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THE UNIVERSITY AS A REGIONAL ACTOR
PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

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FOREWORD

The European Union's objective of promoting a new knowledge economy through raising the educational levels of citizens and through reducing social exclusion has led to a new emphasis on the potential contribution which the university can make towards economic and social development. The ever increasing speed of globalisation has also given rise to new opportunities and challenges which have also led to calls for the promotion of new lifelong learning opportunities to meet the needs of individuals, communities and the workforce.

Promoting a culture of lifelong learning through developing new partnerships with the different regional actors including employers, and with other social and voluntary agencies, is increasingly being recognised as an important ingredient for success in regional development. By raising questions and debates about the new role for lifelong learning in universities, this book is providing new ideas and challenges which can inform our thinking on the way forward.

As the representative of the European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), I wish to acknowledge the very great contribution which Leibniz Universität Hannover has made over the years through its teaching, research and other activities in the promotion of regional development. This book, which has arisen directly from discussions at the 34th EUCEN Conference in Hanover last November, has provided an excellent opportunity to highlight key ideas and current thinking, and to provide first class examples of regional cooperation from all over Europe. It also supports the aims of EUCEN, which include providing opportunities to discuss and exchange ideas and experiences on best practices for those working in University Continuing Education (UCE). In turn this enables new and dynamic lifelong learning strategies to be developed.

EUCEN has grown to become the premier European UCE Network and is closely involved in discussions concerning lifelong learning perspectives in the European policy context. It has also developed strategic projects - for example, on the Bologna process and lifelong learning in universities, quality assurance and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These projects provide an opportunity for dialogue with the European Commission. They also inform discussions on lifelong learning with

other national university networks, assist with the dissemination of best practice, and help members benefit from strategic and practical reflection and an understanding of the European debate on lifelong learning. EUCEN sees its role as promoting lifelong learning in higher education, in particular, with the help of members and national UCE networks. We seek to help universities to become lifelong learning organisations which is important if they want to contribute to economic and social development at European, national, regional and local level.

In 2001, the University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) perspective was introduced in the EU through the Prague communiqué of the Ministers responsible for higher education. Surprisingly after the Bergen conference of Ministers held in 2003, it became submerged under other priorities. The London Communiqué in 2007 stated that Ministers should make proposals for the future of the Bologna process after 2010. We have therefore launched a project known as BEFLEX, which examines lifelong learning in universities. Although the emphasis on ULLL has gradually increased due to the Bologna reforms, the issue is still under-valued. Our objective is therefore to promote the development of policy and practices in ULLL in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Bologna process.

I wish to thank the Leibniz Universität Hannover for being host to the conference and for this publication. The book will help many people more fully understand lifelong learning and the role it can play in contributing to regional development.

Prof. Dr. Michel Feutrie
EUCEN President
Lille, France. April 2008

PREFACE

It has been a great honour for Leibniz Universität Hannover to host more than 120 university continuing education experts from all over Europe and regional representatives from industries, trade unions and from the Government of Lower Saxony. It was a pleasure to jointly organise this EUCEN-conference at our university campus.

Leibniz Universität was named after Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who was closely connected to Hanover from 1676 until 1716, a period encompassing the major part of his life and work. During this time he made an important contribution to all areas of knowledge. His universality and influence are both an inspiration and a responsibility for Leibniz Universität Hannover. Leibniz was a true universal genius with a great sense for technological progress. He presents a broad scientific spectrum with specific strengths in engineering and sciences. This fits in an excellent way to the actual profile and development of this university and has had a specific impact on the university mission statement: 'Shaping the future with knowledge'. Leibniz Universität Hannover is a research-based university with all subject areas except Medicine, offering Bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees.

In addition to research and teaching, we attach great importance to all modes of university continuing education. Each year there are about 3.000 part-time participants (enrolled or guest students), mainly employees of the region, making use of a range of lifelong learning opportunities including:

- Postgraduate part-time Master courses
- Certificate courses for the development of specific professions
- Supplementary continuing education programmes, summer schools and in-service trainings
- Liberal adult education in cooperation with institutions of adult education
- Further education modules for guest students, e.g. Third Age University
- Leibniz Universität Hannover staff development

Since Leibniz Universität Hannover is still developing new opportunities for university continuing education, we are grateful for the opportunity to learn from this EUCEN conference which has helped focus the relevance of university lifelong learning in the European context. The conference theme: 'The University as a Regional Actor: Partnerships for Professional Development in Europe' is a great challenge, helping us to compare different university approaches on lifelong learning across Europe. For example, Leibniz Universität Hannover views the part-time Master degree as a very important mode of operation for university continuing education in the future. All of our faculties have been asked to develop this new type of course in close collaboration with employment fields.

