

SAMUELE UNIVERSITY ULLL PRACTICES GLOBAL ANALYSIS REPORT: SURVEY, MAPPING AND CASE STUDIES

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SAMUELE ULLL Practices Global Analysis Report: Survey, Mapping and Case Studies

Executive Summary

This global analysis report presents the integrated findings of Work Package 2 of the SAMUELE project, integrating evidence from three complementary strands of research: a National Survey across 18 European countries, a questionnaire mapping exercise involving over 100 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and a structured Compendium of 36 Case Studies from 17 countries. Together these sources provide a multi-level analysis of how University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) is conceptualised, structured and implemented across Europe at system level, institutional level and practice level.

The findings reveal a sector characterised by strong strategic recognition but uneven structural integration. At national level, ULLL is widely acknowledged as essential in responding to labour market transitions, demographic change and digital transformation. However, comprehensive policy frameworks remain limited, funding is frequently insufficient, and implementation conditions are uneven. A clear gap persists between policy ambition and structural support. At institutional level, most HEIs recognise the importance of ULLL, yet only a minority report that it is fully embedded as a strategic priority with sustainable resourcing. Organisational models vary widely, and many institutions face internal constraints including limited staffing capacity, complex governance procedures, insufficient digital infrastructure and fragmented coordination between central units and faculties. At practice level, however, the case studies demonstrate substantial innovation and a range of emerging approaches, including some examples of structurally integrated models. These examples show ULLL embedded within university strategies, supported by redesigned governance systems, strengthened partnerships with employers and community organisations, and structured progression pathways that enhance access and permeability.

Across all three levels, several cross-cutting patterns emerge:

1. A growing repositioning of ULLL from peripheral continuing education activity toward stronger institution-wide strategic integration
2. Growing adoption of modular, stackable and micro-credential formats
3. Persistent funding constraints that limit scalability and inclusivity
4. Tensions between ULLL as a humanistic societal mission and as a market-driven revenue model
5. Increasing emphasis on partnership-based and ecosystem-oriented approaches

The evidence suggests that ULLL in Europe reflects structural adaptation rather than incremental reform. However, this transition remains uneven. While momentum and innovation are visible, sustainable integration depends on coordinated governance reform, formal quality assurance embedding, dedicated funding mechanisms, institutional cultural change, and stronger alignment between national systems and institutional practice.

This global analysis consolidates the evidence base required to inform the next phases of the SAMUELE project - including the development of the Self-Assessment Model and Policy Recommendations - and contributes to the broader European dialogue on how universities can embed LLL as a core and enduring institutional function.

1. Introduction

This global analysis report presents the integrated findings of Work Package 2 of the SAMUELE project. The objective of this work package was to generate a robust and comprehensive evidence base on the current state and structural trajectory of University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) across Europe. Rather than examining ULLL from a single perspective, the work package was designed to analyse it at three interconnected levels: national systems, institutional structures and practice-based implementation. The rationale for this multi-level approach is grounded in the recognition that ULLL operates within a complex ecosystem. National policies shape funding and regulatory frameworks; institutional strategies and governance models determine capacity and scalability; and programme-level practices reveal how lifelong learning (LLL) is experienced by learners and enacted in partnerships. To understand structural transformation in ULLL, it is necessary to examine the interaction between these levels rather than treating them in isolation. The report therefore moves beyond descriptive mapping to provide an integrated analysis of patterns, tensions and emerging models. It seeks to identify where alignment exists between policy ambition and institutional practice, where structural gaps persist, and where innovative approaches point toward systemic change. The findings presented here contribute directly to the subsequent phases of the SAMUELE project, particularly the development of the Self-Assessment Model and Policy Recommendations. At the same time, they offer a standalone synthesis relevant to policymakers, university leaders and researchers concerned with the future of LLL in higher education.

2. Methodology

Work Package 2 was structured around three complementary strands of data collection and analysis:

1. A National Survey examining policy, legislative and funding frameworks for ULLL
2. A Higher Education Institution (HEI) Questionnaire mapping governance models, organisational structures, operational systems and impact strategies
3. A curated Compendium of Case Studies documenting structured examples of ULLL implementation organised into four thematic areas

This layered design enabled the project to capture both breadth and depth: macro-level system conditions, meso-level institutional configurations and micro-level operational practices.

