

**SOCRATES THEMATIC NETWORK  
AQUACULTURE, FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
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**LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME  
ERASMUS  
Academic Network**

Report on **Challenges and Opportunities for Lifelong Learning**

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## INDEX

<b>SOCRATES THEMATIC NETWORK</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Background .....	3
1.2 Europe 2020: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.....	3
2. What is Lifelong Learning? .....	3
2.1 Diversity or ambiguity?.....	3
2.2 European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning .....	4
3. Survey Results.....	5
3.1 Trends results concerning HE lifelong learning strategies .....	5
3.1.1 The CEDEFOP view.....	5
3.2 AQUATNET survey results.....	5
3.2.1 Educational organisation results.....	5
4. Current lifelong learning practice and provision.....	6
4.1 Types of lifelong learning currently provided .....	6
4.2 Flexible learning pathways .....	6
4.2.1 HE provision of flexible learning pathways.....	6
4.2.2 VET approach to flexible learning pathways.....	6
4.2.4 AQUA-TNET contribution .....	7
4.3 Need for accreditation.....	7
4.3.1 AQUA-TNET Stakeholder findings .....	7
4.3.2 Conclusions.....	8
5. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and ECVET .....	8
5.1 What is the EQF? .....	8
5.2 Scope of the EQF .....	8
5.3 AQUA-TNET response to key challenge for the EQF.....	9
5.4 ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) .....	9
5.4.1 What is ECVET?.....	9
5.4.2 Developments across Europe.....	9
6. Guidance for partners.....	10
6.1 Guidance/good practice from WAVE (Working in Aquaculture, Validation of Experience) .....	10
6.2 Guidance/good practice from VALLA (Validation of All Lifelong Learning in Aquaculture) .....	100
6.2.1 The VALLA dedicated software tool.....	10
6.2.2 Learning Outcomes .....	11
6.2.2 How the VALLA tool helps users to present course materials in terms of Learning Outcomes .....	11
6.3 The SIRUS project.....	11
6.4 The EU project ALLUME. ....	12
6.4.1 ALLUME objectives.....	12
6.4.2 The ALLUME approach .....	12
6.4.3 Problems encountered.....	13
6.4.4 Final Products.....	13
6.4.5 Strengths of the project.....	13
7. Challenges and opportunities for Lifelong Learning.....	14
8. The future challenges .....	144
9. References (in chronological order) .....	155

## Introduction

## Background

Extraordinary and largely unanticipated changes have occurred world-wide since the global financial crisis of 2008. The EU responded to these challenges by restructuring some objectives and restructuring agendas, particularly in its “Europe 2020: Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” (COM (2010) 2020).

## Europe 2020: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

President Barroso, describing the changes as a wake-up call, set out the Commission’s vision of an integrated stronger Europe. Europe 2020 presents five headline targets which are to be achieved by three mutually reinforcing priorities: “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. These sound-bite priorities (in the light of the 2011 financial crises) are themselves underpinned by seven Flagship Initiatives, which are achievable and are set out in admirable detail. Within five of these (*Innovation Union, Youth on the Move and A Digital Agenda for Europe; An Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era; and An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*), education and training play an important role. It is their scope and relevance for the stated objectives and deliverables of AQUA-TNET that this report of AQUA-TNET Work Package 6 “*Positioning Lifelong Learning*” now addresses.

Though the Barroso strategy for 2010, described above, has now replaced the Lisbon strategy, which aimed to transform Europe through more emphasis on research and innovation, and expanded access to education and lifelong learning opportunities, one of the latter’s key features has been fulfilled: the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was formally launched on March 12 2010 at the Ministerial Meeting in Vienna. It is not too much to claim that the Thematic Network AQUA-TNET has played an important role in its sector in pushing hard for the Bologna reforms and in several of its activities has never lost sight of the need to find ways of combining the Bologna and Copenhagen Processes. AQUA-TNET has taken up the task of addressing the need for a European transnational policy with respect to educational affairs, endeavouring not only to create curricular harmonisation (closely following the Bologna reforms) but also to minimise overlapping by revealing complementarities, of European players in this field, focussing on certain key issues. It should however be noted that the objectives of WP6 were set and have been implemented within the context of the Lisbon Strategy, while endeavouring to keep pace with the perfect storm of new initiatives as well as complying with previous requirements.

## What is Lifelong Learning?

To start with the concept as defined by CEDEFOP - “*All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and/or qualifications for personal, civic, social and/or professional reasons*”(CEDEFOP, 2003).

## Diversity or ambiguity?

However, there is a good deal of ambiguity in the use of the term, especially in relation to HE involvement in Lifelong learning as shown in this passage taken from the Trends 2010 Report, carried out by the European Universities Association (EUA).

*“Lifelong learning has a great diversity of meanings and can be understood in many different ways. Depending on the institution or the country, it is conceived either as*

*(i) a strategy and a cultural attitude to learning or (ii) a set of different activities unrelated to an overarching concept.*

Thus, there are generally two different ways in Europe to interpret the concept of lifelong learning:

- The first one views all provision of education in a lifelong perspective and thus includes all formal, informal and non-formal learning (Austria, Hungary, Scotland, Slovakia and Sweden).
- The second and most prevailing view regards lifelong learning as ensuring provision of a series of activities: e.g., professional upgrading, continuing education, distance education, university courses for junior, mature and senior learners, preparatory courses, and part-time education” (Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Education, EUA, 2010, p. 68).

The lack of clarity and loss of unanimity regarding the concept had already been pointed out in the Trends V report, whose authors concluded that “Lifelong learning has thus been developed more on the periphery of institutional strategy, rather than as a driving element of it”. (op cit., para 5, p. 62).

