

7. THE TERRITORIAL DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION

Niamh Moore-Cherry <niamh.moore@ucd.ie>

Delphine Ancien <delphine.ancien@ucd.ie>

School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy

University College Dublin (Ireland)

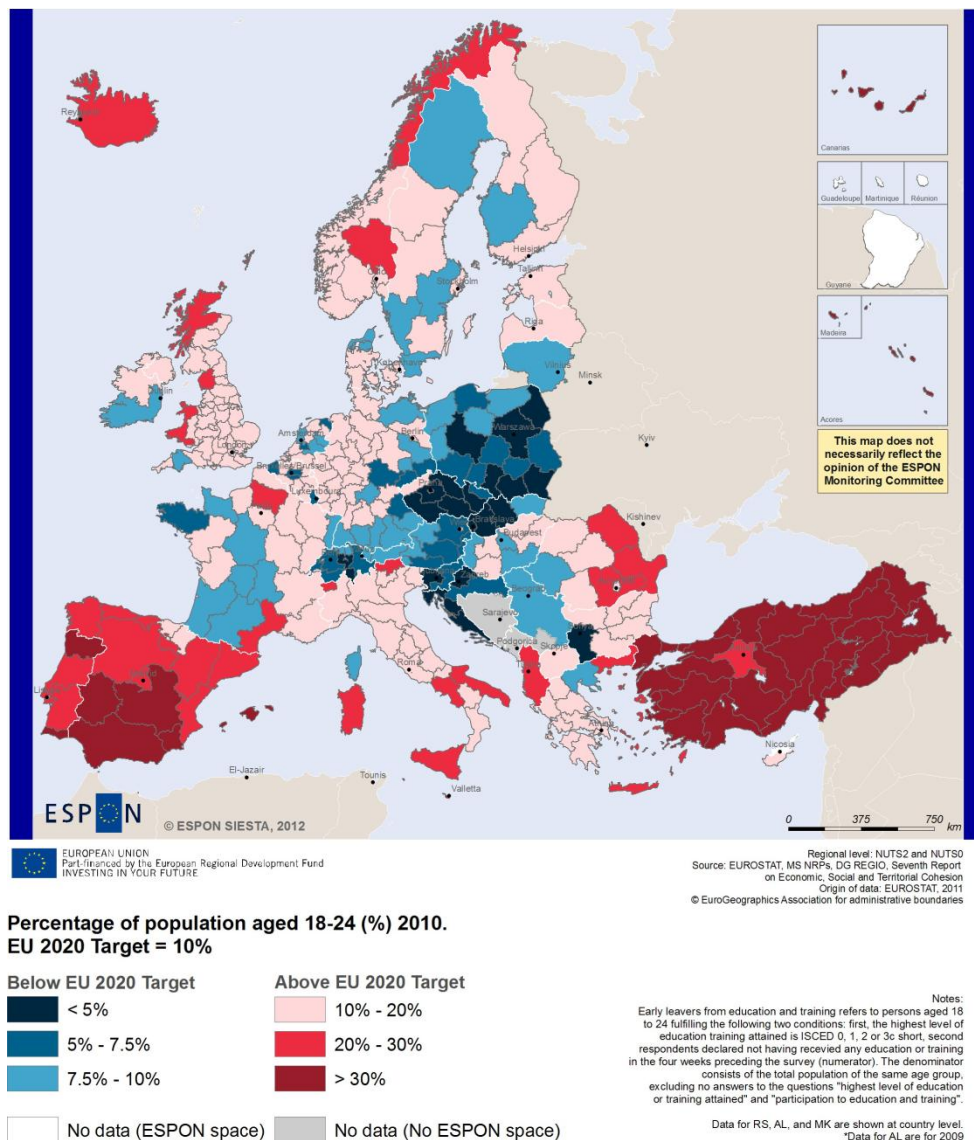
7.1. Introduction

For all citizens to participate fully in society and to improve employability, a basic level of education is required. Education is a key factor in preventing poverty, achieving social inclusion objectives, and in ensuring that Europe can develop a “smart growth” agenda because the growing numbers of knowledge-intensive jobs require higher levels of education and those with low levels of qualification could potentially be significantly excluded (Lennert *et al.*, 2010). The transition towards a more knowledge-intensive economy can only take place with increasing levels of education. Carneiro (2006, p. 98) specifically argues that “education directly affects individual employment and earnings and therefore it contributes to income inequality for a given cross section of individuals”. The EU2020S itself associates high levels of early school leaving with a range of negative impacts on individuals, societies and economies (European Commission, 2011a); improving educational attainment is therefore critical for the development of a smart, inclusive and sustainable Europe.

