

EPICUR

LIFELONG LEARNING

POLICY



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background:

The EPICUR Alliance, consisting of nine partner universities, aims to create a learning offering for all learners from the different regions. By establishing a lifelong learning culture within EPICUR, the alliance is responding to the necessity of reskilling and upskilling the European workforce and providing ongoing learning opportunities for learners of diverse backgrounds and ages. The policy paper outlines guidelines for implementing Lifelong Learning within the alliance, benefiting learners and institutions alike.

Co-Creation Process:

The policy paper was developed through a participative bottom-up process involving all partner universities. A dedicated Lifelong Learning Working Group was established to work collaboratively on Tasks 5.1 and 5.2. A mapping exercise on Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education strategies was conducted, followed by an in-person workshop in Odense end of March 2023 and several online meetings involving representatives from all partner universities to compile the content of the policy paper. The resulting policy is a joint EPICUR Lifelong Learning strategy based on the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning and the partner universities strategies.

Aims and Objectives:

The primary goal of the EPICUR Lifelong Learning policy is to foster inclusive education, widen participation, and create a flexible and diverse learning environment. The policy seeks to establish a shared understanding of Lifelong Learning among the partner universities, facilitate connections between Lifelong Learning experts, share expertise, open opportunities for co-creation of offers developed by various partners and develop common quality standards for learning offers. The policy also aims to empower the current workforce and citizens to adapt to the evolving job market and support the European Commission's European Skills Agenda. By integrating Lifelong Learning into its

mission, EPICUR aims to become a driver of change, expanding its educational impact beyond traditional university boundaries and offering a truly European learning experience through innovative pathways and flexible education and training systems. This gives the EPICUR members as public universities the opportunity to utilize their resources where they are needed and to create synergies in order to complement each other and close existing thematic gaps.

Conclusion:

The EPICUR Lifelong Learning Policy Paper is a milestone (MS30) within the EPICUR SHAPE-IT project, serving as a guideline for the alliance to approach and implement Lifelong Learning. It provides recommendations for opening existing and creating joint Lifelong Learning offerings. By promoting Lifelong Learning, EPICUR aims to build a common culture, foster innovation, and empower learners to empower European citizens as change-makers. The policy positions EPICUR to be at the forefront of educational excellence and inclusivity.

2. INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid and broad labour market transformation, the workplace is increasingly becoming a learning space. There is a growing demand for advanced skills, creativity and adaptability in the workplace; yet the pace and nature of technological changes – in the form of AI and automation – make it difficult to predict what skills will be needed in the future while also necessitating the development of national LLL¹ agendas².

In view of a wide variety of social challenges ranging from globalization to the rapid development of technologies and digitalization and the accompanying

¹ LLL: Lifelong Learning

² UNESCO Institute of LLL. (2022). Making lifelong learning a reality: a handbook - UNESCO Digital Library, p. 25.

changes of labour market, perpetual development of new competencies and deepening of existing skills is required.

During the European Vocational Skills Week of the European Commission, a “Skills Pact” was launched in November 2022 which aims to mobilize various stakeholders to upskill and reskill people of working age and (where relevant) through partnerships.

The European Commission's communication on a European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Equity and Resilience proposes 12 EU actions to support skills partnerships, skills upgrading and retraining, and strengthening Lifelong Learning.

Current EU Lifelong Learning Policy recommendations include promoting parity of esteem between different academic career paths and providing more flexibility for academic careers, also beyond academia.

Further frameworks to take into consideration when it comes to Lifelong Learning are the *DigComp* and the *GreenComp* frameworks by the European Commission. Their aim is to provide learners with a solid foundation when it comes to digital (DigComp) and green skills (GreenComp)³.

Within EPICUR SHAPE-IT, this policy paper “EPICUR Lifelong Learning Policy” is a milestone (MS 30) of work package 5 – Building skills with society and outlines the possibilities and procedures to create EPICUR Lifelong Learning offerings. As such, it is meant to serve as a guideline for approaching the concept of Lifelong Learning and as a paper that outlines common understandings of the concept on the level of the EPICUR alliance. It does not commit the partners to taking any actions, but serves as merely an alliance-wide recommendation, aside from the actions that are specifically listed in the previously agreed upon EPICUR SHAPE-IT project proposal. This also implies a certain flexibility for each partner to narrow the concept down where helpful and necessary for the individual institutions.

