



## CONCLUSIONS OF THE EADTU-EU SUMMIT 2023:

### “LEVERAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR INNOVATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING”

The European Commission recognizes that digital technologies “are part of our everyday life and also need to be part of our learning experience, especially in a lifelong learning perspective. Embedding digital technologies in teaching and learning processes does not mean simply replicating or transposing face-to-face practices or traditional approaches online. It is a complex process, requiring strong focus on learning driven pedagogy” (Digital Education action Plan, 2020).

The mass unprecedented use of technology for learning revealed many opportunities for students and educators. Yet, also new significant challenges in terms of equity and quality as well as new divides occurred. In 2023, digital education is a strategic priority and an integrated and comprehensive approach to digital education has to be shaped. (Ivana Juraga, European Commission).

The EADTU-EU Summit 2023 has explored three of the most prominent topics of the year: the use of Large Language Models (LLM) such as ChatGPT and Bing in higher education, the conceptualization and implementation of micro-credentials, and accessibility and inclusion.

EADTU and the affiliated universities have worked intensively in all three areas in recent years, resulting in reports and input in EU consultation meetings. This Summit strengthens the dialogue (Theo Bastiaens, President of EADTU).

#### GENERATIVE AI AND LLM IN DIGITAL EDUCATION, CHAT GPT

Large Language Models have caused a significant disruption by applying AI in various fields, including education. This has led to discussions on its use and implications. Some educational institutions have rapidly developed policies or guidelines to restrict its use, while others have begun experimenting with ways it could be used to support teaching and learning. There are both opportunities and challenges that need to be explored with an eye on future developments that would enable universities to improve higher education.

All key stakeholders in an institution are directly affected by the introduction of LLM: students, teachers, teaching and learning and IT support services, institutional leadership, and national and EU authorities.

Universities should establish the educational and ethical conditions that enable the utilization of Large Language Models as a means of enhancing education by integrating LLM and generative AI into teaching and learning design models.

Embracing generative AI and LLM in higher education involves a long process of building trust. We need to “flip the narrative from “how will AI impact education?” to “what are new and effective ways to teach and learn with AI?”. AI can generate alternative ways of expressing an idea, act as an opponent to develop an argument, help groups to research and solve problems together, act as a guide to navigate physical and conceptual spaces, tutor each student and give immediate feedback on progress (Mike Sharples).

*What is needed to follow-up these developments:*

- continuously track the latest developments in research, innovation, and institutional policies and practices related to LLM in education;
- based on this, develop LLM-educational frameworks for the deliberate use of LLM in teaching and learning design;
- implement and evaluate the use of LLM in teaching and learning activities, enhancing mature decisions;
- develop recommendations and guidelines for the ethical use of LLM and generative AI for teachers and students, including institutional policies;
- provide continuing professional development of staff and leadership European-wide on the use of LLM and generative AI in higher education.

## **QUALITY PERSPECTIVES ON MICRO-CREDENTIALS**

The European Council Recommendation considers micro-credentials as short, flexible learning programmes that can help individuals reskill, upskill, or change careers. Especially the digital delivery of micro-credentials is useful for professional development, as digital provisions offer flexibility and scalability to meet the changing competence requirements for career development.

The EU is encouraging Member States to use micro-credentials to make it easier for people to keep learning and reach the goal of 60% of adults participating in lifelong learning every year.

To build on this Recommendation, higher education institutions and governments should work together to establish continuing education systems based on micro-credentials that provide clear qualifications., recognized by academia and employers.

*Quality assurance of micro-credentials*

For quality assurance of micro-credentials, the Bologna process quality assurance tools are applicable, such as the European Standards and Guidelines and in addition the Considerations on the Quality of E-Learning for digital micro-credentials. Some areas need specific attention. Digital education criteria should be integrated into regular criteria.

Providers have primary responsibility for quality and quality assurance of micro- credentials. Most important criteria for internal quality assurance are well-defined learning outcomes, transparent assessment methods and transparent public information. Where external quality assurance is requested, it should be proportionate (Anna Gover). This should avoid that flexible responses to needs in society are compromised.

## ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

The European Commission works with EU Member States to support and reinforce the development of key competences and basic skills for all, from an early age and throughout life. Key competences include knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by all for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. The approach is to promote key competences by providing high-quality education, training and lifelong learning for all.

The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights underlines that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship is one of the strategic objectives for cooperation in education and training at the EU-level.

As society's need for complex competencies grows, higher education institutions have an increasing responsibility to promote inclusion in degree programs as well as in continuing education. This requires implementing measures to widen participation, improve retention, and provide adaptive education that meets the individual needs of learners.

### *Agile student services*

In higher education institutions, diversity arises from a variety of factors such as differences in prior knowledge, cultural background, language skills, self-learning abilities, availability of time, and self-assessment (Ada Pellert). This leads to a variety of needs to be addressed.

Agile student services play a crucial role in meeting the diverse needs of students in higher education institutions. These services can enhance study success, reduce dropout rates, maintain student motivation, foster collaboration and support, and engage students in their studies. These services can include coaching and tutoring to help students stay on track, as well as personalized assessments to monitor progress and provide feedback. They can also provide students with timely and relevant information about available opportunities and offer guidance on career exploration and planning. By creating an environment of trust and accountability, agile student services can help students feel safe and supported as they pursue their studies.