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## CASE STUDY: CATALONIA, SPAIN

### CATALAN STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYMENT (ECO – ESTRATÈGIA CATALANA PER L'OCUPACIÓ)

#### GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA

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#### Context

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The Catalan Strategy for Employment is an initiative developed by the Generalitat of Catalonia. The Generalitat is the government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia that governs over the regions of Barcelona, Tarragona, L rida y Gerona. The Generalitat has responsibilities regarding the development of employment policies, which have been fully transferred from the Spanish government.

Previous activities in the Barcelona region<sup>1</sup> provided the stepping stone on which to build the Catalan Strategy for Employment (ECO). ECO is a tool that allows the transfer and consolidation of those previous experiences in Barcelona to the rest of the Catalan territory. ECO uses the European Strategy for Employment as a referent and was developed under the new round of Innovative Measures of the European Commission.

ECO facilitates the management, programming and ‘concertation’<sup>2</sup> of employment policies with a bottom up approach and acknowledges the important role of social agents at local level. More precisely, ECO encourages the development of Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) based on private-public partnerships and offers technical assistance to all the TEPs developed in Catalonia.

This framework of action is moving towards greater decentralisation of employment policies so that the principles of subsidiarity are used to their full extent. In practice this means that the territories will decide on objectives, actions, resources and criteria to be utilised in agreement with all local agents. The Generalitat will keep responsibilities regarding provision of technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation.

#### Partnerships and sources of funding

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The partners in the ECO project are:

- Generalitat de Catalonia, as institution responsible for the project.
- Diputaci n<sup>3</sup> of Barcelona, Diputaci n of Tarragona, Diputaci n of L rida and Diputaci n of Gerona.
- County Council of Western Vall s, as provider of technical assistance.

All TEPs developed under ECO involve local institutions (Local Authorities and County Councils), business organisations, trade unions, large local companies, voluntary

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<sup>1</sup> Namely in the Western Vall s county and through 20 territorial pacts developed in Barcelona.

<sup>2</sup> Concertation is a public, private and third sector legal agreement.

<sup>3</sup> The ‘Diputaci n’ is an institution that represents collectively all local authorities in the region.

organisations, universities, chambers of commerce, co-operatives, residents associations. All representatives that participate in the TEPs are local since this provides an in depth knowledge of needs and allows better implementation of the employment actions.

The main sources of funding that ECO draws include 66.9% European Funds and 33.1% from the partners (mainly Generalitat and other regional institutions).

### **Activities carried out**

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- The Generalitat has initiated an on-going dialogue with Local Authorities, County Councils, large local companies and trade unions emphasising the need of joining efforts in development employment initiatives; conducted studies of the labour market using SWOT analysis; and carried out analysis of factors involved in territorial development. Each of the Catalan regions has been assigned a theme (tools for local integration, equal opportunities, support to entrepreneurs, and new technologies) and is then responsible for organising a conference for politicians, policy makers and practitioners for dissemination and exchange of best practice.
- Each one of the Catalan regions has been assigned a theme, as follows:
  - Barcelona Theme: Tools for local integration.
  - Gerona Theme: Equal opportunities.
  - Lérida Theme: Support to entrepreneurs.
  - Tarragona Theme: New technologies.

Each region is then responsible for organising a conference for politicians, policy makers and practitioners for dissemination and exchange of best practice.

- ECO has a political arm for organisational purposes and a technical arm for territorial co-ordination, which includes local working teams.

### **Underachievements and failures**

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- The different TEPs under ECO have developed at different speeds, which has had a detrimental effect. Some TEPs are highly sophisticated whereas other TEPs still require a high degree of support from the Generalitat.
- Issues such as the culture change in favour of a partnership approach, methodologies and integration remain to be consolidated.
- Information networks are not fully tested but it is expected that a planned website will facilitate this because it will provide all TEPs and partnerships with the best practices and tools available. At present, not all TEPs have access to the same knowledge.

### **Achievements and lessons learned that can be transferred to other employment initiatives**

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- Regional partnership structures should create political as well as managerial capacity.

- Any overarching regional strategy will have to cater for local partnerships and strategies that develop at different paces.
- Effective networking within and between localities requires principles of subsidiarity and complementarity to be applied at the regional level.

### **Contacts**

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