## European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning

In response to this situation, revealed as a results of its own survey, the EUA actively promoted the re-emphasis on the lifelong learning agenda by developing the “European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning” in 2008 (EUA 2008). The Charter is a call for European universities and governments, together with the social partners and other stakeholders, to support the lifelong learning agenda, and to assist Europe’s universities in developing their specific role in this context. The Charter places all types of higher education – formal, non-formal and informal – in the framework of lifelong learning. Here is an abbreviated version of the Charter, which may be found in full in Appendix I.

### European Universities commit to:

1. Embedding concepts of widening access & LLL in their strategies
2. Providing education to a diversified student population
3. Adapting study programmes to enhance widening participation
4. Providing appropriate guidance & counselling service
5. Recognising prior learning
6. Embracing LLL in quality culture
7. Strengthening the research/teaching links in LLL perspective
8. Consolidating Bologna reforms designed to promote flexible learning environments
9. Developing partnerships at all levels to provide relevant programmes
10. Acting as role models of LLL institutions

### Universities call on governments to commit to:

1. Recognising the university contribution to LLL as a major benefit to individuals & society
2. Promoting social equity & an inclusive learning society
3. Including LLL objectives in their national QA systems
4. Supporting the development of appropriate guidance/counselling
5. Recognising prior learning
6. Removing legal obstacles that prevent potential learners from responding to LLL opportunities
7. Ensuring the necessary autonomy & incentives
8. Encouraging partnerships, especially at regional level
9. Informing and encouraging citizens to take advantage of LLL opportunities offered by universities
10. Similarly acting as role models in relation to their own employees.

Several valuable EU projects have been undertaken which show how to develop the Charter, and these will be referred to below.

## Survey Results

Because a main pillar of the “*Europe 2020: Agenda for New Skills Initiative*” is the provision of lifelong learning flexible learning pathways between different education and training sectors, WP6 was tasked with sounding out what is actually taking place within the AQUA-TNET partner organisations.

### Trends results concerning HE lifelong learning strategies

The present survey has coincided with those carried out in the *EUA Trends V* and *Trends 2010 Reports*, and it is therefore very interesting to make comparisons of the various results.

The *Trends V* survey looked at **what priority** European higher education institutions give to lifelong learning. Two thirds of the institutions (**66%**) answered that LLL either had high priority or had priority along with other priorities. However, only **17%** indicated that LLL had very high priority for their institution (*Trends V*, 5.1, p.63).

The *Trends 2010* survey results indicate that the development of institutional lifelong learning strategies that support all educational provision in a lifelong perspective (i.e. the first meaning of the term) evolves very slowly. Data from *Trends III* (2003) showed that **35%** of institutions stated that they had developed an overall lifelong learning strategy. Six years later, there was a “negligible increase to **39%**” (*op. cit.*, p.68).

#### 3.1.1 The CEDEFOP view

CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) wisely pointed out the underlying inherent difficulties in the following concise yet thoroughly pragmatic view of the situation. “*Strong disjunctions traditionally exist between HE and VET. In many countries the framing of HE qualifications and VET qualifications are separate, and there is institutional reluctance and technical difficulty in bringing the two into closer alignment. This lack of connection has also emerged as a potential problem within the EQF, where the specific intention is to bring into alignment different forms of qualification through the adoption of common levels based on generalised learning outcomes. This tension can be seen clearly at the European level, where differing approaches are being taken to credit accumulation and transfer in HE (ECTS) and in VET (ECVET).*”

Several studies later, the EQF published “Using Learning Outcomes” (Note 4 in the EQF series) in which a warning note is still sounding. “*It is the case that whilst learning outcomes may bring transparency to education, training and qualifications, they do not replace considerations on what are the most accurate inputs to the learning process. **Therefore, they complement and enhance what currently exists in education and training systems***”.

### AQUATNET survey results

AQUA-TNET WP6 carried out a survey (Stakeholder Survey), using the same approach as other groups, such as WP4 (New Generic Skills and Competences Approaches) (questionnaires in Appendices 2 and 3).

#### 3.2.1. Educational organisation results

There was a clear distinction in the responses (71 from 22 countries) to the question concerning which educational institutes have an institutional LLL strategy in place. Overall, there was a fairly even split: **54%** indicated that they did have such a policy, while **46%** admitted that they had no such policy. But that in itself shows a noticeable difference from the *Trends* results.

However, when the AQUA-TNET results were subjected to further scrutiny, the responses showed a clear and unexpected divide between the northern countries and the southern countries. Only **48%** of northern educational institutes in the marine science sector as represented in AQUA-TNET, had a LLL strategy in place in 2009, while **61%** of countries belonging to the southern geographical sector claimed that they had such a policy.

This contrasts further with the *Trends 2010* findings: “*The Trends 2010 data made it possible to further identify two types of institutions that are more likely to have an overarching lifelong learning strategy. The first is more likely to be a university, with 15,000 to 30,000 students, and an international profile. 50% of the universities with this profile have indicated that they have a lifelong learning strategy as opposed to the 39% average for the overall sample. The data indicate that this group is also more likely to have a strong research profile*” (op.cit., p.68).

Even more interesting is their second conclusion: “*The second type includes higher education institutions that provide lifelong learning activities, but do not necessarily have an overall strategy in place. They are smaller and more likely to define themselves as having a regional (39%) or national (40%) mission.*” (op.cit., p.68).

Perhaps these conclusions show that the AQUA-TNET approach has successfully incentivised at least some of its partners, since a higher percentage of AQUA-TNET partners (**54%**) have a LLL strategy in place than the HE organisations surveyed by the EUA (**average 39%**).

## Current lifelong learning practice and provision

### Types of lifelong learning currently provided

The *Trends 2010* results concerning specific types of training are also illuminating in respect of what is happening in European Higher Education. *Trends 2010* data revealed that the three main lifelong learning activities are:

- Professional development courses for those in employment (**79%**)
- Continuing education for adults (**67%**)
- Distance learning (**53%**)

“*Those European HEIs with an overarching strategy in place have started to appreciate the importance of developing student services targeted at these specific categories of learners*” (op.cit., p.70).

