



**CONSULTATION ON THE MEMORANDUM ON LIFELONG LEARNING**

EXPERT REPORT BASED ON THE CONSULTATION WITH THE MEMBERS  
OF THE  
'PLATFORM OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL NGOs'

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## INTRODUCTION

### **NGO's Response to the Memorandum**

This report is based on a consultation carried out by Solidar<sup>1</sup> with the members of the Platform of European Social NGOs between May 1<sup>st</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001. It is important to stress that this is not a common position paper on behalf of the Platform of European NGOs. The Social Platform, as a third level alliance of networks and federations would need a much longer time frame to reach a common position on a topic which is relatively new to it. This report incorporates the independent opinions and recommendations of the members of the Platform. However, following the success of this consultation, the creation of a common position paper on lifelong learning is being considered for the future.

The Social Platform was established in 1995 and now regroups thirty seven members who are working to build an inclusive society and promote the social dimension in the European Union. It brings together over 1700 direct member organisations, associations and other voluntary bodies at local, regional, national and European level representing the interests of a wide range of civil society. It includes organisations of women, older people, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, migrants, people affected by poverty and homelessness, gays and lesbians, children and families. However, those members who were the most active in contributing to the Consultation were;

- Eurolink Age<sup>2</sup>
- Fédération des Femmes aux Foyer
- Solidar
- European Federation of the Elderly
- European Network of the Unemployed
- Autisme Europe
- European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities
- European Forum of Child Welfare
- Red Cross (EU Office)

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the European Youth Forum are also members of the Social Platform but didn't contribute to this report since they are both responsible for their own networks in the Consultation and will submit their opinions via their own experts.

Solidar worked with one of its member network, the European Workers Education Association for its national consultations. Two national members (The People's

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<sup>1</sup> Solidar is a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs and signed the contract to carry out this consultation on behalf of the Social Platform since the Platform of European Social NGOs had no legal entity at the time.

<sup>2</sup> Position papers on the Memorandum have been produced by some of these member organisations and they have been annexed to this Report as requested.

College, Ireland and Mszosz, Hungary) responded to the questionnaire and their views have also been incorporated into this report.

### **General Opinions on the Memorandum**

Before proceeding any further, it is important to give some information on the general response of many NGOs in the social sector towards Memorandum on lifelong learning in order to be able to appreciate the comments and recommendations given in this report.

In most cases, lifelong learning is considered as a very broad concept which has different definitions in different contexts.<sup>3</sup> Social NGO's working at a European level tend to promote their specific interests. As a result, many have difficulty understanding how lifelong learning is directly relevant to their work. They consider lifelong learning is an 'aim' in itself rather than a 'tool' that could help them achieve their aims. It would seem that the Memorandum does nothing to rectify this misconception since even after reading it, many do not understand how lifelong learning is directly relevant to their interests and their work.

While social NGOs may be involved in projects that indirectly promote lifelong learning, they do not have the resources to promote lifelong learning directly in their NGO. Most could not find any examples of 'good practice' because they work very little on education issues or training within their NGO.<sup>4</sup>

Lifelong learning is one of the best methods of promoting social inclusion. However, many NGOs in the social sector don't seem to have grasped this message from the Memorandum. It does state that 'education and training throughout life...is also the best way to combat social exclusion'.<sup>5</sup> However, this statement is misleading since here 'education and training' could easily be interpreted as 'education and training' in the formal sense rather than 'non-formal learning' as such. Concrete measures to promote social inclusion through learning in the Action Plan might be a means of rectifying this misinterpretation.

In addition, many non-native English speakers unaccustomed to dealing directly with education issues (as is the case of most of the NGOs in the Platform of European Social NGOs) complained about the complex language used in the Memorandum. Some of the NGOs represent groups who have not completed their formal education or who have left it a long time ago. For such groups, this language poses difficulties. If the Action Plan is to reach as wide an audience as possible, it is important that it is written in simple language that everyone can understand.

In spite of these general reactions, certain NGOs were very interested in lifelong learning and contributed actively to the Consultation. They have made some very

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<sup>3</sup> One member compared it with 'sustainable development' and 'corporate social responsibility'

<sup>4</sup> However, by investigating projects they were involved in, I was able to find some projects that indirectly contributed to learning that are indeed good examples of practice in this field.

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum, p.6

interesting comments and given good examples of ‘best practice’ in their field. It may be too late to rewrite the Memorandum, but they stress that it is important to take the following ideas and examples into serious consideration in the Action Plan.

This report will be structured in the following way to facilitate the incorporation of policy guidelines and practical recommendations for the Action Plan. (Please see Annex 1 for information on the research method used to collect this material.)

- (i) The obstacles that NGOs have in implementing the guidelines in the Memorandum will be identified under each of the key messages.
- (ii) Concrete measures for the Action Plan suggested by the NGOs will be given.
- (iii) For each key message, I will identify relevant examples of ‘best practice’ that have been submitted by NGOs

By proceeding in the following way, I hope that this report will be useful in the examples of ‘good practice’ it provides and forward thinking in the policy guidelines suggested by NGOs. By taking these into serious consideration, lifelong learning could become much more meaningful and relevant for NGOs working in the social sector in the future.

### **KEY MESSAGE 1: NEW BASIC SKILLS FOR ALL**

***Possible Line of Action for the Action Plan:** Clearly defined relevant basic skills not only for those who participate in the knowledge economy, but for all those excluded from society in general.*

#### **(i) Policy issues to be addressed - Which ‘Basic Skills’?**

The Memorandum defines new basic skills as those required for active participation in the knowledge society and economy. The five basic skills chosen (IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills) reflect the needs of the knowledge society. Even though the Memorandum states that ‘this is not necessarily an exhaustive list, but it certainly covers key areas’<sup>6</sup>, the five skills chosen give a good idea of the future orientations of lifelong learning policy.

Groups such as the elderly and those with mental and physical disabilities felt that these future orientations must take into account many sectors of society for whom the acquisition of knowledge is extremely difficult, sometimes impossible. These groups are sometimes excluded from the ‘knowledge society’. The Memorandum fails to take into account basic skills that would facilitate their inclusion into this society. Therefore, **special provisions must be made for those who have special difficulty in acquiring these basic skills.**

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<sup>6</sup> Memorandum, p.10

Of these five basic skills, **social skills** were considered the most relevant by those surveyed, followed by IT skills, languages and technological skills (in order of preference). Entrepreneurship was not as highly considered. It is also interesting to note that 78% of respondents felt that **basic skills should not be limited to skills whose acquisition can be tested.**

55% of those NGOs surveyed would like to see **other basic skills** included in the list of 'basic skills' in the Memorandum. Some of the skills they would like included were basic 'communication skills' (to facilitate integration and participation in society and promote active citizenship), 'empowerment skills' (to help people defend their rights) and 'personal development' and 'creative skills' (to enhance people's value and self esteem). It is interesting to note that most of those surveyed felt that civil society should have as important a role as the state in deciding which skills should be taught. They welcomed this Consultation as a means of helping determine relevant skills for lifelong learning.

