

## The Integration of LLL into Higher Education: Non-formal Learning Services Delivery into the Greek HEIs

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### Abstract

*The article focuses on the issue of the incorporation of non-formal types of lifelong learning (LLL) services delivery into the Greek Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). During the past three decades, this issue appears to have received significant attention as a result of relevant policies promoted worldwide and the strong political will demonstrated by the European states. After briefly presenting the consecutive stages of LLL incorporation into HEIs, the article will emphasise the incorporation of LLL into the Greek Universities and, especially, non-formal types of learning services delivery. The University has been undergoing a series of constant, rapid and profound transformations, in the last few years, that have, on the one hand, turned it into a vast and multi-dimensional organization and on the other, present it with unprecedented dilemmas and perils. Among these, one of the most fundamental pertains to the severe impact induced by the adoption of non-formal types of learning by the University, which may act in a corrosive and/or rejuvenating and modernising way on what we are used to calling the University.*

### Key words

*Lifelong Learning, Greek Higher Education Institutions, Non-formal learning.*

### Περίληψη

*Η παρούσα εργασία επικεντρώνει στο ζήτημα της ενσωμάτωσης μη-τυπικών μορφών παροχής υπηρεσιών Διαβίου Μάθησης (ΔΒΜ) στο ελληνικό Πανεπιστήμιο. Το ζήτημα αυτό φαίνεται πως έχει προσλάβει σημαντικές διαστάσεις κατά τις τελευταίες τρεις δεκαετίες ως αποτέλεσμα των σχετικών πολιτικών που προωθούνται παγκοσμίως αλλά και της ίδιας της πολιτικής βούλησης που φαίνεται πως δείχνουν τα ευρωπαϊκά κράτη. Αφού παρουσιαστούν, συνοπτικά, τα διαδοχικά στάδια που ακολούθησε η πορεία ενσωμάτωσης της ΔΒΜ στο Πανεπιστήμιο γενικά, η εργασία αποδίδει έμφαση στην ενσωμάτωση των μορφών ΔΒΜ στα Ανώτατα Εκπαιδευτικά Ιδρύματα της χώρας και, ειδικά, στις μη-τυπικές μορφές παροχής υπηρεσιών μάθησης. Το Πανεπιστήμιο, τα τελευταία χρόνια, υπόκειται σε συνεχείς, ραγδαίες και ριζικές μεταμορφώσεις που αφενός, το έχουν μετατρέψει σε ένα τεράστιο και πολυ-επίπεδο οργανισμό, και αφετέρου, τον θέτουν πρωτόγνωρα διλήμματα και διακυβεύματα. Ένα από τα πιο βασικά, σχετίζεται με τη δραστική επίδραση που ενέχει η υιοθέτηση μη-τυπικών μορφών μάθησης από τον Πανεπιστημιακό θεσμό οι οποίες μπορεί να δράσουν διαβρωτικά ή/και ανανεωτικά, εκσυγχρονιστικά σε αυτό που έχουμε συνηθίσει να αποκαλούμε Πανεπιστήμιο.*

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**Introduction**

A Higher Education Institution (HEI) is *any institution providing services in the field of higher and/or tertiary education, as defined by national law* (EU, 2013: 285).

The term Lifelong Learning<sup>4</sup> (LLL) is used, by the European Union (EU), to describe every learning activity undertaken throughout one's life in order to improve knowledge, skills and abilities within the context of a personal, social perspective and/or a perspective pertaining to employment (European Commission, 2001: 11).

Finally, the expression *non-formal* is used to describe learning that takes place *through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public* (Council of the European Union, 2012). Participation in non-formal learning activities may further lead to the acquisition of nationally recognised qualifications (Stamelos, Vassilopoulos & Kavasakalis, 2015).

The fact that non-formal types of learning are incorporated into HEIs is a current trend that this article focuses on. This trend is also linked to the importance attributed to the participation of a growing number of diverse student population in LLL delivery

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<sup>4</sup>At this point, it would be useful to note the distinction between the terms *lifelong learning* and *lifelong education*. The second –*lifelong education*– primarily refers to the public good of delivering educational programmes while the first –*lifelong learning*– considers the individual responsible for any piece of knowledge s/he may or may not have acquired and consequently, for his/her ability to be employable at any given moment (Stamelos, 2009; Jarvis 2004). It therefore implies a shift in focus from a policy-related responsibility for educational systems to a responsibility concerning the employee and his employment or rather his employability (See also Asderaki & Tsinissizelis, 2008; Papadakis, 2006). It further conceals the *supranationalisation*– to use Papadakis' term (2008; 2006) – of policies related to education, employment and finally, the economy. In its formal policy texts, the EU makes no references to lifelong education, especially after 2000. This is a serious issue to the extent that the opportunities to participate in LLL are, almost, one-dimensionally linked to the fortification of employability rather than citizenship. We will not however expand on this topic at this point.

services provided by the University<sup>5</sup> for the equal benefit of both the society and the individuals themselves. This is a development that has been noted over the past two decades<sup>6</sup>.

