



MAPPING OF THE HEIs QUESTIONNAIRE

SANDRINE BONNET | LYNDSEY EL AMOUD | DIANA TREVINO, CARMÉ ROYO
UNIVERSITÉ LILLE (FR) | UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK (IE) | EUCEN (BE)

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<https://samuele.eucen.eu> | samuele@eucen.eu | Project coordinated by **eucen**

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Authors: Sandrine BONNET, Lyndsey EL AMOUD, Diana TREVINO, Carme ROYO, on behalf of the SAMUELE consortium.
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Mapping of the HEIs SAMUELE Questionnaire

1. Introduction

The SAMUELE¹ project aims to explore how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) organise, implement, and support University Lifelong Learning (ULLL). The project combines a European-level survey of HEIs with national surveys in participating countries.

To achieve this, the project will carry out the following tasks:

- WP2: Conduct a survey across 18+ EU countries, followed by the collection of a questionnaire from 60+ HEIs and the identification of 25+ relevant case studies. The findings will serve as the foundation for a Comparative Matrix and a Good Practices Report on ULLL. The aim of WP2 is to build a comprehensive knowledge base on ULLL, covering both the national level across Europe and the institutional perspectives of HEIs.
- WP3: Develop a standardised Self-Assessment Model for European universities to evaluate and enhance their ULLL strategies. This model will be tested in 18 HEIs to ensure its adaptability across different educational contexts. The aim of WP3 is to provide institutions with a practical tool to reflect on, assess, and improve their ULLL approaches.
- WP4: Formulate a set of Policy Recommendations and Action Plan for EU policymakers at different levels to support the seamless integration of ULLL into HEIs. The aim of WP4 is to raise awareness and equip policymakers with actionable insights for embedding ULLL into higher education systems at governance and policy levels.

The HEI questionnaire, developed under WP2, was designed to provide data on the effective implementation of ULLL within institutions, identifying the key and critical success factors, as well as the barriers to the impactful and high-quality delivery of ULLL. These results will support the development of a self-assessment tool for HEIs to assess the implementation of ULLL.

¹ SAMUELE is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme under ERASMUS-EDU-2024-PCOOP-ENGO 101184156 Partnership for Cooperation in Education and Training for European NGOs. Coordinated by [eucen](https://eucen.eu) (BE), the project brings together a strong consortium of full partners, including ESU (BE), Johannes Gutenberg University (DE), Copenhagen Business School (DK), University College Cork (IE), University of Lille (FR), Stifterverband (DE), Station (DK), IRD Duhallow (IE), and FCU (FR). Additionally, the project collaborates with 12 associated HEIs and the Lifelong Learning Platform, that have joined the project as Associate Partners.

2. Methodology

The questionnaire targeted Higher Education Institutions², universities of applied sciences, and other providers of higher education programmes.³ It was widely disseminated online with an English Google Form and was shared by all the partners of the consortium to ensure broad representation of institutions. To facilitate the participation of French universities, a translation was recommended by the representative of the National Network: this allowed an additional 10 universities to be included. While the consortium expected at least 60 responses, 102 complete questionnaires were collected, enhancing the significance of the results.

Respondent profiles – General information

The majority of respondents come from Traditional Universities (77,5 %), and 82,9 % represented public institutions.²

The questionnaire reached 20 countries across Europe: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, UK.

- Participants from the following countries contributed to the HEI Questionnaire and the National Survey: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK.
- The following countries only participated in the HEI questionnaire: Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia.
- The following countries only participated in the National Survey: Denmark, Sweden, Turkey.

Structure of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was structured around four key thematic areas:

- Strategic commitment and vision of ULLL
- Structure and organisation
- ULLL operations
- Impact and engagement.

Strategic Commitment and Vision of ULLL

Themes on strategy, institutional context, policy drivers, and transformation levers: this section shows how ULLL is strategically positioned and supported at policy level.

² European Commission – Study in Europe - Higher Education in Europe

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/study-in-europe/planning-your-studies/higher-education-in-europe>

³ Type of institution (Q3): Traditional University, University of Applied Sciences, Business/Management School, Institute of Technology, Other... (open-ended option)

- Institution profile Q3, Q4, Q5
- Definition and Governance of ULLL, leadership, responsibility for ULLL Q6, Q7, Q8
- Level of institutional support from leadership, influencing factors Q9, Q10
- National Frameworks, alignment with national/legal policy and funding Q39, Q46,
- Success factors, strategic levers, effectiveness, vision for change Q66, Q67

Structure and Organisation

Themes on organisational models, degree of autonomy, and resources to implement ULLL: this section highlights how HEIs organise and support the development of ULLL in their institutions.

