

COMMIT

Committing to the social dimension in universities

COMMIT project and its tools: Committing to the social dimension in universities

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Belgian National Event and COMMIT Final Learning Activity
26 May 2016
Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium


Project co-ordinated by: 
 Lifelong Learning Programme
Project funded with support from the European Commission. This presentation reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

COMMIT Background

- The COMMIT project is a follow up of **eucen's** project ALLUME (504635-LLP-1-2009-1-BE-ERASMUS-EMHE), whose main objective was to explore the ways to increase the participation of universities to LLL and to give tools to universities to turn into *Lifelong Learning Universities*
 - ALLUME Executive Summary
 - ALLUME Pathways and Policies - Recommendations
 - ALLUME Tools and Results
 - Benchmarking Tool: ALLUME Excel spreadsheet for creating a spider diagram


ALLUME

<http://allume.eucen.eu>



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Project 539519-LLP-1-2013-BE-ERASMUS-ESIN



Lifelong Learning Programme

COMMIT facts

- ❑ Starting date: **01 October 2013**
 Finishing date: **31 May 2016 – extended to 31 July 2016**
 Contractor and Coordinator: **EUCEN**
 Call of proposals: **EAC/S07/12**
 Programme: **LLP ERASMUS**
 Action: **Multilateral projects**
- ❑ Website <http://commit.eucen.eu>
- ❑ 13 Partners from 12 different countries:
 - eucen** (BE) | Université Catholique de Louvain (BE) | University of Turku (FI) | University of Brest (FR) | University of Aveiro (PT) | University of Stuttgart (DE) | Dublin City University (IE) | University of Bogaziçi (TR) | University of Genoa (IT) | University of Ioannina (GR) | University of Iasi (RO) | University Rovira i Virgili (ES) | University of Pecs (HU)

COMMIT Strengths

- ❑ To address **specific aspects of the social dimension**, with focus on the issues of **access, retention and attainment of adults in Higher Education**.
 - The **innovative aspect**: an approach based on **social learning**, on **learning from experience of self and others**, including from **mistakes and failures**. Requires trust and confidence, is about **individual learning**, and also **mutual, collective and team learning**, and **organisational learning**
- ❑ The **European partnership** - international sharing and feed back into a national context of the learning process
- ❑ Promotion of **peer learning**: the **difference of cultural, political, historical and institutional structures** brings a richness of experience and allows exchanges
- ❑ **Partners with previous experience and new experts from new countries**: the solid basis and new contexts, principles, practice and experience
- ❑ Bringing together **different institutional and national expertise, actors from other European projects and national and European networks**: foster the learning process within the project and the feed back into other communities of practice

COMMIT Partnership

- The partnership was composed of 13 partners from 5 countries with a documented track record of attainment – BE, FI, FR, ES, IE – and 7 countries with more work to do in this regard – RO, DE, GR, HU, IT, PT and TR. Six of the 13 partners had taken part in the ALLUME project (5 as full partners and 1 as a testing university), to provide continuity with the previous project experience.

COMMIT Main Objectives

- Provide a collective and common understanding of the universities social dimension
- Review and adapt the innovative tools developed in ALLUME, in order to include a wider social dimension
- Design a new tool for monitoring attainment and test its feasibility
- To support universities in the **self-assessment** of their level of commitment to the social dimension, their strategies to increase attainment, and to embed the policy and practice of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in a strategy of wider social interaction

COMMIT project approach

- ❑ Re-definition and adaptation of the 3 ALLUME self-evaluation tools and design of a new tool for monitoring attainment
- ❑ Capacity building activity
- ❑ Testing of the tools within partners' institutions and during peer-learning visits
- ❑ Transversal analysis of the visit reports and the tools filled out by partners
- ❑ Validation of the final products

COMMIT Outputs

- ❑ **Four self-assessment Tools :**
 - The Strategy Process Tool
 - The Strategy Content Tool
 - The Benchmarking Tool
 - The Monitoring Attainment Tool
- ❑ A **"Self-Assessment Kit"**, consisting in a set of documents to be used by partners when organising the peer-learning visits. The 'Self-Assessment Kit' includes 7 different files:
 - Welcome | Short Info Sheet | Fact Sheet | Template Agenda | Step by Step Procedure | Host Report Form | Visitor Report Form
- ❑ Executive Summary
- ❑ Policy Reminders
- ❑ Technical Report