We strongly believe in the concept of the 'university's third mission' as it will support the extension of our regional cooperation and knowledge transfer through continuing education and consultancy. Eventually, this should be extremely beneficial for the development of the region as well as the university itself.

We are proud to be one of the founding members of EUCEN, which is an impressive network having 210 member universities across Europe. We are keen to continue to participate in an international exchange of experience which provides new opportunities for university lifelong learning and for regional dissemination.

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Erich Barke
President of Leibniz Universität Hannover
Hannover, April 2008

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We would like to express our thanks to everyone who contributed to the conference and to those who contributed their ideas and experiences in this book. We are grateful to Professor Erich Barke, President of Leibniz Universität Hannover and to Professor Michel Feutrie, President of EUCEN, who together enabled the conference to take place on the university campus in Hanover. We are especially grateful to AutoStadt who invited conference participants for an excursion to Wolfsburg.

Sincere thanks go to colleagues at the Centre for Work Science and the Centre for Continuing Education at the Leibniz Universität Hannover who organised the conference. We are also grateful to a number of people who assisted with the organisation of the conference as well as this book. In particular, we would like to mention Susanne Hermeling, Conference Manager, Alexander Korzekwa, for the overall coordination of this publication, Agnes Philipp and Philipp Germer for the layout and design and Manuela Heidelberg and Carmen Royo who assisted with the conference management and organisation.

We would also like to thank the following organisations for their financial support: Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur, Lower Saxony; Leibniz Universität Hannover; Freundeskreis der Leibniz Universität Hannover e.V.; Hackerodt Maschinen- und Werkzeugbau GmbH & Co., Langenhagen; Volkswagen Nutzfahrzeuge, Hannover.

Peter v. Mitschke-Collande, Leibniz Universität Hannover

Rob Mark, Queen's University Belfast

Hanover, April 2008

1 | INTRODUCTION

ROBIN MARK AND PETER V. MITSCHE-COLLANDE

In recent years there has been much debate about the role of universities in the knowledge economy and society. At the same time, there has been a new emphasis on promoting relationships between universities and their communities at regional and local level and in the engagement of universities with civic society. The university has potentially a unique role to play in providing knowledge and tools to enable cities and regions to become dynamic learning communities through building on their social, intellectual and human capital. The creation of a 'Europe of Knowledge' has been a prime objective for the European Union since the Lisbon European Council (2000). The Council set a goal of becoming:

'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment.' (EU 2000).

The European Council recognised the need to build knowledge-economy infrastructures, to promote innovation and economic reform and to modernise social welfare and education systems. The Council also recognised that Europe faced challenges in adapting to globalisation and in shifting towards knowledge-based economies, and confirmed the need to move towards a knowledge age where lifelong learning would become the guiding principle for participation across a spectrum of learning contexts. In its report on progress towards the Lisbon objectives (2005, p.12), the Commission of European Communities noted that education and training can help deliver personal fulfilment, jobs, prosperity, greater social cohesion and a cleaner environment, but that without first rate education and training systems, a skilled workforce, and cohesive society, it would not be possible to achieve the Lisbon goals.

The Memorandum of Lifelong Learning of the European Communities (European Commission, 2000) which followed on from the Lisbon Council, was an important milestone for the development of lifelong learning. It recognised the importance of lifelong learning not just for contributing to economic development, but for the development of active citizenship, personal fulfilment and social inclusion. The Memorandum re-launched the concept of lifelong learning onto the European policy

agenda and since then, has been having a profound effect on how education is understood. The Memorandum had also important implications for universities and for regional development and has given rise to new debates on the role of lifelong learning in universities. This includes the development of regions through economic, social and community development and by promoting partnerships with different stakeholders to achieve these ends.

