



ZENTRUM für WEITERBILDUNG
center for continuing education

UNI
GRAZ

The University of Graz – A Partner for Lifelong Learning for all generations

Bologna Seminar “Higher Education Institutions as places integrating individual lifelong learning strategies”

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OVERVIEW

1. University Lifelong Learning in Austria – State of play

2. University of Graz:

2.1 Strategy

2.2 Organisational model

2.3 Provision & quality

2.4 Partnerships and collaboration at a regional, national and European level

3. Outlook





1. University Lifelong Learning in Austria – State of play

What is understood by “University Lifelong Learning” in Austria today?

Clarification needed: “university continuing education” – “continuing professional development” – “university lifelong learning” – “Lifelong learning universities”

Legal Framework:

Austrian universities are required by law to include Continuing Education in their performance objectives: “continuing education, particularly post-graduate training” (Austrian Universities Act 2002, fully implemented on 1 January 2004). → Universities are autonomous, i.e. have to develop their own profile, their own strategy, position themselves

- The Austrian Universities Act 2002 explicitly allows – in order to provide financial and organisational support – cooperation with other legal entities.
- University Continuing Education (UCE) provision is not part of the regular (under)graduate degree programmes of the universities. Certificates: from “confirmation of participation/certificate of attendance” → “university certificates”; title “Akademische...” or “Akademischer ...” [academically accredited], followed by a suffix indicating the contents of the course in question, is to be awarded to persons successfully completing the course in question, provided that it qualifies for at least 60 ECTS credit points.” → “Master’s degrees”



Autonomy of Austrian Universities since 2004

- Necessity to develop University profiles and strategies for all areas of activity including University Lifelong Learning**
- Necessity to use a platform for further development and exchange: AUCEN – Austrian University Continuing Education and Staff Development Network (founded in 1996)**

AUCEN - Austrian University Continuing Education and Staff Development Network Mission Statement University Continuing Education

After research and teaching, university continuing education is the third key task of Austrian universities.

Through university continuing education, individuals with academic and/or adequate qualifications can participate in universities' learning processes and can continue their academic studies, thus stimulating the influence of experience and approaches from outside on the universities, in the same way the universities influence various professions and areas of life.

Besides qualifying individuals, university continuing education contributes to professional cooperation, the formation of groups with common interests, and networking. Consequently, university continuing education also stimulates society to react to these processes.



- 1. *Relation to Research of International Standard:*** University continuing education has the advantage of being able to offer a learning process based on the latest internationally recognised standards of knowledge and competency in a particular field. As experts in the field, providers of university continuing education take part in international research; they are able to offer insights into the development of knowledge and to impart research competency as required.
- 2. *Reflexivity in a Social Context:*** Academic knowledge is critical and reflexive as it questions the conditions of its formation and effects. This reflexivity asks where the knowledge comes from and what it is for. Reflexivity is also the most reliable form of mediation between theory and practice: the differences between theory and practice are not rejected or disavowed, but considered a benefit for both learners and teachers in the learning processes. Reflexivity requires candour and freedom in situations of teaching and learning.
- 3. *Common Principle:*** Learners and teachers see each other as partners in a common process of teaching and learning: the experience and the knowledge of both parties involved are part of the process right from the beginning.



Understanding of UNICO (Austrian Rectors' Conference)

- **Continuing Education is a main task of the university**
- **Addresses those who want to re-engage in a learning process and who have a first degree or fulfil the requirements for university studies (including relevant experience outside the tertiary sector)**
- **Teaching in continuing education at university level is characterised that it is research-based (link to research, reflection, academic discourse, a high degree of self-directed learning)**
- **Appropriate organisation is needed to perform this task**

(Source: Principles and Recommendations for continuing education provided by universities [Grundsätze und Empfehlungen zum Weiterbildungsangebot an Universitäten], UNIKO 2009)



Definition provided by EUCEN – European University Continuing Education Network

EU Project BeFlex, led by EUCEN:

“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.”