In the following sections, after we have briefly presented the consecutive stages of LLL incorporation into HEIs, we will focus on LLL incorporation into the Greek Universities emphasising non-formal types of learning services delivery. Finally, we will pay particular attention to the challenges presented by this new, undergoing development for the University as a whole.

### **What is trending in Europe? The gradual integration of LLL into HEIs**

Nowadays, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are institutionalising structures that go beyond their original scope and adopting processes of continuing vocational education and training after having, more or less, fully incorporated LLL delivery services to their mission<sup>7</sup> (European Commission/EACEA /Eurydice, 2018; EU, 2013; Reichert, 2009; Nesbit, Dunlopp, & Gibson, 2007). This has not always been the case, however. Things seem to have started to change during the past three decades. In fact, HEIs are expected to provide adult, delayed and/or non-traditional learners<sup>8</sup> LLL services delivery (Nesbit, Dunlopp, & Gibson, 2007).

In this section we attempt to describe the current trends in LLL services delivery<sup>9</sup> in

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<sup>5</sup> Higher Education (HE) is undergoing a significant change: *from elite, mass to universal form* where its last form implies the population's need to adapt to the rapid social and technological change and sees University as a driving force towards that direction (Isanović Hadžiomerović, 2016; EUA, 2008). In this regard, Trow (1973: 223-250) noted three key stages concerning the expansion of HE: the “elite” University where up to 15% of the 18-25 age group attends, the “mass” University where up to 40% of the same age group attends and, finally the “universal” University where over 40% of this age group is studying at some University. Zgaga (2007: 12) mentions, with regards to expansion, that the increased demand to enter HE, was not simply a response to the growing employment opportunities offered by University studies but also, a result of the population's higher social and cultural expectations. In any case, the main difficulty in the expansion process is that the University has changed in size but appears to, thoroughly, resist change when it comes to its philosophy or values (Kavasakalis, 2015: 105-106).

<sup>6</sup> Technological change, globalisation, demographic changes but also the multitude of changes in the work place are permanent arguments in support of the constant demand for a continuing upgrade of knowledge and skills of the adult population.

<sup>7</sup> The terminology of lifelong learning embraces many concepts –including initial education for disadvantaged groups, continuing education and training for well-qualified graduates, and post-retirement opportunities for cultural enrichment– and is subject to considerable local, regional and national interpretation (EUA, 2008: 3).

<sup>8</sup> We will define the meaning of these terms later in the section.

<sup>9</sup> The scope and the differentiation of the content of the definitions given to LLL (Viron & Davies, 2015; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018; 2015) hinders a complete recording of all LLL activities in HEIs across European states. The scope and the number of courses offered vary to a large extent. In some countries, LLL includes services like counseling, career advice, alumni communication and formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning while in other countries such services are institutionally

European Universities after we have briefly presented the consecutive stages of LLL incorporation into HEIs.

The discussion on delivering services of continuing (vocational) education by the University became prominent in Europe in the 90s. In 1990, a global conference on *Education for All* took place under the auspices of UNESCO. In 1991, three European Union memoranda on tertiary education, vocational education and distance learning entered the sphere of public debate. In 1992 the Maastricht Treaty was put into action - articles 149 and 150 referring to (vocational) education and training- providing the legal basis for the development of educational programmes across the Union as well as internationally. The Council's resolution on the quality and appeal of vocational education and training ensued on December 5, 1994. In fact, 1996 was named European Year of LLL by the EU. On the same year, the report by UNESCO, *Learning: The treasure within* as was OECD's *Lifelong Learning for all* were published. The latter promoted the need for the continuous development of adults' skills and abilities after the commencement of their professional life and set out the general guidelines pertaining to University's involvement into the LLL. UNESCO was the first to suggest, among other things, that Universities should broaden the scope of both their function and duties in order to become involved with vocational education and training throughout one's life (Stamelos, Vassilopoulos & Kavasakalis, 2015; Karipidou, 2012). The joint convention between the European Council and UNESCO on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications within the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention, LRC) in 1997 was another landmark moment. In 1999, Edgar Morin's book, *Seven complex lessons in Education for the future* was published by UNESCO, as a follow-up to UNESCO's *World Conference on Higher Education* a year before (Mitchell, 2018; Stamelos, Vassilopoulos & Kavasakalis, 2015). Finally, in 2000, the Lisbon Strategy placed economic reform, employment reinforcement and the safeguarding of social stability at the centre of its objectives in the context of the knowledge society. Taking action to implement LLL was fundamental in the effort to achieve those goals<sup>10</sup>.

