



**SEEL BENCHMARKING SYSTEM  
STARTER PACK**

**WP 6**

**Draft version 4**

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>THE BENCHMARKING EXPLANATORY GUIDE AND TOOLS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
MISSION AND GOALS.....	5
<b>THE ENVISAGED PROCESS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
RELEVANT DEFINITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BENCHMARKING EXERCISE.....	10
A. SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE.....	2
B. POSITIONING QUESTIONNAIRE .....	1
C. CASE STUDY .....	1
D. SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS (INDICATORS QUESTIONNAIRE).....	4
<b>ANNEX 1</b> .....	<b>9</b>
THEORETICAL APPROACH TO BENCHMARKING: SHORT OVERVIEW .....	11
THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS .....	14
<i>Preliminary Diagnostic Activity</i> .....	14
<b>ANNEX 2</b> .....	<b>15</b>
THE SEEL BENCHMARKING SYSTEM .....	15
PRINCIPLES, FOCUS, AREAS, CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF THE SEEL BENCHMARKING SYSTEM ....	15
<i>Principles</i> .....	15
<i>The focus, criteria and indicators</i> .....	15
<i>Criteria and Indicators</i> .....	17

## INTRODUCTION

*The project activities of SEEL (Supporting Excellence in E-Learning) are intended to:*

- measure the impact of quality policies and quality initiatives employed in both the education and training sectors;
- identify and assess the quality of learning resources, programmes and services in order to make them available for each partner;
- implement quality schemes while supporting change, innovation and creativity for improved organisational and individual learning and performance;
- provide indicators to Regions as to how they can obtain and implement quality eLearning services.

Initially this is made possible by offering systems that identify relevant practices and facilitate evaluation of the quality of eLearning policies and initiatives at the regional level followed, by the promotion of network development among key stakeholders for the dissemination and sharing of local innovative experiences.

*In fact, the development and the implementation of the benchmarking framework among Regions represents just one of a number of various project outputs foreseen by the SEEL partners.*

**This document aims to provide regional participants in the benchmarking exercise with a complete, clear and concise explanation of the those tools considered necessary for effective implementation of the exercise.**

Actually, it presents and illustrates the process together with the related steps to be followed in order to perform the benchmarking exercise (the system and process will be tested and validated by a sample of Regions) and the operational tools to be used.

The definition adopted within the SEEL project makes reference to the following concept of Benchmarking  
: Benchmarking provides

***a measure or point of reference that can serve as a standard for the purpose of comparative assessment of other like processes.***

Benchmarking systems are used to improve process efficiency by analysing and understanding the nature of the process and, where applicable, adopting best practices as used by other players within the same field or sector. The process is a dynamic one, involving continuous review and development in response to changing internal and external stimuli.

***The SEEL Benchmarking system should be considered as a way of helping REGIONS to identify and reflect on strategies and actions that will help them improve their performance in promoting, supporting, developing, implementing, monitoring and assessing quality in eLearning at both the local and regional level.***<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The concept of Region does not coincide with that of a Region as defined at an administrative level but corresponds to a territory with the capacity of policy definition and implementation in Education & Training and territory development. In the case where Region consists of more than one territory they must be contiguous and have social/economic and cultural similarities. Examples of Regions could include a metropolitan area or two provinces that are contiguous, sharing the common objective of development as a Learning Region.

For further details and background relating to the theoretical approach and principles of benchmarking and the criteria and indicators for assessing regional and local quality in eLearning used in the above presented tools, the regional participants are invited to see the annexes of the current document. .Please See:

- Annex 1 for the chapter "Theoretical approach to benchmarking: short overview"
- Annex 2 for the chapter "the SEEL benchmarking system" at the end of this explanatory guide.

## THE BENCHMARKING STARTER PACK AND TOOLS

The benchmarking starter pack is intended to support the Regional Team through the benchmarking process.

The present guide contains explanations on the basic steps and the different tools considered necessary to implement the process (e.g. regional case studies, performance measurements - indicators), together with a set of important terms relevant to the eLearning and quality management system.

Our aim for this document is to make it a practical useful and convenient resource, that facilitates the process of going through the benchmarking system proposed.

### MISSION AND GOALS

Before beginning the benchmarking exercise, it is important to understand its mission and goals.

The following benchmark process mainly aims at identifying where the Region is positioned in terms of the eLearning quality approach.

Benchmarking will help identify local policy strengths, identify areas in need of improvement/action and in so doing will provide both suggestions for the improvement of each regional eLearning approach and the opportunity to share and optimise the achievement obtained by each Region in this field. Of significance is the fact that the tools employed permit any public entity to reflect on its current position compared to the global eLearning vision.

**A well-implemented process needs to be based on the assumption/believe that it lays the ground for improvement: benchmarking provides value when the actors involved are willing to change.**

**It is important to recognise the need for improvement and to be willing to start making changes. It also means that benchmarking data should be used to drive improvement and not to criticise poor results.**

