GRID FOR A STRATEGY

UNIVERSITY OF AVEIRO

1 VISION

- Analytical dimension: challenges, identification of drivers of change

  As relevant trends, we can identify local and regional economic factors, funding and innovation needs, and the demographic landscape. A favorable national and international climate towards LLL should be acknowledged. The geographical vicinity of two large and dynamic classical universities requires a high level of competiveness and is always a factor to be taken into account

- Strategical dimension:

  - Missions/statements

    "To create knowledge, to expand the access to knowledge in benefit of people and society, through research, teaching and cooperation; to assume a project of global education of the individual; to be an actor on the construction of an European space of research and education, and a model of regional development based on innovation and on the scientific and technological knowledge."

    To be a central partner of the Inter-Municipal Community of the Aveiro Region, and the wider vicinity, namely through the CET programs, adequate strategies dedicated to LLL and to the (re)qualification of the workforce

  - Motivations

    To increase the number and quality of skills and competences certifications and the academic qualifications of both mature students, and active professionals, in order to provide global, individual, meaningful and quality education projects.

  - Values

    Quality in all procedures (welcoming of non-traditional students, taking notice of individual trajectories) and products (programs content and design, internal and external cooperation).
    Sustainability, regarding the balance between expectations and needs of the students and the reality of the University, namely on its ability to provide (either by adapting or creating) "after work" timetable flexible programs.

*The case studies and grids 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.

1

2 OBJECTIVES

Although our institution does not yet have its own LLLU definition, it is fair to say that LLL is moving towards the centre of the institution's identity and vision as it becomes an integral component of the role and function of higher education institutions today.

For this purpose, the institution has established as priority goals the consolidation of the LLL activities which are ongoing in the institution, the development of proper RPL mechanisms and the creation of a versatile LLL unit able to give visibility and status to this area, coordinate diverse activities and articulate between different entities, promoting internal cohesion and attracting new publics.

To include a higher proportion of Non-Traditional Adult Students (NTAS), namely through the implementation of the next phase of the Bologna Process, regarding the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and improving the conditions of access for new publics.

To be an institution where guidance and counseling are available to all students, including, in particular, time management skills, competences acquisition and development in their University path, as well as group work methodologies, stress management skills and other skills necessary for increased autonomy in academic work.

3 ORGANISATION

To consolidate what has already been achieved, collecting disperse information and providing a global overview of the University's LLL offer; to develop proper mechanisms of RPL.
Creation of an LLL unit (Integrated Unit for Continued Education, UINFOC) dedicated to programs that are part of graduate and post-graduate studies and articulate it with the unit (UNAVE) already set up. This unit interacts directly with the University's departments and schools as well as with other organic units inside the University, and with teacher's continuing education certification entities. UNAVE (University of Aveiro Association for Professional Training), an interface unit for continuing education, created in 1986, has been diversifying and intensifying its ad hoc offer on professional certification offer.

4 ACTORS

- Internal/external

  So far we have no staff that is specifically designated as LLL staff. We have internal and external contributors to LLL. The former (career teachers) combine LLL with their other activities; the latter come mainly from secondary schools, which provide teacher education, and from enterprises, providing professional training.

  In the different units that provide some LLL, we have about 16 internals, 19 external, all in part time, and 15 administrative staff, all in full time.

  The total number of persons involved in LLL in the institution as a whole is larger than the 50 mentioned above, due to the many activities which are promoted by regular staff and others that are developed within European projects on LLL, for example

  Regarding trends and future perspectives, we can identify strengths coming from the interaction with enterprises, the very high quality of the services provided, and the initiatives of the University in finding partners at a formation level.

- Isolated actors/teams/ collective approach

Taking into account the existence, at the University of Aveiro, of capacities and competences, both at decision-making level and among teaching and non-teaching staff, for the implementation of a strong LLL unit, it is necessary to consolidate and extend existing activities and involve the academic community in the development of this area and in making it an integral component of the university's identity and function.

5 DISCUSSIONS

- Risks vs. benefits

  Apart from funding, which is always a (problematic) issue, the main difficulties come from the level of effort put into assembling and managing disperse information and initiatives, and from resistance to the recognition of LLL activities as regular ones, also as a result of the lack of information on the nature of these activities.
   Yet there are evidences that an underlying acknowledgement of good contributions to the teaching and learning processes, resulting from the increase of the presence of non-traditional students, is building up. An increase in the overall number of students in the University can be observed, due to LLL initiatives.

