**A NETWORK FOR DEVELOPING
LIFELONG LEARNING
INARMENIA, GEORGIA AND UKRAINE
(LeAGUe)**

NATIONAL POLICIES
OF LIFELONGLEARNING

Coordinating Institution:
ANGEL KANCHEV UNIVERSITY OF RUSE

PART 2

LIFELONG LEARNING
MONITORING WORKING MODEL

Coordinating Institution:
ILIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LEAGUE	–	Lifelong learning in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine
LNU	–	Linnaeus University
ANAU	–	Armenia National Agrarian University
GSU	–	Gavar State University
RAU	–	Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University
VSPI	–	Vanadzor State University
ALLLL	–	Armenian Lifelong Learning League
ISU	–	Ilia State University
TeSaU	–	Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University
UG	–	The University of Georgia
AEAG	–	Adult Education Association of Georgia
KNURE	–	Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics
NTUU	–	National Technical University of Ukraine Kyiv Polytechnic Ins.
ONPU	–	Odessa National Polytechnic University
TSNUK	–	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
DTU	–	Technical University of Denmark
UC	–	University of Coimbra
UR	–	Angel Kanchev University of Ruse
MOES	–	The Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Armenia
MoES	–	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
MESU	–	Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
AGU	–	Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the best practice model for monitoring of LLL programme planning and implementation. The objectives of LLL monitoring working model is to help organizations track the progress and achievements of the programmes by regularly collecting, analysing and using information to assist timely decision making, ensure accountability, and provide the basis for evaluation and improvement.

The questionnaire has been developed to understand the way in which LLL programme performance monitoring is done in EU consortium countries. Partners that provided the feedback were: (1) Linnaeus University (Sweden) – LNU; (2)University of Coimbra (Portugal) – UC; (3)Danish Technical University (Denmark) – DTU; (4)University of Ruse (Bulgaria) – UR.

The questionnaire was designed so that it covered all 4 phases of LLL programme performance monitoring: **1)** *Monitoring of LLL programme planning* – information on the legal framework and procedures (EU, national, institutional), stakeholder involvement mechanisms and LLL programme concept and architecture; **2)** *Monitoring of LLL programme implementation*– information on the legal framework/procedures, admission/graduation processes and student support; **3)** *Monitoring of LLL programme appraisal*– information on the legal framework/procedures, QA mechanisms, LLL programme effectiveness measurement; **4)** *Monitoring of LLL programme improvement*– information on the legal framework/procedures, improvement process.

Based on the review of the approaches used in the 4 universities from EU consortium countries the practice model for monitoring LLL programme development has been proposed that can be used by AGU educational institutions and relevant LLL organizations and further adapted to the specific needs and context.

3.   INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of identifying the best model of LLL Programme monitoring in the EU consortium countries a questionnaire has been developed and the feedback has been collected from the LeAGUe project partners (Linnaeus University (LNU), Technical University of Denmark (DTU), University of Coimbra(UC) and Angel Kanchev University of Ruse(UR).

The questionnaire consisted of 4 sets of questions concerning:
1: MONITORING OF LLL PROGRAMME PLANNING
2: MONITORING OF LLL PROGRMME IMPLEMENTATION
3: MONITORING OF LLL PROGRAMME APPRAISAL
4: MONITORING OF LLL PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT

The presented report contains the analyses of the collected feedback by the LeAGUe project partners and based on the review of the approaches used in the EU consortium countries it proposes the best practice model for LLL programme monitoring that can be implemented in AGU educational institutions.

The objectives of the working model of LLL programme monitoring is to help organizations track the progress and achievements of the LLL programmes by regularly collecting, analysing and using information to assist timely decision making, ensure accountability, and provide the basis for evaluation and improvement.

4. UNDERSTANDING THE WAY IN WHICH LLL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE MONITORING IS DONE IN EU CONSORTIUM COUNTRIES

4.1. Monitoring of LLL Programme Planning

The first part of the questionnaire is aimed at collecting information on the legal framework and procedures, stakeholder involvement mechanisms and LLL program concept and structure development employed by LNU, DTU, UC and UR to shape and establish their LLL programmes.

Legal Frameworks / Procedures
The key questions were:
- What are the legal framework/ procedures regulating the development of LLL programmes on national and on institutional level?
- What institutional procedures are followed on the LLL programme planning level by the EU institutions?

The European Union has a supportive role in the development of a shared vision on education and training policies including the idea of Lifelong Learning (LLL), its policies and priorities. Member States are in charge of their own education and training systems, but they cooperate within the EU framework in order to achieve common goals. LLL instruments are being developed on behalf of the Ministries responsible for LLL and vocational education and training in the 34 European countries and social partners at European level. This cooperation has resulted in agreements on quality, guidance and validation, on founding a *European Qualification Framework* (EQF), the development of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). It means that the participating countries commit themselves to continue their national implementation efforts in making higher education comparable across Europe. For the purpose of translation of different national qualifications in different EU countries and for joining the qualifications of different EU members together, the European –wide qualifications framework (EQF) has been adopted. The EQF aims to facilitate mobility of students and workers within the EU in order to encourage development of mobile and flexible workforce throughout Europe and to help develop lifelong learning. A *European Reference Framework for Qualifications for Lifelong Learning* (the European Qualification Framework, EQF) is a tool to enable qualification levels (course certificates,

professional certificates, etc.) to be easily understood and compared, both by individuals and employers, across different European countries. It serves also to increase, ease and stimulate the mobility of individuals and facilitate their lifelong learning. All Tempus partner countries are encouraged to relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF so that all new qualifications issued from 2012 onwards carry a reference to an appropriate EQF level. Also the *Higher Education Act* as a general document, specifying the organization, funding and key players involved in higher education is used. The EQF national coordination points have been designated for this purpose in each Tempus partner country. The EQF is divided into eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do – "learning outcomes", where level one is the lowest and level eight the highest (equivalent to doctorate degree).

Along with the *European Qualification Framework* as a primary EU regulatory document, some universities provide a detailed description of institutional procedures for LLL programme planning on the university level;some refer only to general documents concerning development of educational programme curricula and syllabi.

