



## Case Study: Final version

**Version of Karine Janssens (University of Ghent, BE)  
Visited by Jean-Marie Filloque (University of Brest, FR)**

### University Factsheet

Title	<b>Ghent University Association</b> partnership between <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ghent University</li> <li>- University College Ghent</li> <li>- University College Arteveldehogeschool</li> <li>- University College West-Flanders</li> </ul>
Location/country	Ghent, Belgium
Year when the partnership was founded	2003
Total number of students of the partnership	62.000
Total number of staff of the partnership	11.000
Kind of degrees offered	Bachelor (EQF 6) Advanced Bachelor (EQF 6) Master (EQF 7) Advanced Master (EQF 7) PhD (EQF 8)
Date of the Case Study	March 2010

University Title	<b>Ghent University</b>
Location/country	Ghent, Belgium
Public or private	Public
Year when the institution was founded	1817
Number of overall students of the institution	32.000
Degree/non-degree	Degree students: 32.000 No data available for non-degree programs
Number of academic/research and non-academic/administrative staff	Academic/research staff: 4.800 Non-academic/administrative staff: 2.300
Number of faculties	11
Kind of degrees offered (if possible including	Bachelor (EQF 6)

\*The case studies have been written in English by non-native English speakers and, in order to retain the original voice of the partners, they have not been edited.

EQF)	Master & Advanced Master (EQF 7) PhD (EQF 8)
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University Title	<b>University College Ghent</b>
Location/country	Ghent & Aalst, Belgium
Public or private	Public
Year when the institution was founded	1995 (merger of 15 University Colleges, oldest one founded in 1748)
Number of overall students of the institution	15.000
Degree/non-degree	Degree students: 15.000 No data available for non-degree programs
Number of academic/research and non-academic/administrative staff	Academic: 1.700 Non-academic: 800
Number of faculties	13
Kind of degrees offered (if possible including EQF)	Bachelor & Advanced Bachelor (EQF 6) Master & Advanced Master (EQF 7)

University Title	<b>University College Arteveldehogeschool</b>
Location/country	Ghent, Belgium
Public or private	Public
Year when the institution was founded	2000 (merger of 4 University Colleges)
Number of overall students of the institution	10.000
Degree/non-degree	Degree students: 10.000 No data available for non-degree programs
Number of academic/research and non-academic/administrative staff	1.000
Number of faculties	10
Kind of degrees offered (if possible including EQF)	Bachelor & Advanced Bachelor (EQF 6) Master (EQF 7)

University Title	<b>University College West-Flanders</b>
Location/country	Bruges & Kortrijk, Belgium
Public or private	Public
Year when the institution was founded	1995 (merger of 6 University Colleges)

Number of overall students of the institution	5.000
Degree/non-degree	Degree students: 5.000 No data available for non-degree programs
Number of academic/research and non-academic/administrative staff	Academic: 750 Non-academic: 100
Number of faculties	7
Kind of degrees offered (if possible including EQF)	Bachelor & Advanced Bachelor (EQF 6) Master (EQF 7)

## University-specific best practices in relation to the 10 Commitments

Commitments	Ghent University Association <b>Public version of the case study</b>
1 Embedding concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in their institutional strategies	1.1 (association) 5.3 (SWOT)
2 Providing education and learning to a diversified student population	2 (funding) 4 (target groups)
3 Adapting study programmes to ensure that they are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners	/
4 Providing appropriate guidance and counselling services	3.3 (staff)
5 Recognising prior learning	2 (case nr 4 on RPL) 3.3 (staff)
6 Embracing lifelong learning in quality culture	/
7 Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of lifelong learning	/
8 Consolidating reforms to promote a flexible and creative learning environment for all students	/
9 Developing partnerships at local, regional, national and international level to provide attractive and relevant programmes	/
10 Acting as role models of lifelong learning institution	/

**ALLUME**



**CASE STUDY: FINAL VERSION**

**VERSION OF KARINE JANSSENS (UNIVERSITY OF GHENT, BE)  
VISITED BY JEAN-MARIE FILLOQUE (UNIVERSITY OF BREST, FR)**

**SELECTED CHAPTERS FOR PUBLICATION**

(SEPTEMBER 2010)

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## 1 Basic Information

Institution: **GHENT UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION**

Country: **Belgium, Flemish Community**

### 1.1 Introductory Remarks

This document reflects the state of affairs regarding lifelong learning at the level of **Ghent University Association** (sometimes in this text abbreviated as GUA) and its member institutions. The association is an umbrella organisation and not a single higher education institution.