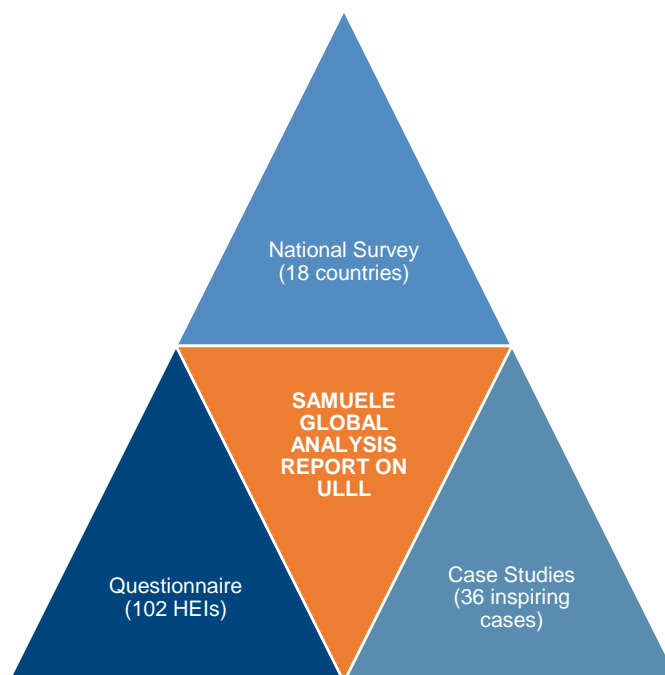


Figure 1. Data collected feeding into the SAMUELE Global Analysis Report on ULLL

National Survey: System-Level Analysis

The National Survey gathered structured data on policy frameworks, legislative provisions, funding mechanisms, quality assurance systems and strategic priorities shaping ULLL within 18 respondent countries. It also collected qualitative insights on barriers, enablers and perceived system-level challenges. This strand provides insight into the degree of national coherence in ULLL policy, the availability of dedicated funding instruments, and the regulatory conditions influencing institutional autonomy and innovation. It establishes the macro-context within which HEIs operate and highlights cross-country variation in maturity and strategic alignment.

HEI Questionnaire: Institutional-Level Mapping

The HEI Questionnaire focused on how institutions conceptualise, structure and operationalise ULLL. It examined:

- Strategic positioning and definitions of ULLL
- Organisational models (centralised, decentralised, foundation-based or hybrid)
- Governance arrangements and approval processes
- Funding and sustainability mechanisms
- Quality assurance systems and digital infrastructure
- Target learner groups and impact orientation

By collecting comparable data across a large and diverse sample of over 100 institutions (n = 102), this strand provides insight into patterns of institutionalisation, structural constraints and organisational diversity across Europe.

Case Study Compendium: Practice-Level Evidence

The Case Study Compendium was developed through a structured call for submissions, resulting in detailed institutional case studies from 17 countries. The cases were organised into four thematic areas:

- Strategic Commitment & Vision
- Structure & Organisation
- ULLL Operations
- Impact & Engagement

Each case provides contextualised evidence of how ULLL is embedded in strategy, enabled through governance design, operationalised through delivery systems, and connected to societal outcomes. Unlike the survey instruments, which capture patterns across large samples, the case studies offer in-depth illustrations of structural integration, innovation and partnership models.

The analytical strategy of this report does not treat these strands as parallel outputs but as interdependent levels of analysis. By triangulating system-level, institutional-level and practice-level evidence, the report seeks to identify cross-level patterns and structural conditions shaping institutional configurations of ULLL.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Structural Dimensions of ULLL in Europe

The integration of national survey data, institutional mapping and case study evidence reveals recurring structural dimensions shaping the development of ULLL in Europe. While each data strand offers distinct insights, their combined interpretation highlights five interrelated axes that define the current ULLL landscape: policy coherence, governance design, financial sustainability, learner permeability and institutional culture. These axes describe the structural conditions within which ULLL in Europe currently operates.