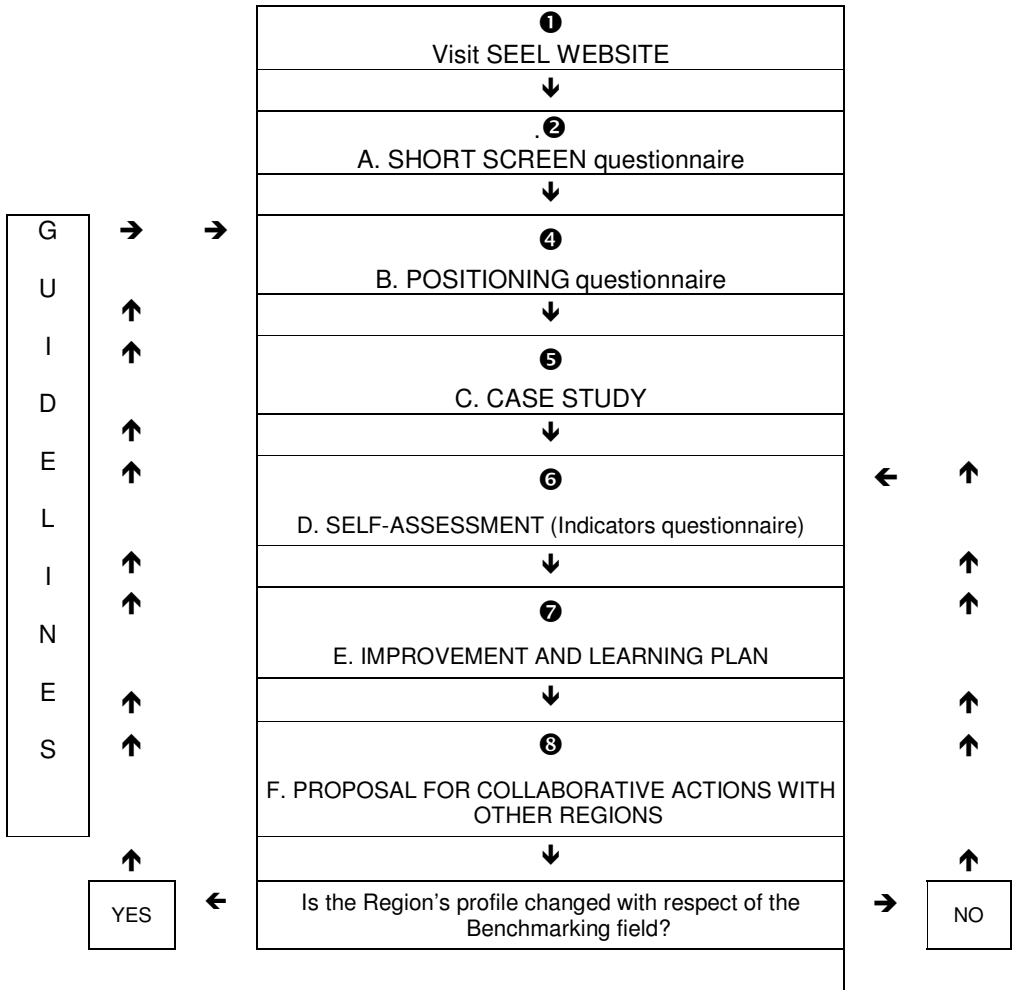
Even though the benchmarking process is based on a collaborative model rather than a competitive one, some benchmarking tools (explained below) may be considered as private documents (for internal regional usage only), if the regional participants prefer not to make them available to the **SEEL Project Supporting Partners (SPSP)**.

In addition, we remind participants that the final purpose of the benchmarking exercise is to facilitate self-analysis and assessment of the regional quality policy in eLearning. This process may then be reinforced by getting in touch with the best performing Regions in order to know and to share their best quality policy measures and activities in eLearning or by initiating collaboration with other Regions which have the same interest and need profiles with regard to "development and improvement".

For this reason, we recommend particular consideration be given to the steps regarding:

- The positioning step questionnaire, in order to construct and represent an accurate regional picture;
- The case study description, which allows Regions present relevant and innovative experiences which can then be shared and modified or adapted;
- The self-assessment phase, in which the Region assesses its own performances concerning the quality in eLearning through the use of a list of specified indicators.

**THE ENVISAGED PROCESS**



The whole benchmarking process is characterized by 8 phases, which allow the project management, as well as Regions involved in the process, to focus on practices and improvements. They are identified as follows:

**1. SEEL website**  
**www.Seelnet.org**

Interested member Regions visit the SEEL website, where detailed information on the project and its consortium is provided. Furthermore, each partner or any other European regional authority, learning service and technology provider, consulting organisations (even if it is not a project partner) can find more information about the second international Conference (on quality of eLearning, innovation, and regional development), the other outputs (e.g. European Quality Award, Quality Guidelines, Regional Centres of Excellence etc)

**2. A. Short screen questionnaire** (a public document to be sent to SEEL Project Supporting Partners (SPSP))

Document: *Short screen questionnaire*

If Regions are interested and willing to take part in the SEEL Benchmarking exercise, they are asked to fill out a short screen questionnaire and leave their contact details.

This document constitutes a refined profile of the Region with particular attention being paid to social, geographical aspects and to its E&T and eLearning approach. It is important because it allows the collation of a useful first set of information about those Regions that have decided to participate in the process. This information is *propaedeutical* to the comparative process.

*All short screen questionnaires filled in by the Regions, as well as the other documents considered "public", will be collected by the Seel Project Supporting Partners, which will follow the Region throughout the complete benchmarking procedure/exercise and it will facilitate the Region in the use of the relevant tools.*

**3. B. Positioning the Region** (private document)

Document: *Positioning questionnaire*

A positioning questionnaire is available in order to provide a more detailed picture on the eLearning strategies and the quality approach and to help the Region to reflect on its process. If the Region is willing, this questionnaire will be made available to other Regions participants in the benchmarking process so as to help Regions to compare themselves. This phase makes it easier to accurately situate the Region and thus facilitates any further comparison.

The document should direct regional participants to focus on eLearning initiatives and services provided in Educational and Training fields and, in particular, through a specially created chart, will identify the regional position within the global eLearning and quality system.

Furthermore, this document will be kept in private form as long as the Regions wish to do so. However, if they wish, all information related to this step can be made available to the other partner/participants in the benchmarking exercise so facilitating the interaction of the improvement process through exchange of good practices. In this case, the document will be made available exclusively for the use of other Regions implementing the benchmarking process.

**4. C. Case study description** (*public document to be sent to SEEL Project Supporting Partners (SPSP)*)

*Document: Case study description grid*

A case study grid is available in order to allow each Region to present relevant and innovative experiences in eLearning.

It goes without saying that “relevance” and “innovation” are concepts which always need to be placed in a specific context. *Therefore, the Regions should feel free to present any experience which could represent a point of reference for any other member (even in the initial phase).*

Participating Regions should take into consideration that all Regions taking part to the benchmarking exercise represent different levels of development in the eLearning area.

The case studies will be collected by the SPSP in order to facilitate the process of knowledge sharing and collaboration.

The sample of best practices list provides the participant regional entities to identify new forms of regional cooperation on the basis of their specific interests.

Moreover, these practices constitute a scenario against which one can measure their performance in terms of a formative evaluation approach.

The case studies’ collection also facilitates selection of the “the right” or the “most suitable” benchmark partner.

**5. D. Self-assessment (Indicators questionnaire)** (*private document*)

*Document: Indicators questionnaire*

In entering this phase, the Region assesses its own performances with respect to various elements of quality in eLearning.

These indicators are rated in different scales according to their nature (qualitative or quantitative) and allow the Region to identify where it should situate itself within the eLearning and quality system.

**6. Comparison**

*Document: Indicators questionnaire*

The same list of indicators allows the comparison among Regions. The comparison is made by the institutions themselves against the list of indicators, which represent, in an optimal scenario, the ideal eLearning Region.

