

COMPASS LLL

Research National Report: Germany

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I. Overall national commentary on the collection and analysis of national policy data / Germany

University Lifelong learning (ULLL) in Germany

On the basis of the German constitutional (law) framework there seems to be no coherent strategy for ULLL in Germany. However, Germany abounds in different examples of good practice models that have already been successfully tested. At the same time the multitude of concrete projects in the field of ULLL makes it difficult to keep them straight and to detect one clear, common policy. The reason for this obviously lies in the distribution of competences and responsibilities within the education system which falls primarily within the 16 federal States (Länder). It remains the task of the responsible protagonists in the 16 Länder and in the German federation (BUND) to fill in the framework of the policy paper – each according to its focus on matters of education policy. The passing of the report on lifelong learning in the “*Bund-Länder Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung*” shows that the responsible protagonists are willing and ready to enhance the development of our German education system.

According to our findings and to results of other organisations and institutions dealing with lifelong learning (i.e. *Bertelsmann Stiftung*), though, conditions and requirements for ULLL in Germany have been regarded as average in contrast to other European and international countries now. One of the reasons seems to be too poor investments into education at schools and universities.

The Bologna Process, however, has obviously forwarded the development of ULLL in German universities and governments. The constant changes in the labour market and the demographic development in Germany – as in other western European countries – make new demands on the skills and flexibility of individuals. So everyone dealing with ULLL seems to be aware of the significance of a common and target-oriented strategy for the promotion of University Lifelong Learning. Our research results as well as other findings (s. IV sources & links) should be pulled together and with a good cooperation of the BUND and the 16 Länder as well as strong interaction between universities and governments University Lifelong Learning in Germany will become a crucial tool for coping with today’s economically challenging times.

II. The implementation of the LLL Charter: results of our research activities concerning the collection of national policy data (interviews with Germany's 16 Länder)

July – September 2010

1.2. Is your institution familiar with the commitments of the LLL-Charter?

1.3 Has your institution been actively analysing and working with the Charter?

More than half of the respondents were familiar with the ULLL-Charter before our interview. Most representatives, however, have not yet involved it actively into their assignment but have worked out their own guidelines according to the subject of ULLL (5 out of 15). So they see the 10 commitments more as a confirmation of their own ideas than as anything new.

1.4 Has the Charter influenced directly or indirectly national policies and regulations?

All interview partners state that not the Charter itself has influenced their concepts of ULLL, but similar goals of expert circles or project groups dealing with the topic of ULLL. Some say that internal discussions and resolutions resembling the 10 commitments have influenced their State's politics a lot. They name especially the Higher Education Acts ("*Hochschulgesetze*") as well as the so called "*Qualifizierungsinitiative von Bund und Ländern*" from March 2008 which obviously has had a great impact on the states' politics. Especially Lower-Saxony's Governmental representative claims to lead the way in the field of ULLL since obviously they have the most modern Higher Education Act in Germany. Especially those partners dealing frequently with the topic of ULLL state that the content of the charter is not new and that they've been dealing with it since the 1990s.

2. Looking at the 10 commitments of the LL-Charter

2.1 How far are you accomplishing and implementing those commitments? And what indicators are you applying?

There are quite diverse answers to this question. Still you can say that most underline **commitment no. 2 "Promoting social equity and an inclusive learning society"**. In this context it is important to mention that a speciality in Germany is the so-called "*duale Ausbildung*" (dual education system). It combines apprenticeships in a company and vocational education at a vocational school in one course. This seems to be unique in Europe and most Federal States claim to have the leading role here – fully in the sense of the ULLL-Charter. In addition, all Federal States have established a wider access to their

Higher Education Institutions by accepting people with the “Meister-Abschluss” (“*Master Craftsman*”) or people with more than 5 years of work experience.

In addition, the so-called “*Hochschulpakt 2020*” seems to commit the responsible governments to a great deal of the Charter`s commitments. **Commitment n° 4 “Recognizing prior learning”**, plays an important role for some States, for example Hamburg. Our interview partner also mentioned the Lisbon Convention in this context which seems to facilitate the implementation of n° 4.

Especially in the State of Saarland **commitment n° 8 “Encouraging partnerships at regional level with local authorities...”** has a great impact on university learning: the cooperation between different regional universities (*Universität der Großregion / Université de la grande région*) and companies / institutions offers great opportunities in the field of ULL.

2.2 How satisfied are you with the current process and progress concerning the different aspects of the charter?

The overall opinion here is

a) process is too slow and too tenacious; universities simply have other problems to deal with at the moment (implementation and realization of the *Hochschulpakt*, “*doppelte Abiturjahrgänge*” from next year on, BA/MA-change); there are too many lip services and too little realization and implementation of the ULLL goals.

b) topic of ULLL is not important enough at the moment, thus it is being adjourned to a later – and more pressing – situation;

c) there should be more job postings in the field of ULLL to take it more seriously as well as more financial support.

Politicians tend to blame universities not to react fast and well enough to their institutional framework having all the necessary pre-conditions to implement and publicize their opportunities as to ULLL but not promoting them enough.

2.3 What are/were new regulations/laws/national initiatives which support or hinder the implementation of the LLL-Charter?

See 2.2

2.4. Which incentives have you put in place/can you see that would effectively push the commitments?

- latest contest “***Aufstieg durch Bildung***” which has been decided by the German Federal States as well as the German federation. This contest is going to be launched at the end of this year and most interview partners have mentioned it.

