FLLLEX-Radar
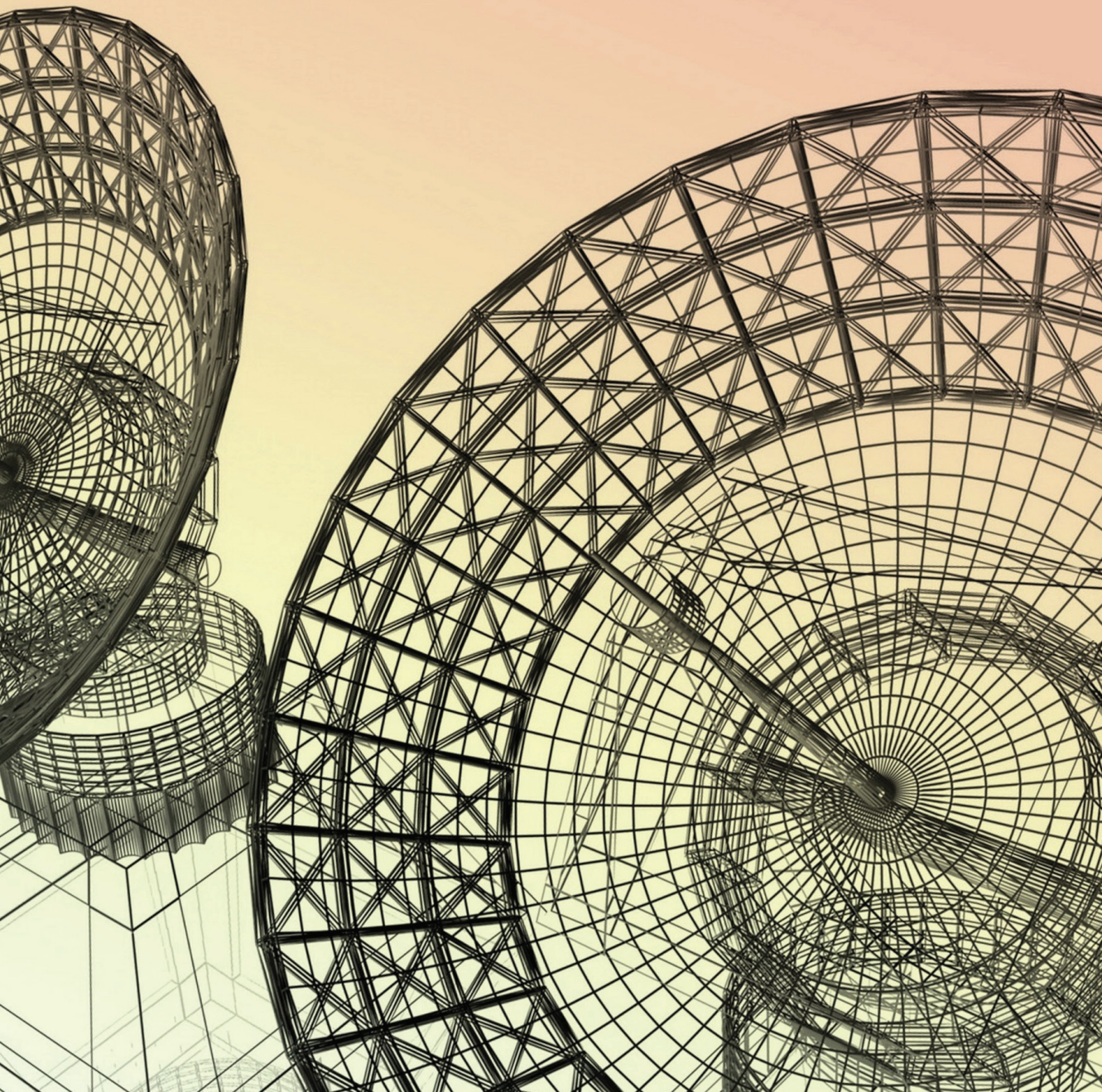
A self-assessment instrument for
Lifelong Learning in Professional Higher Education

FLLLEX–Radar:

A self-assessment instrument for Lifelong Learning in Professional Higher Education

Self-assessment instrument

The FLLLEX-Radar is a self-assessment instrument that will help you to assess and reflect on the situation of Lifelong Learning (LLL) at your institution. The FLLLEX-Radar is designed to address the challenges and implications stemming from the incorporation of Lifelong Learning into European higher education institutions (HEIs).

