

2nd European Summit on open and online learning and the modernisation agenda for European higher education

Invitation

Participants are staff of the European Commission, members of the European Parliament, members of the national delegations for the EU, university networks and other stakeholders (enterprises, social partners).

Theme

Universities are affected by the expansion and new opportunities of ICT in education. Simultaneously, in the entire higher education sector, we witness an increase of student numbers (also pushed by the ET2020 benchmark). Conventional lectures in large amphitheatres foster only sub-optimal solutions for these massive student numbers and difficultly approximate the original idea of higher education pedagogies. Hence, universities are looking for (combinations with) innovative teaching and learning modes online, which bring teaching staff and learners closer to the ideals of higher education. This will change the nature of teaching and learning, if they are led by appropriate pedagogies and incorporated in new organizational models for education in higher education institutions.

Although in most universities interesting experiments have been set up, in most European countries, the university sector didn't yet apply appropriate structural solutions to implement new modes of teaching and learning for mainstream degree education, which involve student-centred concepts of teaching and learning, collaborative course design by course teams, quality assurance by external reviewers before the course implementation is started, interaction and tutoring of students and learning communities and the assessment of students online. Hence, new roles for teaching and for learning support will emerge. This requires the rethinking of the organisation of educational development and delivery in higher education institutions at the level of faculties and central support for teaching staff.

Education beyond or without the classroom is what European open and distance universities already successfully do since four decades. They have built a strong experience and expertise in this field, supported by their well-known R&D institutes. They can contribute to the innovation of the entire sector of European higher education as change agents, as is pointed out in the action plan EMPOWER from EADTU, supporting universities and their governments in their transition to online teaching and learning. This also forces the open and distance teaching sector to reposition themselves and face the challenges of a broader sector working with open and flexible education.

Online teaching and learning is also suitable for reaching out to non-mainstream target groups, as is demonstrated by the open and distance teaching universities. In countries where they are absent, the conventional sector has to take over in order to reach the participation benchmarks of ET2020. These target groups are diverse: 25+ students taking a bachelor, master or doctoral degree in combination with other, mostly professional activities; students who follow a short programme or short degree (diploma, certificate,...), university-business collaboration for education and training; open education through informal learning (OERs, MOOCs); specific groups such as disabled people, prisoners, sportsmen, etc.

Both from a national and a European perspective, widening participation to higher education for non-traditional target groups is needed, because in many countries, there is no other way to reach the 40% benchmark for participation in higher education (EU2020). Also, in the knowledge society updating and re-skilling people is a permanent need.

In most countries, there are no or weak provisions for open and flexible education for non-mainstream students, because of a lack of appropriate strategies, pedagogical, organizational and business models in most higher education institutions. This outreach is not an automatic consequence of online education in the mainstream. Specific structures for non-mainstream students have to be set up as a spin off. Governmental frameworks and stimuli have to activate these institutional developments.

Programme

14.00h-14.30h

Welcome by Anja Oskamp, President EADTU

Empowering European universities in their transition to new modes of teaching and learning

A European-wide action programme is needed to promote and accelerate the modernisation of higher education in the EU by sharing the experience and expertise in open end online education, acquired by institutions and experts, to support institutions and systems of higher education European-wide. An EMPOWER partnership will be created, consisting of existing institutions and experts pools with advanced expertise in open and online teaching and learning, and institutions that seek to improve on line and blended teaching and learning in the mainstream and to increase their flexibility and responsiveness towards non-traditional target groups.

14.30h-14.50h

Ana-Carla Pereira, Head of Unit in DG Education and Culture, European Commission,
The modernization agenda of the European Commission: where we are and where we will go.

Last years, the European Commission has been developing a European policy with regard to the modernisation and innovation agenda for higher education. Last year, communications were published concerning opening up education, excellence in teaching, rethinking education and international education. The EC was also involved in the discussions about OERs and MOOCs. This is a sound basis for a framework for higher education that will complement, consolidate and harmonize the implementation of the Bologna process. It will also activate universities to open up higher education to the regions, to businesses and to citizens who want to update their knowledge and competencies.

