

# ALLUME

## A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

### **ALLUME – From “A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe” to “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities”**

In view of the importance of lifelong learning (LLL) as the backbone of the European Education and Training Strategy and the contrasting low commitment to LLL by universities, the main objective of the ALLUME project and of EUCEN was to explore ways to increase the participation of universities in lifelong learning and to produce “A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe”. This model was supposed to assist universities by providing guidelines based on the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning published in 2008. However, during the project’s lifespan it became clear that the idea of a unique model or a one-size-fits-all approach was outdated and not adequate given the diversity of universities, environments and the heterogeneity of LLL strategies and processes.

While the challenge of making the Charter and of making Lifelong Learning Universities (LLLUs)<sup>1</sup> a reality remains, the project evolved to the vision of developing flexible “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities” in order to tackle the diversity in LLL strategies. Thus, the objective of ALLUME was to provide to deciders, like (vice) rectors and senior managers involved in LLL, and to LLL-practitioners a set of reflexive and inspiring tools and recommendations that could help their teams to define and implement concrete actions to make the 10 commitments of the Charter a reality. ALLUME intended to contribute to this implementation process on the basis of best practices at work in universities having already built and integrated successful LLL strategies.

### **Approach**

The project design of ALLUME combined research and assessment activities in the context of organisational development, with awareness-raising initiatives at different policy levels. This approach led to the proposition of pathways and policy recommendations and tools which were introduced to decision-makers, deciders and LLL-practitioners in universities and promoted through key European networks in Higher Education.

The project’s methodology can be divided into the following areas:

1. Production of consortium case studies following a three-step methodology:
  - Step 1: Institutional analysis of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) strategies in the 10 partner universities and first case study report
  - Step 2: Visits to the case study institutions and visit reports
  - Step 3: The final case study reports on the basis of the visitors’ recommendations
2. Analysis of the case study results and design of draft supporting tools
3. Testing visits in the form of on-site visits in six universities in European member states not yet considering LLL as a priority.

While working on the case studies and carrying out the testing visits, the diversity of the different strategies to implement a LLL University was highlighted and led to a questioning of the usability of the concept of a single set of guidelines, which would not be adequate for today’s diversity and flexibility of processes. Thus, the approach passed from producing

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<sup>1</sup> Please see chapter 7 for the definition of Lifelong Learning University used for the ALLUME project.

guidelines for universities to the concept of designing flexible tools which will help universities start and support a LLLU strategy process respecting a wide range of identified frameworks.

4. Discussion of the preliminary tools and results at the final event “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities?” in Barcelona in September 2011 with European organisations, institutions and networks

### **Final Products**

- 10 case studies presenting progress in 10 European universities in the implementation of LLL strategies in line with the 10 commitments of the Charter
- The 10 case studies presented in an analytical grid
- Discussion seminars in Brussels (BE) and Barcelona (ES)
- A highly effective proven methodology including structured peer visits
- Two publications containing the final products and methodologies
  - Pathways and Policies – Recommendations (printed and on-line) including the main findings of the two transversal analyses on content and on process, as well as recommendations addressed to strategy deciders in universities like (vice)rectors and regional, national and European public authorities
  - Tools and Results (on-line) including the three flexible tools for self-analysis and benchmarking, the two transversal analyses in full length and background papers addressed to LLL-practitioners
- One executive summary (printed and on-line)

### **Strengths of the project**

- Constant interaction with LLL stakeholders and decision-makers at European level through consultation seminars and the testing process
- Strong evidence of awareness-rising among end-users
- High impact on the partner institutions who guided and hosted the visits as independent experts
  - Mutual exchange of different LLL approaches and concepts
  - Additional learning experience
  - Highly valued benefits for both hosts and visitors
- High adaption to end-users’ needs of the final tools
- Highly positive feedback from the testing institutions about the set-up of the visits
- Confirmation of identified needs
- Visibility of impact of the project’s results and supportive character of the developed tools
  - Inclusion of LLL as one of the fundamental principles of action in the draft of the West University of Timisoara’s Charter
  - Embedding of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in the Zentrum für Lehre und Weiterbildung (ZWL) in the University of Stuttgart
  - Design of concrete ULLL strategies in the University of Stuttgart

*“The process of evaluation was extremely important for our institution. We discovered that we are actually better than we thought. We were able to isolate the weak points in our system and we are going to improve them. The cooperation in the international levels gives institutions new perspectives and changes the paradigms for problem solving.” (Feedback from one of the testing institutions)*

For more information, please visit our website <http://www.allume.eucen.eu/>  
or contact the project team directly via: [executive.office@eucen.org](mailto:executive.office@eucen.org)

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# 1. Project Objectives

## The recent Evolution

During the past decades, as shown for example in the BeFlex<sup>2</sup> and BeFlex Plus<sup>3</sup> results, many universities have developed very wide and diverse “Continuing Education activities”, dedicated to adults and people having interrupted their education process: Implementation of degree and non-degree programmes, for professional, personal or civic needs or purposes, development of guidance and counselling for the adult learners, intensification of the validation of non-formal and informal learning for admission or for exemption for parts of the course, increasing flexibility in the learning pathways, and so on. Universities have been invited and supported in these developments by successive declarations of the conferences of European Ministers of Education.