3.1.1. Policy Coherence

At national level, ULLL is widely recognised as strategically important. The National Survey indicates strong rhetorical commitment to LLL in response to demographic change, labour market transformation and digitalisation pressures. However, this recognition is not consistently matched by coherent legislative frameworks or dedicated funding instruments. Only a minority of participating countries report comprehensive national ULLL strategies, and funding insufficiency remains one of the most frequently cited constraints. This creates a structural paradox: LLL is positioned as essential to economic and social resilience, yet the systemic conditions necessary for long-term integration remain uneven. Institutional data reinforces this pattern. While many HEIs report having a formal definition or recognition of ULLL, fewer identify it as a fully embedded strategic priority supported by stable governance and resource allocation. In many cases, ULLL is referenced in strategic documents but not fully integrated into core planning, budgeting or academic development processes. Case study evidence adds further nuance. Some institutions demonstrate advanced structural integration despite operating within fragmented national contexts. Others show active programme innovation without corresponding governance reform. These patterns indicate that policy ambition and institutional embedding do not automatically align.

3.1.2. Governance and Organisational Design of ULLL

Across all three data layers, governance emerges as a decisive structural variable shaping the maturity and sustainability of ULLL. While policy coherence establishes the external framework, institutional governance determines whether LLL becomes embedded, scalable and resilient. The HEI mapping data reveals considerable diversity in organisational models. Institutions report centralised ULLL units, decentralised faculty-based approaches, hybrid arrangements and foundation-based entities. While such diversity reflects institutional autonomy and contextual adaptation, it is frequently associated with fragmentation. Many respondents identify internal barriers including complex approval procedures, unclear role delineation between faculties and central units, limited administrative capacity and insufficient integration of digital systems. In such environments, ULLL often operates alongside - rather than within - mainstream academic governance. The National Survey reinforces this finding at system level. Even where national quality assurance mechanisms exist, their applicability to short-

format, modular or micro-credential provision is not always clear. Legislative frameworks may recognise LLL conceptually, yet institutional governance procedures remain calibrated to traditional degree-based models. This misalignment can slow innovation and limit scalability. The Case Study Compendium illustrates that where deliberate organisational redesign occurs - including clarified accountability structures, cross-faculty coordination, streamlined approval processes and integrated digital infrastructure - ULLL becomes more coherent and sustainable. Conversely, where governance remains ambiguous or rigid, activity is more likely to remain project-based or dependent on individual initiative. Governance, therefore, functions as a pivot point, mediating between policy ambition and institutional practice.

3.1.3. Financing and Sustainability of ULLL

Across the three data strands, financing emerges as one of the most significant structural constraints shaping the development of ULLL in Europe. National survey data indicates that dedicated funding instruments remain limited, fragmented or short-term. Even where funding exists, it often targets specific initiatives rather than supporting systemic integration. Institutional mapping reinforces this picture. A substantial number of HEIs report that ULLL provision is largely self-financing, dependent on course fees or market-based revenue. While this can encourage responsiveness, it also creates vulnerabilities. Revenue dependence may prioritise commercially viable programmes, limit inclusive provision and constrain long-term planning. The case studies then illustrate both the opportunities and limitations of current financing models. Some institutions demonstrate diversified funding portfolios combining public funding, partnership agreements and fee-based provision. Others reveal tensions between their mission and revenue-generating pressures, particularly where social inclusion initiatives rely on external grants or temporary funding streams. The interaction of these findings reveals a core tension: ULLL is expected to contribute to workforce development, social inclusion and regional innovation, yet is often required to sustain itself financially within competitive market conditions. This dual expectation can constrain long-term integration and create inequities in access. Funding structures thus influence institutional configuration.

3.1.4. Learners Permeability

Across the data sets, the question of access and progression emerges as a defining structural dimension. Nationally, ULLL participation is frequently framed around employability and workforce development. Career development and professional updating dominate motivations for participation, while financial cost and time constraints remain significant barriers. These findings reflect a strong labour-market orientation, but also highlight structural obstacles limiting equitable access. Institutional data shows that the primary target group for ULLL is adult learners returning to education, often balancing study with employment and family responsibilities. However, the degree to which institutions provide structured recognition pathways, validation of prior learning and flexible progression routes for this cohort varies considerably. In some contexts, permeability between non-formal, modular and degree-bearing provision remains limited. The Case Study Compendium adds further depth to this picture. Several cases demonstrate structured progression pathways for learners facing disadvantage - including migrants seeking recognition for professional

qualifications, individuals in recovery from addiction, learners in prison contexts, and adults re-entering education after extended absence. In these instances, ULLL operates not merely as skills provision but as a mechanism of social mobility and professional requalification. Recognition frameworks, micro-credentials and qualification bridges are used to enhance permeability between learning and employment. At the same time, the evidence reveals uneven integration of such pathways. The distinction then between episodic access and structured progression becomes central. ULLL systems that embed recognition frameworks and progression mechanisms are better positioned to support social mobility and long-term inclusion.