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located elsewhere. Target groups vary also: isolated trainees, specific groups such as the unemployed, women or immigrants and organisations of all types; public, private, non-profit, professional, cultural (Viron & Davis, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> The European Union secured substantial funding to this direction by announcing a series of programmes. In 1994, the Socrates programme, the Leonardo (2000-2006) and the Life Long Learning programme for the period 2007-2013 served the EU greatly in realising its goals (Stamelos & Vassilopoulos, 2013).

Specifically, member-states pledged that the number of people aged 25-64 participating in any type of vocational or other education would reach 12,5% of adult population<sup>11</sup> by 2010 (European Council, 2003, par. 6). At the same time, according to the Bologna Process and until the Leuven meeting in 2009, European states went from supporting LLL in theory to making it an indispensable part of the function of the university<sup>12</sup> (Karipidou, 2012: 72). On the other hand, based on the Copenhagen Process, they promoted the agenda of creating a European Area of Vocational Education and Training, complementary to the European Area of Higher Education (EHEA), through which the qualifications awarded in one country would be recognised across Europe through the use of shared frameworks, institutions and bodies but also, through the homogeneous use of comparable data in order to increase youth and, most importantly, adult population mobility (Asderaki, 2009; Papadakis, 2008; 2006; Asderaki & Tsinissizelis 2008; Pepin 2006).

In May 2009, the Council (of Education) defined the framework of European collaboration in the fields of education and training for 2010-2020, following a Commission's proposal (Commission of the European Union, 2008). LLL was, yet again, placed at the centre of this process becoming *the* “fundamental principle upon which the whole framework would be based” covering “every type of learning –formal, informal and non-formal– on all levels: from preschool and primary education to higher education, professional education and training as well as adult education” (European Council, 2009, par. 3). From their part, member-states agreed that, by 2020, at least 15% of adults would be taking part in LLL programmes<sup>13</sup>. Accordingly, two years later, in

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<sup>11</sup> While in all EU countries certain LLL policies were developed and systems for the formal recognition of informal and non-formal learning were formulated –at a slower pace – the practical implementation of these strategies and the participation of adults in LLL remained problematic (European Council and European Commission, 2008: 2-6). In 2009, in Greece, the percentage of adults taking part in professional education and training was barely 1,8% when the respective average for the other EU member-states was 9,6% against a set goal of 12,5% (Stamelos & Vassilopoulos, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> At the same time, in 2008, the EUA drafted the European Universities' Charter on LLL where 10 suggestions to HEIs and another 10 for the governments were made, so they may aid in the development of their role as institutions of LLL (EUA, 2008). The commitments the universities were called to honour included: incorporating LLL in their overall strategy, adapting their programmes so they would attract adult learners, providing counseling and career advice, developing partnerships on a local, regional, national and international level in order to provide appealing programmes and finally, functioning as model institutions of LLL. Governments were called to, among other things, promote social justice, to remove certain legislative/legal objects that prevent adults from partaking to LLL, to provide information and support to citizens so they may take part in University education programmes and for themselves to be LLL models by offering public servants opportunities for LLL (Karipidou, 2012: 78-80).

<sup>13</sup> In Greece at least, in 2014 and 2017, the percentage of adults (25-64) taking part in LLL programmes was 3,2% and 4,5% respectively (Commission of the European Communities, DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2018: 124-135).

2011, the European Council called member-states “to focus on promoting flexible learning pathways for adults, including broader access to higher education for those lacking mainstream access qualifications, and on diversifying the spectrum of adult learning opportunities offered by higher education institutions” (Council of the European Union, 2011). Likewise, in 2015 in Yerevan, Bologna ministers placed their emphasis on widening access to HEIs creating flexible learning paths and facilitating the recognition of prior learning for the inclusion of different types of learners.

Based on the above, there are three main issues connected to the prevalent modern trends concerning LLL delivery services from European Universities<sup>14</sup>: LLL funding (re)sources, the various forms given by HEIs to LLL delivery services and, of course, target groups. In the background of this discussion, the recognition of qualifications received through the use of these services is also an issue with particular interest to which, however, we will not make further reference in this section.

With regards to the first issue, the dominant trend in Central and North European countries is public funding of LLL whereas private funding (students and private companies) is dominant in Eastern European countries and the Balkans –with the exception of Greece where over 50% of LLL funding comes out of the state budget (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015: 154-156).

In reference to the second issue, what characterises LLL integration into European HEIs is the fact that in many cases the institutions attempt to adjust popular and tried models of education services delivery to new and diversified to some extent, student needs<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the lack of a shared LLL<sup>16</sup> system across European countries, has led to the formulation of a large variety of structures –centralised, within the University, decentralised and/or structures where the University cooperates with outside parties – the model of Great Britain (Viron & Davies, 2015; Karipidou, 2012; European

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<sup>14</sup>For a detailed description of LLL incorporation into HEIs in various European countries, see also <http://www.eucen.eu/> (Accessed Last: July, 2019) and EU, (2013).