Ghent University Association was officially established, as a not-for-profit organisation on 29 April 2003 with four member institutions:

- Ghent University
- University College Ghent
- University College Arteveldehogeschool
- University College West-Flanders

With more than 60,000 students and 10,000 staff members in total, it wants to create a Flemish study and research environment of European importance.

Striving for quality, pluralism, student and personnel participation and a strong interaction with the region are key in the way in which the association wants to operate.

The reason why the situation regarding lifelong learning is described at the level of the association is quite clear: one of the core reasons for Flemish legislators to create these associations in 2003 was exactly to facilitate lifelong learning at the level of higher education.

This is for instance eminent from the following extract (article 101) of the Structural Decree of 4 April 2003 describing the tasks of an association (specific terminology used will be explained in the following chapters):

*1° arranging a rational educational offer within the educational authority of the institutions as described in articles 26 to 53. Especially, in reciprocal consultation, long-term plans are to be set up for this;*

*2° attuning the educational profiles, structuring educational tracks and ameliorating the throughput-possibilities, with special attention to these in between bachelor- and master-programmes;*

*3° organising study track guidance for students;*

*[...]*

*5° setting up and implementing a long term plan for educational innovation and development, connected to a jointly set-up system of internal quality assurance for education.*

In the course of the existence of the association, other tasks have been assigned to it by the member institutions. Many of these, especially in the field of education, could also be linked to overall lifelong learning strategy elements.

For Ghent University Association and its members the concept of lifelong learning has to be linked to the idea of “sustainable education”, i.e. education that takes into account aspects such as diversity, strategic connections, reciprocal responsibility, added value and learning to learn. Sustainable education is aimed at learning to find solutions for complex, uncertain and unpredictable problems that may occur now or... later, i.e. a life long.

Hence, Ghent University Association and its member institutions, explicitly want to adopt a holistic view on lifelong learning, encompassing a whole range of activities and initiatives that have in common that they are situated at the “higher levels” of the qualifications frameworks but are not limited by structural, institutional or organisational boundaries.

In the text, a division has been made between “at the level of Ghent University Association” and “at the level of the member institutions” (describing the situation for the four members”. The first refers not only to elements that are (legally) transferred competences, but also to general elements that are common (for all higher education institutions or for most of the members of Ghent University Association). Only in chapter 5, describing the concrete LLL-initiatives, for reasons of clarity and easy referencing, a distinction is made between “at the level of GUA” and “common for all/most GUA-members” (*not available in the public version*).

In some cases, reference is made to particular cases that are specific for Belgium, Flanders the association or an institution. This means that it is not always easy to provide an accurate translation or to explain in not too much detail what the concept is about. It is however presumed that this will not jeopardize a good interpretation of the overall LLL-picture.

Because, perhaps unlike some other countries or regions, Flanders has a strong governmental and even legal influence on lifelong learning, this aspect is first of all dealt with in the following, separate paragraph.

## 1.2 Lifelong learning in Flanders

The most recent numbers (December 2008) <sup>1</sup> of the “*Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering*” (Statistical Office of the Flemish Government) make clear that Flanders is leaping behind compared to the EU-average as far as participation of 25-64 year olds in training/education is concerned. For Flanders this number is only 7.9% as compared to the European averages of around 10%<sup>2</sup>, although we all agree that our schooling’s degree is one of the economical and societal determining factors in our current prosperity model.

In January 2009, the Flemish government presented, after some years of preparatory work, its ambitious global plan for the future, called “Flanders in Action - A socio-economic stimulus for



Flanders” (“*Vlaanderen in Actie - VIA*”). In this plan, Flanders is looking forward to 2020. In that year, it wants to assume a leading position among the best performing European regions.

For reaching this aim, it was felt necessary to formulate a number of “breakthroughs”. One of these is headed “The Learning Fleming”.

Flanders can rely on the presence of numerous highly schooled and trained citizens and the Flemish educational system rates very highly on international ranking lists. There is no question about the labour productivity and the motivation of its workers, while its researchers and scientists enjoy a very high reputation in the international community. A major asset for the Flemish people is their multilingualism plus their proficiency and preparedness to speak foreign languages.

