

Paolo Federighi, Francesca Torlone

Tools for Policy Learning and Policy Transfer

Supporting Regional Lifelong Learning Policies



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Research Project: **Prevalet**
European Commission-Leonardo Da Vinci
project EUR/05/C/F/RF-84802 Agreement 2005-2030/001-001

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Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <<http://dnb.d-nb.de>>.

The sole responsibility lies with the authors and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

This work was carried out as part of the Prevalet Project, co-financed by the European Commission.

**© W. Bertelsmann Verlag
GmbH & Co. KG, Bielefeld 2007**

Production and distribution:
W. Bertelsmann Verlag GmbH & Co. KG
P.O.Box 10 06 33, D-33506 Bielefeld
Phone: (+49-5 21) 9 11 01-11
Fax: (+49-5 21) 9 11 01-19
E-Mail: service@wbv.de
Internet: www.wbv.de

Order no.: 6001860
ISBN 978-3-7639-3580-2

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Presentation

The “Prevalet” research programme has been designed to investigate in what ways the regional governments can upgrade the quality of policies affecting vocational education and training, and, more generally, lifelong learning, through transactional cooperation and mutual learning.

This second volume is devoted to the presentation of the instruments and the methods, which can be used to practice mutual learning between Regions. This volume forms an integral unit with the first (*Learning among Regional Governments. Quality of Policy Learning and Policy Transfer in Regional Lifelong Learning Policies*, Bielefeld, 2007), which presented the theoretical and methodological bases of the proposal of a model of cooperation between regional governments, simplified in comparison with the Open Method of Coordination, but still capable of supporting policy learning and policy transfer.

The proposed model is the outcome of an applied research initiative which has, over a period of two years, directly involved the regional governments of Andalusia, the Basque country, Tuscany (acting as coordinator), Västra Götaland, Vidin, and Wales, under the direction of Earlall and with the support of three research centres (Florence University, Örebro University and the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung). Over this period of time (2005–2007), members of the regional governments, civil servants and researchers have established a mutual learning process dealing with the policies of lifelong learning (initially dealing only with the areas of informal adult learning and the drop-out situation) and from there they moved on to the actual and effective transfer of concrete measures for the activation of the policies. This process has been planned, monitored and assessed using suitable backup and observation tools. This has made it possible to gather a large quantity of empirical material on both institutional learning pathways and on the more complex routes of policy transfer and innovation, based on transnational cooperation. The complexity and the time needed for the processes of policy transfer have lent support to the idea of including prior experiments undertaken by the actual regional governments involved in the research into the empirical material. This has been enormously useful, since it has made it possible to observe the phenomenon as it develops over the long term: cases occurring over a period of more than seven years have been recon-

structed. However, the cooperative and voluntary transfer procedures turned out to be smoother than expected, which means that in some cases it has been possible to directly observe the initial phases of the progress from policy learning to policy transfer over the course of the actual Prevalet project itself.

The research concentrated mainly on the forms of cooperative and voluntary policy learning and policy transfer between regional governments, and it has been thanks to this approach that a proposal for the Soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC) has been developed. The aim of this proposal is to arrive at a procedure described via its stages of progress, which will be backed by working tools used to analyse policy and interchange information between the institutions, as well as web-based support services.

The research has taken the purpose of policy learning to be the measures of the policy, understood as the way in which the ideas and objectives of a policy are put into practice. This choice has been motivated by the consideration that, apart from the ideas, it is the measures that can more easily move from one country to another, overcoming resistance to the voluntary transfer of other objectives. An example would be the difficulty of transferring public regulations or systems, particularly in the field of education and training. The approach through measures had already been adopted by a comparative research programme promoted in 2005 by Isfol - *Comparative Research on measures and actions to foster participation in Lifelong Learning in four European countries (France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom)*. Following this, also on the basis of the positive results made possible by this approach, the same method was adopted by the Youth Research project (2007), the subject of which was youth policies in the 27 countries of the EU, which concluded by providing support for the European Commission in its drafting of the flexicurity guidelines. The same approach was also adopted by the comparative research carried out on policies relating to the older worker in Italy, Ireland and Denmark (*Senior at work, 2006–2007*) promoted by the Province of Livorno and in researching policies on innovation transfer (*Costa della Conoscenza [The Cost of Knowledge], 2006–2007*), promoted by Provincia Livorno Sviluppo [Leghorn Province Development]. The results of the Prevalet research mean that they can now be implemented, and this will take place by the activation of an inter-regional mutual learning service supported by Earllall with database fed by members of the network (www.mutual-learning.eu). Inevitably a service such as this will have greater possibilities of usage and development if the European Union is able to and wishes to promote inter-regional cooperation in the area of lifelong learning policy as well.

Carina Abrèu, Paolo Federighi, Ekkehard Nuissl von Rein