Many of those surveyed felt that more emphasis needs to be put on the traditional **basic skills of literacy and numeracy**. They felt that it cannot be taken for granted these skills are automatically acquired in schools today. In fact, it is often the failure to acquire these basic skills that leads to social exclusion in the first place. They felt that any Action Plan that fails to include these skills is ignoring the 'learning needs' of many groups outside the formal education system.

Perhaps the failure to mention them is the result of another problem in the memorandum – **the basic skills mentioned are not clearly defined**. Many feel that their definition is too vague. 67% of those surveyed felt that the basic skills mentioned needed to be more clearly defined. It is clear from the memorandum that the basic skills are supposed to be 'broad'. If people are to work towards promoting these skills, it would be useful to define more clearly what exactly is meant by each of them so that everyone understands what it to be achieved.

## (ii) **Concrete Measures for Implementation**

All respondents believed that the right for citizens to acquire and update skills throughout life should be part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

### Universal Access to Acquiring Basic Skills

Measures suggested to insure universal access included;

- Training courses that are more closely related to work and real life where those with low learning threshold can see the direct relevance of what they are learning.
- Lower registration fees, affordable for those on low income.
- Free childcare provision offered with classes to facilitate one parent families who wish to attend without having to pay a babysitter.
- Lessons arranged at times when house-wives are least busy.
- Compensation for expenses incurred while learning (eg. travel expenses, lunch tickets etc.)

## Second Chances to Provide Basic Skills

The main obstacles identified for the failure to complete compulsory education and the failure to participate in adult education programmes;

- lack of provision of education tailored to ‘special needs’
- too much emphasis on education for young people rather than providing for the learning needs of the elderly
- initial prejudices about the learning potentiality of groups with disabilities.
- Low motivation of learners in the first place

67% of those surveyed felt that basic skills should be taught to people outside schools. Suitable places mentioned to do this included day centers, the premises of local organisations when they’re not being used during office hours (special ‘learning partnerships’ could be set up between them and the local community), tutors coming into family homes, retirement homes, public libraries, community centers and parks (in summer!)

Suggested measures to give adults a second chance to acquire basic skills included;

- The creation of special schools for adults with special needs
- Evening classes provided free by the State that offer a diploma recognised throughout Europe.
- Special ‘training hours’ in the workplace to teach ‘basic skills’ to those who haven’t acquired them.
- Special language classes offered as part of town twinning programmes with more frequent adult language exchanges between twin town to improve fluency in the foreign language.

### **(iii) Examples of ‘Best Practice’ for Teaching ‘Basic Skills’**

A) The ‘*Junior Association*’, France: An initiative to help young people under 18 years of age set up their own association

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	La Junior Association
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	France
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	La Ligue de l’enseignement et de l’Education Permanente, Le Groupement d’Interet Public DEFI JEUNES, J.Presse, La Fédération Nationale des Centres Sociaux et Socioculturels, La Confédération des Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture de France.
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	Réseau National des Juniors Associations + 33 01 43 58 98 70
<b>5) Target groups</b>	All groups of young people who wish to create an association for a common activity.
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	Junior Association leaflet <a href="http://www.laligue.org">www.laligue.org</a> (page d’accueil>aux associations>constitution des associations > junior association



## B. DESCRIPTION

The young people decide what kind of a association they wish to create, how many people will be involved, what are the best actions to take, what resources they will need to achieve this, what contacts will be necessary. A dossier is created with a counsellor who defines the exact goal of the association. The association is registered as a 'junior association' not at the town hall but at the 'Reseau National des Junior Associations'. The 'Reseau' gives the association

- assurance to cover their activities
- a bank account (which allows the young people to take responsibility for their budget)
- resources to help them with their organisation
- relevant training

The pilot group is made up of five members of the national 'Reseau'. It insures a local presence and insures that young people are aware that the possibility exists to create a junior association and provides them with information on how to go about setting up an association.

The pilot group nominates a 'Relais départementaux' which provide information for young people in each of the departments. They establish the necessary contacts with one or more local actors to make sure that the projects of the Junior Association are successful. They create an assistance plan adapted to each project to help solve problems that they encounter along the way.

## C. ASSESSMENT

<b>1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences</b>	<p>En France, les jeunes âgés de moins de 18 ans, ne peuvent créer une association loi 1901, avoir le statut de personne morale, statut juridique français qui permet notamment de pouvoir assurer les personnes et les activités, d'ouvrir un compte bancaire, de pouvoir passer des contrats (bénéficier d'un local, de présenter un concert,...). L'habilitation permet, après un travail effectué en collaboration avec des représentants de différents Ministères (Jeunesse et Sports, Justice, Intérieur, Education Nationale,...), de proposer aux jeunes d'accéder à une assurance et à l'ouverture d'un compte bancaire, et de contractualiser un certains nombre d'actes nécessaires à leur projet.</p> <p>Toute association loi 1901 dépose ses statuts auprès d'une préfecture (échelon départementale), une Junior Association dépose son dossier auprès d'un relais départemental qui valide le dossier et l'envoie pour habilitation au Réseau National des Juniors Associations.</p> <p>Le Relais Départemental est le référent pour une Junior Association et il est garant de l'accompagnement. Il rencontre les jeunes, réponds à leurs questions, les aide dans leurs démarches.</p> <p>Ce Relais Départemental permet donc aux jeunes un accompagnement dans la conduite de leur projet. Il est issu des grandes fédérations et organismes qui ont créé ou rejoint le Réseau National des Juniors Associations :</p> <p>La Ligue Française de l'Enseignement et de l'Education Permanente, le G.I.P. Défi jeunes, la Confédération des Maisons de Jeunes et de la Culture de France, la Fédération Nationale des Centres Sociaux et Socioculturels et l'association nationale J.Presse.</p> <p>L'intérêt du dispositif réside donc également par une présence au plus près des jeunes d'adultes, professionnels et bénévoles, qui soutiennent dans leurs réalisation et leur démarche collective, dans les contacts institutionnels nécessaires.</p>
<b>2) Indicators: measuring the result, costs and time</b>	<p>Le dispositif existe depuis 1998 et il a été mis en place sur 6 départements pilotes ont permis de construire une démarche souple qui est de proposer aux jeunes, les outils de la vie associative au moment où ils en ont besoin (démocratie interne, prises de décision,</p>

	gestion d'un budget...) pour la réalisation de projets qui peuvent être à court ou long terme. Depuis 2000, le dispositif est en voie de développement : 50 départements en 2001 et la totalité du territoire français en 2001 . Il existe à ce jour 83 Junior Associations.
<b>3) Problems faced (and how they have been overcome)</b>	Les difficultés rencontrées ont été de définir le cadre juridique permettant de fonctionner en Junior Association et de pouvoir ouvrir un compte bancaire, contractualiser avec une mairie, des partenaires, bénéficier de subventions..

