

# WiSaR

## Regional Economy-oriented Strategy for Lifelong Learning



Education and Culture DG

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# Regional Economy-Oriented Learning Strategy for Lifelong Learning

## I. Defining basic terms

### Lifelong Learning

The term lifelong learning (LLL) was defined in the Memorandum of the European Commission on Lifelong Learning as a targeted constant education activity, the aim of which is to improve knowledge, skills and competence. In the latest Communication to the European Council on Implementation of the Lisbon strategy, the European Commission views the LLL as a concept roofing all systems of education –formal, non-formal and informal, as well as ***all levels of education, pre-school education, primary school, secondary school, and higher education as well as further education.***

**See:** Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council No. 1720/2006/EC.

- **Formal Education**

It is an intentional activity and takes place as an organised and structured activity, depending upon the place, goals, time and means. It applies to institutions assigned for education and training. **It leads to acquiring qualification** and receiving officially recognised documents.

- **Non-formal Education**

It takes place aside the main ways of education and occupational training and usually **it is not concluded by issuing of an official document that would confirm the acquired qualification.** It can be organised at schools apart of their main activity, in organisations, which were created for supplementing the programs of education in the formal system, at workplaces, at interest organisations, etc.

- **Informal Learning**

It is a natural part of everyday life. Contrary to formal and non-formal learning, it does not have to be intentional and conscious. The learning person does not even have to recognise how this learning contributes to his/her knowledge and skills.

- **Lifelong Guidance**

It is a complex of counselling and guidance services, provided with focus on various disciplines. In closest relationship to the LLL strategy and building the knowledge economy, the lifelong career guidance is being perceived, from the spectrum of these equal value services as „the assistance to individuals of any age during the decision making in issues of education, occupational training, choice of employment and career development in any phase of their lives“.

## Regional Development

### 1. Regional Profile

The Nitra region spans over 6,343.4 sq km, i.e. over 12.9 % of the Slovak Republic. It is located in the south-western part of Slovakia. In the South, it borders with Hungary, in the East with the Banská Bystrica region, in the North with the Trenčín region and in the West with the Trnava region. It is divided into 7 districts: Komárno, Levice, Nitra, Nové Zámky, Šaľa, Topoľčany and Zlaté Moravce. On December 31, 2007, the population of the Nitra region was 706,158 - the third highest among the regions of Slovakia; 51.62 % of the population are women. It is the fifth most populated region of Slovakia. There are 345 municipalities in the Nitra region, out of which 15 have the status of a town; 47.03 % of the population lives in these towns. In 2006, the average age of the region population was 39.04 years. What the nationality structure of the Nitra region concerns, Slovak nationality is dominant (70.2 %), followed by Hungarian nationality (27.15%). Other nationalities, like the Roma, Czechs and Moravians represent less than 1 % of the population. The adult population education structure of the Nitra Region is on average level, most of the population has a decree from an occupational secondary school, a specialized secondary school decree without the school leaving exam (30 % altogether) or basic education including unfinished school education (31%). Complete secondary school education and complete secondary school education including a school leaving exam can be found in 29 % of the adult population; 8 % of the Nitra region inhabitants have a university decree.

## 2. Employment Structure

The economy structure correlates to legal business subjects located within the region. They influence not only the production of GDP, but also the employment level of the region and the salary level. The concentration of businesses in the individual districts is strongly influenced by the number towns, which provide more localization factors and benefits for the entrepreneurs. On December 31, 2006, there were 62,103 legal subjects listed in the organization register. Out of the total number of registered subjects, 21.3% were legal persons. Similar to other regions, most of the legal subjects were natural persons with a share of 72.7 %. There 200 cooperative businesses in the region, concentrated primarily in the districts of Nitra, Nové Zámky, Levice and Komárno. There are more than 4 thousand non-profit organizations registered in the Nitra region. Form a territorial point of view, most of the region enterprises are located in the district of Nitra. A low concentration of enterprises shows the district of Zlaté Moravce. If the entrepreneurial activity of the Nitra region was to be judged by the number of enterprises per 1,000 economically activate inhabitants, then it must be said that this activity is lower than the average of Slovakia. In the Nitra region, there are 25 legal persons per 1,000 economically active inhabitants, whereas the Slovak average is 36 legal and 134 natural persons. Based on the number of people employed in the various industries, the economy structure of the Nitra region can be described like this:

- the dominant economy segment is industry, which in all of its branches employs a total of 30.8 % people,
- the various branches of the public administration, e.g. the educational system, public health, social services, i.e. the branches providing public service, are the second largest employer in the Nitra region, right after the industry. The branches of public administration employ 23.5% of the people working in the region. The largest employer if public administration is the educational system,
- the third largest branch are trade and businesses services, which employ 18 % of the people working in the region,
- the various branches of agriculture employ 8% of people. The influence of these branches is considerably higher in comparison to other regions,

- the construction industry is the fifth largest employer of the region, 6.5 % of people work there
- the transport industry employs 5.8 % of people
- the real estate and other business activities in the region employ the same number of people as the transport industry,
- financial services, the hotel and restaurant industry employ the rest of the working people, i.e. 1.6 %.

The Nitra region experienced the arrival of the most foreign investments among all the regions in Slovakia. These investments were mediated by the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO), as presented by the SARIO statistics in the years 2002 – 2008. During this period, 56 investors came to the region. Third to the regions of Bratislava and Košice, the Nitra region provided the most job opportunities, when all the industries of the national economy are taken into account, including public administration. The highest employment rate is in the Nitra district. The town of Nitra is the largest municipality of the region. Other towns are concentrated in its vicinity. The Nitra region is one of the regions with the lowest nominal wage (second to the region of Prešov). The part of the population that is economically active bears valuable potential for the economic development of the area. The number of economically active inhabitants living in the Nitra region has a slightly increasing tendency. Men are more economically active than women. Districts with the highest percentage of economically active people (over 48 %) are Šaľa and Nitra, other districts find themselves in the interval between 44.5 % (Komárno) to 47.6 % (Topoľčany)

### **3. Unemployment Rate and Its Structure**

At present, the unemployment rate is at 11.72 %, but shows a decreasing tendency. Of all the regions of Slovakia, the Nitra region has currently the highest number of open jobs waiting to be filled. Regional differences on the level of districts show various trends in the development of the level of the unemployment rate. Apart from the district of Levice, all the districts of the Nitra region reached a lower unemployment rate than the nationwide average in 2007. Apart from the district of Nitra, all the

districts of the Nitra region have unallocated labour force at their disposal and it is necessary to find a suitable utilization for it.

Current structure of the unemployment rate:

Among the most endangered categories on the job market are juveniles and graduates. Within the Nitra region, the districts of Topoľčany (9.3%), Zlaté Moravce (7.6%) and Nitra (6.4%) show the highest unemployment rate in this category. In other districts, this indicator is below the regional average (6.2%). Other endangered job market categories include women taking care of children, people of lower education, physically challenged people and people of higher age.

Considering how long people stay unemployed, the Nitra region finds itself within the intentions of the development of the whole country of Slovakia. A problem that is becoming significant in the region is long-term unemployment (12 months and longer). More than 50 % of the unemployed people are listed in this category. This problem is typical for the districts of Levice and Nové Zámky, where 53 % of these people are located.