The main priority of the use made of the Radar is **to promote discussion and food for thought** through analysis of different strategic areas linked to the development of Lifelong Learning in the coming years.

The purpose of a self-evaluation like this is not to rank the individual institutions, but to strengthen the position of institutions within their national and international contexts. The focus is clearly on 'enhancement' rather than 'accountability'. In this respect, one of the more important tasks to be carried out by institutions in the self-assessment process is oriented towards the organisation and facilitating of debates and discussion on Lifelong Learning provision among the institutional members and with relevant stakeholders.

The instrument is an outcome of the FLLLEX project ('The Impact of Lifelong Learning Strategies on Professional Higher Education'), an EU funded project within the framework of the Transversal Programme, Key Activity 1. Eight HEIs from eight different countries have developed and tested the tool. The objective of the project is to identify challenges and implications of Lifelong Learning (LLL) incorporation into European higher education institutions (HEI's), with special attention given to the recognition of prior learning and to different aspects of the management and services within higher education institutions.

Results and Recommendations of the FLLLEX project are summarized in Towards an institutional strategy of Lifelong Learning in Higher Professional Education. This publication, as well as more detailed reports of the different work packages, can be found on www.FLLLEX.eu.

Why assess the implementation of LLL?

HEI's remain a preferential partner in most countries for the governing bodies responsible to implement the national goals of LLL. HEI's have a particular role to fulfil in the landscape of LLL, together with or among all other stakeholders, including lifelong learners, social partners/employers and training providers (profit and non-profit). The project would like to assess this role, as determined by the national policies and as perceived by the institutions themselves. The FLLLEX-Radar assesses in the first place if your institution matches up with the expectations of the different stakeholders.

The aims of the self-assessment are:

- To develop an analysis of the current situation for Lifelong Learning provision in higher education institutions.

- To provide food for thought, at different levels within higher education institutions, on the future development of Lifelong Learning.

- To open dialogues with stakeholders and other groups of interest on Lifelong Learning provision.

- To enhance quality assurance frameworks for Lifelong Learning provision.

Therefore, the FLLLEX self-assessment tool is organised according to *four core dimensions:*

1. Analysis of the broader context
2. Lifelong Learning provision at the HEI (current situation)
3. Institutional policy (preferred situation)
4. Quality assurance in the institution

Each dimension can be assessed separately. However, it is suggested to tackle those in the order as proposed in this guide and build upon the results of the previous one.

The FLLLEX-Radar is meant to serve as a **starting point for strategy development.** Hence it is designed to be used only one time within the institution, not for repetitions in a cyclical mode. Although we are aware that carrying out a self-assessment requires substantial staffing resources, we are convinced that if discussions of the focus groups are well organised, the result should be very relevant for establishing new institutional strategies for Lifelong Learning.

How to use the FLLLEX-Radar?

This section can be read as a user-guide for carrying out a self-assessment using the FLLLEX-Radar. The self-assessment process consists of 8 main steps, as described below. The questions that are to be addressed in the Radar can be found in the next session. No Higher Educational Institution is the same and therefore both the self-assessment process as and the questions will have to be adapted to your local situation.

Step 1: Set up a FLLLEX-Radar team

The first step is to set up a team to organise and carry out the FLLLEX-Radar, with the following composition being suggested:
- a chairperson who leads the exercise,
- a rapporteur/researcher (compiling information on the context, taking notes during Focus Group meetings, in charge of preparing the self-assessment report).

