



# Innovation, Third Mission and Lifelong Learning: Challenges for the Future

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european university  
continuing education network

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# Agenda

- Positioning
- Blueprints for the future
- Developments in the innovation laboratory
- European developments
- Future challenges and priorities

Posizionamento  
**POSITIONING**

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# University Lifelong Learning

University Lifelong Learning (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.

(eucen, n.d.)

# Third Mission

Area	Fields of action
Continuing education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (higher) vocational education and training</li><li>• Academic continuing education</li></ul>
Technology and knowledge transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge development</li><li>• Knowledge transfer</li><li>• Knowledge marketing</li></ul>
Social engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Civic engagement</li><li>• Community service</li><li>• Widening participation</li></ul>

(Henke, Pasternack & Schmid, 2015)

# Innovative universities

- conducting disciplinary and interdisciplinary research in international and cross-institutional cooperation,
- providing basic and continuing education with curricula that foster innovation skills
- being integrated into the regional economic and social environment and being actively involved in innovation processes, and
- making productive use of disciplinary differences and tensions between the universities' tasks, knowledge, education, and innovation

(Poetzsch-Heffter & Wehn, 2018)

# The role of ULLL

- in-between entity
- mediating between inside and outside of academia
- boundary spanner and operating at the fringe
- gateway to society and as a testing zone for innovation

(Dadze-Arthur, Mörth & Cendon, 2020; Cendon, Schulte & Mörth, 2021)

# ULLL - Layers of innovation

Layers of innovation	Examples
Product innovation	Improved or new modules, study programmes
Process innovation	New form of delivery, new guidelines for recognition of prior learning
Position innovation	Offering a programme to a new target group
Paradigm innovation	Changes of basic assumptions, i.e. ULLL becomes a key function

(Cendon, Schulte & Mörth, 2021)



Progetti per il futuro

# BLUEPRINTS FOR THE FUTURE

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# Driving forces

- Digitalisation penetrating all areas
- Increasing international competition
- Radically changing working environments
- Rapidly changing environmental conditions
- The need for continuous learning

(Cawood 2018, Orr et al., 2019, Ehlers, 2020)

# Blueprints for the future

- Transformation of the education system through digitalisation (OECD, 2019)
- Diversified learning biographies, individual learning paths (Orr et al., 2019)
- Necessary future skills (Ehlers & Kellermann, 2019)
- Fluid structures, different profiles (Cendon et al., 2020)

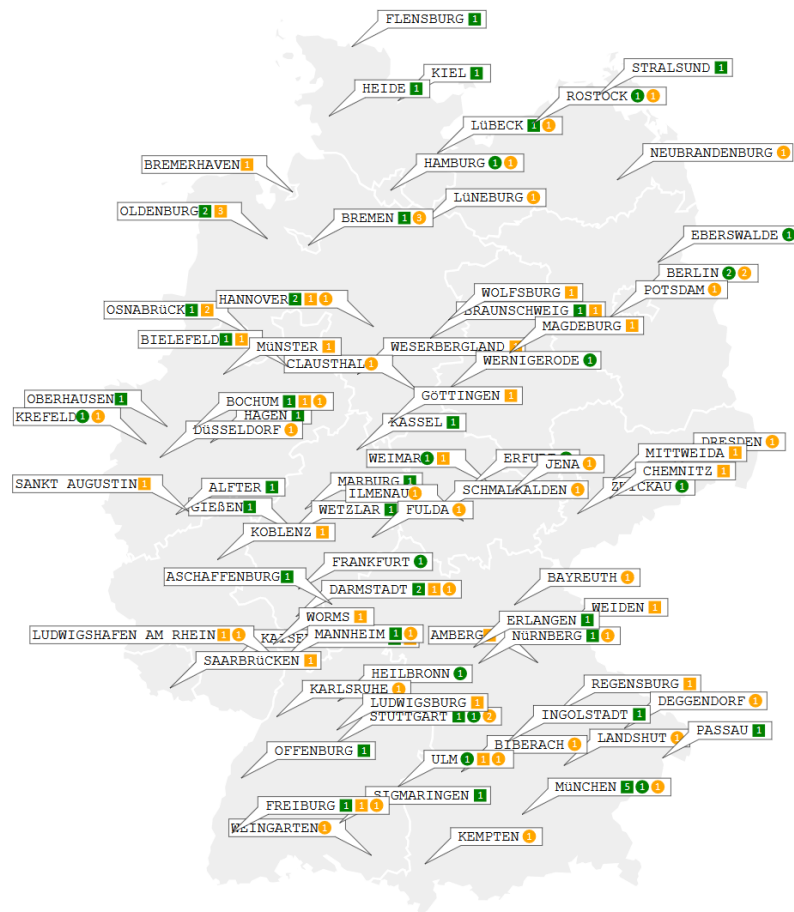
Sviluppi nel Laboratorio di innovazione

# DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INNOVATION LAB

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# Federal-Länder Competition "Advancement through Education: Open Universities" (2011-2020)