- Organisational models, centralised vs decentralised Q11, Q12, Q13
- Roles and collaborations, internal coordination Q14, Q15
- Centralised model: challenges, advantages and benefits Q16, Q17
- Decentralised model: faculty-level autonomy, responsibilities Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24
- Human resources, training opportunities for staff Q25, Q29, Q30
- Financial models, funding sources, sustainability Q40, Q41, Q42, Q43, Q44, Q45

ULLL Operations

Themes covering the entire ULLL offering cycle from design to quality, including target audiences, delivery methods, and potential areas for improvement: this section shows the diversity and flexibility of ULLL offerings, and how they are implemented.

- Teaching staff, delivery, staff training Q26, Q27, Q28
- Types of provision, development, planning, innovation Q31, Q34, Q38
- Target group, beneficiaries, objectives Q32, Q33
- Modes and timing of delivery: face-to-face, hybrid, on-line ... Q35, Q36
- Operational change, obstacles, constraints, implementation Q37
- Quality assurance, evaluation mechanisms, standards Q47, Q48, Q49, Q50
- Monitoring and assessment, evaluation and evidence of outcomes Q51, Q52
- Accessibility and inclusion, model design Q56, Q57

Impact and Engagement

Themes covering partnerships, collaboration, learner support and effectiveness of ULLL: this section shows how HEIs support learners and build partnerships to strengthen the effectiveness and long-term impact of ULLL.

- Learner services, enablers, accessibility Q53, Q54, Q55
- Partnership types, internal/external collaboration, stakeholders Q58, Q59, Q60
- Partnership impact, long-term cooperation Q61, Q62
- Overall effectiveness, impact perception, areas for improvement Q63, Q64, Q65

3. Key Findings

Strategic Commitment and Vision of ULLL

67,6 % of respondents have a clear definition of ULLL in their institution and 53,9% mentioned a national funding scheme for ULLL.⁴

There is a mixed landscape of HEIs, ^{Error! Reference source not found.} with a recognition of the value of ULLL, but it is not yet fully embedded as a top priority in strategy for many HEIs. Only **1 in 4 HEIs reported ULLL as a clear priority with very strong support and resources** (Q9). The most frequent response was “strong support” (44%) which shows a good perception from leadership and strong support to develop ULLL even if improvement is still needed. 29% reported “moderate support”: acknowledged but inconsistently funded. Only 3,8 % mentioned minimal or no support.

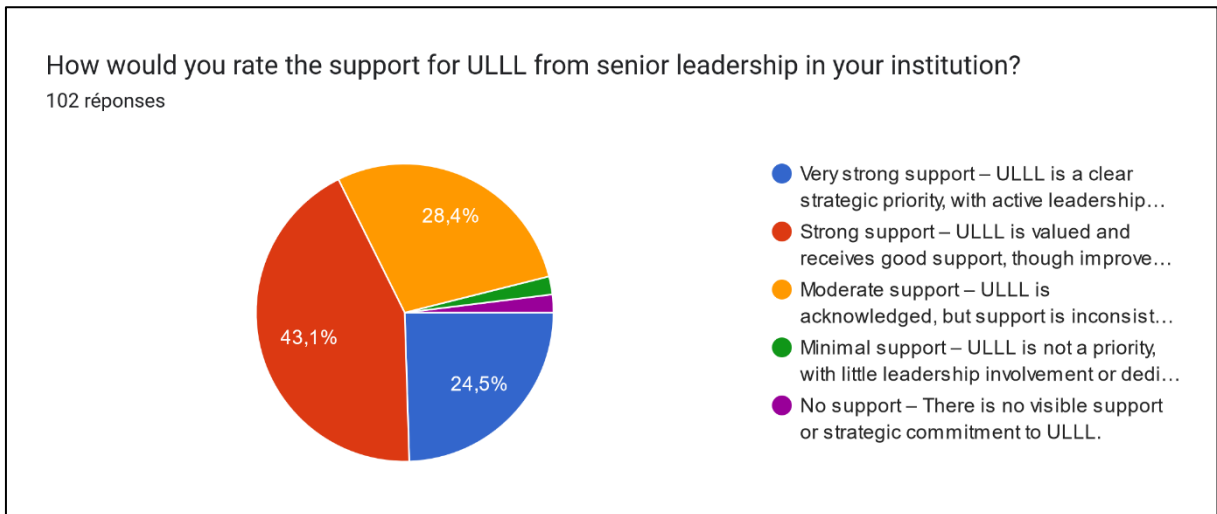


Figure 1

The questionnaire revealed that senior leadership is influenced by a **clear institutional strategy** (53,9%) and the **recognition of ULLL’s impact** on community and workforce development (52,9%). These 2 dimensions appeared to be the strongest drivers and they are followed by the alignment of ULLL initiatives with National or Regional policies (48%) and by the allocation of dedicated fundings and resources (43,1%).