In order to foster the mutual learning aspect of the SEEL exercise, the SPSP provides the Regions the opportunity to receive the names of best performing Regions from the completed case studies. In the case where the relevant best performing Region has agreed to make public to the other participant Regions the results of their Indicators Questionnaire such results will also be made available to other Regions.

If a Region wants to improve its performance in a specific field, it is welcome to get in touch with the SPSP, who will provide the institution with the name and the contact details of the best performer in that particular field.

**7. E. Improvement and Learning Plan**

Going through the whole process (positioning questionnaire (B), case study description (C), indicators questionnaire (D), etc.), the Region itself can then write an improvement and learning plan.

The Improvement and Learning Plan should allow the Region to identify its strengths and areas requiring improvement.

The plan presents the Region's reflections and considerations on the process' results with regard to those areas considered excellent or requiring improvement in terms of eLearning strategies and quality approach.

At this point the Regional Team should be aware of areas on which future action needs to be focused. The Region can decide to keep the results of the Improvement & Learning Plan private, or to send the document to the SEEL Project Supporting Partners.

Naturally, in the latter case, if the Region is in agreement, the results can be made available to the other relevant participant Regions.

## 8. F. Proposal for collaborative actions with other Region

As we mentioned in the previous steps, in the light of the first results of the benchmarking analysis conducted by the Region through the tools A-D, the Region can make a proposal of collaboration in order to share or acquire the knowledge and competencies associated with the eLearning field at a regional level.

To that end, the Region is invited to present, in a structured way, a "*proposal for collaborative action*" so as to:

- ◇ identify some improvement action paths in order to initiate collaboration with another Region considered excellent in the target field, or with a Region which shares the same interests;
- ◇ make its knowledge and best practices available to the other participants.

*It goes without saying that the SEEL Project Supporting Partners act as supporters during the whole implementation of the Proposal for collaborative actions in order to facilitate and coordinate the collaboration among Regions having the same interests and needs.*

### Feedback loop to step 3 or 5

As soon as an improved system is in place, the Region can once more start the benchmarking exercise by going back to either phase 3 or 5.

Returning step 3, the profiling of the Region, is appropriate when the Regional Team considers that the changes implemented had considerable effects on the profile of the Region. The Regional Team fills in the positioning questionnaire in order to find out in what way the improvements have had an effect on its general profile.

If some changes have been produced, but not so important to change the regional profile, the suggested option is to return to step 5. This should allow the Region to achieve a different rating and thus clearly demonstrate the improvement achieved and highlight the areas where room for improvement still exists.

## REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS GROUPS: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CHOOSING THE REGIONAL TEAM

As it was mentioned before, the Benchmarking system is aimed at helping the Regions to reflect on the actual state of their regional quality policy in eLearning and identify areas for improvement and collaboration.

It would be preferable for a group of stakeholders rather than a single participant to fill in the different tools (please refer next paragraph) in order to collect multiple points of view. This will ensure that different perspectives are taken into consideration and that all the relevant information is collected.

In this regard it appears obvious, that the success of the exercise necessitates that some efforts should be placed in selecting the team which is considered capable of providing a valid, comprehensive and realistic picture.

Therefore in an attempt to help Regions to identify such participants, the following suggestions can be made:

- 1) The completion of the tools can be conducted by a single user (in particular the tool A. Screening questionnaire) or in group as a first step. However, once the tools are filled in, a discussion group should be established in order to promote exchange and reflection. One of the major benefits of the benchmarking exercise is to provide an “occasion” for discussion and open-mind thinking.
- 2) The group of participants or the regional team (in the best option) might include all relevant regional stakeholders: Training and Educational Institutions, Trade Union, Enterprises, Category Associations, eLearning providers, cultural associations. It is important to include and support amongst the group, people who can bring informal and bottom-up approaches and strategies and present grass-root initiatives.

## FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BEFORE STARTING THE BENCHMARKING EXERCISE

In filling in the tools some elements can arise:

- a) the participants within the group have different perceptions of the regional quality policy in eLearning. This is an important first result, which needs to be taken into great consideration and allows the Region to initiate the process of defining those elements of the strategy that need to be modified or reinforced, what are the communalities and the differences and through which objectives and which actions it will be possible to transfer and implement the values which are considered important at regional level.
- b) The Region is conceived in SEEL as an *evolutionary and learning reality*: Therefore one must be sure to capture the current regional picture and review the data reported in the different tools whenever one feels the *changes have modified the regional picture*.
- c) It must be underlined that the Regions which take part in the benchmarking exercise may have different levels of development (from Regions which have a long tradition in eLearning to Regions which have just started the process). For this reason we have envisaged the use of tools (in particular B. Positioning questionnaire and D: Self-assessment process (indicators questionnaire) which have different levels of complexity.. Participants are asked to complete the process using all tools, but the requirement to complete all sections of Tools B & D will depend on the maturity of the implementation level of the regional quality policy in eLearning .

- d) In the Improvement and Learning plan it is important to establish different levels of priority and also define what is interesting but not immediately feasible, as well as what is important and feasible.

## RELEVANT DEFINITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BENCHMARKING EXERCISE

### REGION

The concept of region does not coincide with that of a Region as defined at an administrative level but corresponds to a territory which has the capacity of policy definition and implementation in Education & Training and territory development. In the case where Region consists of more than one territory they must be contiguous and have social/economic and cultural similarities. Examples of Regions could include a metropolitan area or two provinces that are contiguous, sharing the common objective of development as a Learning Region.

### LEARNING REGION

The learning Regions function as collectors and repositories of knowledge and ideas, and provide the underlying environment or infrastructure which facilitates the flow of knowledge, ideas and learning.

### eLEARNING

The definition of The European Commission stated that eLearning means using "new multimedia technology and Internet to improve quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration".

In the perspectives of EIFEL, which has been adopted by the SEEL project, eLearning is considered as "the e-transformation of individual and organisational learning, so as to reflect the needs of a knowledge economy and society and the potential of knowledge, information and learning technologies".

### FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Definition of **formal, non-formal and informal learning** from the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (European Commission, page 8)*:

- **Formal learning** takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognised diplomas and qualifications.
- **Non-formal learning** takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates. Non-formal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations and groups (such as in youth organisations, trades unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organisations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).
- **Informal learning** is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may well not be recognised even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills.