³ *DigComp*. (n. d.). https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp_en

Due to the differences in regional institutional regulations, a varying mixture of priorities and distinct, yet understandable, variations in levels of agreement, this policy paper refrains from zeroing in on specific future actions, and, as stated above, is meant as a first step in developing commonalities when it comes to the field of lifelong learning within to the EPICUR alliance. The conceptualization and development of the concrete points will be the key component of the next Lifelong Learning-related tasks within WP 5 (most notably, within the context of the T5.1.4 and T5.1.5 tasks setup of the joint Lifelong Learning Centre).

Lifelong Learning is based on a holistic educational research background. In this understanding, EPICUR's Lifelong Learning offerings should be developed with focus on the research activities of the partner universities. For the development of this policy paper all universities were invited to share their own concepts of a Lifelong Learning culture in order to develop a common EPICUR Lifelong Learning policy paper. The process was a participative bottom-up process with an on-site workshop, several online meetings including a high number of feedback loops (see figure 1).

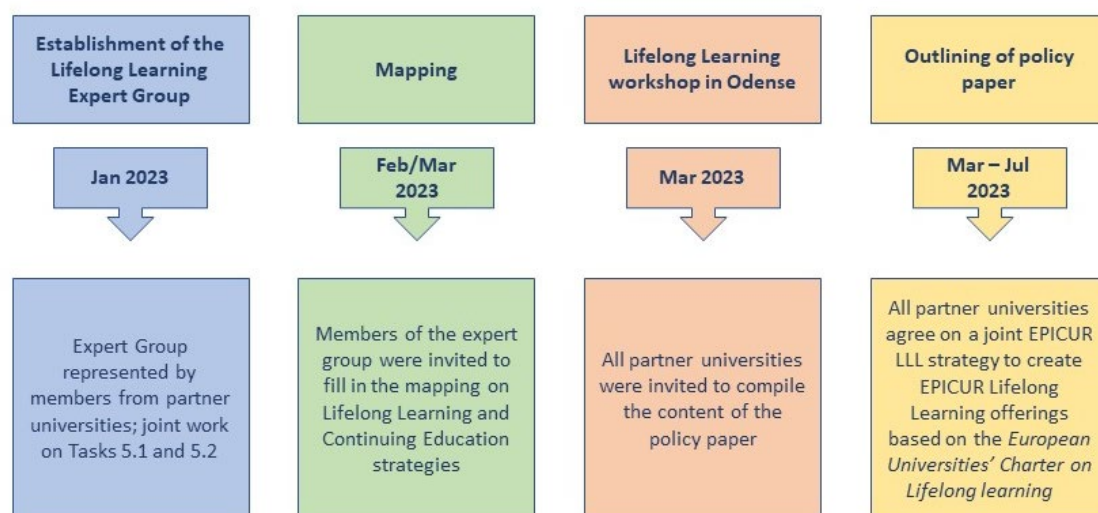


Figure 1: Timeline of the policy development process

3. LIFELONG LEARNING WITHIN EPICUR

In accordance with the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning⁴, the EPICUR alliance sees itself as part of the solution to make Lifelong Learning a reality in higher education, by offering diverse education opportunities and introducing innovative and student-centred pedagogies, jointly delivered across European conventional and digital inter-university campuses where a diverse group of learners can build flexible learning paths at all levels of their studies and career.

The aim is to involve Lifelong Learners outside of the university, so no one is left behind.

European universities recognize the important contribution that a diversified student body will make to the development of a culture of success and innovation in the institution and wider society, and the need to think how far different types of learners can interact together in a supportive mutual learning environment.⁵

A diverse mindset fostering shared learning is crucial for the development of Lifelong Learners. The importance of diversity lies in the multitude of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences it brings to the learning process. When individuals from different cultures, ethnicities, ages, genders, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds come together, a vast tapestry of ideas, insights, and knowledge emerges. This diversity encourages critical thinking, promotes creativity, and broadens horizons by questioning preconceived notions and expanding understanding beyond boundaries. It fosters empathy, cultural competency, and appreciation for the richness of human experiences. The EPICUR alliance is firmly convinced that diversity is Europe's most precious asset. Hence, the partners are committed to the principles of diversity as a cross-cutting component while implementing Lifelong Learning.

⁴ EUA (2008). European Universities' Charter in Lifelong Learning.

⁵ EUA (2008). European Universities' Charter in Lifelong Learning, p. 5. <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/646:european-universities%E2%80%99-charter-on-lifelong-learning.html>

Flexible learning opportunities and alternative learning pathways are to a certain extent often offered to learners at all stages of life, across disciplines and sectors, including small volumes of learning (e.g., leading to micro credentials).