- motivation through **political appreciation**, acceptance and the already mentioned “*Hochschulpakt*” and “*Qualifizierungsgipfel*”;
- sound financial support, more specialized personnel and more economical incentives. Concretely there is the universities` teachers` remuneration which should be individually managed.
- Funding sources (“*Fördertöpfe*”) should also be invited for LLL-initiatives, not only for the conventional domains of universities, such as research.

2.5. What are / were the success factors to realize the commitments of the LLL-Charter?

1. **Bologna process** has to be improved and readjusted so that study conditions can be improved. Especially the allowance of achievement (“*Anrechnung von Leistung*”) has to be standardized and facilitated in the whole of Germany.
2. Universities having enough **financial and mental support** while reorganizing their degrees and subjects through the BA/MA-process.
3. ULLL is acknowledged as a **crucial topic** in university policy and is being **forwarded** into the different faculties.
4. The German initiative “*Aufstieg durch Bildung*”.
5. **Effective networking** of all universities for a better counselling and advisory service. But also networking between economy and universities in each region.
6. LLL offers that are **tailored for specific target groups** (like for example the successful cooperation between the Government in **Mecklenburg-West Pomerania**–University of Rostock and *Fraunhofer Institut*.)
7. Allowance of **prior learning**.
8. Universities` **innovativeness and openness** according to new groups of students.

2.6. What are/were major obstacles that hinder the realization of the different aspects of the charter?

- opportunities offered by ULLL are **not familiar and not at all well-known** to the public and neither to a great part of teachers and employees at universities.
- universities are **not ready** to deal with any other than first degree students (“*Primärstudium*”).
- **little financial support** is mentioned by nearly every interview partner. Also the “*Lehrvergütungsverordnung*” at German universities is difficult since it doesn’t allow full and associate professors to commit themselves for LLL-courses.
- “**Academic habitus**” of university staff

To conclude it seems to be unisono, that especially the **mentality** of universities has to change – otherwise they will have to deal with empty universities in a couple of years.
(*“Umdenken erforderlich!”*)

3. Overall, looking at the complete LLL-Charter

3.1. Which of the 10 commitments do you consider to be most important (TOP 5) and why?

TOP 1: Commitment 2 (Promoting social equity and an inclusive learning society)

TOP 2: Commitment 5 (Recognising prior learning)

TOP 3: Commitment 9 (Informing and encouraging citizens to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities offered by universities)

TOP 4: Commitment 4 (Supporting the development of appropriate guidance and counselling services)

3.2. Where do you see the greatest need for change , what are the greatest challenges and why?

See 2.6 and 3.1

3.3. What are / were important regulations/laws/national initiatives that you would consider as important milestones / best practice which support LLL at universities?

- *“Hochschulpakt”*, special promotional programs (*„Förderprogramme“*) to invite and promote more migrants to universities (Bremen);

- open access and inclusive learner society seem to be the most important keywords in this context. Especially in [Mecklenburg-West Pomerania](#) the *„Hochschulrahmengesetz“* is being modernized so that the interview partner hopes that more open access will be anchored.

- *“Qualifizierungsinitiative für Deutschland”* from 2008;

- Bologna guidelines are being considered as important milestones. Especially in Lower-Saxony the interview partner mentioned two universities that serve as a standard for all universities in Germany: *“University of Lüneburg”* and *“University Oldenburg”* dealing very successfully with the field of ULLL.

4.1. Key Issue Finance: How do you think about financing LLL for Universities?

The overwhelming majority of the interview partners think that ULLL should be liable to pay costs (*“kostenpflichtig”*). It should be organized under private law and should finally be self-financed – either by the single student or by companies. Another statement notes that ULLL should be a source of finance that the universities themselves have to organize.

4.2 In the current policy context of your country, how would you describe the priority that is given to LLL?

- verbally very high, but implementation and realization are being a long time coming.

Most partners admit that unfortunately there is not enough priority on the topic and that therefore the progress is too slow. Too many lip services, too little action! Universities' main problem at the moment is that they have to deal with other, more urgent issues and challenges.

- it is unfortunate that the publicity of ULLL in Germany does practically not exist: to the public, the whole topic and its vast opportunities is practically unknown.

4.3. How would you describe the relation between European and national policies on LLL?

Most interview partners don't have an idea of what's going on in other countries according to ULLL. There is a vague knowledge about GB and some Scandinavian countries that are seen as more developed and more successful in the field of ULLL. All partners are very interested in the COMPASS results because they would like to have a better survey on the topic in Europe and they would like to learn from other European countries.

4.4 If you create a timeline, how would a future roadmap for the next 10 years for national LLL-policies look like?

The dramatic demographic change which is already perceptible right now is going to force universities – and governments – to improve and reinforce the approaches as to ULLL – this is the overall evaluation. Concretely partners mention a period of 5-10 years. After that time universities in Germany will be forced to do more in the field of ULLL if they want to have a decent number of students.

5. Evaluating comments & reflexions

Interview partners were all very open to the topic of ULLL – they all see this as an important topic, the challenge of the 21st century and would like to reinforce its implementation. Also the cooperation with each State`s universities seems to be successful. However, it is interesting that the Governments` representatives in this topic are persuaded to have given adequate preconditions and that now it's the universities` turn to DO something.

III. Research Template for the situation in the partner countries

→ will follow soon.

IV. Links / Sources

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