*Most educators see the three formats existing within a continuum, with indistinct rather than sharply defined borders. The distinction made is largely administrative. The continuum of lifelong learning brings non-formal and informal learning more fully into the picture.*

**QUALITY ASSESSMENT** denotes the totality of measures carried out consistently and systematically in order to insure that a product conforms to the requirements of a stated specification (EN 180000:1995)

**QUALITY ASSURANCE** denotes all the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system, and demonstrated as needed, to provide adequate confidence that an entity will fulfil requirements for quality (ISO 8402:1994)

**QUALITY MANAGEMENT** denotes all activities of the overall management function that determine the total quality policy, objectives and responsibilities, and implements them by means such as quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement within the quality system (ISO 8402:1994)

**STANDARDS** are regulations defining requirements necessary to achieve rationalization, quality assurance, safety, environmental protection and improvement of communication in industry, technology, science, administration and public sectors.

**TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT** is a management approach of an organization, centred on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long-term success through customer satisfaction, and benefits to all members of the organization and to society (ISO 8402:1994)

**SEEL BENCHMARKING TOOLS**

**SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE**



Role assigned to LLL

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Role assigned to eLearning

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Is there any eLearning resource centre in the Region?  yes  no

What is its mission? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is there any plan to develop one in the near future? \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!**

**POSITIONING QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **B. POSITIONING QUESTIONNAIRE**

The positioning questionnaire is composed of qualitative and quantitative questions designed to collect objectives and quantitative data so as to position a Region within the global eLearning scenario and quality system.

Moreover, the questionnaire leads the Region to reflect on its current position, to identify its strengths and weaknesses in order to give a more precise analytical picture.

Generally speaking four key phases can be identified:

- 1) policy orientation
- 2) policy definition
- 3) policy implementation
- 4) policy evaluation

The questionnaire is divided into two levels of complexity: the first part is focused on design and planning issues (phases 1-2) for Regions which have just started their process; while the second part is focused on the implementation and evaluation elements (phases 3-4) for Regions which have already an experience in eLearning policy.

*This document will be kept confidential as long as the Regional Team are so willing. However, if they wish, all information related to this step can be made available to other partner participants in the benchmarking exercise. In this case, the document will be exclusively available to other participating Regions implementing the benchmarking process.*

<b>REGION</b>	
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	
<b>NAME AND SURNAME</b>	
<b>ROLE WITHIN THE INSTITUTION</b>	
<b>EMAIL</b>	

### **FIRST PART**

### **Facts and figures**

N. of eLearning providers (Organisations) in the Region (approximately): N. \_\_\_\_\_

Overall weight of eLearning in the provision of Education of the Training and percentage of total provision of Education and Training.

- Less than 1%
- From 1 to 5%
- From 5 to 10%
- From 10 to 20%
- More than 20% Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Trainers involved in eLearning initiatives as a percentage of the total of the trainers % \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Specific policy in eLearning  yes since \_\_\_\_\_  no

Specific policy on quality in eLearning  yes since \_\_\_\_\_  no

What is the main reason to implement eLearning from the Regional perspective (up to 3 replies are possible)?

- Innovation of education and training methods and organisations
- Improving access to learning and reducing social exclusion
- Facilitating the access and the management of learning records
- Providing ICT skills for everyone
- Supporting the “knowledge industry” development
- Increasing the appeal of the continuing training supply
- Cost Saving of training provision.
- Supporting involvement of privates entities in the provision of E&T
- Reducing and co-ordinating efforts between local, regional and national authorities.
- Satisfying the demand of new customers in education & training
- Satisfying the new requirements of existing customers
- Providing a more reliable information system of achievement of learning policy
- Supporting the traceability of the assessment and evaluation process.
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

From which starting point does the Region want to start up the process of eLearning or from which point has it already started? (e.g. from an investment for a eLearning portal? equipment of regional training centres? Training of trainers? agreement with other Regions? )

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What choices have already been made or are in the process of being made?

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**SECOND PART**

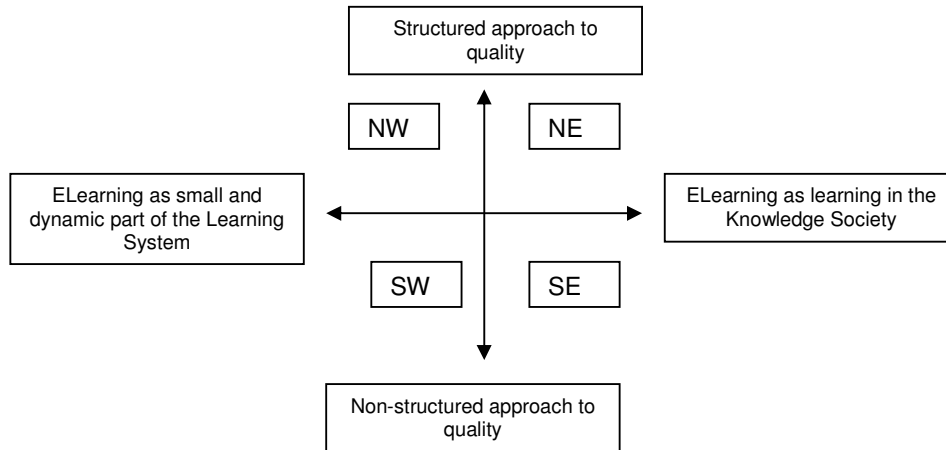
Please try to use the following questions in order to develop your process of reflection and identification of the position of the Region within the eLearning quality system:

1. Do measures to implement quality initiatives operate in your Region? How is the impact of Education and Training policy measured?
2. Have you implemented (or you are planning to) a system of recognition of experiential, informal and non-formal learning achievements?
3. Have regional/local authorities a QA scheme for their services to their citizens, and in particular to the learning citizens?
4. Have the political measures defined by the Region supported the creation of partnerships which plan and deliver innovative education and training actions?
5. Have you ever participated in a multi-regional project for identifying the best practices developed from other Regions in the eLearning sector?
6. How do the local authorities facilitate & support local learning networks, learning communities, associations, research dissemination, links between research and SMEs, clusters of learning organisations, etc.?
7. Have you implemented in your Region some measures to support the development and piloting of new initiatives involving eLearning networks?
8. Is an integration mechanism between methods of delivery, evaluation and certification of the results of eLearning initiatives and the recognition of the different systems (labour market, VET, University) available in your local context?
9. Do you have any specific measure for the training of trainers and teachers in eLearning and on the use of ICT ?
10. Have you got an evaluation and monitoring system linked to regional governance and management structures?
11. Is an Operational Plan to promote LLL available in your regional context,?