7.2. Early School Leavers

Across the EU27, the average rate of early School leaving in 2010 was 14.9% but this masks significant variation across European territories. This is one of the headline indicators in the EU2020S which sets a 10% target for early School leaving across Europe. While an important indicator in its own right, it is also an extremely important target in terms of meeting a range of other economic and social inclusion objectives as disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are more likely to be affected by early school leaving (European Commission, 2012). The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion notes that achieving the goal “would be a strong contribution to poverty reduction, since a sufficient level of skills and competences (including digital ones) is indispensable for the employability of young people in today’s labour markets” (European Commission, 2010a: 6). However the Annual Growth Survey of 2012 recognises the difficulty in achieving this target “on the basis of current national commitments” (European Commission, 2011b: 3).

In terms of broad geographical patterns, a broad divide is evident between Southern and Northern Europe, with the former experiencing higher rates of early school leaving than the latter. At the national scale, our analysis indicates that several countries already have exceeded the 10% headline target set by the EU2020S, most of them in the eastern part of Europe – Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia – in addition to Switzerland and Luxembourg. Overall, the Danube Space (except for Bulgaria and Romania) and the Southern part of the Baltic Sea Region are maintaining early school leaving at low rates, including most of Austria and 12 regions of Germany along the eastern and southern borders as illustrated in Map 7.1. In North



Map 7.1. Regional early school leavers from education and training as percentage of population aged 18 to 24 (drop-out rate), 2010.

West Europe, the Northern Periphery, and the Scandinavian part of the Baltic Sea, several regions have also already reached the EU2020S headline target: a quarter of Belgium's NUTS2 regions, almost half of the Dutch regions, half of Ireland's regions, two regions of the UK and nine French ones, alongside over a third of Sweden's regions, one region in Finland, and one in Denmark.

The trend towards higher rates of early school leaving at the regional level in the Southern part of Europe was confirmed by our analysis at the urban scale. This data demonstrates the particularly problematic nature of Southern European cities in general, but especially those in Spain (with 10 Spanish cities at the bottom of our ranking of school non-completion, ranging from 29.1% in Santa Cruz de Tenerife to 37.3% in Valencia), and to a lesser extent in Greece and Bulgaria. Some of this may be explained by concentrations of immigration. However, an encouraging trend in recent years is the

