

## **THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SUSTAINABLE LEARNING: THE LECH-E OER PROJECT BRIDGING FORMAL AND NON FORMAL LIFELONG LEARNERS**

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The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014) aims to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. In accordance, many educational institutions, universities in particular, have been actively striving to fulfill these aims into their activities at all levels of formal, informal and non formal education. *The Lived experience of climate change: e-learning and virtual mobility* (LECH-e) is an Erasmus-funded project that intends to support those efforts by creating a European community of scholars, students and citizens who collectively may contribute to the United Nations decade on education for sustainable development.

In order to achieve this goal, the LECH-e project has been developing learning resources on the topic of climate change that will be openly accessible on the web for higher education institutions and the wider world public to use and adapt. Higher education institutions are in fact free to integrate these resources into their formal programs and non-formal courses. In this paper we depict the open learning strategy implemented by the LECH-e partnership and how it can contribute to widening participation in education for sustainability, specifically in climate change related issues.

We believe Open Education Resources (OER) has the strong potential to support the largely missing component in the European higher education system: OER for widening participation and the inclusion of lifelong learning for the 25+. Within the LECH-e Consortium, OER is therefore designed in a way to increase participation in Lifelong Learning through providing open access for people of (mostly) all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socio-economic background. OER created within LECH-e particularly stimulates the adoption of pedagogical, technological, organizational frameworks for strategic implementation by individual institutions, as well as by collaborative international partnerships. Within the LECH-e Consortium the starting point for each institution is to connect properly with one's own development stage that is already in place: awareness raising – strategy building – the design of pedagogical, technological, organizational models.

Many Open Universities have been developing new OER strategies, exploring viable OER business models in the area with the support of external partners. Innovative aspects of this are: self-learning pedagogy, ICT innovation, accessibility, sharing and reproduction of content. From the recent experience, it has been learnt that the expertise of these frontrunners combined with the LECH-e project approach used, can lead to an important impact in diffusion of OER in the domain of sustainable development, and for the challenge of Climate Change particularly. Synergies are currently harvested in the LECH-e Consortium between individual partners, as well as through dedicated products, which will lead to an increased multiplier effect.

The LECH-e project will promote the sharing and use of the produced e-learning materials. To allow free use and modification in academic institutions and other organizations (in European and other countries), the materials will be registered under a creative commons licence. For long-term sustainability it is important to gather evidence of the impact of the OERs through tracking of their use and versioning. It will be part of a pilot study to examine ways to capture and structure user commentaries on the material.

The e-learning learning materials are therefore designed to combine knowledge of the global mechanisms of climate change with local experiences of impacts. In accordance, special care will be taken to search for synergy with the European Regional Centres of Excellence networks and with other local bodies who work on climate change, and who are most likely to benefit from the knowledge produced. In our view this approach at OER contributes to disseminate a much more socially sustainable notion of environmental education, because it manages to involve formal, informal and non formal learners in the production, reproduction, dissemination and preservation of knowledge on Climate Change.