- 250 million euros funding
- 100 participating universities
- 77 projects
- 376 new offers
- [www.offene-hochschulen.de](http://www.offene-hochschulen.de)

## Goals:

- Ensure demand for skilled workers
- Increase permeability
- Improve knowledge transfer
- Raise the profile of LLL

# Developments and trends I

- Diversification of the thematic orientation in the programmes
- Blended learning formats as standard
- Diversification of degrees with simultaneous systematisation (CAS, DAS)
- From longer study programmes to shorter formats
- Development of polyvalent programmes

(Nickel & Thiele, 2020)

# Developments and trends II

- Modularisation taken seriously and revitalised
- Recognition of and interlinking with vocationally acquired competences in many forms
- Boundaries between undergraduate and continuing education become blurred
- Field of tension between periphery and centre
- Research-based - practice-oriented

(Cendon, Elsholz et al., 2020)

Sviluppi europei

# EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

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# European developments

- Focus on lifelong learning (European Commission, 2020)
- Micro-credentials (European Commission, 2021a)
- Individual learning accounts (European Commission, 2021b)
- Green skills and green transition (Bianchi et al., 2022)

# Micro-credentials – a working definition

*“Micro-credential’ means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following **a small volume of learning**. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and **clearly defined standards**. [...] Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared, are portable and may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.”*  
(European Commission, 2021a, p. 66; emphasis EC)

# eucen and micro-credentials

- micro-credentials provide a multi-faceted form for supporting lifelong learning and serve very important goals of university lifelong learning both for social inclusion *and* for supporting employability
- They *advance* the recognition of prior learning by facilitating the process of recognition – given there are transparent clear standards in place
- They help ULLL-centres to *respond* more quickly to both societal and professional needs and thereby to liaise with different providers of learning always with the goal to fully apply quality standards of higher learning
- They bring new skills and competencies that can *enhance* existing programmes and help shaping individual learning paths and learning goals of students both in work-based learning programmes and in lifelong learning programmes
- They *enable* further enhancement of partnerships with enterprises /industry/community in designing and developing curricula with experts both from academia and enterprises

(Cendon, Atabarut & Royo, 2021)

# Aspects to consider

- The micro-credential needs to include the central learning outcomes as both prerequisite and important currency for the recognition of prior learning
- Level and scope of learning needs to be defined for a better understanding of where the micro-credential is positioned in the continuum of learning
- Holistic approach of the programmes; it is about developing knowledge and understanding not merely enhancing economic potential
- Learning has been assessed and that the assessment method corresponds to the learning outcomes as this is important for the recognition of prior learning
- Quality assurance system to ensure that the level of knowledge is gained
- Standardisation is important and special attention should be given to preventing commercial exploitation through micro-credentials
- Recognition needs to be decided by university or UCE centre

(Cendon, Atabarut & Royo, 2021)

Sfide e priorità future

# FUTURE CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

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# Individual learning paths

- Validation of prior learning
- “Credit modules” as part of study programmes
- Enabling different entry points
- Guidance and advice on individual learning paths

# Variety of learning opportunities

- Different modes of delivery (multimodal, inclusive forms)
- Stackable portfolio of programmes
- Building blocks for individual composition and “learning à la carte”
- Different degree options

# Reflexive framework for practice

- Building bridges and connections
- Critical thinking and critical judgement skills
- Portfolios and reflective essays
- Projects, practitioner research and forms of action research



# Overarching learning architectures

- From the small to the big
- Linking corporate programmes with individual opportunities for "saddling up"
- Cross-institutional cooperation with other educational institutions, companies, the public sector for forms of work-based learning
- Individual curricula as "negotiated learning" (Mörth, Cendon & Klages, 2020)

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**Thank you for your attention**

*Grazie per la sua attenzione*

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