Reconciling the social investment imperative with the Stability and Growth Pact: is there a need for a ‘golden rule’ for education spending?

*Insights from the ‘Actors, practices and challenges of non-formal and informal learning and its validation in Europe’ project*

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Social Developments in the EU OSE-ETUI Conference

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Preliminary: education as a non-material investment with short and long-run benefits (1/2)

- The Citizens’ initiative: «Invest in Education»
  notably supported by economists, civil society, …

- Education as an investment: short and long-run benefits
  In the short run: economic needs of the moment
  In the long run:
  - renewal of offer and structure of skills and inclusive economic activity
  - intergenerational impact: through parental education

- Individual benefit of education for:
  - wages (returns to education)
  - employability (relevance of lifelong learning)
Preliminary: education as a non-material investment with short and long-run benefits (2/2)

- The importance of education for fragile populations
  Three populations in particular:
  - young people leaving secondary school without a qualification
  - older workers (low average level of education)
  - migrant workers

- Persistent difficulties for low educated people
  ➔ the recent European Vacancy and Recruitment Report 2014 by the European commission (June 2014)
Insights from the « Actors, practices and challenges of non-formal and informal learning and its validation in Europe » project (1/4)

- The aforementionned evidence pleads for:
  - an increased *mobilization of skills*
  - *recognition and enhancement of skills*
    ➔ *utmost importance of public policies/initiatives in the fields of E&T*

- Public policies, strategies, initiatives in the fields of E&T
  - Europe 2020, E&T 2020, work of the social partners…
  - a quite innovating (and growing) aspect: the recognition of skills through *validation of non-formal and informal learning*
    ➔ the ‘Actors, practices and challenges of non-formal and informal learning and its validation in Europe’ Project by Alpha Group Team for ETUC
Insights from the « Actors, practices and challenges of non-formal and informal learning and its validation in Europe » project (2/4)

The project:
- panorama of practices of validation of « NFIL »
- survey in ten UE countries
- non-formal and informal learning (NFIL): may have been acquired in professional or private settings, outside educational institutions
- validation: certification after evaluation of skills that are required to match some specified standards

Wealth and diversity of the national experiences in NFIL validation
- large diversity in the existence and/or maturity of validation practices…
- … in a national framework or local settings
- quite recurrent complexity of the existing validation systems
Insights from the « Actors, practices and challenges of non-formal and informal learning and its validation in Europe » project (3/4)

- Importance of social partners involvement in the vocational training and validation of NFIL systems:
  - upstream: by the definition of occupational standards in Sectoral councils
  - downstream: the role of collective agreements in companies and sectors

- Validation of NFIL: for smooth/balanced professional paths and transitions?
  - raises employability (employees)
  - better awareness of skills offer (companies)
  - encourage education systems to a better articulation skills/degrees
    ➔ quite flexible way to acquire/valorize competences (modularity…)
    ➔ validation of NFIL: should not be a « ghetto », should participate with VET systems to raise skills

- A UE concern
  - Cedefop guidelines for validation, UE definitions…
  - the recent European Council Recommendation on NFIL recognition and validation (Dec. 2012)
In favor of the « Invest in Education » Citizens’ initiative?

- crucial role of E&T and of public policies, european strategies, Community Law, tools (e.g. EQF, ESCO) in the field to stimulate enhancement and recognition of skills in EU
- at the present time: some acquired social rights frozen or called into question in many EU countries …

→ a major concern that, in a way or another, E&T wouldn’t be ringfenced
- especially in a long run perspective (only losers)
- … access to E&T: a Community acquis, a fundamental right to protect and anticipate

Insights from the « Actors, practices and challenges of non-formal and informal learning and its validation in Europe » project (4/4)