



**Social Vulnerability Management
A Concept to Manage Tertiary Lifelong Learning
Synthesis**

**Karsten Krüger; Néstor Duch & Montse Álvarez
Fundación Conocimiento y Desarrollo**



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0. Introduction

In this report, we present the theoretical outline for our research project about the Lifelong learning strategies of 21 universities in 7 European countries. Project THEMP – co-funded by the Lifelong Learning program of the European Union – addresses one of the main challenges of the ageing knowledge economy: How can the European society organise a constant upgrading of the skills of the active population older than 40 years to prevent their old and new social risks; to mitigate and to cope with its negative impact on the work and life of the citizens? THEMP focuses on a specific social collective: people older than 40 years and exposed to risks of exclusion in the labour market and the lifelong learning. The integration of this age group in higher education is one of the main challenges of the education and training systems.¹ The EUROPE 2020 strategy considers that higher education will contribute to achieve the established employment targets. But it can be forecasted that the achievement of the employment rates and the rate of people having attained education level equivalent to higher education will produce an increment in the demand of tertiary lifelong learning in mid and long term perspective.

Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLL) is considered one key element to develop more inclusive and responsive universities (Proyecto NESOR 2009). Opening higher education for mid-life learners, designing flexible pathways from Vocational Education and Training (VET) and professional experience to higher education, flexible learning arrangements conciliating family-work life and learning and the adaptation of didactical methods in higher education are challenges for the universities² to confront the problems of the aging knowledge society.

Revising the discussion on higher education we observe that, despite the declared relevance of lifelong learning, a strong orientation of the European universities towards tertiary lifelong learning is not the mainstream. However, there are many European universities³, making steps in this direction.⁴

¹ In a recent strategic document, the Commission defined that one of the key issues of higher education is to “encourage outreach to school students from underrepresented groups and to <non-traditional> learners, including adults ...” (EC (2011: 4)

² Higher education is carried out by a wide range of institutions within the EU. For reasons of operationalisation, the project will focus this study only on universities, recognising that the universities are not the only providers of tertiary lifelong learning.

³ See the website of EU-project Allume (<http://allume.eucen.eu>) where several case studies on Tertiary Lifelong Learning are available.

⁴ This stimulates to think that we cannot speak about European Universities in general and that it is necessary to adapt a differentiated view on the European university landscape. The European project U-Map, focused on the development of differentiated profiles of higher education institutes (www.u-map.eu), worked in a similar direction.

THEMP focuses on the education and training mission of the Universities and asks for the measures taken by the universities to expand their educational and training activities beyond the traditional students to a wider range of citizens and in wider range of learning environments. In other words, we consider that universities have not only education and training functions in the modern society, but also broad social function. Still in the 1970s, Parsons & Platt (1973) discussed the social function of higher education under the systemic perspective. And more recently Brennan & Naidoo [2008: 287] focus the attention on equity and social justice. Zajida et al. [2006: 13] addressed this issue under the question, how higher education can “*contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone?*”⁵

Asking for the social function of higher education goes beyond employability and economic development, which are the dominant issues in the current discussion on higher education policies. However, a modest project like THEMP cannot handle such broad perspective and must concentrate the research on one specific aspect, in our case to tertiary lifelong learning for the management of social risks in the transitional labour market putting mayor attention on the specific group of people older than 40 years. The project maintains, in so far, the main focus of the European strategy, that is employability, but focusing in a qualitative way connecting with the issue of quality of work and life.

The project will provide not only an analysis on the actual performance of 21 universities of 7 European countries, but also the tools and instruments to measure the social equity of tertiary lifelong learning. The project deals with an issue that is not actually a main priority of higher education policies. But the recent reforms in the pension systems, the demographic changes, the changes in the education structure of the European population and the lack of high-qualified workforces in the European Union are clear indicators that tertiary lifelong learning and the inclusion of mid-life learners will become more and more relevant in the education and training strategies of the future. THEMP is going into unknown and less developed terrain, which requires developing a broad conceptual perspective for the analysis of the social efficiency of tertiary lifelong learning.

For this objective, the project has developed a theoretical framework based on the three main approaches:

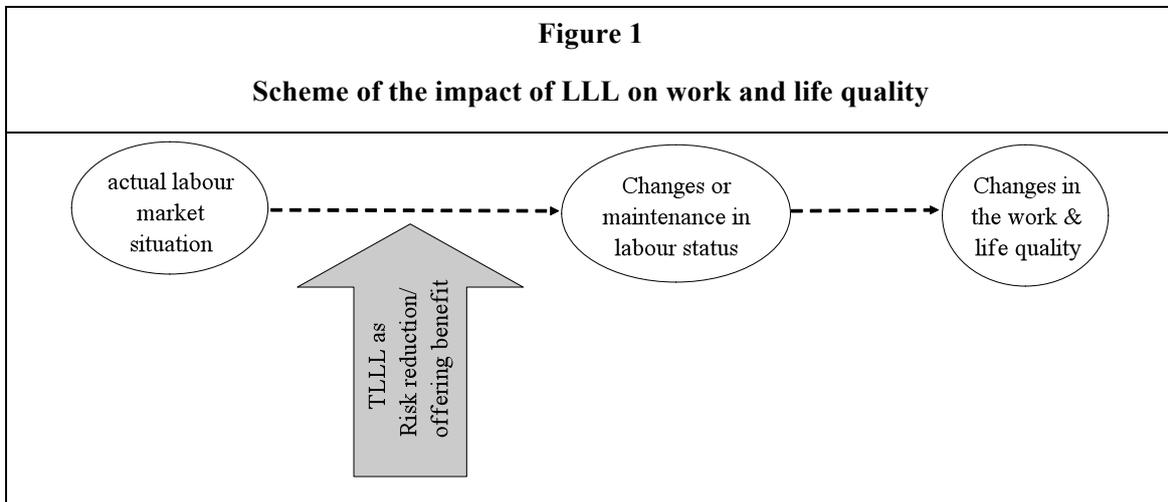
- Transitional Labour Market approach [TLM] which has been developed by a group of social scientists in the mid 1990s as an answer to the growing instability of the labour market.
- Capability approach (Sen) which promotes the integration of social justice in the design of public policies.

⁵ The key question is higher education for whom and how?

- Capital approach bringing in main capital approaches as human capital (Becker) cultural capital (Bourdieu) and social capital (Putnam and Coleman).

Referring to these three approaches allows the analysis of tertiary lifelong learning programs in relation to their labour market impact under aspects of social justice. In so far, the project asks

- If and how tertiary lifelong learning programs are giving support to periods of labour market transitions – from one workplace to another or from one employment to another, etc – avoiding or reducing the associated corresponding social risks?, and
- If and how the tertiary lifelong learning programs have an impact on the labour market situation of the learners in terms of quality of work and life?



The design of tertiary lifelong learning strategies must be taking into account the specific resources of the potential learners (and firms), but also their expectations and objectives. Under the capability perspective, the central question is how the tertiary lifelong activities are contributing not only to employability in the sense of access to employment and the maintenance in work places but also the maintenance or improvement of the quality of life and work. This implies to take a triple perspective to evaluate the social quality of tertiary lifelong programs:

- The individual perspective: Citizens who participate in learning programs always developed expectation on the impact on their life. Our approach allows answers to the following questions: Do the programs consider these expectations still in its design? Do the lifelong learning programs have fulfilled these expectations? And, do they contribute to avoid that the learners are exposed to risk situations, to mitigate proactively or to cope with ex-post the negative impacts?

