the Improvement of School Coexistence	
EEA milestone	1.Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Region of Murcia
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Students, administrations of educational centres
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan

In 2017, the Region issued an action plan to fight violence and school bullying in educational centres. The Regional Plan for the Improvement of School Coexistence 2017-2020 is articulated around five lines of action: 1) raising awareness of the educational community on the need to improve school coexistence; 2) undertaking of initiatives in educational centres to improve networking among centres, participation in and implementation of pilot projects, and uptake of measures to detect coexistence problems; 3) intervening with bullies, witnesses and bullied to favour appropriate behaviours; 4) involving the broader community in addressing the problem and creating social awareness; and 5) providing teachers with conflict management tools and training to detect bullying cases. Under these lines, the plan outlines 79 measures as well as a set of indicators for monitoring purposes. In 2018, measures were increased to 100 and indicators to over 25. Besides the support of the Observatory for School Coexistence of the Region of Murcia, a collegiate body in charge of collecting and analysing the information on school coexistence, the implementation of the plan relies on the collaboration among different administrations and entities and, at the operational level, on a group of professionals (about 450 people in 2018) such as teachers, inspectors, and educational and psycho-pedagogical staff. The plan is funded through the regional budget.

Sources: Regional Plan for the Improvement of School Coexistence-2017-2020; Murcia Region website; Regional Resolution of 13 November 2017; La Verdad Europa press release dated 14/09/18.

14_ES: Regional Strategy for Professional Training and Lifelong Learning 2015-2020	
EEA milestone	2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Region of Murcia
Education/training	VET, adult education
Target groups	Citizens
Type of approach	Strategy

The Region has a long-standing tradition of promoting training and lifelong learning through multi-annual strategies (2004-2009, 2010-2013 and 2015-2020). The Regional Strategy for Professional Training and Lifelong Learning 2015-2020 has four objectives: 1) reduce the number of people with low qualifications and increase the level of intermediate qualification paths, especially among young people; 2) improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the vocational training system, in particular by linking it to the needs of the business community and the Regional Strategy for Smart Specialisation framework that will be used to determine the most important sectors to be considered while planning the training offer; 3)

make lifelong learning and professional mobility a recognised reality; and 4) improve innovation and entrepreneurship in the field of vocational training. The strategy includes a set of 48 measures structured around four strategic lines, and outlines indicators to measure progress, but does not set targets. Its implementation is funded through the ESF regional operational programme 2014-2020 with an initial budget of €68 million for the first two years.

Sources: Region of Murcia website; Regional Strategy for Professional Training and Lifelong Learning 2015-2020; Programa Operativo FSE 2014- 2020 de la Región de Murcia.

15_ES: Three-level centers of professional excellence: Qualification, entrepreneurship and innovation in the Green Economy

EEA milestones	2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Region of Catalonia – Education Department
Education/training	VET
Target groups	SMEs workers
Type of approach	Project-boosted, ET ecosystem

The Region of Catalonia is part of the consortium which was awarded the establishment and development of one of the seven Centres of Vocational Excellences (CoVEs) under the ERASMUS+ Programme (Key Action 3 – Support for policy reform). The COVE where the Region is involved is implemented though the project *'Three-level centers of professional excellence: Qualification, entrepreneurship and innovation in the Green Economy'* (3LoE) co-funded with €3,885,643 over a 4-year period (September 2020-September 2024). The 3LoE project involves 21 partners from seven countries (Austria, Italy, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Spain) and another 60 associated partners from 13 countries that will benefit from its results. The 3LoE project aims to support SMEs facing the challenges of the green transition. It does so by providing the adequate competencies and by addressing specific aspects such as a growing shortage of skilled workers; qualification deficits, especially in the green economy; loss of attractiveness and low qualification of school-based VET; ageing of entrepreneurs and high/increasing shortage of young highly-skilled people; limited cooperation between universities and SMEs; and lack of teaching/education geared to SMEs needs. Centres of professional excellence focussed on 'Green Economy' will be established in each of the project's partners 7 countries. They will address the specific educational needs of SMEs through vocational training, further education and higher education on European Qualifications Framework levels 3-6, Train-the-Trainer programmes, vocational and educational counselling, and innovation support and consulting programmes on Green Economy, Digitalisation and Entrepreneurship.

Sources: Official EC project webpage; Confindustria website.

16_FI: OpenDigi project

EEA milestone	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Municipalities in the regions of Oulu, Jyväskylä, Eastern Finland, Turku and Lapland
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Teachers
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The OpenDigi project aims to improve the quality of teachers' competencies in digital pedagogy through dialogue and sharing of expertise within a community of education institutions (i.e. the University of Oulu, the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Eastern Finland, the University of Turku and the University of Lapland), teachers and primary schools. This community-based model is an operational approach that allows the testing of initiatives in a context of collaborating structures and actors. The project first created communities at the regional level in five regions and then developed an operational model for the production and distribution of research-based digital learning material and implementation of initiatives. In March 2020, as part of the project, quality recommendations for distance education in primary schools were developed. These recommendations were adopted by several municipalities in their primary schools, including the [City of Oulu](#), the City of Kempele, the City of Turku, the City of Vantaa, the City of Akaa, the City of Nokia, the City of Savonlinna, the City of Porvoo, the City of Kuopio, the City of Loviisa and the City of Virrat. The project was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture over the period 1 September 2017-31 December 2020 with a budget of €167,710.

Sources: Project [website](#); [Quality recommendations](#) for distance education in schools; University of Jyväskylä [webpage.](#)

17_FI	Education in the Korona Action Plan 2020-2021 of North Ostrobothnia
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Region of North Ostrobothnia
Education/training	VET, adult education
Target groups	Employees, jobseekers, students
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan

In October 2020, the national government reallocated the unspent structural funds (ESF and ERDF) of the national operational programme for Sustainable Growth and Jobs to Finnish regions. In order to receive and use these amounts, regions were required to prepare recovery plans for the period 2020-2021. North Ostrobothnia developed a regional 'Korona Action Plan 2020-2021' which also covers the 'development of education and skills.' The plan includes a short analysis of the situation caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and a list of actions meant to address the identified problems. With respect to education, the analysis emphasises 1) the changing skills requirements of companies and industries further to the pandemic, and envisages the development of a forecasting system to continue understanding these needs; 2) the need for investment in continuous learning and competence development at different life and career stages of employees and jobseekers; 3) the recognition of a changing learning environment which requires not only digital skills but also new spatial solutions, hybrid approach models to balance distance and face-to-face learning, and cooperation between education and the business community. Stakeholders in charge of the implementation of the actions related to education and skills improvement are universities and educational institutes, municipalities, companies, labour market organisations, the North Ostrobothnia ELY Center (a regional branch of the central government), the North Ostrobothnia Employment and Economic Development Office, and the Association of Northern Ostrobothnia (i.e. a consortium of 30 municipalities).

Sources: North Ostrobothnia [Korona Action Plan 2020-2021.](#)

18_FR: Regional action for high schools in Île-de-France

EEA milestone	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Region of Île-de-France
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	High school students and workers
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan

The Region is responsible for 465 public high schools. Back in 2017, the Region undertook an assessment of its high schools and concluded that a significant investment was needed in order to renovate and/or enlarge school infrastructures as well as to improve working and learning conditions in existing buildings. The 'Emergency plan for Île-de-France high schools' allocates €5 billion over the period 2017-2027 to create new 20,800 places for students, build 12 new high schools and enlarge 23 existing schools. Out of this budget, €1 billion is set aside for maintenance purposes. Besides the investment plan, in 2019 the Region began the digital shift of its schools through a programme for the distribution of 140,000 tablets and 37,000 laptops. Digitalisation and distribution of digital devices to students was accelerated by the COVID-19 outbreak and by September 2020 all secondary school students in the Paris region were equipped with tablets or laptops. Among the other actions undertaken by the Region for its high schools are combatting early school leaving (which was allocated €5 million in 2020), improving high school workers' (receptionists, canteen staff, etc.) working conditions, and making school canteens affordable by all and increasingly based on the public procurement of sustainable food (through the *ÉquiTables* programme started in 2017). According to the Region's key figures on finances, among the sources for interventions/projects in high schools are an EIB multi-annual credit facility and loans from the *Caisse des Dépôts*.

Sources: Île-de-France Region website; Emergency plan for Île-de-France high schools; Regional Finances – Key Figures.

19_FR: Regional strategy 2020-2030 for higher education, research and innovation

EEA milestone	5. Reinforcing European higher education institutions
Authorities	Region of Grand Est
Education/training	Higher education
Target groups	Students, teachers
Type of approach	Strategy

This initiative is developed into a case study in Part 3.

20_FR: IDÉE Regional Action

EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Region of Normandy
Education/training	Schools, VET, higher education, adult education
Target groups	Municipalities, non-profit associations, education and training structures
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The Sustainable Development, Energy and Environment Initiative 'IDÉE' was initiated by the Region in 2017 to support the implementation of its policies in the corresponding domains. The initiative includes four mechanisms: strategies, advice, actions and innovation. Among

the actions, the IDÉE Regional Action is designed as a regional support mechanism for education initiatives in the domain of sustainable development. Supported initiatives may include the coordination, networking and participation of stakeholders in education; and information, communication, awareness, training and education actions. The domain of sustainable development covers the themes of climate change, biodiversity, quality of life, social cohesion and solidarity between territories and generations, as well as sustainable production and consumption. This mechanism is addressed to the following categories of regional stakeholders: municipalities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, or groups of municipalities with more than 200,000 inhabitants but with their own tax system in place; non-profit associations; and education and training structures. The mechanism is based on calls for projects. Regional contribution is not expected to be more than 50% of the total eligible cost of the proposed initiatives and varies depending on the scope and type of initiatives. One call for projects was opened on 14 December 2020 and will remain open until 1 March 2021. The call is for 'innovative and experimental projects in the field of education for sustainable development'. These projects are expected, among other aspects, to contribute to the Region's education objectives on sustainable development, to ensure economic development, and to enhance the attractiveness of Normandy.

Sources: Normandie Region webpage on IDÉE Regional Action; IDÉE call for projects; La Normandie, région durable document.

21_IE: Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strategy statement 2017-2021	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Limerick, County of Limerick, County of Clare
Education/training	Schools, VET, higher education, adult education
Target groups	Students, teachers, adults
Type of approach	Strategy

This initiative is developed into a case study in Part 3.

22_IE: Lifelong learning projects implemented by the city of Cork as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities	
EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Municipality of Cork
Education/training	Schools, adult education
Target groups	Citizens
Type of approach	Strategy, ET ecosystem

The City of Cork has made lifelong learning projects a structural approach to address a number of socio-economic challenges. In particular, the city aims at reducing social division and early school leaving; extending the use of modern learning technologies; increasing employment levels; and lowering economic emigration while improving the lives of the immigrants who decide to remain in the city. Cork is one of the cities participating in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. In 2015, it received the UNESCO Learning City Award in recognition of its achievements. Learning opportunities have been offered to citizens through a series of international seminars and a conference aimed at integrating the idea of Cork as a Healthy City, a Green City, a Learning City and a City experiencing Sustainable Economic Development; the Cork Learning Festival, which celebrates learning as a joyful and collective experience and proposes almost 500 free events every year; the Cork City Development plan, which encompasses lifelong learning and recognises Cork as a city of learning; the Growing Lifelong Learning in Cork, a cross-sectoral working group designed to implement the Declaration on Building Learning Cities; and two Learning Neighbourhood pilot programmes implemented in disadvantaged areas and to be used as case studies of the current approach adopted by Cork as a learning city.