The top 4 factors for a successful programme of ULLL were then reported as (Q66):

- Strong leadership & institutional commitment..... 51.4%
- Flexibility in delivery formats..... 13.3%
- Financial sustainability..... 12.4%
- Industry/employer collaboration..... 9.5%

⁴ The results of the National Survey found that 39% of respondents mentioned a National Policy or Strategy, this will be analysed in a further reporting combining both sets of data from the national survey and HEI questionnaire. The National Survey is available here: [SAMUELE D2-2 National-Survey-Report FINAL](#)

Structure and organisation

Most institutions have a centralised model (70,6 %), generally with a single unit to manage ULLL at institutional level rather than a decentralised model (Q11): dedicated university lifelong learning unit (33,3%) or centre for continuing education (27,5%).

Concerning the decentralised model: for overall ULLL strategy coordination across faculties and schools, 43,3 % of the HEIs reported central guidance but independent implementation by faculties, and 80% reported a level of partial autonomy for the design and delivery of programmes (only 16,7% have full autonomy). This shows a lack of coordination between faculties/schools, mentioned as a huge challenge in implementing the model by 53,3%.

Hybrid models also exist, combining central coordination with local faculty autonomy.

The questionnaire shows that clarification must be improved for the definition of roles and responsibilities, since half of respondents (50%) said that they are partially defined or not defined at all.

ULLL involves **diverse categories of staff (Q25 -Figure 2-, Q29-30):** academic, coordinators, administrative staff, IT experts. **Human resources are a critical issue** and can be a barrier to sustainable and full expansion of ULLL: issues reported included optional or informal staff training, workload, lack of recognition, insufficient staff numbers.

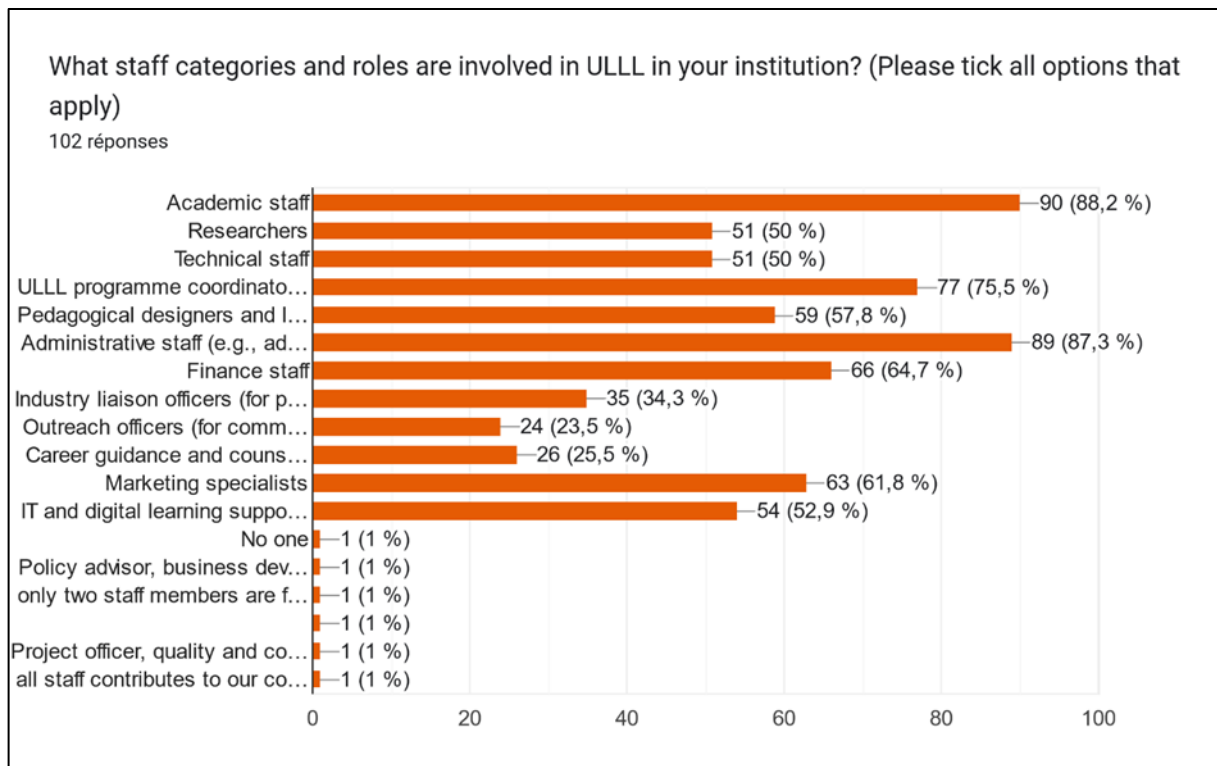


Figure 2

Financial sustainability is also one of the main issues of ULLL structures (Q40-45-*Figure 3*) with 68% noting the fact that ULLL programmes must cover all costs through revenue generation (fully self-sustained) which can be a **weak point**.