#### **4. Offer of Training, Education (formal and non-formal) Institutions**

The current educational and upbringing system of Slovakia comprises pre-school institutions, primary schools, secondary schools (gymnasiums, secondary occupational schools, conservatories and centres of practical education), schools for pupils who did not finish primary school at schoolable age, special schools (primary, secondary, practical schools and specialized occupational schools), and schools of interest education, universities and institutions of further education. The establishers of the listed schools, pre-school institutions and interest organizations are self-governing regions, municipalities, the Church and the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The education priority is the execution of the right to choose the education freely and thus the creation of conditions for everyone to live to the fullest and become successful on the European job market. Apart from the basic education activities, schools represent the cultural, sports and social centres in the area of the individual communities. However, the systematic solution of the National Programme of Upbringing and Education of the Slovak Republic introduced a change in the quality

and quantity on various management levels. It initiated changes in goals, content, methods and forms, change in the status of teachers, change in the relationship between teachers and students in schools. The rationalization of the network of schools, pre-school and educational institutions leads to:

- the optimalization of management and operational costs,
- more effective use of human resources as well as the technical and material equipment of schools,
- a more flexible and effective strategic management of schools,
- the creation of space for a wider offer of quality educational services and options for individual choice of educational paths,
- more opportunities and better availability of other financial resources (e.g. Eurofunds).

### **Kindergartens**

The most numerous group of pre-school upbringing participants are five-year-olds. This corresponds with the effort to prepare them for compulsory school attendance. The development tendencies in the number of these children mirror the population development of the Nitra region, as their number is closely connected to the demographic development of the region. In the school year of 2003/04, there were a total of 431 kindergartens in the Nitra region, 426 were state-run and 5 Church-run. A total of 18,380 children attended the state-run kindergartens; the Church-run kindergartens were attended by 147 children. Due to the unfavourable demographic development of the region, the number of state-run kindergartens decreased gradually by 6.5 % in the year 2007/08. On the other hand, the number of Church-run kindergartens did not change in the monitored period and the number of classes and children attending these schools even increased. At present, the demographic indicators of the Nitra Self-governing Region show signs of improvement (more newborns) and the interest in kindergarten services increases, as well.

## **Primary schools**

The unfavourable demographic development affected also a number of primary schools. In the school year of 2003/04, there were a total of 350 grammar schools in the Nitra region, out of which 333 were state-run and 17 Church-run. A total of 67,673 pupils attended state-run primary schools, 3,387 pupils attended Church-run schools. In the following school years, the number of state-run primary schools in the region gradually decreased. In the category of Church-run schools, no new schools were established in the particular time period and during the course of five years their numbers did not change. However, the number of classes and pupils attending Church-run schools decreased. The highest decrease in the number of state-run primary schools was recorded in the district of Komárno.

## **Secondary schools**

The main goal of secondary school education is the stimulation of upbringing and educational activities and processes. Lowest in numbers were gymnasiums, but their numbers increased in the monitored years by 8 %. The highest decrease in numbers experienced secondary occupational training centres (SOU), almost by 40 %. The number of secondary occupational schools decreased by 26 %. Their number stabilized at 32 schools. This was the result of a gradual increase of secondary joint schools. Whereas in 2002/03 only one secondary joint school existed, in 2005/06 there were already 16 of them. In the school year of 2007/08, dominant among secondary occupational schools were secondary industrial schools (41.1 % share) and schools of economy (35.3 % share). These types of schools were attended by most of the students. In the school year of 2008/09, the Nitra Self-governing Region had 74 schools and educational institutions. The structure of these schools comprised 16 gymnasiums, 37 secondary occupational schools, 5 business academies, 5 secondary industrial schools, 3 joint schools, 1 pedagogical and social academy, 2 secondary health care schools, 1 language school, 2 centres of practical education and 2 school homesteads.

## **Universities**

The Nitra region houses 2 public universities with nationwide activities and one private university. Nitra is the seat of the Constantine the Philosopher University with its 5 faculties (Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Central European Studies, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care) and Slovak University of Agriculture with its 6 faculties (Faculty of Agrobiology and Food Resources, Faculty of Biotechnology and Food Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Management, Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development, Horticulture and Landscape Engineering Faculty, Faculty of Engineering). Apart from these two universities, there is also the Theology Institute of St. Gorazd operating in Nitra, which prepares Catholic priests (it is part of the Comenius University in Bratislava). Komárno is the seat of the private University of J. Selye with its 3 faculties (Faculty of Economy, Faculty of Reformed Theology and the Faculty of Education), where the teaching language is Hungarian. In the district of Komárno also operate extended working stations of the University of Economy Sciences and Public Administration and the University of Technology, which have been accredited in Hungary. The town of Komárno is also the seat of the Schola Comaromiensis, which offers extramural studies for citizens of Hungarian nationality, the West Hungarian University (Faculty of University Education – Győr, Faculty of Pre-school Education - Sopron), University of Horticulture and Food Industry (Horticulture Faculty– Kecskemét) and the Theology Institute of J. Calvin.

All the universities in the region show a perspective for further development. The strategic goal of the universities is to link specialized orientation of faculties with practice, support interfield studies and shape the upbringing and educational process as an open three-stage study model that complies with the Bologna Process and the legislative regulations of the Slovak Republic, as well as the requirements dictated by the practice.

## **Establishments and institutions of after-school upbringing and free-time activities for children and juveniles**

The education of children and juveniles in Slovakia utilizes two approaches: the first one is formal and represented by a network of schools and educational institutions,

the second one is informal and used by institutions and establishment for after-school upbringing and free-time activities. The informal way of education stimulates young people towards acquiring competence, skills and abilities, and at the same times supports their personal growth. After a decrease in the school year of 2005/06, the development in the number of free-time establishments for children and juveniles in the Nitra region became stabilized in the school year of 2007/08. A fluctuating development was recorded in the number of school clubs and language schools. A gradual decrease in the number of school clubs until the school year of 2006/07 was replaced by an increase in their numbers in the year 2007/08. This development relates to the reduction of schools, where the school clubs were based in. After an initial increase, the number of language schools stabilized in the school year of 2005/06. The number of primary schools of art increased in the monitored years by 23.5 %. This increase is the result of the increasing number of private primary schools of art in the Nitra district, where their numbers more than doubled. In other districts of the Nitra region, the number of primary schools of art did not change.