In 2009, it was obvious that in the global movement for LLL, universities had to go one step further than continuing education or adult education development. In April 2009, the Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, emphasised in particular widening participation, student-centred learning but also the implementation of LLL policies. This communiqué raised the question of how to implement LLL within the universities towards 2020.

On the basis of the BeFlex Plus results, the EUCEN Louvain-la-Neuve/Leuven Conference in 2009 recommended the implementation of a “Lifelong Learning University”<sup>4</sup>. The characteristics of this “LLL University” were described and 10 recommendations were proposed in order to achieve it. In parallel EUA had launched a charter for lifelong learning<sup>5</sup> including 10 commitments from universities to achieve the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, with a set of matching commitments for governments and regional partners.

The question resulting from these developments is now “**How to implement a Lifelong Learning University in practical, concrete terms?**”. The **objective of the ALLUME** project was to **help universities, in a concrete and practical way**, to elaborate a vision, mission and action plans dedicated to adapting their own organisation and leadership in order to **become a LLL university**, in short to **develop a lifelong learning strategy within their institution**.

Taking into account the background of this challenge, ALLUME prepared supportive tools and recommendations to help universities to initiate and support an implementation process which accommodates a wide range of models and contributes to the comparability at European level.

Starting from the BeFlex Plus recommendations and EUA commitments, the intention of ALLUME was to start from concrete positive situations, experiences and practices in the 10 university members of the ALLUME consortium to understand why and how it is possible to develop LLL strategies in other universities. The reflective assessment and analysing process of these best practices led to the development of supportive university tools and was

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<sup>2</sup> Please see <http://www.eucen.eu/beflex.html> (last accessed on 27/10/2011)

<sup>3</sup> Please see <http://www.eucen.eu/BeFlexPlus/index.html> (last accessed on 27/10/2011)

<sup>4</sup> Please see chapter 7 for the definition of a Lifelong Learning University used for the ALLUME project.

<sup>5</sup> Please see the website

[http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user\\_upload/files/Publications/EUA\\_Charter\\_Eng\\_LY.pdf](http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/EUA_Charter_Eng_LY.pdf) (last accessed on 27/10/2011) for a full outline of the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning.

regarded as a practicable way of bringing together experiences gained in different member states and contexts for the development of LLL strategies and their implementation.

The project's approach towards the development of such tools was based on the idea to benefit from the expertise and experience of all partners involved as well as from the diversity of situations and levels of implementation within the partner institutions.

### **Involvement of and benefit to end-users**

In order to ensure that the developed products met end-users' needs, the draft tools were presented and discussed with a consultation group involving different stakeholders representing various European institutions, organisations and networks as well as universities and social partners in order to initiate a "benchlearning" process intending to raise the expertise of each member through a mutual learning process (consultation seminar in Brussels, in September 2010).

Based on this consultation process, the draft version of the tools was reviewed and a test version was designed for the testing visits in six institutions from European countries where LLL is not considered as a priority yet. The experience and feedback gained from these insightful visits led to the final version of the guidelines, which was presented in the ALLUME event "Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities?" for further discussion to European LLL-professionals and representatives of regional governmental bodies and of the European institutions in Barcelona in September 2011.

This flexible approach applied by ALLUME appeared to the project consortium as a good way to take into account the different levels of implementation in European countries and the diversity of institutions and their respective commitment to the lifelong learning issue, and the differentiation of regional/national environments.

Aiming to support universities in becoming Lifelong Learning Universities and to develop their own lifelong learning strategies, ALLUME produced valuable results for senior managers, vice rectors and regional, national and European authorities, and also for practitioners and staff involved in the actual strategy development process on the ground:

The publication "Pathways and Policies – Recommendations" presents the essential learning points and outcomes of the two transversal analyses based on the consortium case studies and formulates recommendations following the experience of the testing visits and work with the produced tools. This document is more oriented towards strategy deciders and decision-makers. In contrast, the second publication "Tools and Results" includes the three distinct tools for benchmarking and self-analysis, the two transversal analyses in full length and background papers and addresses practitioners and staff directly involved in strategy implementation.