These figures are remarkably similar to the AQUA-TNET HE organisations where **73%** currently provide training to non-standard 3rd level students (e.g. professionals, adult learners, senior citizens) and **63%** have study programmes adapted for flexibility in order to enable broader participation.

## Flexible learning pathways

### 4.2.1 HE provision of flexible learning pathways

While the latest Ministerial Declaration (Budapest-Vienna, 12/03/2010) stresses that “*higher education is a major driver for social and economic development and for innovation*” (para.11), it also states that “*flexible learning paths provide the best solution, requiring cooperation from teachers/researchers in international networks*” (para.10).

In this context, it is perhaps revealing that **31%** of the 72 AQUATNET respondents have a system in place whereby an individual could obtain credits towards one of their programmes through evidence of work experience.

Yet according to the definitive *Trends 2010* report, this type of provision is very rare, “*In the majority of European countries, lifelong learning is considered as a set of activities provided outside mainstream education, in relation to which Bologna tools such as learning outcomes and academic credits are only rarely defined or attached.*” (op.cit, p. 73).

Perhaps because of the greater integration and cooperation of the AQUA-TNET partnership which includes organisations, research organisations and industrial partners as well as universities, there is a greater awareness of the need for more flexible learning pathways and also for recognition of prior learning, which has long been one of the pillars of the Bologna reforms.

## 4.2.2 VET approach to flexible learning pathways

It should also be noted that the Bruges Communiqué (December 2010) states trenchantly: “*In the knowledge society vocational skills and competences are just as important as academic skills and competences*”(p.3). This latest set of recommendations from the Copenhagen (VET) Process reflects, though in a slightly different way, the dichotomy that has emerged in relation to the theory and practice of lifelong learning (see para 3.2.1 above).

The Bruges Communiqué (perhaps taking a leaf from Apple terminology!) differentiates between what it describes as **I-VET** (“initial” VET) and **C-VET** (easily accessible and career-oriented”continuing” VET. I-VET “*should equip learners with key competences and specific vocational skills*” (p.6), in other words, it should be linked to formal education. C-VET on the other hand, is intended for “*employees, employers, independent entrepreneurs and the unemployed, which facilitates both competence development and career changes.*”(p.6). C-VET seems rather to be linked with non-formal and still, at this point in time, unaccredited learning.

However, the Bruges Communiqué goes on to join hands with the Budapest Ministerial Declaration in also signalling the importance of **flexible systems of VET**, “*based on a learning outcomes approach, which support flexible learning pathways, which allow permeability between the different education and training subsystems (school education, VET, higher education, adult education) and which cater for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, including competences acquired in the workplace*” (p.6).

## 4.2.4 AQUA-TNET contribution

From the data presented above, it can be seen that AQUA-TNET has played a crucial role in bringing together all stakeholders to ensure that there is a flow of information and knowledge transfer to partners. Its admittedly long-term approach has succeeded in translating at least some of the concepts promoted in the evolving Bologna/Copenhagen dialogue. AQUA-TNET’s wide sectoral support is now represented in the EATIP Technology Platform offering a new knowledge transfer pathway.

## Need for accreditation

### 4.3.1 AQUA-TNET Stakeholder findings

AQUA-TNET WP6 carried out the stakeholder survey through the producer organisation FEAP, who presented AQUA-TNET and the survey specifically at their AGM2009. Respondents were professional aquaculture associations from seven countries (Italy, Norway, Spain, UK, Greece, Germany, Finland) representing the views of thousands of individual fishfarms. **50%** of the Stakeholder respondents think that it is essential to provide shorter courses and onsite training, which is more affordable for the companies (but much less convenient for university departments). Time availability to take part in training and suitable location (i.e., close to the company) were major concerns for the industrial

partners, who also voiced interest in awarding some kind of recognition/accreditation for the training, even if this were only a certificate for participation.

The AQUA-TNET partnership has therefore responded to the need clearly set out in the *Trends 2010* report. “Therefore, there is **a clear need for European HEIs and national authorities – together – to connect policies in order to create accessible, flexible and transparent student-centred learning and to monitor and evaluate implementation continuously**. This is necessary in order to ensure that all education provision is seen within a lifelong perspective and in specific national, regional, local and institutional contexts. The joint approach advocated in EUA’s Lifelong Learning Charter, requiring the joint commitment of governments and HEIs, is essential in order to achieve success. It will also be important to act together at regional level and promote cooperation between regional stakeholders, including employers and HEIs.” (*Trends 2010*, p.73)

### 4.3.2 Conclusions

Formal education is an essential part of lifelong learning, but there is no doubt that the acquisition of knowledge, skills and wider competences at the workplace, is also important. Yet from the *Trends 2010* report it is evident that a more systematic development of flexible learning paths to support lifelong learning is needed, supported by some hard evidence as to what the current state of play in European universities is.

The Executive Summary presents a somewhat daunting picture of the state of play. “Progress is being achieved in developing national qualifications frameworks (NQF) but institutions’ understanding seems low particularly with respect to the importance of learning outcomes and of their central role within qualifications frameworks and in facilitating mobility and lifelong learning (through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)). There have been some rare and very successful efforts, at national level, to delegate to institutional actors, through their rectors’ conferences, the task of discussing (but in some cases also developing and implementing) NQFs.” (*op.cit.*, p.13).

## The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and ECVET

### What is the EQF?

The aim of EQF is to act as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, by relating different countries' national qualifications systems or frameworks (NQFs) to a common European reference framework of eight levels, describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do (learning outcomes). Levels of national qualifications can be placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8). This allows for a much easier comparison between national qualifications so that individuals and employers can use the EQF to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems. It also means that people do not have to repeat their learning if they move to another country.