## Visions toward eLearning

The vision of a Region toward eLearning can be positioned in a 2 dimensional diagram along two defined axes:

- The eLearning dimension (eLearning as a Limited part of the Learning system versus eLearning as overall regional development strategy) and
- The Quality dimension (a non-structured approach to quality versus a defined approach to quality) (see figure below).



Analysing the two axes it can be highlighted that:

- 1) at one extreme eLearning is embedded and present in all sectors (“eLearning as learning in the Knowledge society”) and it may be considered a means of improving the quality of learning as a whole by using new technology and Internet. eLearning is the strategic element of learning at individual, organisational and societal levels. While at the other extreme “eLearning as a small and dynamic part of the Learning system” indicates that the Region has started to introduce eLearning (some limited experiences are available) but the coverage is limited in specific sectors and areas of education and training
- 2) at on extreme the Region has defined clearly an approach to quality. It has identified and made available to the different stakeholders and actors, procedures, criteria and indicators to be followed at regional level.

On the other side of the continuum, the approach is not defined which relates to two different positions:

- a) the Region has not defined the system yet it is in the process of starting its reflection on it;
- b) the Region has purposely not implemented a structured approach to quality because the Region wants to promote many eLearning actions and supports the vision of eLearning without proposing specific quality policy, so as to insert in the system competitive stimuli which will improve the quality and the diversification of the elearning supply through open competition and plurality of approaches.

**The North West Sector (NW)  
The “controller” eLearning Region**

The Region pays particular attention to promote learning actions and learning opportunities which match defined quality criteria. Quality experiences in eLearning can be found in the Regions but within specific sectors.

**The North East Sector (NE)  
“The eLearning goes Region”**

Elearning, in this regional context is seen as the strategic vector for innovation and social development. Experiences in eLearning are promoted and supported in the Regions within all sectors.

The Region pays particular attention to promote learning actions and learning opportunities which match defined regional quality criteria.

**The South West Sector (SW)  
“The cautious eLearning Region”**

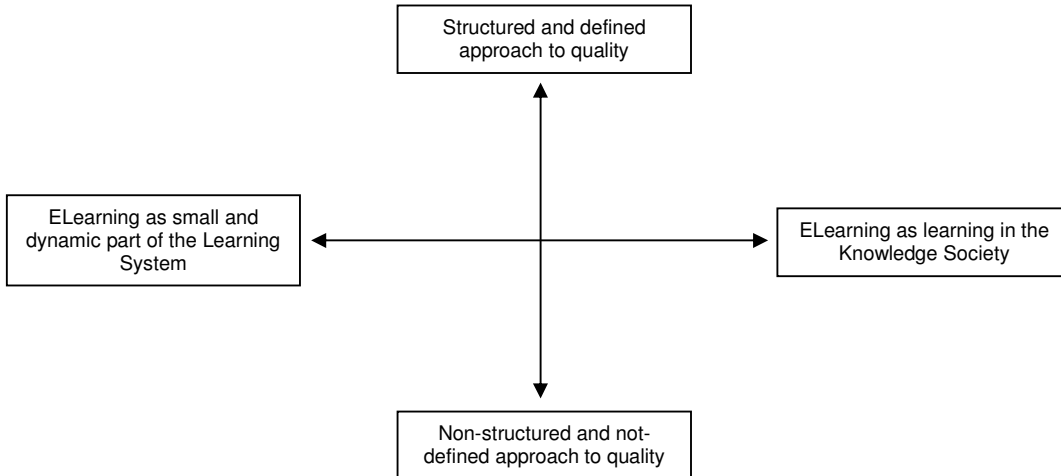
Experiences in eLearning can be found in specific sectors. An elearning regional policy (promoting eLearning actions at general level) and a defined quality approach are not available within the system yet.

**The South East Sector (SE)  
The “experimenting eLearning Region”**

Elearning in the Region is seen as a key element for the strategic development.

Experiences in eLearning within all sectors are available throughout the Regions. The Regions supports the vision of eLearning without proposing specific quality policy.

Taking into consideration the answers given above, Please place the Region within the quadrant:



Could you explain the position of the Region within the scheme?

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Other comments:

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**CASE STUDY**

## C. CASE STUDY

As benchmarking is defined as a process of identifying, learning, adapting and measuring outstanding practices and processes from any organization/public entity to improve performance, it is necessary to collect in a common data base the best and innovative initiatives in eLearning developed by any participant Region.

It is a public document and it can be made available to any interested regional entities (not exclusively those participating in SEEL benchmarking exercise).

The case study description should be considered a useful exercise since it will provide evidence that regional strategies are not only in place but are being followed using concrete practices.

Can you describe an innovative practice in eLearning developed within the Region? (if you have more than one initiative, please describe them all using individual copies of the same grids detailed below)

1) CASE STUDY "IDENTITY CARD"	
✧ Who	
✧ What	
✧ Why	
✧ Where	
✧ When	
✧ how many involved	
✧ how much spent	

**2) INNOVATION PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE INNOVATION**

Innovation in the education and training system can be analysed according to the following dimensions<sup>2</sup>:

- **Pedagogic dimension** (focused on the changes implied by the adoption of new technologies in teaching methods and learning methods, and implying quantitative indicators such as the access to ICT equipment and qualitative indicators, such as the motivation of teachers/trainers to adopt ICT and the interest of learners in ICT);
- **Organisational dimension** (focused on the changes implied by the adoption of new technologies in terms of roles and responsibility of the personnel, new architectural structures required for the utilisation of equipment, new organisation of the didactic, increased incidence of teacher training in determining good practice);
- **Economic dimension** (focused on the financial consequences of the increasing autonomy of training centres and educational organisations and on the market position of them as service providers)
- **Technological dimension** (focused on the changes implied by the massive adoption of new technologies in terms of access and in particular of infrastructure and hardware & software endowment).
- **Institutional dimension** (focused on the institutional changes determined by the increasing autonomy of training centres and educational organisations and by the massive adoption of new technologies).

