

# European Universities' Charter on Lifelong learning

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Recognition of prior learning  
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## Defining the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL)

- An often confusing amalgam of concepts requiring clarification:
  - ✓ retraining & skills updating for those with prior training
  - ✓ Reaching out to those who have missed out on initial (higher) education
  - ✓ cultural enrichment for ageing populations
  - ✓ continuing education for specific needs: personal fulfilment, tailor-made course for retraining, reaching out to primary students, etc.
- Balancing economic productivity & self fulfilment  
->universities must reconsider their role & their approach, taking account of their specific missions & profiles

## Background: Towards a European knowledge society

- European universities with their 3 core missions:
  - ✓ Teaching & Learning
  - ✓ Research & Innovation
  - ✓ Knowledge Transfer & Service to Society
  
- After a decade of major reforms on Bologna and Governance the time has come (back) to focus more specifically on lifelong learning, building on existing achievements

## **Background: Towards a European knowledge society**

- Lifelong learning as a response to economic & social challenges generated by:
  - ✓ The demographic transformation of Europe
  - ✓ The increasing speed of globalisation & the pace of technological change
- Widening access and expanding participation – underpinned by strong economic arguments
- Taking account of developments in other regions – Europe needs to be competitive in this area as well
- Systems & HEIs need to cater for a greater diversity of learners

## LLL in the context of ongoing reform processes

- *A national but also a European challenge:*
  - increased mobility of students, researchers & migration of workers seeking employment
  
- *The Bologna Process:*
  - new academic structures, flexible learning paths, new tools enabling the recognition of prior learning
  - LLL already a priority but requires further attention
  
- *The Lisbon Process & the 'modernisation' agenda:*
  - focus on LLL
  - university autonomy & adequate governance structures

## But there is much to be done..

- LLL means changing mindsets – creating a culture
- Communicating to society & individuals the overall goals of ongoing European reform processes
- What does a 'Lifelong Learning University' look like?  
(outcomes Rotterdam conference 2008)
  - Knowing its audience
  - Cooperating with stakeholders
  - Providing incentives for reaching new audiences
  - Creating communities of learners
  - Supporting diversity of practices
  - Enhancing quality and competitiveness
  - Supporting interaction between education, research and innovation

## European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning

### Process:

- Invitation from Prime Minister Fillon, Dec 2007
- Broad consultation with stakeholder organisations
- Adopted by National Rectors' Conferences, EUA Council, 4 July 08
- Further discussion with universities & stakeholders: EUA Autumn Conference, Rotterdam, October 2008
- Engaging with governmental partners during the French Presidency – Bordeaux Ministerial summit, 25/26 Nov 08

## European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning

### European Universities commit to...

1. Embedding concepts of widening access & LLL in their strategies
2. Providing education & learning 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 a perspective of LLL
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

## European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning

### 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.

## RPL and the LLL Charter

### **Commitment 5: Recognising prior learning (universities)**

« To ensure that all with the potential to benefit from higher education provision are able 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. »

## RPL and the LLL Charter

### **Commitment 5: Recognising prior learning (governments)**

« 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 **qualifications frameworks**. »

## RPL and universities

- Crucial for universities to approach RPL systematically:
  - ✓ Ensuring consistency
  - ✓ Fairness
  - ✓ Quality
- Main purposes of RPL for universities
  - ✓ Giving students access possibilities to study programmes
  - ✓ Shortened programmes
- However, framework conditions need to allow this
  - ✓ Access regulations
  - ✓ Incentives for universities to be flexible
  - ✓ Funding

## LLL and QA

- LLL charter calls for universities to embed LLL in the institutional quality culture
- Avoid overburdening – no separate QA for LLL
- Institutional QA for all learning provisions, including LLL
- Role of QA agencies is to check whether the institution has fulfilled this requirement (institutional audit)
- Regulated professions: professional development courses and modules must be quality assured both internally **and** externally in order to protect public health and safety

## Thank you!

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