<sup>15</sup>The University's involvement in continuing education has been considered as a matter of minor or lesser importance among academics in comparison to research and undergraduate education. Universities have, from time to time, demonstrated certain reluctance or hesitation in getting involved with this sector (Isanović Hadžiomerović, 2016; Karipidou, 2012; Reichert, 2009). For many years, the University has shown self-sufficiency and the need to differentiate itself in comparison to other social and/or educational institutions (Isanović Hadžiomerović, 2016: 4).

<sup>16</sup> ALLUME Project, A LLL University model for Europe, focused on exploring ways to increase the participation of Universities in LLL and to produce “A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe”. This model was supposed to assist Universities by providing guidelines based on the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning published in 2008. However, during the project’s lifespan, it became clear that the idea of a unique model or a one-size-fits-all approach was outdated and not adequate given the diversity of Universities, environments and the heterogeneity of LLL strategies and processes (see also: <http://allume.eucen.eu>, (Accessed Last: July, 2019).

Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018; 2015). On the one hand, European HEIs are developing study programmes to attract adult students –without, necessarily, deviating from conventional study programmes in terms of context- or other programmes that cater to the needs of non-traditional students<sup>17</sup> (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Short-cycle programmes (120 ECTS typically) addressing mature, adult, learners constitute part of HE<sup>18</sup> in many EHEA countries. They comprise a range of programmes that differ in terms of content, orientation and purpose, meeting with the needs of the labour market<sup>19</sup> resulting into (self-) employment in an economic sector in line with the study programme, employment in a different economic sector or at a different level or further studies<sup>20</sup> (bachelor or master). Accordingly, HEIs in Europe are developing more flexible forms of study (such as part-time studies) in order to expand the range of students they appeal to. There is evidence that adult learners, particularly those with work and family duties, prefer studying part-time and at non-standard hours. The median of country percentages of students enrolled as part-timers in tertiary education ranges between 46% and 62% for the 30-49 age group, a fact indicating that older students are much more likely to study part-time than their younger peers<sup>21</sup> (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018: 70). However, not all countries have formal part-time study programmes for students attending HEIs. These students may be studying part-time *de facto* while officially they are studying full

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<sup>17</sup> This type of special study programmes are becoming increasingly popular in European HEIs. This is an indication, perhaps, of a newly-growing importance attached to LLL (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). In the Hungarian case, the ‘Special Course on Logistics Management’, students are encouraged to work on authentic logistic problems occurring at their respective companies as part of their studies and theses. In the German case, the aim of the bachelor programme is to enable participants to reflect on their daily work experience by using theoretical knowledge and by applying methods of social research. Students’ reflection on their professional role is part of their regular learning activities. This is supplemented by a study project in which students are asked to apply their new theoretical knowledge to a selected problem in their field of employment (EU, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> In contrast to short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED 5), which is not recognized as HE, commonly comprising vocational programmes.

<sup>19</sup> Final report of the 2015-2018 BFUG Working Group on fostering implementation of agreed key commitments.

<sup>20</sup> According to the Bologna Communiqués, countries that offer the short cycle should ensure its proper recognition when graduates progress to the next cycle of HE (bachelor programmes). Countries where the short cycle does not exist are not obliged to introduce it, but they should establish mechanisms allowing for the recognition of short-cycle qualifications from other EHEA systems (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018: 102).

<sup>21</sup> In the EHEA countries as a whole, fewer than 20% of students between the ages of 18 and 23 study part-time. Meanwhile part-time studies are the most common study form for adults over 30 years of age, accounting for almost 63% of 30-34 years old, and even higher percentages in older age ranges (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015: 157).

time<sup>22</sup> (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). The main routes to acquiring access to typical types of learning delivery services in HE in Europe are three: a. entry with a standard qualification (with an upper secondary school leaving certificate from general or vocational education, giving direct access to higher education); b. entry with a higher education entry qualification obtained later in life; c. entry without higher education entry qualifications – this refers to cases of recognising previous informal or non-formal learning (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018: 172-173). However, in spite of the aforementioned flexible entry routes, the vast majority of students in Europe enter HE in the traditional way: with a standard qualification obtained directly at the end of upper secondary education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018; EU, 2013). This reality cannot but act as a deterrent for adult learners and/or non-traditional students.

On the other hand, LLL in HEIs may have the form of participation in non-formal, *open to all* courses, such as learning languages or aiming to professional specialisation or the form of an upgrade of professional qualifications and skills for students of certain fields (EU, 2013). In the same context, HEIs in most EHEA countries offer various types of distance LLL delivery services – including online –synchronous or asynchronous– learning (European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice, 2015; 2018). Additionally, they offer a variety of courses taught during the afternoon and courses taught in other popular languages (EU, 2013). Furthermore, HEIs have developed study programmes for adult learners specifically, relevant to the vocational education sector, the EU mandates<sup>23</sup> and the Bruges communiqué objective of promoting flexible pathways between vocational education and training and HE bridging theory (theoretical and research based issues) and practice (experiential and practice related issues). Such programmes integrate teaching methods such as working on authentic problems occurring in participants’ fields of employment, learning by means of (preferably authentic) case studies, or engaging in collaborative learning and group learning (EU, 2013; EACEA, 2012). In the EU, Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of

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<sup>22</sup> Of course, different interpretations of the definition of part-time studies across countries, partly determine the flexibility of programme organisation.