- b) The institutional perspective: The institutions, universities in this case, develop expectations in respect to their lifelong learning programs. Our conceptual framework allows evaluating the orientation of the TLL-programs to specific situations of labour transitions, the integration of stakeholders in the program design and the orientation onto the empowerment of the citizens aimed to reduce their exposition to social risks in the labour markets.
- c) The societal perspective: The society, and in its representation the governments, giving institutional support to tertiary lifelong learning also expects results, in our case, in the labour market. The orientation of our project to aspects of social equity allows evaluating first the orientation of the societal measures to social aims, specifically its focus on employability measured in active participation rates, the creation of employment, unemployment rates, etc or measured in terms of quality of work and life. But it also allows measuring the impact of the tertiary lifelong learning on the quality of life and work of the participating citizen.⁶

This document is the summary of the work done in three discussion papers outlining the concept of social vulnerability management. The discussion papers have gone through intensive discussions among the project partners. The fruit of these discussions is an electronic book and this synthesis.

The concept starts from the approaches of Social Risk and Transitional Labour Market, which is by itself a tool to manage social risks associated with transitions in the labour market. Our concept introduces some innovative thoughts in the original approach that make, for instance, a clear distinction between social dangers and risks on one side and social vulnerability on the other.

Public policies for the institutional support for labour transitions require points of reference to measure their social quality and efficiency. In several works, some promoters of the TLM approach mention the works of Rawls, Dworkin and Sen to cover the dimension of social equity. In the project we will take up the capability approach of A. Sen, which provides a more qualitative oriented perspective for the measurement of the efficiency of the lifelong learning programs in terms of quality of work and life or in the terminology of Sen, the sets of functionings.

However, using the TLM approach implies to ask how the tertiary lifelong learning contributes to the achievement of new functionings via labour market. Without excluding that lifelong learning by itself allows achieving new sets of functionings, we ask here how the learning

⁶ Insofar the capability approach is normative.

outcomes are converted to human, cultural and social capital, valued in the labour markets as opening new opportunities to achieve more quality of work and life. We conceive the labour market and its segments as social field in the sense of Bourdieu. The social fields are complex social bargaining processes determining whether a learning outcome has a value in the labour market and which is its value in the respective segment. The value of the human, cultural and social capital in the hands of the citizens defines their labour market status and permits them to gain economic capital, salary in this case, to achieve healthier labour conditions, or more freedom to manage their own time.

According to the TLM as well as Sen's capability approach, our concept of the social vulnerability management puts citizens in the centre, asking for the institutional support which they need in specific situations of labour transitions to develop their capacities investing capital to improve the value of their capital stock and at least their position and status in the labour market. But the capital accumulation is not a mean by itself, it is a resource achieving functionings, that means quality of work and life.

1. Tertiary Lifelong Learning as Tool of Social Risk Management

In the last decades, the societal transformations have produced substantial change in the conception of education and training and its interrelation with other socio-economic policies: It is not perceived any more as a specific period in the life course of the citizens – before the labour market entry – but as a permanent process during the whole life course. The continuous participation of the citizen in education and training activities is seen as a key element to assure social quality of life and work. This new consideration of education, training and learning has become an essential of European social policies and part of the overarching strategy to modernise the European social model.

The main strategies followed in the EU have the declared objective to transform the European social model based traditionally on compensatory aid in case of poverty, unemployment, etc to an activating model preventing cases of social need by the proactive social investment, that is i.e. in education and qualification (Palier 2005 and 2006; Pfau-Effinger 2006). The redistribution of the means of social protection between passive mechanisms and activating proactive mechanism– focused on the increase of rates of active participation and employment – is to ensure the future funding of the social programs by the maintenance or increase of the state income through (labour) taxes as well as the reduction of costs for such programmes reducing the number of beneficiaries, the number of unemployed people, the number of persons in early retirement and the delay of the retirement age, for instance.

This strategy advocates “*a market-oriented approach to social welfare*” (Gilbert 1999: 21); reinforcing the link between social rights and social obligations, and fostering social inclusion through active participation in the labour market. The mayor emphasis on employment measures has been accompanied by the implementation of social programs to enhance human capital and to give support to people under social risks to adapt themselves to the labour market requirements (see Gilbert 1999: 21).

Similar to the traditional social protection systems, activation policies are focused on the protection in the case that a citizen cannot be active – temporarily or permanently – in the labour market. But the activation is focused on proactive measures to generate and accumulate human capital (see Nelson & Stephens 2009). Besides the economic capital, human capital is conceived as a pre-condition for functioning markets and communities contributing to mayor autonomy of the citizens. In consequence, activation is considered the main road to affront the social problems aimed to increase employment and active participation in the labour market.

One of the masterpieces in the activation strategies is lifelong learning (Jakobi 2009) becoming a main concept to guide not only educational policies but also social policies at national and international levels (see Papadopoulos 2002: 39). Lifelong learning fits well with the activating

approach, but also with the political discourse on the knowledge society identifying the need to adapt the qualification structure of the working population as an essential item to compete in the globalised knowledge economy.

The lifelong learning approach sustained also the general political discourse of the individual responsibility for the own life and working careers (see Kallen 2002, and Tuijnman & Boström 2002). Lifelong learning offers the perspective of a workforce in constantly training and whose skills and competences are continuously updated facilitating so a lifelong employability. For this reason, it is so attractive to politicians and businesses and has become since the late 1990s in an axis of European employment strategy considering the lifelong learning of paramount importance not only for the employability of people but also for competitiveness in the global economy (Jakobi 2009: 17).

From this perspective, lifelong learning is a new challenge for higher education systems. Conceiving education, training and learning as a continuous process during the whole life course implies opening higher education systems to new age cohorts and widening the access to new collectives. Higher education could not be limited to a specific period in the life course between secondary school and work, but as a continuous learning process. Consequently, tertiary lifelong learning became, together with the other lifelong learning means, essential for the modern social and employment policies. Tertiary lifelong learning has the social function to support the skill-up-dating of citizens and of enterprises and to contribute to the employability of the citizens and the competitiveness of the enterprises, regions and EU-member states.

This social function is mentioned in the Lisbon Declaration of year 2000 and is reinforced by the new *EUROPE 2020* strategy. The last one set as a strategic target that 75% of the 20-64 year-olds would be employed, which implies increasing specifically the employment rate of the 45-64 years old.⁷ In the area of education, the new strategy sets – besides the considerable reduction of the school dropout rate – the target to achieve that at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds completing third level education.

The strong orientation of the Lisbon strategy on quantitative indicators has received substantial critics as it is centred on employment rate, leaving in the background the issues of quality of life and work. The new strategy Europe 2020 followed this orientation to indicators as participation and employment rate, without asking for the quality of work and life. Different social equity approaches have made proposals to measure the efficiency of social policies going beyond the measurement of the numerical development of employment. These efforts have their main

⁷ From 45 years on, the active participation rate of the European population is decreasing constantly. In spite of the growth of this rate of the 40-64 years olds from 2005 to 2010, in the 4th Quarterly 2011, the active participation rate of the 40-45 years old was 85,6% and the of the 60-64 years old 39,9% (see data of the Labour Force Survey of Eurostat consulted the 01/10/2011)

expressions in more extended proposal to measure quality of life, see Stiglitz & Sen & Fitoussi (2009); Robeyn & van der Veen (2007) and recently the OECD (2009 and 2010).