After the positive feedback from the testing institutions, the project partners expect that more proactive initiatives will be established through ALLUME, opening a new space for experimentation and for raising awareness. ALLUME partners hope that the overall dedication of HEIs towards LLL will be treated as a strategic resource for the successful accomplishment of universities' future challenges and tasks.

## 2. Project Approach

### **Project methodology carried out**

The project design of ALLUME combined research and assessment activities in the context of organisational development, with awareness-raising initiatives at different policy levels. This approach led to the proposition of pathways and policy recommendations and tools which were introduced to decision-makers, deciders and LLL-practitioners in universities and promoted through key European networks in Higher Education.

The project's methodology can be divided into four distinct areas:

### **1. Production of consortium case studies following a three-step methodology**

Before any implementation tools could be designed, a detailed picture about existing best practices of ULLL strategies in European universities had to be obtained. Therefore, all partners produced comprehensive case studies representing the state-of-play of their institutions' ULLL strategies embedded in their respective national legal and economic backgrounds. Once the first draft of the case studies was produced, each partner visited another consortium partner's institution so that views and practices could be exchanged and mutual learning could take place. In order to achieve comparable results, templates for the case studies and the visits were provided to partners in a first step.

The overall design of the production of the consortium case studies thus followed a three-step methodology:

- Step 1: Institutional analysis of ULLL-strategies in the 10 partner universities and first case study report
- Step 2: Visits to the case study institutions and visit reports
- Step 3: The final case study reports on the basis of the visitors' recommendations

### **2. Analysis of the case studies and design of draft supporting tools tackling the content and process of ULLL-strategies and the benchmarking of these strategies against the European Universities' Charter of LLL**

Towards the end of the first year of the project, a transversal reading was produced based on the results of the case studies. It became evident through the in-depth case study production that the consortium partners – as much as they are advanced in their LLL-provisions – were still involved in the transformational process to become real Lifelong Learning Universities within very different contexts and national settings. Consequently the initial underlying thesis of the project approach – to get from case studies and their transversal analysis to a LLL University model, which could be formulated in genuine recommendations – needed some readjustment and the idea of “pathways” emerged.

On the basis of these findings, a draft set of guidelines (supporting tools) was created. These guidelines and the interim project outcomes were subsequently discussed with European LLL professionals, LLL networks and policy makers at a consultation seminar that took place in Brussels in September 2010.

The objective was to receive reactions, comments and recommendations about the guidelines/supporting tools and their perspective on the future role and impact of LLL in the European Higher Education Area to finalise the test version of the tools for the next project phase. In addition, three representatives of the testing universities were invited to the consultation seminar providing them with the opportunity to get a first hand impression of the project's approach and of the first draft of the guidelines. The consortium considerably benefited from taking into account their propositions and remarks already at an early stage of the development process.



### **3. Testing visits in the form of on-site visits in six universities in European member states not yet considering LLL as a priority.**

In order to test the utility and practicality of the produced tools, testing visits were carried out in six external institutions in different European countries (Italy, Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia, Greece and Romania) from February 2011 until May 2011. For this phase, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), where LLL is not yet considered as a strategic priority, but more as a credo where lip-service is paid to, were chosen in order to test the tools. These universities have a profile similar to the expected end-users of the main products. The testing processes were designed in the format of on-site visits where one of the consortium partners coming from a university experienced in LLL structures visited the respective testing institution as an external expert and monitored their working process with the developed tools.

Depending on the arrangements between the visiting partner and the testing institutions, certain sections of the guidelines or the whole document were discussed.

In general, the joint work on the testing visit guidelines involved two to seven persons from the testing institutions in roles like (vice) deans, (vice) rector, directors, (assistant) professors, teachers and project managers from different institutions.

While working on the case studies and carrying out the testing visits, the diversity of the different strategies to implement a LLL University was highlighted and led to a questioning of the usability of the concept of a single set of guidelines, which would not be adequate for today's diversity and flexibility of processes. Thus, the approach passed from producing guidelines for universities to the concept of designing flexible tools which would help universities start and support a LLLU strategy process respecting a wide range of identified frameworks.

The need to further work with the wealth of information gathered by the in-depth consortium case studies and their additional value for the project outputs in terms of illustrative examples and hands-on experience about strategizing processes led to the production of two additional profound transversal analyses focusing on the strategizing processes and on the content of the developed ULLL strategies.