**Please fill in the grid below, keeping in mind the specificity of the case study and following different innovation dimensions.**

	AIMS	IMPACT
Pedagogic		
Economic		
Technological		
Institutional		
Socio-cultural		
Other specific aspects		

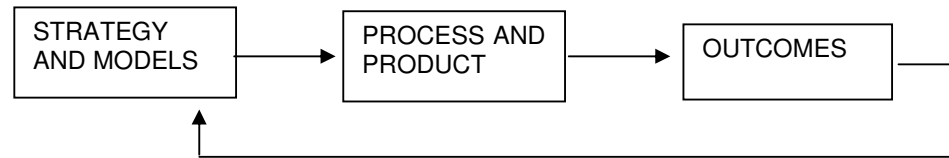
<sup>2</sup> EWAtch Project, Conceptual Analysis Framework, SCIENTER (MENON Network), June 2001.

<b>3) DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Background (who took the initiative, past related initiatives, conditions, contextual elements that explain motivation to start)</li> <li>❖ Involved actors and responsibilities</li> <li>❖ Target group</li> <li>❖ Sources of funding</li> <li>❖ Objectives, components, activities, results</li> <li>❖ Quality approach applied to which objects</li> <li>❖ Evaluation approach adopted</li> </ul>
4) Please explore to what extent the experience/case study is coherent to regional policy?
5) Transferability potential
6) Sustainability potential

**THANK YOU!**

### D. SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS (INDICATORS QUESTIONNAIRE)

The questionnaire is divided in two parts: in the first part the indicators are focused on the designing and planning issues (those Regions which do not have long experience in eLearning might limit themselves to fill this part) the second part is focused on the implementation and evaluation elements of quality policy in eLearning.



**FIRST PART**

STRATEGY AND MODELS (S)		
N	Rate	Comments
<b>A. CENTRALITY OF ELEARNING QUALITY IN POLICY AGENDA</b>		
1	Document which defines the approach and the policy on eLearning in the regional context	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= no accessible public documentation exist <input type="checkbox"/> 1= accessible public documentation exists and some implementation plans are in progress <input type="checkbox"/> 2= partially implemented <input type="checkbox"/> 3 = fully implemented at system level

2	Document which makes explicit the link between the eLearning regional policy and the quality approach	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= no accessible public documentation exist <input type="checkbox"/> 1= accessible public documentation exists and some implementation plans are in progress <input type="checkbox"/> 2= partially implemented <input type="checkbox"/> 3 = fully implemented at system level	
3	Involvement of the different stakeholders in the eLearning Policy development within the regional context	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
<b>B COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES</b>			
1	% of funds planned for eLearning actions out of the total funding in E&T by the Regional Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	
2	% of funds devoted to training of trainers in ICT and eLearning out of the total of training of trainers provision	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	
<b>C. EXTENSION AND SOLIDITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION OF ACTORS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE REGIONAL SYSTEM</b>			
1	Measures which support and promote new partnership development in eLearning within the regional context	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
2	Measures which support external and internal relationship among eLearning providers within the regional context	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	

<b>PROCESS AND PRODUCT (P)</b>			
<b>N</b>		<b>Rate</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>D. SELECTION OF ELEARNING ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS TO BE FUNDED/SUPPORTED/ACCREDITED</b>			
1	Tools for monitoring costs related to eLearning actions and materials	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
2	Quality framework (principles, standards and tools) to assess the eLearning resource providers capability	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
3	System to assess the relevance of the eLearning initiatives to the social and labour market needs	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	

**SECOND PART:**

<b>PROCESS AND PRODUCT (P)</b>			
<b>N</b>		<b>Rate</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>E. PROGRAMMING THE ELEARNING ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS</b>			
1	Measures to support the development and piloting of new initiatives in eLearning networks within the regional context	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
<b>F. DELIVERY OF ELEARNING ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS</b>			
1	Technical infrastructure extension and capacity	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= not satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> 1= satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> 2= it allows experiments but not full diffusion	
2	Interoperability and compatibility standards for the delivery of eLearning initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Not at all satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Fully satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> 2= Average acceptability	
<b>G. MONITORING ELEARNING ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS</b>			
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1	Systemic approach to collect feedback and suggestion from customers/citizens	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	

2	System to track and to collect statistical data on the behaviour of the learning population	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
3	Tools and procedures for assessing outcomes of the learning process	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	
4	Implementation of Quality framework (principles, standards and tools)	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress	

<b>OUTCOMES (O)</b>			
<b>N</b>		<b>Rate</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>H. DEGREE OF DEVELOPMENT OF ELEARNING WITHIN THE REGION</b>			
1	N. and % of course in eLearning	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	
2	N. and % of participants in eLearning actions out of the total number of participants involved in education and training initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	
3	% of the drop-outs from eLearning courses	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	
4	% of "certified or accredited" eLearning providers out the total regional Learning providers	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	
5	N. and % of products certified and accredited out of the total material provision	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____	

<b>I KNOWLEDGE SHARING</b>		
1	N of networks of organisations active in the Region to develop eLearning products and other services and presence in % of learning provisions developed by networks of organisation rather than simple institutions or enterprises	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____
2	N. eLearning multi-regional projects	
<b>L. INCREASE ACCESS TO DISADVANTAGED GROUPS</b>		
1	% of eLearning provision specifically targeted to disadvantaged target groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1% <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 to 5% <input type="checkbox"/> From 5 to 10% <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 to 20% <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20% Please specify _____
<b>M. REPUTATION</b>		
1	Opinions within the Region	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= eLearning is considered as not very relevant and/or not very successful <input type="checkbox"/> 1= eLearning is considered very successful <input type="checkbox"/> 2= eLearning is considered as relatively important and successful
2	Opinions outside the Region	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= The Region is perceived as less advantaged than the average in the field <input type="checkbox"/> 1= the Region is perceived as an advanced Region in the field <input type="checkbox"/> 2= the Region is perceived as being in an average state of development in the field
<b>N. EXPORT OF KNOW-HOW, EXPERTISE, PRODUCTS AND SERVICES</b>		
1	N. of eLearning initiatives participated in at international level	N
2	N. of eLearning products used outside the Region	N
3	IPR management system	<input type="checkbox"/> 0= Non available <input type="checkbox"/> 1= Available <input type="checkbox"/> 2= In progress

### E. IMPROVEMENT AND LEARNING PLAN

After having gone through the process you should be ready to draw up your improvement plan

(\*)

1 = Important and feasible

2 = Important but not immediately feasible

3 = Not so important but immediately feasible

4 = Not so important and difficult to be achieved.

