

Learning Region Audit Tool 1

***Your Region's Perceptions and
plans for the Future***

Audits – Tools to help Cities and Regions achieve better Economic, Social and Green Development

Introduction

We're mapping out a journey into the world of 'Learning Regions.' We're convinced that it will transform your own region into a modern, vibrant and dynamic place where the economy prospers, social capital advances and people flourish in many ways. Please read these notes to know why it is important for you, for your region and for its citizens.

So what is a Learning Region?

The European Commission has a definition. Its policy document says *'A learning city, town or region recognises and understands the key role of learning in the development of basic prosperity, social stability and personal fulfilment, and mobilises all its human, physical and financial resources creatively and sensitively to develop the full human potential of all its citizens.'* So a Learning Region can also be a city or a town or any place that is large enough to have active educational, social and industrial sectors and an administrative structure to organise them.

And why is it important?

For Local and Regional Authorities that definition has important implications and opportunities. In the globalised and complex world of the 21st century, we all know that great and rapid change is inevitable. So, those regions that are flexible and versatile enough to learn and adapt quickly and effectively will be the winners and will best serve the medium and long-term interests of their citizens. Regions can only learn their way into the future. There is no other way.

It affects too the strategies, policies and actions taken by regional management in order to influence that future. They must develop a clear vision of what a learning region is and how it can be activated. It isn't easy. Charles Handy said, perceptively, in 'the Empty Raincoat'.

'When the future was an extension of the present, it was reasonable to assume that what worked today would also work next year. That assumption must now be tossed out. The world is not in a stable state. We are seeing change that not only accelerates ever faster but is also discontinuous. Such change lacks continuity and follows no logical sequence.'

The Audit Tool

The audit isn't simply a questionnaire. It's a powerful tool, carefully-worded to raise the key questions and provide some of the answers. It opens up the mind to new possibilities and new insights about your region's future as a place for quality learning and regional development. It isn't one-sided. We don't just ask for information in the questions and exercises. We want to profit from your opinions, tap into your personal knowledge and encourage you to weigh up some alternatives. In this way your, and our, learning is active. It's shared with many people, separately or in groups, and it's more durable.

So, this Audit Tool has 6 purposes, all of them designed to help you construct a 'learning region' in your locality.

- Firstly, it explores the character of a learning region – the dynamic that administrators will need to understand its complexities and characteristics
- Secondly, it gathers together ideas, experiences, opinions and observations from those who complete it so that they can be taken into account in strategies and actions – a sort of structured blog
- Thirdly it suggests solutions, tools, materials, recommendations and more, from the extensive EUROlocal database

- Fourthly, it engages the region's stakeholders in learning institutions, business and industry and community organisations so that they too can make their contribution to learning region construction
- Fifthly, you are encouraged to use any section of the tool as part of your continuous development programme, encouraging all your departments to learn and to join in the debate
- Lastly, it provides an index by which regions can measure and improve their performance as learning regions

So this is a tool and not just a questionnaire – its purpose is to stimulate thinking and debate, to start a process, to promote action on the many aspects of regional economic, social and environmental development, and the importance of lifelong learning in it.

There are in fact a number of Audits, each dealing with a different aspect of the Learning Region, each giving a different insight. In this way you can break up your learning load and deal with a topic at a time. We recommend that you start with Audit 1, After that the order isn't important – though the content certainly is!

Go to it. Please note that, where we use the word region, this also means cities and towns

Audit 1: PERCEPTIONS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

About this Audit

This Audit explores your perceptions and opinions about your region as a (potential) Learning Region. It explains why it may be important to you and your region and presents a number of exercises about strategies and their implementation. By selecting the answers you will come to a better understanding of what is entailed by the term 'learning region.' After each section there is an opportunity to make your own comments and to obtain a reply.