Recent thinking has also encouraged European universities to examine their role as regional actors, making regional development more central to their missions. In particular, many universities have sought to develop cooperation with industry through transfer of knowledge, thus contributing to the better exploitation of results of research. This has been done through the creation of regional networking between economic and social players within a range of networks.

Some universities have also sought to exploit the workplace as a place of learning where new skills and knowledge can be developed within the context of university-employer partnerships. Such investments in learning can have positive effect for the development of industries, regional economies and local employment and can also influence social and cultural development. New global policy initiatives in lifelong learning and the recognition of the need to link life and work experience are providing new challenges for universities as part of their 'third mission'.

This book has been compiled from papers and presentations given at a conference organised by the *Leibniz Universität Hannover* (LUH) in collaboration with the European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN) in Hanover in November 2007. The conference looked at the challenges provided by the Bologna process for the development of university continuing education (UCE). These challenges can be summarised as follows:

- Promoting excellence in teaching and research according to international standards and promoting mobility of students in the European Higher Education area. (the original mission of the university).
- Developing university structures for promoting lifelong learning, in particular promoting work related learning for employability (the third mission of universities).

The conference focused on the second of these two objectives. The idea that lifelong learning can be supported effectively by regional strategies as part of the third mission of universities to promote employability was adopted as a guiding principle for the discussions. This approach

involves promoting knowledge transfer through, for example, university continuing education courses and through research, consultancy and other developing services which can benefit regional development.

The key questions arose from the experience of *Leibniz Universität Hannover* and other local stakeholders which have extensive experience in the development of support for the professions (in both the private and public sectors) and who have been involved in promoting education for the professions in the Lower Saxony region of Germany.

In Germany, there are only a few universities which are currently promoting regional development through continuing education, and in so doing, providing examples of successful regional cooperation. The German federal regions (known as *Länder*), are seeking to promote educational policies which extend lifelong learning opportunities. Through its experience in, for example, 'dual education' which links the university to the workplace, Lower Saxony provides an excellent example of how regions can develop their role in this field of practice.

For the conference, *Leibniz Universität Hannover* invited continuing education experts from various parts of Germany as well as other European regions to discuss ways of promoting lifelong learning and continuing education services such as research and consultancy to act as channels for transfer of research-based knowledge to the regions. These experts included different regional actors from Lower Saxony e.g. employees, employers, unions and politicians. Contributions were also made by experienced professionals from other European universities which have been involved in regional development and who have made progress in the implementation of the Bologna reforms.

The Hanover conference provided an opportunity for detailed dissemination of new ideas and experiences in the delivery of university continuing education. It included a keynote presentation on the role of the university in the development of lifelong learning opportunities in the region and compared different approaches internationally (Chapter 2.1).

There was also a panel discussion which involved employers, unions and other national and international experts from the field of lifelong learning. The discussions examined educational needs in the economic and social sectors and highlighted conflicting ideas and approaches. Employers favour negotiated tailor made university continuing education formats which can have immediate and often short-term economic gains, while on the other hand, the university wants to keep control of the innovative knowledge it produces through its ownership of the curriculum and assessment practices, and through other ways of meeting the individual, social and economic needs of participants (Chapter 2.2).

In addition, a field visit to the Volkswagen Company in Wolfsburg was organised to learn from real-life examples of university-industry co-operation in Lower Saxony. The visit included presentations on dual education and training as well as other regional contributions on lifelong learning from local experts (Chapter 3).

A series of workshops looked at several aspects of change affecting university continuing education. The workshops focused on topics and themes such as the Bologna process and lifelong learning, research in lifelong learning, implementing prior and experiential learning (APL, APEL), promoting part-time professional Masters programmes, the development of competence portfolios, university staff development for regional cooperation, and the role of national networks in promoting lifelong learning. They also focussed on highlighting examples of good practices through an examination of individual case studies (Chapter 4).

Finally, a summary of key issues is provided in chapter 5.

Several other presentations given at the conference, which are not printed in this book, may also add to the knowledge base. They can be downloaded from the conference website (<http://www.wa.uni-hannover.de/eucen/>) under 'abstracts'.

For further information on the authors please refer to this book's appendix, where a detailed list of contacts is given.

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