

Leadership and Organisation for Learning and Teaching at European Universities
(LOTUS project)

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION- Leadership Development Programme

Deadline: 2 November

The present call offers an opportunity for European **higher education institutions which are currently developing and implementing their strategies for enhancing learning and teaching** to exchange experience and discuss capacity building and change management in learning and teaching.

1. The context and objectives of the LOTUS Leadership Development Programme

In partnership with the Irish Universities' Association, the Finnish Ministry of Higher Education, the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Vienna), the European Students' Union (ESU) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), EUA has launched in September 2020 a project entitled [“Leadership and Organisation for Teaching and Learning at European Universities – LOTUS”](#) (2020-2022), funded under the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme. LOTUS aims to contribute to capacity building and strategic change management for learning and teaching at higher education institutions across Europe. The project also aims to demonstrate the potential of various actors (ministries, university associations, student and staff unions, etc.) to support transformation and innovation in learning and teaching.

The landmark initiative under LOTUS is the organisation of a **Leadership Development Programme**, which will address key challenges in learning and teaching that institutions face in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), such as student-centred learning, digitalisation, teachers' professional development, institutional organisation and governance, to name a few – while taking as departure points individual institutions' specific priorities.

The response of many institutions to the current Covid-19 crisis magnifies the relevance and added value of such Leadership Development Programme, hence participation in this programme would be timely for harvesting experiences from the crisis, while discussing long-term solutions and capacity for change in learning and teaching beyond the immediate response to the crisis.

The Leadership Development Programme will run with two cohorts of institutions: the first one during the period of December 2020 to October 2021, and the second one during the period of October 2021 to June 2022.

The objectives of the Programme are to:

- Foster higher education institutions' capacity to develop and implement structured and systematic approaches to enhance learning and teaching.
- Provide the institutional representatives of selected institutions with opportunities to exchange experience and discuss strategy development and implementation, capacity building and change management in learning and teaching at their institutions.
- Assist the selected institutions with the implementation of their own strategic priorities, through a peer-learning and problem-solving approach.

2. The concept and activities proposed

2.1. Concept

In the LOTUS context, “leadership” should be understood as both the agency to develop strong strategic oversight, coordination and implementation for learning and teaching, and the institutional collective capacity to address organisational development towards enhancement. Therefore, the Leadership Development Programme builds on the premise that:

- Leadership consists of many skills and competences; it is a role that can be learned, trained and developed.
- The Programme will not consider leadership as a matter of personal characteristics, but under the angle of institutional capacity building and institutions’ agency to manage change, in the specific field of learning and teaching.

The Programme will also operate taking into account the great diversity of approaches to leadership in higher education across Europe, as well as, more generally, diversity in the institutions’ governance and management models and cultures.

The current call concerns the first cohort of the Programme (December 2020 – October 2021). Under this call, **a total of 20-30 European higher education institutions** will be selected, and grouped into **five to six Leadership Working Groups**, of four to five institutions each. These Leadership Working Groups will:

- Be composed according to common challenges in priority areas for learning and teaching, identified in the application process;
- Focus on these priority areas, and exchange inspirational practices on how to address them, based on case studies from their own and other institutions

Examples of such areas or institutional priorities, where the Programme would generate useful exchanges, could include (non-exhaustive list):

- Making student-centred learning a reality throughout the institution
- Supporting and enabling innovation through a variety of approaches in learning and teaching¹
- Developing the institutional capacity to cooperate with other higher education institutions in learning and teaching
- Recognising and promoting teaching as part of the academic profession
- Implementing collaborative and participatory approaches in learning and teaching across the institution
- Further connecting learning, teaching and research
- Promoting and ensuring equity and inclusiveness through learning, teaching, and the curriculum
- Developing education provision as a lifelong learning offer
- Etc.

¹ Although digital learning will probably be addressed in the LDP, the LOTUS project does not specifically target it under this call. It should be noted that, in November 2020, EUA will launch another call for participating to Thematic Peer Groups specifically dedicated to digitally enhanced learning and teaching.

For higher education institutions, **benefits** in participating to the LOTUS Leadership Development Programme would be:

- Gaining a comparative view of solutions proposed by different institutions across Europe to similar problems and challenges
- Peer learning with other participating institutions on how to implement strategic goals and priorities, and sharing own experience in this regard
- Adding value to the professional profiles of participants, both within their institution, and in relation with colleagues

2.2. Activities

The activities planned under the Leadership Development Programme are:

- **An induction workshop** (currently planned as an online event in January 2021) as a full cohort of 20-30 institutions, with an alternance of plenary and breakout sessions, where all Leadership Working Groups would be able to meet together, as a group, for the first time.
- For each participating institution, develop as a first input a brief, written analysis of its main challenges in terms of implementing their strategic learning and teaching goals. This analysis is to be shared with the participants of their Leadership Working Group, as a departure point for the peer learning work.
- During a period of nine to ten months (until October 2021), each institution will work on **an implementation plan** to address its own challenges and priorities, which is embedded into an existing institutional process prior (as per the attached LOTUS application form) to the commencement of the project. Institutions will report and discuss progress within its Leadership Working Group, which will enable problem-solving through peer-learning.
- **Each Leadership Working Group:**
 - Will focus on issues that are common to the group, and exchange inspirational practices on how to address them, based on case studies from their own and other institutions.
 - In order to achieve this, will discuss each other's development and implementation plan, to receive peer feedback on different options for addressing similar issues.
 - Will explore concrete steps for problem-solving and strategy implementation to enable change based on questions such as:
 - Would this work at my institution? How could it be adapted? What could be alternative approaches to the one we use?
 - What are pros, cons and lessons learnt?
 - How to identify relevant changes and change factors in the institution's environment?
 - How to analyse and understand own organisation, so to better bridge policy and practice?
 - How to monitor and assess change and progress?
 - Etc.

- Can define its own pace for organising meetings, mostly as an online community, but also alternating online and one physical meeting if the pandemic situation allows in the course of 2021. A minimum of 2 online meetings should be organised so to create enough opportunities for exchanging.
 - Will be supported throughout the programme duration by a member of the project consortium acting as a liaison person and facilitator.
 - May benefit from the input of external experts for specific contributions, during physical or online meetings, based on specific needs expressed by LWGs.
- By the end of the period, in October 2021, each participating institution will prepare and share a **brief update about the progress/other developments** for its chosen challenges/priorities during the work of the Leadership Development Programme.
- Based on these updates and feedback from institutions and group coordinators, a **debriefing workshop** (currently planned as a physical meeting) will assess the results and draw conclusions. Part of the debriefing workshop will be a plenary discussion on lessons learnt and reflections on the capacity to work in an inter-institutional context.

3. Profile of applicants

The LOTUS' approach to leadership is to address both an individual agency and a collective capacity. This is reflected in the way the Programme would engage with institutional representatives, and the way the Programme aims to foster a participative and co-constructed approach to change and enhance management for learning and teaching at institutions. Participating and taking full benefit of the LOTUS Leadership Development Programme requires a collective commitment from the candidate institutions:

- The call primarily targets **members of the institutional leadership team with responsibilities in learning and teaching at the university** (Vice-Rector, Pro-Rector, Head of Learning and Teaching, or similar positions). They will be the main contact points in the Leadership Development Programme.
- However, participation in the Programme also calls, in each candidate institution, for an active involvement of other stakeholders with key roles in strategy implementation: heads of administrations such as the Learning and Teaching Centres, students, teachers, deans, and possibly other profiles depending on the candidate institution's priorities in learning and teaching. It is expected that, in each participating institution, the vice-rector or institutional lead person **gathers around her/him a small yet representative team, with diverse profiles and responsibilities**. The members of this team would be able to share their respective expertise and perspective in the Programme, and benefit from exchanges with their peers from other institutions.

4. Eligibility and selection

European higher education institutions of different types (universities, university colleges, music schools, etc.) are welcome to apply, if they are:

- Currently in the process of implementing changes from their institutional strategy in learning and teaching
- Located in a country of the [European Higher Education Area](#)²

The selection will take place under the following criteria:

- Motivation and overall relevance of the Leadership Development Programme for the current priorities of the institution (see application form hyperlinked under Section 5)
- Geographical balance within the cohort
- A balance of institutional missions and profiles within the cohort
- Preference will be given to institutions that are members of [EUA](#) and [EURASHE](#) (partners in the LOTUS project), as well as [AEC](#) and [EADTU](#) (associate partners).

Each Leadership Working Group will be composed based on:

- Common challenges and priorities identified in the application process
- Potential for mutual learning
- Complementarity and balance of expertise

The results of the selection will be notified to all applying institutions by email, at the end of November 2020 at the latest.

5. Terms and conditions for participation

Higher education institutions selected under this call commit to actively take part in all activities described under Section 2.2 above.

Institutions will participate on a self-funding basis. Should the epidemiological situation allow the organisation of physical meetings, the LOTUS project will cover the catering. Participating institutions will be responsible for organising and covering travel and accommodation costs for these physical meetings.

Universities interested in participating in this Call are invited to fill in the online application, available [here](#), before 2 November 2020. For further information and questions, please contact Luisa Bunescu (luisa.bunescu@eua.eu).

² IMPORTANT NOTE: the Erasmus+ funding provided for the LOTUS project can only cover catering costs for the Erasmus+ Programme countries, i.e. EU27 + North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Turkey, and United Kingdom (as a participating country during the transition period, until 31 December 2020). Countries that belong to the EHEA, but are not in this list, can participate to the LOTUS activities but will not be funded. See also Section 5 below.