<sup>23</sup> The recent Communication on a renewed EU agenda for HE mentions that it “should also allow students to acquire skills and experiences through activities based around real-world problems, include work-based learning and, where possible, offer international mobility. Cooperation with employers can allow HEIs to increase the relevance of their curricula and deliver them effectively, and to increase opportunities for students to access high quality work-based learning” (Commission of the European Communities: 5).



professional qualifications regulates practical training for certain professionally-oriented study programmes (e.g. for medical or pharmaceutical studies). Many non-EU member countries also apply similar regulations in some, more practice-oriented study fields. However, beyond these regulated professions, HEIs are mostly free to decide whether they include such structured work experiences in their study programmes<sup>24</sup>. Most EHEA countries have regulations or incentives to include practical training and work placements for at least some HEIs and/or programmes (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018).

To return to the third issue raised earlier in this section, regarding the population addressed by LLL in HEIs, one could make the distinction between: adult/mature students<sup>25</sup> – whose country median (academic year 2011-2012) was 15,8% – non-traditional<sup>26</sup> and delayed transition students<sup>27</sup>. More specifically, the target population of LLL services in HEIs can vary significantly among individual learners; specific groups of learners such as the unemployed, women or migrants; and organizations of all kinds – public, private, not-for-profit, professional and cultural (Viron & Davies, 2015).

## The integration of LLL into HE in Greece

### *Setting the scene: LLL in Greece*

Until 1980, and in spite of the successive legislative initiatives on the part of Greek

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<sup>24</sup> In the context of LLL and alternative learning and training paths, a flexible route could be the Work-Based Learning (WBL). WBL can take three forms: informal, when learning occurs randomly at the workplace by performing the daily tasks of the worker, non-formal, when learning is linked to continuing vocational education and training and is conscious and structured (CEDEFOP, 2015), and, finally, formal when linked to initial vocational education and training and part of upper secondary and/or tertiary education (e.g., professional colleges, “sandwich-courses”) aiming at equipping young learners with skills in line with the needs of the labor market (Commission of the European Communities, 2010) in order to achieve a smooth transition from workplace education (Kavasakalis & Liossi, 2019: 34).

<sup>25</sup> There have been several attempts to describe the *adult/mature learner*. We consider the following description a perfect summary of the relevant discussion in international bibliography “...adults in higher education are mostly older than 25 years at the time of enrolment, come from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education, enter higher education after a period of biographical discontinuity after initial education, enter higher education via alternative admission procedures, e.g. via recognition of prior learning and/or work experience, prefer flexible modes of study over the rigid schedules of regular study programmes, combine participation in higher education with continuing professional development, often initiated in partnership with their employers, select specialist higher education institutions, such as open universities, or special units within public higher education institutions, e.g. Universities of the Third Age” (EU, 2013: 12).

<sup>26</sup> This term entered our vocabulary in 1987 when OECD coined it to simply describe adult students in HE. Today, the term denotes students from various and diverse backgrounds, non-indigenous, middle class and academically unprepared students (Isanović Hadžiomerović, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Those who have delayed their entry into HE for at least two years after completing upper secondary education or another qualification giving access to HE (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015: 162).

governments already from 1929<sup>28</sup>, adult education remained an institution with limited scope and development (Karalis, 2010). Until the 90s, there was no system of continuing vocational education and training established in Greece. Greece's admission to the EEC in 1981, provoked a series of developments resulting from European funding –mainly the European Social Fund (ESF)– primarily characterised by the fact that it led bodies of the wider public sector (ELKEPA, OAED, EETAA, EOMMEX in Greek<sup>29</sup>) into setting up adult education activities. This is a time/when 95.099 learning classes with 1.468.470 recorded participants were running (Fotopoulos & Zagos, 2016; Prokou, 2007). In the years between 1990 and 2000, the number of such activities and programmes dropped significantly, as did their appeal in comparison to a decade before. Adult education moved towards vocational education and training and in policies relating to the reinforcement of employment through LLL programmes. At the same time, in accordance with the conditions of the funding by the first Community Support Framework/ CSF (1989-1993), until the middle of the 90s, the adult education delivery services system was fundamentally restructured and extensively privatised while the participation of public bodies and HEIs' activity in continuing education decreased significantly (Karipidou, 2012; Prokou, 2007). In the 90s, OEEK and ESEEK (in Greek) were founded and the operation of private and public IEKs was institutionalized. Moreover, SDE became operational and provision for the creation of (private and public) KEKs, IDEKE, KETEK and EKEPIS (in Greek) was made; all fell under the responsibility of the Ministries of Education and Employment<sup>30</sup>. During the same time, the Open University became operational and PSEs<sup>31</sup> were institutionalised in order to