It is important to note, though, that as an alliance of universities, the Lifelong Learning offerings that EPICUR will provide in the future are research-based and has a specific focus on university lifelong learners (depending on the requirements for lifelong learners of each partner institution).

EPICUR's goal is to set up a joint EPICUR Lifelong Learning Culture:

- to foster a common understanding of Lifelong Learning and to build its offers on a common ground.
- to build connections between Lifelong Learning experts within the nine universities of EPICUR, to enable them to share their expertise and support each other.
- to enable citizens and workforce to better cope with current challenges (e.g., climate change, skills shortage and job demands).

3.1. Definition of Lifelong Learning and EPICUR's Lifelong Learners

There are various definitions when it comes to Lifelong Learning. For the EPICUR SHAPE-IT project, the members of the Lifelong Learning expert group agree on the following⁶:

Lifelong Learning encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within personal, civic, social or employment-related perspectives including non-formal and informal learning activities.⁷

⁶ This definition applies to the implementation of the Lifelong Learning process within the current project phase, but it may be used also beyond the lifecycle of EPICUR SHAPE-IT

⁷ Glossary: Lifelong learning (LLL). (n. d.) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Lifelong_learning_\(LLL\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Lifelong_learning_(LLL)) (Considering the different perspectives of Lifelong Learning within EPICUR partners' institutions)

Embracing and celebrating the variety of Lifelong Learners is EPICUR's way to make the most out of the unique strengths, experiences, and perspectives that individuals bring to the table – and to the market. By acknowledging and valuing this diversity, the EPICUR partners create an environment that fosters innovation, creativity, and collaboration. Lifelong Learners are therefore individuals of various ages and backgrounds and stand among the profiles who possess a curious and open mindset and have a strong commitment to continuous learning and personal development throughout their entire lives.

The learners' diversity is also represented within the learning activities. They can include cultural as well as sporting activities and encompass a variety of learning activities ranging from opening education to disadvantaged groups, to continuing education and training for graduates. It also includes post-retirement opportunities for cultural enrichment. However, it is subject to considerable local, regional and national interpretations.⁸ Within EPICUR, Lifelong Learning activities will be closely connected to the employability activities including reskilling and upskilling processes.⁹ Upskilling encompasses further training in a field that the learner already has a certain understanding of. It is often used to close possible qualification gaps. Reskilling, however, designates newly acquired skills and can be considered as "retraining". Within the digital transformation of the workplace, it is getting increasingly important.

3.2. Added value of a joint EPICUR Lifelong Learning Culture

Emerging economic, technological, environmental and social changes signal the need to foster adaptation, creativity and, most importantly, learning that continues throughout life. People can no longer navigate their life course using only the skills and knowledge acquired at school, college or university.¹⁰

⁸ Tinoca, L., Gil-Jaurena, I., & Watkinson, M. (n. d.). *Organising Lifelong Learning A Report on University Strategies and Business Models for Lifelong Learning in Higher Education*.
https://www.academia.edu/41076267/Organising_Lifelong_Learning_A_Report_on_University_Strategies_and_Business_Models_for_Lifelong_Learning_in_Higher_Education

⁹ European Commission (n.d.). Pact for Skills. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en

¹⁰ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2022). Making Lifelong Learning a Reality. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381857>. p. 21.

EPICUR's goal as an alliance is to educate and empower learners as European citizens and drivers of change. By fostering Lifelong Learning (LLL), EPICUR will expand its impact beyond traditional academic boundaries. Sharing expertise and resources in Lifelong Learning will result in high quality and innovative education and a diversified LLL audience.

The specific points outlining the added value of Lifelong Learning within EPICUR for both the educational institutions and for the Lifelong Learners are outlined in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

3.2.1. Added value for EPICUR universities:

- Sharing of best practices and building synergies
- Institutionalization of Lifelong Learning throughout EPICUR
- Connecting with similar initiatives that share the same goals
- Finding synergies through cooperation and using them actively
- Possibility for EPICUR's Early Career Researchers (ECR) to follow another learning pathway(s)
- Expanding and diversifying the audiences EPICUR impacts
- Enhanced reputation
- Increased enrollment
- Diversification and expansion of program offerings
- More collaboration opportunities
- Improving links with business and organizations
- Improved staff engagement and increased job satisfaction and productivity
- Knowledge sharing, e.g., from research with professionals
- Greater prospect for funding opportunities from government agencies, foundations, and corporate sponsors
- Enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, including learners, parents, community partners, and funding agencies
- Stronger community connections

