



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture

COMMIT

Committing to the social dimension in universities

**COMMIT | Committing to the social dimension in
universities**

Progress Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

COMMIT intends to increase commitment to the social dimension of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), support strategies to increase attainment and thus embed the policy and practice of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in a strategy of wider social interaction.

The project has **reviewed and developed the three tools of a previous EU project - ALLUME - adding** new features to take on board a clearer idea of the social dimension aspects in Higher Education (HE):

- *Tool1 - Strategy process tool*
- *Tool2 - Strategy content tool*
- *Tool3 - Benchmarking tool (EUA's ULLL Charter)*

In addition to this, COMMIT has elaborated a **new tool**, specifically designed to monitor attainment in HE, taking into account data in terms of socio-economic background, disability, ethnicity, migrant status and so on.

The **visit templates** created by ALLUME project have also been amended and adapted to the new project needs and research objectives and turned into a full 'Visit Kit' that includes existing reviewed documents and brand new ones:

- Short information for the participants and promotional Leaflet
- Template Fact Sheet
- Template Agenda
- Template Report Host
- Template Report Visitor
- Step by step procedure

The whole process has been underpinned by a **1-day training event: the Capacity Building Activity**, organised in combination with the first Full Partners Meeting (May14). The main aim of the training activity was to develop a common understanding of the project goals and to establish with all partners the exact use of the self-evaluation tools and the visits. The training event included inputs from several experts and other related EU-funded projects such as EU-USR (*Comparative Research on University Social Responsibility in Europe* - <http://www.eu-usr.eu/>) and PL4SD (*Peer-Learning Initiative for the Social Dimension* - <http://www.pl4sd.eu/>), and the participation of an expert in university management, a facilitator and the external evaluator.

The 4 self-evaluation tools have formed the starting point/basis of a collective learning process whose key moment were the peer learning visits each partner received and carried out in their turn. Visits took place between Sep14 and Apr15. Partners 2-13 hosted a partner as visitor and visited a different partner themselves. Thus, each partner has had close contact and collaboration with two partners in the visits period. P1 attended two of the visits as external observer: the first visit of the programme to P8 (Bogaziçi University) to see how the Visit Kit and the used tools worked and to make the appropriate amendments, and the visit to P7 (Dublin City University) first partners to use the new Tool 4. The approach has been to involve in interviews different members of staff from different managerial levels (connected to ULLL/Continuing Education/Outreach/Social Services) in each partner institution, with the aim of making the group aware of the COMMIT tools and generate organisational learning and reinforce commitment towards university social dimension.

The next project phase will consist in carrying out a transversal analysis of the visit reports and of the tools completed by partners, to produce and publish a set of focused reports on the project results, including a feasibility study on the tool for monitoring attainment.

Aims and objectives

1. Improve and enhance the social dimension of HE universities in Europe
2. Support the development of a comprehensive strategy for promoting and monitoring increased levels of attainment in HE
3. Embed the social dimension in the strategy and practice universities, particularly in those countries with below average attainment rates in tertiary education in 2011
4. Promote and support the commitment to change in universities in Europe.
5. Embed the policy and practice of ULLL in a strategy of wider social interaction

Target groups

The **primary target group** comprises: universities Management teams (President/Rector teams), Directors of ULLL/Continuing Education (CE)/Outreach/Social Services Units, Faculty/Department Deans, who are directly involved in the use of the self-assessment tools and participated in the visits. Student representatives are also a primary target group. So far an average of 5 individuals have been involved in each team, in 12 different institutions and countries, thus engaging a total of around 60 primary target individuals.

The partnership

The partnership includes 5 countries with a good track record of attainment – BE, FI, FR, ES, UK – and 7 countries that have more work to do in this regard – RO, DE, DR, HU, IT, PT and TR. The partnership also includes 6 partners which took part in the ALLUME project (5 that were full partners and 1 that was a testing university), to provide continuity with the previous project experience, and 7 partners that did not take part in the project. Partners are at different stages of developing the social dimension of HE, therefore it was expected a valuable and stimulating exchange, each partner having something to teach and to learn, making it an ideal combination to promote commitment by all. Apart from **eucen**, 10 partners within the consortium are currently actors in their respective national network for ULLL (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P12, P13). And all partners act as multipliers at national level through formal and informal professional networks.