TYPOLOGY OF ACTIONS	RATING(*)	TIMING	TYPOLOGY OF SUPPORT NEEDED

**F. PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS WITH OTHER REGIONS**

One of the aims of the benchmarking exercise is to support the process of collaboration and knowledge/experience and practice exchange among Regions.

<b>REGION:</b>
<b>AREAS IN WHICH WE DO NOT HAVE EXPERIENCE BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO LEARN FROM OTHERS:</b>
<b>AREAS IN WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO PROGRESS IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER REGIONS SHARING SIMILAR INTEREST AND LEVELS OF ACHIVEMENTS:</b>
<b>AREAS IN WHICH WE HAVE SOME RELEVANT EXPERIENCE TO SHARE WITH OTHER REGIONS:</b>
<b>CONTACTS:</b>

# ANNEX 1

## THEORETICAL APPROACH TO BENCHMARKING: SHORT OVERVIEW

The definition of a Benchmarking system is dependent on the nature of the process being benchmarked and therefore various definitions are often applied. In brief, Benchmarking provides

***a measure or point of reference that can serve as a standard for the purpose of comparative assessment of other like processes.***

Benchmarking systems are used to improve and standardise process efficiency by analysing and understanding the nature of the process and where applicable adopting best practices as used by other players within the same field or sector. The process is a dynamic one, involving continuous review and development in response to changing internal and external stimuli. Heretofore, such systems have been effectively used within industry to provide competitive and cost saving advantages, but are now gaining greater acceptance and application within non-profit making sectors, such as those of public administration, education, academic and government institutions, (both local and global).

Advantages relating to the use of Benchmarking include,

- Improved Operational Standards (within companies & sectors)
- Improved Cost Savings (Capital & Labour)
- Improved Performance
- Increased Efficiency
- Increased Competitiveness
- Identification & Provision of Skills
- Identification of Infrastructural Requirements and development of same
- Fostering of Innovation
- Fostering of Cooperation
- Environmental Efficiency
- Improved Response to Sectoral Change
- Stimulation of Organisational Development
- Stimulation of Globalisation
- Creation of Knowledge
- Creation of a Learning Culture

Prerequisites to effective Benchmarking include:

- Leadership Commitment,
- Organisational Preparation
- Capacity for Learning,

- Knowledge of Clients & Competitors,
- Availability of Suitable Resources, and
- Willingness to Change.

Benchmarking systems are defined relevant to the context in which they are used but the process for all is essentially identical, differing primarily in complexity, objective and the nature of players involved. A number of such systems are described in Table 1.

TYPE/ CHARACTERISTICS	ENTERPRISE-BASED	FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS	SECTORAL	COMPETITIVE	COLLABORATIVE
<b>COMMON PLAYERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Companies &amp; Enterprises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government,</li> <li>Local Authorities</li> <li>Institutions &amp; Official Bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government,</li> <li>Local Authorities</li> <li>Institutions</li> <li>Official Bodies</li> <li>Companies &amp; Enterprises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Companies</li> <li>Enterprises</li> <li>Organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent (External) Collaborative Organisation. Operating at a National or International level and often Government Funded</li> </ul>
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt Best Practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Common Standards</li> <li>Implement Efficient Practice</li> <li>Understand processes relevant to Framework conditions in society &amp; economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify &amp; Adopt Best Practice in Sector.</li> <li>Develop Common Standards</li> <li>Implement Efficient Practice</li> <li>Understand structural factors that drive competitiveness of Sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare Competitiveness</li> <li>Develop Competitive Advantage</li> <li>Identify &amp; Close Performance Gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop, Normalise &amp; Apply Standards</li> <li>Process Optimisation</li> <li>Identify Synergies</li> </ul>
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost Saving</li> <li>Improved Performance</li> <li>Increased Efficiency</li> <li>Increased Competitiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital Cost Saving,</li> <li>Labour Cost saving</li> <li>Provision of Skills</li> <li>Provision of Infrastructure</li> <li>Innovation</li> <li>Environmental Efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved Performance</li> <li>Increased Efficiency</li> <li>Increased Competitiveness</li> <li>Capital Cost Saving,</li> <li>Labour Cost saving</li> <li>Provision of Skills</li> <li>Provision of Infrastructure</li> <li>Foster Innovation</li> <li>Environmental Efficiency</li> <li>Improve Response to Sectoral Changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost Savings</li> <li>Improved Performance</li> <li>Increased Efficiency</li> <li>Increased Competitiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster Cooperation</li> <li>Stimulate Development,</li> <li>Stimulate Globalisation</li> <li>Stimulate Innovation</li> <li>Create Trust Environment</li> <li>Create Knowledge Learning Culture</li> <li>Improve Operational Standards</li> </ul>
<b>STIMULI</b>	Internal: Management External: Clients, competitors & non related industry	Internal: Policy Makers External: Clients & competitors, other agencies	Internal: Local Management Policy Makers External: Clients & competitors	Internal: Local Management External: Consultation bodies & trade organisations	External: Multiple inputs from diverse fields and sectors.

## THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS

The process itself involves a number of discreet phase:

### *Preliminary Diagnostic Activity*

#### **Knowledge of the Process**

The process must be well understood and conditions (positive & negative) that influence the efficiency of the process identified. This often involves identifying elements and sub-elements within the process and where possible assigning to them a weight or level of significance (applying a hierarchy). Once process elements are identified and understood, a reliable point of reference or measure must be developed and applied.

#### **A Reliable Measure or Reference Point**

To a great extent the success or effectiveness of a Benchmarking Process is determined by the reliability and suitability of the chosen measure or reference point, also referred to as a “critical control point” (CCP). The reference point or measure may relate to a process condition, critical parameter status or process output, depending on the nature and complexity of the process being benchmarked. The more complex a process the more difficult it may be to define reliable reference points and the number of reference points employed is often directly proportional to the complexity of the process being evaluated.

#### **Reliable Evaluation of External Processes**

Once the internal process is understood and performance measurable, the knowledge gained should allow reliable analysis and evaluation of external processes, those of competitors, collaborators, other organisations of like-nature, that are considered to represent suitable models of best practice and superior performance. Evaluation of external processes involves identifying both the key elements and performance indicators (which may differ to those employed internally) of the external process.

#### **Reliable Comparative Analysis**

Application of reliable process measures to both internal & external processes permits valid comparison and contrast of the processes in terms of elements, output and suitability of reference points employed.