UC notes that the main procedures at LLL programme level are: analysis of possible demand and available internal resources; At the LNU formal document (syllabus or course plan) is developed following informal discussions by members of working and planning groups. Afterwards the document is submitted to the faculty board for approval. Decision making process regarding the development of study programmes is decentralized and it is open. As for the UR - planning of LLL programmes follows the steps outlined in the Procedural Rules for Development of New Programmes (institutional document). One of the steps for planning LLL programmes is preparing a suggestion for the development of a new educational programme including a clear motivation for the need of such a program. The motivation has to focus on:
- the need of the programme and the supposed interest in it;
- short qualification description of the program;
- a list of the HEI on a national level that provide education in such a program;
- a verification of the qualification and preparation of the lecturers responsible for the education in the specific program;
- a document describing the inventory of available and necessary resources and facilities for the first five year of education in the program;

- information for the necessary financial resources for the implementation of education and training;
- timetable for the development of the curriculum;
- information about the members of the Educational methodology commission that approves the official educational documentation.

Stakeholder Involvement

The main questions that were included in this section of the questionnaire were:

- Which are the identified stakeholders of LLL programmes in EU consortium countries?
- What mechanisms underlie the involvement of LLL programme stakeholders in EU consortium countries?
- What mechanisms are used for the active involvement of stakeholders in the LLL programme planning process?
- How is LLL programme planning linked to the needs of stakeholders?

Key Stakeholders of LLL programmes identified in EU consortium countries
• **Individuals who already have higher education but want to get a higher level degree**
• **Individuals who already have higher education but want to obtain new specialization**
• **Individuals who do not have higher education and want to acquire one**
• **Institutions / companies / business enterprises involved in LLL programmes**
• **Institutional actors and community members affected by LLL (e.g. parents)**
• **Potential employers of trained students**
• **Companies, company associations**
• **Public services**
• **NGOs**
• **Unions**
• **Professional bodies**
• **Other educational organizations**

In most cases there are no formal mechanisms for identification of stakeholders in EU consortium country universities. Though for instance in the case of LNU there are some informal connections and relations with primary and secondary

beneficiaries that ensure getting necessary signals from labour market regarding the needs of LLL programme.

As for the mechanisms for ensuring active involvement of the stakeholders in the LLL programme planning process it varies within the universities. In case of LNU the potential employers (e.g. companies, institutions, and business enterprises) are covering the costs of education of the students involved in LLL programs. LNU also stresses the participation of Students in the planning and implementation of LLL programmes. Similar to regular university courses, students are evaluating the quality of each individual LLL course. Their representatives are also sitting on the faculty board – the body which is responsible for course planning. In case of UR stakeholders are involved in a process of planning, designing and even implementation of the LLL programmes from the initial phases. They participate in the discussions of the aims and content of the LLL programmes and also provide feedback in written form. Similar to regular university courses, students evaluate the quality of each individual LLL course. They are also represented on faculty boards – bodies responsible for LLL course planning. In the case of DTU panels with members from the industry operate on university and department levels. The existence of these panels is a way to ensure compliance between the content and outcome of the LLL programme and stakeholder's interest.

In order to link the planning of the LLL programme to the needs of stakeholders some EU consortium universities have formal mechanisms in place, which in case of UR include:
- Establishment of an engagement strategy with stakeholders and setting common priorities;
- Close cooperation with stakeholders as a prerequisite for cooperation, creativity and future development;
- Sustaining stakeholder dialogue by involving them in the preparation of LLL curricula and asking for help in terms of the qualifications they expect from their future employees.
- Maintaining stakeholder ownership of the programme development;

UC has no formal mechanisms of ensuring compliance of the content of LLL programmes with the needs and interests of stakeholders.

LLL Programme Concept and Architecture
The third sections attempted to collect feedback on the following key questions:

- What regulations of LLL programme planning exist in EU consortium countries on national and on institutional level?
- What mechanisms are there in EU consortium institutions about:
  - The decision on the format of LLL programmes;
  - The specification of LLL programme objectives;
  - The link between the LLL programme objectives and the expected outcomes;
  - LLL programme student assessment and its link to the LLL programme outcomes;
  - Selection procedure of LLL programme teaching staff;
  - Planning for teaching materials/ administrative management of the LLL programmes.

The European Union's *Europe 2020 Strategy* sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21[st]century and places a strong focus on the acquisition of transferable skills and making lifelong learning a reality. It shows how the EU can come out stronger from the crisis and how it can be turned into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. It includes a European benchmark for raising the proportion of higher education graduates (in the age range 30–34 years) to 40% by 2020.

The strategic framework for co-operation in *Education and Training 2020(ET2020)* focuses on four key areas:

1. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality (including a European benchmark that by 2020 at least 15% of adults (age group 25–64) should participate in lifelong learning);
2. Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
4. Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship.

The EU consortium countries mostly follow the regulations outlined in standards and guidelines for LLL programme development on EU, national and institutional levels. In the University of Ruse these regulatory documents are:

- EU standards and guidelines for LLL programme development:
  - European Qualification Framework;
  - European Universities Charter.
- National standards and guidelines for LLL programme development:

- o Higher Education Act – outlines the general requirements for education in higher educational institutions and the type of management, organization and financing of all educational programmes;
  - o Ordinance on the state requirements for acquiring education academic degree "Bachelor", "Master" and "Specialist" - describes the type of courses (obligatory, optional, and facultative) in a curriculum; the length of education for obtaining different degrees; the types of state exams etc.)
  - o Ordinance No 21 on the application of a system for the accumulation and transfer of credits in higher educational institutions – ECTS credit system;
  - o Ordinance on the Unified State Requirements for content of documents issued by higher education institutions, approved by Decree No 151 issued by the Council of Ministers in 1997(addendum in 2011).
- Institutional standards and guidelines for LLL programme development:
  - o *Procedural Rules for Development of New Programmes*–specifies the steps in the development of any programme;
  - o *Internal Rules for Distance Learning Education*– identifies the percentage of materials for self-study and the types and materials used in the teaching process.

The LLL programmes in EU consortium countries are of different format: online/distance; face-to-face; blended learning and they can comply with different levels of the European Qualification Framework.

The decision on the format of the LLL programme is made mostly on institutional level:
- With participation of industry partners;
- With participation of stakeholders, faculty or Subject Department levels;
- According to institutional standards and guidelines for programme development;
- Considering the location of target groups and availability of relevant resources at the university.

At Linnaeus University LLL programme objectives and architecture are defined on the basis of stakeholder needs and follow the relevant legal framework requirements and demands and is submitted to faculty board for approval. At DTU the decision is made on institutional level. At the University of Ruse the programme

objectives for the LLL programme are developed by the team which is responsible for preparing the educational documentation for the specific LLL programme.