Nonetheless, not all opportunities are properly explored and exploited. The tiered cascade system within the educational sector, the disproportionate labour participation of certain social groups, too few people that are employed or will remain employed: all of this points to (too) much talent still untapped and going to waste. Moreover, the labour market and the job demands have undergone strong changes, and the knowledge world has also become globalized.

Flanders consequently needs to continue to adapt the qualifications and skills of its population to such changing circumstances so that people may be adequately armed to face the challenges of the labour market. In the area of talent, there is need for more commitment and responsibility, this not just on the part of every single individual and every entrepreneur, but also on the part of the authorities.

But the stress on education and training in this important Flanders in action-project is not new and not unique. Also other (including older) strategic plans refer to the importance of “learning” for a region like Flanders.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/nlapps/data/docattachments/2008-12-08-pvv2008.pdf>;  
also see : [www.flandersinaction.be](http://www.flandersinaction.be)

<sup>2</sup> EU15: 11,3%; EU25: 10,3% en EU27: 9,7%



Examples of these are the so-called “Pact van Vilvoorde”<sup>3</sup> and “Competentieagenda 2010”<sup>4</sup>.

The first goal of the Vilvoorde Pact, for instance, is focused on creating a learning society clearly stressing the importance of lifelong learning.

*Goal 1*

*By 2010 Flanders has further evolved into a learning society. Lifelong and lifewide learning are embedded in society. At least 10% of the Flemish inhabitants between 25 en 65 participate in continuous education. A learning society also recognises that competences, wherever and however obtained, have to be recognised on an equal basis.*

Also the Competence Agenda 2010 clearly mentions the importance of the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning as a top-priority.

In recent documents, these quantitative aims are even sharpened (e.g. in the so-called “Pact 2020: a new future pact for Flanders”<sup>5</sup>, in which goal 11 focuses on talent:

*As many as possible children and adults need to profit from the best possible education and the best possible training. The number of people on the labour market which are short-term trained has to be cut in half by 2020. This need to be done*

*i) by allowing more young people to finish secondary education*

*ii) by an increased number of young people continuing in higher (professional) education*

*iii) by an increased participation in lifelong and lifewide learning (a rise up to 15% of the active population)*

Finally it is worth mentioning that in all these policy documents, and others alike (an example of this is the relatively recent publication (December 2008) “Onderwijs: kiem voor onderzoek en innovatie” – “Education: germ for research and innovation” by the Flemish Council for Science Policy) an explicit link is made between lifelong learning and innovation.

It is hence clear that Flanders is very much devoted to lifelong learning and that it seems to have very explicit expectations to higher education institutions in this also regarding the importance of LLL for innovation.

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<sup>3</sup> Presented on 31 January 2003

<sup>4</sup> As approved by the Flemish Government and the Flemish social partners on 14 May 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Flemish Consultation Committee, “Pact 2020” - 19 January 2009

### 1.3 Staff involved with the Case Study

#### 1.3.1 Staff involved with the case study of the association:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title/role</b>	<b>Email</b>
<b>1</b>	Frederik De Decker	Senior Education Advisor, Ghent University Association Editor of this <i>"Description of Ghent University Association's situation regarding LLL"</i>	Frederik.DeDecker@UGent.be
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#### 1.3.2 Staff and other stakeholders involved in the internal group

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title/role</b>	<b>Email</b>
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## 2 Funding systems at Ghent University Association and its member institutions

As mentioned before, in March 2008 the “Decree on the financing of the operations of university colleges and universities in Flanders” was adopted. The new financing mechanism established through this decree takes into account a variety of performance parameters in education and research, some of these linked to enhancing LLL-possibilities. The main element in this is the introduction of a financial bonus for specific student groups of which students who combine their studies with a job are the most relevant with regard to lifelong learning.

But the basic principle of this Finance Decree is that it treats students as much as possible on an equal basis. This means that on one hand there is little incentive funding for specific lifelong learning initiatives (except for programmes for students who combine their studies with a job, see *infra*), but on the other hand it gives equal opportunities to all kinds of learners. This was already the basis of the Flexibility decree referred to above and is hence extended in the new financing system.

Of course other activities also involve financial preconditions which have to be taken into account, e.g. if activities are set up for alumni, for the professionalization of the own employees of the institutions, at the demand of external parties or for the wider public.