## **5. Strengths and Potentials**

### Strengths of the Nitra Self-governing Region

- Natural Conditions
  - Favourable geographic location
  - Great variety of natural environments and a high biodiversity of the area
  - Significant deposits of ground water
  - Significant deposits of non-metallic materials
  - Significant deposits of geothermal, healing and mineral table waters
  - High potential for utilizing alternative energy sources
  - Favourable natural conditions for agriculture
  - Favourable conditions for the implementation of selected specific activities of tourist trade

- Human Resources

- Increase in the number of people in productive age
- Increasing number of economically active inhabitants
- Sufficient amount of qualified labour force in the research and development department

- Economy

- Sufficient amount of free and green zones for building industrial parks; presence of large companies operating in fields with a high level of added value
- Increasing number of direct foreign investments with higher added value
- Agricultural and breeding traditions
- Presence of tourist trade centres of international importance

- Cooperations, Partnerships

- Good experience with implementing financial mechanisms that support cross-border cooperation
- Implementation of pioneer projects on the field of cross-border cooperation
- Functioning network of international contacts between scientific and educational institutions

### Opportunities in the Nitra Self-governing Region

- Economy

- Development of industries based on the utilization of the region's natural potential (multifunctional agriculture, specialized food industry with high added value, rural tourism, agrotourism, thermal spas, city tourism)
- Development of industries based on the region's location potential (combined transport)

- Development of industries with higher added value (electrotechnical industry, chemical industry)
- Development of third sector industries (citizen services, crafts, consulting and information-providing services)
- Increased attractiveness of the region for investors through the completion of transport infrastructure, including ship transport and its linkage to international transport corridors
- Increased attractiveness of the region through the renovation of historical, cultural and technical monuments and landmarks
- Utilization of the research potential and the activation of the region's innovation potential through the creation of a research and development cluster

- Social

- Increase in the scope and quality of the offered social services
- Completion of the local infrastructure

- Environmental

- Increase in the quality of the environment through the implementation of low-waste and waste-free technologies into the production processes
- Introduction of a cooperative and coordinated protection from natural disasters, as well as the introduction of crisis management
- Better use of the potential of renewable energy sources
- Minimalization of waste production through the implementation of complex waste separation and recycling systems

- Institutional

- Linking the education system with needs and requirements of the job market

- Cooperation and a coordinated advance during the promotion of development intentions through the development and institutionalization of intersector partnerships
- Increasing the citizens' participation level on the decision-making and management through supporting informatization - networking of information systems
- Coordination of the concepts and strategies of the development of neighbouring cross-border regions
- Strengthen the support for research and innovations through Euro funds in the new planning period
- Promotion of interdisciplinary approaches and teamwork of multiple research institutions
- Opportunity to utilize financial resources from the EU structural funds
- Strengthening microregions for the integrated development of rural areas through the LEADER program

## **6. General outline and vision of the region**

### Visions of the Nitra Self-governing region

The Nitra region will become one of dynamically developing regions through utilizing internal and external development sources. The economy will be based on modern technologies that provide products with high added value. Modern and effective multifunctional agriculture will produce a plenitude of quality groceries, offer attractive job opportunities for the rural population and together with tourist trade will become an axis of integrated development of rural areas. These goals will be accomplished thanks to a quality education system, which will offer better career and personal life opportunities for citizens. The increasing quality of life will be accompanied by a sustainable development of the quality of the environment and its elements.

### Global goal of the strategic development of the Nitra Self-governing Region

The global goal is to increase the competitiveness of the Nitra Self-governing region in the common European area through a long-term sustainable growth of the economy,

through increased protection of environmental and countryside elements and through better life conditions for its inhabitants. By achieving the global goal of the program, which is based on the adopted common vision, the Nitra Self-governing region strives for the following until the year 2013:

- Share of the regional GDP in the national GDP at **15 %**.
- Regional GDP at **65 %** of the EU.
- Unemployment rate at **7 %**

Strategic development goals of the NSR

Strategic goals are based on key development issues as defined in the five areas of social life and the economy of the region.

- Strategic goals of the economy  
Achieve long-term stability of economy development through a diversified structure, where industries producing high added value prevail, as well as those that utilize endogenous resources of the region. The economy performance of the region will be among the first half of all the regions of Slovakia.
- Strategic goals of the environment  
Secure long-term sustainable area development with special emphasis on lowering the risk of the occurrence of events and processes that influence the quality of environmental components (or reducing the effects of their negative impact) through building and developing environmental infrastructure facilities and increasing environmental awareness of the region population.
- Strategic goals for HR  
Long-term balanced growth of the level of studiedness, accompanied by an overall increase of the employment rate and with special emphasis on endangered groups of inhabitants. Optimization and modernization of social infrastructure facilities towards European quality level with emphasis on individual client approach.

- Strategic goals for transport and technical infrastructure  
Modernization and improvement of transport infrastructure security within the trans-European transport system, which will enable effective transport of people, goods and services at subregional level and a connection to international transport corridors; better availability and increased attractiveness of towns and municipalities of the Nitra region.
- Strategic goals for cooperation, partnerships and regional management  
Achieve intense cooperation on regional, supraregional, or international level through supporting the establishment of mutual partnerships, which utilize an effectively operating self-government that offers a high level of staff education and high quality technical equipment.

With regards to accepted strategic goals, a set of specific goals was created, which monitor their achievement. For the period of 2008 -2015, the Nitra Self-governing Region defined 12 priorities, which create a basic structure of the program's development strategy:

- Science, research, innovations
- Industry and services
- Tourist trade
- Agriculture
- Protection of the environment
- Sustainable area development
- Education and job market
- Social infrastructure
- Supraregional transport infrastructure
- Regional and local transport infrastructure
- Territorial and interregional cooperation
- Modern management procedures in the regional self-government

## 1.2 Regional LLL strategy

### 1. Main points of national and EU documents

Current trends in lifelong learning (LLL), which are almost completely identified in the strategies of individual EU member states, list the following main components:

- **Complexity and flexibility of the LLL system**

The strategies mention both formal and non-formal systems of education on all its levels, from pre-school to adult education. This way the LLL system enables the learning person to pass between the formal and non-formal system and hence provides him or her with the option to choose a flexible education path. At the same time, the system allows to recognise achieved education at any point during lifelong learning. The lifelong guidance enables orientation within this system.

- **Qualifications framework and qualifications systems in LLL**

These tools are important primarily for orientation purposes of all the participants of education (the learning individual, the education institution, the employer, the state), which is required from them by the labour market. Qualification standards are describing knowledge and skills, which are necessary for carrying out a particular job. To know the requirements of the labour market means to adjust education to a particular goal in the form of achieved qualification.

- **System of modules and credits in LLL**

Another function of the qualifications system is to provide a framework for the division of education programs that lead to obtaining a qualification (full or partial) into shorter units (modules), which are awarded credits according to their importance and significance. The purpose of the modules lies with the fact that the learning person can adjust the speed of his or her proceeding during education (he or she does not have to pass the entire education program at once) and on the other hand it does enable the learning person to have some of his or her modules (credits), achieved beforehand in the framework of education achieved in another education institution.

- **Open access to LLL**

This component can be understood in several dimensions. The first is the proximity of the actual education opportunities in the form of local education centres or available e-learning education programs. Another one is the availability of education options in the sense of financial and material education requirements. The access to LLL can finally be also perceived through the form, in which education is being provided, as various age, social and economic groups of citizens have different requirements for the pedagogic and didactic implementation of education. It is also necessary to prepare teachers and lecturers for the new demands in education.

- **Organisation of LLL**

In the EU, great emphasis is put on effective allocation of lifelong learning investments, carried out predominantly by local participants on lifelong learning (local self-government, education institutions, employers, trade unions and non-government organisation and citizens). In order for lifelong learning to be successful, regional partnerships of participants are preferred, which are able to identify both the current and future needs of the regional labour market best and which are capable to mobilise the entire education potential. The last important part of LLL organisation is permanent and targeted promotion.

