

European University Continuing Education Network - EUCEN

“Final session: To become LLL Universities: how to move from rhetoric to practice?”

Speech by Patrick Hetzel, Director General for higher education and professional integration

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Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

Allow me to thank you for asking me to speak today; I am very pleased to do so, as Director General for Higher Education and Employability, but also because continuing education, training and lifelong learning are essential to my way of thinking, my experience as an academic and my projects.

During the National initiative about the relations between universities and the job market, which I chaired in 2006, continuing education was one of the central themes and gave rise to many suggestions; many of which have now been implemented.

I wrote at the time that continuing education is a fantastic catalyst for progression for initial training. If universities develop their activities in this area, they will easily be able to keep abreast of changes in society in terms of training and also establish measures for ‘cross fertilisation’ between L.L.L. and initial training. If lifelong learning develops, students will perceive their initial training differently.

Since June 2007, a deep rooted initiative has been undertaken in France to transform our higher education and research system. This has led to a French university reform, allowing these institutions to increase their independence and through the increase of cooperation between all stakeholders in higher education and research and between the universities and the ‘grandes écoles’. The general concept we find all around the world is that of **the university**, but our training system is built around diversified structuring and I would also say that it is enriched by this diversity.

However, at a time of globalised competition in terms of knowledge, we must encourage and organise synergies between the various players. With regards training and research, procedures could become inter-operational. What we need is more effort to develop innovation. By innovation I mean training in all its forms and research.

French higher education had long suffered from problems in terms of attractivity, but it also generates inequalities and failure, which make the system inefficient overall and slow down our social developments, (only 38% of those who registered for degree courses between 2002 and 2006 following their baccalaureate, graduated within 3 years; 38% obtained their Masters in 2 years and 1 student in 10 dropped out with only their baccalaureate under their belt)

These reforms went hand in hand with renewed budgetary effort and widespread renovation of university buildings. The first renovations are now being finished; university campuses must regain their aesthetic qualities and practicality.

These reforms are in line with the aim of consolidating our country's competitiveness in the economy of knowledge and this justifies the Government's undertaking to make higher education and research its main priority, with strong financial backing by the nation for students and their families, universities and their employees.



This is a particularly pertinent time for us to get together to L.L.L. and its perspectives:

- It will soon be one year since the French Parliament adopted the law dated 24 November 2009 regarding guidance and professional lifelong learning.
- This year, with a certain number of institutions we are initiating renewed contractual dialogue and for the first time we are going to discuss the place of lifelong learning.
- Higher education institutions are currently rallying to meet calls for future initiatives.

The law dated 24 November 2009 – the so-called 'Wauquiez law' – generated numerous changes in regulations surrounding professional training. These rules are of course common to all players operating in continuing education and are obviously imposed on our institutions.

I feel however that we are suffering from the fact that L.L.L. is generally regarded as being 'the work of specialists'. But the job of leaders in this domain is more than ever affected by the many reforms, which reinforce the need for interactivity with the other universities' endeavours.

Our Ministry has been particularly called upon in the framework of the Wauquiez law with regards the following topics:

- The implementation of a lifelong academic/professional guidance policy and the right to guidance
- A ban on non course-related work placements. Our objective is of course to permit the upswing of course professionalization, and therefore work placements in a more normalised context in order to avoid breaches.
- The reinforcement of initiatives by the National Commission for Professional Certifications, responsible for ensuring coherence in public certifications.
- Changes to the regional professional training scheme, (PRDF) defined in each French region.

I would like to emphasise the first point, which is the implementation of a lifelong guidance policy and the right to guidance.