Let us take some random examples to illustrate this. For this reason we describe a number of cases from the point of view of possible “clients” and the costs involved for them and for the organisation(s) involved:

- A 35-year old policewoman wants to follow a specialised criminology-course at Master’s level at Ghent University: she can enrol with a so-called credit-contract and pays the same student fee as every other student. Ghent University gets the same kind of financing as for other students enrolled with a credit-contract.
- A bank clerk of 32 has a bachelor degree in accountancy, but is stimulated by his employer to follow another bachelor programme (in financing). He can even get some time off from his work to follow the courses. On the basis of his first degree, he gets exempted for 125 credits. He registers at University College Arteveldehogeschool and pays for just 55 credits and receives, at the end of successful completion of the course, a second bachelor degree. For the procedure leading to the exemption of 125 credits he has to pay nothing; all costs related to this are borne by University College Arteveldehogeschool, that gets the regular governmental student financing and a so-called degree-bonus.
- His friend of 45 has the same goal, but he has to combine his studies with a full-time job as a legal assistant and the care of 2 young children. Fortunately, University College West-Flanders offers a special part-time evening course for such students who combine their studies with a job. The first year he registers and pays for just 29 credits, the second year for 26 and just like his friend but at his own pace he receives, at the end of successful completion of the course, a second bachelor degree.

Also here, University College West-Flanders receives the regular governmental student financing and a so-called degree-bonus but it also gets an extra 50% financing for this student since he is

enrolled in a special part-time evening course for such students who combine their studies with a job.

- After 25 years of administrative work in a theatre, a 49-year old mother of 3 children who have left home, feels the need for a career shift. She has been active for years as a volunteer in a centre for the prevention of drug abuse and from this grew the idea to study professional bachelor in social work. She goes to University College Ghent where she is pointed at the possibility to start the procedure for the accreditation of her prior experience and learning (APEL – EVC in Dutch). Because the procedure is time-consuming and she will have to pay for it, she hesitates, but in the end she takes on the challenge and she files her portfolio to the Ghent University Association Validating Body and pays the administrative fee necessary (€ 155). Her long and varied career and volunteer experience has apparently made her competent to some extent in social work and hence about half of the learning outcomes of the social work bachelor degree are recognised. This recognition procedure involves about 8 staff members of University College Ghent (counsellors, assessors,...) that has to bear all costs for this. With the proof of competences, she can ask for exemptions. She is granted these for a total of 95 credits, which gives her the possibility to finish her degree after 3 years of part-time study paying each year the enrolment fee for about 30 credits. University College Ghent gets the same kind of financing as for other students enrolled with a degree-contract.
- Having left secondary school without a certificate giving access to higher education, a 23 year unemployed man hears about the possibility to sign up for an “Admittance Screening” for students who do not fulfil the regular admittance requirements. He registers for this procedure for free. Three assessors from three different Ghent University Association member institutions assess his portfolio (which takes them about 1 hour) but they lack clear evidence that he would have a fair chance in higher education. Hence he is referred to a specific computer based test (costs: 200 EUR, borne by the association) that sufficiently proves he has some necessary skills. He enrolls in a bachelor course at Ghent University as a student with a scholarship, i.e. at a reduced enrolment fee, meaning that the university gets 1.5 times the regular funding for this student.
- An excellent 21-year old student has obtained a (profession-oriented) bachelor degree in nursing from University College Ghent and wants to proceed to a Master course. All four members of Ghent University Association jointly organise a “Master in Nursing and Midwifery” programme, which would be the right choice for her. Before having the possibility to enrol for this master, she first has to be successful in a 60-credit linking programme. The enrolment fee for this programme is just the same as for all other programmes and also the organising institutions get similar financing for students in such a programme.
- A 62 year-old OAP has had an intense and long-standing interest in Darwin’s evolution theory. When he hears about a science café organised by Ghent University Association (whose members take care of the organisations, cover the costs of speakers and logistics etc.) in Kortrijk (West-Flanders), where he lives, he takes his chance and indulges (for free!) in a thought-provoking evening with a professor in biology and a professor in philosophy who trigger the debate with the wider public. The whole concept is sponsored by the Flanders in Action programme, referred to above. He considers attending other science cafés, taking place every month (most of them in

Ghent however) and start searching the internet for other activities organised by Ghent University Association.