1.1 Have you ever come across the term 'learning region' or 'learning city'? Yes/No

1.2 What do you think it means - please select if relevant. More than one can be chosen

A city, town or region which:	
1.2.1	Prioritises Adult Education in order to raise the educational level of the population as a whole?
1.2.2	Designs a strategy for lifelong learning from cradle to grave?
1.2.3	Encourages all educational stakeholders to work together in order to maximise opportunities
1.2.4	Uses specially designed tools, materials and techniques to improve performance in lifelong learning
1.2.5	Engages all its people and organisations in the development of economic and social prosperity
1.2.6	Mobilises people in the community to offer their talents, skills, knowledge and experience in active citizenship projects
1.2.7	Promotes outward-looking values that encourage an international perspective and broader horizons
1.2.8	Extends the use of new information and communication technologies to enhance education and lifestyles
1.2.9	Recognises the prime importance of learning for the development of economic and social capital
1.2.10	All of the above and more

1.2.11 IN THIS AUDIT WE ADOPT THE LAST DEFINITION – The following explains why, but if you have any comments to make about definitions, please do so here..

1.3 So now let's look at some of your opinions on the future of your region. How would you measure the importance of the following statements for regional growth. Please select the answer you most believe according to these criteria

1= crucial to the future development of the city or region – we should find resource at all costs

2= very important – we should prioritise it highly

3= important enough to warrant the use of some resources

4= interesting but not important enough to spend valuable resource on

5= Not relevant to my city or region

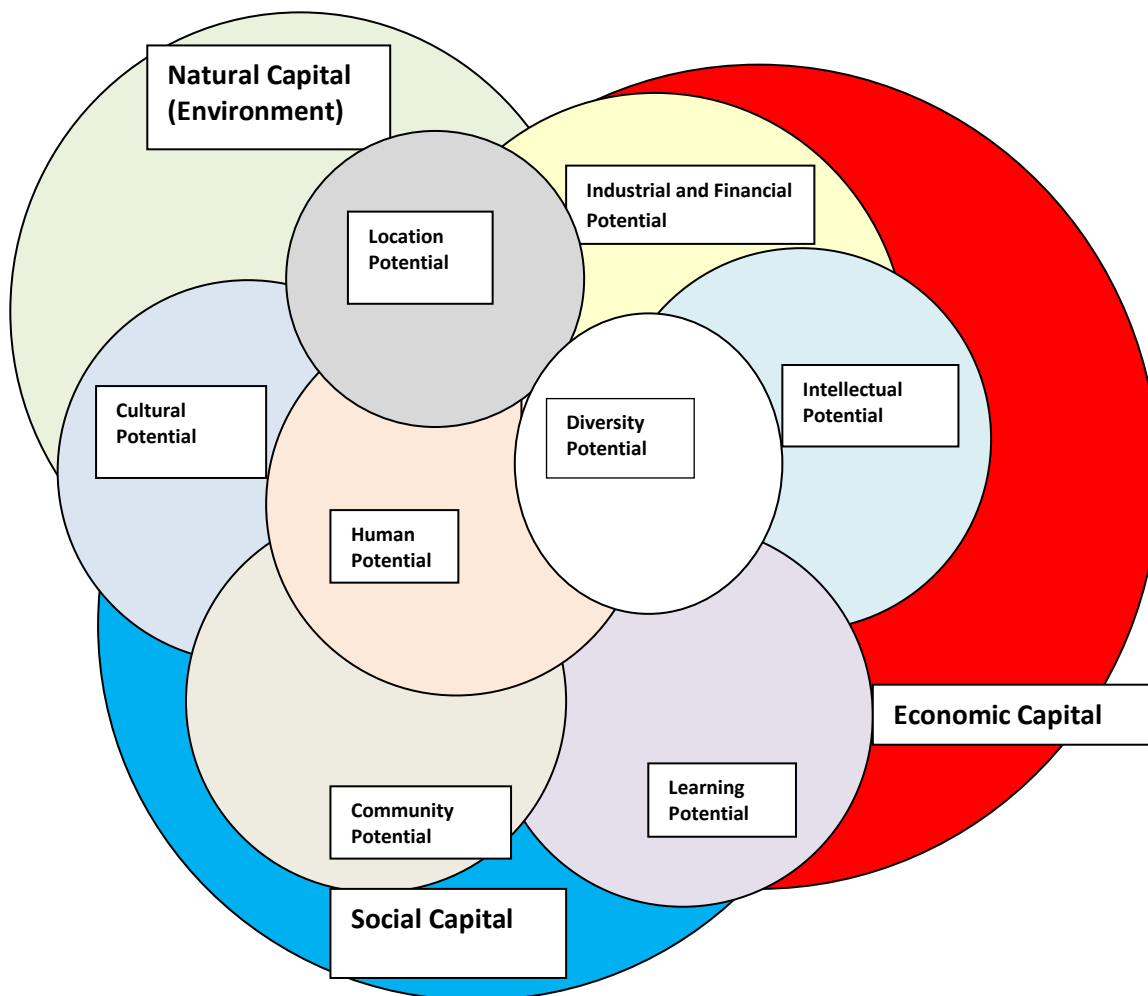
		1	2	3	4	5
1.3.1	The region's future economic prosperity depends upon its ability to persuade a large number of its citizens that learning is a lifelong activity		☐		☐	
1.3.2	The region's future social vitality and stability depends upon its ability to engage its citizens in learning as a lifelong activity					
1.3.3	The region's learning providers should prioritise the generation of lifelong learning values in their students		☐		☐	
1.3.4	All sectors of the city or region have a part to play in making learning a lifelong activity					
1.3.5	The environmental challenges we face can be better solved through learning, lifelong		☐		☐	
1.3.6	Innovation in my region is fostered by learning					
1.3.7	The key to optimising economic and social development depends on developing all its human, organisational and natural resources to their full potential		☐		☐	
1.3.8	The concept of the Learning City or Region is important in making lifelong learning work					