### **4. Discussion of the tools and results at the final event “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities?” in Barcelona in September 2011 with European organisations, institutions and networks**

The project's methodology, results of the testing visits, revised tools, and the two transversal analyses were subsequently presented and discussed at the final project event “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities?” that took place in Barcelona in September 2011 with (vice) rectors, decision-makers and practitioners from universities, professionals from qualification agencies, European LLL professionals, LLL networks (Fundación CyD, EURASHE and EADTU) and regional policy- and decision-makers. The event attracted a total of 41 participants from more than 20 countries and was thus highly successful. The highly valuable comments led to a revision and production of the final project outputs, which include a set of recommendations based on the results of the two transversal analyses, the insights of the project visits and facilitation processes targeting senior managers and (vice)rectors, and three supporting tools for practitioners.

#### **Added value**

When the idea for the ALLUME project was developed, apart from good will and lip-services, no concrete action at European level trying to implement lifelong learning strategies in universities was visible. The project had at its disposal descriptions of interesting

experiences from previous project results while undertaken surveys indicated the overall low commitment of universities to the lifelong learning perspective (BeFlex/BeFlexPlus). Furthermore, within the EUCEN network, colleagues working in continuing education repeatedly pointed at their difficulties to place discussions on lifelong learning issues on the strategic agenda of their institutions.

On the basis of these different observations, actors working in innovative institutions or involved in networks, considered that the production of guidelines or supporting tools would be of some help for colleagues trying to mobilise their institutions. According to the knowledge of the project partners, that is the first time that such a proposition was done.

An approach allowing for personalised “pathways” seemed to the consortium a good way to take into account the diversity:

- 1) in the vision of their mission/roles/values
- 2) of their legal context (national or regional)
- 3) of the environmental demands
- 4) of their resources (humans, intellectual, technological, ...)
- 5) of levels of implementation or consideration in European countries,
- 6) of institutions and of their commitment to the lifelong learning issue.

Consequently, the three tools recommended for further work on ULLL strategizing processes are reflexive in their nature and allow a personalised approach to ULLL which respects universities’ specific circumstances and needs. They allow respecting the rhythm of each country or institution, identifying steps and milestones. Furthermore, actors were provided with shared references for their work on implementation of policies and practices.

Apart from the added value of the final products, the results and approach of continuously involving end-users, in consultation seminars and/or testing visits (internal consortium visits and guidelines/tool testing visits), proved to be highly valuable and ensured a high awareness-rising among end-users and the adaption of the tools to their needs. The positive feedback received regarding the concept of structured peer-reviews for the guidelines/tools testing visits and from the internal consortium visits indicated equally the benefits and value derived from the project. In concrete terms, the testing visits and supportive tools helped to raise the profile of ULLL in some of the testing institutions and led to the following tangible outcomes:

- Inclusion of LLL as one of the fundamental principles of action in the draft of the West University of Timisoara’s Charter
- Embedding of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in the Zentrum für Lehre und Weiterbildung (ZWL) in the University of Stuttgart
- Design of concrete ULLL strategies in the University of Stuttgart

The consortium partners monitoring the testing process as independent experts also derived benefits from the peer-review process as they could benefit from the mutual exchange of different LLL approaches and concepts, which provided an additional learning experience for them.

From a European policy perspective, the added value of the recommendations and the tools lies in their bottom up and trans-national methodology contributing to the priorities of the ET 2020 and the Europe 2020 strategy by inviting and stimulating universities in their implementation of lifelong learning strategies thereby narrowing the gap towards the realisation of a European Lifelong Learning area. ALLUME’s approach reflected the diversity of common principles, learning cultures and national priorities while providing key-actors and decision-makers with shared references for the implementation of LLL strategies.

### **The external evaluation**

The evaluation of the project was undertaken by an independent external evaluator who provided formative input to the project. The role of the external evaluator was to ensure full accountability of the project's progress, difficulties and achievements. The external evaluator provided a short feedback report after each management group meeting and a more detailed report for the interim report at hand and the final report. The final evaluation analysed the results in the eyes of the aims and assumptions of the project.

The external evaluator also undertook the role of rapporteur at the dissemination and consultation seminars (Brussels, September 2010 and Barcelona, September 2011).

### **The dissemination and exploitation strategy**

During the first year of the project, its methodological design was oriented towards a strong focus on the internal processes of the institutions involved with proven learning processes coming from the intense self-assessment in the case study production. These internal consortium visits strongly contributed to the dissemination of the project within the partner institutions and enhanced the visibility of ULLL. With the consultation seminar and the production of the second version of the guidelines/supporting tools – the test version - external networks and LLL-professionals became the major target. The final project products were sent to all the testing institutions, EUCEN members and their national networks and to key European policy-makers.