- Making a positive social impact: fostering Lifelong Learning as a societal value
- Alumni engagement
- Enlarging access to new (guest) lecturers, traineeships/business cases for regular students, research projects, etc.
- Possibility to try new subjects before adding them to regular study programs
- EPiCUR may be considered as a source of inspiration for a heightened sense of community across Europe

3.2.2. Benefits for Lifelong Learners:

- Access for learners to a wide range of diverse contents and formats (also to those that have not yet been offered in the learner's region) making the most out of the combined expertise of 9 universities
- Possibility to take part in diverse online and hybrid formats
- Possibility to meet international Lifelong Learners sharing similar experience and needs
- Possibility to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities in cutting-edge fields
- Possibility to participate in programs that are conducted in an intercultural environment
- Personal development
- Professional advancement
- Experience interculturality, multilingualism and European identities along the way / in an inspiring setting
- Cognitive stimulation
- Adaptability
- Personal Empowerment

3.3. Challenges and key competences

3.3.1. Challenges of our time

In the framework of the Lifelong Learning Workshop that took place during the WP5 meeting in Odense, Denmark, in March 2023, the participants identified the following issues as key challenges of our time:

- Skills shortage
- Climate Change
- Disqualified staff
- Ageing demography

Further challenges are the following:

- Developments in digital technologies
- Transformation in the world of work
- Demographic changes
- Health and well-being
- Strengthening citizenship

To tackle these challenges and meet the needs identified in the “Work Force Skills Needs Reports” (MS32), the EPICUR universities take up the recommendation of the Council of the European Union on the key competences for Lifelong Learning. Furthermore, the aspect of intrinsic motivation must be considered. The Inner Development Goals¹¹ provide the framework for imparting the mindset to Lifelong Learners to successfully work with complex societal issues. By establishing a joint EPICUR Lifelong Learning offer which covers different areas of the key competences, we aim to contribute to all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the key focus on SDG 4 *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote Lifelong Learning opportunities for all*. This presents another added value of a joint Lifelong Learning Policy and joint Lifelong Learning activities – EPICUR partners on their own would not be able to cover all 17 SDGs, while within the alliance and due to the complementarity of the partners this is possible.

¹¹ Inner Development Goals (n.d.). The 5 dimensions with the 23 skills and qualities.
<https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/framework>

3.3.2. Key competences recommended by the EU

The Council of the European Union adopted a Recommendation on key competences for Lifelong Learning in May 2018. The Recommendation identifies eight key competences essential to citizens for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.¹²

The key competences are the following:

Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering

- Digital competence
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence
- Literacy competence
- Multilingual competence

4. EPICUR'S STRATEGY ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Subsequent to a seminar on Lifelong Learning which was held in Sorbonne University in December 2007, the European University Association (EUA) developed a Charter on Lifelong Learning. The document was published in 2008 and emerged from an extensive consultation with EUA member universities and a wide range of actors from European Higher Education.

One of EPICUR's missions is to bring depth to and widen the EPICUR European learning experience. Building on its initial portfolio of flexible learning formats and mobilities, it aims at redesigning the curricula to integrate shared courses

¹² Schola Europaea / Office of the Secretary-General (2018). Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools. <https://www.eursc.eu/BasicTexts/2018-09-D-69-en-2.pdf>

and innovative pathways to offer a truly European learning experience, which also relates to Lifelong Learning offer.

Thus, the EPICUR Alliance follows the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning and commits to taking the steps listed in points 4.1 through 4.9.

4.1.Embedding concepts of widening access and Lifelong Learning in EPICUR's strategies and project tasks

Providing access to a variety of learners from different backgrounds is crucial for Lifelong Learning. To achieve this, several measures must be taken to increase the general interest in Lifelong Learning strategies, both within the public and governments. Therefore, measures are taken both in terms of continuously improving and upgrading the Lifelong Learning system all over Europe as well as promoting it.

The EPICUR Alliance aims at expanding capacity to provide needed re-skilling and up-skilling of the existing European work force, by:

- developing a dynamic, flexible and hybrid Lifelong Learning system based on joint educational offers (tasks number T2.1; T2.2; T4.4 in the EPICUR SHAPE-IT project)
- expanding students' identity as socially responsible European Lifelong and Life-wide Learners (cross-cutting)
- increasing the attractiveness and international employability of EPICUR students and (young) researchers (T5.5)
- enhancing teachers' competencies for incorporating Lifelong Learning and employability into the curriculum (T5.7)
- increasing the general public's appreciation of science, academic freedom and freedom to debate, as well as people's understanding of the societal challenges that Europeans have in common (cross-cutting)

4.2. Providing education and learning to diversified learning community

In the area of Lifelong Learning, EPICUR will devise specific training formats for Alumni and other Life-wide Learners for upskilling and keeping up with the latest academic developments in their work areas. This will include cross-sectoral mobilities with start-ups and SMEs in EPICUR's surrounding regions.