The development of the objectives and architecture of the programmes usually reflect the needs of the target groups as well as competition among companies/enterprises to get best qualified, best educated employed staff members.

Student assessment methods are defined differently in the EU consortium higher educational institutions:

- Defined by an instructor individually (at LNU decision about student assessment methods is made by the lecturer on individual basis);
- Based on the results of the survey of the instructors'/ lecturers' opinion on the objective and fair student assessment (UR);
- According to the institutional regulatory documents on student assessment (Institutional standards and guidelines for programme development; State Educational Requirements(UR).

There are some defined criteria for selection of instructors for LLL programmes at UR, UC and DTU that are similar to the criteria for the selection of instructors for other types of educational programmes. These criteria include advanced qualification in a relevant to the LLL programme field and professional experience. LNU has internal procedure of selecting an academic staff for each program. Discussions are held between members of the Subject Collegium, members of the subject department and Head of Department. At LNU, UC and UR the responsibility for the planning for teaching materials and/or administrative management of LLL programmes lies with the different members of staff, course teachers themselves, course coordinators, the Dean and IT department members.

4.2. Monitoring of LLL Programme Implementation

The second part of the questionnaire is aimed at collecting information on the legal framework, admission process and student support mechanisms employed by LNU, DTU, UC and UR to successfully implement their LLL programs.

Legal Framework Procedures
Among the central questions in this section could be pinpointed:

- What are the institutional regulations of LLL programme implementation in EU consortium countries?
- What are the institutional procedures of LLL programme implementation in EU consortium countries?

All EU consortium countries have institutional regulations for implementation of LLL programmes. LNU has two types of regulations namely programme syllabi and course plans. UR refers to the internal system for quality assurance as the main mechanism providing assessment of teaching and administrative processes.

At UR the institutional procedures cover different phases of programme implementation. They include the following:

1. Approval of the official documentation of the LLL programme;
2. Preparation of all course related documents;
3. Inclusion of the new LLL programme in admission process.

Admission and Graduation Process

Due to the fact that the admission and graduation processes play a key role in the planning and implementation of successful LLL programmes, the questionnaire comprised of questions such as:

- What are the admission procedures on institutional level in EU consortium countries?
- What are the LLL programme fields in EU consortium countries (on institutional level)?
- What are the graduation requirements?

The admission procedures vary in EU consortium country universities. In some cases, higher educational institutions refer to general regulatory documents that are common for all types of educational programme admission. UR has an Admissions Guidebook for the individuals interested in LLL courses/programmes to learn about application procedure, requirements, and exams. DTU and LNU do not have any separate regulation especially for LLL program admission rather than general admission regulatory documents for any educational programmes. UC states that admission regulations vary depending on the LLL course. LLL programmes offered by LNU, UR, UC, DTU cover various fields of specialization: Pre-School Education, Nursing, Forestry, Wood Technology, Health Care, Engineering, Agriculture, Machine Engineering, Transport, Business and Management, European Studies, Pedagogy, Law, Economics, Foreign Languages, Computer Literacy. Courses are

offered for advanced level education for school teachers, librarians, engineers, programmers, business administration people, social health care people, policemen, administrative workers. Duration and workload (number of ECTS) of the LLL programmes vary as well. They can last from one– to six semesters.

The graduation requirements are defined by the programme itself. They can specify the amount of ECTS to be accumulated within each programme, the exam requirements, etc.

In the EU consortium universities the graduates mostly are granted University Diplomas for LLL programmes and Course Certificates for LLL courses. At LNU two respective documents are issued "University Certificate" and "Course Diploma". At DTU there is an additional option like receiving a grade for taking a single course.

Student Support

The next group of questions attempted to provide an insight into the support (academic and administrative) students receive. The key question included was:

- What is the administrative and academic support given to LLL programme students in EU consortium universities?

A common practice at EU consortium universities is that students are guided by one person per course, who usually is the same person as the course teacher. He or she provides academic guidance (UR, UC) or both academic and administrative support (LNU) to the LLL programme students. At the University of Ruse the course tutor is in charge for consultancy and academic guidance of students. Besides of this, UR mentions Career Development Centre as an important institution associated with administrative support of students.

In case of need, there is some staff for technical support (LNU) or "specialized administrative services" (UC) available at the universities.

4.3. Monitoring of The LLL Programme Appraisal

This section of the questionnaire aims at collecting information on legal framework and programme appraisal mechanisms employed by LNU, DTU, UC and UR to assess the effectiveness of their LLL programmes.

Legal Frameworks

In order to establish the quality assurance mechanisms underlying the LLL programme effectiveness and efficiency, one of the questions asked was:

- What are the QA mechanisms applied in EU consortium institutions about LLL programme quality?

All EU consortium countries comply with the standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance (QA) in the European Higher Education Area (as part of the Bologna Process) when monitoring the quality of LLL programmes. QA is a subject to national regulations in all countries except of Portugal. In Bulgaria, Sweden and Denmark external evaluation leading to accreditation is conducted by the National Accreditation Agencies. Accreditation standards slightly vary from country to country. In Bulgaria it deals with a range of different issues (e.g. structure, design and content of the curricula; staff profile and qualification), whereas in Sweden it mainly focuses on examination of theses written by students at all levels.

QA is subject to institutional regulations in most of the EU consortium universities except of the University of Coimbra. At the University of Ruse there is an institutional regulatory document called "Policy on the Quality of the University of Ruse", identifying the key elements/standards ensuring the quality assurance of programmes offered by the university. At DTU, in accordance with the requirements of the national accreditation system, the QA process goes on to the departmental level. At LNU evaluation is done on the level of individual courses.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms for LLL Programmes
The main purpose of this sub section of the questionnaire was to identify the national and institutional QA mechanisms in EU consortium countries and institutions.

All universities from the EU consortium countries except of the University of Coimbra undergo external evaluation by National Accreditation Agencies for appraisal of their LLL programmes. In addition, LNU participates in regional and national conferences for the same purposes.

Besides an external evaluation system, all EU consortium universities except of UC have a system for internal evaluation. At DTU and LNU it is based on evaluation of individual courses by students and lecturers. At the University of Ruse evaluation bodies set at the institutional, department or faculty level are responsible for this process. For continuous quality enhancement purposes special regulatory

documents are developed regulating production of relevant documents, study process and development of teaching and research staff competencies.

