



MESSAGE OF ROME, 11 NOVEMBER 2005

TOWARDS LISBON 2010: “COLLABORATION FOR INNOVATIVE CONTENT IN LIFELONG OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING”

EADTU IN THE WORLD: EXPANSION, PARTNERSHIP, LEADERSHIP

According to the W.KOK-Lisbon report of the European Commission, the Lisbon objectives are not being reached. From an economic point of view the EU is reaching a point where the size and the qualification of labour force are too small. The knowledge society requires universities to perform a civic role in a truly European sense, which includes education and training accessible for all ages. The EC action plan in the field of lifelong learning 2007-2013 is not fully adapted to this role and there is a shortage of the investment required to achieve a significant jump in the participation to higher education throughout Europe. In the Heerlen Message (2004) it was stressed that the Lisbon agenda urgently requires the launch of an unorthodox EU action plan for developing a mature knowledge-based society through a significant jump in the participation in higher education throughout Europe. EADTU seeks to accelerate the process of change through its promotion of lifelong open and flexible learning. It will do so through **EXPANSION, PARTNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP**.

EXPANSION

The European Learning Space has been extended from the EU15 countries to the EU25 countries. This process is proceeding to the EU28 countries and the neighbouring “Bologna” countries, including the Euro Mediterranean area. Since universities of the whole Union are co-operating more closely, the European Learning Space will serve a community of 450 million people. However, this community is also characterised by a linguistic and cultural diversity which makes collaboration more challenging than in other large continents.

EADTU will contribute to the realisation of this community by expanding its membership to cover both the accession states and the non-EU signatories of Bologna. It will adjust its practices and culture in order to provide a home for established and emerging institutions from every part of Europe.

The older EADTU institutions will learn from the activities and ambitions of the new members and in turn will deploy their experience to assist in the task of capacity building across Europe. An immediate task will be to compare national and institutional models for funding of lifelong open and flexible learning in European countries and to develop business models for this mode of higher education.



PARTNERSHIP

The aspirations of the Bologna process are founded on partnership between universities, governments and trans-national bodies. The slow pace of realising the Bologna goals is a reflection of the practical difficulty of generating effective co-operation between these agencies. A flexibility of learning tracks is required that goes beyond the Bologna two cycle bachelor-master structure in terms of access, diversification and personalisation. The European Learning Space should be spanned through collaborations and alliances among European universities.

EADTU will seek to strengthen co-operation by promoting the cause of borderless education across Europe and by enhancing its record of effective partnership with other organisations. It will support partnerships and strategic alliances for lifelong open and flexible learning between members and with stakeholders throughout all European regions.

EADTU will support the further development of European and national action plans for open and flexible learning through cooperation with the EU Council of Ministers, the European Commission and EUA. It will intensify partnerships with peer organisations and innovative universities in the Mediterranean area, Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean. To realise its goals in a globalising context, it will collaborate further with ICDE as a world organization for open and distance learning.

EADTU will work to strengthen frameworks for the virtual mobility of students and staff between institutions, and the European-wide quality assurance and accreditation of lifelong open and flexible learning institutions, programmes and courses.

LEADERSHIP

The fulfilment of the Bologna process requires the development of modes of education most appropriate to its aspirations. European universities are part of the European Area of Higher Education. Already in the Messages of Sorbonne (2001) and Madrid (2003), EADTU members agreed on a common action, called E-Bologna, creating a European Learning Space to support the Bologna process.

EADTU has a double responsibility for leadership. It has a trans-national role in promoting a particular mode of higher education which in most European countries remains too close the margins of mainstream educational policy and funding. The model of Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) Learning embraces the characteristics of open learning, distance learning, e-learning, online learning, open accessibility, multimedia support, virtual mobility, learning communities, and the integration of earning and learning. EADTU will seek to strengthen curriculum, e-learning, quality assurance and accreditation processes.



EADTU will propose models and plans to increase drastically participation in lifelong open and flexible learning in European higher education. It will take the leading role in developing open education resources, which are vital for the promotion of access amongst those traditionally excluded from higher education.

Open educational recourses should involve a broad spectrum of academic disciplines and should be attractive to those studying inside and outside universities. In one mode, learning materials, continuous assessment and learning communities should be made available. In the other mode, tutoring support, formal assessment and certification should be organised. Open educational resources are to be developed in close relationship with members' services for intensive study support, assessment and accredited certificates.

Alongside its role within the open learning community, EADTU also seeks to give leadership to European higher education more broadly. Its expertise in e-learning, in open learning, in borderless education, and its commitment to key innovations such as open educational resources, are all relevant to the challenges facing the conventional university sector which in general is not active enough in lifelong learning, nor in open and flexible approaches. EADTU must keep in its sights the vision of instilling its philosophy and its practices in the bloodstream of European higher education. Only by these means will the shared dreams become a shared reality.

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