Sources: City profile on the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities website.

23_IT: Project Green Learning 360° in the Lazio Region

EEA milestones	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Region of Lazio
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Teachers and pupils
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The educational project 'Green Learning 360°' was developed in the framework of a memorandum of understanding between the Lazio Region and Anci Lazio, an association of municipalities of the Lazio region. The project also received the support of Ancitel Energia and Ambiente SpA, a company specialising in the environment whose objective is to support educational institutions in improving teaching methodology. The project aims to stimulate learning and active citizenship in the environmental sector by promoting knowledge on the subject of circular economy and waste cycle management, showing the technologies used and the environmental benefits that are derived from recycling. The schools that choose to participate in the initiative have access to a platform that enables a 'Waste Travel 360' virtual tour which allows students to make an interactive visit to waste recovery plants. The project was launched in June 2020, has a duration of three years and a total regional funding of €70,000.

Sources: Green Learning 360° website.

24_IT: Alliance for #Milanodigitale

EEA milestones	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Municipality of Milan
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools
Target groups	Students
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The city of Milan is the capital of Lombardia, one of the regions most affected across the EU during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The city reacted promptly to the risk that social distancing measures imposed by the Italian government would have on continuity in education. On 20 March 2020, it launched a call to sustain schools in implementing remote learning. The call, named 'Alleanza per #Milanodigitale' (Alliance for digital Milan) was intended to collect donations of digital devices (e.g. computers, tablets, notebooks, printers, USB devices for internet connections) from private companies, third sector organisations and NGOs in order not to discriminate against students who had no access to digital tools. Schools had to fill in a questionnaire to declare their digital needs and receive donations. The Municipality of Milan's Education Department played the role of matching the schools' demand with the donors' supply. Multinational IT companies responded to the municipality's call by providing notebooks, courses for teachers aimed at facilitating the adoption of digital tools, and free access to online platforms for distance learning.

Sources: Alliance for #Milanodigitale public [call](.).

25_LT: Action plan for non-formal adult education and continuing education for 2019-2020	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	District Municipality of Kaunas
Education/training	Adult education
Target groups	Adults
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan

The scope of the action plan is to implement the provisions of several national strategies and programmes, including the 'Non-formal adult education and continuing education development programme for 2016-2023'. The action plan's overall objective is to strengthen the adult lifelong learning system of Kaunas district and to create the conditions for adults' social and work inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. Specific objectives include: 1) create the conditions for improving the general competencies of residents (e.g. digital literacy, foreign language); 2) strengthen the capacity of residents to live a healthy life; 3) develop environmental education and initiatives; 4) improve the competencies of teachers of adult learners; and 5) strengthen cooperation (i.e. joint activities and projects) between institutions providing non-formal adult education. Monitoring and funding mechanisms are also envisaged. Funding is from the municipal budget and other sources such as project funds and participation fees.

Sources: Text of the [legislative act](.).

26_LU: The 'practice a language online' project	
EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Luxembourg
Education/training	VET
Target groups	Citizens
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The 'practice a language online' project started at the beginning of December 2020 with the support of the City of Luxembourg and the Ministry of Family and Integration. The project has the twofold objective of creating the conditions for improving language skills and oral expression, and of alleviating the isolation and loneliness caused by the restrictive measures enforced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project, launched by ASTI, an Association for the Support of Immigrant Workers, offers free online language practice activities in French, German, English and Luxembourgish, which are the most frequently spoken languages in Luxembourg. These free online activities include virtual language coaching for practicing a language with one person, and virtual conversation tables where the teacher practices a language with 2-3 learners. 65 volunteers offered their services to practice a language online, out of which 50 completed a short training course to prepare for the activity. The action is expected to have significant added value for the integration of immigrant workers.

Sources: Pratiquer une langue en ligne [website](#).

27_LV: Ādaži municipality education strategy 2016-2022	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Ādaži
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools, VET, higher education, adult education
Target groups	Students, children, citizens
Type of approach	Strategy

In Latvia, education is by law one of the responsibilities of local governments. The national law on education states that the local government must provide pre-school education and basic education to its resident citizens, as well as the opportunity to attend secondary education and extra-curriculum activities. The Ādaži municipality's strategy 2016-2022 follows up its previous strategy 2007-2013, implements the reforms initiated in recent years in the education system, and complies with the national educational development guidelines for 2014-2020. The strategy is articulated around the two priorities of 1) promoting accessible and high-quality general education, and 2) developing professional education. Under the first priority, the municipality envisages the strengthening of existing educational institutes and the creation of new ones, including the development of the infrastructure of an international university and campus; the provision of pre-school education services for all resident children; an inclusive education for all, regardless of individuals' social status and ability; and the promotion of quality learning processes. Under the second priority, the municipality aims at providing the necessary premises for carrying out professional education and at promoting and improving vocational education services and lifelong learning. The strategy also outlines the organisation of the system and monitoring activities. Among the main indicators/results used for monitoring the development of education in the municipality are: the number of pre-school age children (from 987 in 2013/14 to 1,579 in 2022/23); the number of children attending municipal pre-school institutions (from 499 in 2013/14 to 541 in 2022/23); and the number of high school students (from 1,035 in 2013/14 to 1,629 in 2022/23). The total budget allocated over the period 2016-2022 is some €18 million. Sources include state budget, local government budget, EU funding and other sources such as loans.

Sources: Ādaži [webpage](#) on the education strategy; Ādaži [education strategy](#) 2016-2022.

28_NL: The House of Skills project in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area

EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Amsterdam
Education/training	VET, higher education, adult education
Target groups	Employers, workers, job seekers
Type of approach	Project-boosted

The House of Skills is a project organised in the form of a public-private partnership (PPP) in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. The PPP is participated in by the City of Amsterdam, regional and local government administrators, the business community, training organisations, knowledge institutions, trade unions, industry organisations, and employee and employer organisations. The project budget is €11.2 million, out of which €3.7 million are EU funds received through the Operational Programme West Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020. The project duration covered the period 09/2017-08/2020 but the resulting platform and tools are still running and online. The project supported the development of skills and offered services for employers, workers and job seekers in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. For example, it created a platform where job seekers and employers can find each other, and developed various tools that enable skills matching, namely Skillspaspoort (aiming at certifying competencies), De Paskamer (a matching tool giving people access to suggestions for professions and vacancies according to their skills profile), and the Mijnhouseofskills (a digital platform which helps people find vacancies according to their work history and skills). In collaboration with other partners, in September 2020, the House of Skills also launched the Transfer Point Care and Welfare, a tool assessing the opportunity for people working in other sectors to move to the sector of care and welfare. In terms of results, 120 agreements were signed and over 60 collaborations have taken place between employers and relevant parties in order to develop skills in their sectors. A designated area has been created in the Amsterdam library where visitors can receive free career advice, discover labour market developments and find personal opportunities. In order to expand out of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area and share knowledge, 25 working visits have been planned and cooperation has taken place with Eindhoven and Rotterdam.

Sources: House of skills website; EC webpage of the project.

29_PL: The Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project

EEA milestones	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Region of Wielkopolska
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Teachers and pupils
Type of approach	Project-boosted

This initiative is developed into a case study in Part 3.

30_PL: Gdynia Urban Lab to foster citizens' education

EEA milestones	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Gdynia
Education/training	Adult education
Target groups	Citizens
Type of approach	Project-boosted, ET ecosystem

As citizens' education is one of the key priorities of the policy agenda of the city, in 2019 the Municipality of Gdynia become a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities which was established to facilitate the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals especially through lifelong learning. The city aims at providing its citizens with knowledge and skills through lectures covering a wide range of topics such as technological, demographic and environmental ones with the aim of increasing participants' individual and professional potential. Lifelong learning programmes also target employment and entrepreneurship needs. Educational opportunities are defined though an Urban Competence Programme managed and implemented by an Urban Lab, a three-year implementation pilot supported by the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy (through the Operational Programme Technical Assistance 2014-2020, co-funded by the Cohesion Fund) and by the Institute of Urban and Regional Development. The Gdynia Urban Lab also includes an Urban Café, a space where citizens and municipality officials can engage in open dialogue and discussions generating a bottom-up decision-making process. From the city governance point of view, in January 2020, Gdynia established a learning city task force composed of municipal representatives and citizens. Together with the pilot of Urban Lab in Rzeszów, Gdynia represents a further testing ground for adaptation of the cooperation model of Urban Labs – which is based on the quadruple helix approach – to the context of Polish cities.

Sources: News on the education in Gdynia in the UNESCO Institute for Life Long Learning; Urban Lab website.

31_PT: Establishing the legal framework for inclusive education in Madeira

EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Region of Madeira
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools
Target groups	Students
Type of approach	Legislative/regulatory act

With Legislative Decree No. 11/2020/M of 29 July 2020, the Regional Assembly of Madeira adapts the provisions of Decree-Law No. 54/2018 of 6 July 2020, as amended by Law No. 116/2019 of 13 September 2020, and of Decree-Law No. 55/2018 of 6 July 2020 on inclusive education to the regional context. At the core of the regional policy is the curriculum instrument and the need to offer students and citizens diversified, flexible and even personalised learning paths in order to increase participation in the learning process. The decree is relevant to all education and teaching establishments that are part of the school network of the Autonomous Region of Madeira (public, private and cooperative ones). It outlines a more autonomous organisation of schools as they become active partners of the education system and can make their own decisions on curriculum management and development. The Regional Directorate of Education is entrusted with the preparation of a manual to guide the inclusive practices. The manual was presented on 9 December 2020 and aims at supporting the educational and teaching establishments of the region in the organization, management and operationalization of the curriculum for basic and secondary education.

Sources: Diário da República Eletrónico nº 146/2020; Regional Government webpage on the presentation of the manual.

32_PT: Cascais' framework for the implementation of the Learning City concept	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	Municipality of Cascais
Education/training	Schools, VET, adult education
Target groups	Students, citizens
Type of approach	Action/implementation plan, ET ecosystem

Cascais is one of the 11 Portuguese cities which are members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). Being a learning city means promoting lifelong learning for all. The network provides support towards this practice through policy dialogue and peer learning among members; provision of capacity building; and development of instruments to monitor progress. Overall, the network focuses on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and SDG 11 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'. Cascais joined the network in 2016. This was a natural follow up to the city's long-standing adherence to the 'Educating Cities' movement (which was then formalised in 1994 into the International Association of Educating Cities). The city has developed its own framework for implementing the learning city concept which focuses on space-related activities such as the promotion of vegetable gardens in schools and the development of non-formal education spaces inside and outside of schools; on the development of instruments such as a local volunteering database and a participatory budget; and on education-focussed initiatives on, for example, vocational training, employability and inclusion. In particular, the participatory budget is considered an inspiring model by URBACT for facilitating civic participation in city development. With regard to schools, the Mayor and the Deputy implement the programme 'So, tell us' (primary schools) and 'Voice of Youth' (secondary schools) to directly listen to students' ideas and suggestions on the type of interventions to be put forward by the city.