LLL Programme Effectiveness Measurement

Feedback about the measurement of the LLL programme effectiveness was obtained through the questions:

- What indicators are used by EU consortium institutions to measure the quality of their LLL programmes?
- How is the effectiveness of LLL programmes measured by the EU consortium institutions?
- Who is involved in the measurement of the effectives of LLL programmes on EU consortium countries – national and institutional level?

The effectiveness of LLL programmes in LNU and UC is measured through feedback from participants and stakeholders (employees) of these programmes. In addition, at LNU discussions on Faculty level are serving this purpose. University of Ruse has specified indicators helping them to measure effectiveness of LLL programmes. These indicators are: 1) Relevance; 2) Quality of Programmes; 3) Cost-benefit ratio; 4) Impact; 5) Innovativeness.

To measure programme effectiveness against the indicators listed above the questionnaires and interviews are used at UR and UC.

National Accreditation Agencies are involved in the QA processes on national level in Bulgaria and Sweden. At institutional level members of university staff are actively participating in the QA processes at UR, LNU and UC. These are course coordinators (UC), members of the Faculty Boards and Subject Collegium (LNU),representatives of The Quality of Education Directorate (UR).

4.4. Monitoring of LLL Programme Improvement

The last section of the questionnaire is aimed at collecting data/information on the legal framework and programme improvement mechanisms employed by LNU, DTU, UC and UR to make informed decisions on the improvement of their LLL programmes.

Legal Frameworks

An essential question in this subsection was:

- What are the regulations of LLL programmes at the EU consortium institutions?

The University of Ruse has a specially designed institutional regulatory document called *Instructions for making changes to the functioning curricula* for BA, MA and LLL programme improvement which regulates the process of improvement for any educational programmes in this university.

Improvement Process

In order to tackle the issue of how corrective measures are implemented in the consortium institutions the questionnaire tried to gather feedback on the question:

- What is the process of informed decision making for the improvement of LLL programmes on the basis of the QA feedback at EU consortium institutions?

At the University of Ruse the results of regular internal accreditation function as corrective feedback. Offices involved in decision-making are: members of the University Commission for the Quality of Education, Deans, and Vice-Deans of Education, heads of Departments. At UC reports by course/module coordinators and teachers are analysed and based on the received feedback subsequent amendments are made in the LLL programme.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The information obtained from the EU partner universities regarding the monitoring of LLL programme planning, implementation, appraisal and improvement was not homogeneous. It showed different approaches to the Lifelong Learning practices in different higher education institutions as well as common LLL policy and systems development within all EU universities. Some key aspects of these approaches appear to be shared by most of the partners and therefore can be regarded as highly recommended to be adopted by the countries in transition as well (Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine).

The experience from the EU consortium partners suggests that at the level of LLL programme **planning** the partner universities in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine might need to focus their efforts on:

- Planning LLL programmes through observation of the EQF, national and institutional regulations for the reason of complying to a common reference framework as a translation device between different qualification systems and their levels;
- Development of stakeholder identification and effective involvement mechanisms within relevant fields;
- Inclusion of such stakeholders as: industry/ business enterprises, current students, graduates, academic and administrative personnel, etc. in the LLL programme planning, appraisal and improvement processes.
- Development of the LLL programme architecture by academic/teaching staff within universities and its unification with the needs of stakeholders;

Issues concerning the **implementation** of LLL programmes cover all phases of programme life-cycle and thus transparent, comprehensive and effective procedures and processes need to be elaborated for successful LLL programme delivery within AGU universities.

- Responsibilities for implementation of LLL programmes need to be delegated within universities and among stakeholders;
- LLL programme admission preconditions and requirements need to be clear to ensure the participation of persons with adequate knowledge, skills and values into the programme and information regarding LLL programmes need to be accessible and available for prospective students;
- Graduation requirements need to be clear and available for admitted / current students from the commencement of the LLL programmes;
- The Institution need to ensure that students get necessary consultancy, assistance and support from course instructors, administrative or academic staff.

A major challenge is to ensure the enhancement of the quality of LLL programmes. For this reason an elaborate monitoring system for programme **appraisal** needs to be developed. To achieve this it is vital that higher education institutions (HEIs) have:
- Clearly stated regulations and guidelines for LLL programme appraisal;
- Effective quality assurance (QA) mechanisms;
- Well-developed and purposeful tools and instruments for effectiveness measurement of LLL programme execution;

To ensure the excellence and attractiveness of LLL programmes through their systematic appraisal–**improvement** procedures and processes need to be clearly outlined within AGU HEIs, namely:

- Guidelines and procedures need to be developed and elaborated in order to facilitate LLL programme review and decision making within universities;
- Institutions need to focus their efforts on accountability on the quality of services and training provided in the LLL programmes and measures for their further improvement should exist.

6. BEST PRACTICE MODEL FOR MONITORING OF LLL PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

6.1. The Need for a Best Practice Model

The information obtained on the basis of the feedback from the questionnaires delivered to the LeAGUe project consortium EU partner universities regarding the monitoring of LLL programme planning and implementation shows a vibrant diversity of approaches and practices. However, due to the adoption of clear and straightforward standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the EU consortium partners have developed consistent systems for the safeguarding and promotion of the quality of the rich spectrum of lifelong learning pathways (LLL) provided by higher educational institutions. As a result of this they do not only develop proactively and deliver LLL services which meet a broad range of needs, but they also shape and continuously improve these services so that they meet future challenges of the labour market.

Since this specific "behaviour" of the EU partner institutions leads to the provision of the high quality of learning experience of the end users, certain aspects of it that correspond to and comply with the national context of higher education in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine can be used as exemplary successful practices for increasing the capacity of partner universities for offering LLL programmes and courses relevant to the needs of the labour market and to society at large. For the purposes of this the current project attempts to develop a **best practice model for monitoring of LLL programme and implementation** which would serve as guidance

for the three partner countries in identifying the choice of principles and practices for LLL programme development and performance supervision on institutional level.

6.2. Definition of the Best Practice Model

Best practice is a definition that can be given different interpretations depending on the context and the professional field in which it is used. In the current project under *best practice* is understood as: *Those actions and procedures of LLL programme planning and implementation that are followed in order to ensure the most effective and efficient way of accomplishing the tasks of LLL programme design and execution with minimal problems and complications. The best practices are a result of the application of repeatable proven practices which use predefined indicators facilitating the taking of informed decisions about the improvement of the process of LLL programme and planning and implementation.*

It has to be noted, however, that since the notion of a *best practice* implies the idea of a universally effective practice, they are just exemplary. Therefore, the suggested **best practice model for monitoring of LLL programme planning and implementation** is to be considered as an illustrative model which needs to be adapted to the context of the specific higher educational institution which decides to use it.