The Slovak Republic currently adopted the strategy of LLL and LLC, as well as the new Life Long Learning Law. However, these have not been put into practice in full extent. Therefore, it can be said, that a functioning system of life long learning and lifelong guidance that would address the issues of the citizens and the society, is not existent. This situation does not meet the requirements of the employers, the public administration and self-government, nor those of educational institutions (public or private), i.e. the requirements of the four most important players within the human resources and employment development. Current subsystems of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance in Slovakia are neither mutually open nor linked. They do not enable the citizens to acquire necessary knowledge and qualification (as dictated by the development of employer requirements) throughout the period of their active lives flexibly enough. Considering the high tempo of the economy development in the

country, it would be only logical to anticipate an increased need for frequent and flexible qualification changes from the side of the citizens and an increased need to fill positions in new professions from the side of employers. However, there is no time and no financial resources to acquire new qualification only via the formal education system.

### **Characteristics of the Shortcoming of the Current Education System and Guidance**

In the last decades, the education and guidance system responds to the needs of the labour market in the Slovak Republic insufficiently, which shows predominantly in the following:

1. absence of an open system of lifelong learning for the labour market,
2. insufficient ability of the formal system of education to respond to arisen needs of new qualifications through creating and implementation of new learning and study programs flexibly enough,
3. mutual exclusiveness between formal and non-formal systems of education,
4. absence of the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal education for the purpose of obtaining qualification,
5. the state does not guarantee high quality of non-formal education,
6. absence of continuous monitoring and surveying of educational needs on national level,
7. absence of a lifelong guidance system in all the phases of education and active life,
8. insufficiently transparent and effective way of investing in both formal and non-formal educations and informal learning,
9. insufficient development of key competences in lifelong learning,
10. prevailing gender stereotypes.

The shortcomings listed above manifest themselves especially in the particular educational and consulting subsystems.

**The formal system of** education shows a high level of separation and a relatively low ability to constructively utilise complementary functions of non-formal systems of education with the aim to shorten the time that is required for obtaining new qualification or extension of the original one. Except for a few exemptions (e.g. fire protection technicians, tourist guides), it issues, officially recognised qualification certificates.

The most significant system deficit is the low ability of the formal system of education to respond flexibly to newly created professions and to the implementation of new technologies and innovations into practice by creating new learning and study programs. The length of the process of creating and implementing new learning and study programs is often too long. This does not correspond with the needs and demands of the employers and practice.

**The non-formal system of education** is extraordinary for its ability to instantly respond to new educational needs, to innovation and implementation of new technologies by creating „tailor made“ education programs.

Its deficit is that it does not provide formally recognised certificates of partial or full qualification and also that it does not have a state controlled quality management system, which would provide high quality non-formal education that equals the quality of formal education.

**Informal learning** is at present the least utilised subsystem of education. It is based on the natural abilities of perceiving and learning. It has the potential to lead towards obtaining formally recognised qualification. It also provides all the conditions necessary for practical mastering of professions (learning by doing).

The **services of lifelong guidance** are in the Slovak Republic provided primarily under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The current system of guidance does not cover certain groups of citizens sufficiently: the employed population, craftsmen and the self-employed, unregistered unemployed, population in the post-productive age and other marginal groups.

## **Tools for Creating an Open System of LLL and LLC**

In order to create a new, open system of LLL and LLC, it was necessary to identify and define key tools, which will help the new system during start-up, followed by gradual putting into practice.

The key tools for establishing a new, open system of LLL and LLC are:

### **a/ Monitoring, Survey and Prognosis of Education Needs**

Monitoring, survey and prognosis were implemented into the legislature in order to create condition for citizens, employers, the public administration and educational institutions so that they can respond to the changing needs of the labour market through education, according to current needs.

### **Basic Structure of the Education Needs Survey Model:**

- *identification of target groups for education needs analysis*
- *identification of the sources of education needs development of selected target groups and formulation of the required competences*
- *planning of the education needs analysis*
- *realisation of the education needs analysis*
- *preparation of recommendations resulting from the education needs analysis*
- *implementation of recommendations*
- *predicting future development of education needs*

In case of utilizing the generally applicable model of education needs survey, a standardisation of the education needs survey will be achieved, which enable a more precise development prediction.

## **b/ Creating an Information System for Lifelong Learning and Guidance**

The information system will become an effective tool for the free access of citizens, employers, public administration and institutions to education and guidance, and at the same time, it will be a bilateral communication tool for its clients. The draft of the information system for non-formal education, which will adequately complement the current formal education information systems, is designed as a concept outcome of a national project called „Creation, Development and Implementation of the Open System of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic for the Needs of the Labour Market“

### **Basic Structure of the LLL Information System:**

- *database of certified education institutions*
- *database of certified lecturers and managers of non-formal education*
- *database of accredited education programs in form of modules*
- *database of subjects authorised to validate of learning outcomes of non-formal education for the purpose of obtaining qualification.*

### **Among the Users of the LLL information system will be:**

- The information system administrator(the ministry or an authorised national authority)
- Individuals
- Institution – receiver of education
- Institution – provider of education needs analyses
- Institution – provider of education

### **Functions of the LLL information system:**

- Certification of education providers
- Accreditation of education programs/activities
- Certification of lecturers and managers of non-formal education
- Authorisation of subjects authorised to validate learning outcomes of non-formal education for the purpose of obtaining qualification
- Non-formal education innovation centre

- Supplementary modules of the information system
- Search for education activities
- Link to other databases

### **c/ Creating a Management System Within the Framework of Lifelong Learning And Guidance**

The current system focused on quality management in the subsystem of formal education. It is anchored directly in the legal regulations dealing with formal education on all levels. Until now, quality management in non-formal education systems was non-existent. Based on the new strategy and legislature, it will be provided by the national authority established by the Ministry of Education. The national authority will grant accreditations to programs of non-formal education based on modules. Credits will be assigned to individual modules, lecturers, managers and consultants of non-formal education. This will guarantee the state's control over the quality of lifelong learning and guidance.

### **d/ Recognition of LLL Outcomes**

Recognition of non-formal education and informal learning outcomes is one of the key components (subsystems) of the lifelong learning system. It strengthens the position of LLL as one of the development tools of a knowledge-based society. There are two ways for the recognition:

- \* Credit system for non-formal education programs
- \* Recognition of the outcomes of non-formal education and informal learning to persons from the practice by the national authority

In the process of accrediting education activities for the non-formal system of education, which is anchored in the new Lifelong Learning Law, also modular programs will be accredited (it will not be an obligatory process). During the accreditation, they will be assigned a respective number of credits, in the extent of

non-formal to formal education ratio of 1:3. The procedure of assigning of credits shall be determined by special regulation. A citizen who obtains a specific number of credits for participating on education activities in the non-formal system of education will be able to accumulate these credits according to his/her decision and with the support of lifelong guidance he/she will be able to shape his/her partial or full qualification according to his/her needs or the needs of the local labour market.

Accreditation of education programs modules in non-formal education which assigns a particular number of credits will provide for vertical permeability and shorter time needed for occupational training. The variety of offered modules will enable a flexible response to the changes in the needs of the labour market and also provide a corresponding specialisation of the labour force, whereby it will also free the formal system of education from the need of preparing of narrow study specialisations. Due to a special regulation, the national authority can define procedures for credits recognition of education programs in institutions of non-formal education, which are not accredited, do not utilize modules and do not have credits assigned. Thus the credit system will enable recognition of credits obtained for a defined extent and way of graduating the education program, respectively modules in further education for credits transferred into formal system of education. For example an x number of accredited modules of education programs = fulfilled condition for being admitted to the final exam necessary for obtaining an occupational certificate or occupational certificate + x accredited modules of education programs = fulfilled condition for passing the secondary school leaving exam, etc. On one hand, this procedure shall provide for adaptability of the labour force and on the other hand enable obtaining of a required qualification in a relatively short time.

