

**COMMIT**

Committing to the social  
dimension in universities

**EMBEDDING THE LLL CONTRIBUTION  
FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT  
INTO UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES  
AND PRACTICES**

**STRATEGY  
CONTENT  
TOOL**

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**HEI** = Higher Education Institutions

**LLL** = Lifelong Learning

**ULLL** = University Lifelong Learning

**LLLU** = Lifelong Learning University

**SD** = Social Dimension

**SME** = Small and Medium Enterprise

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## Welcome to COMMIT’s Tool 2: Embedding the LLL contribution for social engagement into university structures and practices

This tool offers you various possibilities to understand the strategic content of lifelong learning in your institution. It is meant to promote discussion about the need to place emphasis on the social dimension of LLL in HEIs.

The second ALLUME tool has been enhanced to include a set of questions about the relations between the LLL strategy and other university strategies/implementation plans/practices.

It is important that you make a clear decision about how to use the tool, as going through the whole agenda demands a lot of work. It may be useful to focus on a selective analysis using only some of the subtools available.

### Contents found in Tool 2 and their use

Section	Page	Objective of the section	Type of activity
<b>Rationale behind this self-analysis tool</b>	4	To introduce the basic idea of the use of the tool	Reading
<b>What do we understand by ULLL?</b>	4	Definition of university lifelong learning	Reading Considering the relevance of the definition in your context
<b>Second self-analysis tool (content) – Questionnaire</b>	4	Description of the use of the questionnaire	Reading and deciding your way to use the questionnaire
<b>Describe your university’s LLL strategy/position</b>	5	Documenting the strategic positioning of ULLL in your University Identifying LLL priorities	Analysis of the content of the strategy Documenting the findings Identifying the Institutional priorities
<b>SWOT analysis of your top 3 LLL priorities</b>	6	Defining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the three priorities	Analysis Documenting the findings
<b>Additional set of questions for self-evaluation</b>	7	Better understanding of the social dimension of LLL/social engagement in your University, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>its links to the strategies and organization of your Institution</li> <li>its relation to the key processes</li> <li>its internal and external relations as well as interactions</li> <li>its evaluation</li> </ul>	Reading the questions Choosing the relevant ones for your University Adding the missing viewpoints Providing answers
<b>A supportive table</b>	9	To help you report your answers to the additional questions	Documenting your answers in the table
<b>The social dimension of LLL in its strategic context</b>	10	Introducing the new feature of the COMMIT strategy content tool Positioning the social dimension of LLL/social engagement with the strategies and practices of research, education and support activities in your University Understanding the various approaches you can choose from, when you want to promote LLL in your University.	Reading Considering the variety of approaches that can be adopted

## Decoding Tool 2

The potential usefulness of this tool to the universities:

Purpose	Description
Ranking purpose	This tool is not made for ranking purposes.
Promote in-depth discussion on LLL and SD	Strategic content, implementation and context of the social dimension of LLL.
Current state & future developments of LLL and SD	Answering the questionnaire, key priorities, SWOT-analysis, additional set of questions
Understanding the importance of LLL and SD	Identifying the three priorities, SWOT-analysis
Crystalizing the Institutional LLLU strategy	Answering the questionnaire, identifying the three priorities
Implementation issues	Answering the questionnaire, SWOT-analysis of the three priorities

### Rationale behind this self-analysis tool

This tool works on identifying and evaluating the institution's current LLL-strategy. Once the status quo of the current strategy has been mapped, it invites the user to review this strategy and to formulate three priorities for the medium term, which will be analysed in more detail and for which an Action Plan will be produced.

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A new Tool has been added to enhance the ALLUME strategy content analysis. It deals with lifelong learning and social engagement as a part of the university mission. The tool looks especially at how lifelong learning and social dimension agenda are integrated into university structures and practices. This tool can be used independently or as a next step after the lifelong learning strategy analysis.

### What do we understand by ULLL?

*ULLL is the provision by Higher Education Institutions of learning opportunities, services and research for: the personal and professional development of a wide range of individuals - lifelong and lifewide; and the social, cultural and economic development of communities and the region. It is at university level and research-based; it focuses primarily on the needs of the learners; and it is often developed and/or provided in collaboration with stakeholders and external actors.*

Definition from the BeFlex project (Agreement number 2006/0073-001-001, Socrates)

It is recommended to use this tool in combination with the Tool for Benchmarking further below in order to get for a better insight into potential LLL-priorities for the coming years (especially sections "Revisiting your LLL-Strategy", "Benefits" and "Action Plan").