The idea is to create tailor-made and flexible education and training systems, solutions to deliver more learner-centred, accessible and inclusive learning to a wider range of profiles, for example by:

- bringing university to society through formats/events which are open for public audience
- opening university courses to non-academic participants
- rewarding ECTS and/or micro credentials for all learners (inside and outside academia) to enable Lifelong Learning Pathways (T2.5)

Specific examples of Lifelong Learning practices from some the EPICUR partner universities are provided in section 6.7 of this document.

4.3. Widening participation for Lifelong Learners

Learners' participation in the Lifelong Learning activities is vital to its success in fostering a Lifelong Learning culture that benefits all. Especially adult learners are sometimes in need of an additional push when it comes to deciding on whether to join the Lifelong Learning community. It is therefore the program's task to increase both availability and attractiveness of (re-)joining a university program and to benefit from Lifelong Learning offerings of the EPICUR universities within the European dimension through mobility and international exchanges.

The EPICUR universities intend to pursue the different strategies to widen participation and attract adult learners returning to university or attending university. The examples for such activities include the following:

- Accessibility through low admission criteria and immediate gain from the content imparted, especially for those with temporary difficulties in participating in learning activities (e.g., caring for children or parents, illness, time restriction...)
- Connection of the learning content with areas from everyday life and practice
- Combination of learning content with excursions, guided tours or trips
- Consideration of age and previous education in learning content for a tailor-made experience
- Offerings for the elderly (e.g., courses on digital skills) and cross-generation offerings
- Training senior profiles to become “ambassadors of teaching” (Increasing motivation)

4.4. Providing appropriate guidance and counselling services

With the aim of providing a high-quality Lifelong Learning service, the members of the Lifelong Learning Expert Group agree that a good guidance and counselling service should ideally be provided to all learners throughout the whole registration process and their learning pathway. An EPiCUR support service could include for example “support and orientation, as well as assistance with the validation of acquired experience (VAE, or RPL)”¹³.

4.5. Recognizing prior learning

*Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is when a higher education institution recognizes what you already know, understand and can do before, for example, starting on a program or module. This eliminates the duplication of learning, meaning you don't have to relearn things you already know.*¹⁴

¹³ ibid. - <https://www.uha.fr/fr/formation-1/formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html>

Remarks: As officially outlined by UHA, “a return to academic studies can sometimes be complicated”.

¹⁴ What is RPL? | Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). (n.d.). <https://www.priorlearning.ie/what-rpl>

RPL can consist of three essential parts: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning:

Formal learning refers to structured programs or courses of study that result in certification or accreditation. Non-formal learning occurs outside of traditional education systems and typically lacks formal certification. Examples of non-formal learning include planned training activities in the workplace, voluntary sector, or community-based settings. Informal learning happens through life and work experiences, such as on-the-job learning, but does not lead to formal certification.

All three of these learning experiences are to be regarded as equally valuable and are a crucial part of Lifelong Learning. It is therefore important that the review of whether the existing competences previously acquired meet the required pre-established standard is transparent. The members of the LLL expert group therefore recommend considering RPL in future recognition approaches undertaken in WP2 in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit.

4.6. Embracing Lifelong Learning in quality culture

The EPICUR universities agree that the education of Lifelong Learning needs a certain quality procedure matching other educational offerings offered at the university level. The EPICUR Lifelong Learning offers will be subject to evaluation against the quality assurance criteria developed with the EPICUR Quality Assurance Unit (T1.5) to ensure high quality standards for all learners.

4.7. Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of Lifelong Learning

EPICUR intends to strengthen the bond between research, teaching and innovation by taking various measures such as:

- Connecting research and teaching with local stakeholders through the creation of the EPICUR graduate hubs (T6.2)
- Developing a Teaching and Learning Center (T4.3) that could be linked with the Lifelong Learning Center (T5.1)
- Offering career courses, transversal skills workshops (e.g., entrepreneurship, scientific writing) (T5.5, T6.3.)
- Organizing events within the regional ecosystems to foster exchange and knowledge transfer (T6.2 & T7.2)
- Development of Communities of Practice (T1.7) to facilitate for Lifelong Learning within university staff