The European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning (EUA 2008) –

www.eua.be





State of play of implementation of University Lifelong Austria

- **Relationship State – Individual University: Performance agreements (contract to be signed and published) to be negotiated between the individual university and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research; a “global budget” – lump sum for three years**

- **Performance agreements include “continuing education”;**

for the negotiations for the period 2010-2012 the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning was used as a framework for the proposal of the individual universities;

Priorities in the area of ULLL requested by the state from each university (“minimum”):

to define a ULLL strategy (or to look at the existing one again)

to develop ULLL programmes for working students

to ensure quality development and -assurance



- **Challenge: further development of cooperation and consensus-building with stakeholders as well as to further develop cooperation among Higher Education Institutions in ULLL; as well as to include ULLL in the National Qualifications Framework (currently in the process of being developed)**
- **ULLL data: no data available regarding the amount of public lectures, short courses, etc.;**
“Universitätslehrgänge” (diploma programmes) at public universities: in the period from 2000 to 2010 increase; the number of enrolments rose from almost 7,000 in the year 2000 to about 15,300 in the year 2010 (only public universities)
(Source: Qualitätsentwicklung der Weiterbildung an Hochschulen, AQA, Vienna 2012; p.17) - <http://www.aqa.ac.at/>
published by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research in 2011: 877 registered continuing education programmes (not short programmes but diploma programmes); 58% of these active
- **National LLL-Strategy:**
http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/20916/lll-arbeitspapier_ebook_gross.pdf
- **National elections Sept 2013: will result in a new government development plan 2013-2018 providing the political framework for further development in the field**





At institutional level:

- **Strategies and programmes: exist; broad concept of University Continuing Education, less “University Lifelong Learning” as “mainstream”**
- **Infrastructure: exists; usually as “Centres”, sometimes outsourced (companies)**
 - **Continuing Education/LLL as a concept has arrived; implementation delegated to the Centre for Continuing Education; is this “LLL”? Variation: All we do is “LLL” (meaning: we do not need to change as institution)**
 - **Stronger connection between “regular university study programmes” and continuing education, but organised separately; opening up to new target groups, mixed groups; stronger cooperation with external partners**
 - **LLL as new organisational culture – real focus on learners and their needs – link to research – accompanying learners throughout their professional career and in post-retirement; especially in “transition periods”**
- **Acceptance as task of universities? In general, University Continuing Education is an accepted task of the universities, internally and externally.**





2. University of Graz:

Some fact & figures: 6 Faculties and Administration & Services | 3,800 staff | 30,000 students | over 100 regular study programmes (Bachelor/Master/Ph.D.) and Continuing Education.

2.1 Strategy - A broad approach to ULLL:

The University of Graz is a “Partner for Lifelong Learning” for all generations.

General education at university level and continuing professional development / training

We are targeting: “a diversified student population”:

- **university graduates and graduates of the universities of applied sciences experts and managers**
- **individuals interested in continuing education**
- **people in employment/self-employed or un-employed; “transition periods”**
- **specific professional groups such as teachers**
- **Students**
- **the “general public” and those interested in “Learning in Later Life – Vita activa”; pupils: Children's University (8-10) and Junior University (10-18)**



Strategy – contd.

- **Strategy 2010 and Developmental Plan 2005-2010/II 2010-2012: The University of Graz as a “Partner for Lifelong Learning”**
- **Performance agreement 2010-2012 between the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research and the University of Graz: https://online.uni-graz.at/kfu_online/wbMitteilungsblaetter.display?pNr=159512;**
(Chapter [C2] Initiatives in Continuing Education and Implementation of the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning, p. 28-31); Rectorate included the programme Vita activa – U3A (Learning in Later Life); revision of strategy (new Rectorate in 2011); regular degree courses designed to be achievable while students are working in the field of study
- **Performance Agreement 2013-2015: https://online.uni-graz.at/kfu_online/wbMitteilungsblaetter.display?pNr=433823**
- **Development plan 2013-2018 (http://www.uni-graz.at/en/bdr1www_ep_13-18.pdf)**

In summary: LLL as clear strategic goal and targeting all generations at all university levels with a wide range of learning opportunities (lifelong and lifewide learning), contributing to the further development of individuals and groups, organisations and the community, institutionalised at the University of Graz and within the responsibilities of the University





Looking back: How the strategy was developed...