### Scope of the EQF

The EQF encompasses all types of education, training and qualifications, from school education to academic, professional and vocational. The system shifts the focus from the traditional approach which emphasises 'learning inputs' such as the length of a learning experience or type of institution, to **'learning outcomes'**, which are sets of competences, expressing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of a process of learning.

Agreed upon by the European institutions in April 2008, the EQF is being put in practice across Europe. It encourages countries to relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF so that all



new qualifications issued from 2012 carry a reference to an appropriate EQF level. An EQF national coordination point has been designated for this purpose in each country.

## **AQUA-TNET response to key challenge for the EQF**

A key challenge for the EQF is the status of unaccredited short-term sectoral/professional training courses. National awards fit smoothly into the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) frameworks, whatever the differences in levels between them. But work placements, on-the-job training, and short courses (unaccredited learning) are often not part of national awards, even though such skill acquisition is seen as essential in competitive business. This is particularly the case for the fast-growing innovative European aquaculture industry, whose success is relying on a joint practical and theoretical knowledge base and whose personnel regularly require specialized training, yet that kind of training usually falls outside current credit systems.

AQUA-TNET has carried out work in cooperation with ongoing initiatives, such as the WAVE and the VALLA projects, in order to enable partner institutions to find reliable ways of accrediting knowledge, skills and competence:

i) by using the WAVE Master List of 238 aquaculture competences, which are also described in terms of learning outcomes; and

ii) by using the VALLA tool which enables organisers of short training courses to describe their course in terms of competence-based learning outcomes and eventually to calculate the credits that the training is worth. Similarly, experienced workers who have over the years accumulated skills and competences can acquire recognition of prior learning (RPL). Graduates who have complemented their formal studies with relevant but previously unaccredited short courses, student placements, etc., can add these to their CVs to more adequately reflect their competences and thus their genuine qualification for specific employment.

## **ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training)**

### **What is ECVET?**

ECVET is a system designed to operate at the European level, interfacing with national systems and arrangements for credit accumulation and transfer, designed for vocational education and training in Europe. In ECVET, an individual's learning outcomes are assessed and validated in order to transfer credits from one qualification system to another, or from one learning "pathway" to another. By means of this approach, learners can accumulate the required learning outcomes for a given qualification over time, in different countries or in different situations. It enables the documentation, validation and recognition of achieved learning outcomes, defined in terms of the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for achieving a qualification, whether these have been acquired abroad, in both formal VET or in non-formal contexts. The system will be fully compatible with [the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System \(ECTS\)](#).

### **Developments across Europe**

The European Commission is developing an ECVET users' guide, and is establishing a European ECVET users' group and a European ECVET network.

**A European education and training area**, with transparent qualifications systems which enable the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes, as well as the recognition of qualifications and competences, and which facilitate transnational mobility;

## Guidance for partners

WP6 was also tasked with guiding the AQUA-TNET partner organisations on how they could go about setting up systems and how Universities/network partners can help. There are a number of EU projects which provide excellent help and guidance for AQUA-TNET partners, some of which have already been referred to above.

### **Guidance/good practice from WAVE (Working in Aquaculture, Validation of Experience)**

The most important and useful WAVE product is the European Master List of Competencies for the sector, which has been evaluated, agreed and accepted by education providers and the industry working together with a range of individual farms throughout Europe. The Master List, which can be freely accessed online and exists in 10 European languages ([www.waveproject.com](http://www.waveproject.com)), can be used to measure and recognise experience in the workforce and provide a benchmark for work performance.

- These *competencies* provide statements on skills and knowledge required to work in a variety of fish farming environments.
- They recognise regional/state variations in work practices and variations across the species being farmed.
- They cover the key activities undertaken within the occupation under all the circumstances the job holder is likely to encounter.
- They define the competencies in the form of statements of performance and knowledge required to verify competence.

The WAVE Master List of competencies can be used to:

- Provide a way of identifying gaps in skills and/or knowledge
- Offer a framework for training and development
- Describe good practice in particular areas of work
- Set out a statement of competence which brings together the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to do the work
- Facilitate the development of focussed courses
- Plan future developments to update courses
- Highlight areas of specialisms for further development
- Tailor education and training to industry needs/demands
- Form a basis for the development of a relevant qualifications framework

### **Guidance/good practice from VALLA (Validation of All Lifelong Learning in Aquaculture)**

#### **The VALLA dedicated software tool**

The most important and useful product from the VALLA project, is a freely accessible, multilingual tool ([www.vallaproject.com](http://www.vallaproject.com)). The VALLA project developed a dedicated software tool based on existing European Best Practice which enables trainers to define non-formal training units (short courses/workshops/placements, etc) in terms of competences and learning outcomes as well as describing level/assessment/evidence requirements/delivery/credit value etc. These are the types of courses which at present lack formal validation/accreditation in both VET and HE education, though they are often formative educational experiences which are rightly regarded as valuable, from several points of view.

## Learning Outcomes

In order to have short courses agreed, accepted and validated in terms of ECVET credits, potential users need not only to understand the learner-centred approach, and the underlying concepts, but must be able to rewrite course content in terms of identifiable and assessable Learning Outcomes.

The shift to the Learning outcomes approach has been described by one of the prime movers in this far-reaching reform as an important paradigm change (Stephen Adams, 2008).

- They shift the focus from teachers/trainers to all learners and, by explaining what learners are expected to know, understand or be able to do at the end of a learning process, they become more motivated and more actively involved in the learning process.
- Another positive feature lies in the fact that learners are better able to see what is offered in a particular course and how this links with other courses and programmes.
- They provide a framework within which formal and informal learning can be recognised and accredited (for the purposes of study, training, employment, mobility). This latter capability can deliver a reliable trustworthy platform on which mobility exchanges, credit transfer and recognition of qualifications between different countries can be built.

### 6.2.2 How the VALLA tool helps users to present course materials in terms of Learning Outcomes

It is not surprisingly therefore that rewriting courses with acceptable Learning Outcomes is a time-consuming task which has put off many potential users.