The following sources were used for effective information and dissemination of the project's progress:

#### 1) Project website, newsletter articles, flyers and poster

In the first year of the project, the website was set up and a project description leaflet was produced. Various articles appeared in the EUCEN newsletter, reaching out to more than 220 Universities throughout Europe. Moreover, the project leaflets were re-printed in the second year and distributed at the EUCEN conference in Granada reaching about 140 participants. Leaflets were distributed to partners for further dissemination. An ALLUME poster was designed and presented at the same conference (please see below for the concrete activities during the conferences). The flyer and poster are available for download to interested parties on the project's website <http://allume.eucen.eu>

#### 2) EUCEN conferences

During the 39<sup>th</sup> EUCEN conference in Rovaniemi (FI) with more than 150 experts participating, the project materials were presented to the Finnish Minister of Higher Education in an arranged meeting.

ALLUME played an important role during the 40<sup>th</sup> EUCEN conference (Lille, 18-20 November 2010, "From rhetoric to reality-two years after the charter on LLL"). The aims and content of the ALLUME project matched completely the conference's topic. Apart from one specific project workshop on ALLUME, several workshops related to the EUA Charter and the concept of a Lifelong Learning University were given.

At the 41<sup>st</sup> EUCEN conference in Granada (ES), two consortium partners presented the project in a poster session and invited the conference participants to the final project event at the end of the conference plenary session. A specifically-designed invitation flyer for the final event in September was distributed to all participants (approximately 140 copies).

In general, the project received very positive feedback and much interest in its final results from the audience in all the conferences.

### 3) Consultation seminar

The close liaison with national and European actors to promote the implementation of LLL-strategies at HEIs was targeted throughout the project. This was shown at the consultation seminar, which was hosted by the Flemish Ministry of Education. As an additional key element, the liaison with other European networks operating in the field (like EUA, EURASHE, EADTU, etc) and social partners (ESU, Business Europe, ETUCE) was intensified to raise awareness, promote the final products and take their perspectives into account – illustrated by their engagement during the consultation seminar.

### 4) Testing visits of the supporting tools in six additional European universities

Although the main aim of the visits was refining the developed tools to help universities in implementing their ULLL strategies, these visits also had a dissemination character. Since the testing institutions involved 2 to 7 people in the working process around the guidelines/supporting tools, these tests were used to raise the profile of ULLL in their institutions, spread the project's aims and led in many cases to tangible results.

### 5) ALLUME event “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities?” (Dissemination Seminar in Barcelona 2011)

Approximately 40 European LLL-professionals from European LLL-networks, universities, validation agencies, regional governments and the European institutions cooperated and contributed actively at the project's final event.

The event was promoted on the project's website, through European LLL-networks (EUCIS-LLL, EDEN, ENQA, Pascal Observatory, EAPRIL, EADTU) – on their websites and in their newsletters – EUCEN members, the consortium, testing partners and through targeted invitations to regional and European political representatives, social partners and LLL-associations. A press release and an invitation flyer were produced for this purpose.

### 6) National and European LLL-networks

In the second year of the project, more attention was paid to reaching and informing external actors and information was disseminated through various national and European networks and events. Different national ULLL-networks were informed about the projects' progress and the identified testing institutions cooperated closely with them promoting and disseminating the supporting tools in their respective countries. The consortium partners contributed as well to informing their institutions and networks through their websites and announcements of the project.

### 7) Post-project exploitation strategy

The close cooperation with other European networks will ensure the exploitation and dissemination of the produced materials beyond EUCEN's reach and the project duration. Several activities, like disseminating project leaflets after the project's lifespan, have already been carried out. Furthermore, the three final products of ALLUME (the executive summary, the publication *Pathways and Policies – Recommendations*, the publication *Tools and Results*) are being translated into French and will be made available on ALLUME's project website for the benefit of any French speaking colleagues from the ULLL-communities and networks. A launch of the translated documents is planned for the next meeting of the Conférence des Directeurs de SUFC that will be held in Dijon in 2012.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

In view of the overall aim to provide to LLL strategy deciders and decision-makers like (vice) rectors and senior managers and to LLL-practitioners a set of reflexive and inspiring tools and recommendations that could help their teams to define and implement concrete actions to make the 10 commitments of the Charter a reality, ALLUME produced three main results:

- Two publications containing the final products and methodologies
  - Pathways and Policies – Recommendations
  - Tools and Results
- One executive summary

The publication (*Pathways and Policies – Recommendations*) is intended for senior managers of universities, (vice)rectors as well as regional national and European public authorities. After introducing briefly the project's main aims and methodologies, it presents the essential learning points and the main results of the two transversal analyses in view of ULLL strategies and strategizing and gives recommendations for the creation of LLL strategies to achieve Lifelong Learning Universities. Since these recommendations are based on the experience gained through the testing visits and the work with the produced tools, they provide valuable and practical points for consideration.