4.8. Consolidating reforms to promote a flexible and creative learning environment for all learners

Universities now need to exploit the potential of these reform processes and their tools (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, Qualifications Frameworks, etc.) to enhance the development of a creative Lifelong Learning environment that is open to a more diverse population of learners, and thus responds to societal needs for the modernization of higher education. Fully integrating Lifelong Learning to the mission of universities is essential to enhance the creativity and innovation profiles of institutions.¹⁵

Through the creation of the EPICUR Lifelong Learning Centre, flexible and innovative learning formats will be provided for a diverse group of learners. These offers can include online, hybrid, blended or in-person formats like MOOCs, BIPs, seasonal schools or webinars. The Lifelong Learning offer will include already existing Lifelong Learning formats of the different universities made accessible to EPICUR's Lifelong Learners as well as jointly created offers

¹⁵ EUA (2008). European Universities' Charter in Lifelong Learning, p. 6.
<https://eua.eu/resources/publications/646:european-universities%E2%80%9999-charter-on-lifelong-learning.html>

from the activities of the different work packages and beyond. The possibility of awarding micro-credentials for some of the Lifelong Learning offers could also be explored.

4.9. Acting as role models of Lifelong Learning institution

As Lifelong Learning institutions, our universities are committed to fostering an inclusive Lifelong Learning Culture. Hence, EPICUR may be considered as a source of inspiration for a heightened sense of community across Europe serving as a prime example of a successful implementation of Lifelong Learning. Examples from each institution are included in the Annex.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As the EPICUR Alliance consists of nine partners from different EU regions with their own legal framework for the opening and widening of university courses to Lifelong Learners, this policy paper is understood by the partner universities as an agreement on common understanding of Lifelong Learning as well as a guideline for approaching the concept of Lifelong Learning both on the level of the EPICUR alliance and within the broader European context.

As an alliance, the EPICUR partner universities are eager to contribute to a joint Lifelong Learning offer to the extent that the legal requirements of their home university permit. This may well have an in-depth impact on the universities themselves regarding Lifelong Learning as well as the Lifelong Learners at the EPICUR locations. The benefits for both the institutions and learners are listed in chapter 3.2.

As a strategy on how to develop an EPICUR Lifelong Learning offer, the Lifelong Learning Expert Group agrees in a bottom-up process to take up the recommendation of the Council of the European Union on the key competences

(see chapter 3.3.2) and to follow the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (see chapter 4). The main goal of the strategy is to widen participation for Lifelong Learners and include a diverse learning community through various formats and ensure a flexible and creative learning environment for the learners (see chapter 4.8).

The next steps towards a common EPICUR Lifelong Learning service are shown in the Annex (chapter 6.6, figure 2), as foreseen in the EPICUR SHAPE-IT project proposal. As universities that already have competences in Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education, the EPICUR partners can benefit from each other's expertise and create synergies. The best practices of the EPICUR universities are presented in the Annex (see chapter 6.8).

In conclusion, EPICUR is committed to fostering Lifelong Learning as a European approach to inclusive education. By joining efforts in Lifelong Learning, EPICUR will increase accessibility of university offers, enabling all learners to participate in the various offers of nine universities, irrespective to their age or background. Through the creation of a Lifelong Learning Centre, EPICUR will make individual courses from different universities accessible and will join forces in creating new offers for all learners. Through connecting Lifelong Learning activities with the activities of the different work packages of the EPICUR SHAPE-IT project, EPICUR facilitates the necessary start for a sustainable approach to Lifelong Learning.

6. ANNEXES

6.1. Administrative framework

The universities of the EPICUR alliance have the vision to create a learning offering that is not only addressed to the students, but particularly to Lifelong Learners from all of our regions, thereby improving EPICUR's ability to reskill and upskill the European work force and enabling an ongoing learning for all learners.

Considering that the Lifelong Learning community includes various target groups with different educational backgrounds and a diverse set of competences, it is difficult to establish general eligibility criteria for the participation in the course offerings. Rather, the EPICUR partners intend to refer to the individual admission criteria of individual courses when admitting participants. This could be, for example, the requirement of language proficiency or prior learning.

In addition, the EPICUR alliance consists of 9 partner universities situated in 7 European countries and are bound by the different higher education laws regarding the opening of university offerings to people outside of the university. Therefore, it is not possible to establish a joint framework for the opening of courses at this stage, since this depends on the regulation of each university.