Sources: UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities website; Cascais profile on GNLC; URBACT news dated 14 August 2019.

33_RO: Quality, Equality and Friendship in Schools in Turda	
EEA milestone	2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive
Authorities	Municipality of Turda
Education/training	Early childhood education and care, schools, adult education
Target groups	Children, students, parents, Roma
Type of approach	Project-boosted

CEPS Turda is a project led by the Municipality of Turda in partnership with the Resource Centre Foundation for Roma Communities. Four local schools and one kindergarten are the associated partners of the project. The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020 and implemented over a 3-year period, from May 2018 to May 2021. The total project's budget is €1.2 million. The project's objective is to reduce and prevent early school leaving among the municipality's disadvantaged communities. This is tackled by implementing a system of integrated formal, non-formal and informal learning interventions at the level of preschool, primary and secondary school. Examples of interventions are after-school programmes (which envisage the distribution of food and supplies to stimulate attendance), summer kindergartens, counselling activities for parents, as well as mentoring and coaching in 'second chance' programmes for young people and adults who have not completed compulsory education.

Some of these activities were delivered outside the schools according to the so-called 'mobile school workshop' concept which implies the use of a bus. Target groups include: 60 pre-school children; 200 pre-school children coming from vulnerable groups; 260 parents; 480 students from primary and secondary schools (with a minimum participation – 75% – of Roma); and 50 young people and adults.

Sources: City of Turda project webpage.

34_RO: C-EDUC education cluster in Cluj-Napoca	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive, 5. Reinforcing European higher education institutions
Authorities	Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, County of Cluj
Education/training	Schools, VET, higher education, adult education
Target groups	Students
Type of approach	ET ecosystem

C-EDU is the first education cluster of Romania. It was launched in Cluj-Napoca on 6 October 2020. Founders of the cluster include six Cluj universities, the Cluj County School Inspectorate, the Transylvania College Foundation, the Cluj County Council and the Cluj-Napoca City Hall. The cluster is a collaborative effort between local authorities and education establishments/institutions. Its mission is to create an inclusive platform for co-design, dialogue and collaboration among a variety of public and private actors such as public authorities, education institutions, companies and non-governmental organisations. This is expected to improve access to education by students and young people, to enhance the quality of education and to better connect education with the economic sector. In addition, the cluster will facilitate the dialogue between vocational training and research and innovation so as to adapt educational development to technological changes. C-EDU's vision '*is that of a connected and competent educational ecosystem, which puts the student at the centre of the educational processes*'. The cluster is believed to support the need for change highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis in the education sector. It has been also conceived to facilitate the contribution of the cluster's members and community to the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025.

Sources: Cluj-Napoca City Hall press release dated 6 October 2020.

35_SE: Competence supply strategy for Kronoberg Region 2016-2025	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Authorities	County of Kronoberg
Education/training	VET, adult education
Target groups	Students, adults, business community
Type of approach	Strategy, Action/implementation plan

The competence supply strategy of Kronoberg (2016-2025) is a sub-strategy of the region's Green Strategy 2025. It is implemented through an action plan and aims at matching demand and the needs of the labour market as well as at developing human capital as a prerequisite for sustainable growth. The strategy outlines four priorities: investing in skills' enhancement throughout the working life; matching education with the working life; meeting the needs of youngsters from school to work; and making use of everyone's skills. The working method is

driven by challenges and based on a logic of change, as it is in the Green Strategy. The action plan has been designed as a dynamic instrument shaped through interaction and consensus among involved stakeholders. Stakeholders are primarily employers, the local business community, municipalities, education providers, government agencies and civil society. The Kronoberg Regional Development Board supports the implementation of the strategy and of the action plan including through project development, financing, investigation and analysis. For example, the project 'Competence in Kronoberg', funded through the ESF with kr 3.7 million (approx. €0.37 million) (2017-2020) implements the action plan by focussing on employers and employees of SMEs.

Source: Competence supply strategy for Kronoberg County 2016-2025; the Swedish ESF Council project bank 2014-2020, project fiche.

36_SE: The education strategy of the Municipality of Örnsköldsvik 2016-2020	
EEA milestone	1. Lifting quality in education, 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession
Authorities	Municipality of Örnsköldsvik
Education/training	Schools
Target groups	Students, teachers
Type of approach	Strategy

With the aim of becoming one of the best municipalities, nationally, for children and students' learning and knowledge development in 2020, the City Council of Örnsköldsvik adopted an education strategy in 2016. The strategy outlines a series of areas to focus on over the period 2016-2020. The implementation of the strategy is the responsibility of the municipal Board of Education. The key areas defined in the strategy include: students must be prepared to participate actively in society; schools must have a modern, professional and inspiring leadership which implies the need to develop the necessary competencies of schools' employees; all children and students must be given the opportunity to reach a higher level of knowledge which implies, among other aspects, an inclusive approach to teaching; competence development at all levels must be based on experience and research which requires collaboration with nearby universities; and learning environments must be appropriate.

Sources: Municipality of Örnsköldsvik website; Education strategy 2016-2020.

Part 2: Typology of educational approaches for territorial development

Educational approaches for territorial development are a result of devolution/decentration policies in the different Member States (UNESCO, 2007) as well as a result of bottom-up approaches pursued by actors on the territory, including local and regional public authorities. The rationale behind these educational approaches for territorial development in Europe is the relevance of skills and competence to boost social and economic growth. This is even more true after the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic (EC, 2020b).

On the basis of the initiatives included in the inventory in Part 1, this part identifies **six main types of approaches by LRAs** in the domains of education and training. Each type is described by making reference to one or more of the initiatives collected in the inventory (examples of initiatives are in brackets).

▶ **Approach 1: Strategies.**

Strategies aim at fostering local and regional development by means of education and training. This approach is coordinated or led by public authorities but requires the local/regional stakeholders' structural involvement in the strategies' design, implementation and assessment.

ET strategies' objectives are also coupled with other structural objectives for the socio-economic growth of the territory such as employment (*02_AT: The city of Vienna's training package for the youngsters*) and innovation (*19_FR: Regional strategy 2020-2030 for higher education, research and innovation*) goals. Digital transformation is also an objective integrated in some ET strategies (*01_AT: The 'Science goes School' project in Lower Austria; 03_BE: The digital strategy for education of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation; 10_DK: IT strategy for Tårnby Municipality's school system 2017-2020*). In most of the cases, strategies have multiple targets in terms of educational scope, ranging from early childhood education and care to adult education (*27_LV: Ādaži municipality education strategy 2016-2022*). Strategies are often led by one public authority only (*14_ES: Regional Strategy for Professional Training and Lifelong Learning 2015-2020; 36_SE: The education strategy of the Municipality of Örnsköldsvik 2016-2020*), but in a few cases foresee the involvement of a number of authorities in the neighbouring territories which face the same socio-economic challenges (*21_IE: Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strategy statement 2017-2021*). Stakeholders involved through this approach are those operating in ET (e.g. universities, training centres) as well as other actors actively contributing to the socio-economic development of the territory such as businesses (*35_SE:*

Competence supply strategy for Kronoberg Region 2016-2025). Preliminary activities to the definition of the strategy also include consultations with local stakeholders (*06_BG: The comprehensive development strategy for education of the Municipality of Plovdiv*).

▸ **Approach 2: Action/implementation plans.**

Action/implementation plans provide a medium- to long-term structured framework to undertake concrete ET-targeted activities. They are usually prepared and led by an individual public authority that nominates the territorial stakeholders to be involved in the plan, such as universities and training centres, or that involves relevant territorial stakeholders in the design of the plan at an earlier stage.

Action/implementation plans usually define the contextual conditions of the territory including the weaknesses which are to be addressed by the plan. They also usually define objectives/priorities, areas/domains of intervention, activities over the reference period as well as expected outcomes, ET target groups and approaches for involving them, budgets, sources of funding, and monitoring and evaluation procedures. Sometimes these plans are structured as programmes (*08_DE: Digitale Schule Hessen programme*). Plans can be focused on ET (*18_FR: Regional action for high schools in Île-de-France*) or include ET as part of broader interventions (*17_FI: Education in the Korona Action Plan 2020-2021 of North Ostrobothnia*). Often, plans focusing on ET target only one education type (for example, higher education in *05_BG: Varna's municipal strategy for cooperating with higher education institutions and consolidating into an international university city*; schools in *13_ES: Regional Plan for the Improvement of School Coexistence;* adult education in *25_LT: Action plan for non-formal adult education and continuing education for 2019-2020*).

▸ **Approach 3: Project-boosted initiatives.**

Project-boosted initiatives are cooperation opportunities in the educational and training domains which are often used by LRAs to address specific needs of local stakeholders as well as to benefit from the professional expertise and practices in ET of high-profile, renowned project partners, if any. The approach relying on project-boosted initiatives foresees the participation of LRAs as partners or coordinators of the consortium established for the project.

Project-boosted initiatives participated in by LRAs often rely on **EU funds** made available in ET-oriented programmes such as Erasmus+ (*11_EE: Internationalisation of Tartu Vocational Education Centre; 15_ES: Three-level centers of professional excellence: Qualification, entrepreneurship and*

innovation in the Green Economy) as well as on mechanisms more oriented to innovation for the socio-economic development of territories such as the Urban Innovative Actions funded through the ERDF (*12_EL: 'Curing the Limbo' in the city of Athens*).

Projects boosted at the local/regional level are frequently funded within the framework of Regional Operational Programmes supported by ERDF, ESF and CF and cover a wide range of ET initiatives (*28_NL: The House of skills project in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area; 29_PL: The Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project; 33_RO: Quality, Equality and Friendship in Schools in Turda*). Less frequent are projects involving LRAs supported through **national funds** (*16_FI: OpenDigi project; 26_LU: The 'practice a language online' project*) or **other resources** (*24_IT: Alleanza per #Milanodigitale; 09_DK: PLF Nord project - Development of professional learning communities).* Regional authorities can make use of a **call for projects** as an instrument to facilitate the implementation of ET initiatives promoted by local/regional stakeholders, including local authorities (*20_FR: IDÉE Regional Action*).

Regardless of the funding source, objectives and ET targets vary greatly in projects: from the integration of migrants (*26_LU: The 'practice a language online' project)* to the promotion of knowledge on circular economy and waste management in schools (*23_IT: Project Green Learning 360° in the Lazio Region*); from the construction and renovation of school sites (*07_DE: The investment-led education and integration programme of Nuremberg)* to the general upskilling of citizens (*30_PL: Gdynia Urban Lab to foster citizens' education*).

Although projects usually allow a short-term investment in ET, some initiatives demonstrate that they can become a structural instrument to guarantee ET activities in the medium to long term. This happens through chains of projects and/or a structural project-boosted approach, and by means of the creation of education and training structures (as in the identified initiatives relying on Erasmus+ funds).

▶ **Approach 4: Legislative/regulatory acts.**

Legislative/regulatory acts represent the top-down approach by default. Regional authorities in particular can adopt such an approach for compulsory education and training activities. For example, the Region of Madeira allows the education and training offer to be diversified and even allows personalised learning paths to be developed autonomously by schools. Still, the key elements of such an offer are regulated through guidelines issued by the authority (*31_PT: Establishing the legal framework for inclusive education in Madeira*).