#### **Feedback & Response**

Knowledge of the differences and similarities of the processes and how they effect anticipated output provides the stimulus to fine tune or change internal process elements. Once modified the comparison should be repeated on a continuous (periodic) basis.

## ANNEX 2

### THE SEEL BENCHMARKING SYSTEM

***The Benchmarking system in SEEL should be considered as a way of helping REGIONS to identify and reflect on strategies and actions that will help to improve their performance in promoting, supporting, developing, implementing monitoring and assessing quality in eLearning at local and regional levels.***

Learning Regions “function as collectors and repositories of knowledge and ideas, and provide and underlying environment or infrastructure which facilitates the flow of knowledge, ideas and learning. Learning Regions are increasingly important sources of innovation and economic growth, and are vehicles for globalisation”

(R. Florida ,1995, “Toward the Learning Region”, Future, vol. 27, no 5 pp. 528)

### **PRINCIPLES, FOCUS, AREAS, CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF THE SEEL BENCHMARKING SYSTEM**

#### ***Principles***

The SEEL benchmarking system is based on six principles:

1. *Formative approach*: the system is designed to support a process of self-assessment in order to help Regions to identify strategies and actions that will help improve their performance, related to their vision/strategy toward quality in eLearning
2. *Region as evolutionary and learning reality*: the benchmarking system has to consider the dynamic nature of the regional context and has to include an intrinsic principle of flexibility
3. *Process focused and manageable*: the benchmarking system has to be easy to manage (a particular effort should be placed in designing clear and easy-to understand criteria, indicators and tools) but at the same time has to be very focused on its purposes.
4. *Stakeholders’ perspectives* have to be strongly considered before defining criteria and indicators.
5. *Context depending*: the benchmarking system has to consider the specificity and “maturity” of the context in which it is being applied. This means that the benchmarking should include suggestions for helping “users” of the system to ponder or to “weigh” each criteria coherently against the current approach of the Region regarding quality in eLearning in order to develop a feasible “improvement plan”.
6. *Collaborative .e.g:* so as to stimulate collaboration and practice exchange.

#### ***The focus, criteria and indicators***

The starting point is the definition of the three basic concepts through which the Benchmarking analysis process has been developed.

**The focus/i** of the SEEL benchmarking process are:

- **Strategy & Models:** policy, guidelines, standards, strategic principles, quality criteria, measurements of competencies, strategic alliance and collaboration

- **Processes & Products:** training actions and initiatives, new partnership development, infrastructure and applications
- **Outcomes:** impact, knowledge sharing and production, customer satisfaction, innovation...

**Criterion** (Qualitative) Principle enabling the assessment of the state of development of each area identified.

**Indicator** Objective element of information which facilitates follow up, analysis and comparison between services/systems according to the criteria established.

Indicators in the SEEL Benchmarking system must be:

- *change-oriented:* For benchmarking to work, indicators need to capture how quality in eLearning policy and practices and outcomes evolves over time
- *context-specific.* The right indicators to be used will depend on the type of Region, its strategies and working practices in eLearning
- *valid:* its value should not depend on the observer or the methods used when measuring
- *precise:* able to measure what has to be measured.
- *combining both 'external' and 'internal' assessment.* Although benchmarking indicators need to reflect particular features/characteristic of specific Regions, they also need to provide a common baseline to enable Regions to assess their position and performance relative to other Regions. This means that in practice, benchmarking indicators include "quantitative" and "qualitative" measurements.

### **Criteria and Indicators**

<b>FOCUS</b>		<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>
<b>STRATEGY AND MODELS (S)</b>	A	Centrality of eLearning Quality in policy agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document which defines the approach and the policy on eLearning in the regional context</li> <li>2. Document which makes explicit the link between eLearning regional policy and quality approach</li> <li>3. Involvement of the different stakeholders in the eLearning Policy development within the regional context</li> </ol>
	B	Commitment of resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of funds planned for eLearning actions out of the public funding of Education and Training by Regional Administration</li> <li>2. % of funds devoted to training of trainers in ICT and eLearning of total training of trainer provision</li> </ol>
	C	Extension and solidity of the partnership and collaboration of actors within and outside the regional system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Measures which support and promote new partnership development in eLearning within the regional context</li> <li>2. Measures which support external and internal relationship among eLearning providers within the regional context</li> </ol>
<b>PROCESS AND PRODUCTS (P)</b>	D	Selection of eLearning activities/actions to be funded/supported/accredited	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tools for monitoring costs related to eLearning actions and materials</li> <li>2. Quality framework (principles, standards and tools) to assess the eLearning resources providers capability</li> <li>3. System to assess the relevance of the eLearning initiatives to the social and labour market needs</li> </ol>
	E	Programming the eLearning activities/actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Measure to support the development and piloting of new initiative in eLearning networks within the regional context</li> </ol>
	F	Delivery of eLearning activities/actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Technical infrastructure extension and capacity</li> <li>2. Interoperability and compatibility standards for the delivery of eLearning initiatives</li> </ol>
	G	Monitoring eLearning activities/actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Systemic approach to collect feedback and suggestion from customers/citizens</li> <li>2. System to track and to collect statistical data on the behaviours of the learning population</li> <li>3. Tools and procedures for assessing outcomes of the learning process</li> <li>4. Implementation of Quality framework (principles, standards and tools)</li> </ol>

FOCUS		CRITERIA	INDICATORS
<b>OUTCOMES (O)</b>	H	Degree of development of eLearning within the Region	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. N. and % of course in eLearning</li> <li>2. N. and % of participants in eLearning actions out from the total number of participants in education and training initiatives</li> <li>3. % of the drop-outs from eLearning courses</li> <li>4. % of "certified or accredited" eLearning providers out the total regional Learning providers</li> <li>5. N. and % of products certified and accredited on the total material provision</li> </ol>
	I	Knowledge sharing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. N. of networks of organisation active in the Region to develop eLearning products and other services and presence in % of learning provision developed by networks of organisations rather than simple institutions or enterprises</li> <li>2. N. eLearning multiRegional projects</li> </ol>
	L	Increase access to disadvantaged groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of eLearning provision specifically targeted to disadvantaged target groups</li> </ol>
	M	Reputation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opinions within the Region</li> <li>2. Opinions outside the Region</li> </ol>
	N	Export of know-how, expertise, products and services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. N. of participation in eLearning initiatives at international level</li> <li>2. N. of eLearning products used outside the Region</li> <li>3. PR management system</li> </ol>