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## *University Lifelong Learning to Live a Better Life – Continuing Education for Sustainable Quality of Life in Europe*

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**Strand:** Active Citizenship and Humanity Engagement

### ***Work world and professional environment's transformations: Challenges for Universities***

The recent transition from knowledge society to learning society (Jarvis, 1998, 2000, 2007, 2012) had a significant impact in redesigning the work and its relevant features on knowledge workers (Drucker, 1959, 1969, 1987; Butera, 1987; Butera et al., 1997; Butera et. al., 2008).

For the development of an increasing number of jobs in learning societies, there is the need for change, knowledge workers are becoming learning workers.

Significant changes are already taking place in professional environments, increasingly characterized by: demographic heterogeneity, fluidity, variety, flexibility, responsible autonomy, collaboration, temporal intensity and vision (Bagnara, 2010).

In the knowledge society, workers are required to be constantly educated, trained, responsible, resourceful, creative, flexible and autonomous; thus a significant dimension, the "know-how", expands (Negrelli, 2013).

In the learning society, a person's main resource is not only the quantity and quality of knowledge itself, but also the strategic competence of "learning to learn" and applying it to new environments and scenarios. Nowadays, different values are given to: what people know, where the knowledge has been acquired and how, giving more importance to how this knowledge is valued, how it is produced and how it is shared.

Developing the ability to learn quickly, results challenging for workers, showing evolving implications on applying this ability to new situations and problems. Thus, organisations must modify their structures from the knowledge society framework to the learning one, adopting less hierarchical structures, becoming more open, lean, networked and adhocratic (Cocozza 2012), and supportive toward workers' learning processes (Billet, 2001; 2008; 2014).

From the learning society, new opportunities arise increasing, for example: flexibility, conciliation, teamwork, networking, initiative, creativity, autonomy, responsibility. Nonetheless, also well-known risks increase, such as: precariousness, flexibility, decreasing number of stable rewarding jobs (Negrelli, 2013) and individual responsibility to solve systemic problems (Beck, 1986). As Wyn said (2014, 12), "Being 'self-navigators' is increasingly necessary, in part because the links between education and employment are so complex".

In addition, to the Third mission, also the other two Universities' missions are questioned by the increasing complexity of: labour market crises, lifelong and life wide learning implications. Thus, these transformations pave the way to rethink the role of Universities in society, as well as growing towards a "universal" task to consider the critical forecasting of future of work in a "finanzcapitalismo" (Gallino, 2011) globalized society. Following this perspective, the focus on relationships amongst Governments, Industries and Universities expands to a fourth subject (civil society), considering the challenges for social innovation, with an evolution from Triple to Quadruple Helix approach. Proposed by Etzkowitz and Leydesorff (2000) as well as by Carayannis and Campbell (2009), who defined the fourth helix as "the media based and culture based public", associated with the "creative class". Therefore, today, Universities have a crucial transformative function which contributes to refound a social criticism competence, becoming a new lifelong and life wide Agency.