B) *ALDICT – Access of Persons with Learning Disability to Information and Communication Technologies, Belgium.*

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
1) Title of good practice	ALDICT – Access of Persons with Learning Disability to Information and Communication Technologies
2) Country of origin	Belgium
3) Partners involved	Inclusion Europe, Mencap (U.K.), Widgit Software Ltd (U.K.), FENACERCI (PT), UNAPEI (FR), Lebenshilfe (DE), UTL-FMH (PT)
4) Contact data on person & organisation responsible	Inclusion Europe Galeries de la Toison d'Or 29 Chaussée d'Ixelles #393/32 B-1050 Brussels – Belgium Tel. : +32-2-502 28 15 Fax : +32-2-502 80 10 e-mail : secretariat@inclusion-europe.org
5) Target groups	Persons with intellectual disability
6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)	<a href="http://www.widgit.com/html/products/s_intercomm.html">http://www.widgit.com/html/products/s_intercomm.html</a>
<b>B. DESCRIPTION</b>	
<p>Many people with intellectual disability use graphic symbol sets for communication. In Europe there are many different symbol sets in use. Symbols help people with intellectual disability to understand concepts and written words. They can be used for 'writing' symbolised text and messages. Thus, symbols are also a tool for gaining access to literacy.</p> <p>Starting from the program "Writing with Symbols 2000" of Widgit Software Ltd., the ALDICT project has developed an e-mail program for people with intellectual disability. It works without any text and the user interface is also entirely graphic. Users compose their e-mail messages with one of the available sets of communication symbols and send them by simply clicking on an image or graphic representing the recipient. The program includes automatic translation, therefore symbol messages are translated between different symbols sets and several European languages.</p> <p>The alpha versions of the program have been field-tested by more than 100 users with intellectual disability in Germany, the U.K., Portugal and France. They were for the first time able to exchange e-mails and to communicate independently across language barriers. The program is on the market in the U.K., the U.S.A., New Zealand, Sweden and Finland under the name Inter_Comm. Other language versions will follow soon.</p>	
<b>C. ASSESSMENT</b>	
1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences	The result of the project is a fully functional symbol-based e-mail program for persons with intellectual disability. It gives

	them the possibility to communicate independently by e-mail.
2) Indicators: measuring the result, costs and time	Since the introduction of the program into the European and international market, it has been sold quite well to several hundred of users.
3) Problems faced (and how they have been overcome)	The ALDICT project faced several technical problems, especially relating to the automatic translation of symbols and words into other languages. These were overcome by developing a new common standard for symbol communication sets that will make different sets more compatible.
4) Success conditions for sustainability and transfer	The project results are sustainable because of the fact that the research project responded to a need expressed by the users and the consequent involvement of four large user organisations in different European countries.

## KEY MESSAGE 2: MORE INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

*Possible Line of Action for the Action Plan: Create more human resource development programmes for people with special training need to insure their active participation in the work force.*

(i) **Policy issues to be addressed – how can human resource development be promoted in social NGOs?**

Key message two aims to ‘visibly raise levels of investment in human resources in order to place priority on Europe’s most important asset – it’s people.’<sup>7</sup> Therefore, **human resource development programmes should be suited to people’s needs – and above all, those with special training needs.** People with special needs have the greatest difficulty on the labour market and are the first to be hit by unemployment. 86% of those surveyed felt that the training needs of their interest group were not being addressed by the human resource departments in companies. All those questioned felt that employers were not sufficiently aware of the problems in the workplace faced by the people their NGO represent.

The Memorandum states that ‘**the unemployed**, too, have the right to training opportunities’. However, those NGOs representing the unemployed felt that the needs of their interest group were not addressed in the Memorandum. They would like to see job design projects that take the ‘lack of skills’ as a point of departure rather than a reason to refuse someone a job.’<sup>8</sup> They also hoped to see more ‘in-job’ training placements in companies created for the unemployed. These are all important elements of lifelong learning that should be addressed in an Action Plan.

The NGOs representing **the elderly** were the most active contributors in this consultation. They congratulated the Memorandum for recognising that ‘continuing

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum, p.12

<sup>8</sup> European Network of the Unemployed.

education and training also currently falls off sharply for older workers, most especially for the less qualified and those in lower level jobs'<sup>9</sup>. But concrete measures need to be taken to address this problem. AGE states that 'Lifelong learning needs to actively address older workers if it is to contribute to raising their employment rate in line with the EU's targets. We don't see it (the Memorandum) really tackling access for older workers, which is often not on offer from companies and training schemes: training older workers is often written off as a waste of time. In other words, discrimination is an issue here. The 1996 Year of Lifelong learning did not address older people as a target group, and the e-learning initiative also failed to address older people. In the list of targeted EU initiatives under way, it's not obvious that anything includes older people.'<sup>10</sup> These sentiments should be born in consideration in future policy-making.

It is interesting to note that the vast majority of NGOs in the social sector did not have a human resource development plan in their organisation. It is important to stress in the Action Plan that 'more investment in human resources' concerns not only companies but also **human resources in organisations**.

## (ii) Concrete Measures for the Action Plan

### Measures to Make Employers Aware of 'Special Training Needs' Of Certain Employees

Suggestions made in this regard included

- Special evaluations of the 'training needs' of employees when they start a new job and the creation of training programs more closely related to these needs rather than uniform programmes for all employees.
- The value of training older workers must be stressed to employers. Government incentives for training older workers would encourage employers to do so
- Companies should do more to take 'family life' into consideration and avoid training periods that interfere with 'family time'.

### Improve Access to Human Resource Development Training Programmes for those usually excluded from such programmes

Suggestions included

- make 'in-job training' a compulsory part of education schemes for the unemployed.
- create more links between universities/vocational schools and companies to giving students the opportunity to do work placements to insure they have the relevant skills necessary to enter the labor market immediately after they graduate.

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<sup>9</sup> Memorandum, p.12

<sup>10</sup> Eurolink AGE

Human Resource Development Programmes not only for those who work in companies

- A special Action could be created under Grundtvig Lifelong learning to fund human resource development programmes in NGOs working at European level. Special provisions could be made in the European Social Fund for such programmes in national NGOs.
- More volunteer programs in NGOs should be created to train young people who would like to work there after their studies.

