

ALLUME – A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe

Report of the Consultation seminar, Brussels, 21-22 September 2010

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CE	Continuing education
HEI	Higher education institution
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LLLU	Lifelong Learning University
ULLL	University Lifelong Learning

Background

The ALLUME Consultation Seminar in the Flemish Ministry of Education in Brussels from 21 - 22 September 2010 presented an important step in the process of developing the final products of the project.

The main objective of ALLUME is to explore ways to increase the participation of universities in Lifelong Learning (LLL) by developing concrete tools and guidelines, which will assist higher education institutions (HEIs) in developing their own LLL-strategies at institutional level and in providing flexible learning opportunities, organizations and services.

ALLUME intends to contribute to this implementation process on the basis of best practices at work in universities having already built and integrated successful LLL-strategies. The project approach is to develop guidelines which will help universities to start and support an implementing process respecting a wide range of models and to make comparability at European level possible.

Against the project's background, it was the objective of the Consultation Seminar to receive reactions, comments and recommendations by different LLL stakeholders about the guidelines and their perspective on the future role and impact of LLL in the European Higher Education Area. These considerations will help to formulate a second draft version of the guidelines – the test version – which will be used in the testing visits in six different European member states, where LLL is still not considered a priority.

In addition, the seminar provided a good opportunity to build close links with the ministry and to involve and liaise with representatives of key European University networks (EUA, EURASHE, EADTU), European institutions and organizations (EC, Bologna-Secretariat) and social partners (ESU, ETUCE).

Moreover, 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. This presented equally a chance for the consortium to take into account their propositions and remarks already at an early stage of the development process.

The outline of the Consultation seminar

The overall aim of the meeting was to further develop the Guidelines so that Lifelong Learning will become a structuring process. Additional partners and guests were invited in order to strengthen the pool of expertise for testing and to provide motivational visions on future perspectives on Lifelong Learning within Universities.

There were four objectives for the meeting:

- obtain and discuss partners' comments on the first draft;
- gain a theoretical insight into the Lifelong Learning landscape based on a transversal analysis of EUCEN projects;
- harvest the comments of the additional consortium (associate) partners as they responded to the first sight of the draft;
- interact with highly experienced European operators to further enhance the knowledge/experience/perspective pool of expertise.

Since it was the key aspect of the Consultation seminar to receive feedback on the draft version of the guidelines and on their relevance and usefulness for assisting universities in formulating LLL-strategies, the seminar included a short introduction session as well as an outline of an emerging theoretical model, followed by two working group sessions on the following topics:

- "Structure of the guidelines"
- "Objectives of the guidelines"
- "LLL as a structuring principle for a Lifelong Learning University (LLU)"
- "Financing a LLLU"

The meeting concluded with a very vivid and insightful panel discussion on "LLU – a (re)volution for European Universities?" among Michael Gaebel, Head of Unit, Higher Education Policy, EUA, Robert Santa, Executive Committee Member, ESU; Piet Henderikx, Secretary General EADTU; Ligia Deca, Head of the Bologna Process Secretariat and Stefan Delplace, Secretary General EURASHE¹.

¹ Please see Annex II Agenda of the Consultation Seminar for further information.

Working groups on key issues and recommendations

Plenary session “Development stages of Lifelong Learning Universities- an emerging theoretical model”

Michel Feutrie outlined an emerging theoretical model based on three stages:

- an adaptive stage;
- an organisational stage;
- a cultural stage.

These three stages resulted in four models of Lifelong Learning:

- The Slogan Model
 - No Lifelong Learning policy or strategy
 - The Institution simply calls what it does Lifelong Learning
- The Delegation Model
 - Policy and strategy delegated to a specific unit or department
 - a separated Initial and Continuing Education
 - Lifelong learning is equivalent to Continuing Education
- The Articulation Model
 - There is a general strategy, but provision is separated
 - Co-existence of two types of service
 - Mixed populations or identical programmes
- The Integration Model
 - A permanent holistic approach to individual and regional development

On the basis of all of the above, it was confirmed that the Guidelines should *assist towards* the Charter recommendations, i.e. it should not be prescriptive, but enabling. They should be motivational as well as practical.