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<sup>28</sup> In Greece, the institution of LLL appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during a period when a small number of social organisations were trying to face the issue of illiteracy in rural and semi-middle class Greek society (Vergidis, 1995). One of the initial attempts of governmental interventions, can be traced back to Law 4397/1929, which provided for the founding and operation of evening schools in order to reduce illiteracy among the country's adult population. From then on, in 1935, individuals (private bodies) were given the right to found professional schools, outside the system of education, mostly for adults (Karalis, 2010) and in 1943 the Directorate of Popular Training (for adults) was established within the Ministry of Education. From 1950 onwards, both the institution and the network of Popular Training (for adults) were upgraded and updated, OAED began organising training programmes for adult employees, EOMMEX provided training to artisans, while ELKEPA planned and performed training programmes that catered to the needs of business executives (Fotopoulos & Zagos, 2016; Karalis, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> ELKEPA: Greek Productivity Centre, OAED: National Employment Agency, EETAA: Greek Organisation of Local Development and Self-Government, EOMMEX: Hellenic Organization of Small & Medium Sized Enterprises & Handicrafts.

<sup>30</sup> OEEK: *Organisation* for Vocational Education and Training, ESEEK: National System of Vocational Education and Training, IEK: Vocational Training Institutes, SDE: Second Chance Schools, KEK: Centres for Vocational Training, IDEKE: Adult Lifelong Learning Institute, KETEK: Centres of Vocational and Technical Education, EKEPIS: National Centre of Lifelong Learning Accreditation.

<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Optional Study Programmes (PSE), together with the Greek Open University, were

increase the offer of LLL services for Lyceum and tertiary education graduates (Fotopoulos & Zagos, 2016; Prokou, 2007).

In this chaotic landscape of LLL delivery services, from 2000 onward, there have been attempts to, institutionally, update the system so that available resources may be rationally put to use, but also to ensure the most effective coordination of activities inextricably linked to the development of the adult education (Kavasakalis, 2018, Fotopoulos & Zagos, 2016; Karalis, 2010). Thus, in 2003 by Law 3191/2003, ESSEKA (in Greek) was created<sup>32</sup>. In 2005, an attempt to create a cohesive legislative framework for LLL was made by Law 3369/2005 where, among other things, there was a provision to set up Lifelong Education Institutes (IDBE in Greek) in Tertiary Education<sup>33</sup>. In 2008, the Secretariat-General of Vocational Education got renamed to Secretariat-General of LLL and its scope and responsibilities expanded; it became the main administrative body of LLL in the country in 2010 (Agioutaki, 2019).

When Law 3879 /2010 passed, it was the first time that a homogeneous national strategy for LLL in the vein of European standards, was formed in Greece. The main characteristics of the new Law were: linking the educational needs of adults to the

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newly-founded educational structures aiming to facilitate university access for Greek and foreign/internationals of all ages. Their main goal was to implement LLL in tertiary education, continuing education of high school graduates or other equivalent qualification holders, and the expansion of their educational options (Law: N.2752/1999). PSEs, essentially introduced fundamental changes in tertiary education: A PSE was not necessarily attached to a University department, but was actually the product of cooperation between various departments of one or several Universities and HEIs, Greek or international. PSEs, besides degrees, offered their students attendance certificates in specific/certain scientific fields, while there was provision for study programmes in foreign languages as well as access to international students. In the end however, this initiative did not move forth due to serious protests from students of conventional universities departments because: a. Law 2525/97 did not clarify the differences and similarities between conventional degrees and degrees awarded by PSEs and b. The candidate selection method varied from the uniform system of admission into tertiary education (Karipidou, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> National System for linking initial and continuing vocational education and training.

<sup>33</sup> In the Report for the draft law “National system of assuring and assessing the quality of Higher Education, Lifelong Learning Institutes, International Greek University and other provisions” in 2001, which, however, was never put to a vote in the Greek parliament, there were references to the wider international developments –also see previous section – that were calling for HEIs to take action on the matter of LLL. Stated within, were also the principles of EUA concerning the necessity for the scales of the goals of LLL to tip towards the social dimension and central role (that Universities must have) in LLL. This involvement however, should not, in any way, affect the particular characteristics of HE, which, to a great extent, defined the aims, and operation of the University. In the end, the law for the foundation of Lifelong Education Institutes (IDBE) was passed 5 years later but was never implemented in the Greek HEIs. The Panhellenic Federation of Associations of Academics (POSDEP in Greek) expressed its objections with regards to the foundation of IDBE in HEIs on the grounds of: a) the need to found IDBEs is unsubstantiated and their mission is not (adequately) defined, b) structures are formed, within HEIs, which will operate under insufficient control from University bodies, a fact that will potentially threaten their autonomy, c) the foundation of IDBEs poses a threat to the public nature of education since it allows for earnings from educational services delivery, studies, tuition fees and private funding, as well as for the “assessment” of provided educational “services” from the latter. It has been argued that this provision may mark the beginning of the transformation of AEIs to Centres of Vocational Training (Karipidou, 2012, p. 124).

