



Policy Document

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The purpose of this document is to develop short and long-term perspectives for the Euro League for Life Sciences. These perspectives are based on the Memorandum of Understanding and the experiences gained from practical implementation of ELLS, since the signing of the letter of intent in September 2001.

Introduction

The Euro League for Life Sciences (ELLS) is a network of leading universities cooperating in the fields of Natural Resource Management, Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Life Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Food Sciences, and Environmental Sciences.

Presently the ELLS network includes the following members:

- 1 The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University (KVL), Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2 University of Hohenheim (UHOH), Stuttgart, Germany
- 3 Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Uppsala, Sweden
- 4 University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna, Austria
- 5 Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR), Wageningen, The Netherlands

The network will be open for participation of new members, but at the present stage, the priority is on establishing cooperative activities and common strategies, rather than the extension of membership. This view is supported by the experiences made so far in the realisation process of ELLS activities.

Objectives of ELLS

The focus of ELLS is on joint teaching and learning, student and staff mobility, and quality assurance. These activities will result in highly qualified graduates, who are prepared for the demands of the European and international market. Furthermore, through the sharing of expertise and resources, this network will enhance the national and international position and potential of all partner universities, as part of the development and implementation of their degree programmes.

The objectives of ELLS are:

- to offer students additional values by expanding existing activities and by developing new joint programmes in the field of Life Sciences
- to support the high quality of education by the sharing of expertise and facilities
- to provide transparent and easily accessible information about joint ELLS study programmes
- to increase student mobility by simplifying the process of student exchange.

Achievement of Objectives

These objectives will be achieved by the following measures:

Offering joint study programmes

Individual Subject Areas in the ELLS network are responsible for the development of joint teaching programmes. Their work is of utmost significance for the progress of ELLS.

There are three types of joint study programmes:

1 *Use of existing study programmes*

Students can make use of modules of already existing study programmes at another ELLS university. While at another ELLS university, students can either study the same module

as offered at their home university, or they can supplement their curricula by taking additional courses not offered by the home university. Prerequisites are the application of ECTS and the mutual recognition of the courses.

This way of exchange does not differ greatly from other existing exchange programmes. The aim of ELLS, however, is to simplify the exchange procedure in regard to easy accessibility of the study programmes, advice and course guidance, mutual recognition of courses, introductory programmes (e.g. language courses, get-togethers), and convenient placement in housing.

The use of existing study programmes is the most rapid way to start student exchanges within the network.

2 *Joint short-term study programmes*

One characteristic for this kind of activity is that a special scientific topic is covered by lecturers from several ELLS universities. By sharing expertise and facilities and with the participation of highly motivated students, the high quality of such courses is ensured. The courses are blocked in order to enable the participation of students from all ELLS universities. One example for such short-term study programmes is the “summer university”, which may rotate between ELLS universities. Other examples are projects which utilise modern information and communication technologies, such as the LAT (Learning Apart Together) project as well as regional and global seminars.

Joint short-term study programmes are essential components for the enhancement of existing programmes. They can be organised in a relatively short time and offer the opportunity to tackle new scientific topics immediately. Summer universities may be integrated in regular studies.

3 *Joint curricula and joint Master programmes*

A central focus of the ELLS network has to be on the development of joint curricula and joint Master programmes. There are many organisational models which may lead either to an ELLS certificate, double degrees or joint degrees. At the moment ELLS is considering two models:

- a) A model already in the process of development by the Subject Areas is the establishment of a joint Master programme by at least two universities. The study programmes are joint programmes from the beginning, and they may be derived either from combining resources of existing programmes or from planning completely new Master programmes. They are designed in such a way that students can easily study one or more semesters at the other ELLS universities.
- b) A long-term perspective for ELLS is the development of new joint Master - programmes on future-oriented topics, in which the involved universities are contributing to different parts of the study programme. None of the universities will offer the full course programme alone, requiring students to spend substantial study periods at different universities. This is the most ideal way to share expertise and facilities of the partner universities.

The focus of the ELLS network is on the second and third type of joint study programmes. Only minor obstacles exist for the implementation of joint short-term study programmes. In contrast, joint curricula and joint Master programmes require meticulous and more time-consuming adjustment due to differences in national study systems. Furthermore, in some countries the implementation of joint degrees is still limited by legal constraints. Nevertheless, it is strongly believed that the creation of a European Higher Education Area will overcome these problems. The ELLS network will contribute to this process.

Sharing of expertise and facilities

In order to provide the best quality of study courses possible, sharing of expertise and facilities is recognised as a basic principle of the ELLS network. Student and staff mobility, as well as the use of information and communication technologies, are crucial requirements for functioning effectively as a network. The sharing of expertise and facilities also contributes to a more economic use of resources.

Making information accessible

In order to attract students, information about the study programmes of the ELLS partner universities must be easily accessible, clearly structured, and instructive. This is achieved by the establishment of a central ELLS website (<http://www.euroleague-study.org>), by the dissemination of ELLS activities within the individual ELLS universities by Task Force members, International Relation Officers, Subject Area representatives and ELSA, and by the distribution of information brochures.