The publication *Tools and Results* contains the technical results of the ALLUME project and targets practitioners and staff involved in the actual strategy creation processes on the ground. Apart from the two transversal analyses, it comprises the three tools developed by the ALLUME project which will assist universities in the development of concrete ULLL strategies and actions by helping them to work on the process and the content of their LLL strategies through reviewing and extending their current LLL approaches.

The *Executive Summary* provides a concise overview about the main methodologies, products and recommendations of the project.

All documents are available for download under <http://allume.eucen.eu/documents>

Apart from these main results, the project also generated further materials, which support and illustrate the main project results:

- 10 case studies presenting progress in the implementation of LLL strategies in line with the 10 commitments of the Charter
- The 10 case studies presented in an analytical grid
- Discussion seminars - Brussels (BE) and Barcelona (ES)
- Three tools for self-analysis and benchmarking (included in the final publication *Tools and Results*)
  - Tool for Self-Analysis (Process)
  - Tool for Self-Analysis (Content)
  - Tool for Benchmarking against the European Universities' Charter on LLL
- Two transversal analyses (included in the final publication *Tools and Results*, main findings included in the publication *Pathways and Policies - Recommendations*)
  - Transversal analysis of the consortium case studies focusing on the content
  - Transversal analysis of the consortium case studies focusing on the process
- A highly effective proven methodology including structured peer visits

#### **10 consortium case studies**

The consortium case studies were compiled using a three-step methodology as explained in chapter 2 and portray the respective university and its ULLL strategy in place. The case

studies concentrate on the vision, mission and goals of the ULLL strategies, future paths and funding systems. They serve as illustrations for the Benchmarking tool in the *Tools and Results* publication and intend to present various systems of function ULLL strategies to interested stakeholders. They invite other universities to reflect upon the relevance and transferability of some elements for their own purposes. A basic categorisation of the consortium institution as well as its relevance for parts of the 10 commitments of the European Universities' Charter on LLL are given at the beginning of each case study and allow readers to select the cases which seem most relevant to them.

### **10 consortium case studies presented in an analytical grid**

These grids are a reorganisation of the information contained in the case studies and present the primary source for the *Transversal Analysis on LLL strategies – content*, which can be found in the publication *Tools and Results*.

### **Three tools for self-analysis and benchmarking**

#### Objectives of the tools

The reflexive tools address universities and other actors in the field of learning at academic level (EQF level 6 – level 8), such as policy makers, research institutes, commercial enterprises offering learning opportunities, and facilitate the development of a lifelong learning culture within universities and the design of a lifelong learning strategy adapted to specific needs of each university. They also help institutions on the way to a practical implementation of lifelong learning, by inviting universities and other LLL-actors to formulate concrete action plans, largely connected to (for example):

- curriculum development, enhancing guidance and counselling
- renewal of the student recruitment strategy, reaching for new audiences
- construction of a quality system or launching a quality charter (e.g., learning achievement, graduation rates, relevance for employment, Recognition of Prior Learning)
- going through an institutional, field-specific or thematic evaluation
- designing the corporate governance of the social interaction of the university
- planning of staff development activities, both to foster lifelong learning as well as for their own lifelong learning
- Institutional relations (e.g., partnerships, networks, resource sharing, problem-solving assistance)

The three developed tools are:

#### 1. Tool for Self-Analysis (Process)

This tool works with the Strategy-as-Practice approach developed by Whittington and invites universities to analyse in detail their way of doing strategies. In this way, it helps to identify key (internal and external) actors involved in the strategizing process and facilitates identifying the single steps undertaken in making a strategy. This tool has a strong internal organisation focus.

#### 2. Tool for Self-Analysis (Content)

This tool assists universities in getting a strategic overview about their current LLL strategy, mission, vision and goals. Furthermore, it invites institutions to select three key priorities for the next years and to work in detail on them, leading to a revision of the current LLL strategy and the formulation of an action plan.

#### 3. Tool for Benchmarking against the European Universities' Charter on LLL

This tool invites HEIs to benchmark their performance against the 10 institutional commitments of the European Universities' Charter on LLL. Universities will receive suggestions of further areas for improvement.

### **Effective and proven methodology including structured peer visits**

The concept of structured peer visits was used for the final production of the consortium case studies (internal consortium visits) and for the testing visits of the guidelines/tools. Especially the feedback received by the consortium partners as external experts and by the testing institutions was highly positive. They cherished the concept of peer-reviewed on-site visits thanks to the mutual learning benefits and the fact that these visits helped to increase the importance of ULLL in the testing institutions. The concept of working with a colleague from another university through the guidelines was appreciated by the testing institutions and the consortium partners as the objective experts contributed to the process through their impartial views and the knowledge of different ULLL approaches, which facilitated the analysis of current strengths and weaknesses.