In the area of employment policies emerged the transitional labour market approach proposing an alternative to the activation policies of the social investment state. This approach proposes linking social risks management in specific transitional periods in the labour market with concepts of social equity. Under such premise, the higher education has the social function to contribute (i) to qualitative work-life trajectories of the citizens and (ii) to the management of social risk providing adequate tertiary lifelong learning opportunities for new collectives of students. In so far, higher education must form part of the social risk management in short, mid and long time perspective.

2. Risks and Vulnerabilities in Transitional Labour Markets

For the conceptual development we take as starting point the Transitional Labour Market approach (TLM)⁸, which has been developed successively in the course of two European projects since the mid 1990s. Within the literature on the TLM, we find two definitions of transitions in the labour market: In the first phase of the approach development, it was proposed to take a full-employment as reference point, redefined as “*an average working time of 30 hours a week over a life cycle*” of a person (Schmid 1998). Periods in which the working time varies substantially from this standard are <transitional employment> phases. If these intermediate periods are sustained by institutional arrangements, that is i.e. monetary compensation of the social insurance or the public funding of training, these transitions are forming part of the <transitional labour market>. Examples are periods of “*short-time work, temporary part-time work, further training and retraining, sabbaticals, parental or career leaves*” (Schmid 1998).

Later, a second interpretation came into the debate conceiving “*that every sequence of a personal or occupational career constitutes a <transition>*” (Gazier & Gautié 2009: 3). This second interpretation is actually dominating, but, to be relevant to the design of institutional support, it must be complemented by the idea that transitions are leading to somewhere *and this <somewhere> should be defined as well*” (Gazier & Gautié 2009: 3). Also this second interpretation maintains the criteria of the institutional support of labour transitions (including from employment to entrepreneurship or self-employment and vice versa) to define transitional labour markets.

Both interpretations ask how institutional support could reduce the risks associated with the labour transitions and how to strengthen the possibility of benefits.⁹ That means: the transitional labour market approach is conceived as social risk management in crucial moments of the labour market trajectories of the citizens considering lifelong learning as one of the primary tools of to reduce social risks.

One of the problems of this focus regarding the analysis of (tertiary) lifelong learning programs is that such programs are not focused only on the transitions phase but also on the preservation of a workplace. Learning is also a mean of adaptation to changes in the workplace or in the labour environment. For this reason, we include also the stages of adaptation. For the

⁸ For more information about the development of the TLM-approach, see the still operating website TLM-network (www.siswo.uva.nl/tlm), funded by the 5th Framework program of the EU.

⁹ Only these transition in the labour market, which are institutional supported, are considered transitional labour market.

classification of situation of transitions, we take up a long discussion in the labour market sociology and distinguish between the internal and external labour market perspective¹⁰:

Table 1
Situation of labour market transitions
<p><u>Internal Labour Market</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptation to changes at the individual workplace - Personal development - Vertical professional development: Up-wards professional carrier - Horizontal professional development: From one workplace to another at the same hierarchical level
<p><u>External Labour Market</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From unemployment to employment - From one employment to another employment - From one employment status to another

On this background, THEMP asks: How the tertiary lifelong learning organised by university is supporting the labour market transitions of people older than 40 years?

We have mentioned before that only these transitions receiving institutional support can be considered transitional labour market. Similarly, not all adult training is considered an institutional support for labour market transitions. Only the training with an express orientation to the labour market can be considered an institutional support for a transitional situation, which then can be considered as <transitional labour markets>¹¹.

The institutional support for labour market transitions is an insurance tool to protect from social risks using, besides monetary instruments, mechanisms to generate other forms of capital – human, cultural and social – to avoid that an undesired event will affect a citizen, to mitigate beforehand the negative impact of such an event or to cope with the negative impact after the occurrence of the undesired event.¹² In so far, institutional support does not mean only

¹⁰ This isn't a closed list; it is open for the addition of other situations of adaptation.

¹¹ In spite of our orientation to the broader concept of adaptation, we maintain the original term.

¹² Hereafter we use the term <mitigate> for the proactive measures and the term <cope> for the reactive ones.

(monetary) compensation for the damage, but also proactive measures to avoid that the damage occurs or to limit its impact.

The sociology literature considers that the concept of risk is one of the primary strategies to transform uncertainties into more dependable future expectations.¹³ Risk is a social construction both in its perception of future situations and its potential negative and positive impacts. In so far, risks are caused by decisions and actions of individual or social actors based on bounded knowledge.¹⁴

Risk is future-oriented, preventing or expecting events in the sense that it facilitates actions or decisions that drive to desired events, or to prevent undesired events and to achieve a positive impact on the own situation, or to avoid, mitigate and cope negative impacts. Risk management shouldn't be focused only on possible negative impacts, but also on positive impacts and possible benefits.¹⁵ In the economic risk theory, this type of risks situations is called speculative risk in front of the pure risks, which are focused exclusively on losses. For instance, natural catastrophes are generally classified by the economists as pure risk; while the roulette is frequently mentioned as an example for the speculative risk. Here we can also include these businesses that do contract insurance considering possible events that could reduce the expected, but not sure, benefits, as the maritime transport of goods in the 15th century, for example.

Referring to the sociological discussion, we consider two key elements of risk. These are (i) bounded knowledge and (ii) the action (or decision) ability to stimulate the future situation or to prevent, mitigate or cope with its negative impact. Using the dimension of knowledge, we differentiate between risk and danger. In the first case, the citizens have some knowledge of the potential future situation and its negative impact on their personal situation; meanwhile, in the second case they ignore the potential future situation and its negative or positive impact.

Social risks are discriminated from individual risks by the decision capacity of the citizens to create or avoid the situation. Individual risk implies that the citizens have the ability to avoid a given situation with a potential negative impact or to provoke a situation with a potential

¹³ On the contrary, some economists put in the forefront that risk is uncertainty. For example, Deneberg et al (1974: 4-5) defined "*risks as uncertainty of loss*" and Wilbert (1901: 27) states: "*It seems necessary to define risks with reference to the degree of uncertainty about the occurrence of a loss, and not with reference to the degree of probability, that it will occur. Risks in this sense are the objective correlation of the subjective uncertainty.*" In a certain way it seems that the economists assume the certainty of the results of economic action. On the contrary, the sociologists take as point of departure the uncertainty how it is resumed in the problem of the double contingency: in principle there is no way to know how an actor (Y) reacts on the action of actor (X) and how the latter reacts on the reaction of actor (Y). The concept of risk increases the degree of certainty providing probabilities that certain actions or events will happen.

¹⁴ If the knowledge of a situation and its future development would be complete, then the decision making implies no risks.

¹⁵ For the theoretical development of risk see Zinn (2004a, 2004b and 2008) and Taylor-Goody & Zinn (2006)

positive impact. For example, practising risky sports is an individual decision from knowledge of the related risk to suffer an accident and disability. And it is the citizen, who makes the decision whether to practise or not this sport by estimating its potential positive effect – for example, on the individual well-being – and the probability of negative consequences. The citizens have the ability to avoid this situation or to choose this sport assuming the risk.

Table 2		
Decision capacity and knowledge as criteria to define danger and risk		
	<i>Decision Capacity to avoid or stimulate situation</i>	<i>No decision capacity to avoid or stimulate situation</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>	Individual risk	Social risk
<i>Ignorance</i>	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	Social danger

But there are many social situations about which the actors know something, but they have virtually no possibility to avoid or change them. Examples are gender or ethnic discrimination but also economic and financial crisis. Generally the citizens can only take measures to mitigate beforehand the negative impact, or to cope with it after the event, or to take advantage. And the citizens’ action capacity depends on their concrete social and economic situation, which defines their degree of social vulnerability.

