

Message of Poitiers

20 September 2008

The EADTU Conference 2008 in Poitiers has dealt with the theme of **Lifelong Learning in higher education: networked teaching and learning in a knowledge society**. The conference covered the main issues related to:

- **Networking Learners**
- **Networking Teachers**
- **Networking Across Working Lives**
- **Networking Quality**
- **Making Networked Learning Pay**
- **Networked research**
- **Partnership and Leadership**

Universities have to redefine themselves as key players in broader knowledge networks and to open up to the knowledge and learning demands of a rapidly changing economy, labour market and society at large.

It was concluded that new possibilities of networked teaching and learning on-line can transform the capacity and the quality of delivery of lifelong learning.

1. Networking Learners

After 20 successful years of the Erasmus programme, it is time to increase drastically the potential of this programme by integrating the new possibilities of virtual mobility. Virtual Erasmus action should become an integral part of the Erasmus physical mobility action in order to achieve the Erasmus objectives for 2013, building on existing Erasmus networks and encourage them to integrate virtual mobility schemes into their exchange schemes.

2. Networking Knowledge

The free movement of educational content across Europe is another aspect of networked teaching and learning. Networked free content can extend the higher education footprint across the lifecourse in Europe, drawing into higher education those previously excluded by age or deprivation. Furthermore, OER will raise the quality of European higher education and profile European universities in the world.

This year EADTU has been deploying the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in the MORIL project to **broaden the accessibility of Open Educational Resources in Europe**.

3. Networking Across Working Lives

Lifelong Learning requires the integration of education and work across the lifecourse. **All citizens should be able to access knowledge and take part in the economy at any age and without any restrictions.**

We are responding to this challenge through two forms of networked learning, Virtual Entrepreneurship and Virtual Internships. University should be encouraged to increase their business and market connectivity by enabling networked students to obtain a more profound business experience. Open and distance learning creates the best opportunities for this.

EADTU leads a European consortium to address urgently **the professional skills of the lifelong learner** by Cross Board Virtual Entrepreneurship (CBVE). In the Cross Sector Virtual Mobility or CSVM project, EADTU leads a European Consortium in disseminating state-of-the-art **research into models and practices of remote internships.**

4. Networking Quality

The current measures of quality derived from print-based learning are no longer sufficient. The rise in initiatives aimed at promoting the internationalisation of higher education, in particular the rapid development of cross-border higher education, have emphasised the urgent need to establish robust frameworks for quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications. **Quality assurance in e-learning is especially of interest since e-learning has become the main instrument for generating cross border higher education.**

Working in cooperation with ENQA, the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies, we have come to an **approach towards models of e-learning quality assessment and accreditation across Europe.**

On the global level EADTU will cooperate with UNESCO in developing a framework for quality assurance in e-learning. This collaboration is **building on the work of EADTU in Europe and the experiences of UNESCO in quality assurance in other regions.** With UNESCO, a global Task Force will be set up, which would include in addition to UNESCO and EADTU, representatives of experts from all UNESCO regions involved in the project.

5. Making Networked Learning Pay

Delivering networked lifelong learning represents a fundamental challenge to the business models of conventional universities. Extending networked learning across Europe requires innovation and controlled risk taking by those institutions already engaged in this mode of delivery. **EADTU established a consortium which will identify and share successful institutional strategies and business models for lifelong learning and distance education.**

The objective in this case is deliberately to work across the divide between conventional and open and distance universities. The intention is both to identify the strategies and support each other in their implementation.

6. Networked research

Different research institutes of the EADTU membership have developed a **research agenda for lifelong learning**. Point of departure are the requirements of the Lisbon agenda and the regional differences in development and innovation within Europe. We need better **to know how we can obtain the Lisbon objectives** and what can be done to **get rid of regional differences**. Therefore, we need research and development on lifelong learning.

The Task Force Research on Lifelong Learning is working on a coherent set of four research themes:

- competences;
- flexibility and personalisation;
- non-formal educational settings, including business models for it;
- integrating learning and working to become professional development)

and

three development themes

- devising information and communication systems;
- designing instructional systems;
- setting up working and affordable lifelong learning systems in higher education.

7. Partnership and leadership

The activities mentioned above reflect EADTU's core objectives of growth, partnership and leadership.

EADTU will further pursue networked learning by means of networked endeavour. The message is the medium, the objective is the process.

EADTU has now built up a critical mass of innovative projects in the field of lifelong learning, which will enable it to give a lead to higher education across Europe. The task now is further to devolve this work from the centre to the networks. **By this EADTU can multiply the effect of its activities and mainstream this work across the European higher education system.**

8. European Year of Creativity and Innovation

EADTU will contribute to the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 that is launched by the European Commission, contributing to a better use of knowledge and rapid innovation. Since Lifelong learning is key for enhancing creativity and innovation, EADTU wants to cooperate with the Commission and all critical players in the field.