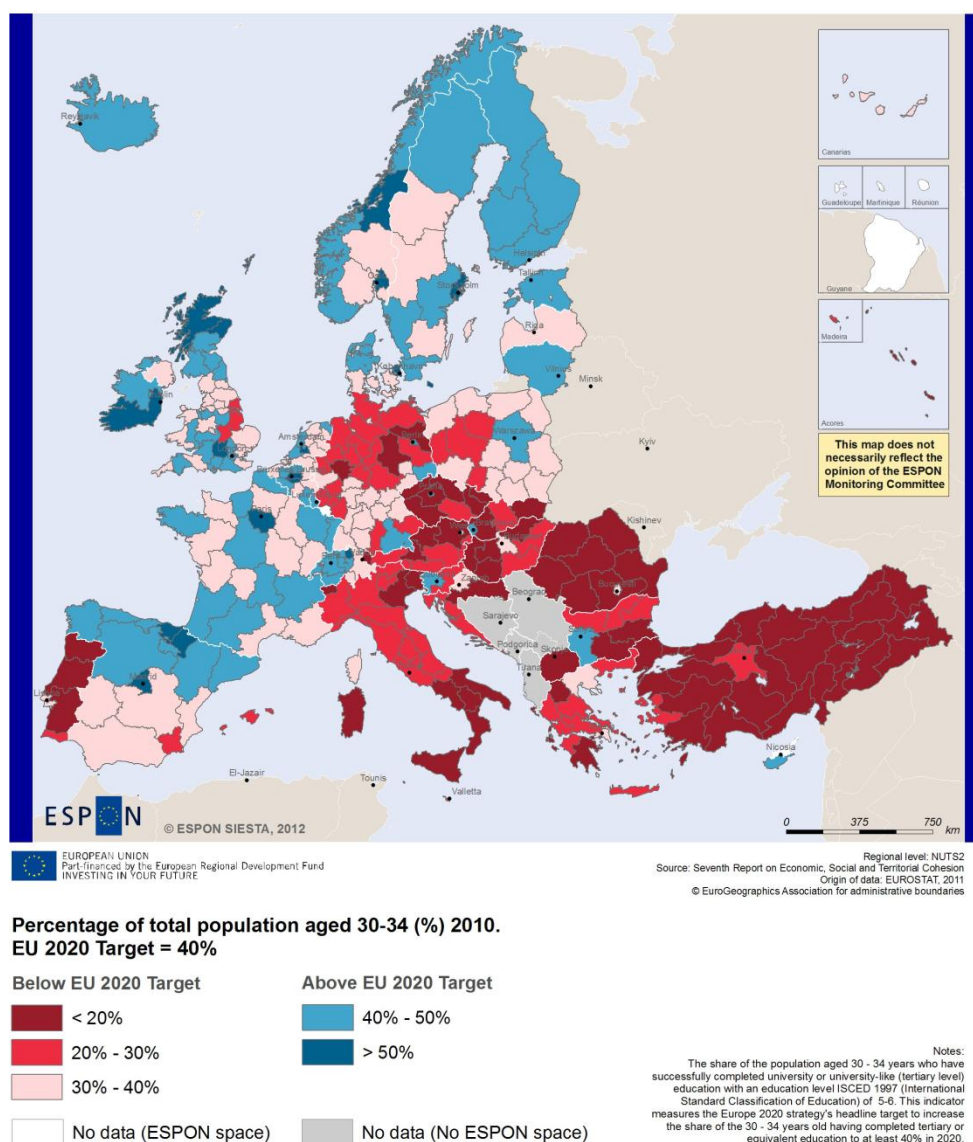
noticeable strides in reducing early school leaving apparent in Greece, Turkey and Spain.

While some low-performing regions such as those noted above are progressing slowly towards their respective national targets, our analysis has also led us to identify a small – but worrying – number of regions previously within the 10% target (2008) but significantly outside of it by 2010, with rates up to 14.2%. Apart from one region in Hungary, all of these regions are located in North West Europe (in France, Germany, and Belgium), in the UK (North-Eastern Scotland) and in Scandinavia (in Finland). This may suggest complacency among high achieving regions with regards to reducing and maintaining low levels of early school leaving. Another modest trend identified is the very significant increases (of over 40%) in early school leaving in parts of North West Europe (in the UK, France, Germany, and Belgium), as well as in the Southern part of the Baltic Sea Region (in Poland) and in the Danube Space (in Romania and Croatia).

Although our analysis does not facilitate the identification of a potential urban/rural divide in early school leaving, cities generally seem to be faring better than regional averages. Finnish and Irish cities are doing particularly well and constitute the top-10 performers, with rates of compulsory education non-completers ranging from 0% for Oulu in Finland to 0.9% for Dublin in Ireland. Interestingly, these cities are also important centres for NBIC technologies (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science and for high-tech and technology-intensive activities). This suggests a significant correlation in urban settings between lower rates of early school leaving and the development of knowledge-based economic activities. Crucially from a policy perspective, what this might also suggest is the existence of a relationship between attitudes toward secondary schooling and perceptions of future employment opportunities as well as further – in particular tertiary or equivalent – training opportunities. This hypothesis is further supported by tendency to higher rates of early school leaving – between 20 and 30% – in remote and outermost areas, as well as coastal zones, such as Iceland; the Scottish Highlands and Islands, West Wales, the Tees Valley and Cumbria in the United Kingdom (UK); several regions of Portugal, Spain and Italy; and Corsica in France.