Generally, a risk situation is a complex mixture of individual and social risks. An example is the situation of women, who take the decision to become mothers. This implies in general the social risks to lose opportunities of professional promotion. Obviously, they have no capacity to change this general situation of gendered unequal opportunities and the professional discrimination of mothers, but they know of it. They are, in so far, in a social risk situation. Taking this social risk into account, they decide to become pregnant running individual risks, even if having possibilities to take measures to avoid the pregnancy. They have not any possibility to avoid the negative impact on their labour situation, but in many case they can take measures to mitigate or to cope it.¹⁶ The fact that many women delay the age of their first motherhood can be interpreted as an individual measure to reduce the negative impact of this risk situation on their professional careers; in this case the pregnancy is an event desired by the

¹⁶ We limit this example to a woman who takes the decision to become pregnant.

woman, but probably not by the organisation that employs her. But the fact that a woman could take measures to mitigate or cope with these social risks depends on her degree of social vulnerability. On the side, the decision to become mother is an exercise of freedom that must be exempt from negative social consequences. The society is pushed to make efforts to a) change the general situation of gender discrimination, and b) provide institutional support to mitigate, cope with or compensate the negative impact on their positions in the labour market in the short, mid and long terms.

Based on this distinction, we can analyse the responsibilities of the actors involved for any negative (or positive) social event. For instance, the financial crisis of the year 2008 has been for the normal citizen more a social danger than a social risk. Despite some analysts advised about the risks that the real-estate and financial bubble would implode, the majority of the citizens could hardly prevent it. This is the difference with the traditional economic crisis, when the impoverishment of the economic situation is announced by standardised indicators as the inflation rate and employment rate. In the case of the 2008 crisis, the responsibility for the crisis and the negative impact on the quality of life of the citizens lies on the financial brokers and the politicians, who haven't reacted adequately to the signals of the coming crisis.

In the category of social dangers, we can also include the crisis of some firms caused by management decision about which the workers haven't had knowledge, a risky short-term financial investment for instance. Here we can also include the closing down of a production centre and the transfer of the production to another region in spite of its high productivity. In the case, the workers have no knowledge of the situation and could not take measures. That means the responsibility lies on the managers of the multinational company.

In some cases, the employees working in a branch or a company have some knowledge of the critical situation that is coming up. We can take as an example, the book industry, where the traditional modes to sell and disseminate products are heavily questioned by the massive use of the information and communication technology similar to what occurred in the music industry. The employees have, in so far, knowledge of the possible transformation in the branch; they have no capacity to change this trend, but they do have some (limited) capacity to take preventive measures. However, this example shows the fine line between labour market dangers and risks depending on the knowledge degree of the actors involved and affected.

On the other side, the action capacity of the actors to avoid the exposition to the social risk, to mitigate beforehand the negative impact or to cope with it later must be taken into account. The action capacity or the vulnerability of the citizens depends on a series of factors, for instance:

- a) The invariable factors, which the citizen hardly can change and which seem constant in time as gender, belonging to a minority, belonging to a generational cohort, sexual orientation, suffering a chronic disease or belonging to a social class. Women are known to be more

vulnerable in the labour markets of the European Union and having more difficulties of vertical professional progressions. The same we can say about ethnic minorities as Turks in Germany, Maghrebians in France and Spain, but also the Romani overall in Europe. These are only visible examples of the discrimination of certain social collectives.

- b) The variable factors, which depend more on the decisions of the citizens and which vary with time as, for instance, to take care of relatives, the capacity to manage the own time, the capacity to manage the own learning opportunities, the degree of geographical mobility and non-chronic illness.

Table 3					
Model of Labour Market Dangers, Risks and Vulnerability					
<i>Labour Market Dangers</i>					
Financial Crisis	Economic crisis	Branch crisis	Company's crisis		
<i>Labour Market Risks</i>					
Obsolescence of a branch	Temporary branch crisis	Companies crisis	Obsolete skills	Quality of work	
<div style="text-align: center;">  </div>					
Invariable dimensions of vulnerability					
Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Chronic disease	Social Class	Religion
Variable dimensions of vulnerability					
Care needs	Options of time management	Learning options	Illness	Religion	Labour Mobility

We introduce the distinction between the invariant factors and variables based on the capacity for action. Belonging to a gender, an ethnic minority or a generational cohort, or suffering a chronic disease, does not depend on the individual's will. Also belonging to a social class does not depend, in principle, on the action capacity of the citizen, but has some variability in the life course. We include here also the religious inclination of citizens as it depends to a large degree on their family environment. However, we included it also among the variable factors as the religiosity can vary in the life course of an individual according to their decisions.

Variable factors are those related in one way or another with the citizens' actions as having a child, living with someone; choose to spend time on his career and leisure. Of course, these factors are interrelated with invariable factors. For example, it is obvious that social class and

ethnicity strongly influence on the access to education and training opportunities, but not in a determining form.

This differentiated risk approach enables us to distinguish the responsibilities of individual and social actors for the crisis responding in each case to the following questions:

- a) Can we assume that the citizens which are affected by the crisis might have had some knowledge of the probability that it could occur?
- b) Have the citizens had some action capacity (i) to avoid the crisis; (ii) to avoid being affected by its negative impact, or (iii) to mitigate or cope with them? These questions have two temporal dimensions: (1) anticipatory or proactive, i.e. taking measures before the event occurs and (2) reactive, i.e. taking measures after the event has occurred.

On the other hand, this approach also gives clues on how social insurance measures might influence the knowledge of the possible risks and the empowerment of citizens aimed to limit risks, their negative impact and to create new opportunities:

Facing social risks in labour markets and to avoid negative impact on the own professional career, citizens may opt for measures to reduce the chance of being exposed to risks. The focus of transitional labour market (TLM) aims to create a framework of institutional support for these measures, for example, through vocational training programs. The TLM focuses primarily on the sequences of changes in working life asking: how could be reduced the risks associated with these phases, especially in the case of vulnerable groups, with certain public measures? The TLM asks for Social Security measures to reduce the risks of transition phases.

Risk management includes, by definition, an orientation to undesirable events, avoiding them or mitigating and coping with their negative impact, but it always includes also the vision of opportunities and benefits. Risk management always has, in so far, a time dimension comparing the potential future situation with the current situation making estimations (i) about what could happens, (ii) about which could be the negative impact, but also the positive impact and (iii) about which measures can be taken or to prevent, mitigate and cope the potential negative impact or to provoke a positive impact. And Risk Management strategies could intervene ex-ante or ex-post. In the first case, the strategy is proactive and in the second case, reactive, but in both cases the focus lies on undesired events.

However, it must be underpinned that social risk always must have two strategic dimensions: a) reducing risks and b) providing opportunities. In so far, social risk management should provide

also a framework to conceive positive action to reinforce positive trends and providing new opportunities for the professional career by the empowerment of the citizens.¹⁷

Besides the social risks, the design of risks strategies and ex-ante and ex-post measures must also consider the specific situation of the citizens. This refers both to the knowledge of risk and the action capacity.

We have defined social risks through the knowledge of the probability that an undesired event will occur and will have a negative impact on the position of citizens in the labour market. The second element of the definition is that the citizens have no capacity to influence whether the event will occur or not.

Social vulnerability is defined by the action capacity of the citizen to avoid being affected by the non-desired event, to mitigate beforehand to be affected by negative consequences or cope later the negative impact. Less action capacity signifies higher vulnerability Empowerment strategies should be aimed to reduce the social vulnerability of citizens limiting their risk of social exclusion and improve their social inclusion.

