**EADTU’s “E-SLP” project under the Erasmus+ KA3**

**Summary**

This project is about forward looking, forward thinking and forward acting with regard to the integration of SLPs in higher education systems. It starts with identifying the concept and position of SLPs in higher education, analysing European, national and institutional policies and looking for a consensus on SLPs as a structure responding to the needs in the economy and society at large. In this concept, SLPs respond to mismatches and gaps in knowledge/skills and needs for personal development. Online/blended SLPs are flexible and scalable and enable universities to serve large numbers of learners.

The project looks how institutions take this forward in policies, strategies and funding/business models within the context of national frameworks. It will raise the capacity of universities with patterns of good practices with regard to pedagogies, technologies, organisational support and business models for these innovative curricula. It will create an expert pool to enlarge this capacity by on site seminars for university leaders and teaching staff (CPD). It will develop guidelines for collaborative curricula and mobility in order to increase the scale and impact of SLPs internationally based on pilot studies. It will deal with issues on the recognition of SLPs and their compliance with the (renewed) EQF as well as with quality assurance and accreditation procedures. It will stimulate the public demand for SLPs by companies and learners by a joint portal. Throughout the project, a Stakeholder Group with main stakeholders (students, universities, employers and employees, governments, EUA, EURASHE and ESU) will point to all policy implications, using the Roma-technique, ending with a set of recommendations for policy makers at the institutional, national and European level.

**Approach**

Launching the New skills agenda, the EU Ministers showed concerns about the level of knowledge, competences and skills in a competitive, complex and multicultural world. Europe is also affected by periods of low economic and employment growth, an ageing population, as well as increased migratory flows and low levels of innovation. The Ministers underlined the mission of education and training “to prepare for these challenges. The Ministers agreed that it is important “to focus also on those aspects of education and training that are able to drive innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity, shape sectors, create jobs and new markets, empower people (including the most vulnerable), enrich democratic life, and develop engaged, talented and active citizens”.

This shows the spectrum of the New Skills Agenda, which is also the scope which this proposal will take with short learning programmes (SLPs). At the same time, it will *upgrade the scalability of SLPs* by flexible new modes of teaching and learning and by European collaboration, deploying continuous education/continuous professional development as an large area of provision of universities, next to regular degree education and open education.

This project will address the implementation of short learning programmes as a main part of continuing education/continuous professional development and lifelong learning policies. It concerns all European Qualification Framework (EFQ) qualification levels (from foundation to postgraduate levels), since longer and changing careers increase the needs of learners and stakeholders. SLP qualifications will correspond with the EFQ. The project will have an input in discussions on the renewed EQF (New Skills Agenda). Online/blended SLPs are flexible and scalable to serve large numbers of learners, which is necessary to close the knowledge and skills gap in Europe (Modernisation Agenda).

The project objectives are:

* Defining the concept and position of short learning programmes as part of higher education systems and of policies for continuous education/continuous professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning, responding to needs of the economy and personal development
* Developing institutional policies, strategies and frameworks for the development and delivery of flexible and scalable SLPs in Europe, keeping pace with the size and diversity of needs of employers and employees and as an opportunity for learners to fit study programmes to their time horizon
* Empowering university leadership and staff for curriculum and course design, quality assurance and recognition for SLPs complying with the EQF
* Developing guidelines for collaborative SLPs and related mobility, enriching the content and quality of SLPs and raising their European outreach, scale and cost-effectiveness
* Designing next steps for change towards systemic and sustainable institutional, governmental and EU policies and strategies for continuous education, mainstreaming SLPs as a specific area of university provision, next to degree education and open education.

This project is about forward looking, forward thinking and forward acting with regard to the integration of SLPs in higher education systems. It starts with identifying *the concept and position of SLPs in higher education systems*, analysing European, national and institutional policies and looking for a consensus on SLPs as a structure responding to the needs in the economy and society at large. In this concept, SLPs respond to mismatches and gaps in knowledge/skills and needs for personal development. Online/blended SLPs are flexible and scalable and enable universities to serve large numbers of learners. It connects with the Modernisation Agenda as SLPs will increase the potential of European higher education institutions to fulfil their role in society and contribute to Europe's prosperity.

EU2020 fact sheets of the European Commission reveal that neither the EU attainment objectives for higher education nor for lifelong learning are achieved and that there are dramatic differences between member states, although progress is made. 40% of the employers face problems with recruiting workforce with the right qualifications. The EU employment rate is 53% for low-skilled young people and 80% for high-skilled. SLPs can compensate for these figures at a later stage of life, which is badly needed. They also keep innovative knowledge and skills of workforce up to date. SLPs can more rapidly respond to needs in the wider economy and can better anticipate on careers of tomorrow than degree programmes, which are submitted to strict regulations.

The project looks how *universities* take this forward in *policies, strategies and funding/business models* within the context of national frameworks. It will raise the capacity of universities with patterns of good practices and guidelines with regard to pedagogies, technologies, organisational support and business models for these innovative *courses and curricula*. It will create an expert pool to enlarge this capacity by on site seminars for university leaders and teaching staff (CPD). It will develop guidelines for *collaborative curricula and mobility* in order to increase the scale and impact of SLPs internationally based, on pilot studies. As suggested in the Modernisation Agenda, online/blended SLPs as conceived in this project will use flexible, innovative learning approaches and delivery methods to improve quality while expanding student numbers, to widen participation to diverse groups of learners, and to combat drop-out. It will exploit the transformational benefits of ICTs and other new technologies to enrich teaching, improve learning experiences, support personalised learning, facilitate access through distance learning, and virtual mobility. It will also *empower leadership and staff* by on site seminars.

The project will deal with issues on the *recognition of SLPs* and their compliance with the (renewed) EQF as well as with quality assurance and accreditation procedures, recognition practices vary between countries. The project will contribute to aligning recognition across countries. The partnership takes up the invitation of the EC to collaborate in reviewing EFQ for a better understanding of qualifications which is a condition for a better use on the labour market. Moreover, it will contribute to recognising SLP qualifications as building blocks in wider degree programmes (bachelors, masters)

The project will stimulate the public demand for SLPs by companies and learners by *a European SLP portal*. The SLP portal will be designed to a multi-target group visitors of learners, universities and companies. The portal will bring together the supply and demand on the use of SLPs within continuing education programs /CPD. It will act on three levels: SLP provision for CPD for LLL-ers and companies and for regular education by students; support to companies and citizens in effective use of SLPs (including how to get them recognized in various degree programs); and services to support HEIs in their development of (cross-institutional) SLPs, and how to incorporate them in their regular educational CE/CPD provision.

Throughout the project, a Stakeholder Group with main stakeholders (students, universities, employers and employees/social partners, governments/regions) will point to all policy implications, using the Roma-technique, ending with a set of *recommendations for policy makers* at the institutional, regional, national and European level. The project encourages the dialogue between universities, social partners and governments on CE/CPD. Education and training should be anchored in the knowledge triangle, improve the continuum between basic and applied research, and transfer knowledge more effectively as pointed out in the Modernisation Agenda. CE/CPD at later stages of life, next to knowledge transfer, are needed to this end. SPS have a perfect role in this. Universities have an eminent position as the centre of a knowledge network, serving the local/regional economy and society.

**Partnership:**

* **EADTU (Coordinator)**
* **FernUni in Hagen**
* **OUUK**
* **OUNL**
* **UNED**
* **OUCatalunya**
* **HOU**
* **Uninettuno**
* **Anadolu University**
* **Universidade Aberta**
* **OUCyprus**
* **University of Jyväskylä**
* **KU Leuven**
* **NADE**
* **AGH**