- After 7 years of teaching in University College Arteveldehogeschool, a 29 year old lecturer hears about the “Educational Seminars”, jointly organised by all association institutions. Especially the one about competence-based assessment appeals to him, since a few years ago the curriculum he is teaching in is competence-based and he finds the assessment a great challenge. The registration fee, which normally is 45 EUR per seminar, is waived for him since he works for one of the GUA-institutions.

The costs of the whole organisation (preparatory work, costs of speakers, logistics etc.) is covered by the GUA member institutions and is part of their lifelong learning budget for their own employees.

These are but a few examples illustrating at the same time how funding of this diversity of LLL-activities is organised (from both the perspective of the individual and the organisation) and how LLL can be made concrete for a variety of (potential) “learners”. It also points out what kind of administrative burden sometimes has been created, also leading to overhead costs.

It makes clear that in many cases the funding is not earmarked, project-based and sometimes relying on external funds provided but that with some creativity a lot of results have been achieved creating chances for a variety of individuals.

### **3 ULLL-Staff at Ghent University Association and its member institutions**

#### **3.1 Introductory remarks**

It has already been mentioned that Ghent University Association and its member institutions, explicitly adopt a holistic view on lifelong learning. This does not make it easy to earmark which jobs or which staff members are specifically dealing with “lifelong learning”.

Where possible, and especially for some “new” tasks assigned to higher education institutions and associations by law (see above) an indication has been given of the absolute numbers devoted to some specific tasks.

But in reality most of these tasks are broad and can not fully be linked to “lifelong learning”. It gives however an overall indication.

#### **3.2 At the level of the association**

As stipulated before, Ghent University Association is responsible for a number of LLL-initiatives. This means that staff members at this level have to follow up on these initiatives. The secretary of the Validating body and the two senior education advisors of Ghent University Association are the persons dealing most with lifelong learning at the level of the association, especially with the items mentioned in the inventory in chapter 5 as LLL-initiatives at the level of Ghent University Association. Broadly speaking this would come down to a total of about 1.5 FTE.

#### **3.3 At the level of the member institutions**

Also at the level of the 4 member institutions, a number of staff is devoted to a variety of specific LLL-provisions. This number has grown quite spectacular over the last years, especially with the introduction of decentralised study track counsellors, which has taken place at all institutions since 2003-2004.

If you want to become a true lifelong learning institution, you have to practice what you preach and invest in the lifelong learning of your employees. This means that the continuous (professional) development of their own personnel has gained a lot of attention the last years at the level of the institutions as well.

Below, it is described in more detail what all this means in terms of numbers, functions, responsibilities etc. This is not an exhaustive overview: it is only a mere illustration of what kind of personnel is involved in lifelong learning and what the tentative number is.

- All institutions have a central staff member responsible for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL – EVC in Dutch, literally translated as Recognition of Acquired Competences) and for the alternative admittance procedure for students who do not fulfil the regular admittance requirements (1 FTE);
- At each faculty/department there is a full-time study track counsellor ( $\pm$  1 FTE per faculty/department)
- Sometimes there is a special (central) unit dealing with LLL-linked initiatives. At University College Arteveldehogeschool for instance there is a special unit *Compahs* dealing with among other things a number of LLL-initiatives, especially in the field of continuous education.  
But more and more it becomes clear that is important to give responsibility for the overall educational offer to the departments/faculties that organise the basic education (= bachelor/master programmes). This would facilitate an overall LLL-approach at the level of the departments/faculties. It is difficult to point out what numbers are/would be involved in this.
- Also the number of people involved in setting up and maintaining an IT-based system for the administration of study programmes and students that is able of dealing with the flexibility offered, has increased dramatically over the last years.

#### 4 ULLL-Target groups & services at Ghent University Association and its member institutions

As stated before, Ghent University Association and its member institutions, explicitly want to adopt a holistic view on lifelong learning. They do not want to restrict it to specific initiatives that can easily be earmarked as “lifelong learning”, but they want to consider the whole range of activities in which the institutions can be involved. For reasons of clarity and comparability however, the choice has been made to distinguish in the overview of LLL-initiatives at Ghent University (→ see chapter 5) between a number of different target groups and to list the services provided for these.