The VALLA online Tool can deliver specific guidance and genuine assistance in the form of appropriate templates available online. The generic templates can be customised to cope with individual courses and thus help users create descriptions of sectoral training (mobility placements, short term training, workshops/conferences, on- the-job training) in terms of Learning Outcomes. The templates generated are very transparent and should go a long way to satisfy the strict accountability criteria Quality Assurance agencies as the online tool and the supporting guidelines/protocol have been designed to ensure compliance with EC policies.

The VALLA Tool takes users step by step through a process which generates a template that covers in essence the following areas:

- identification of the Learning Outcomes covered by the subject areas of a specific unit or course
- information as to how the Learning Outcomes can be acquired
- information as to how these Learning Outcomes are assessed.

## The SIRUS project

In 2009, the European University Association (EUA) – in a consortium with the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), the European Access Network (EAN), and the European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)<sup>2</sup> – launched the SIRUS project to support European universities in implementing the commitments set out in the LLL Charter and to enhance further the institutional consulted during the drafting of the LLL Charter became part of the SIRUS project.

Based on existing research, the underlying assumption in the SIRUS project was that many universities already contribute substantially to lifelong learning (LLL), but that these approaches are often not guided by institutional strategies and are constrained by national legal frameworks and financial provisions. The *EUA Trends 2010* report highlighted the lack of progress in developing

lifelong learning strategies between 2003 and 2009 while advances were taking place in relation to other higher education objectives and reforms.

Through the further development of institutional strategies for lifelong learning, the aim of the project was to look at the positioning of LLL in different types of higher education institutions in Europe and to demonstrate different ways of incorporating LLL activities into institutional portfolios. Thus the SIRUS project offered an opportunity for a diverse group of universities to develop and enhance their strategic LLL approaches through interactive discussions with colleagues from across Europe

Specifically, the goals of SIRUS were to:

- support universities in developing, embedding and enhancing lifelong learning strategies
- test the implementation of the ten commitments adopted in the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning
- ensure wide dissemination of existing best practices in the field to universities, governments and stakeholders
- contribute to the further development of policy recommendations.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

## **The EU project ALLUME.**

### **ALLUME objectives**

The main objective of the ALLUME project and of EUCEN was to explore ways to increase the participation of universities in lifelong learning and to produce “A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe”. This model was supposed to assist universities by providing guidelines based on the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning published in 2008. However, during the project's lifespan it became clear that the idea of a unique model or a one-size-fits-all approach was outdated and not adequate given the diversity of universities, environments and the heterogeneity of LLL strategies and processes.

While the challenge of making the Charter and of making Lifelong Learning Universities (LLUs) a reality remains, the project evolved to the vision of developing flexible “Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities” in order to tackle the diversity in LLL strategies. Thus, the objective of ALLUME was to provide to deciders, like (vice) rectors and senior managers involved in LLL, and to LLL-practitioners a set of reflexive and inspiring tools and recommendations that could help their teams to define and implement concrete actions to make the 10 commitments of the Charter a reality. ALLUME intended 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 ALLUME approach**

The project design of ALLUME combined research and assessment activities in the context of organisational development, with awareness-raising initiatives at different policy levels. This approach led to the proposition of pathways and policy recommendations and tools which were introduced to decision-makers, deciders and LLL-practitioners in universities and promoted through key European networks in Higher Education.

The project's methodology can be divided into the following areas:

1. Production of consortium case studies following a three-step methodology:
  - Step 1: Institutional analysis of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) strategies in the 10 partner universities and first case study report
  - Step 2: Visits to the case study institutions and visit reports

- Step 3: The final case study reports on the basis of the visitors' recommendations
2. Analysis of the case study results and design of draft supporting tools
  3. Testing visits in the form of on-site visits in six universities in European member states not yet considering LLL as a priority.

## Problems encountered

While working on the case studies and carrying out the testing visits, the diversity of the different strategies to implement a LLL University was highlighted and led to a questioning of the usability of the concept of a single set of guidelines, which would not be adequate for today's diversity and flexibility of processes. Thus, the approach passed from producing start and support a LLLU strategy process respecting a wide range of identified frameworks.

Discussion of the preliminary tools and results at the final event "Pathways for Lifelong Learning Universities?" in Barcelona in September 2011 with European organisations, institutions and networks.

## Final Products

- 10 case studies presenting progress in 10 European universities in the implementation of LLL strategies in line with the 10 commitments of the Charter
- The 10 case studies presented in an analytical grid
- Discussion seminars in Brussels (BE) and Barcelona (ES)
- A highly effective proven methodology including structured peer visits
- Two publications containing the final products and methodologies
  - Pathways and Policies – Recommendations (printed and on-line) including the main findings of the two transversal analyses on content and on process, as well as recommendations addressed to strategy deciders in universities like (vice) rectors and regional, national and European public authorities
  - Tools and Results (on-line) including the three flexible tools for self-analysis and benchmarking, the two transversal analyses in full length and background papers addressed to LLL-practitioners
- One executive summary (printed and on-line)

## Strengths of the project

- Constant interaction with LLL stakeholders and decision-makers at European level through consultation seminars and the testing process
- Strong evidence of awareness-rising among end-users
- High impact on the partner institutions who guided and hosted the visits as independent experts
  - Mutual exchange of different LLL approaches and concepts
  - Additional learning experience
  - Highly valued benefits for both hosts and visitors
- High adaption to end-users' needs of the final tools
- Highly positive feedback from the testing institutions about the set-up of the visits
- Confirmation of identified needs
- Visibility of impact of the project's results and supportive character of the developed tools
  - Inclusion of LLL as one of the fundamental principles of action in the draft of the West University of Timisoara's Charter
  - Embedding of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in the Zentrum für Lehre und Weiterbildung (ZWL) in the University of Stuttgart
  - Design of concrete ULLL strategies in the University of Stuttgart

## Challenges and opportunities for Lifelong Learning

The most important issue, revealed in the AQUATNET surveys, is the implementation of lifelong learning courses in such a way that users can fill their gaps and lack of knowledge and skills.