Work on the University Strategy (including University Continuing Education) started in 2000; first period 2000 – 2003

Summer 2000: Definition of roles and tasks in strategy building

Winter 2000/01: Project group “Strategy Building” and Project group “Management by Objectives”

Summer 2001: Kick-off event and future search

Autumn 2001: Work in progress (results, developmental plans of faculties)

Winter 2002/02: “First reading” in Senate, “counter current process”

Summer 2002: Strategy Conference, decision-making process in Senate

Autumn 2002: Management by Objectives – Final paper



3 strategic targets for “Continuing Education”

- 1. For support, professionalisation and coordination of University Continuing Education (UCE), a Center for Continuing Education is established.**
- 2. Through marketing, the UCE programmes are visible at national and international level.**
- 3. The University of Graz offers post-graduate courses at international level.**

→ 10 concrete projects:

- 1. Information and guidance for university teachers developing UCE**
- 2. Coordination of the various Summer Universities**
- 3. Academy on Monday**
- 4. Board (external stakeholders) for UCE**
- 5. New services for the implementation of UCE courses**
- 6. Data in UCE**
- 7. Marketing concept**
- 8. Business plan**
- 9. Information on how to do market research**
- 10. Concept for quality assurance**



The process was co-developed and supported by a “Stabsstelle für Universitäre Weiterbildung” (assistant to the Rector/Vice-Rector).

Procedures June 2000 - June 2003:

- Internal survey of the State-of-the-Art of UCE (2000/01) including strengths and weaknesses
- Research on models in Austria and abroad
- Project “Profile for Services and Products in University Continuing Education”
- Involvement of relevant internal stakeholders
- Establishment of a project group “University Continuing Education”
- 3 internal Workshops with participation of Vice-Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer
- Internal feedback, work in progress
- Link to the “formal system” (University commission for Research, Rectorate, integration in management by objectives catalogue)
- Final workshop with external consultant (→ final profile)
- Implementation

Results June 2000 - June 2003:

- ✓ A new organisational unit “Center for Continuing Education” - a clear profile
- ✓ Involvement of all relevant internal stakeholders
- ✓ Internal network and building of trust
- ✓ New products (courses)



Experiences June 2000 - June 2003:

Positive:

- **Organisational development is participative, link to strategy development process at University level**
- **Professionalism (workshops)**
- **Productive working atmosphere, participation of the Vice-Rector**
- **Linked to but also independent of formal boards**
- **Taking scepticism and concerns into account**
- **Vision: capacity to act and commitment**

Critical aspects:

- **Long process, parallel: management by objectives for the whole university**
- **In general: organisational development processes: not all are familiar with them; “waste of money”**
- **Raise expectations and not able to fulfil them**
- **Organisational development is not a “serious” business (compared to “top-down”)**

2013: From “university continuing education” to a LLL-approach?

- **“University Continuing Education”**
- **“University Continuing Professional Development”**
- **“University Lifelong Learning”**



2.2 Organisational model

June 2000: “leitungsunterstützende Stabsstelle” (assistant to Rector/Vice-Rector) - Autumn

2002: Center for Continuing Education

Autumn 2004: Association for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning

Summer 2006: The UNI for LIFE Ltd. – Continuing Professional Development for Business and Industry, for graduates/post-graduates, for the University (<http://www.uniforlife.at>);

and the Center for Continuing Education - “Education for All” – research-based programmes of general interest courses at university level for public access, Learning in Later Life (<http://zfw.uni-graz.at/>); our programmes offer: “university learning processes”, i.e. research-based – State-of-the-Art; critical and reflective approach, also taking into consideration the experience and knowledge being brought into the process by participants from their individual environments and their work; “social inclusion of older people” by means of access to general education at university level

Parallel to: University Continuing Education in faculties/institutes or outsourced, University for Children/Junior University (10-18), faculties and institutes, Alumni Association, staff development courses (also open to external participants)

Providing appropriate guidance and counselling services

In summary: flexible structure, able to be responsive to changing environments





2.3 Provision & quality

General interest courses at university level for public access – Civic & Community Programmes; training; specialised programmes up to Master's Programmes (including languages, IT-skills, soft skills...)