6.2. Developing partnerships at local, regional and international level to provide attractive and relevant programs

The following partnerships have been established with various external actors in different activities during the first project phase and will be strengthened in the current phase:

- Collaboration with partners from industry and business (Internships, European Partnership for Innovation in Distant Internships (EDI), Entrepreneurial Labs, Summer schools)
- Collaboration with civil society, e.g., NGOs and social enterprises (Internships, Service-learning, Epic Mission, Citizen Science activities)
- Partners in the field of administration and cultural sector, e.g., the city of Freiburg, museums (EPIC Mission)
- Partners in research, e.g., external research institutions (EPICUR-Research, Graduate Hubs)
- Associated partnerships

- Work Force Skills Needs Report (MS 32): Includes a collection of skills that are needed from external stakeholders within the EPICUR region
- Mapping of regional stakeholders: implemented in the first EPICUR phase and will be extended over the course of the current project phase

6.3. Instruments for Lifelong Learning

6.3.1. Certification of learnings

Council Recommendations on learning for environmental sustainability and micro-credentials for LLL and employability are: Within Europe, more and more people need to update and improve their knowledge, skills and competence to fill the gap between their formal education and training and the needs of fast-changing society and labour market.

Therefore, continuous upskilling and reskilling are essential for workers to respond to the needs of their current job or transition to new jobs and expanding sectors, such as the green and digital sectors, in particular in the context of demographic ageing, using micro credentials to create a Lifelong Learning pathway in order to certify learning achievements. By fulfilling all components of the learning pathway, learners may be issued a certificate.

Instruments for the appraisal of learnings are for example:

- Reflection, e.g., diaries and journals
- Regular and active participation
- Final reports

6.3.2. Joint EPICUR Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC)

In cooperation with WP3, a Lifelong Learning Centre (T3.2.4 Digitalisation of Lifelong Learning services) will be designed in the future in order to support different types of mobilities related with Lifelong Learning. Apart from the

definition of processes and Terms of Reference for the organization of an EPICUR Lifelong Learning Centre, the development of use cases plays a part of the task. As an alliance, we are eager to offer joint activities that are developed by several partners exclusively for EPICUR and offered at the LLC. The Lifelong Learning activities will be offered not only to learners from the EPICUR universities, but also to learners from beyond the EPICUR alliance. Therefore, the aim of the LLC is also to create authentication processes and services for users from non EPICUR partners.

6.4. Examples for target groups to be addressed

The EPICUR Lifelong Learning Expert Group agrees on the main differentiation of target groups: **(a) inside academia** and **(b) outside academia**.

Examples for each group are listed below:

a. inside academia	b. outside academia
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff member (academic and administrative) 2. Students 3. PhD candidates 4. Postdocs 5. Researchers 6. Career counsellors (at career offices) 7. Academic advisors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Public audience, e.g., socially vulnerable groups, elderly people, etc. 9. Guest students 10. Teachers for vocational training 11. Professionals from all background and career steps

Table 1: Examples for target groups

6.5. Short-term, mid-term and long-term goals

Throughout the duration of the EPICUR SHAPE-IT project, the EPICUR partners have a set number of key goals that should be achieved when it comes to Lifelong Learning. Such short-, medium-, and long-term goals are listed in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Next steps towards the EPICUR Lifelong Learning service

6.6. Definition of Continuing Education within the Task of Lifelong Learning and its role within EPICUR

Within EPICUR, the concept of Continuing Education is a part of Task 5.1 – *Develop Lifelong Learning connections within EPICUR* and is connected to Task 5.2 – *Develop an EPICUR Lifelong learning offer*. Terminologies or labels may vary at national or institutional levels (e.g., "Advanced Training and Education", "Education for Professionals", "Specialized Training Programs"), though essentially this domain comprises all special or general study offers outside the ordinary graduate programs. As the various labels suggest, and in gear with a multitude of stakeholders demands and policies, the focus usually is on knowledge transfer and competence development with the aim of sustaining and/or expanding professional expertise ("Up-/Reskilling") on the one hand, and on the other hand for contexts of individual or organizational (NGOs, non-profit, political etc.) interests and motivation.

When developed and performed by universities, offerings will follow the frameworks and standards of academic (research-based) teaching/training. This ties in with the general understanding of the partners in view of the actual work fields within the scope of the EPICUR project's WP5.