The FLLLEX-Radar team needs to be installed by the institutional management and sufficient time needs to be allocated for carrying out the self-assessment. Main tasks of the team include:
- To communicate purpose, method and outcomes of the self-assessment within the institution and with external stakeholders.
- To inform Management on progress and discuss the outcomes.
- To select and invite Focus Group members, organise and chair the meetings.
- Prepare the self-assessment report.

Step 2: Compile context information

The FLLLEX-Radar team compiles and summarizes all relevant (more or less objective) information needed in answering the questions:
- Retrieve information on the broader context of Lifelong Learning, as requested in part 1, Questions 1 – 3 of the next section.
- Collect existing information (if available) and documents relevant for answering the questions in part 2 and 3. For example information from policy and strategy documents, programme guides, statistics (e.g. student input and output numbers) or finance documents. If part 4 of the FLLLEX-Radar is relevant for your institution you should also collect the relevant quality assurance information.

- Summarize and present the relevant available information for each question. The information may not only be used for the context description in the final report, but could also feed the discussions in the focus groups.

Step 3: Appoint Focus Groups

The FLLLEX-Radar team appoints *focus groups* in which stakeholders from different key areas within the institution are represented as well as the most important external stakeholders in Lifelong Learning. The ideal size for a focus group is generally between 6 and 12 people. This size group encourages participants to contribute their ideas.

Useful resources for working with focus groups:
http://focusgroups.pbworks.com
http://www.omni.org/docs/focusgrouptoolkit.pdf

> **A focus group** is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, concept, existing situation and/or preferred situation. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

Possible representations in the Focus Groups:

FG1 – Management and other policymakers:
A group must be made up of the institution's main decision-makers with responsibilities in lifelong learning provision: central office executives, deans, director of the unit for educational development and other relevant executives within the institution are to be included in the focus group.

FG2 – Teachers
A second focus group should be composed of lecturers, especially those involved in lifelong learning programmes.

FG3 – Students
A third group could combine students, especially those who could be regarded as lifelong learners, but also students in regular programmes can be included.

FG4 – External stakeholders
Another relevant group might include significant stakeholders directly linked with the need for good lifelong learning provision at the institution: employers or employer organisations, representatives from local or regional government etc. may all be invited.

Other focus groups may be appointed where relevant. Also consider to include alumni/ representatives of the alumni association and non-teaching staff.
The invitation for the focus group members should at least contain information on goals and purpose of the FLLLEX-Radar and the process and practical organisation of the focus group meeting. You may already provide them with some general context information on Lifelong Learning in your country or decide to

present this information as introduction to the focus group discussion. In this case the FLLLEX-Radar team may prepare a presentation, an introductory movie or an information sheet for the participants.

Examples and relevant documentation can be found on www.FLLLEX.eu.

Step 4: Prepare questions for each Focus Group

Select questions

The entire set of questions is too extensive to be discussed in a Focus Group meeting. Hence the FLLLEX-Radar team needs to make a selection of questions for each focus group. Factors to be

	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
Q1	X		X	
Q2	X	X		
...				

considered in this selection are the relevance of the question for the institution, the information compiled in Step 2 and the interests and expected knowledge of the FG members on the different topics. The selection results in a grid that indicates which questions will be addressed by which focus group.

If the FLLLEX-Radar Team is unsure on the selections of the questions they may consider sending the list of questions to the focus group member prior to the meeting and asking for their main interests.

Translate and define tailored questions

Once this is done you will have to define the questions for each focus group. For some topics the questions may be literally translated, but for other topics you will have to make your own interpretation and translation of the question. The formulated questions for each focus group will be based on the information collected in step 2, tailored to the situation in your institution and to the focus group.