3.1.5. Institutional Culture

Beyond policy, governance and funding, the evidence across the three data sets points to a deeper and more contested dimension shaping ULLL in Europe: institutional culture and academic identity. The National Survey reveals an ongoing tension in how LLL is conceptualised. In some contexts, it is framed primarily as a response to labour market needs and economic competitiveness; in others, it is articulated as a humanistic and civic mission supporting democratic participation, personal development and social cohesion. These orientations are not mutually exclusive, but the balance between them varies significantly across countries.

Institutional mapping reflects similar ambiguity. While many HEIs formally recognise ULLL within strategic documents, its position within academic culture is less uniform. Traditional degree provision remains central to institutional identity, and governance systems are often designed around full-time, initial-entry student cohorts. In such contexts, adult learners may be accommodated operationally without being fully integrated into academic planning, curriculum development or research strategy. The Case Study Compendium provides illustrative examples of institutions that have begun to renegotiate this cultural positioning. In some cases, ULLL is explicitly embedded within university development strategies and linked to knowledge transfer, civic engagement or regional development. In others, cultural shifts are evident in the recognition of adult learners as core participants in the university community, in the reframing of professional engagement as integral to academic work, and in the adoption of flexible and non-linear learning pathways. However, these shifts are neither universal nor uncontested as they often require adjustments to incentive structures, workload recognition and perceptions of academic legitimacy. Institutionalisation of ULLL therefore depends not only on structural reform but also on alignment with institutional identity and academic culture. Institutions must reconcile their traditional academic self-understanding with evolving societal expectations.

3.2. Cross-Level Analysis

The five axes above describe the structural components shaping ULLL development. This section examines how these dimensions interact across national and institutional levels. The analysis is descriptive and comparative, focusing on identifying structural patterns rather than establishing causal relationships.

3.2.1. National Frameworks & Institutional Embedding

The evidence suggests that stronger national frameworks around ULLL do not automatically correspond with stronger institutional integration. In several contexts where national strategies are well developed, institutions still display varying levels of integration of ULLL. Conversely, some institutions demonstrate strong embedding of ULLL even in moderately developed national environments. This indicates that national policy frameworks function as enabling conditions, but they do not automatically determine how institutions organise and prioritise ULLL.

3.2.2. Within-Country Variation

The data demonstrates that substantial variation is visible within several countries. Even in strong policy environments, institutions respond differently to the same national conditions. This suggests that institutional agency - including leadership commitment, organisational design, and local ecosystem engagement - plays a decisive role.

3.2.3. National Effectiveness and Institutional Performance

The analysis also explored whether countries perceived as effective at national level tend to have institutions that report higher levels of effectiveness. A general tendency is visible: countries assessed as highly effective at system level often show higher average institutional effectiveness. However, this relationship is not uniform. In countries rated as moderately effective, institutional performance varies considerably. National effectiveness thus appears to shape the overall environment within which institutions operate, but it does not eliminate variation in institutional performance.

3.2.4. Quality Assurance

A closer look at higher-performing countries reveals an important pattern. The most consistent distinguishing feature is not simply the existence of a national strategy or legislative recognition. Rather, it is the formal integration of ULLL within quality assurance (QA) mechanisms. Where ULLL is embedded within recognised QA systems, institutional effectiveness tends to be more stable and consistently high. This suggests that formal QA embedding of ULLL is more consistently associated with institutional effectiveness in ULLL than strategy articulation alone.

3.2.5. Governance Integration and Institutional Effectiveness

At institutional level, a clear pattern emerges. Institutions that report clear definitions of ULLL, strong senior leadership support, defined governance responsibilities, and coherent organisational positioning also tend to report higher overall effectiveness. This suggests that governance integration is closely associated with perceived institutional performance. While national frameworks create the broader environment, institutional governance arrangements appear to be the more immediate driver of effectiveness. ULLL tends to be reported as more effective when it is structurally embedded - not simply when it is acknowledged or funded.