In the case of educational institutions programs, where the courses were not accredited by the modular system and do not have credits assigned, the practice in the field of study will be taken into account for the purpose of acknowledging non-formal education results.

## e/ Securing LLL Financing Tools

The aim is to evaluate the possibilities of financing lifelong learning in the Slovak Republic with the emphasis on multi-source financing and to put them in the form of a legal norm. This means that apart from individuals the state should also participate in financing lifelong learning in the form of national grants. Among other participants should be: the regional self-government, employers from both public and private sector and the bank sector. Resources from the EU structural funds, primarily from the European Social Fund, could also be used for financing lifelong learning within the framework of the following activities:

- Improvement of lifelong learning quality
- Development of human resources in further education
- Support for Learning Regions and the creation of networks within lifelong learning
- Support for lifelong learning in the particular sectors
- Making access to lifelong learning easier
- Development of key competences through lifelong learning
- Improvement of permeability between sectors and levels of formal and non-formal education and informal learning

During the preparation of the strategy of the LLC systems of Slovakia, multiple political strategies and specialized documents were utilized, the most important of them being:

- **The Lisbon strategy**

A new strategic goal for the European Union for the forthcoming decade was set in Lisbon in March 2000 – to build the most competitive and most dynamically developing economy based on knowledge, with a greater social coherence and higher employment level.

- **Conclusions of the European Council in Brussels on March 25 – 26, 2004**

(9048/04) The Spring summit of the European Council discussed the priorities of the

Lisbon Strategy. In the document, the EU member states were addressed to adopt their national strategies and to implement them until 2006.

- **National Lisbon Strategy and National Reform Program**

The Competitiveness Strategy of Slovakia until 2010 (National Lisbon strategy) is the most important complex document, in which the effort to increase the competitiveness of the Slovak economy and to increase the potential of human resources for the needs of knowledge-based economy is declared.

- **Program Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the years 2006 – 2010**

The Program Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic for years 2006 – 2010 sees its task in a more effective and better quality fulfilment of the National Lisbon Strategy (MINERVA), especially in these areas: investment in human resources, education and employment, innovations, science and research, the information society and entrepreneurial environment

- **National strategic reference framework of the Slovak Republic for the years 2007 - 2013**

The program period between 2007 and 2013 is the first program period for the Slovak Republic, during which it will have the possibility to utilise resources from the EU funds during the entire time span of this period, based on the National strategic reference framework document (NSRF). This document defines options of financing lifelong education within the framework of the Education operation program.

- **Millennium**

The National program of education and training in the Slovak Republic for the upcoming 15 to 20 years, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 1193 from December 19, 2001, created a philosophical and conceptual framework for identifying and declaring political and social goals, interests and priorities in the area of education.

- **The Framework strategy of lifelong learning in the Slovak Republic**, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 157 from February 25, 2004 – the first document with conceptual character in the Slovak Republic, it defines priorities and interests in the area of lifelong learning, as well as the management of processes of their implementation with a particular time schedule.
- **The national project „Creation, Development and Implementation of the Open System of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic for the Needs of the Labour Market“**, designed an open system of lifelong learning for the needs of the labour market, roofing and interconnecting the areas of monitoring and survey of education needs, quality management in non-formal education, recognition of non-formal education learning outcomes for the purpose of obtaining qualification and financing of lifelong learning. Apart from the conceptual outcomes, the project will be concluded by a draft of the Lifelong Learning Law.

## 2. Regional LLL Strategy Attuned to the Regional Development Strategy (referring to 1.1)

### **LEARNING REGIONS**

What economy indicators concerns, there are significant differences between the regions of Slovakia. These differences are in the employment and unemployment rates, labour productivity, etc. and are closely connected to the education level of the population. In regional politics, these differences are permanently in the centre of attention. The long-term strategic goal of regional development in Slovakia is the gradual decrease in the differences between the regions' standards of living. One of the ways of removing these differences in regional development is a varying stimulation level of the dynamics of economic and social processes, as well as the effort to reach a well-balanced development of municipalities and regions. In order to reach this goal, tools are created and used, which have a stimulating effect upon the development of economy. One of these tools are Learning Regions.

It is in the state's competence to oversee the implementation regional politics, as well as in the competence of Higher Territorial Units (HTU). Self-governed regions prepare

medium-term development documents – programs of economic and social development, which are consistent with superior programming tools and at the same time serve as a basis for processing programs for economic and social development of municipalities.

The key to the success of regional development is therefore the combination of regional and central approach, whereas the central approach respects regional and local specifics of the demographic development, the development of the unemployment rate and the creation of new jobs, the specifics of education and special trainings, with emphasis on the needs of a knowledge-based society.

### **a/ Definition of a Learning Region**

A Learning Region is an area, where regional subjects cooperate on the field of lifelong learning and together learn how to solve local or regional problems in partnership cooperation of local and regional subjects. Learning Regions comprise primarily these institutions:

- All types of schools and educational institutions in the region
- Further education establishments
- Higher Territorial Units and municipalities
- Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (OLSAF)
- School establishers
- Employers, occupational unions, associations and chambers
- Non-government organizations

Learning Regions partnerships do not copy the territorial and administration structure of the state, but, if necessary, are established also in small areas or municipalities. There can be multiple partnerships (networks) established within a Learning Region, these will be aimed at achieving various goals.

In connection with Learning Regions, two types of networks can be established:

- **Theme networks** represent a common platform for discussions and the exchange of information about important issues from the field of lifelong learning, strategy

formulation and research. They offer an overview of a particular field in local or regional context; they aid in a more precise criteria determination for the quality of education and spread the results of their activities.

- **Project networks** are specific institutional networks, which have already taken part in projects solutions on the field of lifelong learning and are interested in maintaining mutual contact. They also represent a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience from practice; they increase the interest in joining an international cooperative active on a particular field and present the project results to a wider public.

The purpose of Learning Regions is to provide support during the creation of networks of subjects interested in the development of lifelong learning. This purpose will be fulfilled through a regional lifelong education strategy formulated and approved in cooperation; through establishing partnerships for project implementation on the field of lifelong learning, as well as through preparing regions for utilizing finances from Eurofunds during the program period of 2007-2013.

### **b/ Motives for Creating Learning Regions**

One of the main motives for creating local and regional partnerships is the conviction that a joint approach towards problem solving is far more effective than isolated activities of individual subjects. Other motives:

- utilizing various competences and qualifications of the individual partners
- opportunity to exchange opinions, experience, concepts, methods and strategies
- opportunity to analyze the education content in more detail and prepare an attractive offer based on the expectations of potential education participants
- implementation of projects that require multiple partners
- overcoming the isolation of institutions and organizations
- avoiding plans and projects duplicity
- joint drawing of financial resources

- access to a wider circle of people interested in education
- development of new structures and bonds in the regions
- greater publicity
- economic motives

### **c/ Main goal of Learning Regions**

The main goal of Learning Regions is to support the establishment and implementation of the regional strategy of lifelong learning and guidance in the regions while at the same time respecting the principle of partner networks and utilizing results of regional innovation strategies.