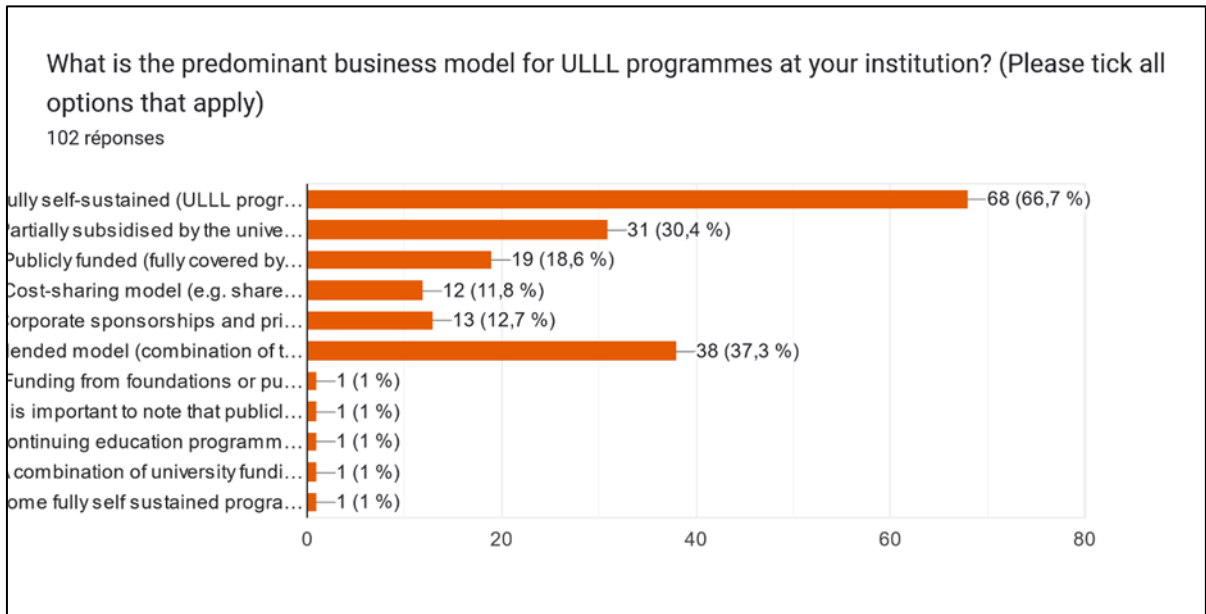


Figure 3

ULLL operations

The questionnaire shows a diversity of ULLL initiatives (Q31)^{Error! Reference source not found.}

The 4 main ULLL initiatives revealed by the questionnaire are:

- Postgraduate awards..... 78,4%
 - o certificates, diplomas, masters' degrees, doctoral degrees
- Short courses non-credit-bearing 78,4 %
- Short courses credit-bearing 71,6 %
- Microcredentials (single) 70,6 %
 - o NB. 44,1% for stackable micro-credentials

The 5 main target groups are:

- Adults returning to education 87%
- Working professionals 85%
- Unemployed/underemployed..... 57%
- Underrepresented groups..... 46%
- Employers and organisations 41%