1.3.9 Clearly we believe that all of these deserve a mark in 1 or 2 and that this would indicate the need for a learning region. However, if you have any comments to make about definitions, please do so here. Please indicate if you wish to receive a reply.

1.4. Strategies and Policies

'Today, a noticeable shift towards more integrated policies that combine social and cultural objectives with the economic rationale for lifelong learning is taking place' (European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning)

Most regions have strategies for economic development. Some have, quite separately, plans for the development of Social Capital. Have a look at the diagram below and then answer the questions which follow. It shows a number of 'potentials' that can contribute to economic and social growth. There are many others. It shows too that economic and social development are interdependent.



Economic, Social and Natural Capital and Potential

1.4, Strategies and Plans

		Yes	No	In plan
1.4.1	Has your region developed a strategy for economic development		☐	
1.4.2	Does your region have a social capital development strategy		☐	
1.4.3	Does the region have an environmental development strategy		☐	
1.4.4	Are the three strategies integrated		☐	
1.4.5	Does the strategy contain provisions for optimising the following		☐	
1.4.5.1	The contribution potential of the community to local life and social well-being?		☐	
1.4.5.2	The development of intellectual potential from all parts of the region?		☐	
1.4.5.3	The contribution of Culture and Heritage to capital growth		☐	
1.4.5.4	The optimisation of its human potential		☐	
	The contribution of people of diverse nationalities, orientations and creeds		☐	
1.4.5.5	The optimisation of its learning potential across all providers and ages		☐	
1.4.6	Did any of the following organisations contribute to its development?		☐	
1.4.6.1	The City/Region Council		☐	
1.4.6.2	The Chief Executive Officer's department		☐	
1.4.6.3	The Education Department of the City Administration		☐	
1.4.6.4	Other Departments of the City Administration		☐	
1.4.6.5	The University (if any)		☐	
1.4.6.6	The Adult Education College		☐	
1.4.6.7	Schools		☐	
1.4.6.8	Business and Industry in the city/region		☐	
1.4.6.9	Voluntary/Community Organisations		☐	
1.4.6.10	Citizens Representative Organisations		☐	
1.4.7	Is learning development incorporated into any or all of the strategies		☐	
1.4.8	If yes or in plan does this include contribution by the following organisations		☐	
1.4.8.1	Schools		☐	
1.4.8.2	University(ies)		☐	
1.4.8.3	Business and industry		☐	
1.4.8.4	Adult Education		☐	
1.4.8.5	Cultural Services (museums, libraries etc)		☐	
1.4.8.6	Voluntary/community organisations		☐	
1.4.9	Has the concept of the learning region been a important item of discussion in your Region?		☐	
1.4.10	Has the town, city or region in which you are situated formally declared itself to be a learning town, city or region?		☐	
1.4.11	Does your Local Authority have a formal strategy for developing a Learning Region?		☐	

