



MESSAGE OF BARI

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Continuous professional development for digital education

The Corona crisis has radically changed the European higher education landscape.

During this period, all institutions established massive support for organizing digital lectures, tutorials and group sessions with different pedagogical approaches. Emergency decisions were taken at all levels. By doing so, higher education institutions have discovered the potential of digital higher education.

This is a momentum for continuing educational change by new pedagogies, building on this experience. But higher education institutions also feel the need for organizing an intensive professionalization of staff and creating of the necessary technological support structures to achieve high quality education. They want to connect with latest developments in the digitization of on-campus education, enhancing the first emergency pedagogies.

In response to these needs, EADTU partners have joined forces for the professional development of digital education, bringing together excellent expert schools, known for their research and innovation in digital teaching and learning and for developing good practices. They will support key approaches in post-Corona digital higher education: synchronous hybrid education, blended education and online distance learning,

Microcredentials

The coming years we will also see a growing focus on continuing education and professional development, stimulated by European and national policies on micro-credentials.

The European Commission will launch a Recommendation to the Council of Ministers on microcredentials by the end of 2021 and will develop a 2025 micro-credential plan to be integrated into the European Higher Education Area. This means that the recognition of microcredential qualifications will be discussed in all Member States in the broader framework of the European Higher Education Area from 2022 to 2025.

Our members are ready for this discussion. Several institutions and governments are already anticipating this policy, which promising for lifelong learning in all member states and in all institutions.

Microcredentials will have an impact on new qualifications for continuing education and professional development in line with the Bologna commitments and their integration in the European Area of Higher Education. They should be designed in such a way that they are recognized by academia and employers. This requires a closer collaboration between higher education institutions and the labor market. Members of EADTU and the European MOOC Consortium noted a growing need in the

economy and society for short learning programmes and microcredentials targeting a specific set of competencies.

The main next question concerns the qualifications to be awarded for microcredentials, understandable to learners, academia and employers to be integrated in national and European qualification frameworks at higher education level. EADTU members are exploring qualification structures for continuing education and will enter in dialogue with the peer groups in the Bologna process.

Microcredentials will be a springboard for universities to develop a full-fledged area of continuing education and professional development. Universities have to prepare strategies and develop business models in conjunction with national funding schemes that make continuing education affordable, both for individual learners and for learners in companies.

Academic collaboration and mobility

EADTU welcomes the new Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission. By integrating digital education and mobility, it promotes academic collaboration and mobility for ALL. On campus higher education institutions are now given the instruments to organize an international academic experience for all students. Lifelong learners can benefit from an international learning experience combining short physical with virtual mobility.

This makes continuing education and professional development more a reflection of society where people increasingly work in international and virtual networks. Working in these environments requires new competencies.

Openness, Diversity and Inclusion

Because of their mission, open and distance learning universities have always embraced the principle of equity in education. Therefore, they have continuously to re-think their role in national higher education systems. Opening up education means that open and distance education is responding to educational needs in society and in the economy.

The recognition of prior learning and experience is important for learners who wish to valorise what they learned already in the past, in higher education or in the workplace.
Talent should not be lost, but upgraded!

Openness means also that higher education institutions take into account diversity and inclusion, giving all citizens a fair chance for developing talent. Therefore, EADTU members explore challenges and share solutions for a variety of needs related to migrants and ethnicity, digital accessibility, gender, social inclusion, education for athletes, and artists, prisoners, and persons with functional disabilities

They will make an inventory of digital solutions which can support diversity and inclusion policies.

The European Area of Higher Education

EADTU welcomes the steps forward in the Bologna process regarding digital higher education and lifelong learning.

In the European University of the Future, lifelong learning takes on a much more important place as careers lengthen and up-skilling and re-skilling are needed to stimulate innovation and create an inclusive society. Lifelong learning will be organized in interaction with human resources in enterprises and sectors, innovation networks, competence centers and smart regions.

Digital education will provide tools for high-quality, accessible and scalable educational provisions for everyone, in emergency situations and beyond.

It is of great importance that the Commission, together with the Council of Ministers, can continue and strengthen its actions in the field of education. The European programmes enable European universities in many ways to lead the way in higher education policies and practices.

EADTU members will generously share educational expertise from 50 years of research, innovation and practices in the field to universities, governments and the European Union.