Working group “Structure of the guidelines”

Ülle Kesli, the project partner from Estonia, gave a short introduction to the working group’s theme and chaired the further discussion process. The work in this group was dedicated to the overall set-up of the guidelines, which should be coherent and supportive for the development process of LLL-strategies.

Participants of this group stressed the fact that important concepts for developing LLL-strategies (CE, LLL, ULLL, LLLU, LLL learner/student) would have to be clarified in the beginning.

Since the 10 commitments of the European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning present the basis for the guidelines, it was suggested adding a matrix to each commitment in order to portray which resources might be needed to put it into place.

Example

Commitment 4: Providing appropriate guidance and counselling services.

This means that relevant academic and professional guidance, as well as other psychological counselling, should be available for all qualified potential students when needed. This support should be relevant to learners of all ages, and from all social and cultural backgrounds.

	Resources needed	Resources present in your institution
1	Which could be the target groups of this commitment?	
2	Which could be the services provided to these target groups? Would they be joint or specific services?	
3	Which of these target groups are already covered by the university? Which services are available for which groups?	
4	What would be the additional costs and efforts to expand your university's services to those mentioned in answer 2?	
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In view of the structure of each section, the following outline was proposed:

Current version	Proposal
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment of the European Universities' Charter on LLL 2. Reflection part 3. Self-Assessment part 4. SWOT part 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → should include comparison with other universities; action plan or action steps for implementation and for better understanding the meaning of concrete activities 2. Self-Assessment part: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → It should be clarified if the same group of persons will assess the university's status quo or if some questions could be addressed to different stakeholders. → Additional questions for commitment 1 could be: Is LLL included in diversity strategies? Is widening access part of the strategic plan? → It has to be decided which persons will be involved in this assessment exercise (internals and externals?) 3. SWOT 4. Commitment of the European Universities' Charter on LLL

For these exercises, the confidentiality aspect was highlighted several times as it will be of utmost importance for universities if they consider this self-evaluation.

Doubts were voiced whether it would be feasible to include the 10 government commitments of the European Universities' Charter on LLL in the guidelines since it would be very difficult to get input from government bodies.

Working group “Objectives of the guidelines”

In terms of the objectives of the guidelines, the participants of this working group stressed that a definition for the notion “guidelines” would be needed and that the final output should be accompanied by a user’s guide.

Furthermore, it was underlined that the inclusion of best practices would be a crucial aspect since they could illustrate the commitments and provide clarity for the users of the guidelines.

Outstanding issues and reflections concern the target group of the guidelines and the inclusion of different visions of LLL and how to treat them. Moreover, it was suggested including aspects related to the funding of LLL activities.

Working group “LLL as a structuring principle for a LLU”

In this workshop Mr Seppälä first introduced participants to the University of Turku’s LLL-strategy before inviting them to imagine their university as a LLLU and to reflect upon all structures and units which would be affected by this change.

Subsequent discussions in this working group were quite active portraying the different points of view and concepts attached to ULLL. Contributions clearly showed that the core aspect and challenge lay in implementing ULLL and in moving from “rhetoric to reality”.

Seriously implementing lifelong learning in institutions would mean a diversification at various levels, like the development of completely new learning situations and the need for further teacher training and staff development. Moreover, drivers for individual professors to become proponents of LLL would need to be defined in order to secure full support for the intuition’s transition.

Working group “Financing a LLLU”

Participants in this workshop discussed different kinds of funding models and funding opportunities for universities to integrate LLL.

Since funding remained a significant and complicated topic, a possible solution might be to prepare “pilot” programmes for experimentation on a small scale and to extend the model if it proves to be successful.

Conclusion of the workshops and recommendations for the further development of the guidelines

The different contributions from the workshops showed that ULLL still remains a very diverse and complex concept, which does not allow for a single strategy or implementation model. Any set of guidelines to assist universities in developing their own LLL-strategy would have to respect this fact and try to support institutions in finding their own way of strategising given their concrete needs and circumstances.