¹⁷ This outline of Social Vulnerability Management isn't limited to an institutional perspective. It is also a tool for individuals to plan their work-life-trajectories taking into account different life course situation of social vulnerability and the estimation of the occurrence of social risks situations.

3. Social Equity in Labour Markets

For THEMP, the central question is the role of tertiary lifelong learning in the social risk management in the labour markets. The analysis of this question requires a general framework to measure the social impact of the adopted measures. The critics against the quantitative indicator orientation of the Lisbon strategy and its respective employment policies indicate the needs to develop indicators to measure its impact on the quality of work and life of the citizens applying criteria of social equity as it is proposed, i.e. by the capability approach of A. Sen. It is a concept used to design social and employment policies putting the differentiated capabilities of the citizens and their objectives in the centre. It starts from the idea that each individual has a set of capabilities and objectives regarding their quality of life (functionings) which must be considered in the design of the concrete measures.

The capability approach goes beyond a resource based input-output approach. It considers resources as inputs for the life quality, but this quality itself is defined by the capabilities of people. Sen criticised that the resource based approach confound the resources with the aims of social and employment policies. But the resources are only utile to achieve other goals: or in the terminology of this approach: functionings.¹⁸ To strengthen the position of the individuals in the social policies, Sen proposes to start from the individual circumstances – capabilities – and the functionings, that they want achieve. He considered that the resources are not aims per se but resources to achieve a better quality of life. But this quality of life must be defined in relation to the capabilities of the citizens and their objectives.

Capabilities refer to what the individuals can do, to their ability to act. Capabilities are the space of possibilities which an individual has. Through the actions of the individual in the particular socio-economic context, these capabilities are transformed into functionings defining their quality of life. The quality of the set of functionings achieved, in turn, influence positively and negatively on the possibilities of individuals to convert their existing capabilities in new sets of functionings. Sen argues that institutional policies should aim to support citizens transforming their capabilities in the features they want to achieve. This implies the assumption that individuals have an idea of (i) what their capabilities are and (ii) what functionality they want to achieve. On the other hand, it seems obvious that no government programs can have a completely individualised orientation. Therefore, there must be a definition of the desired functionality or quality of life by the whole society or the political institutions that give support. There are many different proposals to measure the quality of life. Restricting the analysis of these proposals to those influenced by the capabilities approach, we see eight common

¹⁸ Sen went back to a consideration of Aristotle: “*es evidente que la riqueza no es el bien que buscamos, pues es útil en orden a otra cosa*” (Sen, A. 2009: 285).

dimensions of quality of life: health, knowledge and intellectual development, physical security, time management, social relationships, living environment, personal safety, and political rights and participation.

The capability approach is highly complex, using a distinction among capabilities, functionings and conversion factors. The term capability expresses the concrete dimension of the individual freedom to design their life trajectories aggregating different functionings – defined as *<doings>* and *<beings>* (Sen 1992: 39), which the individual appreciates, as values for his life trajectories. Capabilities are what people really *<can do>* and *<can be>*. Capabilities are the “*opportunities for flourishing that a person has*” (Robeyn & van der Veen 2007: 43). The realisations of the options are what Sen called functionings. A capability as well as a functioning form an ensemble so we can talk about a set of functionings and a set of capabilities (see Clark 2005). Emphasising the individual freedom, the capability approach insists in the action capacity of the individuals and in their empowerment assuming that the individuals have an idea about which state of functionings they want to achieve and which efforts and risk they must run. Similar, institutional policies are also based on previously defined objectives, on which the effectiveness of the programs could be measured. In this sense, we can talk about ideal sets of functionings, as the projection on which individuals or institutions are measuring the really achieved set of functioning or well-being.

At least, the transformation of capabilities into functionings depends also on external factors, the so-called conversion factors. They are mostly structural factors, but not limited to them. Following Sen (1992) and Robeyns (2003) we distinguish three types of conversions factors:

- Personal characteristics, such as mental and physical conditions, i.e. physical incapacities, those influence the capability, which a person can generate from resources and in different degrees.
- Social factors are a number of characteristics of social settings, such as social norms (e.g. gender roles, norms of behaviour, religion, culture etc), social institutions (e.g. laws, organisational procedures, political rights, public policies), and power structures (e.g. organisation structure, political hierarchies).
- Environmental characteristics, including infrastructure, resources, and public goods, but also the natural environment such as the climate are also important in the conversion of resources to capacity and the realisation of functionings.

The different conversion factors are influencing the process of transforming capabilities into functionings. Of course, the physical and mental conditions of the citizens affect their capabilities, as well as social and environmental factors for conversion – for example, the level of contamination in the environment. But social conversion factors – i.e. the existence of a well-

developed higher education system, of a health system, the regulations to access to education, but also the availability of transport infrastructure – and its influence on the transformation of capabilities in new desired functionings is the issue in which the project THEMP is focused. Finally, the different conversion factors also influence the decision of the citizen, what functionings they want to achieve – their preference structures – and at what level that means the ideal of functionings¹⁹. Something similar applies to the design of institutional support for citizens. The key questions are: What functionings are defined as desirable by the society?²⁰ Or in other words, what dimensions of quality of life are guiding social, education and employment policies?

Table 4:		
Lists of societal desirable functionings		
Nussbaum	Stiglitz & Sen & Fitoussi	Robeyns & van der Veen
Life Bodily health	Health	Physical health Mental health
Practical Reason	Education	Knowledge and intellectual development
Senses, Imagination, and Thought		
	Economic security	Labour
Emotions		
	Balance of Time	Care Recreation
Play		
Affiliation	Social Connections	Social relations
		Non-discrimination and respect for diversity
Material Control Over One's Environment Other Species.	Environmental Conditions	Living-environment Shelter Mobility
Bodily integration	Personal Security	Security
Political Control Over One's Environment	Political voice and governance	Political participation

Sen, the main exponent the capability approach, “*conceptualises real accessible quality of life in terms of a person’s capability set, and realised or effective quality of life in terms of the vector of (chosen) functionings that persons actually achieve*” (Robeyn & Van der Veen 2007: 44). Quality of life “*is what we are effectively able to doing and to be, and how we can concrete give shape to our life*” (Robeyn & Van der Veen 2007: 44). However, many writings on the

¹⁹ The <conversion factors> have a conceptual nearness to Putnam’s <social capital> and to Bourdieu’s <social field>.

²⁰ That means the societal defined ideal set of functionings.

capability approach acknowledge the problems to measure capabilities. There are some works on the transformation of resources in capability (see Ruggeri Laderchi, C. 1999), but the main road is to put the focus on the functionings to measure people’s well-being. We take here as reference

- a) The work of Nussbaum (2007), a prominent exponent of the capability approach, who has developed a proposal of basic capabilities,
- b) The proposal of the <Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress>²¹ chaired by Stieglitz, Sen & Fitoussi (2009).
- c) The proposal on <Sustainable quality of life> presented by Robeyns & van der Veen (2007) based expressively on the capability approach.

Table 5	
Links between well-being dimensions and quality of work	
Well-being	Quality of Work
Health	Labour health and well-being
Knowledge & intellectual development	Career development Learning organisation Qualification Learning
Economic security	Income Employment status
Balance of time	Working and non-working time
Social relations	Social infrastructure Social relations
Living Environment	Risks exposure Work organisation
Personal security	Personal Security
Political rights & participation	Social Protection Workers’ rights

Comparing the basic dimensions of these three proposals (Table 4), we see that Nussbaum’s scheme is quite different to these of Robeyns & van der Venn and Stieglitz & Sen & Fitoussi, which in contrast show a considerable coincidence. This allows us to fit both schemes in one list

²¹ This commission has been created on initiative of the French government under the presidency of N. Sarkozy at the beginning of 2008.

and compare its dimensions with the proposal to measure the quality of work made by the European Foundation (see table 5).