7.3. Tertiary Education

As economists have long-argued (see for example Lucas, 1988), human capital, as developed in particular through education, is key to sustained economic development and growth. Barro and Lee (2010: 1) argue that “the level and distribution of educational attainment [...] have an impact on social outcomes, such as child mortality, fertility, education of children, and income distribution”. It is therefore no surprise that one of the main concerns of the EU2020S is tertiary education, which is conceived as a key factor in helping EU Member States and regions attain the smart growth objectives of EU2020S. This is particularly addressed in the ‘Youth on the Move’ flagship initiative that aims “to respond to the challenges young people face and to help them succeed in the knowledge economy” (European Commission, 2010b: 3). A priority of the EU2020S is to help integration into a labour market that is increasingly based on the knowledge-economy, by ensuring that the particular skills and aptitudes gained through tertiary education are acquired by as many young people as possible. This will aid the search for well-paid employment in various sectors of the economy, in particular in the estimated “35% of all jobs that will require high-level qualifications [by 2020],



Map 7.2. Regional population aged 30 to 34 with tertiary education, 2010.

combined with a capacity to adapt and innovate, compared to 29% today” (European Commission, 2010b: 2). Higher-level education also increases employability by facilitating greater mobility. With that in mind, the EU headline target of at least 40% of tertiary or equivalent education attainment among the 30-34-year-old group by 2020 was set by the EU2020S. This is a minimum headline target that Europe needs to achieve in order to compete with other advanced capitalist regions of the world where one finds rates of higher education attainment over 40% (e.g. in the United States) and even 50% (e.g. in Japan).

In comparison with the patterns of early school leaving, our analysis of tertiary education attainment, among the general working age population and the younger generation aged 30-34, has shown that many parts of Eastern Europe lag behind their western counterparts (Map 7.2). The poorest performers in terms of tertiary qualifications within the 30-34 year old cohort are to be found in South East Europe, particularly Turkey, and in the outermost regions of Portugal (the Azores archipelago)

and the mountainous ‘spa region’ of Severozápad in the Czech Republic. In addition to the ‘bottom ten’ regions, a further 61 regions were below 20% of tertiary education attainment among those in their early thirties, overwhelmingly concentrated in the eastern part of Europe, primarily in the Danube Space and South East Europe, as well as the Southern part of the Baltic Sea Region and the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin. Most of those regions where rates of tertiary education attainment are low – i.e. below 20%, which is half of the European target – are characterized by economic structures dominated by labour-intensive activities that traditionally do not require advanced education, namely: agriculture, heavy industries and traditional manufacturing, and tourism. However as far as Turkey is concerned, there is an interesting and encouraging trend to note: our analysis has revealed that many Turkish regions are performing better in terms of tertiary educational attainment among the younger group (30 to 34 years old) than among the broader working age population (25 to 64 years old). This suggests a general up-skilling of the population as well as potential improvements in education, in line with the objectives of the EU2020S.

Most of the highest-performing regions on this indicator are scattered across Europe, displaying no particular spatial pattern other than the fact that a lot of them are regions that encompass or border capital cities. There appears a particularly strong relationship between tertiary education attainment and urbanisation. The top performers in terms of this indicator are all – except one, namely the País Vasco region in Northern Spain – capital city regions or regions bordering a capital city region. That includes Inner London, which both ‘produces’ and ‘consumes’ (i.e. attracts and retains) tertiary level graduates in significant numbers (66% of the population aged 30-34 and 53.1% of the 25-64 age group in Inner London has a tertiary education in 2010), the capital regions of Scandinavian countries, the capital region surrounding Paris in France, and the regions bordering the capital regions of the Benelux countries. In all of these regions, in North West Europe and Scandinavia, over 50% of the population aged 30 to 34 had a tertiary education in 2010, highlighting the importance of the urban in general, of capital city’s status in particular, and of university centres and high-tech growth poles, in producing, attracting and retaining highly educated workers. Not surprisingly, many of these regions are also performing very well in terms of various Research and Innovation indicators, making them the main drivers of Europe’s knowledge-based economy today. This does not mean that other regions in Europe are not showing potential as strong contributors to the development and sustainability of Europe’s pool of highly-educated workers (i.e. trained at tertiary level as per our analysis). These include regions outside of North West Europe and Scandinavia, such as București – Ilfov: the capital region of Romania where 39.8% of 30-34 year-olds have a tertiary education i.e. only 0.2% percentage points below the EU headline target of 40%.