▸ **Approach 5: Bottom-up initiatives.**

Bottom-up initiatives representing the needs of specific stakeholders can be recognised, taken up and further supported by LRAs. The institutionalisation of a bottom-up initiative occurred, for example, with the KlasCement free platform initiated by one teacher in 1998 with the aim of sharing educational resources for students. In 2012, the Flemish Government began supporting the platform until it became an instrument of the Agency for Education Communication under the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training (*04_BE: KlasCement: the official teachers' platform in Flanders*).

▸ **Approach 6: Education and training ecosystems.**

Education and training ecosystems are promoted by LRAs to favour synergies between ET interventions promoted individually by different stakeholders on the territory. The final aim is the creation of **economies of scale and scope** which support the socio-economic development of the territory. The quadruple helix approach, although not explicitly mentioned, characterises those initiatives aimed at the establishment of ET ecosystems.

These initiatives are also the ones in which LRAs most frequently combine different approaches such as strategies, implementation/action plans, or projects. Within the ET ecosystems, LRAs take on a role of facilitator (also through external bodies managed by the LRAs) and/or of institutional guide, which guarantees a medium- to long-term perspective of the initiative.

Initiatives range from the creation of centres of vocational and educational training (*11_EE: Internationalisation of Tartu Vocational Education Centre; 15_ES: Three-level centers of professional excellence: Qualification, entrepreneurship and innovation in the Green Economy*) to the establishment of urban labs facilitating open dialogue between citizens and decision makers through knowledge sharing and education (*30_PL: Gdynia Urban Lab to foster citizens' education);* from the establishment of clusters based on a collaborative effort between education institutions (*34_RO: C-EDUC education cluster in Cluj-Napoca*) to participation in international networks such as the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (*22_IE: Lifelong learning projects implemented by the city of Cork as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities; 32_PT: Cascais' framework for the implementation of the Learning City concept).*

For each of the initiatives included in the inventory in Part 1, **Table 2** summarises the approaches/combination of approaches adopted (blue) and the actors involved. It is worth noting that in some of the identified municipalities/regions more than one ET initiative was found. For example, in the inventory, there are two cases

each for the Region of Murcia and the County of Cluj as their initiatives were considered to add value in terms of scope and type of approach. Several other LRAs implement concomitant initiatives in ET, simply because these domains are wide and need to be broken down by means of tailored interventions when it comes to implementation at the local and regional level.

Table 2. Approaches adopted and actors involved, by initiative

				Approaches						
code	country	NUTS level	name	Strategy	Action/implementation plan	Project-boosted	Legislative/regulatory act	Bottom-up initiative	ET ecosystem	actors involved
01	AT	2	Region of Lower Austria	░		█				One-A driven
02	AT	3	**Municipality of Vienna**	█						External body managed by one A
03	BE	1	The Wallonia-Brussels Federation	█						More than one-A driven
04	BE	1	Government of Flanders				█			Partnership of one A and other SHs
05	BG	LAU	Municipality of Varna			█				Partnership of one A and other SHs
06	BG	LAU	**Municipality of Plovdiv**	█						One-A driven
07	DE	3	Municipality of Nuremberg			█				Partnership of one A and other SHs
08	DE	1	Region of Hessen		█					One-A driven/Partnership of more As
09	DK	LAU	6 municipalities			█				Partnership of more As
10	DK	LAU	Municipality of Tårnby			█				One-A driven
11	EE	LAU	Municipality of Tartu			█			█	External body managed by one A
12	EL	3	Municipality of Athens			█				Partnership of one A and other SHs
13	ES	2	Region of Murcia		█					One-A driven
14	ES	2	Region of Murcia			█				One-A driven
15	ES	2	Region of Catalonia			█			█	Partnership of one A and other SHs
16	FI	LAU	Municipalities in 5 regions			█				Partnership of more As and other SHs
17	FI	3	Region of North Ostrobothnia		█					Partnership of more As and other SHs
18	FR	2	Region of Île-de-France		█					One-A driven
19	FR	1	**Region of Grand Est**	░						One-A driven
20	FR	1	Region of Normandy			█				One-A driven
21	IE	LAU	**Municipality of Limerick, County of Limerick, County of Clare**	█						Partnership of more As and other SHs
22	IE	LAU	Municipality of Cork	█					█	A participating in an ET network
23	IT	2	Region of Lazio			█				Partnership of more As and other SHs
24	IT	3	Municipality of Milan			█				One-A driven
25	LT	LAU	District Municipality of Kaunas		█					One-A driven
26	LU	LAU	Municipality of Luxembourg			█				Partnership of more As
27	LV	LAU	Municipality of Ādaži	█						One-A driven
28	NL	3	Municipality of Amsterdam			█				Partnership of more As and other SHs
29	PL	2	**Region of Wielkopolska**	█					█	Partnership of more As and other SHs
30	PL	LAU	Municipality of Gdynia						█	External body managed by one A
31	PT	3	Region of Madeira				█			One-A driven
32	PT	LAU	Municipality of Cascais						█	A participating in an ET network
33	RO	LAU	Municipality of Turda					█		Partnership of one A and other SHs
34	RO	2 and 3	Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, County of Cluj					█		Partnership of more As and other SHs
35	SE	3	County of Kronoberg		█					One-A driven
36	SE	LAU	Municipality of Örnsköldsvik		█					One-A driven

Note: A=authority; SH=stakeholder. Initiatives highlighted in blue are developed into case studies in Part 3.
Source: table created by the authors.

Table 3 summarises other information which characterises the inventory's initiatives. Regardless of the approach adopted, a number of initiatives were used to react to the challenges related to the COVID-19 crisis (purple). In addition, all initiatives address at least one, and often more than one, of the six EEA milestones (green) (the exception being milestone *6. Education as part of a stronger Europe in the world* which has never been found to be addressed). Concerning the ET types (orange), more than 40% of the initiatives address only one type of ET.

Table 3. COVID-19 reactions, EEA milestones and ET types, by initiative

code	country	NUTS level	name	Reaction to COVID-19 challenges	1. Lifting quality in education	2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive	3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training	4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession	5. Reinforcing European higher education institutions	Early childhood education and care	Schools	Vocational and educational training	Higher education	Adult education
						EEA milestones						ET types		
01	AT	2	Region of Lower Austria				■				■			
02	AT	3	**Municipality of Vienna**	■		■	■				■			■
03	BE	1	The Wallonia-Brussels Federation				■				■			■
04	BE	1	Government of Flanders				■			■	■			
05	BG	LAU	Municipality of Varna					■			■	■		
06	BG	LAU	**Municipality of Plovdiv**	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■
07	DE	3	Municipality of Nuremberg		■	■		■		■		■		■
08	DE	1	Region of Hessen		■	■					■			■
09	DK	LAU	6 municipalities		■	■	■				■			■
10	DK	LAU	Municipality of Tårnby		■	■	■				■			■
11	EE	LAU	Municipality of Tartu		■	■	■				■			■
12	EL	3	Municipality of Athens		■	■	■				■			■
13	ES	2	Region of Murcia		■	■					■			
14	ES	2	Region of Murcia		■	■					■			
15	ES	2	Region of Catalonia		■	■					■			
16	FI	LAU	Municipalities in 5 regions	■		■	■	■			■			■
17	FI	3	Region of North Ostrobothnia	■	■		■				■			■
18	FR	2	Region of Île-de-France			■	■				■			
19	FR	1	**Region of Grand Est**	■					■			■		■
20	FR	1	Region of Normandy		■	■					■			
21	IE	LAU	**Municipality of Limerick, County of Limerick, County of Clare**	■	■	■	■			■	■	■		■
22	IE	LAU	Municipality of Cork		■	■				■	■	■		
23	IT	2	Region of Lazio				■			■	■			
24	IT	3	Municipality of Milan	■		■				■				
25	LT	LAU	District Municipality of Kaunas		■	■	■				■			■
26	LU	LAU	Municipality of Luxembourg	■	■	■					■			
27	LV	LAU	Municipality of Ādaži		■	■				■	■			
28	NL	3	Municipality of Amsterdam		■	■					■			
29	PL	2	**Region of Wielkopolska**	■							■	■		■
30	PL	LAU	Municipality of Gdynia		■	■	■			■	■			
31	PT	3	Region of Madeira		■	■	■			■	■			
32	PT	LAU	Municipality of Cascais		■	■	■			■	■			
33	RO	LAU	Municipality of Turda		■	■				■	■			
34	RO	2 and 3	Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, County of Cluj	■	■	■			■	■	■			■
35	SE	3	County of Kronoberg		■	■				■	■	■		■
36	SE	LAU	Municipality of Örnsköldsvik		■	■	■			■	■			

Note: initiatives highlighted in blue are developed into case studies in Part 3.
Source: table created by the authors.

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Part 3: Case studies

Case 02_AT. Training packages and grants from the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund

Framing the case

The Vienna Employment Promotion Fund, or waff (*Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds*), is the city's institution in charge of labour market policy. Established in 1995, waff falls under the responsibility of the Department of Finance, Economics and International Affairs of the City of Vienna. The organisation works closely with the Vienna Public Employment Service (AMS Wien), trade unions and employer associations to promote the professional development of the city's employees and to address job market challenges. It is structured into a Board of Trustees (whose president is the Mayor of Vienna), a Board of Directors, and an 'Office', which is the implementation arm of the fund. Strategically, at the local level, waff complements the work of the Public Employment Service Austria which is in charge of implementing the national labour market policy.

Description

Waff has defined specific objectives to pursue at the city level, namely: '*improve the career prospects of people who work in Vienna; eliminate existing discrimination in the job market; prevent the threat of exclusion from the employment system; provide young people with good vocational training and a successful start to working life; improve the attractiveness of Vienna as a business location; promote equal opportunities for women and men on the job market; improve opportunities on the labour market for inhabitants of Vienna with a migration background*' (waff [website](#)).

Among waff's target groups are people working and living in the city of Vienna who wish and/or need to improve their competencies and/or qualification to enter the labour market or to remain in the labour market, possibly in another sector/position. Waff has tailored initiatives for young people and for people with a migration background, but it also targets Viennese companies, providing training opportunities for their employees and incentives to create apprenticeship places. Finally, through its strategic Qualification Plan 2030, waff takes a coordinating role among key institutions which are concerned with the professional and educational qualifications of the city's inhabitants. These institutions include the city government, the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, the Vienna Chamber of Labour, the Vienna branch of the Federation of Austrian

Industries, the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions, the Vienna Public Employment Service, the Education Directorate for Vienna, and the regional office of the Ministry of Social Affairs Service. By 2030, Vienna's Qualification Plan aims to achieve a higher number of young people with a qualification that goes beyond the compulsory level; a higher number of adults being given vocational and educational training; and better provision of information and advice on job-related training and education opportunities.

Waff's training and educational offer is varied and often tailored to specific target groups. It includes:

- **Training Accounts** and **Opportunities Cheque**. Through the training accounts, waff provides cash grants **to any individual** to undertake vocational education and training. The amount which is put on the individual's account depends on whether the individual works or not, and, if working, on the level of income. Grants range from €300 to €3,000. The Opportunities Cheque is addressed to **employed people** and may also reach a maximum value of €3,000.