**(iii) Examples of ‘Best Practice’ in Human Resources**

A) ‘Paid Educational Leave in Europe: A Strategy for Promoting Lifelong Learning’ Arbeit und Leben, Germany : A research project investigating the provisions for paid educational leave in a number of Member States.

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	Paid Educational leave in Europe
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	Germany
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	Arbeit und Leben, Germany Centre Socialiste d’Education Permanente Culture et Liberte Centro Studi Economici Sociali e Sindacali
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	Lothar Jansen, Arbeit und Leben, Tersteegenstr 61-63, 40474 Dusseldorf Tel: + 49 211 43 46 85 E-mail: aulbal@aol.com
<b>5) Target groups</b>	Workers who can’t make time for training due to family pressure and work commitments.
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	CD Rom
<b>B. DESCRIPTION</b>	
<p><b>Aim:</b> This project investigates the provisions made for paid educational leave in a number of Member States in order to consider the extent to which they are achieving their goals and makes a comparative analysis between them. It also investigates whether provisions take socio-economic and gender specific disadvantages into account.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Joint discussions were held with the project partners to clarify key questions and exchange views on key terminology. The research was presented on a CD Rom in two parts;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A comparative synopsis of provisions in the Member States was made</li> <li>- A research investigation in the partner countries into objectives, impact and development of prospective provisions was made.</li> </ul>	

B) *‘Renaissance – Resources for lifelong learning for managers and employees in the social care sector’*, TAU-Groep, Belgium: Resources for lifelong learning for managers and employees in the social care sector.

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	Renaissance – Resources for lifelong learning for managers and employees in the social care sector.
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	Belgium
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	Norah Fry Research Center, UK Home Farm Trust, UK Pameyerkeerkring, NL NIZW, NL Instituut Voor Zorg en Welzijn, NL Osszefogas Iparý Szovetkezet HU Asociacion Paz Y Bien, E Aprose, E Institut fur Sozialdienste, A Akademie fur Sozialdienste, A Tau-Group, B Zonnelied, B Vormingsleergang Voor Sociaal en Pedagogisch Werk, B
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	TAU-Groep, Kroonstraat 48, B-1750 Lennik, Belgium
<b>5) Target groups</b>	First-line workers who accompany people with a learning disability, with particular emphasis on those who have already been employed in the sector for a long time.
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	CD Rom
<b>B. DESCRIPTION</b>	
<p>Aim:</p> <p>The project was designed to formulate a response to recent developments to the disability sector such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more flexible individual client-orientated services</li> <li>- increased level of responsibility to employees in the sector</li> <li>- increased internationalisation of the sector.</li> </ul> <p>The project was set up as part of a drive to achieve a high-quality service and in the awareness that flexible systems are required in order to meet the demands of the clients ie. People with learning disabilities.</p> <p>Concrete objectives included</p>	

- 1) The development of methods, concepts and training modules for primary care workers and educators
- 2) The development of lifelong learning strategies integrated in a sector-specific form of human resource management.

### C. ASSESSMENT

<b>1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences</b>	The results were put on a CD Rom. It contained concrete products, concepts and criteria for organisations and managers to use in policy making. The CD Rom was used as an inspiration and stimulus to others. Partner organisations have undergone an intensive reflection process with regard to lifelong learning in their own organisation.
<b>2) Indicators: measuring the result, costs and time</b>	The Leonardo De Vinci programme provided a subsidy of 249, 300 Euros (72% of the overall cost). The partners themselves submitted 95, 873 euros.

### **KEY MESSAGE 3: INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

*Possible Line of Action for the Action Plan: Develop special teaching and learning methods adapted to the requirements of those groups who would benefit most from the opportunity to learn.*

(iii) **Policy Issues to be Addressed – what kind of innovation – ‘technical’ innovation or ‘people-centered’ innovation?**

The NGOs interviewed welcomed the Memorandum’s recognition of the need to adapt teaching and learning methods to specific interest groups. However, while they agree that ICT –based learning technologies offer great potential, they highlight the fact that **ICT based learning does not suit all their interest groups**. ICT based learning requires regular access to a computer and many of the interest groups represented by the NGO’s interviewed do not have access to a computer in the first place. ( When asked whether their interest group had access to a computer, 22% said their group only had ‘limited’ access.)

Apart from the problem of being able to afford a computer, **many people are not able to use one due to physical handicap**. This is the case of old people with arthritis or bad eyesight for example. NGOs representing these groups fear that future lifelong learning policy will put too much emphasis on e-learning to the exclusion of these groups. To make e-learning more appropriate for those with special needs, they

would like to see the development of ‘learning software’ adapted to their special needs.

Others feared the development of ‘learning software’ developed by computer companies to promote their hardware. They would welcome initiatives to promote the **development of ‘learning software’ independent from such companies.**

NGO tended to welcome the drive to promote the ‘active involvement of professionals in the files who are closest to the citizen as learner.’<sup>11</sup> However, they felt that **not enough was being done to involve those working in NGOs in this process.** People who work in NGOs often have a wealth of knowledge and experience in a particular field that could be shared with the public at large. However, of those interviewed, only 50% had ever taken part in teaching activities outside their place of work. Few of these had given courses in schools or universities. This would appear to be a wasted learning opportunity for young people who have a limited knowledge of the issues dealt with by NGOs in the social sector.

Many of those interviewed also felt that the aim of teaching and learning should not only be for career development. The value of **learning for enjoyment** in one’s free time needs to be highlighted. Learning about the world around us is also an important part of our ‘civic development’ and promotes active citizenship. The value of teaching as a means of active citizenship was also mentioned. Everyone has skills that can be taught to others. This message needs to be targeted at those with low self esteem since by teaching others, their self-esteem can be significantly increased. Programmes where the elderly give grinds to school children were mentioned to illustrate this point. Measures such as these need to be promoted in the Action Plan.

## **(ii) Concrete Measures for the Action Plan**

### Suggested ways in which the work done by NGOs can be taught to the public in general included

- Three month stages in an NGO for students taking courses in areas that NGOs deal with. Work placements for the unemployed could be offered in NGOs as part of their training schemes.
- Open days in NGOs where people could come and visit in order to have a better understanding of the work involved.
- Photo exhibitions could be organised in conjunction with local authorities with photos of projects that the NGO is involved in.
- State financed web-developers could be employed in NGOs to make sure that each NGO has a regularly updated website where it can inform the public of it’s work

### Suggested ways of promoting greater transnational cooperation and exchange of research included

- greater lobbying by NGOs to raise awareness of the work they are doing

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<sup>11</sup> Memorandum, p.13



- Funded language programmes should be created for those working in educational research to facilitate communication with those doing similar research in other countries.