Overall, these findings point to a layered dynamic:

- National frameworks create enabling conditions but do not determine institutional maturity
- Institutional variation persists even in strong policy environments
- Formal integration within QA systems appears more closely linked to stable performance than strategy presence alone
- Institutional governance embedding is associated with higher perceived effectiveness

The evidence therefore suggests that the sustainability and effectiveness of ULLL depend less on policy rhetoric and more on structural institutionalisation. ULLL appears to move from peripheral activity to core institutional function when it is embedded within governance structures, recognised within quality assurance systems, and supported by clear leadership responsibility.

4. Emerging Typologies of ULLL in Europe

Taken together, these findings indicate that ULLL development in Europe does not follow a single or linear trajectory. Instead, institutions cluster around recurring structural configurations reflecting differing degrees of alignment across policy coherence, governance design, financing models, learner permeability and institutional culture. The typology of four key models presented below synthesises these recurring patterns. This typology is not a rigid classification system, nor a ranking of institutional performance. Rather, it represents analytically identifiable configurations observable across the HEI mapping data and case study evidence. Institutions may exhibit characteristics of more than one configuration, and movement between configurations is both possible and visible within the dataset.

4.1. *Peripheral or Symbolic Model*

In this configuration, ULLL exists within the institution but remains marginal to core strategy and governance. Typical characteristics include:

- Continuing education operating as a semi-autonomous or loosely connected unit
- Limited prioritisation of ULLL in university-wide strategic planning
- Fragmented or unclear governance arrangements
- Strong reliance on self-financing through fee-based income
- Limited integration within formal QA frameworks
- ULLL framed primarily as professional updating rather than institutional mission

In these cases, ULLL activity may be present and sometimes innovative, but structurally fragile. This configuration reflects a gap between policy rhetoric and institutional embedding.

4.2. *Market-Responsive Operational Model*

In this model, ULLL is actively developed and often operationally dynamic, but primarily driven by labour market demand and revenue logic. Characteristic features include:

- Strong short-format and modular provision targeting mid-career professionals
- Rapid development of micro-credentials and executive education
- Strong responsiveness to labour market demand
- Significant reliance on learner fees and employer-funded activity
- Moderate governance clarity and leadership support
- Organisational agility without full integration into broader institutional identity

These institutions demonstrate agility and responsiveness. However, governance reform and long-term strategic integration are often partial. ULLL functions dynamically, but not yet as a fully embedded institutional pillar.

4.3. *Strategically Integrated Model*

The learner Institutions in this configuration display clear structural embedding of ULLL within institutional strategy. Key characteristics include:

- Explicit positioning of ULLL within university strategic plans
- Clear senior leadership endorsement of ULLL and defined governance responsibility
- Alignment with institutional QA systems accommodating modular and flexible provision
- Mixed or diversified funding structures
- Recognition of adult learners as core participants within the institutional mission

Here, ULLL has moved beyond operational responsiveness and programme-level innovation towards more structural integration. Strategy, governance and quality frameworks are aligned, reducing reliance on individual champions or temporary funding.

4.4. *Ecosystem or Transformative Model*

The most structurally advanced configuration extends beyond internal integration to systemic and regional alignment. Key features of this model include:

- Deep and structured partnerships with industry, public authorities and community organisations
- Embedded recognition and progression pathways for diverse and marginalised learners
- Clear institutional strategy and governance integration
- Formal integration of ULLL within quality assurance and regulatory systems
- Diversified funding sources
- Alignment with regional development strategies and national policy frameworks
- Framing of ULLL as a civic and societal anchor rather than an institutional add-on

Institutions in this configuration operate as anchors within broader LLL ecosystems. ULLL functions not merely as programme delivery, but as a mechanism of institutional and regional coordination.

To examine how these models are represented across the HEI questionnaire sample (n = 102), responses were grouped using a transparent rule-based classification. Institutions were classified based on:

- Strategic signals (clear institutional strategy prioritising ULLL; leadership support; dedicated resources)
- Governance integration (clarity of responsibility; senior-level accountability; centralised or hybrid organisational positioning)
- Funding orientation (fee-dominant versus mixed or diversified funding structures)

- Quality assurance embedding (alignment with accreditation or institutional standards)
- Partnership breadth (engagement across business, public authorities and civic actors)
- Self-reported effectiveness (1–5 scale)

This classification is indicative rather than definitive. It is not a ranking exercise but an analytical grouping that reflects structural positioning.