In terms of the target group, it became clear that the scope of the guidelines would already be considerable if only the universities' commitments were taken into account. In addition, discussions demonstrated that it would be very difficult to commit governmental bodies to work carefully through the guidelines providing the required input. As a result, the second version of the guidelines will only focus on the institutional commitments and will narrow its target group to university staff involved in the design of LLL-strategies and approaches. Due to the diversity and high confidentiality of funding aspects, it was agreed not to include these aspects in the guidelines. Moreover, the ten consortium case studies had also shown that funding was a very delicate topic and that not many universities are prepared to revise it thoroughly in terms of LLL. Overall, the participants emphasized the need for a concrete set of materials which includes material and experiences on good practice.

Round table: LLLU – a (r)evolution for European Universities?

For the round table discussion, the following stakeholders were invited:

- Representatives of the European institutions, like the European Commission (principally DGAC), the European Parliament (Commission of Education and culture) and the Committee of the Regions;
- Representatives of European networks at University level: EUA (European University Association), EUCEN (European University Continuing Education Network), ESU (European Students Union), EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education);
- Representatives of National Networks of University Continuing Education.
- European social partners.

The confirmed panellists were²:

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- **Piet Henderikx**, Secretary General EADTU
- **Michael Gaebel**, Head of Unit, Higher Education Policy EUA
- **Ligia Deca**, Head of the Bologna Process Secretariat
- **Robert Santa**, Executive Committee member, ESU
- **Stefan Delplace**, Secretary General EURASHE

The lead questions of this debate were:

- ⤴ How will Universities in Europe develop over the next 10 years and which role will LLL have in this scenario?
- ⤴ How could a Lifelong Learning University look like in 2020?
- ⤴ Which changes need to happen? Which obstacles need to be tackled to realize this?
- ⤴ What could be the drivers of change and the motives for Universities to implement these changes?

² Please see Annex III Panel information for further information about the speakers.

In a lively debate chaired by Karine Janssens, the panellists discussed drivers and changes as well as future scenarios for LLL in higher education institutions.

In terms of changes needed for a LLLU, the definition of students as well as the financing model were mentioned. Financing LLL could not only be considered a public task anymore. Furthermore, the issue of equal opportunities would have to move up on the policy agenda in order to give more weight to LLL. Awareness-rising was also considered as one important activity in order to initiate those necessary changes.

Regarding possible drivers of change and barriers to further development, social dynamics like pressure applied by underprivileged groups and their advocates were indentified as one important aspect, as well as good practice examples of LLL working in different institutions.

Participants stressed the changing role of universities in the future, which would respond to societal change, but also remarked the difficulty of predicting those changes.

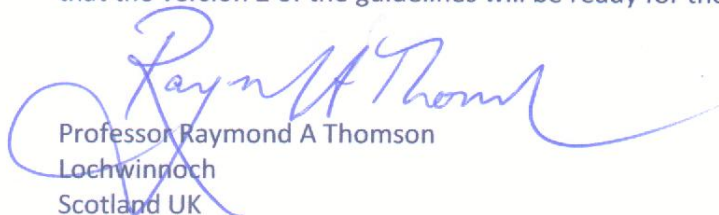
This debate demonstrated the demand for further reinforcement of LLL and RPL processes on the one hand, but also showed the difficulty in implementing necessary structures and changes on the other. Thus, the need for the commitment of the (political and institutional) leadership to LLL became apparent for effective actions in this direction.

Conclusion: Effects of the Consultation seminar for the further development of the guidelines

As mentioned in the beginning, the Consultation Seminar was an important step in the direction of further developing the guidelines of the ALLUME projects as it bundled internal and external expertise in distinct working groups which treated concrete concerns and challenges.

These joint efforts showed that the complex topic of LLL-strategies regroupes many different approaches. However, it is not possible in the lifespan of one project to address all barriers to LLL at once. Albeit crucial, the financial aspects of LLL-strategies should not be covered by the future guidelines since they are too complex and complicated to be included in a set of other topics. Funding and financing LLL has to be dedicated to a special project only exploring this purpose.

As already mentioned under section "Conclusion of the workshops and suggestions for the further development of the guidelines" the seminar led to concrete results and recommendations for improvement of the guidelines. These will be adapted in due time so that the version 2 of the guidelines will be ready for the testing visits from in early 2011.



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List of ANNEXES

- Annex I Project description
- Annex II Agenda of the Consultation Seminar
- Annex III Panel information
- Annex IV List of participants
- Annex V Master of invitation letter