General recommendations for defining questions:

- It is important that **FG 1 (Management)** is the first focus group to work with the questions. In ideal circumstances, this group is requested to answer all questions in part 2 and 3. As such, these answers become a reference within the institution for the other focus groups.
- For the topics in **part 1** (Assessing the broader context) the information that was retrieved by the FLLLEX-Radar team-should be summarized and – where relevant – presented to the Focus Group to obtain their perception of the described context.
- Bear in mind that the main objective of the FLLLEX-Radar is to discuss and provide food for thought regarding the institutional position and engagement for the development of lifelong learning. This is also the reason why some questions may seem one-dimensional. They intend to stimulate discussion, not to lead to a benchmarking.

Step 5: Conduct Focus Group meetings

After thorough preparation the Focus Group discussions are conducted. The chairperson facilitates the discussion by asking open questions, promoting debate and encouraging participant-participant discussion. The rapporteur takes notes and provides the Focus Group afterwards with a report of the meeting.

Step 6: Draw up LLL Radar-Report

The FLLLEX-Radar Team draws up a LLL Radar-Report on the results of the self-assessment. This Report is for internal use within the institution and should be max. 30 pages large.
The suggested structure of the report includes:

1. **A preliminary chapter** with the main facts of the self-assessment exercise (composition of the self-assessment team and focus groups, agenda of meetings, etc.).
2. An **introduction on the institution's current position**, in terms of the provision of programmes and other teaching activities aimed at lifelong learners, based on evidence.
3. The purpose of the core part of the report is to obtain related ideas and answers to the proposed questions. In this part of the report it is important to reflect the **viewpoint of the focus groups** and identify main difference or agreements in their answers as well as the concerns and innovative thoughts of ideas.
4. A chapter for **conclusions**, including the strongest points or best practices for lifelong learning provision that have been identified (a list with no more than 10 items is recommended) and a statement with enhancement opportunities for LLL within the institution (a priority list with no more than 10 items is suggested).
5. You may also wish to compile a **digital library** with documents or sections of documents that support and regulate the policy on lifelong learning and the strategy for lifelong learning provision at the institution (strategic plan, institutional policy, etc.).

We recommend including a set of general data on the institution (total number of students, total teaching staff, departments, budget, list of programmes delivered, etc.). These additional documents may also be provided in a digitised version.

Step 7: Review Radar Results

It is strongly suggested that the Radar Report is discussed with an external review panel. The aim of a review is to maximise impact of the Radar and to validate the link between the regional/national legislation and the praxis within the HEI. An ideal composition of this panel could be the representative of an international partner institution, a national/regional policy maker involved in LLL, a national expert in LLL (e.g. among Bologna experts), a stakeholder (e.g. employer). A representative of the management team should also attend the review meeting.

Step 8: Communication and follow up

The FLLLEX-Radar Team discusses the findings of the self-assessment with the management. The results may lead to policy proposals for the institutions Lifelong Learning strategy.

Results and possible follow-up actions will then have to be communicated within the institution and to external stakeholders.

Self-evaluation questions

Part 1: Assessing the broader context

Assessing the impact of LLL on HEI's starts with a good overview of the different strategies concerning LLL and the instruments to implement those strategies, such as Recognition of Prior Learning and Work Based Learning in your country.

> This first chapter of the questionnaire is thus aimed at providing a view of the context from the institutional perspective. The resulting viewpoint on the context is, of course, subjective. Nevertheless, it is recommended that **complementary perceptions be obtained from different stakeholders** to underpin this subjective viewpoint. The main idea is to identify what the opportunities and limitations of the current context are from different points of view.