- The approach known as active guidance, which we have initiated, is in line with a continuing process: eased access to information about higher education institutions, guidance with personalised advice and success for students in higher education and professional integration. This approach is in line with the concept of lifelong guidance. More precisely, in 2008 we began an active guidance initiative for all students in their final year of high school, based on a global four sequence approach: information, pre-registration, counselling and admission. A fifth sequence, (reorientation), could be added. This approach was brought into general use in 2009 at all universities and for all courses. Future high school graduates can pre-register for one of 9,000 higher education courses.
- One of our priorities is, more than ever, to prevent dropping out without qualifications. This battle must rally all teaching teams in institutions and mobilise all training methods as the aim is not only to prevent dropping out, but also to offer solutions to students. That in my opinion is the key to an excellent education innovation, which “future initiatives” wish to make use of. Furthermore, article 36 of the Wauquiez law establishes a way to pinpoint those students prone to dropping out. This is a societal issue. It not only meets the national objective to raise the average knowledge and skill level of French graduates but is also in line with a unanimous rejection of the waste represented by these drop-outs during courses. However, the establishment of reorientation measures is very clearly one of the aims financed by our degree success plan, into which L.L.L. can fit perfectly.
- What is more, the Wauquiez law has brought about a notion of recognition of the organisations assisting the public in lifelong guidance. These organisations must offer the public a range of services, offering exhaustive and objective information about professions and training, as well as personalised advice. The deliverance of a label for organisations constituting the public lifelong guidance service is a subject that we are considering.

The subjects of endorsement, approval, referencing and brand are more than ever at the heart of debates concerning our training systems. Quality certification for courses is widely discussed and the rules regulating them are visibly reinforced. These new conditions surely have a growing influence on dialogue and the projects developed with and by our economic partners.

Furthermore, the strengthening of the missions of the National Commission for Professional Certifications, in charge of ensuring certification coherence, particularly regarding public certifications, obliges us to reinforce our qualitative analysis of our training offer creation process and these new paradigms invite us to adopt a global approach to this offer, both on an institution and national level. From now on, all new diplomas or officially recognised titles are subject to prior approval from this commission.



All universities are becoming more interested in partnerships with companies. L.L.L. is one of the 6 tasks entrusted to universities (and to higher education institutions) by the parliament and we have high expectations.

Its tasks are as follows:

- 1° initial and L.L.L.
- 2° Scientific and technological research and the dissemination and promotion of its results
- 3° Guidance and professional integration
- 4° Dissemination of scientific and technological culture and information
- 5° Participation in the construction of the European Space for Higher Education and Research
- 6° International cooperation.

This is why I feel it is essential that strategic guidelines for developing continuing education are stipulated explicitly in all long-term contracts, signed between institutions and their trustees, in the manner of other initiatives. I recall this in each letter I write to university presidents, triggering the desire for contractual dialogue.

The strategic aim of our institutions includes all training offered by an institution. I believe it is necessary for at least one board of directors meetings each year in each university to discuss the progress of L.L.L. projects, as well as professional integration and work at the site and beyond.

On a regional level, the coming together of higher education institutions within the "PRES" brings about new cooperation opportunities. Similarly, the foundations bring to light projects which regularly go hand in hand with approaches to professional qualification. We should welcome a proliferation of this type of initiative!

Apart from enhancing the visibility and performance of our L.L.L. system, we are attempting to prove that it is the coherence and the synergy of learning processes which allows us to build courses. This process is based on the active guidance I spoke about earlier. It begins way before this, thanks to the bridges we are able to build in the framework of guidance and integration measures upstream. Public diversity and bridge building development between courses is encouraged.



Finally, at the start of 2010, the French Government chose, thanks to a national loan, to invest heavily in higher education and training to make it tomorrow's motor for growth. Nearly €22 billion of the €35 billion concern either directly or indirectly academics and researchers.

Future investments mean that training is considered as important as research and the development of continuing education is one of the selection conditions for the “Initiatives of excellence”. This transformation drive by our universities will continue thanks to future investments.

Other future investment programmes will dedicate a large portion of their loans to continuing education and digital technology. Here again, the initiatives which will be able to be financed in this framework do not concern everyday activity, financed by professional training funds. The aim is to expand pre-existing excellence. The objective is to consolidate innovation, including project governance. Our role is as a Ministry, to assist these teams to develop very innovative projects.

Thank you very much.