Suggested areas in which those surveyed would like to see more research included

- Methods of adapting education courses to the needs of older students
- Different pedagogic methods of teaching those with special needs
- Research on ways to develop 'free movement' between formal and non-formal learning.
- Research aimed at identifying the best form of education suited to the different personality types.
- Methods of promoting the 'human rights' dimension of citizenship

**(iv) Best Practice in the area of innovation in teaching and learning**

A) *Un Petit Coup de Pouce*, AFEV France: a project where university students can volunteer one hour per week to help school children in disadvantaged areas with their homework.

<b>a. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
b.	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	'Un Bon Coup de Pouce' (programme d'accompagnement scolaire)
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	France
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	Association de la Fondation Etudiante pour la Ville
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	Nicolas Delesque, Association de la Fondation Etudiante pour la Ville, 26 bis, rue de Château Landon, 75101 Paris Tel : + 33 1 40 36 01 01 Fax : + 33 1 40 36 75 89
<b>5) Target groups</b>	Les étudiants et les écoliers dans les quartiers difficiles
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	
<b>c. DESCRIPTION</b>	
<p>QFEV fut créée en 1991 pour favoriser l'implication bénévole des étudiants dans les quartiers en difficulté par des actions de solidarité. Cette démarche s'appuyait sur un double constat à propos du milieu étudiant : la démocratisation de l'enseignement supérieur concernait peu les milieux socialement les plus défavorisés et la présence d'étudiants sur l'ensemble du territoire n'entraînait pas un engagement massif de leur part dans des actions de solidarité liées à leur ville.</p> <p>Partant de ce constat, le volonté de l'AFEV était de nouer de nouveaux liens sociaux entre deux parties de la jeunesse, la jeunesse étudiante en voie d'insertion sociale et professionnelle et la jeunesse rencontrant, de par sa situation sociale, plus en difficultés à y accéder.</p> <p>En 1992, le lancement du dispositif d'accompagnement scolaire 'Un Bon Coup de Pouce' démontrait la capacité de mobilisation bénévole des étudiants dans leur ville. C'est un dispositif</p>	

d'accompagnement scolaire dans le cadre de la ville. Un étudiant volontaire et bénévole devient le parrain d'un élève en difficulté scolaire. Les étudiants sont en passe de réussir et offrent ainsi une image positive de l'école, de l'apprentissage en général. L'étudiant prend en charge de un à trois enfants en difficulté en les aidant à organiser leur travail et en les accompagnant dans le cadre d'une approche globale de l'apprentissage. Les différents acteurs des actions éducatives menées en direction des jeunes sont associés afin de suivre et d'évaluer l'évolution du projet. Les familles sont étroitement associées aux actions mises en œuvres.

### C. ASSESSMENT

<b>1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences</b>	<p>Les étudiants se mobilisent massivement dans cette action. Une vraie complémentarité s'opère entre les enseignants, les familles et les étudiants. La relation individualisée étudiant-enfant et le rapport apprenant-apprenant permettent à l'enfant de reprendre confiance en ses capacités et de s'approprier la démarche d'apprentissage. Ainsi, les enseignants nous font part de progrès notables dans le comportement et l'implication de l'enfant, progrès permettant parfois des améliorations notables dans le domaine plus scolaire. L'implication d'étudiants volontaires apporte une réponse socialement pertinente dans l'accompagnement des politiques publiques en direction des enfants, des jeunes en difficulté.</p>
<b>2) Indicators: measuring the result, costs and time</b>	<p>Après 8 ans d'existence, il existe plus de 160 sites partenaires en France. Aujourd'hui, plus que 20 000 étudiants bénévoles se sont investis.</p>
<b>3) Problems faced (and how they have been overcome)</b>	<p>Le programme 'Un Bon Coup de Pouce' s'est rapidement développé. Nous n'avons pas rencontré de difficulté majeure dans sa mise en œuvre. Il apparaît néanmoins que la question de partenariat, clef de voûte du dispositif sera l'élément le plus délicat à organiser. En effet, en fonction d'un contexte local, régional, il permet la mobilisation de compétences et la synergie des moyens mis en œuvre dans un territoire donné.</p>
<b>4) Success conditions for sustainability and transfer</b>	<p>Il apparaît indispensable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- de prendre en compte les particularités nationales sur les différentes questions; vie étudiante, question éducative, difficultés sociales.....</li> <li>- d'élaborer, en s'appuyant sur l'expérience menée par notre association mais aussi d'autres structures en Europe oeuvrant déjà dans ce type d'action, un dispositif spécifique dans chaque pays.</li> <li>- D'élaborer, en s'appuyant sur l'expérience menée par notre association mais aussi d'autres structures en Europe oeuvrant déjà dans ce type d'action, un dispositif spécifique dans chaque pays.</li> </ul>

### **KEY MESSAGE 4: VALUING LEARNING**

*Possible Line of Action for the Action Plan: Need for formal recognition for all types of non-formal learning*

- (i) **Policy Issue to be addressed – what is the best way of encouraging people to place greater value on learning?**

Most of the NGOs surveyed claimed that learning is highly valued by their interest groups. From this response it would appear that most people already value learning in

some way – even those who have not completed a programme of ‘formal learning’ in a formal education system.<sup>12</sup>

However, one NGO felt strongly that it was important that the value of learning is not just accorded in reference to its relative value on the labour market. It is important to stress that there is a demand for ‘learned’ skills outside the labour market. (eg. PC skills to run local clubs etc)

As regards promoting the value of learning among the unemployed, the ‘European network for the Unemployed’ believe that learning will be valued more and more by the unemployed if learning programmes for the unemployed aren’t considered merely as ‘unemployed day-care’. They also believe that it is important to create learning contexts where the unemployed and those in full employment can learn together to avoid a feeling of being ‘second class learners’.

Motivation is an essential prerequisite for learning and all those surveyed believed that formal recognition of all informal learning achievements no matter how insignificant is the best way to motivate people to learn.

Motivation is also effected by self-esteem. As highlighted by one member, poor self-esteem and self-confidence is one of the main obstacle to learning. This is evident among the elderly and unemployed. Any education policy that aims to promote ‘learning’ must tackle this problem. Therefore, concrete measures to increase the self-esteem of the two above mentioned groups is essential in the Action Plan.

Not all those surveyed were in favour of a common format for a European CV. Those who were suggested that credits could be given for non-formal education and voluntary and community work. Only one person of all those surveyed had heard of APEL and, while praising it highly, believed that there was a need to work on those at the top level of education institutions to insure that their attitude toward is was favourable. Perhaps the Memorandum could give more information about this scheme to inform those involved in education institutions who read it, what it is all about and encourage them to recognise it.

The other initiatives mentioned in the Memorandum were unknown to those surveyed. Concrete measures need to be taken to disseminate information about them in NGOs.