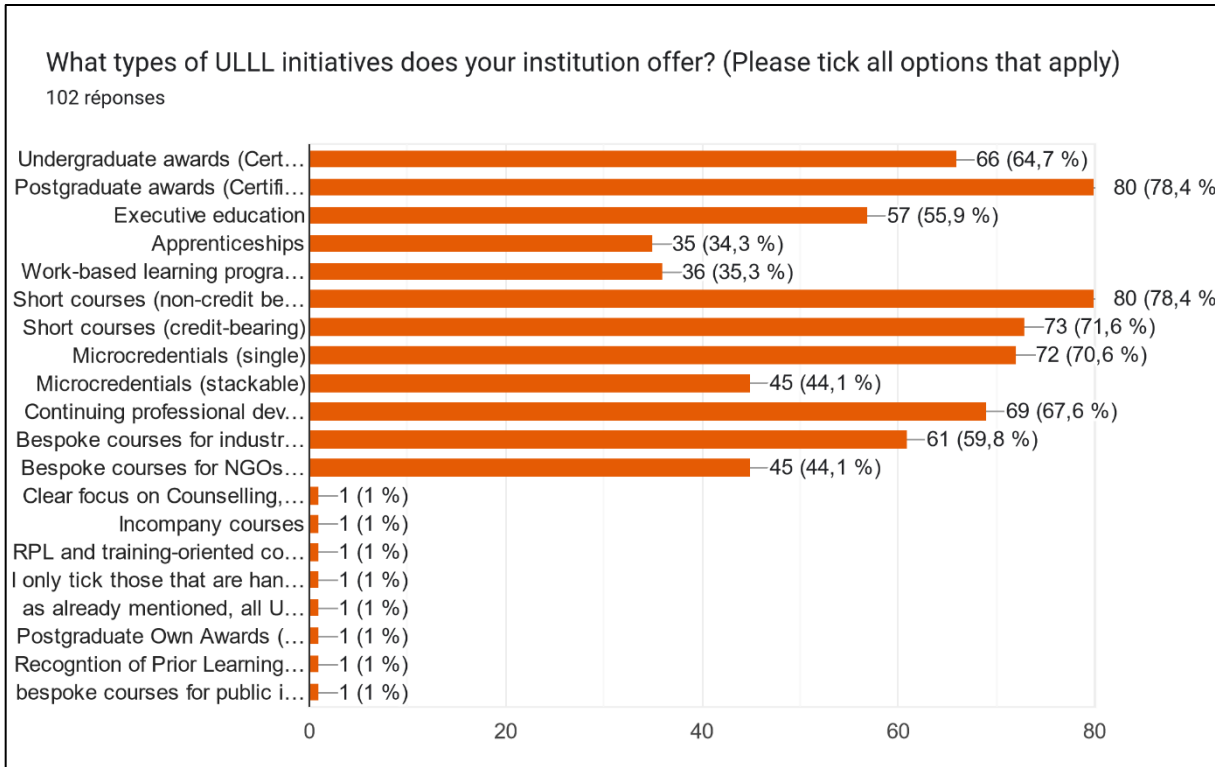


Figure 4

An open-ended answer shows the range of diverse category classification titles, while the main targets show a ULLL offering dedicated to lifelong learners and professional development (Figure 5). Error! Reference source not found.

Flexibility is also one of the main features with online and blended offerings mentioned as the main delivery modes.

Most HE institutions reported that they have internal **quality assurance** (Figure 6) processes for ULLL (regular evaluations, learner feedback mechanisms, internal audits...) and around 55% applied external quality assurance (external agencies for ULLL) (Q47-Q49). The questionnaire also shows that 40% of the respondents believe that their QA procedures are more efficient than those implemented by “private providers”.