- **German language training**. 'Start coaching' is part of the Start Wien programme and is addressed to **those receiving a first-time permission of stay in Austria**. As part of this service offered by the city's Municipal Department 17 - Integration and Diversity, beneficiaries are given €300 vouchers to attend German language courses.

- **'Digi-Winner' training**. This initiative, launched in early 2019, is meant to enhance **employees'** digital skills. The course, jointly promoted by waff and the Vienna Chamber of Labour, covers a wide range of topics, from basic IT to data security and social media. Employees are given a contribution up to €5,000, the rate and level of funding depending on their income. The course on digital skills is expected to benefit some 3,000 people (Digi-Winner webpage).

- Support **to companies**. Companies located in the city of Vienna benefit from the following grant programmes for education and training (waff website):

  (1) **Apprenticeship grant**. This is addressed to companies wishing to train their employees to teach apprentices. Companies must be located in Vienna and have fewer than 50 employees. For larger companies, other conditions apply. The grant covers 75% of the cost of training the

employee (up to a maximum of €500 per person) and the cost of the examination (up to a maximum of €100 per person).

(2) **Training grant**. This is addressed to companies wishing to train their employees. Conditions apply. The grant covers 50% of the cost of training of the employee (up to a maximum of €1,000 per person). One company can receive a maximum of €20,000 per year.

(3) **Innovation and Employment grant.** This is addressed to SMEs located in the city. Although the scope of the grant is to support innovation projects, the grant covers innovation-related training costs for courses delivered by external training institutes/trainers. The grant covers 50% of the cost of training up to a maximum of €7,300.

(4) **Further education offerings to balance staff fluctuations.** This is used to help the company sustain its employees when staff surpluses occur. Staff is granted an educational leave during which individuals can gain new qualifications.

Changes driven by the COVID-19 crisis

A good example of the City of Vienna's reaction to the consequence of COVID-19 on the labour market, which was channelled through waff, is an intervention to support unemployed youngsters. In particular, in June 2020, waff launched a **training package for young Viennese** valued at €17 million. The package was addressed to those individuals who were negatively impacted by the shrinking job market caused by the pandemic. In fact, in May 2020 the number of unemployed individuals aged 20-24 years was over 16,000, i.e., more than double the number of the previous year. The package includes two components (waff [website](#)):

(1) **Provision of additional apprenticeship opportunities.** The pre-pandemic allocation of €6.7 million was topped with an additional €3.3 million to create more training places and to provide needed learning equipment such as tablets.

(2) **Improvement of the qualification of young unemployed Viennese**. This was tackled in three ways. First, around 3,000 unemployed young people aged 18-21 years were contacted from June to September 2020 to get a 'qualification pass'. The pass summarises the qualifications gained and the future training and professional goals of the individual. Because the information on the pass is shared by all the concerned organisations, it is then easier for these organisations to arrange support which is tailored to each individual. Second, the replication of the '[Job

' scheme, through the cooperation with the city's companies, makes it possible to provide competencies for jobs with a potentially high future demand such as those related to health, care, IT, and climate change. Finally, qualification was tackled through the involvement of more training companies, in particular by means of associations of companies.

Funding and impact

Waff is mainly financed by the municipality of Vienna. In fact, waff is the implementing body of the ESF funds allocated to the region of Vienna as part of the national ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020 'Investments in Growth and Employment'. A recent interview of the Mayor of Vienna highlights that '*Over the past 10 years, over 100 million euros have been made available to the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (waff) for the development and implementation of various projects. In the current Structural Fund period 2014 to 2020 alone, 55 million ESF funds have been made available to Vienna in this way - so far almost 63,000 people in Vienna have been supported*' (PES group of the CoR website).

Contribution to EEA 2025

Waff puts an important emphasis on inclusiveness and on equal opportunities for women and men on the job market. It also focuses its efforts on raising competence levels and on supporting the learning environment for groups at risk of underachievement, such as people with a migration background. Furthermore, waff strives to provide flexible vocational training opportunities to reskill and upskill and to improve employees' positions in the labour market and also to meet the demand of the labour market for new emerging skill needs. In practice, waff is fully contributing to inclusiveness through education and training (**milestone 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive**).

Case 06_BG: The comprehensive development strategy for education of the Municipality of Plovdiv

Framing the case

On February 2017, a Working Expert Group was created to coordinate efforts and resources for the design of a new 2017-2022 municipal education strategy. The group was composed of representatives of the Municipality of Plovdiv, the Regional Department of Education, the District Administration, the Plovdiv Municipal Council, educational institutions in the city, local businesses, and the non-governmental sector. The role of the Working Expert Group was to ensure a

pragmatic and achievable level of ambition for the new strategy. The strategy was actually drafted by the municipality with the support of the Teach for Bulgaria Foundation, a foundation working worldwide in proposing innovative methods for education, promoting exchange of educational good practices and facilitating equal access to high-quality education. Teach for Bulgaria and the Municipality of Plovdiv have been working together since 2015. At that time, they concluded a memorandum of cooperation and partnership aimed at attracting highly qualified and motivated young people to the teaching profession; creating good practices in the selection and career development of teachers; and defining interventions to facilitate access to quality education for all students (*Teach for Bulgaria news dated 02/02/17; Teach for Bulgaria news dated 27/07/17*).

Description

The education strategy of Plovdiv, adopted by the City Council in July 2017, aims at providing citizens with 21st-century skills, namely specific cognitive skills, technical skills, social skills and creative skills (*Teach for Bulgaria news dated 27/07/17;* Municipality of Plovdiv, 2017a). The underlying assumption is that a supportive skill environment is able to attract, develop and retain talents while contributing to the economic, social and cultural conditions of the territory. As declared by Stefan Stoyanov, Deputy Mayor of Plovdiv, '*Plovdiv has marked a steady economic growth, and an increasing number of specialists are needed to provide the human capital for the investors the municipality attracts..[..]....Plovdiv's success in this direction is closely related to the education provided in the city and the opportunities for qualification of employees'* (*Teach for Bulgaria news dated 02/02/17*). The strategy was designed starting from a SWOT analysis of the educational offer in Plovdiv based on statistical data, focus groups and interviews with various stakeholders. In addition, success indicators were developed to monitor the progress of the educational system in Plovdiv during the strategy implementation (*Teach for Bulgaria news dated 02/02/17*).

The five-year strategy targets kindergartens, schools, vocational schools and universities. Foreseen measures for each education level complement each other contributing to an integrated development of the city's education system. The strategy defines five priority areas articulated in a number of measures, activities, educational targets, goals, and indicators of success. For each measure, responsibilities for implementation are assigned to well-identified stakeholders in the education domain, including, but not limited to, the Education and Business Development Department of the municipality (Municipality of Plovdiv, 2017a; Municipality of Plovdiv, 2017b).

The five priority areas are:

1. Provision of solutions, instruments and support for high-quality education.
This priority is structured into five measures with specific key activities addressed to early childhood education and care, schools, or higher education. Measures focus on developing skills needed by children, pupils and students to address 21st-century challenges; creating a pilot to assess the added value of schools according to the evaluation system proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science; favouring conditions for an active exchange of ideas and good practices between pedagogical specialists working in Plovdiv; promoting the annual international forum on 'education to succeed in the 21st century'; and implementing an approach to support talented students in school and universities (including doctoral students).

2. Maintenance and improvement of school and kindergarten facilities and related amenities. This priority is structured into six measures with specific key activities addressed to early childhood education and care, and schools. Measures focus on guaranteeing adequate equipment and resources for educational institutions; assessing buildings' capacity and adequacy in order to properly host students and provide sustainable educational solutions; creating conditions for pre-school education; improving equipment and resources for sport activities and developing a system for prioritizing schools in need of funds for renovating/creating sport facilities; increasing the number of available playgrounds and improving the existing ones; and creating an educational environment able to facilitate the adoption and usage of information and communication technologies.

3. Support of skills development of key pedagogical staff. This priority is structured into four measures with specific key activities addressed to early childhood education and care, schools or vocational educational training. Measures focus on adopting a feedback collection approach involving teachers, parents and students in a joint educational process; increasing the quality and efficiency of support provided to teachers and to pedagogical staff; awarding best performing teachers; and establishing an effective mechanism to involve business representatives as lecturers on specific professional classes.

4. Career orientation and creation of skills for the job market. This priority is structured into four measures with specific key activities addressed to schools or higher education. Measures focus on organising informative campaigns for career orientation addressed to students and parents and participated in by businesses in Plovdiv; introducing students to possible professional careers and making students aware of requested skills and competencies including through visits to enterprises; establishing a mentoring programme for students which involves

business representatives from different sectors; promoting cooperation with businesses through the assignment of awards a) to those enterprises located in the municipality which employ students who have graduated from the city's schools/universities, and b) to master and doctoral students' theses in technical domains which were developed through active collaboration with enterprises.

5. Coordination and effective collaboration between institutions and stakeholders in the education system. This priority is structured into four measures addressed to schools. Measures focus on monitoring key data related to education institutions in Plovdiv; initiating the administrative steps for transferring public management and responsibilities of vocational educational training secondary schools in Plovdiv from the state to the municipality; promoting the role of public councils in schools; and establishing a coordination group participated in by the Regional Department of Education and all the other key stakeholders in Plovdiv in charge of education and culture.

In order to operationalise the educational strategy, the Municipality of Plovdiv has adopted **3-year municipal educational programmes** (2017-2019 and 2020-2022). The municipal educational programme related to the 2020-2022 period defines eight sub-programmes, each with specific tasks, expected results and allocated budget in total and by year. These are (*Educational Municipal Programme 2020-2022 webpage*):

- Sub-programme I, linking to Priority area 2: design and creation of new sport grounds and/or improvement and certification of the existing ones in the municipal schools.
- Sub-programme II, linking to Priority area 2: design and creation of new playgrounds and/or improvement and certification of the existing ones, and improvement of yards in the municipal kindergartens.
- Sub-programme III, linking to Priority area 1: application of the Montessori method in nurseries, kindergartens and schools.
- Sub-programme IV, linking to Priority area 1: modernisation of the learning process.
- Sub-programme V, linking to Priority areas 1 and 3: innovative teachers' project.
- Sub-programme VI, linking to Priority areas 4 and 5: career orientation.
- Sub-programme VII, linking to Priority area 1: increase digital competencies in the field of education.
- Sub-programme VIII, linking to Priority area 5: support the creation of dual education classes in state and municipal vocational high schools.

Changes driven by the COVID-19 crisis

Digitalisation of the education system carried out within the 2020-2022 municipal educational programme allowed for a smooth transition from traditional classroom learning to home-based schooling during the lockdown period imposed by the 2020 COVID-19 crisis. Implementation of advanced cloud technologies and personal accounts allowed students to have full access to schools' resources. 'Digitalisation of Municipal Schools in Plovdiv' was included within the 10 finalist best practices in education of the 'Innovation in politics awards 2020' (The Innovation in Politics Institute *webpage* on *'Digitalisation of Municipal Schools in Plovdiv'*).

Funding and impact

The Municipality has allocated BGN 4,380,000 (approx. €2.2 million) for its 2020-2022 educational programme, out of which 34% for sub-programme I; 14% for sub-programme II; 18% for sub-programme III; 21% for sub-programme IV; 2% for sub-programme V; 4% for sub-programme VI; 4% for sub-programme VII; and 3% for sub-programme VIII (*Educational Municipal Program 2020-2022 webpage*).