There is one exception to the positive relationship between urbanisation and tertiary attainment namely that at the urban scale, the geography of low performers is dominated by cities that were at the heart of old industrial basins traditionally not requiring a highly qualified workforce. Many of these cities are in the Danube Space, more precisely in Slovakia, Hungary and Germany.

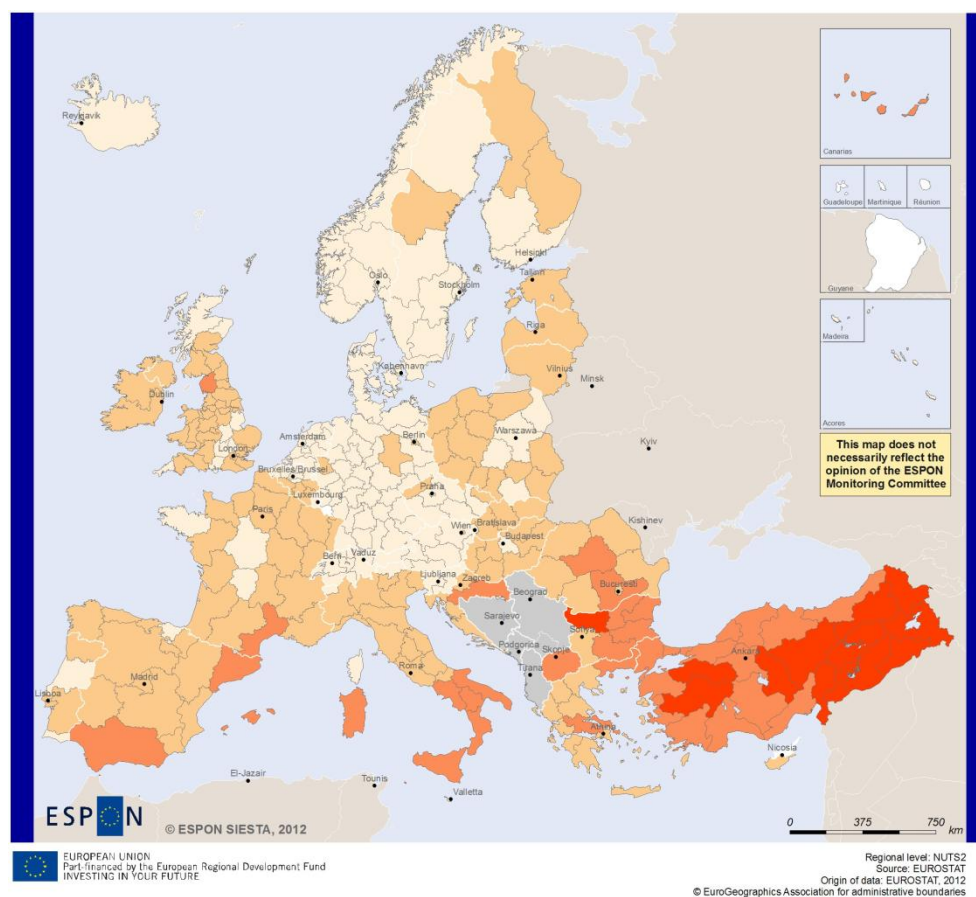
7.4. Young People neither in Employment, Education or Training: NEET’s

At the end of 2011, 16.7% of young people aged 15-24 in the European Union were classified by the EU Labour Force Survey as not in work, education or training. This

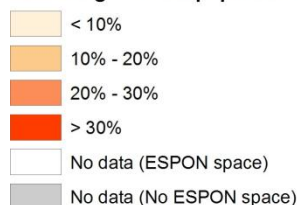
cohort has become widely referred to as young NEET people or ‘NEETs’ and this has major implications for the future supply of skilled labour. The concept of NEET – ‘not in education, employment or training’ – was first introduced in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1999 (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999) and became subsequently widely used by the OECD and some national governments to describe economic inactivity among a particular age group. The current economic crisis has exacerbated the problem as research indicates that young people are the first to lose their jobs and the last to gain employment during a recession (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). This is due to many factors, such as missing opportunities to (re)train, lack of experience and skills, and weak labour-market information and services. Research also suggests that if someone has not worked by the age of 23, they will face long-term damage to their future wages and employment chances (Tomorrow’s People, undated) with long term effects on their well-being (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010). In order to meet objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to satisfy future labour demands, there is an economic imperative to draw those categorized as NEETs back into the labour market. The ‘Youth on the Move’ flagship initiative seeks to do this through four main action points related to labour market training, mobility and activation.

