

# EDITORIAL

## UNIVERSITY LIFELONG LEARNING FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

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As part of the globally enhanced discourse on the Futures of Education (UNESCO, n.d.), a great number of universities in member countries of the United Nations have responded to the recent call to embrace the culture of lifelong learning with a future-oriented focus (UNESCO, 2021). They try to transform their organisations into lifelong learning universities and to initiate effective and innovative forms of knowledge transfer for sustainable economies and inclusive societies through the expansion of skills and competence development (ibid.).

### **PARTICIPATION, PERFORMANCE AND PARTNERSHIP**

*Participation, Performance and Partnership* are key aspirational challenges and urgent imperatives in the context of our rapidly changing world. This requires that higher education institutions be alert, responsive and proactive actors in helping society address the myriad social, economic and environmental issues we face today. The *Participation* of all in reaching solutions for all is crucial to address the current global crisis. Committed *Performance* focused on solutions and based on evidence, best practices, knowledge and respect for all traditions needs to be deployed to help steer humanity away from the precipice. *Partnership* based on mutual respect, consent and inclusion is essential in order to benefit the whole of society. University lifelong learning is a key catalyst in helping to create the conditions of participation, performance and partnership that society needs now.

University lifelong learning has to embrace the interrelated triangle of participation, performance and partnership as a paradigm influencing lifelong learning in and around universities. This relates not only to increased quality, access, better forms and content, but also to effective and innovative modes of delivery that reflect the needs of learners, learning communities and society at large. *eucen's* position paper on the Sustainable Development Goals (Németh, de Viron, Seppälä, Kröber & Royo, 2018) emphasised the role of participation, performance and partnership in shaping lifelong learning to urgently address the UN Agenda 2030 on the SDGs and their 17 goals (UNESCO, 2015). Universities are one of the actors involved in this process. Partnerships, commitments to optimal performance and the participation of the widest possible range of actors is needed and often the key to success.

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Therefore, the 52<sup>nd</sup> [eucen](#) conference held in 2022 at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary, focused on key aspects of university lifelong learning in the frame of three particular strands to highlight some key areas for action. We welcomed papers and presentations that addressed participation, performance and partnership within the following dimensions:

- University Lifelong Learning in urban environments to enhance learning communities;
- Universities promoting Lifelong Learning through skills development and effective HRD;
- Universities' roles in enhancing sustainable environment and social inclusion through LLL.

In order to reflect the diversity of our members and readership and their various perspectives on university lifelong learning, whether managerial, research or practice-based, we invited different kinds of contributions: *research papers* that draw on theoretical debates or empirical research, contextualised within current national and international policy debate, developing the theoretical base of the field or reporting on significant research done; contributions that show and illustrate *innovative practice* or *short papers* offering a closer look at certain practices, approaches or projects that are either in progress or have been completed, and critically reflect upon their impact within the university or beyond; and, finally, *discussion papers* presenting informed opinion and reflection on new trends, current research or policy developments within or connected to university lifelong learning.

Contributors to the conference were invited to hand in papers for this volume of the journal. The accepted six papers enrich the above dimensions with valuable input and address some particularly challenging aspects of university lifelong learning recently faced by higher education institutions. The volume comprises one research paper, two short papers, two innovative practice articles and one discussion paper. They present perspectives from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Turkey, all of them focussing on at least one of the three "Ps" – participation, performance or partnership.

The editors hope readers will find these papers relevant, useful and practical enough to help universities respond to matters of participation, performance and partnership with equitable and sustainable measures referring to quality lifelong learning.

## CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONTENT

The two opening papers of this volume of the EJULL are both contributions from the host country of this year's conference, Hungary. In the introductory short paper, *Éva Farkas* sets the scene and provides us with the recent political context of higher education in Hungary and the specific role university lifelong learning plays in it. She sheds light on three areas in which universities can increase their performance with regard to lifelong learning – areas that are not only of high importance for the Hungarian context, but equally relevant for the European higher education area. *Balázs Németh*, in his research paper, offers a reflective perspective on the changing roles of universities in developing learning cities and examines via an international lens learning cities in Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Finland, Denmark and Hungary with regard to organisational capacity, cross-sectional co-operation and partnership, as well as stimulation of learning communities.

With the international tone set, the two innovative practice pieces that follow focus on the dimension of sustainability and inclusion and present reflective perspectives on two European projects that address issues surrounding these two topics. *Eva Cendon*, *Anita*

*Mörth and Andrea Mangiatordi* report on a pilot project that aims at making international project collaboration greener by basing the partnership almost solely on virtual collaboration. They present the cornerstones of such an approach and reflect on their experiences and learnings and what this means for our environment. *Tamer Atabarut, Sevgi Kesim Guven, Ece Gözde Gokakin and Elif Yildiz* take the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of UNESCO, especially SDG 5 on Gender Equality, as a starting point and demonstrate how to realise it within in the national context of Turkey. They report on the development and roll out of a training programme for high schools and universities, in cooperation with local authorities and companies, that aims to inform, guide and offer practice on how to intervene.

The dimension of skills development and effective human resource development is put into focus by *Sarah Lukas, Monica Bravo Granström, Roswitha Klepser and Karin Schweizer*. In their short paper, the authors introduce a mentoring concept for language mentoring at the workplace in which employees are trained as language mentors. The authors present key findings of the accompanying evaluation and discuss the possible role of universities in work-based learning. *Roberto Romero-Llop, José Manuel Castro-Jiménez, Àngels Fitó-Beltran, Vanesa Valero-García, and Sagrario Martín-Aragón* offer another, more meta-level focus on skills development in their discussion paper on higher education (HE) micro-credentials. The authors take a European perspective and propose a definition of HE micro-credentials, following the recommendation of the European Council, and connect it with already existing initiatives in the higher education context across Europe.

This volume is concluded – as usual – by our “Three questions to...”. This time, the questions are posed by *Kevin Orr*, and the discussants are *Marcella Milana*, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Sciences at the University of Verona, Italy and Honorary Professor of Adult Education in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, UK, and *Zsuzsanna Géring*, Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Future of Higher Education Research Centre at Budapest Business School, University of Applied Sciences, Hungary. They discuss the present and future of lifelong learning in relation to sustainability, especially pertaining to social inclusion and the environment, and reflect on features of successful lifelong learning at universities. In addition, they analyse the relationship between personal development, social development and economic development in lifelong learning.

## REFERENCES

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