1.4.10 We believe that economic, social and environmental strategies are interdependent, and that those that incorporate an across the board learning strategy using all educational providers will be more successful. However if you wish to make a comment here please do so and indicate whether or not you require a reply.

1.5. Learning Implementation

Clearly effective learning is central to the future of a region. Here we look at the provisions for implementing your regional learning development strategies. Please select the relevant answer

		True	Partly True	False	In plan	Don't know
1.5.1	There is a plan to develop lifelong learning in the region.					
1.5.2	The plan affects the following learning providers					
1.5.2.1	Schools					
1.5.2.2	Vocational Education					
1.5.2.3	Non-vocational adult education					
1.5.2.4	Universities					
1.5.2.5	Local government					
1.5.2.6	Business and Industry					
1.5.2.7	Voluntary and Community organisations					
1.5.2.8	Cultural Services – libraries and museums					
1.5.3	This will help to support the regional development strategy					
1.5.4	The plan is the responsibility of a Senior Executive in the region					
1.5.5	The Local Authority has established a committee for implementing the region learning strategy					
1.5.6	A senior person has been appointed whose sole responsibility it is to implement the lifelong learning strategy on the ground					
1.5.7	This person has a budget to do the job					
1.5.8	Every local/regional government employee knows, and acts upon, the Local Authority part of the strategy					
1.5.9	The strategy is publicised and generally available to citizens					

1.5.10 Here you are invited to comment on the implementation of a learning plan that supports the economic and social development strategies

1.6. The search for enlightenment – Commissioned Studies, Surveys, Courses and Activities

A city or region will need good information in order to make good decisions about its journey to becoming a learning region. These questions explore the extent to which the region has initiated studies, surveys and development activities into aspects of the learning region and its implications.

		Yes	No	In Plan
1.6.1	Has the city/region ever commissioned studies and surveys into the following		☐	
1.6.1.1	Learning City/region development strategies in other cities/regions		☐	
1.6.1.2	Economic Advantages of becoming a Learning Region		☐	
1.6.1.3	Schools and learning regions		☐	
1.6.1.4	Adult Education and Learning regions		☐	
1.6.1.5	Learning Attitudes in the population		☐	
1.6.1.6	Learning Requirements Surveys and Needs Audits		☐	
1.6.1.7	The uses of technology in Learning		☐	
1.6.1.8	Museums, libraries etc as learning places		☐	
1.6.1.9	Indicators of Lifelong Learning/Learning City progress		☐	
1.6.1.10	Case Studies of Good Practice in Learning Region matters		☐	
1.6.2	Has there been any conferences, seminars or Symposia on Learning Regions in the region?		☐	
1.6.3	Has the region ever consulted an expert on Learning Region matters?		☐	
1.6.4	Has the Region ever organised a Learning Festival		☐	
1.6.5	Does the Region belong to any national learning region associations		☐	
1.6.6	Does the Region belong to any international learning region associations		☐	

1.7 In the light of the answers you have given here, what would your own definition of a learning city or region be.