EADTU-ENQA Peer Learning Activity on blended and online education

-------------------------------OUTCOMES-------------------------------

The PLA reached the following outcomes:

1 An enhanced common understanding blended and online education

- New, digital modes of teaching and learning will affect higher education practice and policies and strategies in higher education
    - Innovating degree education, facing higher student numbers and a lower staff/student ratios, extending the learning environment and intensifying education
    - Upscaling continuing education for career development (CPD) and for personal development, responding to urgent needs in the economy and in society
    - MOOCs, transferring knowledge and skills to all and creating a culture of lifelong learning
- *Blended degree programs* will be standard offerings in degree education in the future. Blended education can be defined as learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterized by a deliberate combination of online and classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning. The goals of blended learning are: course design according to more effective pedagogies; an increased convenience and access for the learners; and an increased cost-effectiveness
- The role of *continuing education and short learning programs* in higher education will increase to numbers exceeding those of degree education, due to the needs in society. They will be organized at all levels: preparation courses, foundation level, post-bachelor and post-master level and lead to a variety of qualifications: awards, certificates, diplomas, to be fit into the European Qualification Framework. Reasons to provide these SLPs online are related to upscaling participation, being flexible for students at work and broadening the outreach across a country or internationally. Currently, most existing initiatives for continuous education are too small, not scalable and not flexible to face the needs of the economy and of society at large. Universities need an extension structure to organize this area
- *MOOCs* are freely accessible courses that educate many in a flexible way, that meet the needs of today's learners for an increasingly complex world. Investments in and the uptake of MOOCs are increasing significantly worldwide. MOOCs are here to stay and they are becoming an increasingly important part of higher education systems.
- These developments should be stimulated and activated by national governments as part of the *Bologna Process* in order to accelerate strategic efforts and developments in all European countries in a lifelong learning perspective. Next to initial education (bachelor-master), short learning programs at all higher education qualification levels should be part of the European Higher Education Area. Member states have to be aligned and engaged in order to respond to the needs of society and to harmonize provisions and qualifications.

2 A dialogue on innovation and quality assurance between institutions, quality assurance agencies and governments

A dialogue between main stakeholders on digital modes of teaching and learning and the development of blended degree education and on online continuous education should be organized in order to support these developments and to promote appropriate quality assurance policies

- *Institutions:* developing and implementing policies and strategies for digital education in blended degree and extended continuing education provisions, an internal quality framework with a maturity model for online/blended learning and for continuing and open education
- *Quality assurance agencies*: adapting and fine-tuning criteria/indicators and presenting guidelines for innovation and digital modes of teaching and learning, and sharing good practices of internal and external quality assurance
- *Governments:* developing drivers for innovation and quality and reviewing regulatory frameworks and practices for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education encouraging and accelerating innovation. A vision for change should be expressed through national strategies.

This dialogue should lead to concerted actions towards innovation and quality

3 Key elements that should be moved forward in order to strengthen innovation and the dialogue between governments, QA-agencies and universities in this field

Key elements to move forward innovation and the dialogue:

- *Institutions:* leadership to be continuously innovative, continuous professional development of staff, technology and staff support, collaboration within the institution (teams and support structures), institutional evaluation and research, university extension schemes for extending continuing education to a large scale;
- *Quality assurance agencies*: sharing good practices between agencies; seeking for a cross-institutional consistent approach backed by stakeholders; evaluating institutions on their active support of innovation and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning; developing a consistent approach on criteria and guidelines for blended and online education;
- *Governments:* governmental strategies and visions, funding schemes, large scale continuing education as an area of provision next to degree education

4 Identifying the expertise needed and ways of sharing at European level

- *Institutions:* teaching and learning departments, university extension structures with expertise on educational/pedagogical, technological, business models
- *Quality assurance agencies:* in-house expertise on recognizing and supporting digital modes of teaching and learning; expertise also to be reflected in review panels; expertise in blended degree education and online continuous education
- *Governments:* support structure/agency for online and blended education

5 Identifying ways forward and lower thresholds in innovating education

- *Institutions*: Governmental strategies and frameworks; European networking and collaboration; collaboration with quality agencies
- *Quality assurance agencies:* European networking and sharing good practices through ENQA; support of institutions; developing recommendations, guidelines and policies for institutions
- *Governments*: creating a favourable framework for blended degree education and continuing education, including equal funding parameters for traditional and online/distance students; an equal funding statute for full-time and part-time students; making structures for continuing education and degree education permeable and giving extra funding to institutions favouring students combining work an study and flexible study paths

6 Identifying future innovative initiatives and projects related to the topic of the PLA.

- ENQA Working Group e-learning: 2016-2018
- The European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project, coordinator EUA: 2016-2018
- European maturity model on blended education (EMBED) project, coordinator EADTU: 2017-2020
- European Short Learning Programmes (E-SLP) project, coordinator EADTU: 2018-2021