

Academic Continuing Education (ACE) is offered by universities. The target groups are normally academics, who already have a degree. The ACE also addresses target groups with interest in scientific based knowledge. There is HCVET (Higher Continuous Vocational Education Training)<sup>1</sup> the research-based development of professional expertise on the one hand and the skills-oriented education training for vocations on the other (VET). The clearly preferred format is part time or distance learning due to the fact that they are flexible and compatible formats for working. Digital Learning within ACE and the link to HCVET strengthen participation in education. Therefore ACE is the strategic answer to demographic and technological changes.

### **Claim I: Academic Continuing Education and VET as equivalents**

It is of high importance that HCVET and VET are linked and not separated. Universities deliver programmes which lead to qualifications that are at EQF level 5 and above whereas the VET dimension is much more blurred. HCVET is part of a concept of an "Open University" and leads to more equity and permeability in the education system. The big target is to overcome the sectorial segregation and to link the HCVET and the VET. The DGWF aims at a better linkage and intersectoral cooperation between the Higher Education sector and the VET sector. One instrument to achieve this aim is the mutual recognition of (also non-formal and informal) learning.

### **Claim II: Academic Continuing Education is and has to remain a non-commercial governmental task**

Academic Continuing Education is not commercial. HCVET in Higher Education System means more than a mere professional qualification. The DGWF took up a clear position in reference to the information and announcements of the EU (see 19th July 2016<sup>2</sup>): Academic Continuing Education is besides science and teaching without any doubt part of the universities' governmental task "[...] for more and better skilled human resources." The DGWF recognizes exactly this as the core task of Academic Continuing Education. This means that Academic Continuing Education is not commercial. HCVET means more than a mere professional qualification.

### **Claim III: The funding of ULLL should be part of the big European funding programmes**

There is a funding for VET. But as VET is not seen as part of the Higher Education Sector (and therefore also not as part of ULLL) universities may not apply. ACE in the above mentioned sense does not show up in the EU Funding today. It should be an aim of the EU to promote it, with respect to the labour market, the demographic change, and especially because of the increasing importance of HCVET is an „add on“ within the Higher Education Sector, that is not funded sufficiently today.

### **Claim IV: European wide Control of Quality and practice of European standards are necessary**

In the age of digitalization ULLL is globalized. This requires quality management systems and quality control. Conventions like TTIP or CETA impose new standards. German Universities have to credit up to 50% of non-university achievements. However in England a professional training in Germany is completely recognized, so that a seven month study at a university is sufficient to obtain a Bachelor's Degree. Yes, we do have the EQF and the NQF but up to now the handling especially in the field of ULLL shows a very wide range of how the different European countries practice it. Here certain benchmarks of quality (content, work-load etc.) are necessary to be established, to be agreed on and to be put into practice.

### **Claim V: ULLL as part of the European Digitalization Strategy**

HCVET is frontrunner and pacemaker of a digital education by using digitalization to open new ways of access to Higher Education: flexible studying formats enable especially working people to combine work, family and social life. The formats offered by HCVET providers have to answer to this challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition see "Study on higher VET in the EU", DGESA, Feb 2016, DOI 10.2767/421741

<sup>2</sup> (Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2016/C262/01), see chapter 2.5. "Education and research activities", (31).