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Meeting the needs of lifelong learners: an integrated approach

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This presentation will outline the integrated approach of Hanze University Groningen, university of applied sciences, to stimulate the effective demand for lifelong learning within a regional context. The labour market in the northern part of the Netherlands is under pressure: employment rates are above the national average and the labour force is decreasing, as a result of an ageing population. There has been a shift of employment in the production to the service industry, mainly represented by SMEs. The increasing focus on a limited number of economic sectors and investments in innovation, entrepreneurship and the creation of a knowledge infrastructure has created a growing demand for more and better qualified personnel.

Research has shown there are a number of real and perceived barriers which cause both employers and employees to make insufficient use of the possibilities that higher education institutions offer them. As the largest university of applied sciences in the region, Hanze University Groningen aims to contribute to the economic development of the north of the Netherlands by establishing a Hanze Competence Centre which focuses on helping employers and individuals to articulate their lifelong learning needs and on making education more accessible and attractive.

The chosen approach is innovative in the way it uses lifelong learning specialists to help employers analyse their chances to increase their productivity through the effective use of qualified personnel and efficient investments in training and education of personnel and in the way it stimulates individuals to articulate their ambitions with regard to further education. Recognition of Prior Learning is a key element in this process. To facilitate this, Hanze University Groningen has developed a web-tool, known as Connecticut, for the assessment of competences of a potential client and prospective student.