



EADTU Message to the Ministerial EHEA Conference 2020

ehea2020rome, 19th November 2020

EADTU transfers a message to the Ministerial EHEA Conference 2020 in Rome. The message is the result of the Innovation in Higher Education Conference (I-HE 2020, Bridging Event, 28-30 October 2020). The Conference was dealing with the transformation of higher education and digital education, the role of microcredentials in lifelong learning and international education and mobility.

Disruption after the Corona

1. The Corona-crisis made institutions switch fast from face to face to digital education and reorganize their campus. Following the May 2020 surveys of the European Commission, it turned out that in the first lock-down period, 95,1% of the universities organized online distance learning and even 82,7 organized online exams. Universities have developed online emergency pedagogies. At all levels, emergency decisions were made.
2. The sanitary situation for the next months, possibly years will be unpredictable as well as the consequences for higher education. University leaders and staff are challenged by this impact. Scalable, high quality and effective solutions are needed, moving from emergency pedagogies to professional approaches. They are sought in hybrid, blended and complete online and distance education.
3. The perspective is no longer crisis management and fighting uncertainty only, it is a fundamental change towards new educational paradigms for the future, using the full potential of educational technology. It is recommended that staff and universities will sustain their efforts in digital education after the crisis.

Towards the University of the Future

1. The European Commission has published recently reports preparing universities for the next decade: the University of the Future: The new Digital Education Action Plan, the new Skills Agenda, the European Education Area 2025. The digital transformation of education will promote this change.
2. By 2030, the European Area of Higher Education will become a knowledge area connected with innovation ecosystems that make our society sustainable. Universities will not only be places of research and education, they will be engines in knowledge and innovation ecosystems, creating and spreading knowledge to meet the needs of societies.
3. *Lifelong learning* will have a far more important place in tomorrow's society as careers become longer and up-skilling/re-skilling are needed to nurture innovation and to create an inclusive society. Lifelong learning will be organised in interaction with innovation networks, competence centres/communities in public services, sectors and businesses, and smart regions.



4. Universities will also be key actors to restore trust in society by a strong value orientation, integrity and ethics, eg fighting against fake news in an impending post-truth society.

Microcredentials and short learning programmes

1. National and European Qualification Frameworks are positioning different levels of higher education qualifications, broadly corresponding with competences achieved after a bachelor, master or doctoral degree programme. They don't foresee yet a place for qualifications for continuing education and continuing professional development, aligned with these European Qualification Framework (EQF-levels). In view of the growing importance of re- and up-skilling of highly qualified work force, the integration of microcredentials in EQF and NQFs is needed.
2. This integration should allow that:
 - learners find recognition for even small steps in continuing education / continuing professional development, being awarded a qualification after the successful completion of a coherent set of courses;
 - learners are triggered to start or continue learning paths towards a next milestone throughout their lives;
 - a maximum of flexibility is offered in combining learning with the workplace;
 - qualifications are standardized and therefore endorsed by academia and employers
3. While developing a microcredential framework, we should also discuss informal and non-formal learning. In our society, every talent and every experience should be valorised and recognized in order to raise the employability and career perspectives of people.

Supporting European policies

Microcredentials and lifelong learning are key policy priorities for the European Commission, which is expressed in the document on "Achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (30 september 2020). EADTU supports this initiative of Commissioner Gabriel from our experience with the Common Microcredential Framework (CMF) and Short Learning programmes (SLPs). Looking forward to the University of the Future, EADTU members support the transformation of higher education and the development of lifelong learning to nurture innovation and to create an inclusive society.

Digital education will offer tools for high quality, accessible and scalable provisions for all, in emergency situations and beyond. EADTU members continue to support universities sharing best expertise and experience in digital education with all institutions.

Digital education should also support collaboration and mobility throughout the European Higher Education Area and at all levels. This should assure the possibility of an international learning experience in all higher education programmes by physical, blended or online mobility.