The information about European policies concerning Lifelong Learning must be further disseminated to allow all groups to develop in their own way, as is shown in the ALLUME and SIRIUS projects and their use of the EUA Charter for Lifelong Learning.

We also found that the ideas in the EUA Charter for Lifelong Learning must be explained in a better way to all players involved.

The challenges are different depending on the role of the player: university staff (teachers), students, employees and employers.

### Universities:

- Courses should be designed more in line with the needs of industry and stakeholders
- There should be dialogue and interaction between teachers responsible for the design of LLL courses with Technology Platforms
- Courses should be designed that can fill the needs of post-graduate students
- Courses should be updated according to the needs of the industry
- Improve effective teaching, learning and assessment methodologies in LLL.
- The system should be more flexible, for example, by including courses in e-learning, which would allow workers to acquire the skills necessary to remain in the company
- The system should change in order to allow the recognition of previous experience

### Students

- Encourage students to do LLL courses to perform at higher levels of their skills. The student survey revealed a need for more training in generic skills; LLL courses can fill this gap.

### Employees

- The provision of LLL courses is a good way of improving skills, allowing better conditions and the possibility of improving the situation in the industry.

### Employers

- Allow employees to update for example knowledge concerning about legal requirements, in particular new European legislation
- Improving the knowledge's of the employees may result in improving efficiency.

## The future challenges

The implementation of ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training) is a real challenge and as defined, by the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009, the ECVET implementation will start in 2012. In 2014 the European Parliament and the Council will review and evaluate the first stage of ECVET implementation.

**Training AQUA-TNET partners in the use of all tools that can further the use of Lifelong Learning is essential and is planned to be carried out as one of the three workshops in WP5 of AQUA-TNET3.**

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES'  
**CHARTER**  
ON LIFELONG LEARNING





## PREAMBLE

EUA has drafted this charter following on from a seminar on Lifelong Learning held in the Sorbonne in December 2007. At this time French Prime Minister François Fillon asked the European University Association to prepare a Charter on this key topic for Europe's universities and for society in the future.

The Charter has been elaborated on the basis of extensive consultation, not only with EUA member universities and Rectors' Conferences, but also with a wide range of European higher education stakeholder organisations. I

Since their foundation over 800 years ago, Europe's universities have championed research, fostered a civilised and tolerant society and prepared young people for their role in society and the economy. They have also shown themselves to be remarkably resilient and adaptable institutions, continually developing their role as society evolves.

In the twenty first century new expectations and demands on Europe's universities are mounting rapidly, as social and economic development becomes geared around the concept of a Europe of Knowledge. European citizens need strong, autonomous, responsive and inclusive universities providing research-based education and learning in order to meet the many challenges ahead.

These social, and economic challenges are generated in particular by:

- the increasing speed of globalisation;
- the demographic transformation of Europe into ageing societies;
- the rapid pace of technological change.

These developments impact on, and require adaptation in, society and from labour markets everywhere. Universities are key actors in this process. The European stage is set for lifelong learning, and the decade of reforms that has taken place to develop the European higher education and research areas now needs to be consolidated and taken forward to address lifelong learning challenges, taking account of existing achievements and good practice in Europe's universities to meet diversified learner needs. Currently the terminology of lifelong learning embraces many concepts – including initial education for disadvantaged groups, continuing education and training for well-qualified graduates, and post-retirement opportunities for cultural enrichment – and is subject to considerable local, regional and national interpretation.

For a European dialogue to be effective in guiding local and national developments, it is important to define better the overarching concepts and practices, and to clarify more precisely the particular contribution to the lifelong learning agenda that can be made by creating a culture of inclusive and responsive European universities.

### 3. EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES' CHARTER ON LIFELONG LEARNING

I List of organisations can be found in annex.

Universities are among a spectrum of institutions that need to respond to these issues. They have a particular opportunity to provide research-based higher education for lifelong learners.

Currently European societies are missing out on a huge pool of readily available human talent, and comparing higher education participation rates in Europe with those in other world regions makes disturbing reading and calls for action. Widening access to higher education is not about introducing less qualified students, but rather about supporting all learners with the potential to benefit both themselves and society through participating in higher education. This means reaching out to an increasingly broad range of learners with different motivations and interests: not only offering

programmes for professional development adapted to a fast-changing labour market, but also catering for the growing demand for personal development opportunities through the cultural enrichment that universities offer. There is also an urgent need for debate on how lifelong learning provision that will be of benefit to individuals, employers and society as a whole can best, and most fairly, be funded.

This impetus to develop more inclusive and responsive universities is not a call for revolution, but rather for evolution. It is often assumed that lifelong learning provision is different in nature to the provision of education to traditional students. In reality, the key challenge is to find ways to open up a wider range of educational services to new learners and to returning learners, and to ensuring continuing opportunities for learners throughout their lives. Expanding the range of learners becomes the key strategic issue, and the key activities for universities to develop are the establishment of systems for fair assessment and validation of all forms of prior learning, and providing relevant, creative and innovative educational programmes.

Universities are also aware of the need to engage in and reinforce dialogue with society more broadly – with employers and employee organisations, as well as with parents and students. This can best be achieved by strengthening partnerships at different levels, with particular attention to the local level where needs are most acutely perceived and expressed.

The purpose of this Charter, which is written in the form of commitments from universities in addressing the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, with a set of matching commitments for governments and regional partners to make, is to assist Europe's universities in developing their specific role as lifelong learning institutions forming a central pillar of the Europe of Knowledge.

#### 4 EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES' **CHARTER ON LIFELONG LEARNING UNIVERSITIES COMMIT TO:**

##### 1. 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. The complexity of lifelong learning concepts has to be acknowledged and explored as a key aspect of developing the contribution of universities to a culture of lifelong learning.