Major products

1. A refined set of 3 self-evaluation tools based on ALLUME's products. (EN/FR version)
2. A new tool for monitoring attainment. (EN/FR version)
3. A revised set of visit templates, the 'Visit Kit', constituting an enhanced and extended version of the one used in the ALLUME project. (EN/FR version)
4. Presentations during the Capacity Building Activity. (EN version)
5. 12 sets of Visit Reports prepared by the visitor and the visited university. Report of each visit are confidential to the partnership. Extracts will be used in the final reports
6. A website dedicated to the project, hosted by eucen under its domain, containing all main information <http://commit.eucen.eu/> with access to over 40 background resources
7. A Moodle platform, at present only open to project partners, where all project documents and products are stored and regularly updated. At the end of the project it will hold the final version of the project products (i.e. 4 tools, Visit Kit, Executive Summary, Policy paper, Technical reports) open to the general public. (EN/FR version)

Associate Partners

A number of institutions have shown interest to join the project as Associate Partners. Some have already submitted their official request letters, while others are in the process of doing so. Once the tools are edited integrating the project corporate style and in friendly-to-use format, Associate Partners will be invited to test the tools and give feedback on their usability and understanding.

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1. Project Objectives

COMMIT project aims to:

1. Improve and enhance the social dimension of HE universities in Europe
2. Support the development of a comprehensive strategy for promoting and monitoring increased levels of attainment in HE
3. Firmly embed the social dimension in the strategy and practice universities, particularly in those countries which had below average attainment rates in tertiary education in 2011
4. Promote and support the commitment to change in universities in Europe
5. Embed the policy and practice of ULLL in a strategy of wider social interaction

More specifically, COMMIT's objectives are to:

1. Provide a common understanding of the universities social dimension
2. Review and adapt the self-evaluation tools developed in the ALLUME project in order to account for a wider social dimension
3. Design a new tool, specifically designed for monitoring attainment, and test its feasibility
4. Train partners from 12 European universities of 12 different countries on the completion of the self-evaluation tools and prepare them for the collaborative peer learning visits
5. Undertake 12 peer learning visits, so that each partner visits one other and is visited by a different one. Each visit aiming to promote, support and reflect on developing strategies to strengthen the universities social dimension.
6. Make the visits an opportunity for organisational learning
7. Undertake, at the end of the project, 2 additional visits in countries where COMMIT has no partners and where ALLUME had not done any visits. This is meant to further valorise the tools and the project results
8. Produce a transversal analysis of the data collected from the completed tools
9. Produce a feasibility report on the new tool
10. Create learning exchanges with 3 other European projects (HEAD, EU-USR and PL4SD)
11. Engage 4 National Networks from countries not represented in the consortium, inviting them to become Associate Partners
12. Engage 3 European Associations inviting them to become Associate Partners, allowing COMMIT to run a workshop session or make some kind of presentation in their own events towards the end of the project
13. Valorise and exploit the results at national level through active learning events (workshops using the tools) in each of the 12 partner countries and at European level in a transnational event
14. Disseminate information about the project throughout the whole period

During **Year 1** (Oct13-Sep14) the project has reached several milestones:

1. Set up the partner agreements, prepared the Management Team (MT) kick-off meeting and drafted papers. (Oct-Nov13)
2. Kick-off meeting of the MT, with definition of roles and responsibilities. (Jan14)
3. Review and adaptation of the 3 self-evaluation tools developed by the ALLUME project. (Jan-May14)

4. New features added to Tools 1, 2 and 3: an additional set of questions to analyse the relations of the social dimension of Lifelong Learning (LLL) in the strategic context of the institution
5. Design of a new tool for monitoring attainment. (Jan-May14)
6. Design of the training activity in view of the visits phase, including content and method. (Feb-May14)
7. Delivery of blended training for all partners Mar-Jun14. On-line preparation (docs and guidelines for visits, tools and briefing) Apr14. 1day-and a-half-face2face event (May14). On-line follow-up to clarify and discuss details (Jun14)
8. Kick-off meeting of the project partnership (May14)
9. Meeting of MT following training session to review progress and plan forward. (May14)
10. Finalisation of visits' scheduled by 31Jul14

During the first part of **Year2** (Oct14-Apr15) the project has accomplished the following milestones:

11. Collection of the 4 self-assessment tools completed by all partners for their own institution, assembling data for visits to be ready 2 weeks before respective visit (from May14)
12. Completion of 12 peer learning visits (Aug14-Apr15)
13. Debriefing, reflection and production of reports on each tool for each visit, done collaboratively on-line (30Apr15)
14. Additional creation of an introductory guide in the 4 tools for new users (30Apr15)
15. Preparation and submission of the project progress report to EACEA (30Apr15)

In the remaining months of the project (May15-May 16) the consortium will:

16. Prepare a draft feasibility report on the new tool based on the relevant sections of the 12 visit reports. To be done collaboratively on-line (by 31Oct15)
17. Prepare a draft transversal analysis of 12 visit reports on 3 tools. Done collaboratively on-line (by 31Oct15)
18. Hold a face-to-face partners meeting to validate results and drafts from Groups A and B (Nov15)
19. Finalise and publish executive summary, transversal reports, policy paper and recommendation and outcomes (Feb16)
20. Translate all final products into French (Feb16)
21. Hold 12 National Active Learning events in 12 different countries (Jan-May16)
22. Hold the Final Transnational dissemination and valorisation Learning conference in Brussels, to launch the project products (Mar16)
23. Visit two extra countries (AT and PL) and hold active learning events to validate the final tools (May16)
24. Launch all the products in a moodle platform course open to the public (final version May16)
25. Preparation and submission of the project final report to EACEA

Benefits for target groups

Ultimately, the project will benefit learners. However, the **primary target group** comprises: universities Management teams (President/Rector teams), Directors of ULLL/CE/Outreach/Social Services Units, Faculty/Department Deans. The primary target group directly involved in the use of the self-assessment tools, will participate in the visits and receive the reports. Student representatives also are part of the primary target group of the project. The project has been involving so far an average of 5 individuals in each team, in 12 different institutions of 12 different countries, thus engaging at list 60 individuals.

The aim is to involve not only an isolated person, but to work with a group of people from the management team (in charge of ULLL/CE/Outreach/Social Services) in order to generate organisational change and learning. The overall aim of the project is in fact to **reinforce commitment** to change and have a greater impact at institutional and organisational level. This is why, the approach chosen in the visits has been to have a team of different people involved in each partner institution.

Since organisational and cultural change in universities cannot be expected as a direct and immediate result of the project - change within university institutions take time and depends on several factors - the realistic aim of COMMIT is to work for individual and collective training and for the professional development of a critical mass of key actors at organisational level, providing tools to promote group reflection, sharing experience and best practices, thereby stimulating commitment to organisational change. This process has been initiated as it appears from the visit reports, and will be further enhanced thanks to the **national valorisation events** which partners will organise in the last stage of the project Feb-May16. These will take the form of 12 (+2) active learning events (expected ½ day workshops) with the target to directly reach 120 (+20) universities and 12 (+2) ministries.

A carefully-planned dissemination strategy ensures that information concerning the project reaches larger numbers within the target group.

Associate Partners

A number of institutions have already shown interest to join the project as Associate Partners. Some have submitted their official request letters, while others are in the process of doing so. Three institutions have officially joined the project as Associate partners. They are:

- Mykolo Romerio Universiteto (Lithuania)
- Instituto Politecnico de Leiria (Portugal)
- Université Rennes 2 (France)

Once the tools are finalised completely, they will be designed according to the project corporate style and in a friendly-to-use format. The aim is to invite Associate Partners to test the tools and give feedback on their usability and understanding.

2. Project Approach

The project work has been designed to be appropriately distributed among the partners. The **contractor and coordinator – eucen (P1)** – has been monitoring the overall work of the partnership, taking care of administration, general coordination, service meetings, liaison with experts and evaluators, internal quality, management and coordination of dissemination, relation with EACEA, support communications with and between partners and externals.

eucen was the contractor and coordinator of the ALLUME project as well as other related European projects, and has therefore a strong record of experience in the solid management of projects, as well as in effective dissemination and valorisation.

To enable a better coordination and harmonization of activities, a **Management Team (MT)** has been established, having the responsibility to draft, consult and finalise tools and the transversal analysis reports on the outcomes of the activities. The Management Team has the tasks of taking care of the academic content of the project and supervise the collective learning process. Each member of the MT has taken overall responsibility for an aspect of the project work:

- Training event: P1
- Tools: P2-strategy process; P3-strategy content; P4-new attainment tool; P5-charter tool; P1 and P6 templates/guidelines for visits
- Proof reading documents/editing of final products: P7

All partners are constantly involved in the process of exchange throughout the project activities (mostly on-line at a distance) and all the work is underpinned by training and active collective learning at individual, team and organisational level.

Sub-groups will take responsibility for the analysis and reports:

Group A: led by P4 (with Ps 6, 9, 10, 12, 13): analyse the results on the use of the new attainment tool as reported in visits and produce a feasibility report

Group B: led by P2 (with Ps 3, 5, 7, 8, 11): collate the transversal analysis from the partners

Between face-to-face meetings, management and coordination of the project is assured at a distance using on-line tools such as the project website, email, video conferencing, shared google docs, etc. These tools support the work of the consortium by aiding proper transparency and communication amongst the partners, also allowing for the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the project.