Effectiveness of the Municipality of Plovdiv's development strategy for education is assessed through a number of performance indicators defined for each measure's key activity. For example, Activity 1.1.3. aimed at expanding the 'Digitalisation of the learning process and e-school' programme and at ensuring its sustainability, includes among the performance indicators the number of schools using the available cloud technologies, the number of teachers who regularly (daily) use the available cloud technologies, and the performance improvement of students using cloud technologies (Municipality of Plovdiv, 2017b). As of 2019, all 52 municipal schools and over 35,000 active student profiles allowed students to learn in virtual classrooms with video links and chats, take ready-made tests, do homework, and perform group assignments online. Over 900 teachers and school administrators from Plovdiv have received training as part of the programme (The Innovation in Politics Institute *webpage* on 'Digitalisation of Municipal Schools in Plovdiv').

Contribution to EEA 2025

The Municipality of Plovdiv's development strategy for education contributes largely to the achievement of EEA milestones. Having career orientation and creation of skills for the job market among its priorities (Priority 4), it contributes to the fostering of transversal skills in general, and entrepreneurship in particular, of school students (**milestone 1. Lifting quality in education**) as well as to

boosting inclusiveness and quality of VET systems (**milestone 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive**). Activities for digitalisation of the municipal education system (promoted under Priority 1 and Priority 6) address the EEA **milestone 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training**. Priority 3 of the municipal strategy which aims at supporting skills development of key pedagogical staff is in line with the scope of **milestone 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession**.

Case 19_FR. The Grand Est's regional strategy 2020-2030 for higher education, research and innovation

Framing the case

French Law No. 2015-991 on the new territorial organisation of the Republic requires regions to develop Regional Strategies for Higher Education, Research and Innovation (SRESRI) in consultation with stakeholders and local authorities. This requirement is a concrete acknowledgment of the role of regions in the development of territorial policies for these domains, roles that in the past had been the exclusive competence of the central government. The Grand Est Region, instituted in 2016 from the merging of Alsace, Champagne-Ardenne and Lorraine, started a wide consultation process for the outline of its SRESRI in April 2019. The process involved more than 600 people and produced some 70 recommendations for the Region to consider. The Grand Est's SRESRI was adopted in July 2020.

Description

The finalisation of the strategy for higher education, research and innovation (ESRI) was an opportunity for the regional authority to strengthen the identity of its recently instituted territory; to prepare for the new Horizon Europe while considering its smart specialisation strategy (S3); and to support the implementation of the 'Business Act – Grand Est', the regional plan for the recovery and growth of the territory after the consequences suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the State remains the major actor in the nationwide definition of research priorities and educational offers, with its ESRI the Grand Est Region aims at focusing available instruments as much as possible in order to maximise impact at the territorial level. Hence the importance of taking into account the thematic areas identified in the S3. In particular, by 2030, the Region aims at

achieving three main goals, out of which two are directly linked to training and education (Grand Est Region [webpage](#) on SRESRI):

1) reaching a target number of 250,000 students in regional educational establishments compared to 210,000 in 2019;
2) increasing by 50% the number of students with a higher education qualification in the age group 30-34 years, from 40.2% in 2016 to 60% (in 2016, it was 45.5% in France, excluding its overseas regions – the so-called metropolitan France);
3) doubling the business enterprise expenditure on R&D (BERD), from 0.73% of GDP in 2017 to 1.5%.

The strategy outlines three ambitions towards these goals which address specific identified weaknesses. The ambitions are then translated into 14 objectives and 36 actions.

- First ambition: **to make students successful at school**. Identified weaknesses in this area include, for example, low intra-regional mobility of students, low use of Erasmus schemes for international mobility, and mixed undergraduate success rates of training across the region. The ambition will be achieved by:

    o promoting the higher education offer in the region, including through the preparation of a regional support plan for high school students to encourage and guide them in continuing their education.

    o improving the knowledge and condition of students' life, for example with regard to transport, housing needs and healthcare.

    o introducing new forms of teaching. The introduction of digital education in high schools is backdated to 2017, when the regional programme 'Lycée 4.0' was initiated. The COVID-19 crisis massively imposed the need to switch to new forms and tools of teaching including at the level of higher education. The plan, therefore, aims at supporting the educational innovation process of higher education institutes (HEIs). This will also imply the revision of HEIs' student mobility policies and hence HEIs' economic models.

    o preparing students and graduates for their integration in the labour market and, more generally, creating increased linkages between the academic and the business world.

- Second ambition: **create the conditions for the attraction and retention of talent**. Identified weaknesses in this area include, for example, negative demographic dynamics and high attractiveness of neighbouring regions, such as Île-de-France, and of neighbouring countries (i.e. Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland). In fact, the Grand Est is characterised by more than 800 km of borders and some 7% of its working population is already employed abroad, attracted by better remuneration and job conditions offered by these bordering countries to qualified profiles. The ambition will be achieved by:

  o favouring extra-regional and international mobility of researchers and doctoral students to improve their employability and concurrently bring benefits to the territory through the networking and co-developments spurred from their internationally oriented careers.

  o better understanding the incoming and outgoing flows of talent and mobilising academic and business stakeholders to influence these flows.

  o supporting cutting-edge research projects and infrastructures.

  o nurturing the international dimension of the region across universities and research networks, including through the enhanced visibility of the educational and research offer in the region.

  o facilitating major international events.

  o continuing to develop entrepreneurship skills and attitudes through the coordination of the various existing initiatives.

  o continuing the coordination of territorial initiatives aimed at developing and disseminating scientific, technical and industrial culture.

- Third ambition: **strengthen the impact at the territorial level of education, research and innovation.** Identified weaknesses in this area include a modest and weakly rising gross domestic expenditure on R&D and a low level of R&D staff (researchers and technicians). The ambition will be achieved by:

  o supporting the provision of training and education which match the needs of the regional economy. The aim is to create synergies between the business and the academic community, coherently with the

priorities identified in the S3, towards the common objective of increasing the territory's competitiveness.

- o accelerating the conversion of research into innovation.

- o continuing to structure the technology transfer offer to the benefit of enterprises.

Changes driven by the COVID-19 crisis

The strategy was finalised in the first half of 2020 when the Grand Est region was importantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. This circumstance influenced the strategy's scope and, in fact, the strategy has been specifically designed to support the 'Business Act – Grand Est', the regional plan for the territory's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. This will be achieved by focusing on the three main transition issues identified at the regional level, namely industrial transformation, ecological and energy transition, and digital transformation. This focus is explicitly reflected in the intention of the Region to direct 80% of its support for ESRI to projects related to digital, environmental and industrial themes.

Funding and impact

The Region plans to mobilise €1.4 billion of public funds (regional, national and European) over a decade for the strategy's implementation. Public funding is expected to leverage other resources, for a total investment of €2.4 billion in regional higher education, research and innovation over the period 2020-2030. On a yearly basis, it represents an allocation of €240 million, out of which: €60 million are from the Region; €80 million from the state and the EU; €50 million from the academic community; and €50 million from the industry (Grand Est Region, 2020).

The expected impact in 2030 is set by ambition. Indicators of success include (Grand Est Region, 2020):

- o <u>Ambition 1</u>. Rate of continuation in higher education after high school: 90% of high school graduates; students' satisfaction rate on study conditions: 80%; n° of students in in the region: 250,000; share of students following distance learning courses: 50%; n° of teaching websites in the region: 10; professional integration rate in the region or outside the region: 80% of graduates.

- o Ambition 2. Rate of outgoing researchers per year: 25%; n° of publications by researchers in the region: +10%; European financing obtained: double the amount of 2020; share of students setting up a business: 10%; share of beneficiaries of scientific, technical and industrial culture: 10% of the population.

- o Ambition 3. N° of engineers, doctoral students and master graduates: +50%; n° of businesses created out of public research: double the amount of 2020; turnover generated by technology transfer platforms: +50%; n° of researchers in companies per thousand workers: the target is to catch up with the national average.

Contribution to EEA 2025

The Grand Est ESRI is not only to strengthen higher education and HEIs but also research and innovation. In fact, the three areas are addressed in the regional strategy in a synergic manner. More importantly, the strategy is meant to serve territorial economic and social goals by transforming the knowledge of higher education into technology development and innovation for the benefit of regional companies, the region's attractiveness, and the professional future of its youth. **Milestone 5. Reinforcing European higher education institutions** is contributed to by the regional strategy through the support provided to HEIs to adapt to COVID-19, to co-create and share knowledge across borders, to make concrete linkages between academia, research and business, and to facilitate more flexible learning pathways.

Case 21_IE. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board Strategy Statement 2017-2021

Framing the case

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) is one of 16 statutory regional education and training boards (ETBs) established in Ireland by the Education and Training Boards Act 2013. These ETBs replaced the former Vocational Education Committees (VECs). In particular, LCETB replaced the City of Limerick VEC, the County Limerick VEC and the County Clare VEC. Each ETB is composed of 21 members out of which 12 are local authority representatives, two are staff representatives, two are parent representatives and five represent the business community, learners and school management. In general, ETBs '*have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and*

a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes' (ETBI webpage). LCETB has responsibility for the management and operation of two multi-faith community national schools; 18 multi-faith post-primary community colleges; 33 further education and training centres; one prison education centre; two outdoor education and training centres; two music generation programmes and one school of music; and a range of community-based further education and training centres in some 300 locations. It is also co-patron of four community schools and provides education and work support for youth (LCETB, 2020a; LCETB website).

Description

One of the functions of an Education and Training Board, as stated under the Education and Training Boards Act 2013, is to adopt a strategy statement and develop annual service plans (electronic Irish Statute Book website). The development of the strategy for LCETB was based on a consultation process that started in March 2017 and was completed in September of the same year. The strategy was launched in December 2017.

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board strategy statement 2017-2021 provides a road map for the ETB's training and education programmes, youth support and other statutory functions which are carried out by the Organisation Support and Development, Schools, and Further Education and Training divisions. The strategy, which is coherent to a number of local and national policies, outlines four goals to be achieved over a five-year period. For each goal, key actions are identified (LCETB, 2017).

The **first strategic goal 'High-quality student and learner experiences'** is the core of the strategy in terms of provision of quality education, training and lifelong learning opportunities. This goal addresses the social and economic needs of the territory, with a particular attention to employability. In fact, at the time of the definition of the strategy, one of the most important challenges in Clare and Limerick counties was upskilling and the provision of occupational skills, especially in rural areas, due to the presence of several unemployment black spots. In particular, out of the 79 unemployment black spot areas identified nationally in 2016, three were located in Clare county and 18 in Limerick county. The nine strategic actions under this goal include (LCETB, 2017):

- Enhancing the student experience through assessment activities, further development of a comprehensive curriculum and effective student support.

- Ensuring provision of quality education in all schools and centres by supporting them in running self-evaluation and implementation of quality assurance systems.
- Tackling the potential of learners/students, including through the provision of support to those who are at risk of educational disadvantage.
- Developing responses to the social and employability needs of the communities.
- Providing high-quality information, guidance, counselling and other support services in all LCETB's schools and centres.
- Promoting the benefit of education, especially to learners through the development of individually tailored education/training pathways.
- Providing and maintaining high-quality infrastructure and technologies.
- Developing a regional Youth Work Plan.
- Promoting outdoor education.