We can also use these dimensions to measure the vulnerability of the citizens in front of social risks in the labour markets and in specific labour market transition periods. In the line of the structuration theory of Giddens, we interpreted the functionings as result of actions, but also as facilitators or constraints of future actions. That means the achieved functionings at work and in life define also the vulnerability of people in front of social risks. The functionings become resources for the further personal development open pathways for the achievement of future sets of functionings. The achieved level of functionings defined, in so far, the citizen's action capacity or their social vulnerability

4. The Conversion of Learning Outcomes into Capital

Following our definition, vulnerability decreased in relation to the growth of action capacity. The decision capacity of a person depends on his actual set of functionings. But taking the labour market as main focus to convert capabilities into new functionings, the question is: which of these functionings are values to define the occupational status of the citizens? Or in other words: Which of these functionalities are recognised as capital in the labour market?²² The labour market or the labour market segments could be conceived as social fields in which, through complex social bargaining processes, the social status of a person is defined – precisely his occupational status. These social fields could also be interpreted as a web of social conversion factors.

In certain way, we go back to the resource-based approach assuming that the functionings are convertible in labour market relevant resources, that means, capital opening or restricting the citizens' opportunities for professional development²³ achieving new levels of functionings. And the THEMP project asks precisely how the tertiary lifelong learning impacts on stock of labour capital improving or maintaining an occupational status position and improving or maintaining so the actual level of functionings, that means the quality of work and life.

The term capital refers to a broader capacity to mobilise economic, social and cultural resources for the generation of well-being. Besides physical and financial capital, we refer for our study to three capital types that occupy prominent places in the actual social science debates:

- human capital;
- cultural capital; and
- social capital

Human capital, introduced by Becker (1965), considered the enhanced worth of an individual as measured by increased productivity in the workplace. Human capital refers both to the informal acquired skills, knowledge and capabilities of individuals and/or to the accumulated knowledge acquired by each individual through formal schooling (see Coleman, 1988).

Cultural capital refers to the knowledge, competencies and dispositions considered values by the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is an explanation of how information and knowledge are strategically used by the different social classes. In this

²² We make here reference to the notion <capital> in a broad sense.

²³ It is important to underpin again, that not all functionings are convertible in resources, which means in capital relevant in the labour markets.

perspective, the education system is a vehicle of social reproduction, because it reproduces, reinforces, and rewards acts, values and behaviours valued by the dominant social classes.

Coleman describes social capital as social-structural resources that serve as capital assets for the individual. Following Putnam (1993: 167), social capital refers to “*features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.*” Similarly, he also (2000:19) defines social capital as connections among individuals. Individuals’ connection means “*social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.*” Social capital inheres in the network structure between persons and among people. It can be thought to be an asset both to a collective and to an individual. But it does not refer only on the number of social relations, but also on their quality.

A brief overview of the different capital types shows that these capital types are overlapping frequently. For instance, it seems hardly difficult to make a clear cut among the human capital (see i.e. Becker 1965, 1976, 1981 and 1998) and the cultural capital (see i.e. Bourdieu 1986; 2005a and 2005b). Naturally both approaches are quite different in the theoretical orientation but both refer to the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills, competence and aptitudes during the whole life course putting specific interest in the early accumulation stage.²⁴

Hereinafter we will use the notion of <human capital> for the type of cultural-human capital that has obvious labour market relevance and the economic system. The notion cultural capital refers then to that part of the cultural-human capital, whose relevance to the labour market is not so obvious. In other words, we propose to use human capital in the sense of a functional oriented cultural capital.

Both concepts of human and cultural capital underpin the role of the parents in the early phase of the individual human capital accumulation. This indicates (i) the possibility to transfer human capital from one person to another, but also (ii) that the human capital accumulation depends on the disposable social capital. In such sense, the relations to the parents cannot be conceived as human capital but as very specific type of social capital on which the child, in the best case, can take advantages.

Human and cultural capital on one side and social capital on the other are handled on a different analytical level. “*Social capital is not human capital in the strictly Stigler-Becker sense. Human capital emphasizes human skills and knowledge embedded within the individual. Social capital exists in a matrix or network of social relationships*” (Wilson 2000: 4). While the first is open for the microanalysis; the second one is placed at the macro- and meso-analysis.

²⁴ The differences aren’t in the definition of what is human or cultural capital but in the way something is recognised as capital and how it is valued. While Becker limited human capital to economic processes, Bourdieu sees cultural capital as part of the process of social domination...

The notion of social capital was introduced by Loury (1977) considering it a set of resources coming out from family and social relations useful for the cognitive and social development of children and adolescents. In a similar line argues Ben-Porath (1980) putting emphasis of the family, friends and firms in the exchange systems – the F-connections. These ideas were taken up by Coleman (1988), who considered besides the social relations also the relation of authority, trust and norms as forms of social capital. Putnam (1993: 167) argued in a similar way, defining social capital as *“features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.”*

This point of view was adopted by the World Bank (1998: 5) defining social capital as: *“The social capital of a society includes the institutions, the relationships, the attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to economic and social development. Social capital, however, is not simply the sum of the institutions that underpin society; it is also the glue that holds them together. It includes the shared values and rules for social conduct expressed in personal relationships, trust, and a common sense of “civic” responsibility that makes society more than a collection of individuals. Without a degree of common identification with forms of governance, cultural norms, and social rules, it is difficult to imagine a functioning society.”*

Raiser et al. (2001) consider that Putnam proposed social capital as a cultural phenomenon and as a public good. Meanwhile, Coleman considers social capital both a public good and a property of individual or networks of individuals. On the contrary, Bourdieu defines social capital as individual investment in social relation or networks. *“The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent ... depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize”* (Bourdieu 1986: 249). It is a possession of the individual actor used in the social struggle on social positions. *“Social capital here is a private good, which can be converted into cultural capital, real wealth or “symbolic capital” that signals social status”* (Raiser et al. 2001: 2).

In other words: Putnam conceives social capital at the societal level. Insofar his work can be classified as one example of the approaches of social embeddedness of economic action. Coleman conceives social capital in a double way as institutional context and as individual resource (social networks). On the contrary, Bourdieu used a restrictive definition of social capital in the sense of social relations and networks, handled this institutionalised embeddedness of economic action under the key words of social fields and habits.

Putnam’s definition shows a considerable proximity to the approach of embeddedness proposed by Granovetter. And Coleman established expressively a link to Granovetter’s notion of embeddedness, which has attacked the economic point of view considering that economic have an *“undersocialised concept of human action”* (1985: 483), but also sociological works using

<oversocialised concepts>. “Under- and oversocialised resolutions of the problem of order thus merge in their atomization of actors from intermediate social context” (1985: 485). Granovetter remains to the long-running view of the majority of social scientists that economic behaviour was “*heavily embedded in social relations in premarket but became more autonomous with modernization*” (1985: 482).