So far three full partners' virtual meetings have been organised on-line using the GoToMeeting software: Sep14, Jan15 and Mar15. Two virtual Management Team meeting have also taken place Apr14 and Feb15. Partners have been given access to a project intranet system (Moodle platform) where they can easily access and download documents, templates, task assignments, etc.

The MT has taken the opportunity to meet at other events to gather and work on COMMIT issues (for instance in Warsaw Jun14 and is planned to happen again in Istanbul Jun15).

Rationale for setting-up the consortium

COMMIT has involved 5 countries with a good track record of attainment – BE, FI, FR, ES, UK (they are above the European average, according to Eurostat data) – and 7 countries that have more work to do to reach the 2020 targets – RO, DE, DR, HU, IT, PT and TR. In addition to this, the partnership includes 6 partners who took part in the ALLUME project (5 that were full partners and 1 that was a testing university), to provide continuity with that

experience, and 7 new partners who did not participate in ALLUME. Finally, partners are at different stages of developing the social dimension of HE, with some having more experience than others. All partners operate in different cultural contexts and have different priorities, thus allowing for a truly valuable and stimulating exchange, with each of them having something to teach and to learn. This dynamics represent an ideal condition to promote commitment by all.

Apart from **eucen**, 10 partners within the consortium are currently actors in their respective national network for ULLL (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P12, P13). And all partners act as multipliers at national level through formal and informal professional networks.

COMMIT work **approach** is based on social learning, on learning from experience of self and others and is about individual and mutual learning, collective and team learning, as well as organisational learning. The whole process of tools revision and peer learning visits has been underpinned by a training Capacity Building Activity which all partners attended in May14. The main aim of the training activity was to establish a common understanding on the use of the self-evaluation tools and the visits, so that they could, in their turn, brief their colleagues back in their institution and prepare the self-evaluation process and the visits effectively. The event also responded to suggestions made by the ALLUME project which recommended that in any future projects with peer-visits it would be useful to have some training for the visitors and the visited together before the actual visits took place, in order to explore expectations and desired benefits, anticipate possible difficulties and obtain the maximum advantages for all.

The involvement of experts from other related EU projects considerably contributed to enhance the quality of the training activities. Furthermore, an expert in university management was actively involved in the training event. Lastly, an external evaluator was sub-contracted to take part in the first consortium meeting and in the training event, guaranteeing an element of externality and objectivity to the project and providing the partnership with useful insights.

Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy

A detailed dissemination and valorisation work plan with timetable was developed by P1, agreed with the MT in Jan14 and validated by the full partnership in May14.

A number of tools and **dissemination** channels have been already launched or activated to carry out dissemination of the project activities to the target groups. Those already in place are:

- **Public website:** the website <http://commit.eucen.eu/> was created as an information source for those who want to know more about the project. It contains a RSS point and will have automatic links to social network platforms for promotion of pages or sections
- **Newsletters:** a periodical newsletter is sent to partners' contacts. So far two newsletters have been sent (Dec14 and Mar15), and at least 3 more issues are planned to be sent by the end of the project. Each partner submitted to the project coordinator a minimum of 10 contacts interested in COMMIT's topic in the first half of the project. These contacts have built up a targeted mailing list for dissemination. By Aug15 each partner is expected to submit 10 more contacts. This will ensure, in total, a number of 240 targeted individuals directly interested in the project
- **Grey material published:** including abstracts for conferences, articles for on-line journals, "News" in different stakeholder websites, etc. The planned total target to publish 30 "grey" publication by the end of the project has been already achieved by large. It is expected at least to duplicate this number by May 2016

- **Internal Forum:** a dedicated space was habilitated in **euken**'s Moodle platform, where partners and associate partners can share draft papers and other documents. Communications between partners have been primarily carried out by email. However the consortium intends to test, in the second part of the project, the usability and efficacy of the Moodle internal forum to carry out specific tasks and works such as announcement of formal internal news

Other dissemination tools/channels whose use is planned for the coming months are:

- **Final Products:** Four self-assessment Tools, a "Visit Kit", Executive Summary, Recommendations and Policy paper, which will be printed and distributed to participants to the final event, members of **euken** and all the ministries of Education of the 27 EU member states. Tools and Reports will be created in electronic format and available on-line in **euken**'s Moodle platform (see below). All the final products will be available in English and French
- **National network events:** 10 partners with links to their National Networks are intending to use their network's activities to distribute materials (leaflets and posters); partners will do presentations of the project where possible within the programme (potentially reaching a total of around 500 individuals); these networks will also be invited to send representatives to the transnational event. This activity can be done in conjunction/parallel with the National Active Learning Events organised by each project partner (see below). **euken** will reach other National Networks from countries not represented in the partnership (i.e. 7 countries) and (a) invite them to distribute information about the project (potential reach of around 200 individuals) and to (b) invite representatives of these 7 organisations to attend the final event in Brussels in March 2016
- **EUA, ENQA, EAN, ESU:** they will be invited to join the mailing list for the project, to distribute information about the project, and to attend various events especially the transnational event

A number of activities will be used to disseminate, **valorise and exploit** the results, more actively through testing and using the tools, discussing recommendations in depth, etc:

- **National Active Learning Events:** each partner (P2 to P13) will organise a national workshop (with an approximate number of 10 institutions participating in each) to discuss and test the tools in depth in an institutional/national context, with particular attention for the feasibility of use of the attainment monitoring tool
- **Further National Networks:** in addition 4 associate partners (national networks) will be encouraged to hold similar events
- **Transnational dissemination and valorisation event:** it will be organised in Brussels with a targeted audience of 70 participants from 20 countries including EC officials and national representatives in Brussels and a programme of active learning workshops focussing on the tools and its use
- **Resources space in a Moodle platform:** the Final Products will be made available in **euken**'s Moodle platform, where open access will be ensured for a minimum of 5 years after the end of the project

Project sustainability

The project has planned a solid **sustainability** structure, intended to continue to propagate the tools and project results at national and transnational level. This will be done in a coordinated manner through the National Networks for ULLL and trans-nationally through **euken**, its members, and its network of stakeholders and contacts (particularly other European networks and associations).

euken - its membership and its Steering Committee - is committed to an established policy aiming to maintain, protect and promote products from projects beyond the lifespan of the project. **euken** manages a very large number of resources developed in more than 20 years of life and has adopted an open licensing strategy for project products to ensure the reusability and adaptability of the products without restrictions (apart from the obligation for users to acknowledge the source). COMMIT products will be added to these resources and promoted through **euken**'s channels of distribution which includes 182 institutions from 34 different countries and 17 National Networks for ULLL with reach of over 700 institutions. The described structure will guarantee a long term sustainability to the project.

Furthermore, all project partners are active in both formal and informal, national and professional networks, and act as multipliers of the project activities and results at every useful opportunity. More specifically, partners will:

- Prepare articles in professional and academic journals on the project results (after the project ends because often long time is needed for publication)
- Incorporate results into their academic research, teaching and publications
- Use tools in future **euken** events
- Disseminate information to new representatives of National Networks, new **euken** members, new participants in future **euken** conferences
- Follow up contacts with Ministries to review one year after the end of the project what changes have taken place since May16
- Include tools and results in future presentations of **euken** at different levels and in different sectors
- Disseminate final results at stakeholder organisations' events such as EUA, ENQA and EAN
- Invite other organisations/networks events to present the project and its results

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The revision of the three ALLUME self-assessment tools has taken place, adding new features to take on board a wider and clearer idea of the social dimension of HE, particularly the impact of ULLL on social dimension and social engagement. This includes the revision and improvement of the Spider Diagram linked to Tool 3, which allows users of this tool to visualise their answers in an image. Similarly, the ‘Visit Kit’ has been created taking as starting point the initial documents prepared by ALLUME. The new Visit Kit includes new documents (sheet for participants, a presentation leaflet and the “Step by step” procedure) and reviewed templates (Fact Sheet, Agenda, Report Host and Report Visitor). The revision of the three tools and the Visit Kit has been done in different stages:

- Initial update by the appointed responsible partners
- Discussion of modifications at Management Team level
- Refining after the Capacity Building Activity in Barcelona
- Use in some of the peer-to-peer visits and reporting of any problems/recommended improvements
- Re-refining and updating for the subsequent peer-to-peer visits obtaining, thus, a final version of the tools and templates

		VISITED INSTITUTIONS (Hosts)												
		BE	FI	FR	PT	DE	IE	TR	IT	GR	RO	ES	HU	
VISITORS	eucen (observer)						Oct14 T3-T4	Jun14 T2-T3						
	BE						Oct14 T3-T4							
	FI							Jun14 T2-T3						
	FR								Dec14 T2-T3					
	PT									Sep14 T1-T4				
	DE													Sep14 T1-T3
	IE			Jan15 T2-T3										
	TR						Dec14 T1-T3							
	IT		Nov14 T1-T3											
	GR											Nov14 T1-T2		
	RO				Mar1 5 T2-T3									
	ES			Mar1 5 T2-T3										
	HU												Apr15 T3-T4	