COMMIT target groups

- Universities' Management teams (President/Rector teams), Directors of ULLL, Continuing Education, Outreach, or/and Social Services Units and Faculty/Department Deans, who were directly involved in the use of the self-assessment tools and participated in the visits. Student representatives were also included in the primary target group. Over 14 individuals have been involved in each of the 12 different teams (each in a different institution and country), for a total of 172 primary target individuals

Main purposes of the tools

- The purposes of the tools are twofold:
 - To involve people from different levels and interests within universities and help them to start reflecting on the content of their Lifelong Learning strategy
 - To collect information on the Lifelong Learning strategy of the universities and to exchange the information, points of view and ideas

Objectives Tool 1 – Strategy Process

- The strategy-as-practice approach developed by Wittington;
- Invites universities to analyse in detail their way of “doing strategy”, taking into consideration the social dimension aspects.
- A strong organisational focus and helps universities to identify key internal and external actors, steps in making a strategy, methods, and communication issues.
- The tool aims at supporting a collaborative work within HEIs in order to define for the first time a Lifelong Learning / Social Dimension strategy or review and revise an existing one.

Objectives of Tool 2 – Strategy Content

- Assists universities in developing a strategic overview of their current strategy related to LLL and the social dimension, mission, vision and goals.
- Invites universities to select key priorities for the future and to work in detail on them, leading to a revision of their current strategy and to the formulation of an action plan.
- It is meant to promote discussion about the need to place emphasis on the social dimension of LLL in HEIs.

Objectives of Tool 3 – **Benchmarking Tool**

- Aims to benchmark universities against the 10 commitments contained in the European Universities' Charter on LLL and also against a set of social dimension indicators.
- Invites universities to assess their performance against these indicators and to define their objectives.
- Intends to provide HEIs with an insight into their performance in Lifelong Learning and their third mission – Social Dimension.
- Was designed with the intention of fostering awareness of the LLL-SD commitments, to allow ranking purposes and in-depth analysis.

Objectives of Tool 4 – **Monitoring Attainment**

- The tool is specifically designed to monitor attainment.
- The use of this new tool has been the object of a separate feasibility study.

Structure of the tools

- ❑ The tools are **very comprehensive** and **can be used in different environments and in different ways**, depending on what the respondents aim to **find out or achieve**.
- ❑ In general, **a list of different actions are required or recommended**, among which:
 - answering questionnaires
 - establishing key priorities
 - performing a SWOT- analysis
 - plotting and visual understanding of the results
 - reflecting on a set of additional questions
 - and others.

Structure of the tools

- ❑ Each tool contains an **introduction** and an explication of their **rationale**.
- ❑ A **short description** of the tool is then provided, of its main **structure and division** into different sections.
- ❑ A **table of contents** delineates the sections and the objectives envisaged in each section, along with the type of activity that respondents will need to perform to achieve the expected goals and take the most out of the tool use.

Structure of the tools

- Depending on the specific aspect to be assessed, the tools include
 - a set of open questions to be addressed in order to carry out the self-analysis process
 - more specific key questions
 - respondents need to grade the different /appropriate items

How to use the tools

- Can be filled in on an individual or collective (focus groups) basis.
- Focus group involves 3 steps:
 - Collective discussion of the answers
 - Summarization of the answers collected by the focus group
 - Production of a final report or document

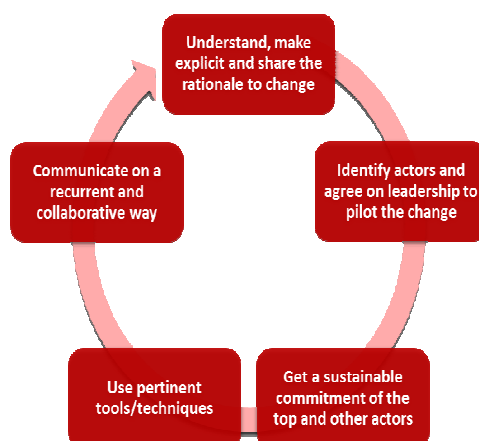
Tool 1

The Strategy Process

Tool 1- Strategy Process

Goal

- To highlight five permanent guiding principles during the process of strategizing.