It concerns lifelong learning:

- Prior to entry in higher education
- For regular student groups
- For new student target groups
- Aimed at an increased throughput of students
- For alumni
- For staff members
- At the demand of external parties
- For the wider public

Further detail can hence be found under chapter 5.

It should be added that as far as focusing on specific, potentially new, target groups is concerned, the institutions of Ghent University Association were faced with a specific phenomenon over the last years. All institutions’ student numbers grew, most of them even quite spectacular. This means that there was not only no need for setting up special services to attract specific target groups, in a lot of cases there has not even been the potential capacity to do so. Certainly for the Ghent-based institutions, ensuring the necessary facilities (including lecturing rooms, student housing etc.) and hiring the necessary staff, have been increasing challenges for the last years, hence creating natural obstacles to investing in specific initiatives to attract new students from specific target groups.



## 5 In depth SWOT-Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

Again for this analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of lifelong learning within Ghent University association a distinction was made between on one hand the Flemish/general level and on the other hand the association/institutional level. This was not an intentional choice, but a result of the tendency during the brainstorming in the workgroup to focus on such Flemish/general as well. It has to be clear from previous parts that the Flemish authorities have a strong governmental and even legal influence on lifelong learning. Hence it was apparently very tempting for the participants in the internal meeting in which the SWOT-analysis was undertaken to also analyse this level. This is reflected in the first table below in which the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Flemish policy and actions regarding lifelong learning are mentioned.

The second table then considers the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of lifelong learning within Ghent University association and its member institutions.

Already this split-level approach is an important element to consider in an analysis: the major driver for lifelong learning seems to be situated at the governmental level. There seems to have been a lot less specific stimulation taking place at the level of the association's or institutions' managerial level. One could even fear for a kind of defeatism at this level because policy decisions have been made already and a framework has been established.

This, however, does not mean that there has been no pushing at all from the level of faculties, departments or other organisational units within the institutions.

But the government-driven approach ("we are taken care of") has in general not stimulated institutions to look at lifelong learning from a "mercantile" point-of-view ("we need to take care of it"). And in Flanders, we do not have (unlike other countries) the tradition to consider (higher) education a commodity. So, contrary to the generally adopted "contract research", "contract education" (e.g. for adult or other non-traditional learners) has never been well-accepted in Flemish higher education.

For the SWOT analysis the following factors have been taken into account:

#### Key internal factors

- Individuals (rector, teachers,...)
- LLL-competence
- History
- Mission ('open' vs. 'social' university)
- Organisation
- Resources: staff, LLL-students, LLL- alumni
- Capacity to change
- Continuity of the strategy
- Methodology used (reflexive practitioner)
- Logistics/location

#### Key external factors

- Pressure of demand
- Companies
- Individuals
- Competition
- Regulation
- Economical situation
- Funding
- Visibility of the university
- Costs and benefits

## 5.2 At Flemish/general level

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic school system (at primary, secondary and tertiary level) is of excellent quality, creating a solid basis for lifelong learning</li> <li>• Flanders boasts of various outstanding “centres of knowledge”: not only universities and university colleges, but also centres for adult education, other public training organisations (VDAB, Syntra) and private initiatives</li> <li>• Lifelong learning is to a large extent legally embedded, not only in higher education but also in for instance adult education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a relative large amount of drop-outs from school (♀: 10% / ♂: 20%)</li> <li>• The high quality and solidness of the established school system can lead to a sense of redundancy of lifelong learning</li> <li>• Budgets are dispersed over a broad variety of “lifelong learning-organisations” (e.g. because of the the compartmentalization along socio-political lines, ‘pillarization’ leading to fragmentation of funds</li> <li>• Too much flexibilisation possibilities can create indistinctness for potential candidate (lifelong) learners</li> <li>• In general, the study-progress (in higher education) is too slow, deterring potential candidate learners</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another vision (more open) on higher education could create levers for lifelong learning</li> <li>• Demand for innovation from economical point of view is increasing, urging for more skilled/better trained/... people</li> <li>• New educational levels (“SenSe” – “HBO5”) in the qualifications structure offer extra steps on the lifelong learning ladder</li> <li>• The current economical crises might stimulate individuals (e.g. unemployed people) to engage in lifelong learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education = too much based on linguistic competences (↔ work-based learning)</li> <li>• Over-regulation cripples own initiative</li> <li>• Degree-fetishism (i.e. degree=lifelong entry ticket to labour market, at a certain level, related to rewarding policy) → does not stimulate LLL</li> <li>• Top-down regulation</li> <li>• Most working people lack time to engage in lifelong learning and the provisions offered</li> <li>• The current economical situation causes cut backs in investment (from authorities and companies) in lifelong learning</li> <li>• There is not yet a sufficient sense of urgency</li> </ul>