##### 2. Providing education and learning to a diversified student population.

European universities will respond positively to the increasingly diverse demand from a broad spectrum of students – including post secondary students, adult learners, professionals who seek to up-grade skills for the workplace, senior citizens taking advantage of their increasing longevity to pursue cultural interests, and others – for high quality and relevant higher education throughout their lifetime. European universities recognise the important contribution that a diversified student body will make to the development of a culture of success and innovation in the institution and wider society, and the need to think how far different types of learners can interact together in a supportive mutual learning environment.

##### 3. Adapting study programmes to ensure that they are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners.

Flexible and transparent learning paths need to be in place for all learners to access and succeed in higher education in all its different forms. It is an essential responsibility of universities to ensure that this educational offer is always of high quality. European universities acknowledge the diversity of individual learner needs and therefore their responsibility to adapt programmes and ensure the development of appropriate learning outcomes in a learner-centred perspective. They also pledge to play their part in promoting widening participation and continuing education.

#### 4. Providing appropriate guidance and counselling services.

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.

#### 5. Recognising prior learning.

To ensure that all with the potential to benefit from higher education provision are enabled to do so, it is essential for universities to develop systems to assess and recognise all forms of prior learning. This is particularly important in the context of lifelong learning in a global era where knowledge is acquired in many different forms and places.

#### 6. Embracing lifelong learning in quality culture.

Europe's universities have taken important steps in developing internal quality culture, assuming prime responsibility for the quality of their provision. This work will adapt to an evolving framework for lifelong learning in order to ensure that an appropriate range of targeted learner support services are provided for increasing numbers of more diverse learners.

#### 7. Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of lifelong learning.

Universities' research and innovation missions can be strengthened through lifelong learning strategies, and universities' specific contribution to lifelong learning should be underpinned by research. Researchers should also be recognised as a fine example of lifelong learners whose own educational needs are continually evolving, also taking account of the changing skills required by the labour market. Lifelong learning can also be a source of new research methodologies and topics.

#### 8. Consolidating reforms to promote a flexible and creative learning environment for all students.

In creating the European higher education and research areas, Europe's universities are engaged on a path of major reforms that places all learners at the centre. Universities now need to exploit the potential of these reform processes and their tools (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, Qualifications Frameworks, etc) to enhance the development of a creative lifelong learning environment that is open to a more diverse population of learners, and thus responds to societal needs for the modernisation of higher education. Fully integrating lifelong learning to the mission of universities is essential to enhance the creativity and innovation profiles of institutions.

#### 9. Developing partnerships at local, regional, national and international level to provide attractive and relevant programmes.

Providing relevant educational provision in a lifelong learning context cannot be done by institutions on their own. The need for structured partnerships – with a range of other educational institutions, employers, employees' organisations (trade unions) as well as with other stakeholders – is essential if provision is to be responsive, flexible and innovative.

#### 10. Acting as role models of lifelong learning institutions.

Universities are not only providers of higher education and research, but also major employers in their own right. They therefore have the potential to act as role models in society by offering lifelong learning opportunities for their own employees – whether academic, administrative or technical and auxiliary staff. They should also be key actors in lobbying for coherent policy development in national systems.

Europe's universities cannot realise these commitments without the concerted actions of governments and regional partners in providing appropriate legal environments and funding. The following commitments are therefore expected from governments to ensure that a

suitable environment is created for universities to develop their contribution to lifelong learning.

#### GOVERNMENTS COMMIT TO:

##### 1. Recognising the university contribution to lifelong learning as a major benefit to individuals and society.

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that universities are valued for their contribution to lifelong learning, and that this is not perceived as a minor addition to the roles of universities. It is a major cultural shift to respond to the demands of a fast evolving lifelong learning society and of long-term labour market needs, and requires significant financial investment.

##### 2. Promoting social equity and an inclusive learning society.

Governments should make efforts to ensure that lifelong learning achievements are valued by individuals, public and private employers and other actors, and that a culture of learning throughout life is shared as a common societal goal. Citizens need to be provided with information on accessing lifelong learning educational opportunities, while Europe's universities need to be supported to ensure that such opportunities are open to all who have the potential to benefit from higher education at whatever time in their life is appropriate.

##### 3. Including lifelong learning objectives in the missions and work of national QA agencies and systems.

Most countries have now developed quality assurance systems for higher education that have a major impact on the nature of programmes developed. Attention to issues of lifelong learning in quality assurance processes is therefore a necessity to ensure that lifelong learning is recognised as a national priority.

##### 4. Supporting the development of appropriate guidance and counselling services.

Professional academic guidance, careers advice and welfare services are essential for all learners to find their way successfully through the more flexible provision that is being developed by universities, but particularly important to those individuals most at risk of failing to complete higher education programmes and who have little support from family, friends and colleagues. Irrespective of whether services are delivered within or outside higher education institutions, governments have a responsibility to ensure high professional standards. Governments also need to ensure that guidance, careers and counselling services are linked up in a lifelong learning perspective to provide continuous support to citizens at all levels of education. This support should be relevant to students of all ages, and from all social and cultural backgrounds.

##### 5. Recognising prior learning.

Governments have the responsibility to support and motivate institutions in the recognition of all forms of prior learning. This task can be facilitated through the provision of appropriate incentives to institutions, and by ensuring full integration of prior learning in qualification frameworks.

##### 6. Removing specific legal obstacles that prevent many potential learners from returning to higher education.

Governments should address the systemic obstacles that discourage many potential learners from taking advantage of lifelong learning opportunities. This means taking action on matters such as social security rights, precariousness of employment rights, lack of financial support for lifelong learning, and loss of pension contributions during periods of study.