## Second self-analysis tool (content) – Questionnaire

### The methodology

The tool could be filled in on an individual or collective basis.

If filled in collectively, it is advisable to proceed by focus groups: the focus groups discuss the questions and summarize their answers before completing all the items of the questionnaire. The procedure would thus involve three steps:

1. Collective discussion of the answers
2. Focus group summarizes the answers collected
3. Only one final document is produced

If you adopt an individual approach, please use one document per person. If you adopt a group approach, please indicate the name, position of all people involved in the discussion.

**Reminder:** The goals for this tool are twofold: on the one hand, to involve people within universities and help them to start and reflect on the content of their Lifelong Learning strategy and on the other hand, to collect information on the Lifelong Learning strategy of the universities concerned.

**Describe your university's LLL strategy/position**

<p>Please, describe briefly the overall university vision concerning ULLL</p>	
<p>What is the mission of the university towards ULLL?</p>	
<p>Which documents describe the mission?</p>	
<p>Which strategies have already been implemented and which are still under discussion?</p>	
<p>Strategies already implemented?</p>	
<p>What are the goals of the university and its individual faculties towards ULLL?</p>	
<p>Goals of the university and faculties towards ULLL?</p>	
<p>Amongst these goals, please <b>choose the 3 LLL priorities</b> for the coming years until 2015.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>



**SWOT analysis of your 3 LLL top priorities**

For these 3 LLL top-priorities of your university, could you please give your perceptions of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

PRIORITY 1:	
Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Opportunities:	Threats:

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PRIORITY 2:	
Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Opportunities:	Threats:

PRIORITY 3:	
Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Opportunities:	Threats:

For details about the Social Dimension of LLL in its strategic context, please read **Annex 1**.

**Additional set of questions for self-evaluation****1. STRATEGIES & ORGANIZATION****Reasoning**

- i. What is the meaning given to the term 'social engagement' in your university?
- ii. Do you see it as one "attraction factor" of your university like merits in research or not? Do you see social dimension integrated to all tasks or as a self-standing function taken care of by specific units and professionals? Can you identify some successful units/departments/faculties?

**Status**

- i. What is the status of social engagement in comparison to research and education?
- ii. Is social engagement written in the strategy documents of the university?
- iii. What mediums are used to communicate the strategic importance of social engagement internally (in the university) and externally (to/with the stakeholders/partners of the University)?

**Involvement**

- i. Which groups of staff work in social engagement and to what level do they operate on this function?
- ii. Are there named responsible people, documents and steering groups for social engagement?
- iii. Does your university have specific indicators measuring activities of social dimension of the faculties/departments in addition to indicators measuring academic merits?

**2. SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE KEY PROCESSES OF THE UNIVERSITY**

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**Student recruitment and admission**

- i. Does the university have a widening participation agenda? To what extent does this agenda lead to concrete actions in student recruiting, admission and / or student support services? Which social groups are identified to be included in the widening participation agenda?
- ii. Is degree education open / accessible for people beyond the traditional degree student body? What kind of groups (SME employees, disadvantaged or disabled people, foreigners, elderly people) can be identified?

**Education provision**

- i. Do you utilize modern teaching methods, learning environments, web-based learning etc. within degree education so as to widen participation and / or flexibility of studies?
- ii. To what extent is learning from experience validated by the university? Is non-formal and informal learning used while recruiting students or during the studies for accreditation?
- iii. Do you have an open university/ flexible studies service in use and if yes, to what extent is it integrated to the degree studies available?

**Guidance and counselling**

- i. Do you offer lifelong learning guidance services to learners beyond existing students or academics?
- ii. Do you identify guidance and counselling needs in learners based on their life situation, family situations, career management, employability, mobility or other social reasons?

**Research**

- i. Is information and trends on social engagement embedded in strategizing research interests and or finance of research at your university?
- ii. Are there different interest groups involved in creating the research agenda of the university and if yes, in what way are they involved?
- iii. What kinds of efforts have you made to open / popularize research results to the wide audience and surrounding society?

### 3. EXTERNAL RELATIONS & INTERACTION

#### ■ Stakeholders

- i. Which are the main stakeholders of the university and do they represent mainly private, public or third sector or all of those?
- ii. Describe the concrete ways how the stakeholders participate in the planning of degree and adult education and strategic work in general? Can you describe their main role?