Q1. Sketch the policy situation on LLL in your country

Before starting the actual focus groups, we suggest that the self-assessment team briefly considers the policy situation in its country. In particular, we recommend that the team (and the institution by extension) familiarises itself with the so-called policy hooks for LLL. Those policy hooks are elements which may promote the implementation of LLL within a region/country. By hook we mean a state or EU policy, directive or piece of legislation that legitimises activities by a HEI. For individual HEI's the type or intensity of response to a particular policy hook will vary depending on the extent to which it believes it has freedom of action in the policy matter. The policy hooks and expected freedom of action are presented in the grid below. Please indicate here which of the mentioned policy hooks are available in your country.

Policy 'Hooks'	Freedom of Action by Individual HEI	Observation
Legal framework/legislation	Limited	
Participation rates	Limited	
Funding and investment	Limited	
Flexibility and access to learning pathways	Limited/Moderate	Depending on the legal arrangements governing the access, transfer and progression of students individual HEIs may have opportunities to enhance progression pathways
Link between education and work	Moderate	Depending on the mission of the HEI some opportunities exist to enhance the link between education and work

		Where member states have introduced qualifications frameworks and enabling regulations/policies HEIs have significant freedom of control to publicise these developments
Transparency of qualifications system	Moderate	Where member states have introduced qualifications frameworks and enabling regulations/policies HEIs have significant freedom of control to publicise these developments
Public awareness and perception of Lifelong Learning	Significant	Individually or collectively through representative bodies HEIs can widely promote public awareness of Lifelong Learning
Link with wider EU developments	Significant	Individual HEIs have tended not to get involved in EU wide projects and other developments. Such involvement potentially greatly enriches the Lifelong Learning agenda within an HEI
Involvement and support of key stakeholders	Significant	Many opportunities exist at no cost to involve wide ranging groups of stakeholders into the Lifelong Learning agenda
Information and guidance for learners and potential learners	Significant	Many opportunities exist for individual HEIs to significantly enhance the information flow to potential learners
Recognition of all forms of learning	Significant	RPL and APL are EU wide policy requirements and individual HEIs should have policies and practices in place to accommodate this aspect of Lifelong Learning
Cost of Education – support/ initiatives	Moderate	Although funding policy is outside the remit of HEIs, where LLL is regarded as of strategic importance flexibility exists to design counselling, guidance and mentoring initiatives that are low or no cost
Other:		

Source: FLLLEX consortium (2012): Towards an institutional policy for Lifelong Learning in Higher Professional Education. FLLLEX project results and recommendations.

Q2. Identification of stakeholders

Is there a policy within the HEI to identify possible stakeholders regarding LLL and is it possible to provide a list of those stakeholders?

Q3. List of other LLL providers

What is the relation of your institution to other training providers? What is the comparative advantage of your HEI? Can you map those providers? As a starting point for indicating other LLL providers you could use the categories below:
- Higher Education Institution
- Centre for Adult Education
- Private training provider
- Public provider focused towards specific target groups
- Sectoral organisation

Part 2: Lifelong learning provision at the Institution

(Describe the current situation)

This part deals with measuring the adequacy of the resources and management mechanisms that support the current lifelong learning provision within your HEI.

Q4. Definition of Lifelong Learning

Can a definition be formulated of LLL as seen within the institution?
This question should be addressed by each focus group at the start of the meeting.

Q5 Policy

Does your institution have a policy on LLL? What is the degree of implementation (as perceived by the focus groups)?

Q6 Leadership and lifelong learning at the institution

Where is leadership (related to decision makers in the HEI) shown in relation to lifelong learning? How is the management involved in lifelong learning? Give examples of when/where the management mentioned LLL.

Do you have an organisation or cell for LLL and what is its position within the organisation?

Q7 The existing provision of lifelong learning at the institution

Provide a list of all activities which the institution considers to form part of lifelong learning. If possible, cluster those activities according to the types of lifelong learning which you identify in the institution.

- Current lifelong learning being offered in terms of the number of programmes, distribution of the programmes according to academic fields, the number of students enrolled in lifelong learning programmes, the profile of enrolled students.