6.3. Objectives of the Best Practice Model

The general objectives of the best practice model for monitoring LLL programme planning and implementation are to:

- maximise the impact of any LLL programme offered at university level;
- facilitate the increase of the return of the invested funds in the LLL programme;
- support the decision-making, accountability and capacity for development and continuous improvement of LLL programmes.

In order to do so the best practice model for monitoring LLL programme planning and implementation will offer a clear nexus between legislative requirements and strategic objectives for LLL in consortium countries; clearly stated management

goals; performance indicators and targets against which the degree of goals achieved can be assessed.

6.4. Elements of the Best Practice Model

The best practice model for LLL programme planning and implementation monitoring steps on the elements of the **Plan – Do – Check – Act** (PDCA) cycle but adapt it in order to suit the purposes of observation and continuous improvement of two interrelated process – *LLL programme planning* and *LLL programme implementation* at university level *(*Fig.1).
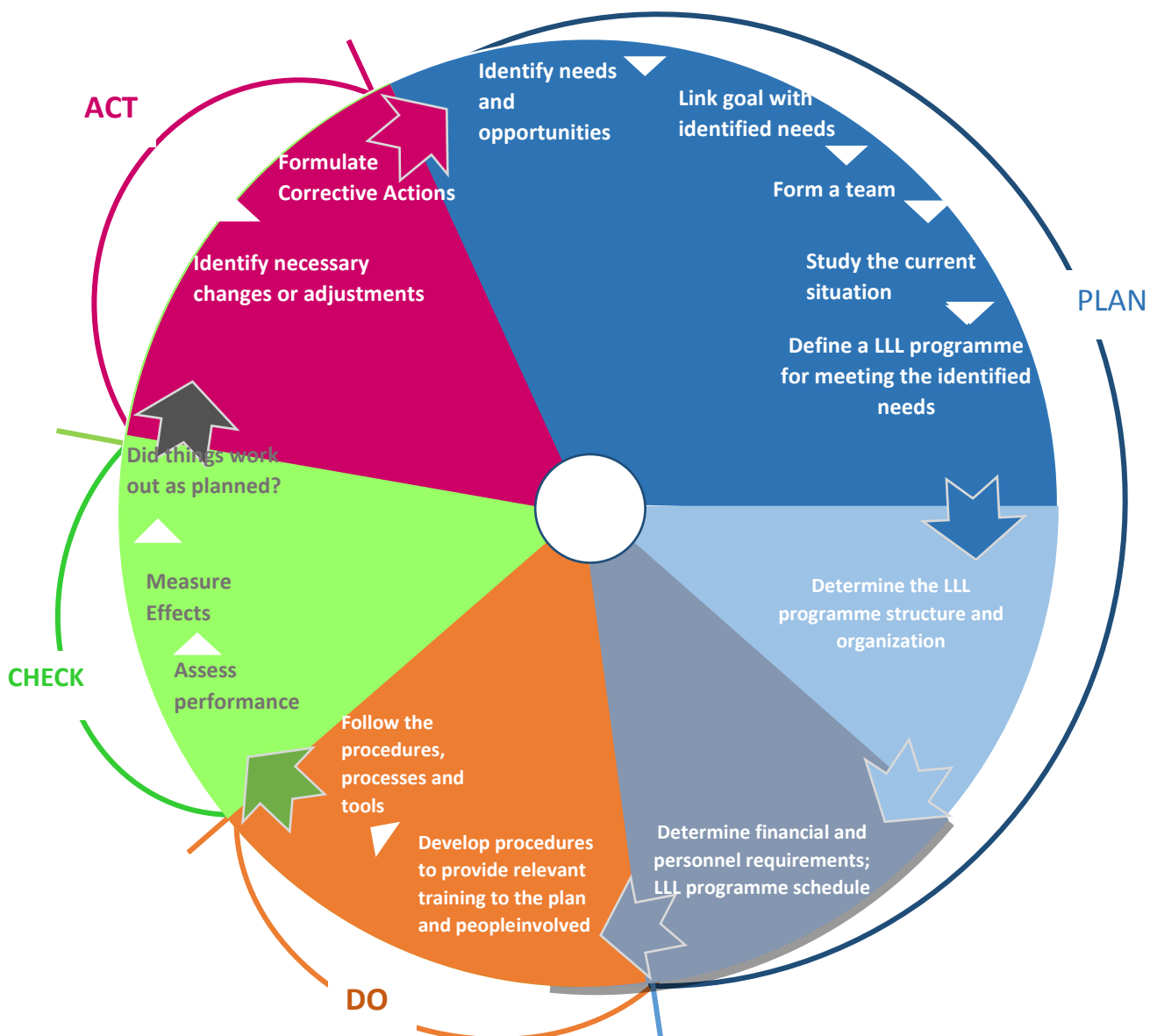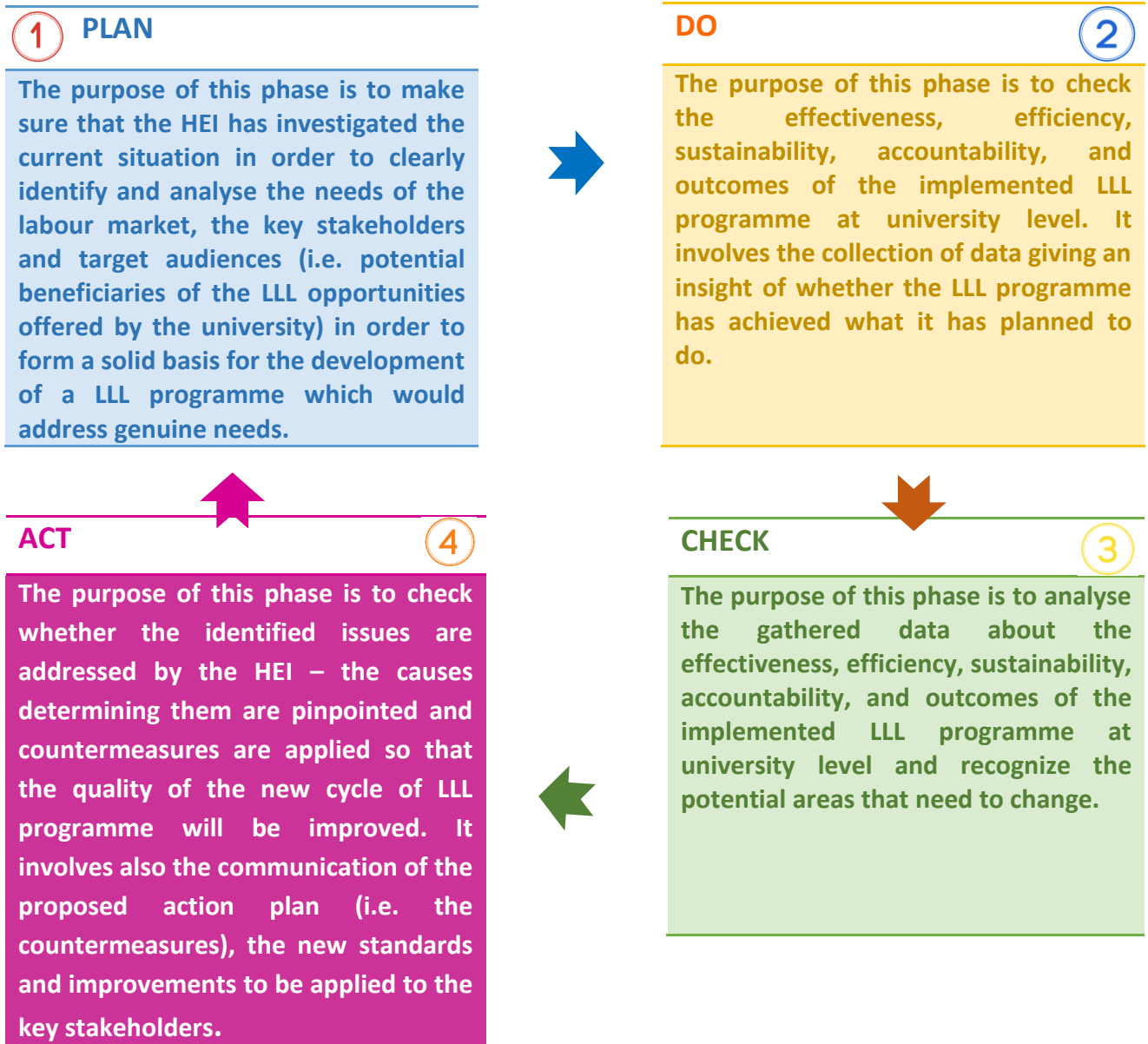