#### ■ Collaboration

- i. What kind of collaboration in continuing education is the university doing with public authorities whose mission includes a strong social agenda? (role of the university vs. role of the public authority)?

#### ■ Alumni

- i. Does the University have an alumni network and how actively is it utilized?

### 4. INTERNAL RELATIONS & EVALUATION

#### ■ Staff development

- i. Is the social engagement integrated in staff training?
- ii. How well is the concept of lifelong learning embedded in teaching / education? Do teachers and students recognize it?
- iii. Do you offer internal support services on social dimension issues for staff and can you name them?

#### ■ Feedback

- i. Does the university collect and monitor feedback from the graduated students and their employers concerning their employment and competencies?
- ii. How is this feedback incorporated to curriculum development, teaching, tutoring and / or learning assessment?
- iii. Is there a protocol to monitor how the feedback has helped in developing employment and competence acquisition?
- iv. Does the university collect feedback from local employers and authorities concerning the university's commitment and contribution to social engagement?
- v. How is this feedback incorporated to development of student recruitment and admission, education provision and research?
- vi. Is there a protocol to monitor how feedback has helped in the key processes?

<b>STRATEGIES</b>	Reasoning →	Guidance and counselling →  Education provision →	Status →  Student recruitment and admission →	Involvement →  Research →
	<b>EXTERNAL RELATIONS &amp; INTERACTION →</b>			
	<b>INTERNAL RELATIONS &amp; EVALUATION →</b>			
	<b>KEY PROCESSES</b>			

## ANNEX 1

### The social dimension of LLL in its strategic context

The ALLUME strategy content tool supported the universities in their efforts to enhance lifelong learning as a fundamental mission of the HEI. The analysis was directed more or less exclusively into the lifelong learning strategy and its implementation. The revised COMMIT tool modifies the perspective into two directions: firstly, it sharpens the view into the social dimension of lifelong learning rather than the whole lifelong learning agenda; secondly it widens the focus of self-evaluation from limited lifelong learning strategy analysis into looking at LLL strategy in its strategic and structural context in the university.

Emphasizing the social dimension is in line with the fundamental essence of the COMMIT project. By analyzing the lifelong learning strategy in its institutional context we aim to promote a coordinated approach of university engagement with its environment. So as to reach the objective we need to look at LLL and its positioning with the strategies, structures and practices of research, education and support activities.

While promoting the social dimension agenda in your university, you can follow different paths. To give some examples:

- One possibility - might be the most difficult one - is to launch a process which ends up in the integrated approach where lifelong learning agenda and social engagement go through the university strategies, education planning and pedagogics and that is approved by the whole university from the top to grass root and from teachers and practitioners to professors.
- A little less challenging application might be to launch pilot projects in the faculties or departments, where the conditions are most suitable. This could be a faculty with strong professional links (e.g. medicine, law or business) or an institution with a sharp profile in interaction with society (e.g. language center, a high tech institution or an institution with strong links to the third sector).
- Another approach is to identify successful practices from the faculties and departments and to gradually widen the similar activities to different departments where applicable. Benchmarking activities and peer discussions within the community, in other words making the academic community acquainted with the different options and practices will offer a chance to see the practical benefits for the research and teaching tasks of the university as well as the obvious role in interaction with society. This makes social engagement activities more eligible for those who are not so familiar with the agenda.
- One option is to see social engagement and lifelong learning as investments for the university brand. Successful practices and active regional engagement might turn to be a relevant attraction factor of the university inviting good students and distinguished researchers and teachers. Capacity development is the way to go forward. It is a challenge for all universities to produce high-quality services for new groups of students. Following lifelong learning principles in the curriculum development, pedagogical training or technical support for blended learning are some obvious possibilities.

Below, read the supportive questions as a way to help your thinking, not as restrictive limits. The core idea of this exercise is to help you picture the entirety of the contribution of lifelong learning for the social engagement in your institutional context. Try to document concrete procedures and practices where possible, don't be afraid to give examples of good practice, use the tool in the way that suits your situation, feel free to concentrate on the issues that you find most relevant in your institution. You can use the additional set of questions as a part of the ALLUME strategy content tool or independently. Please find attached a form, where you can document your exercise.



**The Strategy Content Tool assists universities in getting a strategic overview of their current strategy related to LLL and social dimension, as well as their mission, vision and goals. It supports institutions in the identification of key priorities for the future and helps universities work in detail on them, leading them to a revision of the current strategy and the formulation of an action plan.**

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