Table 1: Peer-to-peer visits

The new 4th tool for monitoring attainment in HE has been developed too. The new tool has been tested as follows:

- Initial desk research to draft the tool
- Discussion of draft version at Management Team level

- Refining of the draft version at the Capacity Building Activity in Barcelona
- Use in some of the peer-to-peer visits and reporting of recommendations for improvement
- Re-refining and updating for subsequent peer-to-peer visits, obtaining, thus a final version of the 4th new tool

During the peer-to-peer visits (see matrix of visits in *Table 1* above - pp 13) partners have detected that, although ready, the four tools are complex and could be improved for external use if a guiding introduction was included. Users would be able to understand what each tool is for and how to use it. Tools 2, 3 and 4 have the introduction prepared and are ready for translation into French. The introduction to tool 1 was not available at the time of submitting this report. Once it is done, tool 1 will also be ready for translation into French.

COMMIT is in the process to invite **Associate Partners** to see the tools and give feedback on usability, structure and appearance. The final formatting of the layout will be done immediately afterwards in parallel with the translation of the tools into French. The tools are expected to be openly available in the Moodle platform by December 2015.

In terms of Dissemination, the **website** of COMMIT <http://commit.eucen.eu/> has been developed and is opened since December 2013. In this online site users can find over 40 background papers and/or links identified as useful to those interested in the project topic. These papers can be downloaded from the section “Background” and/or “Activities” (this section includes de presentations made by experts at the COMMIT Capacity Building Activity in May 2014).

The project has designed a **leaflet** and basic **poster** for general dissemination. A reviewed version of this printed material is planned to be designed once the transversal analysis is done and the tools are available in the Moodle platform for open use.

COMMIT has produced a Newsletter template and has distributed **2 newsletters** (in December 2014 and March 2015) to a list of targeted potential users of **120 individuals** obtained from the project partners (the list will enlarge to 240 by September 2015). These newsletters have also been distributed by all partners to their own lists of contacts (e.g. to all eucen members and stakeholders that could **reach over 700 individuals**).



Partners have been very active and carried out many dissemination activities. We have recorded distribution of **leaflets** in over 29 national/international events and **presentations** (oral or poster) in over 14 events, **reaching over 3.270 individuals**, in a total of 21 different countries (16 in Europe and 5 around the World in Africa, Asia and America).

Also done in this period:

- Regular posting of articles in COMMIT’s dedicated website
- Short articles about the project within **eucen’s** newsletters in October 2013, October 2014 and March 2015
- Creation of dedicated project webpage within the Lifelong Learning Centre website of the University of Stuttgart
- At least 25 posts and articles on the social media pages (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) of the project partners
- At least 20 articles on COMMIT on the project partners’ webpages
- At least 4 articles on other webpages or media (newspapers, etc.)

4. Partnerships

A number of considerations were taken into account when selecting the COMMIT project partners with the objective to ensure a balanced variety of partners that would allow the consortium to achieve and fulfil all the planned work:

Territory

The partnership comprises 13 strong institutions from 12 different European countries, representing thus a broad coverage of Southern, Northern, Western and Eastern Europe.

Expertise

The partnership demonstrates a wealth of experience and knowledge in the HE sector with their different learning cultures, traditions and education systems.

The project is coordinated by **euцен**, which counts with 182 members from 34 different countries. **euцен** has coordinated multinational European projects for over 20 years and disposes of ample experience in connecting key stakeholders from all educational areas and sectors to contribute to the further development of LLL policies and practices.

National Attainment Record

According to the Eurostat data in 2011, the partnership combines 5 countries with a good track record of attainment (BE, FI, FR, ES and IE) and 7 countries that have considerably more work to do to reach the targets (RO, DE, GR, HU, IT, PT and TR).

Development of Social Dimension of HE at National level

The selected partners are at different stages of developing the social dimension of HE, some more experienced, others less. But all are working on this topic in a different cultural context. All the partners have visited another partner and have been visited. The peer-to-peer learning visits are key learning events to acquire knowledge about what is happening in other countries in the EU.