The distribution of regions with lower rates of NEETs (Map 7.3) does not appear to follow a particular geographical pattern other than the fact that, from a macro-regions standpoint, they are mostly located in the Baltic Sea Region, in the Western part of the Danube Space and in North West Europe. That being said, a significant number of regions with higher rates of NEETs (i.e. higher than 10%) are also located in some of those macro-regions, especially in North West Europe. This is the case, for example, of North-Eastern and South-Eastern France and several regions in the Northern part of England and Wales. A significantly variegated geography of NEET populations within particular countries suggests a polarisation of opportunities within national contexts perhaps linked to the geography of R&D investment, knowledge-intensive activities and educational opportunity. For this reason, regional rather than national policies and targets with respect to tackling the issue of NEETs may be most appropriate.

52 out of the 264 regions for which we have reliable data have very high rates of NEETs: rates of 20% or above means that one-fifth or more of people aged 15 to 24 were not in education, employment, or training in 2010. 31 of those regions had rates of 25% or above, 14 had rates of 30% or above, and 5 had rates of 40% or above, all of these located in Turkey, with the Van region displaying a NEET rate of 51.6%. Among the other regions that experienced rates of 20% of NEETs or above in 2010, a significant number are located in the eastern part of the Danube Space, in South East Europe, around the Mediterranean Basin, and in the Northern Periphery/Northern part of North West Europe (i.e. in parts of the UK and in Ireland). It is possible to make a link to peripherality given that many peripheral regions of Europe prominently feature in this category. When comparing data from 2008 and 2010, it looks like this peripheral pattern has been consolidated in places where the most recent financial and economic crisis has hit the hardest. 19 regions show increases of more than 50% in their rates of NEETs between 2008 and 2010, particularly in parts of Spain, Southern Italy, Ireland, Romania, Macedonia, Bulgaria and parts of Northwest England. Cumbria, for example, which was the region with the highest proportional change in early school leavers between 2008 and 2010 emerges as one of the regions that has seen the most dramatic increases in its NEETs rate between 2008 and 2010, far in excess of general trends. The analysis supports earlier research by Quintini and Martin (2006) and Bell and



Percentage of total population aged 15- 24 (%), 2010.



Map 7.3. Regional young population not in work, education or training (as percentage of people aged 15 to 24), 2010.

Blanchflower (2010) that young people are hit proportionally more in a recession. The concept of NEET is a key indicator to inform Europe's growth policy and to make sure that it is inclusive and sustainable. However, while the indicator was initially developed due to concerns about youth being 'at-risk', Marshall (2012) argues that "not all NEET youth are at risk, and specifically targeting this group may come at the expense of others in greater need of policy interventions". Significantly more research on this particular group of youth is required to understand the dynamics of the NEET phenomenon and redress the situation most appropriately.

While our analysis has highlighted specific patterns in relation to this indicator across Europe, also borne out by anecdotal and other published evidence, EUROSTAT urge caution in using the data due to reliability considerations derived from the relatively small sample size in some cases.

7.5. Education Overview

Our analysis has identified a number of strengths, weaknesses, positive trends and challenges across the European territory with respect to education and training, in particular the completion of compulsory education and to tertiary educational attainment. While Europe's cohesion policy aims to enable all regions to develop their full potential in order to promote more balanced regional development (European Commission, 2011c), our analysis has led us to a similar conclusion to the one that has emerged from our analysis of research and innovation indicators. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach focusing solely on convergence toward headline targets would not deliver Europe's 'smart growth' objectives. In line with the statements of the Territorial Agenda 2020 (paragraph 5) document, we argue that "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth can only be achieved if the territorial dimension of the strategy is taken into account, as the development opportunities of the different regions vary".

Although many previous social policy interventions of the European Union have adopted a spatially targeted approach, this should be reinforced and become the driving force for developing policy rather than simply distributing investment and implementing decisions. There is clearly a broad East-West North-South division in Europe with the 'lagging' region varying depending on the indicator under examination. Overwhelmingly South-East Europe and the Mediterranean Basin require specific support in progressing towards the EU2020S educational targets but traditional cohesion/convergence/transition divisions are insufficient to address the root cause of many problems. For example both outermost regions and inner urban areas in some high-performing regions require support to meet targets on early school leaving, but this can only be achieved through more nuanced approaches to policy development.