## **(ii) Concrete Measures for Implementation in the Action Plan**

### Measures Suggested to Increase the Value of Learning Include...

- Using a high standard of teaching in primary and secondary schools to make people’s first encounter with learning and enjoyable experience that they will want to continue for the rest of their lives.
- 4-5 days annual ‘learning leave’ for employees who wish to prepare for exams (not necessarily related to their work)

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<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this key message could be replaced with a more important issue.

- Certificates given to those who complete a fixed period of voluntary work in an NGO to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
- A system of credits for those who have worked in the local community who are applying for courses in social work, psychology etc. that are taken into consideration by universities in their selection process.

**(iii) Examples of ‘Best Practice’ in ‘Valuing Learning’**

*‘Universities of the Third Age’*, UK: learning circles for retired people over fifty who come together to learn a subject.

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	Universities of the Third Age
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	United Kingdom ( with a case study of Waddington U3A)
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	The operations of the Third Age Trust are controlled by a National Executive Committee who are elected at the Annual General Meeting. This meeting is combined with the annual Conference at which third agers from all over the country come together to debate and plan the organisation’s future.
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	The Third Age Trust 26 Harrison Street, London, WC1H 8JG Tel: (020) 78 37 88 38 E-mail: national.office@u3a.org.uk
<b>5) Target groups</b>	Retired people interested in studying – usually people are required to be over 50 and no longer in full-time employment
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	<a href="http://freespace.virgin.net/fg.latham/uta/aboutu3a.htm">http://freespace.virgin.net/fg.latham/uta/aboutu3a.htm</a>
<b>B. DESCRIPTION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The University of the Third Age, U3A, is an organisation offering all kinds of educational, creative and leisure activities to older people not in full-time, gainful employment. Members organise their own activities and use their skill and knowledge to form self-help groups. No qualifications are required and none are awarded.</li> <li>• The seeds for 'Lifelong Learning for Older People' were sown at the Summer School of the Université du Troisième Age held in Toulouse in 1972. This led within a year to the formation of the 'International Association of U3As' (AIUTA). The movement soon became worldwide. In the UK, the U3A started with the creation of the 'Third Age Trust' in 1982 as registered charity and limited company. In the UK it was decided during early discussions to adopt an approach that was independent of the Universities. It was realised that Third Agers themselves had the skills to organise and teach in their own autonomous learning groups, the local U3As. The principle was to be not "they teach us" but rather "we teach one another". In other parts of the world, development has been more dependent on traditional centres of learning, and the resulting U3A courses have often been integrated with a local academic curriculum.</li> <li>• Warrington U3A has a general meeting on the first Wednesday of each month from September to June. After the business of the meeting, there is an opportunity to talk with members to help in taking the</li> </ul>	

decision to join. The fee for joining is £12.00 for the academic year which starts in September. You can then enrol in the study/activity groups at no extra charge. Members of other U3As are accorded Associate Membership of Warrington U3A and on production of proof, can join at a reduced rate.

Since people learn for pleasure, no qualifications are required and none are given. The Third Age Trust is a member of AIUTA which aims to promote active learning, research and community service among Third Agers everywhere.

Contrary to what was happening in France, there was no support from Universities. It was realised that Third Agers themselves had the skills to organise and teach in their own autonomous learning groups and local U3As were formed. Around the country people organise themselves for the purpose of learning. To quote one of the founders of the movement Peter Laslett

‘Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach’.

The subjects tackled vary and each U3A and the number offered will depend on the size and enthusiasm of the group.

### C. ASSESSMENT

<b>1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences</b>	Because a U3A is in effect a co-operative and has no campus of its own, fees are low.
<b>2) Indicators: measuring the result, costs and time</b>	<p>There are now some 400 local U3A's throughout the United Kingdom with a total membership of about 85 000. Each local U3A develops its own character according to local needs and resources.</p> <p>Warrington U3A was started in 1994 with a ceremony at the Town Hall. There are now over 300 members. This year (2001) we have become a Registered Charity (No. 1085069).</p> <p>Each U3A Group contributes a ‘capitation fee’ of £2.00 per member to the Third Age Trust. There are also Sponsors who support with money and in other ways. The Trust receives no financial support from National or Local Government.</p>
<b>3) Problems faced (and how they have been overcome)</b>	
<b>4) Success conditions for sustainability and transfer</b>	<p>We are fortunate to be associated with Warrington Collegiate Institute which provides accommodation and facilities, including use of the library and computers with internet connection. We also get concessionary course fees. You can view their web site through our links page</p> <p>In order to minimise problems, new local U3As wanting to join the Third Age Trust must Accept the Articles and Memorandum, agree with the aims and principles, have a written constitution of a democratic nature and agree to keep the National Office informed of Committee members names, contacts and to pay the annual membership fee of £2.00 per member.</p>

## **KEY MESSAGE 5 RETHINKING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

*Possible Line of Action for the Action Plan: Ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information and advice about learning opportunities throughout Europe and throughout their lives.( as was the original objective)*

### **(i) Policy Issue to be addressed – Local Service Providers as Guidance Counsellors?**

The NGOs in the social sector surveyed were more or less in agreement with the objectives of the Memorandum for this key message. They stressed **the lack of availability of guidance and counselling for their interest group**. 50% stated that guidance and counselling was not really available while 25% said that it was only available ‘to a certain extent’ and 25%, ‘not at all’. The main obstacles to obtaining information were that it was either a) unavailable, b) difficult to find or c) written in a text that they could not understand because it was not written for their audience. They also complained that there was no existing structure or institutions presently in place that could provide them with such information on a regular basis.

The NGOs welcomed the Memorandum’s statement that ‘services must be locally accessible’. They also welcomed the statement that ‘practitioners must be familiar with the personal and social circumstances of those for whom information and advice is provided but must equally know the profile of the local labour market and employers needs’<sup>13</sup> and that ‘guidance and counselling services also need to be linked more firmly into networks of related personal, social and educational services.’<sup>14</sup> **The local network of existing local service providers could be exploited to help ‘institutionalise’ guidance.**

Those working in social NGOs who have direct contact with their interest groups would be ideally placed for such a role. However, only 33% of those surveyed had ever taken on a role as a guidance counsellor for the members of their interest group. They believed that **in order to provide such a service, they would need training in counselling and would need to be informed and have the relevant information at their disposal**. 32% said that such training was not accessible for them at present since it wasn’t being provided by the Ministries of education and they had no funding to pay non-state bodies for it. All those surveyed stressed the fact that guidance should not be limited merely to learning opportunities that enhance a person’s value on the labour market.

### **(ii) Concrete measures for the Action Plan**

#### **Suggested Measures to Improve Access to Guidance and Counselling**

- Local service providers (if they do not have a guidance counsellor of their own) could act as a channel to point people towards the relevant specialists
- and organisations who give the guidance required.