In certain sense, the concept of social capital – as it is defined by Putnam and Coleman - overlaps with Bourdieu’s concept of social fields, but also with the conversion factors proposed by the capability approach. Social capital includes not only the structural relation to other actors, but also the incorporated norms and values. That means social capital has a specific status under the capital types. Economic and human-cultural capital are linked to the individuals, but the social capital is at the same time linked to the individual – his stock of social relations – and to the social structure – institutionalised patterns of behaviour. To take up this double characteristic of social capital, we propose to limit its use to social relations (in the sense of network capital) and to handle norms, values and pattern of behaviour under the term of <social field> and <social embeddedness> of the usage of capital.

Summarizing, we make a distinction among five types of capital: physical, financial, human, cultural and social to which we add a sixth type of capital, which has been discussed within the human capital approach: the health capital. Grossman (1972) considered that the stock of health determines how long a citizen can engage in economic activities and under what conditions. Everyone has at the beginning, according to this approach, a certain capital stock that diminishes in the life course. Of course, this is not a continuous regressive process, but develops in stages under the specific life conditions of the people.

The particular consideration of what is considered capital and what is its value depends on the social fields, in our case of the labour market segments, thereby determining the potential occupational position of every citizen. From this perspective, we asked if the tertiary lifelong learning affects the capital stock and in what form. The hypothesis is that lifelong learning university produces certain learning outcomes that, at the best, are recognised in the labour market segments as increase of the stock of human, cultural and social capital. This conversion of the learning outcomes in human capital, cultural and social relevant in the labour market segment improves the labour market position of the learning citizens and offers them opportunities to maintain or improve their functionings. However, to participate in university learning programs, the learners must invest capital and time. The degree of social vulnerability influences, in some degree, their ability to participate in lifelong learning and to renew their capital stock.

5. Social Vulnerability Management

For the analysis of the social quality of tertiary lifelong learning programs, we propose the concept of “Social Vulnerability Management” based on the interplay among the three approaches of transitional labour market, capability and capital. The differentiation between social danger, social risks and individual risks allows contrasting the dominating concept of employability and social investment state, which delegate the main part of the responsibility for their work and life course to the citizens.

Without denying the self-responsibility of the citizens, the bounded knowledge of social-economic developments limits the capacity of the citizens to prevent future and their limited action capacity restrict their possibility to avoid (or stimulate) undesired (or desired) labour situations or to act proactively or react in front of potential negative impacts and to produce positive situations relativise this individual responsibility.

The transitional labour market approach provides a framework to prevent risk situations and to design measures aimed to mitigate and cope negative impacts of the negative labour market event. Such measures focus on the reinforcement of the knowledge and the action capacity of the citizens in specific situations of labour transition. We propose, however, to interpret the term <transition> in a broad sense including periods of adaptation to changes in the workplaces or the labour environment, which permits the citizens to maintain their work places.

The own transitional labour market approach proposes a link to theories of social equity. One of the candidates is the capability approach elaborated by Sen and others to measure the quality of social insurance programs beyond the rates of active participation or employment and to design programs focused on the quality of work and life. Putting the citizens, their capabilities and functionings in the centre, provides us with the theoretical basis to make a clear distinction between the social risks, which affect all citizens, and the vulnerability of citizens in front of undesired labour market events and their possible negative impacts.

We defined social risks in distinction to social danger on the degree of knowledge that have the citizens about the possibilities that certain events occur. The criterion for social vulnerability is the degree in which the action capacity of an individual is limited to act preventively or to react in front of risk situation. The citizens’ vulnerability is growing in relation to the limitation of their action capacity. The proposals of social equity to measure quality of life together with the proposal of EUROFOUND to measure the quality of work provides us with eight dimensions of functionings to measure the social vulnerability.

The participation in university lifelong learning programs is aimed at improving the level of functionality for students, for example providing them with new knowledge, to support the intellectual development and facilitating new social relations. But, because our project is

focused on labour transitions and the maintenance or improvement of the learners' labour position, the tertiary lifelong learning outcomes should be recognised as values in the labour market segments. That is, the new functionings achieved through learning must be converted to human, cultural and social capital in labour markets, which is a complex process of social bargaining in these specific social fields. In other words, each segment is conceived as a social field determining which functionings are convertible to capital and what is the value of the capital stock of each individual, defining so their positions in the labour market and their occupational opportunities. The labour market position of the citizens and their occupational opportunities depend on their capital stock and its valuation in the labour market segments.²⁵ The comprehensive capital approach, together with the idea of labour markets as contested terrains, allows a differentiated view of the function of lifelong learning measures in the different labour markets

In other words, the question is

- Are the tertiary lifelong learning programs effective to increase the values of the capital stock of the individual and to reduce so the social vulnerability of the risk groups?

Taking the labour market and the position which citizens occupy in it, as reference point of the evaluation of the tertiary lifelong learning programs we ask:

- (i) How are the functionings converted to resources or capital? and
- (ii) How are the achieved functionings contributing to the increase of the individual capital stock improving the position of the individual in the labour markets?

Under this perspective, it seems clear that the higher education institutions must be integrated in a wider institutional network structure to have accurate analysis of the developments in the labour markets, to provide a socially sensitive assessment to the citizens taking into account the situations of social dangers and risks and their expectations of quality of work and life (i) to design adequate lifelong learning programs, (ii) to give institutional and financial support to persons in labour transitions, especially vulnerable in front of social risks, as persons older than 40 years, women and ethnic minorities, and (iii) to monitor the social efficiency of the tertiary lifelong learning programs. But it seems also clear, that the higher education institutes must adapt their internal structures and procedures to these new challenges.

²⁵ One functioning, i.e. the capacity to speak Russian is considered in the labour market segment of tourism in a region with a high attraction for Russian tourists as a capital with a high value, but in a labour market of an industrial production segment in the same region the same capacity has a low value.

The evaluation of the social quality of a tertiary lifelong learning program must take into account the objectives expressed at the societal level, as well as the ones of the tertiary education institutions and the learners combining three perspectives. At all three levels, we can assume that the different individual and social actors have developed expectations regarding learning outcomes of the program and the impact on the learners' position in the labour markets in short, medium and long term. This can be called the ideal set of functionings, which the different actors want to achieve. These ideal sets of functionings are then the folio on which the degree of satisfaction with the program outcomes can be measured.

Choosing social risk and vulnerability as starting point of our conceptual development brings in a temporary dimension in our concept. On one side, it seems necessary to distinguish between the variability of the vulnerability factors in the course of time. While the factors of social discrimination as gender, ethnic minority, chronic diseases and age seem to be invariant in time and independent to the action capacity of the actors, other conversion factors, as the care needs of relatives, devoting more time to leisure or training, or labour mobility seem to be variable in time and more dependent to the citizens' decisions. The policies of social vulnerability management in front of social risks and their negative impacts must vary depending on the vulnerability factors.

But the temporary dimension is also relevant to design the concrete vulnerability management. Following Schmid (2006) we distinguish between ex-ante and ex-post management taking as reference point the concretisation of the undesired event. This distinction permits fine-tuning the analysis of the labour vulnerability of the employees in certain phase of labour transition and when they are exposed to social risk, as economic crisis (social danger), sector crisis, companies' crisis, obsolescence of competencies or precarious working conditions.²⁶ Special attention must be paid to the dimension of non-discrimination taking into account that gender, ethnicity and age are factors of discrimination.

Our project starts from the assumption that age is a factor of vulnerability in the labour markets. In the past, this vulnerability has been managed through the labour market possibilities, monetarily rewarded. The active participation rates in the member countries of the UE-27 continue to fall significantly from the age of 45 on. But the reforms of the pension systems in the countries of the EU-27 make increasingly unlikely the passive mechanisms of monetary compensation, like early retirement. This is reflected in the growing active participation and employment rate of people older than 45 years in the 2000s. This trend along with the general

²⁶ Financial, economic and sector crisis are in the nature of the capitalist economy and they appear cyclically, but they aren't constantly present as social risks compared to the risks related to gender or ethnicity discrimination.