Capacity to work in groups for the analysis and subsequent reports

The consortium has been divided in 2 groups as follows:

- Group A led by P4, with Ps 6, 9, 10, 12 and 13, will analyse the results of using the new attainment tool as reported in the visits and produce a feasibility report
- Group B led by P2 and P1, with Ps 3, 5, 7, 8 and 11, will collate the transversal analyses from the partners responsible for each tool/activity, edit and finalise the full and final report

These works will start in the second half of the project.

Connection to previous work developed by ALLUME

The consortium was constituted in two groups:

- 6 partners connected to ALLUME: 5 partners that were part of the consortium of the ALLUME project and 1 partner that was a tester visited university. These six partners familiar with the ALLUME products were also aware of the challenges encountered during the peer-to-peer visits undertaken in 2010-2011 and therefore in a position to recommend real identified improvements
- 7 new partners that were not connected to ALLUME. These seven new partners did not have a pre-conception of the tools and were expected to act as testers of what it was going to be a new product for them

In the same way, and since the different perspective of partners in the above groups was identified as a useful resource for the consortium, the Management Team was composed by 5 partners from the ALLUME project, 1 tester university from the ALLUME project and 1 new partner that was not familiar with the ALLUME work and could bring that particular perspective to the group

Active connection to National Networks

10 of the partners have active connection to their national network for ULLL (BE, FI, FR, PT, DE, IE, TR, IT, ES, HU). **eucen** will use its links to the national network in AT, CH, EE, LT, PL, SK and UK to encourage these countries to join the project as Associate Partners and, in this way, reach a wider audience in more European countries.

Further active external connections

In addition, **eucen** is able to engage external stakeholders (e.g. EUA, ENQA, EAN) and individual experts representing other EU-funded projects (e.g. HEAD, EU-USR or PS4SD) with COMMIT. The link to the EU-funded projects has already taken place when inviting these projects to attend the COMMIT Capacity Building Activity and present their work. The link with external stakeholders has been made already too, but active contact with them will start as soon as the tools and the transversal analysis are ready to be opened to the public.

Quality assurance care

Apart from the internal quality assurance monitored by **eucen**, and the academic quality assurance that the Management Team commits to monitor, the consortium has engaged an external evaluator with an expertise on the topic of COMMIT to give objective advice to the consortium throughout the project about the work planned and done, as well as the results to be achieved.

5. Plans for the Future

Online tools

The open Moodle platform for COMMIT will be developed between May and December 2015. This platform will have the project outputs available in a way that users can select to work with specific parts of the tools or with the full version of the tools, depending on their needs and objectives.

Visits' related work and subsequent analysis

Twelve peer-to-peer visits and two extra visits as observers (these last two undertaken by **euцен**) have taken place between June 2014 and April 2015 which have generated a total of 12 reports from host organisations, 12 reports from visitors and 2 reports from the observer partner. At least as important as these reports, the visits have been unique learning experiences for the COMMIT partners:

- Have enable the hosts to collect most relevant insights about their own organisation
- Have given the visitors an opportunity to learn about a peer institution as well as to offer the hosts an external view to their specific case

Organising the visits has been highlighted by hosts as an enlightening experience and also a challenge - partners had to identify different level of interviewees and compare their different perspectives when filling in the tools, steer discussion and consensus. Another important remark made is that the visits have generated very interesting internal post-visit discussions and for example in one case has triggered re-thinking the current institutional strategy.

The final peer-to-peer visit reports have been collected. At the beginning of May 2015 the tasks of preparing the transversal analysis will start. The draft analysis will be discussed and finalise during the 2nd full partners meeting planned for November 2015.

Tools and Visit Kit

The Associate Partners of the project will be consulted in relation to the readability, structure and use of the four tools and the 'Visit Kit'. Once received their feedback it will be possible to start the process of editing the layout of the four tools and the 'Visit Kit'. This process will be carried out in May in parallel with the translation of these products into French. Once these works are completed, the products in English and French will be ready to be uploaded in the project Moodle course, which is planned to be open to the public in December 2015. The launch of the moodle course will be done through an official Press Release as well as by general dissemination using social media tools, the project newsletter and the partners general distribution lists.

Partnership activities

The working groups to prepare the transversal analysis of the Tools 1, 2 and 3 reports (group B) or of the Tool 4 (group A) will start in May 2015.

The transversal analysis as well as the final Executive Summary and Recommendations will be discussed and finalised during the second full partners meeting planned for November 2015.

Several virtual meetings for the Management Team group and for the Full partnership will take place in the 2nd half of the project.

Valorisation of the project

A full Valorisation plan will be prepared by September 2015. Each partner will prepare a specific, individual plan for undertaking the National Active Learning events in conjunction (or not, depending in each case if it is possible) with the National Network for ULLL.