Figure 1. The PDCA Methodological Approach at the heart of the Best Practice Model

Regardless of the fact that the PDCA cycle (also known as the Deming Wheel or the Shewhart Cycle) is a tool for quality management, it fits perfectly well the idea of taking informed decisions about the quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of a LLL programme on the basis of careful examination of the programme planning and implementation phases.

① PLAN

The purpose of this phase is to make sure that the HEI has investigated the current situation in order to clearly identify and analyse the needs of the labour market, the key stakeholders and target audiences (i.e. potential beneficiaries of the LLL opportunities offered by the university) in order to form a solid basis for the development of a LLL programme which would address genuine needs.

DO ②

The purpose of this phase is to check the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, accountability, and outcomes of the implemented LLL programme at university level. It involves the collection of data giving an insight of whether the LLL programme has achieved what it has planned to do.

ACT ④

The purpose of this phase is to check whether the identified issues are addressed by the HEI – the causes determining them are pinpointed and countermeasures are applied so that the quality of the new cycle of LLL programme will be improved. It involves also the communication of the proposed action plan (i.e. the countermeasures), the new standards and improvements to be applied to the key stakeholders.

CHECK ③

The purpose of this phase is to analyse the gathered data about the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, accountability, and outcomes of the implemented LLL programme at university level and recognize the potential areas that need to change.

The logic of LLL programme planning and implementation also suggests that apart from focusing on the design, development and the application of the LLL programme involves placing an emphasis on the *inputs*, *outputs* and *outcomes* of the LLL programme.

- **Inputs** – Human and financial resources used for the implementation of the LLL programme.
- **Outputs** – The direct and measurable results expected from the implemented LLL programme. These should be tangible, measurable and visible products of the work of the LLL programme.
- **Outcomes** – These are related to the differences or observed changes made as a result of the LLL programme outputs.
- **Impact**– This is related to the long-term effect(s) of the LLL programme and is directly linked to its objective(s). It has to be noted that these might be more difficult to monitor but which could add important insights into the overall quality of the LLL programme.

Apart from that in order to get a full and detailed picture of the processes of LLL programme planning and implementation, monitoring needs to focus on the:

- **Activities**– These are the actions performed by the HEI to allow the inputs to turn into outputs.
- **Performance indicators** – Qualitative or quantitative measures that are expected to be designed by each university to apply to the activities within the LLL programme. These are intended to measure the progress made towards the LLL programme objectives.
- **Pathways**–The links between the LLL programme activities that lead to the expected outputs, outcomes, impact(s).
- **Assumptions**–Identification of potential risks that could affect the LLL programme success.
- **External factors**–Those factors which are external to the LLL programme, i.e. they are not under its control but which can have an effect on the outcomes and the impact (e.g. a change in the government policies, etc.)

Given all that, the **best practice model for monitoring of LLL programme planning and implementation** includes all of the identified aspects above (Table 1).

Table 1: Structure of the aspects of the best practice model

LLL programme planning		LLL programme implementation			
Needs	**Inputs**	**Activities**	**Outputs**	**Outcomes**	**Impact**
The needs of the labour market, key stakeholders, target groups, community based on the political, economic state on local, regional, national level.	Teaching and administrative staff Time Money Materials Equipment Partners	Lesson sessions Delivered services Staff training	Resources developed Teaching materials developed Delivered services Partners involved	Improved /updated knowledge and skills Changes in beliefs, behaviour, practices, decision-making Policy change	Changes in the social, economic conditions Changes on the labour market Changes in civic conditions
	Assumptions			**External factors**	
Political, social, economic conditions Knowledge, skills, competences of target group beneficiaries Capacity of the HEI to plan and implement LLL programmes			Change(s) in the government policies Changes on local, regional, national level Involvement of key stakeholders		

A crucial step in determining the LLL programme's effectiveness is to establish an ongoing plan for measuring and evaluating its progress.Some general steps can be outlined for designing a monitoring system.