### 5.3 At association/institutional level

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifelong learning is embedded in mission/vision/strategy</li> <li>• Key decision makers are convinced of importance of LLL (at least: pay lip-service to it)</li> <li>• There are several opportunities for cross-fertilization between lifelong learning and “traditional” higher education (e.g. at the level of the staff involved): there is a basis for expertise and (to some extend) experience</li> <li>• Association is itself a lifelong learning organisation</li> <li>• All institutions have open access and want to take on their social role</li> <li>• The creation of doctoral schools offers LLL-possibilities up to the highest qualification level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal competition between partners sometimes hinders new initiatives</li> <li>• There is still too much a diffuse approach to lifelong learning within the association/institutions</li> <li>• We are not strong in work-based learning</li> <li>• The budgets for internal training are too low</li> <li>• The maturity of LLL-students is not used (enough) → concept of “junior staff members”</li> <li>• Alumni are not seen as important stakeholders</li> <li>• The educational organisation and logistics are not (always) facilitating lifelong learning (e.g. restricted opening hours, shared buildings offering limited possibilities,...)</li> <li>• The (spectacular) increase in student numbers has created natural barriers in investing in specific initiatives to attract new students from specific target groups</li> <li>• LLL is getting a lot of lip service, but this is not to the same extend visible in practice</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the “4<sup>th</sup> power”, viz. the media to bring about the LLL-message: the systems are in place but are not known for the general public. We should invest in communication strategies</li> <li>• The association can function as a “network initiator”, not only between the 4 partner organisations, but also with other providers and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much flexibilisation leads to a decreased social cohesion among students scaring off potential candidate (lifelong) learners</li> <li>• Too much flexibilisation can lead to possible international confusion</li> <li>• Lifelong learning has created a lot of extra (sometimes also hidden) costs, without (earmarked / extra) funding</li> <li>• Association / university / university colleges are not (always) perceived as key players in lifelong learning</li> <li>• There is no structured cooperation with providers and stakeholders in lifelong learning outside higher education</li> <li>• Institutions have a feeling of overregulation and too much accountability</li> </ul>

## 6 Conclusion

As a conclusion to this interesting self-evaluation exercise, it was felt more attractive to formulate a number of questions rather than to merely sum up elements that were already touched upon in the previous pages.

One of the reasons for doing this, is that Ghent University (Association) was also selected as a participant in a project coordinated by the European University Association (EUA)

**SIRUS**

SHAPING INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES

regarding lifelong learning. This project called SIRUS (“Shaping Inclusive and Responsive University Strategies”) primarily wants to support universities in developing and enhancing lifelong learning strategies. It wants to offer possibilities to exchange experience and jointly built expertise in 4 networks. Ghent University (Association) is participating in network 4 “Strengthening the role of universities in their regional context, by fostering for example better university-business collaboration”.

Another reason is that questions can be more challenging for the internal workgroup to further work on and finally, these questions could also form the basis for a broader debate, also with external stakeholders, on cooperation in lifelong learning.

- How broad, how inclusive, how holistic... do we have to look at lifelong learning?
- Is it a blessing or a curse to have, to some extent, a governmental or even legal framework for lifelong learning?
- Can we set-up a model which balances better the available resources (manpower, infrastructure,...) with the continuously increasing demand?
- How can the association take on its role as a “network initiator” for lifelong learning?
- How can we better make use of the media to bring about the LLL-message? Or is this not the role of higher education institutions?
- Can we create levers for lifelong learning by changing towards another (more open, less monolithic) vision on higher education? How to proceed in this?
- Even though the demand for innovation from an economical point of view is obviously increasing (urging for more skilled/better trained/... people), higher education does not (always) seem to be the logical partner for companies in this? How can we alter this?
- At the levels of individuals, the current economical crises might stimulate them (e.g. unemployed people) to engage in lifelong learning. How can higher education institutions get involved in this on a more structural and vaster level?



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