Extra visits to non-partner countries

Partners 5 and 6 will visit PL and AT and present the project products in an Active Learning event. The intention of this activity is to test and validate the improvement and appropriateness of the ALLUME tools after their revision and to evaluate the methodology used in COMMIT and feedback to the consortium. The report prepared after these visits take place will be included in the final report to the EACEA as part of the conclusions of the project.

Final European Transnational Active Learning Activity

This major 1 full day event (Brussels, May 2016) will include the presentation of the final outcomes of the project. COMMIT will pay particular attention to invite countries that are not represented in the consortium as well as Associate Partners and project stakeholders (i.e. EUA, ENQA, EAN, EURASHE, EUCIS-LLL, etc), representatives from the National Networks, national Ministries and European Commission officers. This event will include active learning workshops that will allow participants to be guided in the process of using the tools and have the opportunity to discussing the reports prepared by the project in detail.

Dissemination activities

Partners will continue with their dissemination activities, following the individual dissemination plans drafted at the beginning of the project.

The next conference at which COMMIT will be presented is the 48th **euцен** Annual Conference in Istanbul, 03-05 June 2015, where **euцен** presents a specific aspect of the project: *Partnership with external actors in relation with the labour market*.

Three more newsletters are planned for the 2nd half of the project, and are scheduled in principle for September 2015, December 2015 and February 2016.

The partners will stay in touch through the face-to-face and virtual meetings to plan the next steps of the project and discuss the outcomes.

euцен will take care to post the final products to key actors not able to attend the final European Transnational Active Learning Activity in May 2016, once the final version of all the materials is ready.

6. Contribution to EU policies

In the framework of the Bologna process, the Ministers responsible for HE agreed on a common definition of university social dimension: “The student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of the population” (London Communiqué, 2007). After several years and many projects carried out in this field, statistics still show that reality is far from the desired results, and much has to be done to reach the target levels of access, retention and attainment of adults in HE.

Europe 2020 aims at 40% participation by 30-34 year olds in tertiary education. Eurostat data for 2011 show an average attainment for this age group of 30.8 for men and 38.5 for women. EU2020 and Eurostat data thus reveal the scale of the task to be achieved in a relatively short period of time and provide important analytical elements to frame the work that needs to be carried out. These averages also hide considerable differences between countries, institutions and disciplines, with many countries falling below the average.

COMMIT addresses Europe 2020 Strategy by improving LLL strategies and thus widening access to HE and fostering stronger links between universities and regional, national and European partners. The project consortium includes countries whose data for 2011 show they have considerable work to do to attain the 2020 targets. The experience of the ALLUME project offers a solid basis for moving forward in the process and in the partners involved; the new partners in new countries will bring new contexts, principles, practice and experience that will challenge existing responses to the challenges of 2020. Whatever may be the countries' status in international tables, COMMIT intends to promote peer learning between countries having different levels of achievement in relation to the 2020 targets. The project provides an important opportunity for real exchange of experiences. The achievement of the 2020 targets will be supported by the development of tools to access the best experience of LLL in universities, expanding it and embedding it in a strong commitment to a more effective social dimension of HE.

COMMIT addresses ET2020 policy area by improving and bringing forward the implementation of coherent and comprehensive LLL strategies. By enlarging the possibility of universities to self-evaluate their performance relevant to the social dimension, COMMIT will contribute to the development of quality LLL and to the promotion of a European dimension in systems and practices in the field. Enhancing strategic LLL development is the basis for raising the attractiveness of the higher education system to all sections of society, for facilitating adults' access to learning and for refining guidance and counselling systems.

COMMIT will contribute to increasing attainment levels and strengthening the social dimension of higher education in two key ways: firstly, by defining more clearly what is involved in the social dimension of HE; and, secondly, by promoting strategies for a more comprehensive approach to LLL, including diversity of participation and monitoring not just participation but also attainment levels. The project will contribute to increasing the participation of people of all ages, including those with special needs and/or disadvantaged groups by developing new tools to monitor participation and attainment level in HEIs.

COMMIT aims to facilitate a virtuous circle through European partnership, in the firm knowledge that the process is at its best when shared internationally and fed back into a national and institutional process. As a result of its peer and collective approach, and the active learning events that it will organise, COMMIT will support the advancement of the European Area of HE, and increase the quality and volume of the multi-lateral cooperation between HEIs in Europe. Facilitating the implementation of LLL strategies will also contribute to the flagships of Youth on the Move and the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs of the EU2020.