Tool 1- Strategy Process

1. Why does the process of LLLU/Social Dimension strategizing begin? What are the external and internal drivers of change?
2. Who are the people involved in LLLU/Social Dimension strategizing? Who are the internal actors? What are their roles: are they doers, influential people, researchers, decision makers? Who are the external actors? What are their roles?
3. How is the process of LLLU/Social Dimension strategizing done and organised? Is it a formal or informal process? What is its level of development?
4. What are the tools and techniques used for LLLU/Social Dimension strategizing?
5. How are the products of LLLU/Social Dimension strategizing communicated?

Tool 2

The Strategy Content

Tool 2: Strategic Content

Goals

- Document the strategic positioning of ULLL in the institution
- Identify LLL priorities defining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the three priorities
- Position the social dimension of LLL/social engagement within the strategies and practices of research, education and support activities in the institution.
- Understanding the various approaches which can be chosen, when wanting to promote LLL in the university
- Better understand the social dimension of LLL/social engagement in the university
 - its links to the strategies and organization of the institution, its relation to the key processes, its internal and external relations as well as interactions, its evaluation.

Tool 2: Strategic Content

- Focus - strategic content of lifelong learning
- Emphasis - on the social dimension of LLL in HEIs
- Addition - relations between the LLL strategy and other university strategies/implementation plans/practices
- Steps of the exercise:
 - What do we understand by ULLL?
 - Positioning university's LLL
 - SWOT analysis of top LLL priorities
 - The social dimension of LLL in its strategic context (strategies, key processes, stakeholders)

Tool 3

The Benchmarking/Charter Tool

Tool 3: Benchmarking tool against the EU's Charter on LLL

- Intends to provide HEIs with an insight into their performance in lifelong learning and the third mission – the Social Dimension
- Designed with the intention of **fostering awareness of the LLL-SD commitments**, to allow ranking purposes and in-depth analysis.
 - In the remit of the COMMIT project, it was also aimed to promote the success of the partners' visits.
- HEIs are invited to **reflect on their activities and to match them against the 10 Commitments of the European Charter on LLL.**

Tool 3: Benchmarking tool

- ❑ The Charter is presented next to the tool, as well as a definition of LLL, and every commitment is accompanied by illustrations of how it has been put into practice in HEIs.
- ❑ The direct interaction of LLL with the Social Dimension of the commitments is also emphasised, and can be further accessed via an illustrative matrix.
- ❑ An overall picture, in the institution concerned, can be produced by the responses to a questionnaire on each of the 10 commitments, where every respondent can express his/her perceptions towards the commitments.

EUA's Charter on LLL

- ❑ Embedding concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in their institutional strategies
- ❑ Providing education and learning to a diversified student population.
- ❑ Adapting study programmes to ensure that they are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners
- ❑ Providing appropriate guidance and counselling services.
- ❑ Recognising prior learning
- ❑ Embracing Lifelong Learning in quality culture
- ❑ Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation from a Lifelong Learning perspective
- ❑ Consolidating reforms to promote a flexible and creative learning environment for all students
- ❑ Developing partnerships at the local, regional, national and international level to provide attractive and relevant programmes
- ❑ Acting as role models of lifelong learning institutions

Tool 4

The Monitoring Attainment Tool

Tool 4: Monitoring Attainment Goals

- ❑ To **promote strategies** for a more comprehensive approach to LLL/SD
- ❑ To **monitor** not just **participation** but also **attainment levels**.
- ❑ Focusing on **lifelong learning and adults in HE**
 - ❑ **adult learners** cannot be treated as a **homogenous group**
 - ❑ **different criteria** exist to define “what is an adult in HE” according to the country
- ❑ A reduced set of selected **indicators was identified** that enable the **monitoring of the achievement of learners** entering and passing through the arrangements of HEIs for LLL, with a specific vision of social dimension
 - **These indicators are not necessarily available in all countries or institutions and this is, in itself, an indicator of the strategy of the country or institution towards the social dimension of HE.**

Tool 4: Monitoring Attainment

- Includes **two main sections**:
 - the first section is composed of a set of open questions
 - the second section is composed of a more detailed set of questions.
- A **first set** of questions concerns the **arrangements** that are (or not) **offered by the institution** for individuals and citizens.
- A **second set** of questions is designed to try to **monitor** the reality of each of these arrangements, in terms of **the level of activity** (quantitative per year) or **usefulness** (permanent or ad hoc arrangements)
- A **third set** of questions is designed to try to **monitor** the reality of the arrangements made **at a collective level**.

Thank you

If you have any questions or need any further details
please contact us at

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