### **d/ Specific Goals**

Specific goals of Learning Regions are aimed the following areas of operation:

- regional and local support of lifelong learning and guidance
- increasing the motivation of the citizens to educate themselves further
- increasing knowledge (key competence) and the level of studiedness in the region
- linking education with the requirements of the job market
- increasing the employment rate
- structural development, mobility
- developing the ability to learn
- increasing the quality and effectiveness of education
- securing education accessibility while maintaining equality of chances for everyone

### **e/ Establishing Regional Networks and Partnerships**

A partnership is a group of representatives and individuals, created with the purpose of cooperating on the educational, social and economy development of the region and its municipalities. An important step towards building a partnership is to make sure that all the participants know what a partnership is, what their responsibilities are, as

well as the outputs that are expected to result from the partnership. The decisive factor in creating effective partnerships is to find the right partners and clearly define their roles. Good partners can be found with the help of your own contacts or with the assistance of mediation agencies – professionals – consultants. The process of preparing partner networks requires mastering the communication strategy with potential partners.

### **f/ Process of Establishing Partnerships**

There can be several impulses for establishing partnerships. Stimuli that lead to the establishment of a partnership can be:

- initiated “from below”, i.e. from the region itself where a need for better cooperation and coordination arose
- initiated “from above”, i.e. on central level, if the strategic approach is accepted as the correct solution for a certain problem
- initiated by the initiative of an individual - citizen

The basis for successful partnerships is the ability to know how to utilize both the local and regional potentials, the ability of all the partners to communicate about problems, agree on a common vision and program, to maintain own motivation and the willingness of other partners to cooperate. In order for the establishment and operation of partner networks to be successful, it is necessary to pay increased attention to the following principles of partnership:

- communication – communication strategies for planning specific types and forms of means to spread complex information about strategic intentions, goals and priorities of the region,
- transparency – elimination of unjustified suspicions of using biased judgement, incorrect decision-making, or manipulation with financial resources
- trouble free information provision – provide enough information about the selection and evaluation process, monitoring and financial drawings, etc., and provide it on time

- equal rights for all the partners
- cooperation of partners during carrying out tasks
- sincerity and forthrightness in the communication process

### **g/ Activities of Learning Regions**

Partnerships within Learning Regions are aimed predominantly at the following activities:

- establishing a strategy aimed at the development of lifelong learning and guidance in the region they represent
- creating a favourable environment for the active participation of key partners and a reasonable link between related activities and projects, which will bring benefits to the region and its population
- utilizing local impulses that lead towards the improvement of the employment rate
- creating an environment that supports innovations,
- establishing partnerships, partner networks, consulting and information centres
- creating motivation tools for the education of the region population,
- creating conditions for educational activities that are generally available to all the citizens of the region
- securing better orientation in the offer of educational activities and education guidance
- carrying out surveys, analyzing education needs on regional level
- preparing, submitting and implementing projects, applying for financial aid from the European Social Fund, evaluating results and implementing them
- raising the awareness of the local population about the importance of continued renewal, replenishment and spreading of knowledge, competences and skills throughout the whole life via further education

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF THE NITRA SELF-GOVERNING REGION FOR LLL**

In November 2008, the Program for the Economic and Social Development of the Nitra Self-governing Region for the years 2008 – 2015 was created on the level of the Nitra Self-governing region, which replaced the Program for the Economic and Social Development effective until 2003. The main aim was to involve key regional partners and the public in its creation and update. The determining subjects that influenced the preparation of this program material were the representatives of municipalities and microregions, entrepreneurs, occupational organizations, educational institutions and also the non-profit sector. The update of the document of the Program for the Economic and Social Development of the Nitra Self-governing Region was carried out by a solution team based on a part-by-part approach, where each part was submitted for public discussion.

The Program of the NSR is a medium-term program document, which contains predominantly:

- the analysis of economic and social development, development of the environment and culture in the region, main directions of its progress, goal-setting and determining of its primary needs
- identified districts and municipalities that need support in order to achieve a balanced development of the region
- the tasks and primary needs of the development of technical infrastructure, social infrastructure for environmental protection, education, culture and other areas
- a proposal of financial and administrative backing,
- in order for the aim of the Program measures to be effective, it is important to consider also the territorial and segmental disparities within the region and apply effective situation solving tools in the selected areas

Program materials comprise the analytical part aimed at analyzing resources and analyzing problems (SWOT) and then there is the strategic implementation part (defining a development strategy, territorial priorities and an implementation

framework). Whether in the analytical or strategic implementation part, the program materials deal with the issues of LLL and LLG in several chapters.

Within the SWOT analysis of the Program of Economic and Social Development of the NSR 2008-2015, the **key problem** in the area of **HR** was determined to be **the insufficiently developed human potential**. Three specific problems were identified:

- Lack of qualified labour force
- High proportion of handicapped job applicants
- Low level of income

In connection to the specific problems listed, the following areas that are responsible for them have been determined:

- **Insufficient level of education infrastructure**
  - The buildings and equipment of school facilities are physically and morally worn down
  - Weak interconnection between the education system and the requirements of the job market and practice
  - Out-of-date didactic methods and equipment used in the teaching process
- **Insufficiently developed education system with regards to job market requirements**
  - Inapt qualification structure of available labour force
  - Insufficient labour force mobility
  - Low level of cooperation between the public and private sector on the field of education
  - Insufficiently developed system of lifelong learning
  - Insufficiently developed system of career guidance
- **Insufficient level of social infrastructure and social services**
  - Absence of selected social services

**Specific Strategic Goals and Measures Regarding LLL as Defined in the Program of EaSD of the Nitra Self-governing Region:**

**OS III :**

**Human resources**

**Priority:**

**Education and labour market**

**Specific goal 16:**

Improvement of the occupational preparation of the youth and specialized trainings for workers by supporting the cooperation of institutions and structures that secures the link between the educational sphere and the labour market.

**Measure 16.1**

Adjust the job market labour force according to the requirements of the employers.

**Specific goal 17**

Improve the conditions for employing marginalized groups of the population.

**Measure 17.1**

Develop programs that would support the decrease in the number of the unemployed, long-term unemployed and specific groups of unemployed people.

**Measure 17.2**

Improve the educational level of marginalized groups of people and people with special educational needs, special emphasis being laid on the support of child education.

**Specific goal 18**

Expansion of the lifelong learning system of education according to the needs of the job market and broader needs of cultivating human potential, support of the improvement of the adaptability of workers and businesses in order to lower the unemployment rate.

**Measure 18.1**

Develop lifelong learning.

### **Measure 18.2**

Improve the adaptability of workers and businesses; support the creation of new jobs.

<b>OS III:</b>	<b>Human resources</b>
<b>Priority:</b>	<b>Social infrastructure</b>

### **Specific goal 20**

General development of the school system, support of the modernization and optimalization of education infrastructure, better education conditions.

### **Measure 20.1**

Develop and modernize school infrastructure, optimize the school network.

### **Measure 20.2**

Modernize the education system, support educational projects and activities aimed at further development and increase the quality of the education process in schools.

### **Specific goal 24**

Development of infrastructure, technical equipment, institutions and spare-time activities of the population – cultural and sports events, free-time education (libraries, theatres, cinemas, information centres, sporting grounds, hobbies, spare-time organizations, etc.), taking care of the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

### **Measure 24.1**

Support free-time activities.

