

OVERALL NATIONAL COMMENTARY

Please outline the national and institutional state of play concerning the implementation of the LLL-Charter (1-2 A4 pages). Identify key policies, trends, success factors, challenges, etc. Summarize what has happened – is happening – and will further on happen

National and Institutional Implementation of the LLL – Charter (Source: National Reports 2007 and 2009 “Education and Training 2010)

In its transversal dimension, the National Lifelong Learning Strategy seeks to reach every age group and to include every form of education, training and learning in formal, informal and non-formal environments, thereby justifying the definition of Lifelong Learning (LLL) as a culture in which every citizen learns “from the cradle to the grave”. Portugal has thus decided to bet on and invest in the qualification of the Portuguese population, by promoting a lifelong learning culture that reduces the existing deficit of qualifications, increases equity, stimulates and responds to the need to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship, and reduces the disparities in competencies in the labour market.

A number of initiatives have been launched in response to all these challenges, which involve the low level of qualification of the active members of the Portuguese population, like the New Opportunities Initiative, which has established the following goals:

- a) Make the 12th year of school attendance the minimum threshold reference of training.
- b) Negotiate with social partners to create the conditions needed to make it viable for active employed people to participate in training.
- c) Promote the use of ICT within the context of LLL methods.

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy is also present in the priorities and policies for Higher Education in Portugal. These aim, for instance, at diversifying learning opportunities, as well as attracting new publics and ensuring integration and qualification of Portuguese HE institutions within the European area. There are incentives created to recruit new students through coordination with banks to provide at low rates loans to students that are willing to attend HE. Some courses were created in the technological area aiming at qualifications of level 5 of the EQF. It was also created the possibility of access to HE to adults over 23 years with no formal qualifications and with recognition of informal and prior learning through exam, portfolio and interview.

Key policies, trends and factors

The government has created an agency for LLL (<http://www.proalv.pt/>) in 2008 that is managed jointly by the Ministries of Education, Higher Education and Labour. This agency was created as the result of the European policy on LLL. However, most of the European and national funding for LLL is managed by the Ministry of Labour. It has a large institute IEFP (www.iefp.pt) that has practically the monopoly of the public funding for LLL. This institute, that is self-regulated, addresses training for levels 1 to 5 of the EQF. One of the major actions of IEFP is to promote training and salaries to unemployed so they may acquire new competences. The HE sector does not receive funding from its ministry for LLL programs. This is a major obstacle to promote LLL within HE sector since there is

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no financial support. There was, in the past, several initiatives from universities that created their own programs and courses for LLL around the beginning of the century. An association was formally created in 2001 comprehending the public universities: AUPEC – Associação das Universidades Portuguesas para a Educação Contínua (www.up.pt/aupec). Due to the increasing financial constraints, as a consequence of the constant public financing, universities have practically abandoned the involvement in the LLL area. Most of the existing activities derive from private funding or from European projects. There are statements and declarations from university administrations but they these are mostly rhetorical and politically correct. In the near future it is not expected a major change in the LLL policies of the universities. The major factors hindering the adoption of the LLL Charter are the lack of public funding for LLL, lack of a national policy that includes HE in LLL and lack of mandatory periodic LLL in regulated professions. The two first factors will not change in the immediate future but it is expected that the national professional bodies may follow the trend of requiring periodic updating of the members competences.

Summary

The LLL Charter is not a priority among the HE sector. It is fundamentally due to the lack of specific funding and of proper policy for LLL in HE. Some sectors of the HE, not relevant in numbers, have dedicated structures that perform LLL but HE institutions are far from becoming LLL institutions. There were two EUCEN conferences in Portugal in 1993 and in 2003 with participation of the HE sector and of the government. It is expected that the next Forum about LLL organized by the Universidade Aberta (Open University) in Lisboa for 12 and 13 October may reignite the debate and relevance of LLL in the HE sector.