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<sup>13</sup> Memorandum, p.17

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum, p.17

- Even those who are not ‘trained’ guidance counsellors could act as ‘assistants’ to help explain and ‘translate’ guidance information for those who have difficulty understanding it.
- Guidance information should be adapted to make it more suitable and relevant for groups who usually wouldn’t bother reading such information
- Part of guidance counsellor’s training should include guidance to groups with special needs so that they are able to provide the relevant information for such groups.

### Examples of Good Practice in ‘Guidance and Counselling’

‘Le Salon d’Education’, France: Large annual exhibition by education service providers open to the public.

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	Le Salon de l’Education
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	France
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	La Ligue de l’Enseignement avec le soutien du ministère de l’Education et en partenariats avec la Région île de France, La Maif, France Télécom, la Cinquième, l’Express, Radio France, le CCOMCEN, la Mairie de Paris, Hewlett Packard.
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	La Ligue de l’Enseignement, 3 rue Réclamier, 75341 Paris cedex 07 e-mail : information laligue.org http ://www.laligue.org
<b>5) Target groups</b>	
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	Le Salon de l’Education – dossier de Presse Rapport d’Activités de la Ligue d’enseignement 2001
<b>B. DESCRIPTION</b>	
<p>C’est une grande exposition de l’éducation qui a eu lieu pour la deuxième année consécutive à Paris. Sur 70 000 m2 de surface d’exposition, le salon a regroupé 2037 exposants. Des visiteurs viennent chercher des réponses aux questions précises qu’ils posent. Un Café de l’éducation a accueilli toutes les heures des tables rondes portant sur des initiatives concrètes portées par les mouvements pédagogiques et les associations d’éducation populaire. Cette année, de nouvelles zones d’exposition ont été créées :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- l’éveil de l’enfant</li> <li>- handicap et éducation</li> <li>- Salon du livre et du multimédia éducatif</li> </ul> <p>Il y a aussi une ‘librairie de l’orientation’, un espace où les visiteurs pouvaient rencontrer des conseillers d’orientation, des psychologues scolaires, ainsi qu’un espace ‘voie professionnelle’ où des jeunes présentaient leurs établissements et leurs filières. Le Ministre de l’éducation national présentait également ses priorités politiques aux visiteurs. De nombreux autres départements ministériels voient également ses priorités politiques aux visiteurs.</p>	

<b>C. ASSESSMENT</b>	
<b>1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences</b>	Le Salon assure une plus grande présence et une visibilité plus importante du service public de l'éducation. Les partenaires, en associant leur image au Salon de l'éducation ont contribué à sa réussite et à sa médiatisation.
<b>2) Indicators: measuring the result, costs and time</b>	Plus de 500 000 visiteurs ont fréquenté le Salon qui a regroupé 2037 exposants. 11 260 ordinateurs ont été dénombrés (contre 8257 en 1999. 30% des visiteurs venait de province ou de l'étranger. Cette année a vu l'augmentation du visiteur étranger. L'enquête portant sur les visiteurs révèle que ces derniers se déclarent majoritairement très satisfaisant ou satisfaits de leur visite, de l'ambiance générale du salon, de l'accueil et des exposants qu'ils ont rencontrés. Ils posent des questions précises et se déclarent satisfaits des réponses qui leur sont apportées. Les visiteurs consacrent généralement plus de deux heures à leur visite au Salon et la plupart d'entre eux déclarent qu'ils reviendront l'année prochaine.

#### **KEY MESSAGE 6: BRINGING LEARNING CLOSER TO HOME**

*Possible Line of Action for the Action Plan: Provide lifelong learning opportunities as close to home as possible and in the home whenever possible*

**(iv) Policy Issues to be Addressed - 'Closer to home' or 'At home'?**

On reflection, there seemed to be certain overlaps between the issues addressed in this key message and the issues addressed in key message 3 ('innovation in teaching and learning') Perhaps this is because the place where there is the most potential for Promoting innovation in teaching and learning is in the local community and the home. However, here again the same obstacles become apparent – limited resources for acquiring PCs for 'home learning', lack of skills to use PCs and limited resources of those working in NGOs to become 'teachers' in their local communities.

All those surveyed agreed that **lifelong learning could be used as a driver for local and regional regeneration**. It is one of the best means of fighting unemployment and of tackling crime. However, such projects should not depend solely on ICT since the majority of people represented by NGOs did not have a PC at their disposal and felt that personal contact between different groups would be much more beneficial than contact by e-mail or internet.

The Memorandum fails to address the issue of **home schooling**, an issue which would seem much more relevant to this key message than any of the other issues addressed. Certain NGOs highlighted the fact that teaching at home is an important means of raising the self-esteem of women who are forced to stay at home and who often loose their social skills and self-confidence as a result. It is also an important means of creating employment, since parents who stay at home to educate their children create



a place on the labour market for those who are involuntarily unemployed. Home schooling is also very important means of regional regeneration. Even if there is no local school, people are encouraged to move back to these areas, if they can home-school their children. Studies prove that those who learn at home are trained to learn in a more ‘natural’ environment and have greater success continuing their learning throughout their lives. For these reasons, it would seem important that measures are taken to promote home schooling in the Action Plan.

**(i) Concrete Measures for the Action Plan**

Concrete measures suggested to promote computer-based learning at home

- State subsidised computers for those who are forced to stay at home for health and other valid reasons
- Tutors who come into the home and teach people how to use computers for learning purposes
- Create interesting software programmes that keeps children’s attention and encourages them to learn by computer
- Granting of qualifications recognised at a European level for computer-based learning.
- Free Internet access for certain target groups who can’t afford to learn by Internet.
- Free local computer classes

**(ii) Examples of ‘ Best Practice’ in ‘Bringing Learning Closer to Home’**

‘Seniorweb’, Belgium: A website set up and run by retired people to help other retired people learn to use the internet.

<b>A. IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<b>1) Title of good practice</b>	Seniorweb
<b>2) Country of origin</b>	Belgique
<b>3) Partners involved</b>	
<b>4) Contact data on person &amp; organisation responsible</b>	<a href="http://www.seniorweb.nl/be/sw/infoO.asp">www.seniorweb.nl/be/sw/infoO.asp</a>
<b>5) Target groups</b>	Les seniors qui ne sont pas totalement familiers avec des ordinateurs, ceux qui peuvent déjà travailler avec un ordinateur mais qui n’ont pas encore d’expérience suffisante avec Internet et ceux pour qui l’ordinateur et l’Internet ont déjà une place dans leur vie.
<b>6) Documentation available (format ? how to obtain ?)</b>	<a href="http://www.seniorweb.nl/be/sw/infoO.asp">www.seniorweb.nl/be/sw/infoO.asp</a>

## **B DESCRIPTION**

Seniorweb s'est assignée comme objectif d'aider des seniors en leur donnant les bases essentielles quant à l'utilisation de l'ordinateur, en leur donnant une assistance permanente et visible et en les aidant dans les moments difficiles liés à cet apprentissage. Il a pour l'intention de donner de l'assistance aux seniors qui se sont affiliés à l'association, à savoir :

- assistance en matière de raccordement à l'Internet
- aide on-line
- cours informatifs
- tuyaux et astuces
- réponses aux questions les plus souvent posées
- mises à jour de logiciels

La plus grande partie du travail sera faite par les seniors et pour les seniors. La co-ordination de même que l'aspect rédactionnel du site est aux mains de seniors eux-mêmes et des bénévoles qui, avec leurs talents d'organiseurs, de rédacteurs font évoluer la site net.