1. **Identify who will be involved in the design, implementation and reporting.** Engaging stakeholders helps ensure their perspectives are understood and feedback is incorporated.
2. **Develop the questions** to be answered as a result of your work.
3. **Select indicators and measures** to help assess the performance, or to reflect changes. They can be either quantitative and/or qualitative.
4. **Determine the data collection methods.** Examples of methods can be: document reviews, questionnaires, surveys, and interviews.

5. **Collect and analyse information** obtained. Interpret these findings **provide feedback** and **make recommendations** how to strengthen your work, as well as any mid-term adjustments you may need to make.
6. **Communicate your findings and insights to stakeholders** and decide how to use results to improve services through LLL programme delivery.

Inputs	The financial, material and human resources used for the development of the Programme

Institutional and National standards and regulation documents for LLL development and implementation
LLL programme/course plan/syllabus, evaluation instructions
Teaching and learning materials
Internal and external QA mechanisms (tools and instruments)
Qualified academic and administrative staff
Stakeholder identification and involvement mechanisms
Facilities
Funding

Activities	Actions taken or work performed

Developing training or curriculum materials
Developing teaching methods; student assessment methods that fit programme objectives and outcomes
Engaging partners/stakeholders
Deliveringcourse work/training, including admissions, graduation, teaching and learning processes
Ensuring students' academic and administrative support and guidance

Using internal and external QA for programme evaluation	Quantitative indicators	Qualitative indicators
	Graduation rate	Defined indicators and criteria for programme evaluation
	Students average grade point	Student/lecturer surveys
	Cost-benefit ratio	Focus groups/interviews
	Data from registrar's office	
	Drop-out rate	
	Student academic performance data	
	Quantifiable measures for programme resource application (e.g. lab work intensity, use of e-resources)	

Outputs	Tangible, often process-oriented results or products

Number of LLL programmes/courses
Number of LLL graduates
LLL Centres
Staff professional development
Upgraded resources
Increased income rate for HEIs

Outcomes	The likely or achieved short-term and mid-term effects of LLL intervention's output.

Improved job oriented skills and knowledge of graduates
Increased use of new resources and methods
Improved professional awareness of lecturers
Increased awareness of stakeholders of University LLL opportunities

Impact	

Increased employability of LLL graduates
Increased job mobility
Increased income rates for graduates
Improved partnership between industry and Higher Education Institutions

7. SOME SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LLL PROGRAMME ADMINISTRATION

The final part of this report reveals some informationthat LLL programme administrators might consider useful for actual implementation of LLL at their universities.

SET 1:LLL PROGRAMME PLANNING:

LEGAL FRAMEWORK/ PROCEDURES

The take-up of legal framework/procedures for Lifelong Learning in universities varies between countries. This is partly due to the differentconstitutional, policy-making and administrative traditions, and the extent to which higher education has been incorporated into an institutional and legal framework.

Levels of **National Qualifications Framework** (NQF) *should* be placed at one of the central reference levels, in order to enable a much easier comparison between *national* qualifications and will mean also that people do not have to repeat their learning if they move to another country. The NQF applies to all types of education, training and qualifications, from school education to academic, professional and vocational. The reference framework describes the expected results of learning – "learning outcomes", i.e. what a person knows, understands and is able to do, not the length of a learning experience or what study programme etc. a person has completed.

Progress is needed in the implementation of lifelong learning strategies, the development of national qualifications framework linked to the European Qualification Framework and more flexible learning pathways to promote lifelong learning and increase the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners.

Processes and procedures associated with Lifelong Learning must be flexible and not inhibited by existing systems, structures and regulations. Systematic internal and external reviews of the abovementioned processes and procedures are also necessary to ensure that regulations, systems and structures provide adequate incentives and guidance for the further development of Lifelong Learning.

The multiple objectives (economic, social, political, cultural, technological, individual) and definitions of Lifelong Learning policies should be recognized and a debate on their social and educational implications and the prioritization of costs and benefits should be encouraged to enhance people's employability, adaptability and mobility.

Central authorities/Ministries need to clarify policies and funding allocations for Lifelong learning to make lifelong approach to learning a reality. The internal rules

for the development of curricula (that specify the steps, key actors and requirements for the development of LLL and general education curricula) should be developed and used.

Decision making process regarding the development of study programmes should be decentralized and open to ensure the establishment of more flexible learning path ways, effective inclusion of various stakeholders, creating processes and procedures that will be more responsive to all kinds of changes reflecting on educational system (economic, social, political, cultural, etc.).
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF

CONCLUSION:
Recommendation to Ministries for two options:
- Universities are given more flexibility in constructing, monitoring and delivering the LLL programmes and courses;
- Monitoring is carried out by the Ministries depending on the national legislations.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Stakeholders need to be involved in the progress of LLL programme planning.
Lifelong learning stakeholders could be divided into four main groups: groups will be defined as government, employers, educational institutions and individuals. Also Stakeholders could be divided into: Primary Stakeholders (direct beneficiaries); Secondary stakeholders– intermediaries delivering aid to the primary stakeholders; and External stakeholders – decision or policy makers.

Key stakeholders for LLL programmes can be identified as:
- Individuals who already have higher education but want to get a higher level degree;
- Individuals who already have higher education but want to obtain new specialization;
- Individuals who do not have higher education and want to get one;
- Institutions / companies / business enterprises involved in LLL programme;
- Institutional actors and community members affected by LLL (e.g. parents);
- Potential employers of trained students;
- Companies, company associations;

- Public services;
- NGOs;
- Unions;
- Professional bodies;
- Other educational organizations.

Systematic development of a competency framework in the workplace should be strengthened in both public and private enterprises. Increased public and private investment in continuing training and competence development for employees is to contribute to improving the skills of individuals and strengthening the development of the enterprises.

Providing financial support for their employees' education can beone of the forms of participation. Several panels with members from the industry can be created that will operate on university and department levels.

Following mechanisms can be considered for stakeholder involvement :
- Establishment of an engagement strategy with stakeholders and setting common priorities;
- Close cooperation with stakeholders as a prerequisite for cooperation, creativity and future development;
- Sustaining stakeholder dialogue by involving them in the preparation of LLL curricula and asking for help in terms of the qualifications they expect from their future employees.
- Maintaining stakeholder ownership of the programme development;

And also some formal mechanisms can be developed on institutional level to comply the planning of LLL programmes with the stakeholder needs:
- Agreements between universities and stakeholders according to which the stakeholders have to ensure the employment of the graduates after completion of courses.