- Strengths vs. weaknesses

  As strengths we have the willingness, capacity, competences, and people determination, together with a commitment from the hierarchy.

  As weaknesses, the installed culture regarding LLL both on teachers and on the staff, that difficult the information flow; the absence of institutional structures that really "do the job", and the geographical localization.

- Debates, conflicts

  The debate is at the departments, schools and units level, and has not yet been done at a wide internal level. It concerns mainly the *why* and the *how* of new activities and procedures.

  Conflicts arise whenever someone (or some unit) thinks/feels its activity/existence is threatened by LLL UINFOC mission. Also the working contract restrictions teachers have, namely regarding the number of hours of their activity, *vs* the number of hours they really are asked/need to perform, together with the present economical and financial situation, embodies conflicts with the development and implementation of LLL activities.

- Level and type of involvement

  Departments and programs Directors and administrative staff has been involved and will be summoned into the building of an internal network of LLL departmental *pivots* coordinated at UINFOC.

6 DECISION

- Priorities
  Contact Heads of Departments and School in order to identify the offer;
  Mobilize actors to enliven the existing activities and promote new ones;

To focus on two particular sets of non-traditional students: those that enter the University via CET courses, and the ones that constitute the "older than 23" contingent, in order to characterize the demand and the trajectories, enabling the design of initiatives and mechanisms to support and promote the success of this public.

7 IMPLEMENTATION

- Key elements: infrastructure, human resources, organization
UINFOC is a very new and weak structure, and faces the competition of UNAVE (older unit with a different mission). Yet, it integrates the "one shop stop" for non-traditional older than 23 students, therefore assembling knowledge and skills unique in the University regarding mature students. There is no need for more administrative human resources at the moment, due to the number and profile of the activities on. We are about to establish an internal network of LLL departmental *pivots* coordinated at UINFOC, that will help to put dynamic on the process. Regarding the coordination staff, one teacher is in charge, cumulating this activity with the others. Next step is to establish a board of experts at UINFOC in order to develop and implement procedures and activities.

- Roadmap, work plans, timing
The strategy is to progress in "small steps" towards the building of programs directed to different sectors of mature students. Aiming to students entering the university for the first time - "year zero" - (U400 or U4M23 program), to active and /or unemployed mature people wishing to obtain higher academic qualification and /or reorient their working path, and to the general population (U4ALL program), these programs will be built in parallel between themselves and with the consolidation of UINFOC. The University is setting the ground in order to overcome the risks, threats and obstacles identified earlier in this document, and gathering contributions at the same time. First priority regards the non-traditional students entering the University to the CET's and by a special contingent of older than 23 adults. In 3 years time we expect to have the design of a first program directed to older than 65 non-traditional students. Work with the Departments and Schools will hopefully result in the implementation of flexible courses and evening classes.

- Budget: costs – resources

  Costs with staff are supported by the University, as they are university employees. All activities support themselves, and these are the ones that are carried out. The resources are the activities self-funding and the University funds.

- Evaluation: indicators

  Made by questionnaire (designed to the purpose and applied to the users) and by the degree of consecution of the unit's action plan. Indicators will be identified according to the number, profile and degree of consecution of the tasks on the action plan, regarding the operational aims of the unit and of the University.

- Management, leadership

The Coordination Council, the Rector and the Management Council decide the procedures and the whole funding allocation policy. Leadership is provided by the Rector, a Vice-Rector and a Pro-Rector, in articulation with the Coordinator of the unit.

8 PERSPECTIVES

- Further developments

In the future, we hope to see our institution with a strong and dynamic LLL sector as an important component of its identity and capacity to attract students and to serve the community. To reach our goals, the first step is to bring together the disperse activities and initiatives which are being developed, to disseminate information about these activities and initiatives within the institution and in the wider community, and to promote new initiatives. The new unit, UINFOC, will be the cornerstone in this process.

The conditions to meet are institutional, formative and logistical. The first of these have already been undertaken; next we must promote a favorable climate and conditions within the institution for the consolidation and development of LLL activities. Thirdly, we must provide the logistical support in terms of human, physical and financial resources, including installations which are easy to reach and accessible.

- Next steps

To sensitize the University and Academic Community towards the relevance of LLL;

To assemble wills; make activities operational; diagnose/identify local and regional needs;

To disseminate what we do;

To provide stimulus to pro-active intervenient volunteers in the LLL process, that can be presented as "show-cases";

To promote excellence nuclei, acting as "pilots" for the action.