14.50h-15.10h

Jeff Haywood, Pro-Vice-Chancellor University of Edinburgh, Chair Academic Team CPL Study,
The impact of online teaching and learning on European higher education: the changing pedagogical landscape

All European universities are affected by ICT developments in education, by which the face of higher education will change over the next five years. The University of Edinburgh has embraced this development by organizing master degree programmes online and MOOCs. In a European perspective, a consortium is studying the changing pedagogical landscape in European higher education in order to explore high potential trends in new pedagogies and to formulate recommendations about governmental incentives to accelerate the change process towards high quality modes of teaching and learning.

15.10h-15.30h

Eva Gjerdrum, Director Norgesuniversitet

National developments in online higher education in Norway: recommendations of the MOOCs Commission

The Norwegian government commissioned a high level expert report about MOOCs in the context of online higher education. The interim report was published (December, 2013). The recommendations to the government and institutions exceeded the subject of MOOCs and concern online higher education as well. They include aspects like quality and pedagogy, infrastructure, the competency needs for industry and suitable governmental policies and incentives. The final report is expected this year.

15.30h-16.00h – Break

16.00h-16.20h

Mark Brown, National Institute for Digital Learning

Blended or online teaching and learning modes and open and flexible education.

Blended and online degree studies involve new pedagogies allowing for guided independent learning, course designs which replace partially or entirely the classroom, interaction with staff and learning communities and new assessment methods online. To assure the quality of these new modes of teaching and to make them cost-effective, in a short term universities have to adopt new organizational systems for teaching staff to collaborate on courses and curricula. Even new types of staff for learner and teacher support are needed. However, organizing online education for the mainstream is not enough to attract new, non-mainstream target groups like students looking for continuous professional updating, employees on their workplace or citizens in the knowledge society. For widening access to these groups, specific institutional structure is needed for these students to find access to the university, to staff, courses, and learning communities. This is to be considered as a spin off from developments in the mainstream. In practice, a rich European tradition in this field emerged already in the open and distance teaching universities. The entire higher education system can learn from it.

16.20h-16.40h

Alejandro Tiana Ferrer, Rector of UNED

Professional updating and knowledge networking on line

As sciences and the competency needs of society evolve, universities have to pay more attention to their graduates and to the dissemination of knowledge in society. Online knowledge and professional networks are instrumental for continuing the educational task of the university throughout the lifespan of people. Networked exchange of knowledge and networked learning go in hand in hand with open access in research in particular domains. A holistic approach to knowledge and learning networks, fit to the needs of society, is to be promoted.

16.40-17.00h

Fred Mulder, UNESCO/ICDE Chair in OER at OUNL and Chair OpenupEd

European quality for openness in education

MOOCs are not causing a revolution or disruption in universities as some have prophesied, but certainly are an important driver for change. More and more they become recognised as an asset in higher education policy of institutions and governments. Meanwhile they are considered as a powerful instrument to reach out to new target groups but also to further improve the quality and style of mainstream education and - last but not least - to serve the learning society at large, including offering new modes for lifelong learning and training. It therefore is recommended for Europe to profile the significance of full openness in education rather than the restricted version which sticks to the MOOCs. Moreover, with quality being so important, we may applaud the first (European) provision of a quality system dedicated to MOOCs (the OpenupEd label).

17.00h-17.30h

Conclusions by **Deputy Director-General Xavier Prats-Monné and Anja Oskamp**, *How to promote and support innovation in higher education through new modes of teaching and learning and how to open higher education to regions, businesses and citizens? Is the BM of open and distance universities threatened by MOOCs? How can open and distance universities cooperate more efficiently with 'traditional universities', including those who are already MOOC providers?*

17.30 – 18.30 Closing drink