



## Conclusions

# **EADTU Special Summit on open and online learning and the modernization agenda for European higher education**

**Brussels, 2 October 2013**

Higher education that encompasses open and flexible provision is essential to meet the social, economic and cultural needs of the citizens and nations of Europe. Today, there is an intolerable inequality between different European nations in access to open and flexible higher education. We therefore call on national governments to develop and implement policies to ensure that open and flexible provision for citizens aged 25 becomes a vital and natural part of their higher education systems, so that the talents of all citizens develop throughout their lifetimes, so that employability is secured through skilling and reskilling, and citizens have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and understanding, anytime and anywhere they need.

The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities and its members adhere to high quality standards in online and distance teaching and learning. Excellence in teaching and learning is fundamental to our mission, and is assured through rigorous structures and processes combined with peer review throughout the life cycle of courses. With the support of the European Commission, EADTU has already developed quality benchmarks for online and distance learning at the level of the institutional management, curriculum and course development, course delivery, tutoring and staff support. It is continuing to share this work with universities and quality and accreditation agencies in order to jointly establish a European framework for quality assurance and accreditation for online and distance education.

The members of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities are keen to work with the wider sector, using the expertise they have acquired in student-centred teaching and learning through online and other means, to ensure that teaching and learning in all European universities will reach the highest quality standards. To this end, EADTU members are willing to pool their expertise with others in a European-wide action plan to enhance the quality and impact of online and blended teaching and learning in all member states. By creating this pool of experience and expertise, we will drive forward excellence in teaching and learning in European higher education and enhance the competitive position of European universities in the rest of the world. EADTU at the European level and its members in their respective countries already serve a network for experimentation, collaboration and innovation in online teaching and learning, and the development

of business models for open and flexible education reaching out to non-mainstream students. We seek to extend that network in partnership with the wider higher education sector.

EADTU members strongly welcome the *Opening up Education* initiative as a positive contribution to the European Commission's Modernisation Agenda in Higher Education. EADTU is the key partner representing the online and distance higher education sector with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers in support of this initiative. We share the objective to create a European Learning Space of universities, accessible for all in all countries and from anywhere in Europe, and responding to the educational needs of the population, whether that be for formal qualifications or for non-formal and informal learning with open educational resources and MOOCs.

From this year on, the General Board of EADTU will meet once a year in Brussels for a summit on open and flexible higher education, to continue its work to pool expertise and promote excellence in teaching and learning, in partnership with European authorities, the wider higher education sector and its stakeholders.