demands of the market, recognising the part played by learning outcomes, stressing the need to recognise and certify alternative educational routes, decentralising LLL activities by outsourcing them to municipalities and regions, providing support for socially vulnerable populations, assuring the quality of educational actions and the establishment of a consistent national framework of qualification recognition and certification. Three years later, Law 4115/2013 made provision for the founding of the National Organization for Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP in Greek). EOPPEP would accredit studies by adult education bodies as well as develop the National Qualifications Framework according to the European Qualifications Framework model. In the April of 2016 the National Strategic Framework for the Upgrade of Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeship was founded by the appropriate Ministries and authorities. Finally, in 2018, the General Secretariat for Youth and Lifelong Learning was split into the General Secretariat for Youth and the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning.

#### *The integration of LLL into Greek HEIs: 1980 onwards*

The first step in the gradual integration of the LLL into Greek HE, within the context of implementing relevant European policies but also of corresponding to legislative initiatives by the Greek state, was undoubtedly the founding of the Open University<sup>34</sup>. From then on, vocational education and training structures (KEDIVIM, KEE in Greek<sup>35</sup>) were founded, as were others in the field of disseminating Greek language and culture, while educational-training programmes were implemented under the responsibility of academics.

The Open University was founded in 1992 (Law 2083/1992, article 27). Among other things, its mission was the provision of open and distance undergraduate and postgraduate learning and learning programmes through the development and utilization of appropriate educational material and learning methods. The Open University essentially constituted the main carrier of continuing education in Greece in the field of HE. The registration of students in the Open University requires the possession of a

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<sup>34</sup> The broadening of access to the Greek HEIs was also expressed in the creation of new universities and the founding of new departments, the increased number of admitted candidates in the undergraduate study programme of the HEIs departments, but also in the generalization of postgraduate studies (Vassilopoulos, 2015). However, in this section we will not expand further on those aspects of access to Greek Universities.

<sup>35</sup> KEDIVIM: Centres of Lifelong Learning KEE: Centres for Professional Training.

High School Diploma or of an equal or corresponding Secondary Education qualification from within the country or abroad. It awards: a) Participation Certificates for a Thematic Unity, b) Undergraduate Education Certificates, c) Postgraduate Education Certificates, d) Degrees, e) Postgraduate Diplomas of Specialization (Master's), f) Doctorate Diplomas.

In the last few years, in an attempt to integrate LLL into HEIs, KEK, KEDIVIM, Greek Language Schools were introduced to the Greek Universities. Moreover, a series of educational and training programmes were carried out by the Greek Universities as a result of: a) recent legislative provisions of the Greek State, b) indirect (European Social Fund) or direct Community funding (Erasmus+ programmes, LLL 2007-2013), c) funding that stemmed from carriers in the supranational and subnational level<sup>36</sup>.

Parallel to the forms of access in the educational and training programmes under the responsibility of the Greek Universities' faculty members, new forms of access have been developed and/or introduced in the last few years, which mainly focus on the cultivation and dissemination of the Greek language and culture. They address foreigners and/or expatriate students and are closely connected to the certification of knowledge of the Greek language for foreigners<sup>37</sup> (e.g. the School of Modern Greek Language).

The founding of KEKs was under the provision of Law 2009/92, following a Commission's recommendation (see Regulation 815/84 EEC). Their funding resulted from the Operational Programmes of the Ministry of Labour. Access to this specific structure was regulated by the Universities through processes they defined.

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<sup>36</sup> A University Department or a Faculty member, individually, may materialize educational and training programmes, within the existing legislative framework, after funding that comes from private sources, the Greek Government, the Community, Regional Authorities, or the Municipalities of the country. Indicatively we mention: a) the programme "Ariadne: Programme for Training Mental Health Professionals on the phenomenon of teenage internet addiction, as well as the dangers that children and teenagers face through the uncontrolled use of the internet" and the programme "Plato's Academy: The Citizen and the State" at the NKUA, the programme "The University of Aegean: main factor for the financial and social growth of the Aegean sea region" as well as the connection of school-community in the context of the programme "Training of Foreign and Returned Expatriate Students" at the University of Aegean (GSLLL, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> We mention characteristically NKUA's School of Modern Greek Language, AUTH's School of Modern Greek Language (GSLLL, 2012), the Centre of Teaching Greek Language at the University of Ioannina (<https://www.uoi.gr/ekpaideysi/kedegpo/>, Accessed Last: July 2019) but also the Greek Language and Culture Workshop at the University of Patras (<http://greeklab.upatras.gr/el/>, Accessed Last: July 2019).