##### 7. Ensuring autonomy and developing incentives for lifelong learning universities.

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that universities have sufficient autonomy to develop their own responses to lifelong learning challenges and to decide their own admission requirements, but also sufficient incentives to be rewarded for pursuing this key mission. Major progress in

developing lifelong learning provision can only take place if such a framework of autonomy with incentives is achieved.

#### **8. Encouraging partnerships at regional level with local authorities, employers and agencies.**

The benefits of high quality lifelong learning provision will largely be realised in Europe's regions, and regional development agencies, local employers, as well as employees' organisations (unions) therefore have a high stake in this agenda. Regional partnerships with higher education institutions and social partners need to be strengthened as they are vital to the successful planning and delivery of lifelong learning educational services.

#### **9. Informing and encouraging citizens to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities offered by universities.**

As a key aspect of the implementation of national lifelong learning strategy, governments have a special responsibility to ensure that citizens are informed and aware of the varied and diverse opportunities of university based lifelong learning provision.

#### **10. Acting as role models of lifelong learning institutions.**

Like universities, governments can set standards in society by acting as role models for the policies that they advocate. Governments should ensure that public sector employees therefore are encouraged to benefit from the range of lifelong learning opportunities offered by the universities and other providers.

Brussels, July 2008

Annex: List of European higher education stakeholder organisations consulted during the drafting process

- Business Europe
- European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
- European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)
- European Access Network (EAN)
- Education International (EI)
- European Students' Union (ESU)
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
- European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)
- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
- Forum Européen De l'Orientation Académique (FEDORA)

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## Appendix 2 AQUA-TNET Educational Organisation Questionnaire (72 respondents)

*There will be 2 versions, targeted at research institutes and universities and industrial stakeholders, mainly employers and or/producer associations.  
They will be delivered on paper and online*

<b>1. Introduction</b>
The purpose of this survey is to evaluate a) to what extent stakeholders (industrial partners, research institutes and universities) are aware of the current upsurge of provision of validated lifelong learning systems for vocationally-oriented workers in aquaculture, fisheries and other marine sciences and b) in what ways stakeholders are willing to support such vocationally-led educational reforms.

### 2. DATA PROTECTION

Please note that, in order for us to process any personal data that you submit, we need to ask you to complete and sign the declaration below.

All information received from you will be used for <u>statistical purposes only</u> and will be treated as <u>completely confidential</u> . No individual questionnaire will ever be identified in any material published from this survey nor will any of the data obtained be passed on to any other party.
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“I hereby give my permission for the storage and use of this information *under the UK Data Protection Act 1998.*”

Yes  Name

Date

Thank you very much for your assistance

<b>3. Personal data</b>	
Sex	Male / female
Age	
Nationality	
Native language	
Country where you currently work/study	
Profession	
Job title	

<b>4. Educational profile</b>				
Degree or other certification/qualification	B.Sc. or equivalent	<b>M.Sc.</b>	<b>Ph.D.</b>	<b>Other (specify)</b>
Educational institute, country & date awarded	<b>1.</b>			
Educational institute, country & date awarded	<b>2.</b>			
Educational institute, country & date awarded	<b>3.</b>			
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree/qualification description				
Modular	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	

Core + elective units/modules	Yes	<b>No</b>
Compulsory laboratory work	Yes	<b>No</b>
Compulsory field work	Yes	<b>No</b>
Compulsory dissertation	Yes	<b>No</b>
Other compulsory components.	Yes	<b>No</b>
Which part of the course was most useful in your career?		
Which part was the least useful?		

<b>5. New relevant educational information</b>		
Were courses/modules given ECTS credits?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Were courses/modules described in terms of Learning outcomes?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Did your degree involve distance learning?	Yes	<b>No</b>
How many short training courses have you attended?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Could you obtain credits for these short courses?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Did your degree/qualification involve work placements?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Were you able to obtain a Diploma Supplement?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Have you heard of EUROPASS certification?	Yes	<b>No</b>
How many short training courses have you attended?		
Could you obtain credits for these short courses?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>6. Validation of practical &amp; vocationally-oriented learning</b>			
What are your main priorities in job applications? A. Good academic degree B. Good experience in field C. Recognised vocational training D. Other	<b>Manager</b>	<b>Technician</b>	<b>Operative</b>
What are your main priorities in drawing up job specifications?			
Does course provision in terms of Learning Outcomes give useful information to A. Employers B. Researchers			



## Appendix 2 AQUA-TNET Stakeholder Questionnaire

### FEAP Producers Associations Training Survey

<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <p>The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the current provision of training by training providers to the industry and how training provision could be improved to better meet the needs of the industry, in particular suitability to providing training to workers already in the work place.</p> <p>In this context training is not exclusive to husbandry skills only but a broader range of life skills in the modern workplace including languages, communication, scientific methodology, IT and management.</p>
---

<b>2. Personal data</b>	
Association Name	
Country	
Name	
Job Title	
Email address (optional)	

As a national Producers Association has your organisation carried out a training analysis of your members in the past 5 years?	Yes/ No
If No, would you be interested in AQUATNET assisting you in carrying out such an analysis?	Yes / no
Do you think the current provision of training to your members is adequate?	Yes / no
<b>What do you perceive as the main factors in your members deciding to provide training to their workforce?</b>	Please rank from 1 = major factor to 5 = not a factor PLEASE CIRCLE
<i>Legal Requirement (e.g. Fish handling, safety at sea, Health and Safety, etc)</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Financial Cost</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Time Availability to take part in training</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Location (e.g. far away from work location)</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Accreditation of the training (e.g. receive certification for participation)</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Transfer of Innovation (e.g. training on new equipment/technology)</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Business Competitiveness</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
<i>Availability of Training provision</i>	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
Other - Please list _____	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
Other - Please list _____	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
Other - Please list _____	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5

Open Question: How could training providers improve the training provided?  
(e.g. more relevant courses, shorter courses, onsite training, accreditation of non formal training etc.)

Open Question: Are there any subject areas where you would like to see more training provision?