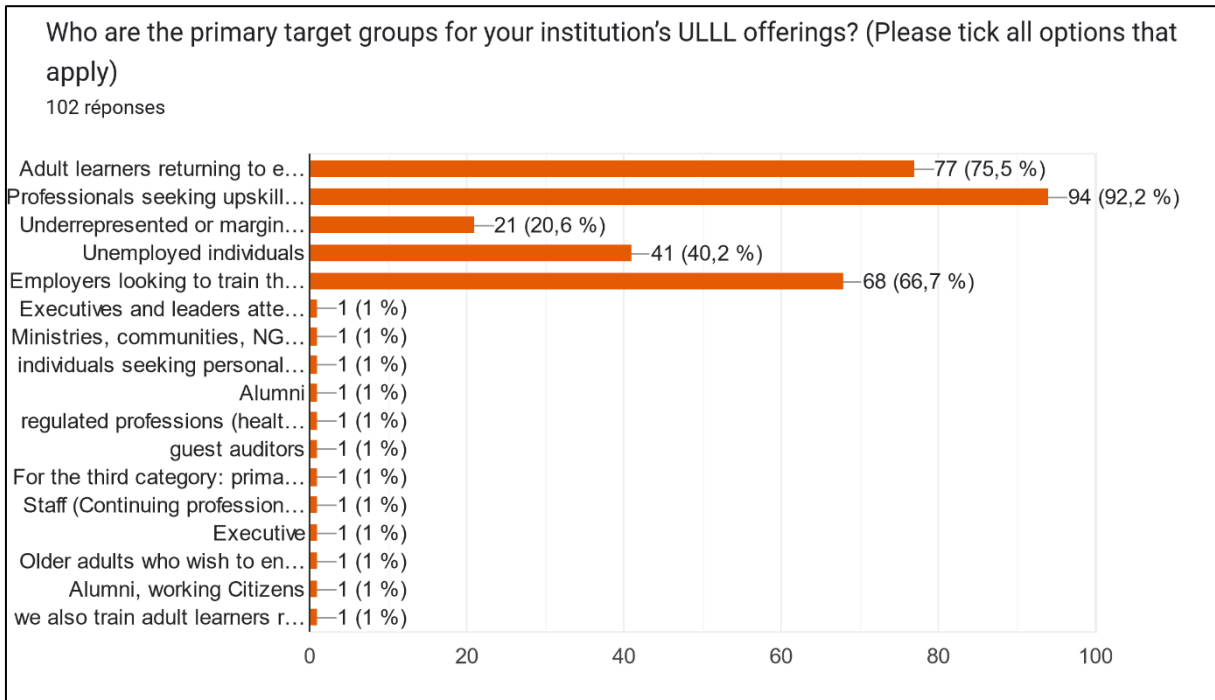


Figure 5

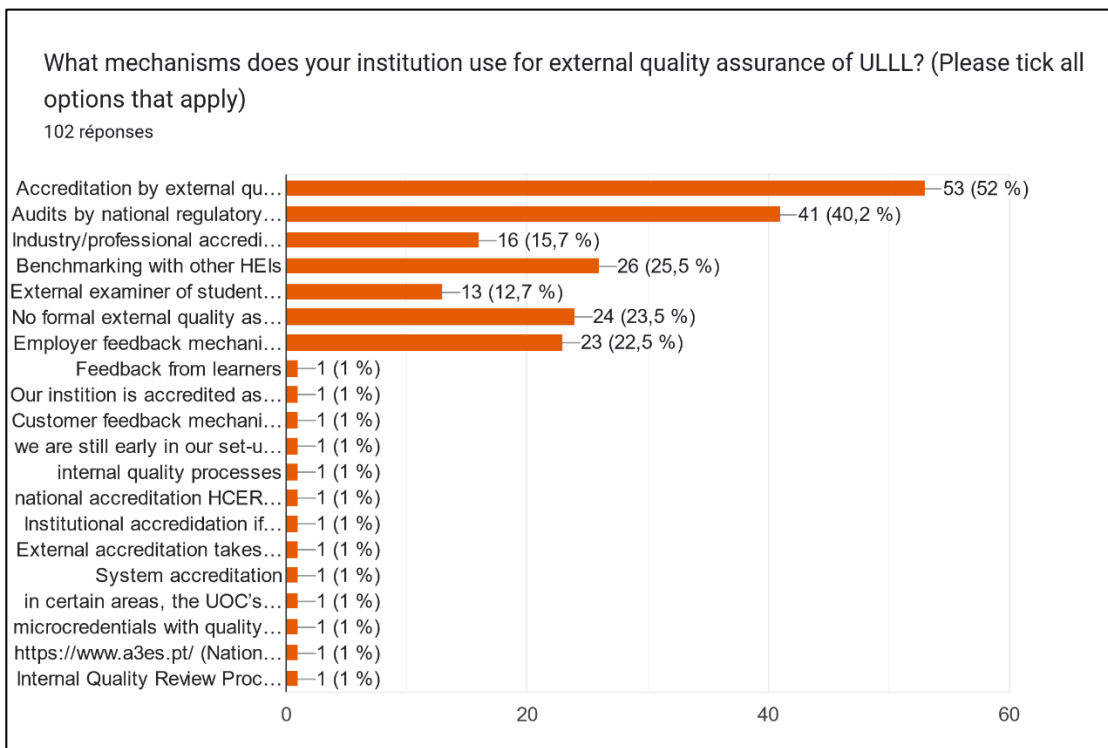


Figure 6

Engagement and impact

HEIs are engaged in learner support in 81% of cases (Q53-Q55) through online platforms, while academic tutoring / mentoring represents 69 %, career guidance represents 62%, administrative support 54%, and digital literacy and inclusion support only 38%.

Institutions support learners but nevertheless encounter **constraints and barriers** related to (Q55) accessibility (44%), costs (56%) and visibility (61%).