The **second strategic goal 'Staff support and organisational development'** aims at strengthening the quality and skills of all staff involved in the activities of LCETB. The six strategic actions underpinning this goal require the appointment of high-quality staff, their further and continuous professional development, and their retention. A culture of leadership, coaching and mentoring is also to be encouraged as well as an active awareness of safety, health and welfare aspects. Under this goal, one action also points to providing appropriate resources and responses to changing needs of staff, students and learners (LCETB, 2017).

The **third strategic goal 'Good governance'** aims at having a supportive framework in place which facilitates the provision of ET services. The nine strategic actions under this goal touch upon the areas of administration, organisation, management, communication and data protection. Other actions aim at maximising the efficient use of public resources; at avoiding duplication of services; and at promoting sustainability and environmental responsibility as well as a culture of self-evaluation for continuous improvement (LCETB, 2017).

The **fourth strategic goal 'Partnership'** implies linking with third parties, including the business community. The five strategic actions under this goal require reacting to requirements of national departments and agencies; developing partnerships with the double aim of exchanging best practices and enhancing visibility locally, nationally and internationally; and strengthening cooperation and partnerships with other relevant actors, including companies, in order to better promote students/learners experience and increase their employability opportunities (LCETB, 2017).

The strategy is implemented through annual service plans where performance indicators and targets are specified. These targets are also determined by goals set at the national level. For example, in 2018, the LCETB finalised an agreement with the State Agency for Further Education and Training (FET) in order to spell out its contribution to national targets in this specific area (LCETB, 2018).

Changes driven by the COVID-19 crisis

LCETB developed a COVID-19 Response Plan according to which schools and FET colleges and centres remained operational during the pandemic lockdown. Teaching and learning for students was shifted to online learning platforms and so was tuition under the FET division (LCETB COVID-19 webpage). In addition, several guideline documents were prepared. The self-evaluation on the effectiveness of the COVID-19-induced modifications to teaching, learning and assessment, carried out in 2020, is very positive, but it also recognises that the timing of the lockdown helped in making the shift to the new training delivery modalities less stressful (LCETB, 2020b). In fact, in March 2020 most of the course content was covered and relationships between learners and teachers were well-established, which was helpful in moving to a remote modality of learning and teaching.

In a broader context, in May 2020, LCETB became a partner of the Mid-West Regional Covid-19 Response Group, a collaboration between private and public organisations (industries, universities and local authorities) to respond to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic in the short, medium and long term. The focus of this initiative is upskilling and retraining of those people affected by the crisis, such as the temporarily displaced employees, according to the real needs of the industry (LCETB, 2020a).

Funding and impact

LCETB is funded primarily by the state, through various bodies, the most relevant being the State Agency for Further Education and Training and the Department of Education and Skills. Other financial sources indicated for the year 2019 include the European Union and self-raised funds from tuition fees, provision of services and rental of rooms. The organisation benefits almost 13,000 students and over 24,000 learners every year, employs 2,500 staff and has an average annual budget allocation of €130 million across its divisions (its annual budget in 2019 was €160 million). In addition, it has a €100 million capital programme investment for the period 2017-2020 (LCETB, 2020a; LCETB Linkedin profile).

With respect to the FET area, over the period 2018-2020, LCETB is committed to contributing to national targets as follows (LCETB, 2018): 1,301 learners get a

job (30% over 3 years versus the national target of 10%); 1,978 learners continue their education (46% over 3 years versus the national target of 10%); 1,048 completers are certified for transversal skill development (28% over 3 years versus the national target of 10%); 13,310 individuals look for lifelong learning offer (11% over 3 years versus the national target of 10%); an average annual increase of 1,625 individuals per year get qualifications which match the needs of the labour market (the national target is 10,000 learners per year); 712 new trainees are registered (the national target is 13,900 new registrations over 3 years).

Contribution to EEA 2025

The work of LCETB underscores **milestone 1. Lifting quality in education** both from the perspective of learners and staff. For example, the teaching of transversal skills is emphasised and the work of staff is very much grounded on quality assurance, evaluation and assessment processes. In addition, the focus on raising qualification and competence levels, the support to lifelong learning, and the reskilling of employees are concrete contributions to **milestone 2. Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive'**.

Case 29_PL: The Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project

Framing the case

The Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project is implemented by the Teacher Training Center in Poznań, an organisational unit of the Wielkopolska Voivodeship self-government (Greater Poland Region), and by the Marshal's Office of the Wielkopolska. The Teacher Training Center is in charge of the professional development of teachers of schools and of other educational institutions (*Teacher Training Center website*). The Marshal Office acts as the subsidiary body of the Board of the Wielkopolska Region. Through its Department of Education and Science, it prepares and implements regional programmes in the field of education and science development; supports and carries out measures to enhance the level of education of citizens in the region; cooperates with territorial self-government units and educational institutions in the field of education; and, on a regional level, coordinates the activities of teacher training centres regarding the establishment of priorities in the field of teacher training skills development (*Marshal office website*).

The project is implemented over a period of five years (2018-2022) and has the main goal of increasing teachers and students' ICT competencies from schools in Wielkopolska which provide education at the primary and secondary level. The project is implemented through six different educational sub-projects focusing on extracurricular activities: two are addressed to primary schools, three to secondary schools and one to both.

Digital Children's Encyclopedia of Wielkopolska (targeted to primary schools). This sub-project's goal is to raise students' interest in the history of the region, build local identity, consolidate local communities, and promote the region. As part of extracurricular activities, students have the task of finding the most interesting and outstanding places of remembrance, characters, and events related to their region's history. Then they create an encyclopaedic entry based inter alia on research, archival inquiries and interviews. The key value of the sub-project is building local and regional identity and providing equal opportunities through science.

Digital Map of the Warta River Basin (targeted to primary schools). This sub-project is oriented towards natural, social and mathematical sciences and fosters a deeper connection between students and their homeland. Through field observations, measurements and experiments, student can (1) process, visualise, analyse and interpret their own results, (2) compare the results of student groups from one school with measurements made in other schools thanks to a map server (GeoServer) and an online database. The activities carried out concern weather and climate phenomena, noise, waste and other forms of environmental pollution as well as CO_2 emissions from households. As a result, a digital map of the Warta river basin will be created, available on the Internet, which will graphically present the most endangered areas of Wielkopolska.

Academy of Advanced Education (targeted to secondary schools). This sub-project includes two tasks. The first task, of a methodological nature, implies that secondary school students are introduced to an approach that, starting from a predefined set of information, helps them in creatively processing it and in building new cultural competencies. Students shall then adopt this approach in their extracurricular work. The second task is to get acquainted with the richness of the cultural landscape of Wielkopolska, especially the areas inhabited by the project participants.

Academic Classes (targeted to secondary schools). Within this sub-project students are organised in research teams which undertake a scientific challenge, jointly set a research topic and carry out the related challenge throughout one

year. The final result is a multimedia article summarising the entire research and presenting its effects. Student teams have direct contact with the best academic lecturers. Once a month, special internet lectures are broadcast for them. Academic lectures are held in multimedia rooms (created as part of the sub-project) which facilitate direct contacts and interactions of students. The lecturers are high-level representatives of the scientific community from Poland and abroad.

Subject-Specific Student Competitions (targeted to secondary schools). Students will be challenged in various fields of science (i.e. English philology, history, mathematics and computer science, geography, physics, Polish language). The competition takes the form of league games. During the games, students answer questions prepared by academics from the relevant departments. The matches are played live and online during the school year.

Student IT Laboratories (targeted both to primary and secondary schools). The sub-project focuses on developing critical thinking and digital competencies, aimed at students of all ages and at their teachers. During the workshops, students gain knowledge and skills in the field of programming and robotics. The covered topics also include network security; internet resources; collecting, storing, organising, developing and presenting data; creating and editing multimedia; and technologies.

The Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project could be implemented because it provided involved schools with the necessary ICT equipment and infrastructures. In particular, the project has contributed to:

- o building a wi-fi network in 600 schools enabling the entire school community to use the internet;
- o equipping laboratories in 600 schools with digital teaching tools;
- o creating digital applications enabling the continuation of classes and extracurricular activities in schools after the end of the project;
- o enabling the use of videoconferencing systems for the purposes of distance learning and conferencing for students and teachers;
- o creating a portal for the purposes of publishing educational content;
- o fostering interactive inclusion in the regional ICT infrastructure of teacher training centres and pedagogical libraries (*Cyfrowa Szkoła Wielkopolsk@2020 website*).

Changes driven by the COVID-19 crisis

Due to the COVID-19 crisis and consequent interruption of lessons, the project expanded and changed its original focus on extracurricular activities. Instead, the project was adapted to work with COVID-19 restrictions, primarily school closures, and it is currently also used for conducting daily education activities in targeted schools. Moreover, during the pandemic period, access to the network infrastructure which was created to connect every school participating in the project (i.e. the Wielkopolska Educational Network) has also been granted to schools that do not belong to *Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020*: '*At this difficult time, we encourage schools throughout Wielkopolska to join us. Our people are ready to help. We also work at home to protect ourselves from illness and make sure everything is technically sound. This is a great opportunity for our schools'* says the deputy director of the Teacher Training Center in Poznań and director of the project Piotr Waśko (*Gazeta wyborcza* website).

Funding and impact

The project Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 is implemented under the Wielkopolska Regional Operational Programme (WRPO) for 2014-2020 (Priority Axis 8 - Education, Measure 8.1. - Limiting and preventing early school leaving and equalising access to pre-school and school education, Sub-measure 8.1.3 - General education). The budget of the project is almost PLN 106 million (over €23 million), out of which PLN 90 million (approx. €20 million) comes from the WRPO 2014-2020 which is funded by the Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Apart from the cost of technologies and digital applications, the project funds salaries for teachers conducting initiatives with students and for specialists in charge of implementing and managing ICT at school; the implementation of educational sub-projects; office supplies for student-teams; and the reimbursement of students' expenses related to travels for being part of a team (*Cyfrowa Szkoła Wielkopolsk@2020* website). The target of the Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project is to involve 4,940 teachers and 11,680 students in the 6 sub-projects from over 600 schools in the region which provide education at the primary and secondary level. In the four editions run so far, 614 schools joined the projects (*Teacher Training Center in Poznań* website).

Contribution to EEA 2025

Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project contributes to supporting the green and digital transitions (**milestone 3. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training**). The project addresses the digital skills gap in a lifelong learning perspective and strengthens the region's digital capacity and resilience by focusing on IT education at the school level.

Through its sub-projects, it promotes the development of a digital education ecosystem and enhances digital competencies and skills of students and teachers. The ecosystem is reinforced by two types of technological intervention: one is the creation of an intra-school internet network enabling the connection of schools to the regional educational network, creating a multifunctional educational platform, and providing schools with sets of scientific aids necessary for the implementation of student tasks. The other is the activation of wi-fi connectivity in each school and the provision of equipment such as laptops and tablets. The project also aims to bring science to school, engaging pupils and teachers on issues covered by the European Green Deal, such as climate change and sustainable development (e.g. the Digital Map of the Warta River Basin sub-project). Qualification of the education profession through targeted actions for teachers related to digital and green transformation is a key element of the Digital School of Wielkopolsk@2020 project (**milestone 4. Enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession**).