Applying these criteria yields the following distribution across the sample:

- Market-Responsive Operational Model - approximately 76%
- Peripheral / Symbolic Model - approximately 10%
- Strategically Integrated Model - approximately 10%
- Ecosystem / Transformative Model - approximately 4%

This distribution suggests that the Market-Responsive Operational model is the most prevalent model in the HEI questionnaire sample. Most institutions are actively delivering short-format, modular or professionally oriented provision, often with moderate to strong leadership support, but remain structurally reliant on fee-based income and only partially embedded in institutional governance and QA systems. By contrast, fully Ecosystem or Transformative configurations remain rare and represent the structural frontier rather than the norm for European HEIs.

When the typology is examined by country, several more important patterns emerge. Firstly, institutional configurations do not align neatly along national boundaries. In countries with small sample sizes (one to four institutions), homogeneity is visible and often clusters in the Market-Responsive model. However, in countries with larger representation in the sample (namely France, Spain, Switzerland, Finland), substantial within-country variation appears. France, for example, contains institutions spanning all four configurations within the same national framework. This finding reinforces a central conclusion of the cross-level analysis: national policy environments create enabling conditions, but they do not determine institutional configuration. Institutions respond differently to similar systemic contexts depending on governance design, leadership commitment and funding architecture. Second, Ecosystem or Transformative models appear only in a small number of countries and remain rare even within them. Their presence correlates with systems where ULLL is embedded within formal quality assurance structures and supported by diversified funding mechanisms. However, even in these systems, not all institutions achieve ecosystem-level integration. National frameworks enable; institutional design differentiates. Third, the predominance of the Market-Responsive model across nearly all countries suggests that this model currently represents the most prevalent institutional positioning of ULLL across the sample. It is adaptive, revenue-aware and operationally effective, but not yet fully integrated into institutional governance architecture. Movement beyond this configuration appears to require deliberate governance reform, funding diversification and QA embedding.

Both the typology and country-level patterns illustrate a layered dynamic:

- National frameworks provide the policy environment and may embed ULLL within legislative or QA structures
- Institutional governance design mediates how that environment is interpreted and implemented
- Funding architecture shapes sustainability and inclusivity
- Cultural positioning influences whether ULLL is peripheral, operational or mission-integrated

Variation within countries confirms that institutional agency matters. Strong national strategy does not automatically produce structural integration. Conversely, institutions may demonstrate advanced embedding even in moderately supportive national environments, though often with greater fragility. This typology provides an analytical foundation for the development of the SAMUELE Self-Assessment Model. Institutions can use it to identify their current structural position and consider the governance, funding and partnership shifts required to move toward greater integration and ecosystem alignment.

5. From Typology to Transition: Enabling Structural Movement in ULLL

While the typology describes the structural positioning of ULLL, the next question becomes what enables transitions between the models. The evidence across national data, institutional mapping and case studies suggests that ULLL development is not linear, but it is patterned. Movement toward greater structural integration depends on the alignment of specific enabling conditions at both system and institutional levels. Analysis of institutional trajectories suggests three recurring transition stages.

From Peripheral to Market-Responsive

HEIs in the Peripheral or Symbolic Model often begin by consolidating operational clarity. This includes establishing clearer leadership responsibility, developing modular and flexible provision responsive to labour market demand, and securing revenue streams through fee-based or employer-supported models. At this stage, ULLL becomes more visible and operationally active, but structural embedding remains limited. The primary driver of transition is internal leadership initiative rather than systemic reform.

From Market-Responsive to Strategically Integrated

The shift from operational responsiveness to structural integration requires governance reform and institutional alignment. HEIs that successfully make this transition typically demonstrate explicit positioning of ULLL within institutional strategy, clarified accountability and decision-making structures, alignment of modular and short-format provision with institutional approval and QA systems, partial diversification of funding streams, and recognition of adult learners as central rather than peripheral. This transition marks the movement from activity to institutionalisation. ULLL becomes embedded in planning, budgeting and quality processes rather than operating alongside them.

