

Peer review of Romania Country Report

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Overview.

The report provides a useful overview of the current state of development of the concept of learning regions as manifested in Romania. In order to understand current developments some background is provided in terms of socio-economic issues. This is also used to justify the selection of the region for the project.

It then outlines the progress that has been made and traces the development of a number of relevant programmes in relation to learning region development and mention is made of various initiatives which are under way.

It comments on the current state of partnership working and stakeholder involvement. This is of particular interest, and perhaps illustrates the evolution of early attempts to foster partnership and can be compared to the more deeply embedded and regulated operation of partnership in the UK case (Dundee City).

The report provides a good overview complete with graphical representations of networks and stakeholders at both the macro and micro levels. Where necessary specific examples are provided to illustrate particular aspects of the networks and their activities in relation to lifelong learning and other stated objectives including employability.

Specific issues identified

It is clear, that in a number of areas progress is evolving:

For example and in comparison with the UK case, the university sector was not fully signed up as a full partner until the introduction of specific EU funding streams. However, it is now more fully engaged and appears to be more focused on regional engagement.

It is not clear though, if there are specific clusters of expertise which will attract inward investment as in the case of Dundee, which harnessed the expertise in cutting edge medical technology and computer games in its universities which resulted in inward investment and value-added employment both directly and in the supply chain.

It would appear that in some respects, the Romanian case study is attempting to address issues which were faced 30 years ago in Dundee, where similar processes of de-industrialisation and the loss of key large employment in specific sectors. Resulting in a need for substantial regeneration and the creation of new employment opportunities.

The influence of EU funding would appear to be of greater relative importance than in the case of Dundee, where statutory legislation relating to community partnership was a major driving force.

In contrast with Dundee, there seems, as perhaps expected given the state of the Romanian economy, a far greater focus on employability and perhaps a neglect of the cultural elements often associated with learning regions.

Under collaborative patterns, this section suggest the requirement of codified or statutory memorandums of agreement of partnership roles, rules and responsibilities.

Finally, in relation to QA, while internal monitoring takes place, there is little mention of how

results are disseminated and whether or not any external evaluation of quality assurance is in operation. Also, it is not clear the role that QA may play in feeding back into strategy and ongoing development?.