Staff development programmes (special unit within the Personnel Unit) – partly accessible for external participants

Continuing professional development and training of staff in their specific fields (research and university administration) | IT-Training including financial software | Activities of associations and Alumni networks

Formats: from public lectures addressing a wide audience to short courses and diploma courses and up to Master's programmes lasting several semesters

Money: from “no fees” to “cost-covering fees”

Certificates: from “confirmation of participation/certificate of attendance” → “university certificates” → “Master's degrees”

Quality: Quality Management Cycle University of Graz (shared responsibility university quality management – academic directors of programmes / management – instructors – adm/tech staff; and other systems; LQW; EMBA / FIBAA





5. Partnerships and collaboration at a regional, national and European level

- **Within the framework of a cooperation agreement for the provision of services, e.g. the live broadcast of a lecture (“Montagsakademie”)**
- **For the development of lifelong learning: joint development work leads to an increase in quality, acceptance and recognition of lifelong learning programmes; partnerships with:**
 - **Learners and potential learners**
 - **Experts in the most diverse fields of study; researchers in education/continuing education**
 - **Profit/non-profit, public organisations and companies**
 - **Adult education centres and universities**
 - **Policy makers, Ministries, regional government, municipalities, technology centres**
- **Sharing the costs: cooperation with partners able to provide financial support and/or sponsoring of materials, e.g. paper; joint use of modern information technology**
- **Public relations and marketing: can be very costly; cooperation with partners for using the media can take on many varied forms to provide mutual benefit**
- **Cooperation with continuing education networks such as AUCEN and EUCEN; also with the Austrian Expert Group on Learning in Later Life (in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection)**





Continued...

At European level:

Benefit for an individual university – EUCEN-European University Continuing Education Network: Exchange – contacts – staff development

Practice – Research – policy development; across sectors; European conferences and seminars

**Output: Recommendations – guidelines – checklists – reports – evaluations – models;
Overall goal: quality**

EU projects supporting institutional development; an example:

ALLUME – A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe | <http://allume.eucen.eu/>

Two invitations:

AUCEN Autumn Seminar 2013, Wed 15 October, Brussels (Tues 15 October: Two final project events – DIALOGUE and OBSERVAL-NET)

46th EUCEN European Conference, Wed 11 – Fri 13 June 2013, Warsaw

www.eucen.eu





6. Outlook - Challenges at institutional level:

- **Profiles/strategies**: Do we – as an organisation – want to contribute to a national lifelong learning system and to what extent? For whom? (individuals, organisations) How can we as universities find our priorities in a competitive higher education landscape? (e.g. MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses) How can we attract teachers seeing research and continuing education as interconnected?
- **Who are our learners** and how can we support them in offering individual pathways into higher education and in transition periods throughout their lives? → more guidance and counselling (do we have staff prepared for that?); „transition periods“; flexible access points: time, physical and virtual; teaching and learning setting: supporting didactics (how to deal with diversity in the student population); who pays (what?) for ULLL? Who teaches in ULLL? Or better: facilitates adult expert learning? Recognition of Prior Learning; Older learners (2060: about 30% of the European population will be over 65 years old); not only „individuals“, also community development
- **Institutional collaboration / joint development**: How can we support business and industry/the public sector/NGOs with short- and long-term provision? Which platforms do we need to initiate dialogue and concrete joint action?
- **Quality Development and Assurance**; organisation and staff development, ULLL a growing area of employment – new roles, new skills needed





Challenges at national level:

- To what extent does politics/public administration take responsibility for providing a supportive framework for implementing lifelong learning?
 - Two examples: Financing lifelong learning over the lifespan (Higher Education Institutions alone cannot solve the problem); Recognition of Prior Learning – the state can provide a platform for negotiations; link to the implementation of the national qualification framework
- Is there a common understanding of „quality“? AQA project „Qualitätsentwicklung der Weiterbildung an Hochschulen“ – Recommendations 2012
- Impact of national strategies for lifelong learning? – autonomy of universities? Sufficient collaboration across educational sectors?

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