Part 4:   Concrete recommendations to the European Commission and Member States

Insights from the five cases together with the evidence collected in the other parts of the study allow the drawing of policy recommendations that may facilitate the contribution of LRAs to the achievement of the EEA by 2025. Recommendations are provided against overarching evidence and are addressed to the European Commission and Member States as required by the terms of reference of the study.

Overarching evidence 1. Digital skills are essential for community resilience and growth *- pursued through milestones 1, 3 and 4 of the EEA.*

Member States should:

- Set up national initiatives to digitally equip schools, and substantially speed up the deployment of digital infrastructures, in particular fast and ultra-fast broadband connectivity in rural and underserved areas;

- Adapt programmes for compulsory education in primary and secondary schools to develop critical consumers, active users and producers of knowledge through the new opportunities which are made or will be made available by new technologies;

- Support the upgrading of teachers' digital competencies through national schemes and set digital competencies requirements for new ET staff;

- Identify successful digital school initiatives at the regional level and financially support their replication or scale up.

The European Commission should:

- Invite the European Committee of the Regions to contribute in identifying good practices at the territorial level in digital education for their sharing and scaling up across the EU;

- Include a subnational perspective in the preparation of a possible proposal for a Council Recommendation by 2022 on the enabling factors for successful digital education;

- Make programmes and funds for digital education and/or digital transition of schools more accessible to LRAs, for example by including as mandatory in the eligibility conditions the participation of a minimum number of subnational public authorities.

Rationale

Several of the collected initiatives provide examples of local and regional digital strategies for education that go well beyond the provision of basic digital skills. These strategies are meant to impact at the societal level both through the personal development of individuals and the creation of added value for the territory. An example is the IT strategy for the school system of the Municipality of Tårnby (10_DK). In addition, there is ample evidence that digital ET systems have contributed to building communities' resilience at the time of the 2020 COVID-19 crisis. Examples include the case of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (03_BE), the Municipality of Plovdiv (06_BG), the Region of Île-de-France (18_FR), and the Region of Wielkopolska (29_PL). In these cases, concrete activities to increase digital competencies and provide ICT tools such as cloud technologies allowed for a smooth transition from traditional classroom learning to home-based schooling during the lockdown. The development of a European digital education ecosystem based on the enhancement of digital competencies and skills requires, de-facto, an appropriate endowment of territories with equipment and infrastructures for digital transformation. In parallel, it is fundamental to strengthen the digital competencies of teachers and trainers.

Overarching evidence 2. Green transition is also achieved through the greening of education infrastructure - pursued through milestone 3 of the EEA.

Member States should:

- Accelerate the greening of school infrastructures, promoting renovation of existing school buildings and construction of new ones according to energy saving criteria as well as environmental sustainability and standards.

Rationale

A small number of initiatives highlights the allocation of important financial resources to the renovation and/or enlargement of educational infrastructures (Region of Île-de-France 18_FR, the Municipality of Nuremberg, 07_DE). Although no emphasis is apparently given to the greening aspects of the renovation/construction works in these initiatives, loans obtained for such works explicitly require the meeting of environmental standards. Renovation of schools across the EU represents an opportunity for the public sector to lead the green

infrastructure implementation by example, creating a pull effect similar to the one of green public procurement. '*Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way*' is part of the EU Green Deal (EC, 2019). The 'European skills agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience' matches this opportunity well by highlighting that '*skills gaps are visible in green design, technologies and materials. As recovery starts, upskilling needs to focus on energy- and resource efficiency, decentralised renewable energy solutions, circularity, digitisation, and renovation of existing constructions…*' (EC, 2020b).

Overarching evidence 3. Language skills are key instruments for inclusion and social cohesion - pursued through milestones 1 and 2 of the EEA.

Member States should:

- Reinforce national migration policies through the support of structured linguistic integration approaches and opportunities to be implemented by LRAs starting from the acceptance phase of migrants, for example through the use of the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF 2021-2027) allocated at the national level.

The European Commission should:

- Define specific mechanisms for the AMF 2021-2027, prioritising ET-oriented early-integration interventions promoted by LRAs or their networks.

Rationale

When adequately integrated, migrants are a socio-economic resource for a territory. This is why it is common to find local initiatives aimed at providing migrants with language competencies in a lifelong learning perspective in order to facilitate their integration as citizens and workers. Still, most of these initiatives are project-boosted and seem to lack long-term sustainability. The Municipality of Athens (12_EL) exploits an Urban Innovative Action and the Municipality of Luxembourg (26_LU) uses local and national funds but ultimately relies on the work of volunteers. The Municipality of Nuremberg (07_DE) and the Municipality of Vienna (02_AT) provide examples of more structured interventions in the framework of a 3-year project and of the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund, respectively. Structural support to LRAs is needed to pursue the linguistic integration of migrants in line with the eight guiding principles of the Council of Europe's project 'Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants' and with reference to 'The good practices in migrant integration: trainer's manual' of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Overarching evidence 4. Economic growth needs professional competencies and their recognition - pursued through milestone 2 of the EEA.

Member States should:

- Improve information sharing mechanisms (e.g. national observatories) and define sustainable partnerships with territorial actors involved in VET (especially with LRAs) to properly design active labour market policies and define budget allocation for professional up-skilling and re-skilling at the territorial level. This should be done in line with the Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (CoE, 2020).

- Support the validation of gained competencies and skills at the highest possible administrative level (i.e. region, country) in order to increase individuals' labour market opportunities.

The European Commission should:

- Favour the involvement of LRAs to CoVEs under the Erasmus+ Programme either by making the involvement of LRAs mandatory and/or by rewarding at the evaluation stage those proposals which involve LRAs. LRAs also contribute to institutionalise CoVEs, guaranteeing them a medium- to long-term perspective after the closure of the project.

- Leverage funding instruments such as the Erasmus+ Programme to spread the adoption of the ECVET tools (i.e. learning agreement and memorandum of understanding) to facilitate recognition, accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes and to support mobility of vocational learners.

- Favour the inclusion and recognition of learning outcomes gained by individuals in short learning experiences (e.g. micro-credentials) within the European context. Promote portability and transparency of qualifications across countries, and across educational and economic sectors, in line with the European Qualifications Framework and the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Education Area.

Rationale

VET has been widely recognised as one of the most effective instruments in reducing youth unemployment. There are several initiatives included in the inventory that focus on VET. For example, the Municipality of Plovdiv (06_BG) works together with local businesses towards career orientation and creation of

skills for the job market. Through the waff, the Municipality of Vienna (02_AT) structurally provides measures to facilitate the match between labour demand and skills supply. Also, the Municipality of Tartu (11_EE) manages a municipal vocational centre, and finally, through education the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board addresses the employability needs of the territory. Efforts carried out by LRAs to match skills offerings with the market demand are frequent, but only a few cases also rely on recognition of professional qualifications (for example, the qualification pass of waff in 02_AT and the passport of skills in 28_NL). Lack of the adoption of EU-wide scope mechanisms allowing potential employees to have their skills and qualifications recognized prevents mobility opportunities and keeps territories from attracting the necessary professional competencies.

Overarching evidence 5. Educational staff skills need to adapt to the fast evolution of society and of quality requirements - pursued through milestone 4 of the EEA.

Member States should:

- Set proper measures to ensure that teachers' professional development plans, prepared at the school level in most European education systems, are reviewed and updated with compulsory topics that reflect the needs of the current and future society.

- Favour mobility as a way to improve human capital, and make it an essential part of teachers' continuous professional development and not only a nice add-on.

The European Commission should:

- Identify a core set of soft skills for the different categories of educational staff and, in line with the European skills agenda, favour transnational alliances between (higher) education institutions in order to create more opportunities to develop these skills.

- Reinforce programmes that support HEIs and schools in activating teacher mobility across Member States.

Rationale

Teachers, trainers and education institution leaders need to continuously update their competencies in order to adapt to changes and increase the quality of education offerings. There are several initiatives included in the inventory that

tackle these goals. For example, the improvement of the competencies of teachers of adults is one of the five specific objectives of the action plan of the District Municipality of Kaunas (25_LT). Professional development of teachers, educators and school leaders is the goal of the PLF Nord project carried out by six Danish municipalities (09_DK). Also, staff support and organisational development is one of the four goals of the strategy pursued by the Limerick County and the Clare County (21_IE), and finally, the State of Hessen (08_DE), within its digital school programme, provides training for teachers. In general, it is noted that educational staff are more frequently provided with technical skills and that soft skills and personal motivation are paid less attention. Mobility is considered as an option to develop soft skills. For example, the Region of Murcia (14_ES) sets the establishment of teachers' incentives for mobility as one of the objectives within its regional strategy of professional training and permanent learning.

Overarching evidence 6. The achievement of the four missions of HEIs positively impact territorial development - pursued through milestone 5 of the EEA.

Member States should:

- Give relevance to LRAs' initiatives which foster integrated HEIs-led ecosystems for education. These initiatives should be promoted with the aim of endowing the country with such crucial assets capable of enhancing local skills, attracting international talent and actively encouraging collaborative projects in ET.

Rationale

There is evidence that the achievement of the four missions of HEIs, namely education, research, innovation and service to society, may positively impact on territorial development. This is the case, for example, of the strategy for higher education, research and innovation of the Region of Grand Est (19_FR), which is based on synergies between education, research and innovation. In addition, efforts to create ET ecosystems aimed at fostering territorial growth and development strongly gain from universities' structural involvement. An example is the cluster for education in the Cluj-Napoca County (34_RO), based on a collaborative effort between education institutions and LRAs.

Overarching evidence 7. International positioning of local and regional initiatives contributes to a stronger recognition of Europe as a reputed world player in education - pursued through milestone 6 of the EEA.

The European Commission should:

- Facilitate accessibility to instruments such as the Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects in Erasmus+ to allow European LRAs to foster policy dialogue, share knowledge and transfer good practices in ET with local, regional and national policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders from Programme and Partner Countries.

Rationale

The EEA and the international cooperation activities developed within, can represent an important leverage for reinforcing the connections of the EU with other world areas. None of the identified initiatives directly contributes to the achievement of the sixth EEA milestone. Nevertheless, some demonstrate orientation for EU cross-border cooperation in ET, not excluding further ambitious steps in the future. Examples are cities which are members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, such as in the case of the Municipality of Cork (22_IE), the Municipality of Gdynia (30_PL) and the Municipality of Cascais (32_PT). Further examples are cities leveraging the world-wide reputation of their universities in order to develop their international identity such as the Municipality of Varna (05_BG), and cities having structural international ET cooperation based on participation to EU-funded mobility and collaborative projects such as the Municipality of Tartu (11_EE).

Overarching evidence 8. The current achievement of the EEA is asymmetric across the EU - this evidence relates to the EEA framework as a whole and to the benchmarks identified to track progress.

Member States should:

- Set an EEA monitor mechanism in order to present progress at the regional and local level in their individual country reports.

The European Commission should:

- Consider including a territorial development dimension in the new framework to measure progress towards an EEA by 2025.

Rationale

EU averages for ET 2020 and EEA 2025 benchmarks are far from being sufficient to understand progress as the positive performance of some territories hides the poor progress made by others. Territorial asymmetries need to be better analysed and understood at the national and EU level to ensure an even achievement of the EEA.

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**European Committee
of the Regions**

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of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors
from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.