Simplifying student exchange

ELLS is successful if study abroad opportunities are readily available for all students throughout the network. Therefore, it is fundamental to focus on the removal of obstacles to student mobility. Within ELLS, International Relation Officers provide as much guidance as possible, and they work together to overcome these obstacles.

It is essential that all types of joint study programmes guarantee the mutual recognition of courses and the use of a uniform credit system, e.g. the ECTS system. Grants and scholarships are necessary to cover the students' extra expenditure for staying abroad. Each ELLS university provides a minimum of five scholarships for outgoing students. At the moment, housing for incoming students is the most crucial problem. There must be an assurance of appropriate accommodation for incoming students at all ELLS universities.

To ease integration of incoming students, ELLS universities offer language courses and general introductory seminars to familiarise students with university facilities.

Quality enhancement, quality assurance, and benchmarking

Permanent efforts to enhance the quality of study programs are a prerequisite when ELLS is to compete with other universities on a national and international level in the field of Life Sciences. The high quality of study programmes must be assured by internal and external evaluation systems. However, quality enhancement, quality assurance, and benchmarking must not be restricted to teaching or to the content of the joint study programmes, but it must be extended to include administration, flow and accessibility of information, student exchange procedures, and student accommodation, as well.

Interaction with other partner networks

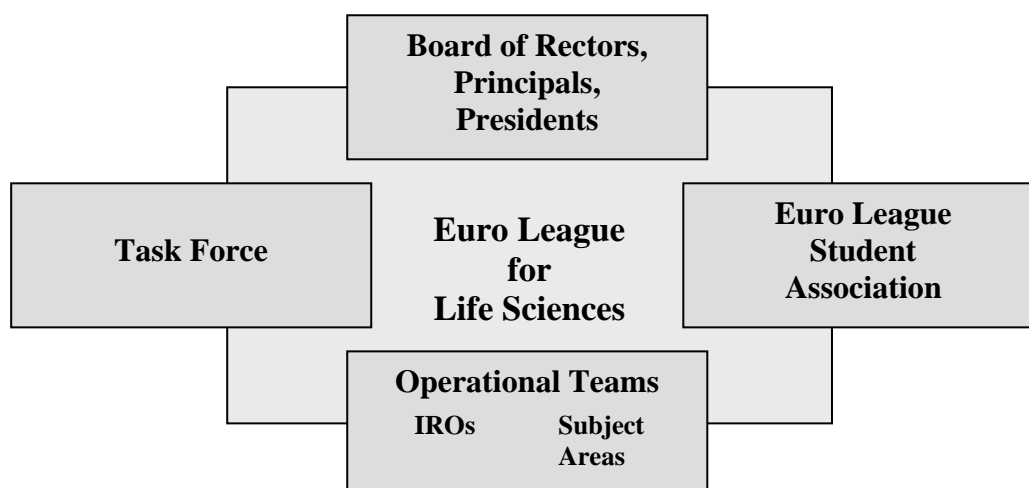
To maintain a strong position in the European Higher Education Area and to increase the interest and added value for students and staff, ELLS is looking for strong strategic partners that extend the ambition and aims of the network. For this reason, ELLS is reviewing the possibilities for cooperation with other education networks in Europe and North American (NA) universities. These universities will act as "natural partners" to the individual ELLS members.

Contribution to the future of Higher Education in Europe

By combining forces and reacting to the current changes in European Higher Education, ELLS aims to contribute to discussions on the future of Higher Education in Europe. These issues include, among others, the comparability of degrees, the link between education and research, the financing of education, and the communication of the significance of academic education to society.

Mode of Action

The structure of the ELLS network guarantees an effective cooperation, within and between the partner institutions, from the student level to the university administration level.



Board of Rectors, Principals, Presidents

- decision making body, meets once a year

Task Force

- consists of one representative of each university, meets at least twice a year
- coordinates ELLS activities
- develops strategy and policy issues
- communicates the activities of the network on university, national, and international levels

Chair and secretariat

- is held by one of the ELLS universities, rotates annually between ELLS universities
- the Chair presides over the Board and the Task Force, the secretariat is in charge of organisation and administration of ELLS activities

Euro League Student Association (ELSA)

- consists of at least two students of each university, meets twice a year
- participates in meetings of all organisational levels; has one vote on the ELLS Board and two votes on the Task Force

Operational teams - Subject Areas (SA) and International Relation Officers (IRO)

- each partner institution has the responsibility for at least one Subject Area and oversees the development and implementation of joint curricula or other teaching activities
- the IROs support the network in relation to student and staff mobility, mutual recognition of study programmes, scholarships, and fund raising.

Policy lines are substantiated in an annual Plan of Operation coordinated by the Task Force. The bases of this Plan of Operation are the activity plans compiled by each ELLS university and ELSA. The Plan of Operation, which must be agreed upon by the ELLS Board, shall comprise concrete time schedules and tangible goals. This Plan will also prioritise the measures needed in order to reach the objectives.