Partnerships are key enablers. They require a high level of collaboration with dedicated staff (*Figure 7 and Figure 8*), with 78% mentioning employers and companies as strategic partners. Types of collaboration include:

- Co-development of programs (62%)
- Guest lecturers and teaching input (55%)
- Shared infrastructure or labs (34%)

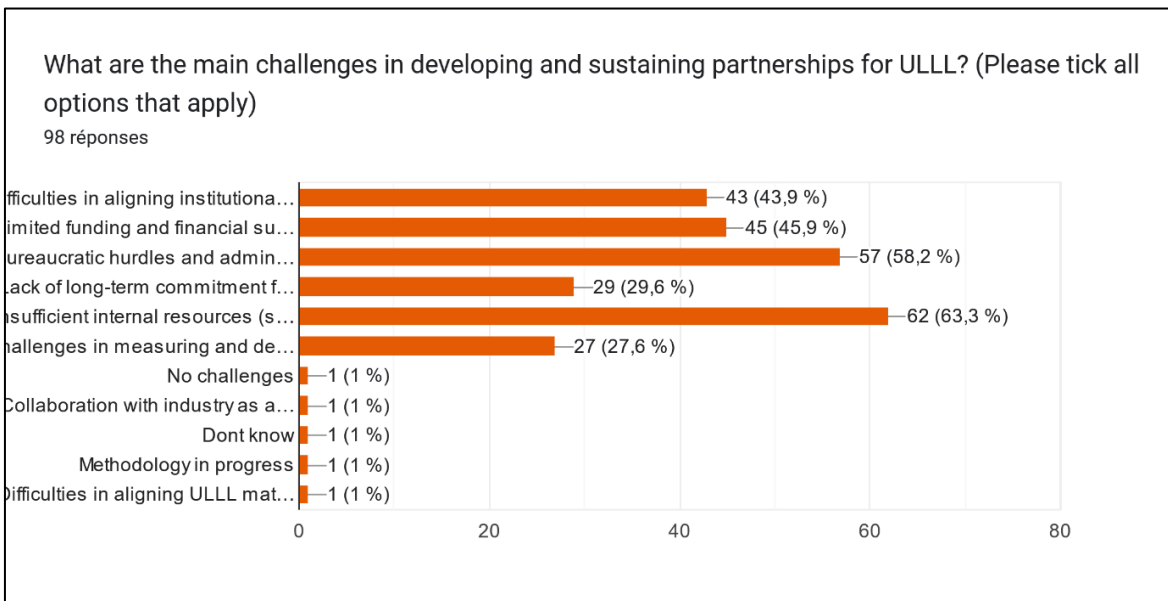


Figure 7

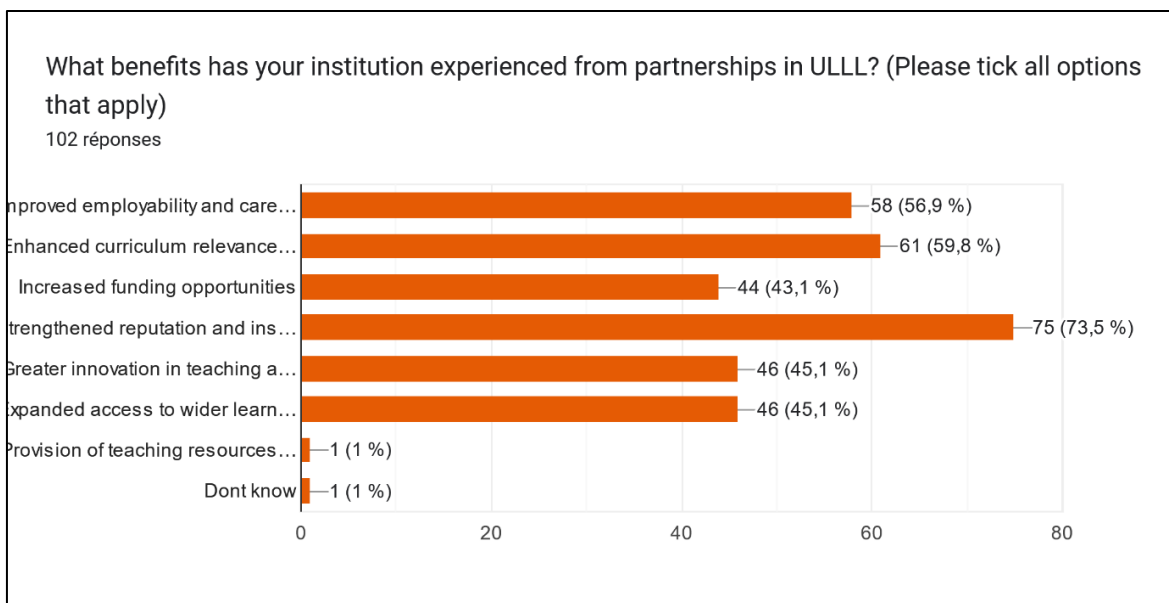


Figure 8

Around 60% of HEIs find their ULLL offering effective or highly effective, showing the engagement of HEIs and their willingness to develop ULLL.