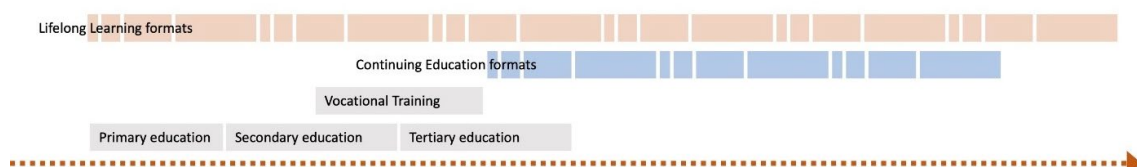


Figure 3: Lifelong Learning & Continuing Education formats in comparison

6.7. Examples of best practices within the alliance

BOKU:

As a "Life-Long Learning University", BOKU is committed to Lifelong Learning (LLL) in its development plan as a life partner of society, especially in the field of natural resources and applied life sciences. BOKU uses research-led teaching that focuses on learners and learning processes. In this context, design competence and education for sustainable development are considered key qualifications in all areas of teaching, including adult education. Lifelong Learning concerns students of regular studies, Continuing Education and all those interested in BOKU topics. In this context, micro-credentials, teaching modules and modules find a common pivot point to promote permeability, smooth transitions and the recognition of prior learning.

SDU:

At the University of Southern Denmark, a competency profile model has been developed by the Career Services (SDU RIO). The model is called 'The Learner for Life model' and consists of five competency areas inspired by inputs from employment stakeholders, educational strategies as well as other national and global models and overviews of needed competences for people from Higher Education. The competency areas are: You as a subject specialist, You as an academic, You as a professional, You as a person and You as a citizen. The Learner for Life model is being used in career guidance, in teaching and in dialogues with study programs on how to integrate a competency focus on courses and teaching at the university.

KIT:

At KIT, the AWWK - Akademie für Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung offers all interested citizens the opportunity to acquire scientific knowledge, techniques and skills. The offerings include a mixture of different event formats (lectures, seminars, workshops, excursions, guided tours, talks) in the areas of culture, politics and society, nature and technology, history, philosophy and religion, literature and media, music and art, body, mind and health. Furthermore, the

KIT offers various training opportunities to internal target groups of the universities (students, staff members, researchers, etc.). For instance, at the Centre for Advanced Technological and Environmental Training, practitioners may join courses on occupational safety, environmental or health protection, or project management to learn to cope with new challenges of their professions or they can attend studies parallel to their jobs. Further programs address researchers (at KHYS), students (HoC), professionals (FTU) and staff members (PEBA).

AUTH:

Lifelong Education is a strategic goal of AUTH and is promoted through an independent academic educational unit (Education and Lifelong Learning Centre), which coordinates and implements every action of non-formal education, such as programs of general or specialized training, professional training, and personal development, with the aim of consistently responding to the needs of both the country and the international community for the development of its human potential. AUTH, as the only interdisciplinary University in Greece, has the comparative advantage of providing all scientific subjects, while it particularly promotes the interdisciplinary approach in all Lifelong Learning programs and activities. The programs are structured in modules, accompanied by corresponding educational material, specially designed for each module, while their intended learning goals (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities) are clearly defined. Based on their objective, the programs are addressed to specific categories of graduates or professionals or to the whole society. Maintaining a strict quality framework, each proposal for the implementation of a training program is evaluated by two independent academics before its approval by the Council of the Centre. A Register of Trainers is maintained, in which interested parties are added after an evaluation of their application. Each program, after its completion, is evaluated by the trainees anonymously with specific indicators. The trainees are provided ECTS and a Certificate of Attendance.

UHA:

At UHA the importance of Lifelong Learning is well understood, and these are some examples:

- Supporting Lifelong Learners to get back to learning through different support services: This includes reception and guidance, as well as support in the process of validating acquired experience (VAE).
- Various training courses: At UHA, nearly 150 continuing professional training courses leading to qualifications or diplomas are available, organized specially for adults. Around thirty of these lead to a national diploma (DUT, licence, master, engineering diploma, etc.).
- Organization & adapted methods: These courses are offered as evening classes or spread over a small number of days to meet the specific needs of the public. Some courses are also available by distance learning.”¹⁶

AMU:

Open University at AMU offers all those interested the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in many areas. The offer includes on-site and online courses. Courses are divided into three groups: legal and social sciences, humanities and biology, and sciences. Language courses are also on offer. The offer is aimed at people aged 16 and over, regardless of their level of education. In addition, the individual faculties organise periodic knowledge popularisation events. A 'Researchers' Night' is held periodically, during which the university's faculties offer activities aimed at children, youth, and adults alike.

AMU also offers open lectures to which all interested parties are invited. An interesting project is the 'School of Nestors', in which retired AMU professors give open lectures in their fields.

¹⁶ “Formation tout au long de la vie”. <https://www.uha.fr/fr/formation-1/formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie.html>

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