From Strategic Integration to Ecosystem Alignment

The most advanced transition extends beyond institutional integration toward systemic coordination. HEIs operating within the Ecosystem or Transformative model demonstrate diversified and relatively stable funding portfolios, formal QA embedding and recognised accreditation pathways, structured progression and recognition mechanisms enhancing permeability, deep partnerships across business, public authorities and civic actors, and framing of ULLL as a civic and regional anchor. This transition requires both institutional maturity and supportive system-level conditions. It is rarely achieved through institutional ambition alone; it depends on policy coherence, legislative recognition and aligned funding mechanisms.

The cross-level analysis indicates that movement between configurations is shaped by the interaction of both system-level and institutional enablers:

System-Level Enablers

National frameworks do not determine institutional outcomes, but they influence scalability and resilience. The most significant system-level enablers include clear legislative recognition of modular, stackable and short-format provision; integration of ULLL within formal quality assurance systems; stable and diversified funding instruments beyond short-term project grants; and policy coherence across education, employment and regional development domains. Among these, QA embedding appears consistently associated with stronger institutional stability. Where ULLL is integrated into recognised quality and accreditation frameworks, institutional effectiveness and structural embedding are more consistent.

Institutional-Level Enablers

Within similar national environments, institutions display substantial variation. This confirms that internal design and leadership matter. Key institutional enablers include senior-level accountability and visible leadership commitment, clear governance integration bridging central units and faculties, administrative and digital infrastructures supporting flexible provision, diversified funding models reducing over-reliance on fee income, and cultural recognition of adult learners and professional engagement within academic identity. Where these conditions align, ULLL is more likely to transition from operational activity to embedded institutional function.

6. Conclusion

The evidence assembled in Work Package 2 demonstrates that ULLL in Europe is undergoing structural adaptation rather than incremental reform. Recognition of LLL is widespread, but structural embedding remains uneven. Most institutions operate within Market-Responsive models; fewer demonstrate full strategic integration; and only a small minority achieve ecosystem-level alignment. These configurations are shaped not by ambition alone, but by the interaction of policy coherence, governance integration, funding architecture, learner permeability and institutional culture. Progression toward more mature configurations depends on institutionalisation, particularly through governance reform, QA embedding and diversified financing aligned with mission. National frameworks create enabling conditions, but institutional integration of ULLL ultimately depends on governance, QA embedding and financing alignment. By integrating national survey data, institutional mapping and practice-based case studies, this global analysis report provides a comprehensive cross-level analysis of ULLL in Europe. The future of ULLL will be shaped not by rhetorical commitment, but by structural alignment. The transition is underway; its sustainability will depend on aligning ambition with structure. The challenge for European higher education is therefore not whether to engage in LLL, but how to embed it coherently within institutional structures capable of sustaining it over time



APPENDIXES



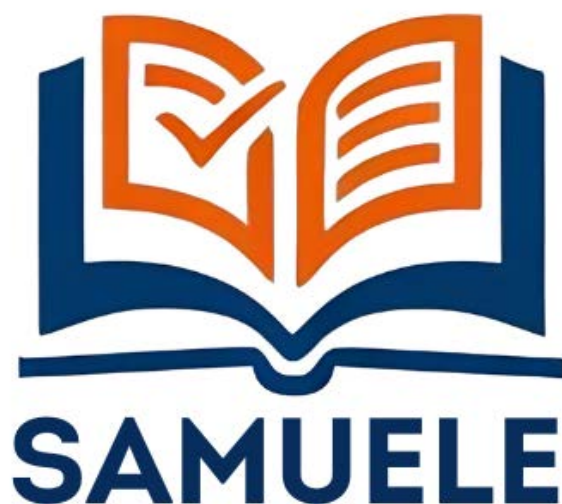
Appendix 1: SAMUELE National Survey on ULLL



Appendix 2: Mapping of the HEIs Questionnaire



Appendix 3: Compendium of Case Studies



What enables some institutions to integrate University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) strategically, while others remain operational or peripheral?

The **SAMUELE Global Analysis Report (2026)** provides a cross-level overview of ULLL in Europe, drawing on data from 18 countries, 102 higher education institutions, and 36 case studies from 17 different countries. The findings show strong policy recognition of lifelong learning, but uneven structural integration. Governance embedding, quality assurance alignment and sustainable funding emerge as key factors for long-term success.

The report offers an evidence-based foundation for strengthening ULLL as a core institutional function in European higher education.