Functioning KEKs as well as the preexisting Lifelong Education Institutes –see previous section– were abolished under Law 4485/2017<sup>38</sup> and were replaced by the KEDIVIM. According to the framework provided by the new Law, KEDIVIM may organize educational and/or training programmes in collaboration with HEIs or research institutes, in Greece or abroad, providing distance learning, taking into account the needs of persons with disabilities and/or special education needs and ensuring electronic access to the programmes to these persons. They grant certificates of non-formal education. The same law that established the operation of KEDIVIM (4485/2017) also made provisions for the ability to organize two-year vocational education and training programmes by the Greek Universities for the Professional Lyceum (EPAL in Greek) graduates. In addition, Law 4521/2018 a year later, clarified the foundation and operational framework of KEEs (in Greek). According to the proposal of the National Council of Education and Human Resources Development on the introduction of this specific institution into the Greek Universities, these structures mainly address the 20-24 age group which does not work and does not participate in an education or training programme. In the particular age group the percentage of unemployment reaches 22% – ranking Greece in the third place after Italy and Cyprus of the highest NEETs percentages in Europe (delayed learners). The initial implementation phase of KEEs would start with 60 study programmes at 11 Greek Universities<sup>39</sup> from the academic year 2019- 2020. In the end however, the recent government change in Greece – after the July 2019 elections– led to the postponement of operation commencement for the newly introduced KEEs “in view of establishing the legislation of a new framework and given the dire need to correct distortions within the system” (<https://www.esos.gr/arthra/63649/n-kerameos-giati-anasteilame-ta-dieti-programmata-sta-panepistimia>, (Accessed Last: July, 2019).

## Discussion

In the previous sections we followed the successive steps having led to the integration of LLL into HEIs. We briefly described the current trends in the European countries and

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<sup>38</sup> In the article 4 of the law it is mentioned, as the second mission of the HEIs is to contribute in LLL with modern teaching methods, including distance learning, based on the scientific and technological research in the highest level of quality, according the internationally recognized criteria.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.esos.gr/arthra/62922/ta-60-dieti-programmata-poy-tha-leitoyrgisoyn-se-11-panepistimia-apo-epomeno-akadimaiko>, (Accessed Last: July 2019).

focused on the Greek case: we placed emphasis on the non-formal types of learning services delivery in the Greek Universities.

A general observation was that the University receives stimuli, or rather pressure, in order to adapt to broader changes on a technological, economic, social and cultural level. This is to be expected to the extent that it constitutes a social institution.

University initially transformed from an institute for the elite to a universal one and later on, to an LLL service-providing institute. These transformations were both rapid and complete and they placed University before unprecedented dilemmas and challenges. The result is that HEIs have expanded, becoming massive and multilayered organizations.

During the process of integrating LLL into HEIs, the issue of non-formal education was presented. Non-formal education was originally perceived as a tool which HEIs could use to become more relevant to the work place and its needs. Later, the demand broadened and turned into: *students should be out of the amphitheaters and in closer contact to real life*, be it the work place or a place of social work (e.g. working at NGOs etc.). The problems of violence and lawlessness, the marginalization of NEETs<sup>40</sup>, as well as the need to construct a *new subject* with a different relation to time and space, thus with a (different) relation to itself and others, led to the expansion of the scope of non-formal education so as to include subjects pertaining to citizenship and soft skills. As a result, a heated but interesting debate is taking place on whether formal education is being absorbed or at least limited by (expanded) non-formal education or whether the latter is the tool, which will rejuvenate formal education. In effect, the question could be phrased as: Does non-formal education corrode the University and its singularities or does it renew and modernize it? In any case, it strongly affects both its organization and the studies' content.

When it comes to the organizational aspect, the three study levels already in place – undergraduate, postgraduate, doctorate– through the development of various accreditation and recognition processes, are now not merely and solely cycles of initial education but of continuing, vocational, education and even of retraining or specialization. At the same time, a series of study programmes offered primarily, but not solely, by KEDIVIM, may be about either vocational education or a free time activity

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<sup>40</sup>Youth not in employment, education or training.

adopting a different line of delivery -distance, synchronous or asynchronous learning- in comparison to convectional programmes.

When it comes to the content, it is clear that the trend of broadening the scope of internships, as well as other opportunities to gain international experience, e.g. within Erasmus+, have brought about significant change to study programmes. Furthermore, learning outcomes come to affect the traditional ways of structuring HEIs study programmes, which were based upon the *treatment* of a science.

Rejuvenation or subjugation? The answer could only be political and not scientific. The essence, however, is that Universities have now moved away from their historical reflection even though they are the institutions that have undergone multiple transformations in their long history which is why they have managed to secure their timeless existence after all.

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