LLL PROGRAMME CONCEPT AND ARCHITECTURE:

The formats of delivery of LLL courses should be preserved as an option for the different higher education institutions in AGU and they can be:

- On-line / distance;
- Face-to-face;
- Blended learning.

The process of LLL programme purpose/objectives development is based on:

- a request from a stakeholder;
- needs analysis of target groups (local Departments of the different universities that have decided to open a new programme);
- the desire / drive of universities to initiate LLL courses
- a combination of both approaches – i.e. request from a stakeholder or the desire of a university to develop a new LLL course / and a needs analysis of different target groups.

In order to define how the offered LLL programmes comply their purpose and objectives with their outcomes, institutional Quality Assurance mechanisms should be used. These mechanisms should comply with the institutional regulations together with the regulations for quality assurance on national and /or regional level.

The QA mechanisms should focus on the following aspects:

- teaching methods;
- student assessment methods;
- selection procedures for teachers;
- compliance of LLL programmes objectives/purpose with the programme components.

The decision on institutional level on the LLL programme architecture needs to be based on the participation of a team of specialists in the respective fields who are members of the university. But it has to comply also with the requirements of stakeholders. Universities need to have autonomy to decide on the architecture of their LLL programmes.

The higher educational institutions need to have:

- Strict criteria for evaluation of students that comply with the regulations of the university when developing the curriculum;
- Transparency of results / transfer of results – credits and validation of results on national level (possibility of transfer).

The teacher selection procedure for LLL programmes should comply with the institutional regulations and reflect the specific needs of the respective LLL programme.

The procedures that universities would employ to cater for the programme planning needs (incl. teaching and learning materials, administration, etc.) are a matter of instituional level regulations.

SET 2: LLL PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

LEGAL FRAMEWORK/PROCEDURES

1. Internal system for Quality Assurance may be regarded as the main mechanism providing assessment of teaching and administrative processes and there should be common criteria on national level linked to the National Frameworks for LLL.
2. The institutional procedures followed to implement LLL programmes at the university   have to include:
3. Approval of the official documentation of the LLL programme;
4. Preparation of all course related documents;
5. Inclusion of the new LLL programme on the list of programmes; Accessibility and transparency of all programme related information.

ADMISSION AND GRADUATION PROCESSES/POLICIES

1. The admission process should comply with the regulations of each university as each university has distinct regulations for its Campus Programmes.

2. ECTS credits need to be allocated to LLL programmes and courses and students must be awarded respective number of credits for accomplishing LLL programmes.

   AGU universities have to be given the autonomy to decide on the fields in which the different LLL programmes are to be delivered along with the specifics of the programmes (e.g. the number of ECTS, program duration, research project completion, internship completion, etc.). Apart from that the LLL programmes need to correspond to the local needs, which would motivate the choice of specific fields of the different LLL programmes.

3. The graduation requirements need to be defined within the LLL programme. In order to graduate students need to satisfy all the requirements of the LLL programme (e.g. should pass successfully all the exams, complete all course work tasks, etc.) Those requirements should comply with the requirements for graduation on institutional and national level.

4. All LLL programmes and courses must be certified by an officially recognized Certificate.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Each university must have its own system of student support, preferably at academic, administrative and technical levels.

Academic or administrative support can be provided by:
- Course teacher/instructor;
- Program coordinator;
- Member of university administration;
- Student service unit.

SET 3: LLL PROGRAMME APPRAISAL

LEGAL FRAMEWORK/PROCEDURES
All AGU Universities should have the quality assurance system in placeto ensure accountability and the improvement of LLL programmes. Universities should act in accordance with the Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance (QA) in the European Higher Education Area (as part of the Bologna Process) when monitoring the quality of LLL programmes. QA should be subject to national regulations. External evaluation leading to accreditation has to be conducted by national accreditation agencies. Accreditation is generally conducted every 4-6 years. QA should be subject to institutional regulations in universities. QA at university level has to correspond to the national level QA requirements.

QA MECHANISMS FOR LLL PROGRAMMES
There should be an internal and external evaluation system for Quality Assurance for LLL programmes. Different mechanisms can be used, like evaluation of individual courses by students and lecturers. Evaluation bodies at the department level are responsible for this process. Or for example evaluation bodies should beset on different levels, including university, faculty and department levels. Quality assurance measures should also include special rules regulating production of relevant documents, study process and development of teaching and research staff competencies. QA process of LLL programmes (institutional and national) should be carried with the involvment of same academic or administrative units of the universities, which are responsible for QA processes of other types of educational programs in the respective universities.

LLL PROGRAMME EFFECTICTIVENESS MEASURAMENT

For measuring the LLL programme effectiveness against the defined indicators various assesment tools can be used:

- Student/lecturer surveys;
- Data from registrars office;
- Focus groups/interviews;
- Students average grade point;
- Discussions with involving staff members of respective programme;
- Feedback from participants and stakeholders.

The indicators which can help to measure the effectiveness of LLL programs can include the following:

- Number of LLL programs;
- Number of students involved in LLL programs;
- Graduation rate;
- Cost-benefit ratio;
- Setisfaction rate with the quality of LLL programmes;
- Employability rate.

Criteria for measuring effectiveness are:

1. Relevance
2. Quality of Programmes
3. Cost-benefit ratio
4. Impact
5. Innovativeness.

Partners involved in the measurement of the effectiveness of LLL programmes at the national level are:

- national accreditation agencies

On the institutional level:

- university staff;
- course coordinators;
- members of the Faculty Board;representatives;responsible body at the university for quality issues , like Quality of Education Directorate, etc.

SET 4: LLL PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT

LEGAL FRAMEWORK/PROCEDURES

At the institutional level it is recommended to develop a special regulatory document which will regulate the LLL programme improvement process.

IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

The process of informed decision making for the improvement of LLL programmes can be organized in the following ways:

Option 1: The offices involved in the decision-making concerning LLL programme improvement include: members of the University Commission for the Quality of Education, Deans and Vice-Deans of Education, Heads of Departments.

Options 2: Course coordinators and teachers have to report to Head of LLL Unit about their courses / modules. The Head of LLL Unit has the responsibility to offer LLL programme improvement or initiate discussion / action for the improvement of LLL programmes.