4. Discussions

The results of the questionnaire consider the institutional level of HEIs for a successful provision of ULLL and the starting point would be their comprehensive vision of ULLL. We still find differences between a broad educational mission aligned with lifelong learning and UNESCO values, and a market-oriented service aimed at adult learners as a revenue stream supported by a strong business model.

Moreover, two thirds of the respondents have a clear definition of ULLL and we can point out recurring key words or synonyms that are consistent with the eucen vision⁵ (not exhaustive list):

- Learning throughout life
- Access for adults, professionals, specific target groups beyond initial education
- Flexibility: part-time, online, blended, modular
- Underrepresented groups, migrants, unemployed
- Professional development, reskilling, and upskilling connected to labour market needs
- Green transitions, Digital transitions, Societal challenges
- Societal role of university, strategic vision or mission

Nevertheless, even when there is a national framework, in some cases, there is no clear definition of ULLL in the HEIs, and some of them are not sure of the existence of a legal framework (funding, quality assurance). The questionnaire shows that there are still efforts to be made in raising awareness of ULLL in HEIs, and in training staff to foster and improve high-quality ULLL development for all.

Even if HEIs are innovative and show a willingness to design and deliver high-quality ULLL programmes, institutions are still facing constraints and structural barriers:

- Limited staff/time for design and delivery of ULLL offerings
- IT infrastructure and digital platform (lack of development)
- Difficulty in attracting adult learners (raising awareness, costs)
- Complex procedures (validation, recognition, certification, credit transfer...)
- Clarification of roles between ULLL units and faculties
- Lack of incentives for staff

Regarding ULLL programmes, in some cases ULLL is presented as credit-bearing programmes (certificates, degrees, EQF/NQF-aligned), while in other cases it includes micro-credentials, short courses, executive education, and customised training. A number of institutions see ULLL as a vector of institutional and societal transformation, while others describe it more simply as a flexible teaching format or an administrative requirement.

⁵ eucen adopted the following definition of ULLL in 2007: “*University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) is the provision by higher education institutions (HEIs) of learning opportunities, services and research for: the personal and professional development of a wide range of individuals – lifelong and lifewide; and the social, cultural and economic development of communities and the region. It is at university level and research-based; it focuses primarily on the needs of the learners; and it is often developed and/or provided in collaboration with stakeholders and external actors.*”

5. Conclusion

The questionnaire shows that there is still a balance to be found between the vision of ULLL and the operational capacity to develop innovative ULLL programmes and deliver them with high quality. ULLL is widely acknowledged as important, but the degree of institutionalisation differs significantly across HEIs, showing progress but not yet fully and equally embedded.

There is a diversity in the organisational models, with a large number of centralised models, with challenges in the coordination, bureaucratic hurdles in programme approval and showing lack of transparency in the role and collaboration between faculties and central units to address direct target and needs. While flexible training offerings appears as a key driver for developing high-quality LLL, yet structural barriers still remain - IT capacity, staff workload, QA processes - especially for innovative formats such as micro-credentials.

While benefits appear in centralised models such as allowing a consistent quality assurance, a stronger institutional branding, and a better alignment with strategies and priorities, the questionnaire shows greater flexibility, and a better responsiveness in decentralised models

Lack of staff and resources is also a critical point to maintain impactful partnerships for the benefit of a strong and sustainable ULLL ecosystem (co-development of programs, guest lectures, shared infrastructures) and to enhance the relevance of curriculum for the benefits of the territory.

Two main perspectives emerge:

1. ULLL as a societal and inclusive mission, supported by strategy, policies, and institutional recognition.
2. ULLL as a practical and market-oriented provision, mainly focusing on flexible short-term offerings and income generation.

The survey also reflects a gap between national or strategic frameworks and local implementation within HEIs. Critical issues remain: strategic vision and integration, dedicated resources, and internal alignment. Many HEIs still lack strong and clear governance, incentives for staff, improved digital infrastructure, and sustainable partnerships and ecosystems for ULLL.



How are European universities implementing University Lifelong Learning (ULLL)? What's holding them back—and what's pushing them forward? Are institutions prioritising society's needs, responding to industry demand, or treating ULLL as a revenue stream?

If you're looking for clear answers, the **SAMUELE Mapping Analysis** describes the main trends in the ULLL landscape across Europe in 2025.

Drawing on over 100 HEIs from 20 countries, it reveals where strategy meets practice—and where gaps persist: governance and coordination, funding and sustainability, staff capacity, digital infrastructure, and inclusion. It also spotlights the opportunities: micro-credentials, flexible delivery, stronger employer partnerships, and mission-driven impact.

Whether your lens is policy, leadership, or operations, this report shows how universities can turn commitment into capability—and ULLL into a lever for transformation