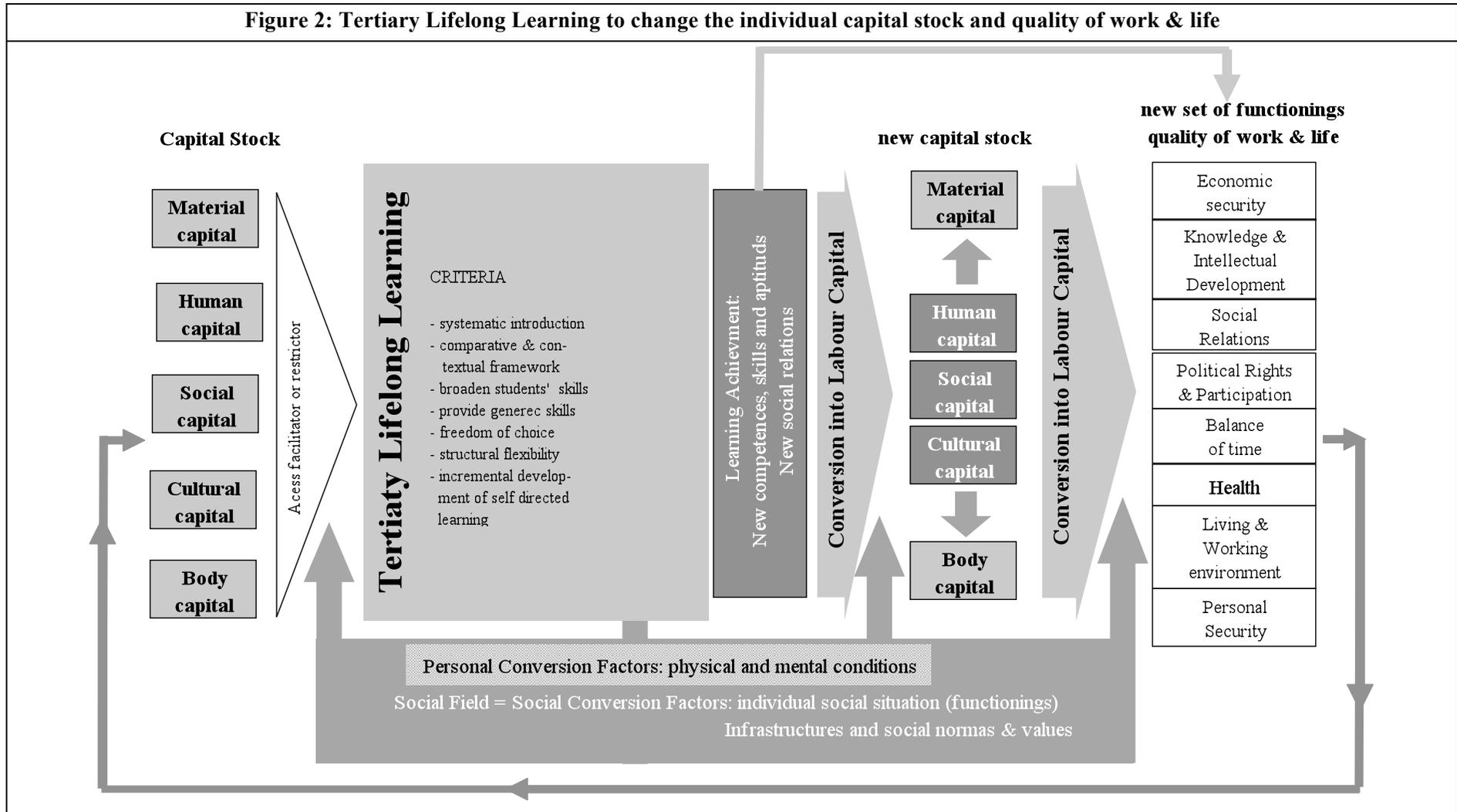
increase in the number of people, who have an educational level equivalent to higher education, indicates that it will become increasingly urgent to design tertiary lifelong learning policies aimed at the integration of people over 40 years and to facilitate human, cultural and social capital to maintain or improve their occupational status.

The project THEMP proposes a tentative research in 21 universities from 7 European countries a) to check the reliability of our concept to manage the social quality of tertiary lifelong learning, and b) to create together with universities instruments and tools to manage the social quality. The research provides three phases:

- a) A series of interviews based on interview guides with persons responsible for tertiary lifelong learning programs, social actors involved in its planning and implementation, teachers and students.
- b) A student survey on the social quality of the programs in which they participated. The questionnaire would be designed based on the result of the interview results and other previous work.
- c) Mutual learning activities involving universities and research organizations of the project.

The goal is to have a constant recognition of the field work by the universities, to facilitate exchange of experiences among the participating universities in the field of tertiary lifelong learning and the development of tools and instruments for the management of social quality responding to the needs of universities but also to those of students and political institutions, and which could be integrated with the routines of university management.

Figure 2: Tertiary Lifelong Learning to change the individual capital stock and quality of work & life



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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Main challenges of the ageing knowledge economy are constant upgrading of the skills of the active population and mitigating new and old social risks. In the aging society and the globalised knowledge economy, the people in mid-life are increasingly exposed to social risks of exclusion from the labour market. They are also excluded from formal Lifelong Learning (LLL), specifically Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLL). The access of mid-life learners to TLL and their retention in the system have an increasing relevance for the socio-economic sustainability of the ageing European knowledge society. TLL is considered a key to develop more inclusive and responsive universities. Opening HE for mid-life learners, designing flexible pathways from VET and professional experience to higher education, flexible learning arrangements conciliating family-work life and learning and the adaptation of didactical methods in HE are challenges to affront problems of the aging knowledge society. Opening Higher Education (HE) to this group is still a minor aspect of education and training reforms, but it is a strategic goal to raise the skill level of the adult EU population, as well as closing the mismatch between supply and demand for high-skilled workers.

The project THEMP aims to study the TLL of HE institutes in several countries with respect to inclusion of mid-life learners. At the core stands a comparative study with concrete example analysing statistically available data, making series of interviews with decision makers, stakeholders, lecturers and mid-life learners. The study will analysis the efficiency of TLL programs in achieving the integration of mid-life learners in terms of access to and retention in programs, their duration, the creation of learning pathways and didactical innovation. The results of this study will allow advances in the design of core conditions of socially and economically effective TLL programs for mid-life learners. The project will use a combination of social research and active participation of the university under scrutiny facilitating mutual learning between HE-decision-makers, stakeholders, practitioners and learners.

For the social research, the project uses an innovative combination of Transitional Labour Market approach to define and measure situation of social risks; and the Capability and Capital approach to operationalize employability and well-being. It will provide differentiated tools to analyse TLL programs and their integration in the general higher education systems based on adequate definitions of efficiency and quality to evaluate the inclusion of mid-life learners. It will also analyse the regulation of the TLL system, not only with respect to labour markets and society, but also its internal regulation in terms of access, learning pathways, certifications, recognition of prior learning and funding. Special attention will be paid to the relation to the Bologna three-cycle system and the ECTS. Another area of analysis will be the analysis of didactical innovation in the TLL programs to assure the retention of non-traditional students in the TLL-system.