<b>OS V:</b>	<b>Cooperation, Partnerships, Regional management</b>
<b>Priority:</b>	<b>Territorial and International Cooperation</b>

### **Specific goal 31**

Development of universal cooperation between regional partners in the region area during the implementation of development intentions aimed at lowering regional disparities.

#### **Measure 31.2**

Preparing strategic and conceptual development documents, action plans.

#### **Specific goal 32**

Improvement in the quality of public administration services on regional and local level.

#### **Measure 32.3**

Create a system of specialized education within the self-administration.

### **3. Guiding Instructions for the Implementation of the Regional LLL Strategy**

Resulting from the previous data, the Program of the EaSD 2008-2015 of the NSR contains a thoroughly elaborated analysis of resources and issues; it defines strategic goals and implementation frameworks until 2015. If the strategic intentions are to be put into practice and not stay on theoretical level on some paper, it is necessary to work with the material, amend it and gradually implement it on the basis of action plan.

Therefore, 3 workshops with focus groups of representatives of 11 key organizations that provide formal and non-formal education within the NSR took place within the WISaR project. During these meetings, strategic materials dealing with LLL and LLG were presented; these had been accepted on national and also on regional level in Slovakia. The meetings took place in the form of round tables. The representatives developed SWOT analysis which is the part of our regional strategy of LLL developed within WISaR project. Based on a SWOT analysis, the participants identified the following strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of LLL and LLG within the NSR:

**Strengths:**

- Good cooperation between the institutions of public administration within the NSR in the area of lifelong learning (local partnership of social inclusion, cooperation between the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra)
- Sufficient number of accredited subjects offering non-formal education of high quality
- Sufficient number of institutions offering formal education on all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary)
- Acknowledgment of formal education certificates by the employers
- Existing motivation standards for the education of pedagogic employees
- Presence of a commission for further education in the NSR
- Flexible work force
- Presence of a university of the third age at the Constantine the Philosopher University (CPU) in Nitra
- The effort of the CPU in Nitra to respond to the requirements of the market through creating new fields of study (e.g. career counselling)
- Institutions of non-formal education are able to respond to the needs of the job market in a flexible manner
- High interest in non-formal education, predominantly by the older generation
- High interest in non-formal education by the unemployed, who acquire not only skills, but also self-confidence and social background (e.g. opportunity to communicate with other education participants)
- Complex information system about education opportunities for the unemployed provided by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (OLSAF) in Nitra
- Functioning system of non-formal education within the counselling centres of OLSAF in Nitra
- Good cooperation between the Regional Counselling and Information Centre in Nitra and the OLSAF in Nitra on the field of counselling for the unemployed
- Career counselling services provided by the OLSAF
- Occupational counselling services provided by the OLSAF
- Programs of non-formal education aimed at the integration of the handicapped

**Weaknesses:**

- Insufficient cooperation between partners in the Nitra Self-governing Region, predominantly between private and public institutions
- There is no independent rating system that would evaluate the quality of lifelong learning, it is needed mostly on the field of non-formal education
- There is no complex information system (portal) that would cover the broad spectrum of institutions and activities of LLL within the Nitra Self-governing Region
- There is no system that would rate the quality of accredited education institutions that offer non-formal education
- Insufficient communication between the entrepreneurs and specialized schools on the subject of what the job market requires
- The employers did not define educational needs of their employees, they usually do not acknowledge non-formal education certificates during hiring
- Non-formal education of pedagogical staff – there is no continuity in acquiring credits (previously acquired credits are not acknowledged), no effective system of credit acquiring in operation, which lowers the overall quality
- Formal education cannot respond to the needs of the labour market in a flexible manner, people usually do not work in the field of their study
- Lower level of formal education
- Students are not interested in occupational secondary education
- year, it should be made available throughout the whole program period
- Absence of multi-source financing of lifelong learning, there are no alternative financial resources for lifelong learning planned after the conclusion of structural funds financing
- The timing of financial resources being ineffective, it does not allow effective planning of educational programs on the field of non-formal education (all the prompts take place at the same time, there is nothing long after)
- Shortcomings in the administration of financial resources of the SF from the side of the governing body, high level of bureaucracy
- Insufficient financial resources for counselling activities for the unemployed
- Absence of an agency for supported employment of the handicapped within the Nitra Self-governing Region

- The establishment of a private social services facility is risky
- Social services monopoly of the public sector, discriminating conditions for private providers of social services
- Insufficient opportunities for integrating handicapped people into the healthy population within lifelong education
- Insufficient informedness about the possibilities of educating the handicapped and also their family members
- Insufficient informedness of the public about the educational needs of the handicapped
- Lack of modules for lifelong education of the Romas

### **Opportunities:**

- Establishing a lifelong education rating agency
- Establishing a complex information portal that would cover a broad spectrum of institutions and lifelong education activities within the Nitra Self-governing Region
- Support non-formal education, accessible also in higher age
- Support other forms of non-formal education for the unemployed (education of the unemployed not only improves their skills and knowledge, but also develops their personality and motivates towards becoming successful on the job market)
- Improving the unemployed education flexibility
- Create an agency for supported employment of physically and mentally challenged people in the Nitra Self-governing Region
- Provide career and occupation counselling for the OLSAF in Nitra in cooperation with the CPU
- Coordinate activities that deal with career and occupation counselling
- Utilize traditional trades and culture within the lifelong education process of the handicapped within non-formal education
- Create new education centres for the handicapped in the Nitra Self-governing Region that would be focused at a complex preparation of the handicapped for employment
- Initiate a public discussion about the needs of lifelong education of the handicapped
- Create a grant scheme on the level of the NSR in order to support non-formal lifelong education

**Threats:**

- Insufficient will of the representatives of the HTU to accept our proposal (Learning Region)
- Persisting consequences of the global crisis
- Ineffective financing of lifelong learning

The representatives of the participating organizations have in the final conclusion identified more opportunities for cooperation within the NSR. One of them will be the creation of a “Working group – i.e. a consulting team of experts from people who participated at the 3 workshops with focus groups organized within WISaR. This working group which is created from experts invited for workshops WISaR will be invited by NSR for the meetings who will prepare additions to the strategic material for the Program of EaSD of the NSR 2008-2015 and also secure a gradual implementation of specific strategic goals and measure by preparing action plan 2011-2013. This proposal was pre-approved also by representatives of the NSR who attended the meeting. Apart from preparing and implementing the LLL and LLG strategy within the Program of EaSD of the NSR 2008-2015, the “Working group” could bring new contacts and joint projects with the financing possibility by the OP Education and thus enable better utilization of structural funds in the NSR.