Both types of structured peer visits gave the opportunity to discuss, refine, re-define and precise the vision of ULLL with several colleagues, and with the assistance or support of a skilled ULLL expert (coming from another partner university). This set-up forced the visited institutions to review and analyse their ULLL concepts with the input of external examples and different models.

Ideas for possible future cooperation also included deepening this peer-reviewing approach.

The tools, case studies and grids<sup>6</sup> are also available for download under <http://allume.eucen.eu/documents>

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<sup>6</sup> Due to confidentiality reasons, only 9 of the 10 case studies and grids are available publicly on EUCEN's website.

## 4. Partnerships

### **The added value of the multi-country partnership in executing the project**

The consortium was formed of ten universities, representing eight European Member States, but ten different regional contexts. Although they were actively involved in the development of ULLL at local, national and European level and had built and integrated successful LLL strategies, they presented diverse ULLL strategies and different levels of development. Thus, they proposed a diversity of backgrounds and approaches which contributed to the elaboration of an open approach of the final project outcomes. The leader of the consortium was EUCEN, the European University Continuing Education Network, which has over 220 members – higher education institutions in Europe – 17 of which are regional/national networks for ULLL.

The project provided to EUCEN an opportunity to come to concrete actions after having demonstrated the overall low level of commitment on LLL issues by European universities (see Beflex/Beflex Plus project results). EUCEN has a track record working with experts who have a longstanding experience in lifelong learning issues.

The universities who had been asked to join the partnership appointed for this project high level experts working in the University Lifelong Learning field. They have a significant European experience and have responsibilities at institutional or national level, working in University Continuing Education (UCE) or are involved in adult education issues. Most of them have developed LLL policies in their university or during their professional pathway and are members of board or heads of UCE National Networks.

The project was clearly based on a European approach. To elaborate tools and recommendations for the implementation of LLL strategies in universities based on the analysis of best practices of a broad European partnership, is a crucial approach likely to contribute to the general objective of the Europe 2020 strategy and meeting the priorities of the LLL-programme, providing a new perspective on the role of HEIs.

The project was based on the participatory and consensus-oriented involvement of all partners in the methodology and content development of the main products and tools.

Additionally to the consortium partners, associate partners from six different countries were involved in the project. The selection criteria for these countries was that LLL is already a topic but not yet a priority. The chosen universities have experience in the field of LLL and ULLL structures are being developed in most of them. They are operating in a complex environment in their countries and are highly interested in new European partnerships in the field of LLL.



## 5. Plans for the Future

The feedback from the internal consortium visits, as well as from the guidelines/tools testing visits clearly demonstrated the need of universities to be supported in their implementation processes of LLL strategies and approaches. In general, the consortium and testing partners were very positive in view of the set-up of the structured peer-reviews and the concept of an external objective expert with whom they were assessing their current situation and who could contribute to this process with experience from alternative models and structures.

*“The process of evaluation was extremely important for our institution. We discovered that we are actually better than we thought. We were able to isolate the weak points in our system and we are going to improve them. The cooperation in the international levels gives institutions new perspectives and changes the paradigms for problem solving..” (Feedback from one of the testing institutions)*

Following up the results and impact of the testing some months after the visits, the supportive character of the process and of the guidelines became visible. Three testing institutions confirmed that they supported institutional efforts to speed up discussions on LLL and to move LLL closer to the forefront of their university’s concerns. As mentioned above, the inclusion of LLL as one of the fundamental principles of acting of the university in the draft of the West University of Timisoara’s Charta serves as a good illustration of the supportive character of the testing visits. As a result, it would be worth considering extending the concept of testing visits and of the usage of the project’s results.

Furthermore, all testing institutions expressed their interest in being informed about the project’s development and many were enthusiastic about being involved in extended projects in line with ALLUME and the set-up of the testing visits. Among the different interests mentioned, the idea of an implementation project developing specific tools and indicators for establishing LLL approaches was the one indicated by most participants. One expert even suggested that this monitoring activity could be offered as a self-financed activity after the project’s lifespan. The idea of a project concerning possible consultancy activities based on ALLUME had also been voiced in February at the Amsterdam partner meeting.

These positive attitudes are also present in the consortium since the testing models proved to be very successful. Three main objectives for the future and sustainability of the produced results and methodologies of the ALLUME project emerge: Strengthen the methodology, enriching/refining the models and the tools and training the expert visitors (in the role of advisors or ‘participant observer’).

