

A1.1.

University strategies towards lifelong learning as part of their role in innovation and regional development

Wim Van Petegem¹, Ellen Sjoer², Bente Nørgaard³, Markku Markkula⁴

¹*K.U.Leuven - AVNet, Leuven, Belgium*, ²*Delft University of Technology, Delft, Netherlands*, ³*Aalborg Universitet, Aalborg, Denmark*, ⁴*Aalto University, Helsinki, Finland*

Recently the Council of the European Union adopted the conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, the so-called ET2020. The first (!) strategic objective is making lifelong learning and mobility a reality. "The challenges posed by demographic change and the regular need to update and develop skills in line with changing economic and social circumstances call for a lifelong approach to learning and for education and training systems which are more responsive to change and more open to the wider world. While new initiatives in the field of lifelong learning may be developed to reflect future challenges, further progress with ongoing initiatives is still required, especially in implementing coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies."

The European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (published by the EUA in 2008) states universities should "commit to embedding concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in their institutional strategies. Universities will grasp the opportunity to address lifelong learning centrally in their mission and strategy as part of a wider definition of excellence."

Taking into account this international call and after an internal reform of its teaching and learning support centers at the university, K.U.Leuven decided to revise its vision and strategy towards Lifelong Learning. A dedicated working group with representatives from different bodies within the universities is drafting a new policy, starting from EUCEN's definition of University Lifelong Learning, i.e. the provision of learning opportunities, services and research for the personal and professional development of a wide range of individuals, lifelong and life wide, and for the social, cultural and economic development of communities and the region. Special attention will be paid to link the developments of the working group to what is happening in the knowledge transfer center of the university. Indeed, while they are focusing on regional development through the creation of spin-off activities and other ways of entrepreneurship, we should also consider lifelong learning initiatives as potential means to transfer research-based knowledge from the university towards the community and society in general. In this way we could through lifelong learning nicely link the three pillars in our university's mission, i.e. research, education and service to the community with the knowledge triangle, based on research, education and innovation. We should also keep in mind that this will be only possible in collaboration with stakeholders and external actors, even in the early stage of drafting our new policy. Therefore we decided to benefit from our involvement in international projects and networks to organize proper peer assessment of our process and its outcomes with colleagues from other universities.

We will present the results of these exercises as input for further discussion about our revised strategy on lifelong learning and innovation.