## **C. ASSESSMENT**

### **1) Impact: results, advantages and consequences**

C'est plus qu'un site net – il se veut être un outil de participation des seniors et de leurs organisations représentatives dans la société et ce via un échange moderne d'information

## **OTHER MESSAGES TO BE INCLUDED**

Most of those surveyed seemed relatively satisfied with the six key messages that had been chosen (even if they were not always happy with the content or proposals of some of the key messages) However, certain groups felt that the 'key messages' restricted the information they could contribute to the Consultation since information was only requested in 'certain areas' of lifelong learning. To remedy this problem and incorporate their views I have listed below other 'key messages' that they would have liked to see in the Memorandum. These included;

- Lifelong learning as a means of personal development
- Special lifelong learning measures for those with special needs.
- Lifelong learning as a basic right for all.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear from this Consultation that lifelong learning is an area that is relatively new to most NGOs working in the social sector. The failure of the Memorandum to make lifelong learning policy more relevant for them does nothing to address this problem. Through their participation in this consultation, they have highlighted gaps in the Memorandum.

Key Message 1: New Basic Skills for All

**Basic skills should be clearly defined and relevant, not only for those participating in the knowledge society, but those who are excluded from society in general due to age, disability, gender, social class etc.**

Key Message 2: Greater Investment in Human Resources

**Create more human resource development programmes for people with special training needs to insure their active participation in the work force.**

Key Message 3: Innovation in Teaching and Learning

**Develop special teaching and learning methods adapted to the requirements of those groups who would benefit the most from the opportunity to learn.**

Key Message 4: Valuing Learning

**Create a system of 'formal recognition' for all types of non-formal learning.**

Key Message 5: Rethinking Guidance and Counselling

**Ensure that everyone can easily access good quality information and advice about learning opportunities throughout Europe.**

Key Message 6: Bringing Learning Closer to Home

**Provide lifelong learning opportunities as close to home as possible and in the home when possible.**

These must be taken into consideration in the Action Plan to insure that lifelong learning policy is credible for NGOs working in the social sector and their interest groups.

While the suggested measures to be taken might seem idealistic (and at times unrealistic), they give a good insight into how 'lifelong learning policy' might be made more relevant for NGOs in the social sector.

Roisin Mc Cabe<sup>15</sup>  
July 31, 2001

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to stress that the opinions in this paper are not the author's own, but the opinions of those interviewed and surveyed.

## ANNEX I

### **Method of Research Used for this Consultation**

An article was published in the bulletin of the Platform of European Social NGOs to inform members about the consultation and to arouse their enthusiasm. Lobbying was done at different Social Platform events to stress the importance of NGO's active participation in the consultation process.

Initially, I tried making appointments for individual interviews, but members expressed a preference for using a questionnaire method to give them more time to think about the questions and to consult with their local members.

In order to insure the success of this method, a 'pre-questionnaire' meeting of platform members was held. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare members to fill out a questionnaire on the memorandum. The consultation process was explained, a copy of the Memorandum was distributed and the questionnaire was reviewed to make sure that each of the questions was clear and easy to understand. The questionnaire originally contained the 'questions for debate' at the end of each of the key messages in the Memorandum.

However, many of the NGOs felt that they were unable to answer or give an opinion on these questions since they were not directly relevant for the work they were doing. They also felt that some of the key messages (eg. Message no. 1: 'New Basic Skills' and message no. 2: 'More Investment in Human Resources' ) were more suited to enterprises and organisations dealing directly with education than NGOs in the social sector.

To overcome this problem, I tried to adapt the questions making them relevant to the subject of the key messages, but also relevant to the NGOs in question. I felt that this was the best approach to insure their response and participation while keeping to the format required by the Commission.

A brainstorming session was then held to help members come up with ideas for the Action Plan. Members were then given two weeks to fill in the questionnaire. A 'best practice' form was sent separately to members to stress the importance of gathering concrete examples for the Action Plan. Follow-up interviews and phone calls were held after receiving the completed questionnaires and 'best practice' forms. Nine out of twenty nine members responded. This week response can be partly explained by the bad timing of the consultation – this is the busiest period of the year for NGOs since they are preparing for their Annual General Assemblies or Board of Director meetings as well as many internal and external activities that must be finished before the holidays.

Since many of the National Consultations were closed before I started working on this project, it was too late to activate national members to participate in them. To overcome this problem, I contacted them and ask them to either write a report or fill in a questionnaire and offered an invitation to the NGO conference in September as an incentive. However, of the fifteen Member States, we only received one report and

two completed questionnaires. Most national members felt that it was not worth their while contributing if the national consultation was already closed (in spite of trying to convince them of the contrary). The Memorandum states that '*the Member States, who are responsible for their education and training systems should lead this debate*'. However, if experts are working at European level, better co-ordination between European and national actions is necessary in the future to give as many groups as possible the chance to contribute.

## Annex II: List of Examples of ‘Best Practice’ from NGO’s in the Social Sector

Country and Organisation	Title	Description
France	The ‘ <i>Junior Association</i> ’	An initiative to help young people under 18 years of age set up their own association
Arbeit und Leben, Germany	‘ <i>Paid Educational Leave in Europe: A Strategy for Promoting Lifelong Learning</i> ’	A research project investigating the provisions for paid educational leave in a number of Member States
TAU-Groep, Belgium	‘ <i>Renaissance – Resources for lifelong learning for managers and employees in the social care sector</i> ’,	Resources for lifelong learning for managers and employees in the social care sector.
AFEV France	‘ <i>Un Petit Coup de Pouce</i> ’	Project where university students can volunteer one hour per week to help school children in disadvantaged areas with their homework.
UK	<i>Universities of the Third Age</i>	Learning circles for retired people over fifty who come together to learn a subject.
Belgium	‘ <i>Seniorweb</i> ’	A website set up and run by retired people to help other retired people learn to use the Internet
La Ligue d’Enseignement, France.	<i>Le Salon d’Education</i>	Large annual exhibition by service providers in education open to the public.