Q8 Design of new lifelong learning offer

To what extent does the institution have adequate mechanisms for designing and implementing new lifelong learning activities? Consider the following:

- Mechanisms to involve employers and other social actors in the process of designing and accepting new activities (contents, learning outcomes, etc.)
- The use of strategies to develop effective and efficient lifelong learning offer (work-based learning, e-learning, collaborative modules with other programmes, etc.)

Q9 Research and professional experience of the teaching staff involved in lifelong learning courses

Taking into account the lifelong learning provision currently being offered and the institutional objectives for this type of education, what is your experience on:

- Teaching staff involved in lifelong learning (take into account, where applicable, the case of teaching/learning services provided by staff working outside the institution). Consider: a) the number of academic staff and their contribution to the quality development of lifelong learning provision (academic and professional experience); and b) the regulations concerning working hours and teaching load.
- The role of teaching staff in introducing and expanding lifelong learning within the institution.
- Does the current distribution of teaching staff within the institution, together with their different roles, encourage the development of lifelong learning? Is there a platform for meeting on LLL?
- To what extent are the skills of all teaching staff effectively developed? Consider their functions in managing current provision and developing the quality of future provision in lifelong learning.

Q10 Involvement of non-teaching staff in the provision of lifelong learning

Aside from general tasks, what additional roles are undertaken by non-academic staff in the field of lifelong learning provision? How does the institution define additional roles to be performed by non-teaching staff for the promotion and enhancement of lifelong learning courses and programmes? Is there a training policy to cover these additional requirements? In short, what is different from the general tasks?

Q11 Financial, human and material resources for life-long learning courses (from the learners' perspective)

Taking into account the current national/regional context of public funding, to what extent does lifelong learning provision requires additional funding by learners and public and/or private enterprise?

Q12 Financial, human and material resources for lifelong learning courses (from the institutional perspective)

What resources are allocated to supporting lifelong learning provision? Amongst other things, take into account:

- Partnerships with employers and other social organisations that support lifelong learning.
- Use of mechanisms for prior learning recognition.
- Use of mechanisms for post-learning recognition (awards, personal development plan, etc.)
- Tutoring systems.
- IT resources

Q13 Promotion of lifelong learning

How does the institution promote its lifelong learning activities? Describe the current target groups (see also context in Part 1) and the communication strategies for each target group.

Part 3: Institutional policy

(Describe the preferred situation)

This part is organised around 2 main issues: the main outlines of institutional policy for lifelong learning, and how the institution organises its policy formulation. The analysis done in Part 2 should facilitate the reflection on the future institutional lifelong learning policy.

Q14 Strategy formulation

What process is used to formulate the institution's strategy for lifelong learning provision?

- Does the institution have formal procedures for defining the policy for lifelong learning?
- How are the preferences of lifelong learners and others stakeholders taken into account in your policy? Are they invited to put forward suggestions?
- How does the institution stay in touch with current developments, partners, and relevant bodies for lifelong learning implementation?
- Within the institution, who/what staff is/are directly responsible for defining the policy for lifelong learning?
- How the institution stays in touch with the social and economic trends within the region and how are those trends incorporated in the policy?

Q15 Main policy lines

If your institution has a policy for lifelong learning: what are your institution's main objectives and priorities for the provision of lifelong learning? The following elements might be considered in the analysis in terms of their presence or absence in institutional documents and the precise description of and anticipated outcomes for each one.

Area 1: Access to lifelong learning: present/absent

- Accessibility to lifelong learning (take into account if special attention is given to groups of students that are under-represented).
- Recognition of prior learning.
- Guidance and counselling services for prospective lifelong learners.
- The institution's activity as a role model for lifelong learning in other institutions and organisations.
- Coordination between lifelong learning provision and other forms of higher education.