One of the other key issues is the need to link education and other policy domains to ensure a more coordinated approach to tackling key social issues such as 'NEET's'. In particular better alignment of educational structures with the current and future requirements of the labour market could go some way towards reinforcing the relevance of education to those most at risk of low attainment. While this will be an important shift in changing the mindsets of some students, it should not be forgotten that education has more than just an economic rationale and that it plays an important socio-cultural role in all European societies.

The geo-historical specificity of particular regions must be considered and respected in order to balance the need for comparability of educational experience across regions and move towards the achievement of EU2020S goals with respect for difference and the right of all European young people to meet their full socio-cultural and economic potential. For example, one of the key issues in relation to tertiary educational attainment will be the differing tuition fee levels and policies across the Union. This links back to the issue of the most appropriate scale for headline targets because until issues such as this built into national targets, some regions and countries will continue to appear lagging in comparison with their European counterparts. A flexible, time- and place-sensitive approach to education and training policy must become the goal of European, national and regional policymakers in order to progress towards EU2020S objectives.

References

- Barro, R.J. and Lee, J.W. (2010). *A new data set of educational attainment in the world, 1950–2010*. Cambridge, National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Bell, D.N.F. and Blanchflower, D.G. (2010). *Young People and Recession: A Lost Generation?* Stirling, University of Stirling / Centre for Economic Policy Research. <http://www.cepr.org/meets/wkcn/9/979/papers/Bell_%20Blanchflower.pdf> (Accessed 1.4.2013)
- Carneiro, P. (2006). *Equality of Opportunity and Educational Achievement in Portugal*. <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctppca/5.pdf>> (Accessed 1.4.2013)
- Lennert, M., Van Hamme, G. and Patris, C. (Coordinators) (2010). *FOCI Future Orientation for Cities. Executive Summary*. Bruxelles, Université Libre de Bruxelles. <http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/FOCI/FOCI_FinalReport_ExecutiveSummary_20110310.pdf> (Accessed 1.4.2013).
- Lucas, R.E. (1988). On the mechanics of economic development. *Journal of Monetary Economics* 22, pp. 3-42.
- Marshall, K. (2012). *Youth neither enrolled nor employed, Component of Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X. Perspectives on Labour and Income*. <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2012002/article/11675-eng.pdf>> (Accessed 1.4.2013).
- Quintini, G. and Martin, S. (2006). Starting Well or Losing Their Way? The Position of Youth in the Labour Market in OECD Countries. Paris: OECD. <<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/30/37805131.pdf>> (Accessed 1.4.2013).
- Social Exclusion Unit (1999). *Bridging the gap: New opportunities for 16- 18 year olds not in education, employment or training*. <http://www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/data/files/1419/bridging_the_gap_s_eu_1999.pdf> (Accessed 1.4.2013)
- Statistics New Zealand (2011). *Introducing the youth not in employment, education, or training indicator*. Wellington, Statistics New Zealand.
- Tomorrow's People (undated). *Rescuing a lost generation: A tomorrow's people report in partnership with Bristol University Centre for Market and Public organisation (CMPO)*. <<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmipo/publications/other/earlybirdtp.pdf>> (Accessed 1.4.2013)

European Commission Official Documents

- European Commission (2010a): *The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion*. Brussels, 16.12.2010. [COM (2010) 758]
- European Commission (2010b): *Youth on the Move: An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Brussels, 15.9.2010. [COM (2010), 477]
- European Commission (2011a): *Tackling Early School Leaving: A Key Contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy*. Brussels, 31.1.2011. [COM (2011) 18]
- European Commission (2011b): *Annual Growth Survey 2012. Annex: Progress Report on the Europe 2020 Strategy*. Brussels, 23.11.2011. [COM (2011) 815 Annex I]
- European Commission (2011c): *Regional Policy contributing to sustainable growth in*

Europe2020. Brussels, 6.10.2010. [COM (2011) 17]
European Commission (2012): *Conference Report: Reducing Early School Leaving – Efficient and Effective Policies in Europe*. Brussels: DG for Education and Culture.