1. Strengthening the methodology, which is a combination of tools and visitors’ expertise
  - a. Skills of the external visitor as ‘participant observer’ (design of training for them in order to acquire the required skills to visit and feedback)
  - b. Tools to be refined by extending the number of (testing) universities
2. Increasing the number of data (case studies/universities/ ...) in order to enrich/refine the identified models of the transversal analyses
  - a. Launching a follow-up or monitoring process in order to update the situation in the 10 partners universities and 6 associated universities (follow-up meeting in order to detect the evolution in two or three years)
  - b. Adding new dimension (cultural change, communication and promotion, market, use of strategic management tools, ...)
  - c. Adding new universities

- d. Adapting the models (comparative research project, transversal analysis, on content and process) and the tools derived from the models
  - e. Developing more dynamical tools for the content and the process (our tools are mainly static – based on one picture at one time)
3. Dissemination of the produced tools and methodologies

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

"Making Lifelong Learning a reality" is one of the priorities of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) adopted by the Council in 2009. Yet the implementation of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and policies remains a challenge. Particularly in the field of higher education LLL is still not perceived as a high priority, except for few institutions in a few countries.

In order to move lifelong learning from a peripheral approach to an integrated key element of the institutional strategy, the definitions of shared LLL strategies are required. The EUA LLL-Charter provides a common point of reference, inviting universities to reflect on the elaboration of LLL-strategies and to work on their concrete implementation.

ALLUME contributed to this implementation on the basis of best practices at work in ten European universities having already developed successful LLL-strategies.

On the basis of these cases, ALLUME intended to prepare reflexive tools which would help universities to start and support an implementing process respecting a wide range of models and make comparability at European level possible. These tools were discussed with European organisations, institutions and networks, contributing to the further development of policy recommendations for LLL at University level in Europe.

By this means, the project principally addressed the Lisbon objectives aiming to create a knowledge based society. The LLL strategy that is encouraged is based on the adaptation of universities to face the new needs of the population, of regions, of companies, offering new services tempting to widen access and participation of non traditional "students" and to facilitate learning pathways between institutions and work and learning and training programs.

The need to promote and implement comprehensive LLL strategies and concepts was reaffirmed in the *Europe 2020* strategy presented by the European Commission in 2010. Particularly the two flagship initiatives "Innovative Union" and "An agenda for new skills and jobs" highlighted the importance of LLL-strategies and their implementation at the European, national and regional level.

## 7. Background information

### What is 'University Lifelong Learning' (ULLL)?

The BeFlex definition of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) has been used in ALLUME.

"ULLL is the provision by Higher Education Institutions of learning opportunities, services and research for:

- the personal and professional development of a wide range of individuals – lifelong and life wide;
- and the social, cultural and economic development of communities and the region.
- It is at university level and research based; it focuses primarily on the needs of the learners: and it is often developed and/or provided in collaboration with stakeholders and external actors." (Davies, 2007, p. 35)

The main advantages of this definition are that it is first inclusive but also potentially measurable as it encompasses a number of characteristic that could be translated into indicators and thus used to measure ULLL.

### What is a 'Lifelong Learning University' (LLLU)?

As the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué of Bologna Ministers suggested, the universities have to move one step further and implement LLL fully within the HE Institutions. It means considering LLL as a culture at the core of the future 21st century university and creating a Lifelong Learning University (LLLU). The design of this future LLLU was discussed during EUCEN's 39th Conference in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve<sup>7</sup>. The debates concentrated on the questions: How can European universities move from a continuing education perspective into a Lifelong Learning one? How to integrate LLL within the University's strategy, structure, organisation and pedagogy? How can the European universities evolve and become Lifelong Learning Universities whilst at the same time retaining their strengths in research, teaching and service to society? The main characteristics of a LLLU have been outlined.

A Lifelong Learning University is a university where:

- Learning is shared: the distinction between teaching and learning is more blurred, students and staff learn together, from each other, and from people and activities outside the university as well as inside it.
- Learning is valued wherever and whenever it takes place: it includes the validation of prior, non-formal and informal learning – for entry, for part of a diploma, may be for whole diploma; the curriculum takes account of prior and other learning.
- Assessment is varied: a large range of assessment methodologies are built and used for different skills, knowledge and competences.
- Learning is lifelong and lifewide: how to learn lifelong, at any time of a personal or professional pathway is a learning objective, included in the 'learning outcomes'.
- Learning is enjoyable and a rewarding experience. (Davies, 2009, p. 19)

In this perspective, a LLL University is an open system - accessible, supported, flexible, permeable at the boundaries, operating with a range of different rhythms, acting as or becoming a learning organisation.

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<sup>7</sup> The recommendations of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve EUCEN conference are available [http://www.eucen.eu/policy\\_statements](http://www.eucen.eu/policy_statements) (last accessed on 27/10/2011)