**Realized steps for developing regional strategy during 3 workshops with focus group:**

- Organized the 1st focus group and discussed the following issues:
  - strategic materials dealing with LLL and LLG
  - discussed the creation of a “Learning Region” in the conditions of the NSR. The session participants:
    - defined basic goals and aims of the Learning region
    - identified basic strategic goals/priorities that are going to be addressed, based on the given SWOT analysis

- determined the form of the Learning Region – whether to become part of an existing counselling body or create a new one
- „Regional Economy- Oriented Learning Strategies for Lifelong Learning” document was sent to members of the work group that attended the workshops with focus groups aimed at the regional strategy and SWOT analysis
- Discussed the materials, submitted suggestions via e-mail
- Organized 2 focus group with the topic of finishing the LLL strategy. The session participants:
  - discussed about “Working group”
  - defined basic goals and aims of the “Working group”
  - agreed on a communication strategy with the NSR
  - harmonization of specific goals and measures of the Program of EaSD of the Nitra Self-governing Region
- Organized 3rd dissemination workshop with focus group and during this workshop was:
  - presented the final version of „Regional Economy- Oriented Learning Strategies for Lifelong Learning”
  - presented the progress of the project and its future project activities
  - distributed project leaflets to associated institutions and to target group
  - presented the future plans of Nitra Self-governing Region in cooperation with institutions participated at all WISaR workshops
  - presented the steps of implementing suggested strategy in Nitra region

**Suggested steps for implementing the LLL strategy within the NSR:**

- Name representatives of the “Working group” who will communicate with the representatives of the NSR and set a time schedule of the meetings
- Meet with the representatives of the NSR, agree on a cooperation, set cooperation rules
- Elaborate on the set strategic goals and thus prepare action plan, carry them out
- Evaluate the implementation of action plan and suggest new strategic goals

**Harmonization of the specific goals and measurements of the Program of the Economic and Social Development of the Nitra Self-government region developed by working group within WiSaR project**

**Specific goal 16:**

Improvement of the occupational preparation of the youth and specialized trainings for workers by supporting the cooperation of institutions and structures that secures the link between the educational sphere and the labour market.

**Measure 16.1**

Adjust the job market labour force according to the requirements of the employers.

Opportunities from SWOT analysis

- Improving of acceptance of documents (certificates) from non-formal education of employees
- Increasing of employers awareness about the need of non-formal education of employees and increasing their motivation to provide non-formal education to employees
- Providing career and occupation counselling, coordination of activities of the University of Constantine the Philosopher with Nitra regional labour office (utilization of potential of new study department Career consultancy in University of Constantine the Philosopher)

**Specific goal 17**

Improve the conditions for employing marginalized groups of the population.

**Measure 17.1**

Develop programs that would support the decrease in the number of the unemployed, long-term unemployed and specific groups of unemployed people.

Opportunities from SWOT analysis

- Support other forms of non-formal education for the unemployed (education of the unemployed not only improves their skills and knowledge, but also develops their personality and motivates towards becoming successful on the job market)

### **Measure 17.2**

Improve the educational level of marginalized groups of people and people with special educational needs, special emphasis being laid on the support of child education.

Opportunities from SWOT analysis

- Create an agency for supported employment of physically and mentally challenged people in the Nitra Self-governing Region
- Create new education centres for the disadvantaged group in the Nitra Self-governing Region that would be focused at a complex preparation of the disadvantaged group for labour market

### **Specific goal 18**

Improving of the lifelong learning system of education according to the needs of the job market and broader needs of cultivating human potential, support of the improvement of the adaptability of workers and businesses in order to decrease the unemployment rate.

### **Measure 18.1**

Develop lifelong learning

Opportunities from SWOT analysis

- Establishing a complex information portal that would cover a broad spectrum of institutions and lifelong education activities within the Nitra Self-governing Region

## **Measure 18.2**

Improve the adaptability of workers and businesses; support the creation of new jobs.

Opportunities from SWOT analysis

- Analysis of needs of small and medium companies of Nitra Self-governing region from view of quantity and quality of Human resources on the job market with the active cooperation of companies. The results of analysis will serve to as base for a design of new school educational programs
- Development of new pedagogical skills for teachers, so that the pedagogical employees do understand the needs of small and medium company in region( with the cooperation of company provide to teachers practice in highly modern technological facilities to learn modern production approaches)
- Creation of training centres for LLL- creation of regional network of educational institutions, which will contribute to preparation of HR which increases the competitiveness of companies.

### **The aspects of sustainability of WiSaR regional strategy and new opportunities for cooperation in Nitra region**

#### Sustainability

All policies, strategies and plans play their important part in contributing to a sustainable future for the region Nitra. The future sustainability of the project WiSaR in Nitra region will be managed and coordinated by very strong and the most influential representative which is called Nitra Self-governing region. The global goal of Nitra Self-governing region is to increase the competitiveness of the Nitra Self-governing region in the common European area through a long-term sustainable growth of the economy, through increased quality education system, which will offer better career and personal life opportunities for citizens and through better life conditions for its inhabitants.

One of the main aims of Nitra Self-governing region is to link the education system with needs and requirements of the job market. This aim will be accomplished thanks

to a quality elaborated Regional Economy-oriented Strategy for Lifelong Learning developed in accordance with the Program for the Economic and Social Development of the Nitra Self-governing Region for the years 2008 – 2015 (the Program of EaSD of the NSR 2008-2015) by the group of experts from Nitra region within WiSaR project. Moreover developed Regional Strategy will encourage the development of growth employment sectors in Nitra region.

In order to achieve a sustainable development, project team of WiSaR focused on cooperation of “Working Group” which has been created from regional experts (regional enterprises and stakeholders, the representatives of Labour office in Nitra, directors from higher vocational schools, representatives of Nitra Self-governing Region, educational institutions, experts from University and also the non-profit sector) who participated at the 3 workshops and at the implementation of Delphi method organized by COOP within WiSaR project. Moreover COOP Institute of Education has been already included in new developed “Working Group” of key decision-makers, which will contribute to the Regional Strategy’s sustainable development objectives. “Working Group” in cooperation with Nitra Self-governing Region has already organized 2 meetings which were dealing with preparation of additions to the strategic material for the Program of EaSD of the NSR 2008-2015. The meetings of “Working Groups” and their outputs will secure not only a gradual implementation of specific strategic goals and measure by preparing action plan 2011-2013 but also support sustainability of the strategy implementation in region. The “Working Group” and representatives of key decision-makers Self-governing Region agreed on involvement of regional strategy (developed within WiSaR) in public material “the Program for the Economic and Social Development of the Nitra Self-governing Region for the years 2008 – 2015.” This strategic document and organized meetings of “Working Group” have already ensured the transformation of developed regional strategy to educational institutions, University, Vocational schools, Labour Office of Nitra and to other public bodies.

## New opportunities

Regarding new opportunities, which project could bring to Nitra region there are 3 basic lines:

1. Cooperation between training institutions and institutions of job market- It is necessary to establish long-term cooperation between this two kind of subject because training institution without knowledge of job market condition couldn't train, educate and prepare students with right qualification. Practical information about news on job market and its needs should be provided to training institutions only by the subjects which has direct experience- entrepreneurs, labour offices, companies, job agencies etc.
2. Cooperation between training institutions-job market institutions-decision makers- During WiSaR was developed cooperation between representatives of Nitra-self governing region which provide us the opportunity to participate in decision making and education legislative creating process on regional level. Participants now have regular access to news from prepared changes in education and training process could provide comments, objectives, additions and feedback to strategic materials and could participate in decisive meetings. For future is important to maintain this contact and to develop the relationship with Nitra self-governing region, because it is key player and main decision maker in education field in Nitra region.
3. Cooperation with similar region abroad- due to the project partnership we have opportunity to recognize and to develop a cooperation with similar region in partner countries. Another form of cooperation should be exchange of information and experience in educational field in transnational level. Foreign partners could provide us advices, transfer of legislative and good practise.