Area 2: Quality of lifelong learning: present/absent

- The concept of quality in lifelong learning provision (Does the institution have internal quality standards for lifelong learning provision in terms of inputs, delivery and outcomes?).
- The provision of creative learning environments for lifelong learners (lifelong learning interaction with research undertaken at the institution, the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation, lifelong learners as co-producers, etc.).
- The process for designing new programmes (for lifelong learners) and their intended learning outcomes, with special reference to employability.
- Partnership between public authorities, higher education institutions, students, employers and employees.

Area 3: Measures to support the provision: present/absent

- Teaching staff policy for lifelong learning provision (Is there any particular policy on the recruitment or selection of staff, evaluation, promotion, recognition, remuneration, etc. in lifelong learning courses and programmes?).
- Teaching staff policy for lifelong learning provision (Is there any particular policy on the recruitment or selection of staff, evaluation, promotion, recognition, remuneration, etc. in lifelong learning courses and programmes?).
- Promotion of flexible learning paths (including part-time studies, work based routes).
- Guidance and counselling services for lifelong learners and potential learners.
- Funding principles and strategies at the institution level for lifelong learning.
- Internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.
- Organisational structures within the institution (Is there any particular action for lifelong learning?).

Area 4: Information on the provision of lifelong learning: present/absent

- Public information about lifelong learning provision and transparency (related quality).
- Accountability.

Area 5: Participation in national/international networks, associations developing lifelong learning: present/absent

- Contributions to national policies.
- Contributions at the international level to achieve the policy aim of increasing lifelong learning.

Part 4: Quality Assurance in the institution

This final chapter is addressed to analyse if the institution has adequate and efficient mechanisms for quality assurance and for implementing recommendations and enhancement plans to do with lifelong learning. The questions in this will only be useful for those HEIs which have already implemented a policy on LLL.

Q16 Quality assessment

To what extent are lifelong learning courses and programmes internally and/or externally assessed? If so,

- Do quality assurance processes produce statements with indicators and results?
- Does your institution have indicators on LLL?
- Does the institution publish indicators for accountability purposes and/or to disseminate lifelong learning practices and their impact to interested audiences?

Q17 Measuring results

Is it possible to benchmark the institution's position at the national/regional level in terms of the lifelong learning that it offers?

- What indicators on lifelong learning are used by your institution to follow up and evaluate institutional policy for lifelong learning?
- What kinds of indicators are needed but have still not been included in the institutional dashboard?

Q18 Alignment of QA and improvement strategy

- Does internal quality assurance provide sufficient component elements on the situation of lifelong learning provision (quality, development, recommendations, etc.) to stimulate food for thought as well as proposals for enhancement?
- Does the institution work with adequate information channels to disseminate good practices in lifelong learning to the entire community?

FLLLEX-Consortium

The FLLLEX-Project was initiated and supported by EURASHE, the European Association of Higher Education Institution. It is coordinated by KHLeuven – Leuven University College and involves a consortium of 23 partners from 10 European countries.

The FLLLEX consortium consists of the following participating organisations and institutions:

Higher education institutions: Clydebank College (United Kingdom); Hanzehogeschool (Netherlands); IuT de Saint-Nazaire (France); KHLeuven - Leuven University College (Belgium); Laurea University (Finland); Letterkenny Institute of Technology (Ireland); Vilnius College (Lithuania); Yasar University (Turkey).

National Organisations for Profession-oriented higher education: L'Association des Directeurs d'IUT (ADIUT) (France); Council of Flemish Institutions of Higher Education (VLHORA) (Belgium); Council of Higher Education (YOK) (Turkey); Institutes of Technology Ireland (IoTI) (Ireland); Lithuanian Colleges Directors' Conference (LKDK) (Lithuania); Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE) (Finland); West of Scotland Colleges' Partnership (WOSCOP) (United Kingdom).

Structural Partners: Banku Augstskola (BA) (Latvia); Educonsult (Belgium); European Association for Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE); European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); 3s research lab (3s) (Austria).

Advisory Board: Business Europe; Education International; European Students' Union.

Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme