Conference
‘The Future of Higher Education’
9 March 2016
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By chairman of the day Farid Tabarki

2. Opening
By Dutch Minister of Education Jet Bussemaker

3. Introduction
By European Commissioner of Education and Culture Tibor Navracsics

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With Farid Tabarki, Ron Bormans, Maurice Crul, Tony Gaynor, and Khadija al Mourabit

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On the outcomes with various speakers and Adam Tyson
'The students of today will be helping to shape our nations and to shape Europe.'

Opening and welcome
Opening by Dutch Minister of Education Jet Bussemaker & Introduction by European Commissioner of Education and Culture Tibor Navracsics

'Equipping students for life and work in the 21st century requires intensive higher education, close contacts with lecturers and plenty of room for discussion and personal feedback.'

Minister Jet Bussemaker said that a university is more than just a knowledge factory. It’s also a community. A place to find out who you are and what you have to offer. Where you learn to form your own opinions, and to appreciate other people’s perspectives, ideas and feelings. Equipping students for life and work in the twenty-first century requires intensive higher education, close contacts with lecturers and plenty of room for discussion and personal feedback. It also requires personalisation, in a way that does full justice to the individual student’s background, talents and style of learning.

Commissioner Tibor Navracsics:
Our initial ideas are that a renewed modernisation agenda will focus on three overarching themes:

- How we can support our universities and colleges to deliver more societally and economically relevant learning and teaching in higher education;
- How to maximise the potential of our higher education institutions to become drivers of innovation and of economic and social growth in our regions;
- Help these institutions bring teaching and research back together again, to make them mutually reinforcing in the life of every student at any level. At European level, that means in particular improving the links between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

'Through new technologies, universities can now reach people who have not traditionally accessed higher education.'
'Universities must go beyond theoretical knowledge, beyond elite education.'

Panel Discussion
Bussemaker en Navracsics, moderated by Farid Tabarki

‘In times like these good education has once-again proven to be very important.’
- Jet Bussemaker

‘Digital technologies are changing how universities teach, how they do research and how they interact with each other and the outside world.’

Navracsics:
Our European societies are going through fundamental changes. We see this reflected in labour market changes, economic and social changes. The traditional forms of higher education have some rigidity, we need to have some flexibility.

‘A university is more than just a knowledge factory. It’s also a community. A place where you learn to form your own opinions, and to appreciate other people’s perspectives, ideas and feelings.’

Bussemaker:
We want to create continuity, but on the other hand we want to open the boundaries and connect our students with the outside world. In the Netherlands we have a lot of international students, but the whole system reflects that of the 19th century. The lecturer is speaking and students are listening and writing down what the lecturer is saying. We need more creativity, more entrepreneurial thinking. But it should not only be something which is fashionable, it needs to be related to knowledge and 21st century skills.

‘The commission’s role is the role of facilitator. We can identify common objectives for higher education, institutions and our member states.’

Bussemaker:
It’s very important that not all the institutions are doing the same thing. We want our universities to have their own profile. Our universities have a lot of autonomy, which is good. On a European level we can have an intense debate and share best practices.
'It is higher education which trains the leaders of the future.'

- Jet Bussemaker
The Dutch Minister for Education, Culture and Science posed the question in her introduction to the The Value of Knowledge: Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research 2015-2025:

‘What significant changes in the world and in our society hold for day to day life in our institutes of higher education? This question is of relevance because universities and universities of applied science do not operate in a vacuum, but rather in open connection with their surroundings’

This points to the need for a new model of the civic university in which engagement with society is embedded within the core teaching and research functions, and policymakers from different parts of government adopt a holistic view of the contribution of universities to society in the round.

Where teaching and engagement overlap there will be effective outreach activities linked to student recruitment (e.g. widening participation to non-traditional cohorts including mature students and worker-learners) and augmenting the student experience (e.g. internships, work-based learning, community work, volunteering).

Where teaching and research overlap there will be enhancements to both, with teaching becoming more meaningful and linked to “real world” issues, while research benefits from the results of applied and relevant coursework.

The overlap between research and engagement will result in non-academic, socio-economic impact, as researchers work collaboratively with non-academic partners to find solutions to specific needs and challenges in the wider world. This in turn informs further research by raising new questions and providing insights that would not be revealed from academic research alone. Students become more engaged in their own learning as they gain enhanced critical skills whilst bringing evidence to bear on understanding and seeking to resolve societal challenges.

When all three areas overlap, the Civic University will be engaged in transformative, demand-led actions, and in this space its impact will be greater than the sum of each activity alone. It will be a multi-level actor linking the global, national and local domains. It will work across the silos of the disciplines and of the public sector and link with both business and community. It will develop the social entrepreneurship skills of its staff and graduates. It will co-produce knowledge in “living labs” and help shape the future through action as well as analysis.

'We have a university in our community, but what is it doing for us?'

Keynote

John Goddard (Emeritus Professor at Newcastle University) – The Civic University and the Future of Higher Education in Europe

For complete keynote, click here
'Don’t waste your talent. It’s not what you’re good at, but what you’re good for.'
- John Goddard
1. Work-based learning and wider university-employer interaction

Breakout sessions round 1
Luc Soete (Rector Magnificus, Maastricht University), Marcel Wubbolts (Chief Technology Officer of Royal DSM), Barabara Oomen (Dean Roosevelt University College)

Marcel Wubbolts notes that DSM is a broad and worldwide company focused on life sciences. DSM is in close contact with a lot of students, and students are present at the DSM campus. DSM is focused on sustainability and looking for new business models. The company also puts an emphasis on collaboration and open innovation. Innovating is not a solitary process; everything is done in teams. Students are trained in new ways of working and collaborating. The university, university of applied sciences and other knowledge institutions reside on the DSM campus (www.chemelot.nl/?taal=en). Expenses are shared and students are being trained. It’s a win-win situation. DSM needs a next generation of entrepreneurial scientists.

Luc Soete speaks of the high numbers of international students at the University of Maastricht. It has changed the city. There are great differences between universities and universities of applied sciences. In medieval times, universities were for the Studium Generale – universities of applied sciences for the Studium Particulare. Research being conducted in universities of applied sciences is not up to par yet. This gap must be closed, even though the two types of institutions should remain complementary. There ought to be a good balance between knowledge and skills. Collaboration in the local region is a new responsibility for universities. They should partner up with companies and other organisations; with the local labour market. See also Brainport Eindhoven for an example. For higher education, this means more attention for:

1. Academic expertise
2. Skills training, particularly 21st century skills
3. Professional experience
4. Personal development

Conducting research is important for both universities and universities of applied sciences. Both types of research are important for the responsive ability of a country. To achieve this, local campuses with smart specialisations are required.

Discussion:
How do we build bridges between industry and higher education?
Physical proximity is very important for innovation from different disciplines. It’s about physical encounters, collaborative research and brainstorming on societal issues. The energy level will rise when people and disciplines unite.

How do we involve disadvantaged (migrant) students?
It requires diversity from all sides

‘Even when higher education and “the outside world” are literally in the same building, you need active mixing to prevent people to stay on their own island.’
- Marcel Wubbolts
to innovate. DSM is very active with Africa: one cow means survival, two cows is an industry. In the Netherlands, accessibility is well provided for, although the refugee theme poses new challenges.

**How do we guide collaborative development on a national level?**

England is leaning more and more towards a market model. The role of professional institutions there is rather conservative. DSM can also be large and slow. So it started with small cores of innovation within the bigger company. Soete notes that as long as there’s public funding, the government will maintain a sense of control. Accreditation systems can be in the way of developments. The danger is that these new accreditation systems and innovation will hinder each other.

If science should help change the world, we need all available disciplines to do so. Tech companies will also need alpha and gamma sciences, such as social science. Therefore, the University of Maastricht houses a wide range of disciplines who are increasingly collaborating.

Is “work based learning” scalable? Can we accommodate enough students? As long as you are able to support the students with the proper guidance. This is more difficult with large groups. How can we open our doors and teach our students new competences? Here lies a great challenge.

**Recommendation:**

Foster university-business cooperation.
2. Teacher professionalisation and cooperation on citizenship

Breakout sessions round 1
Margarita Jeliazkova (University of Twente, Coordinator Master Program in Social Science Teaching), Henk Swart (Katholieke Pabo Zwolle, Coordinator Master Program in Social Science Teaching), Jet de Ranitz (Chair of the Executive Board of Inholland)

Jeliazkova:
Citizenship education addresses the very political core of education. It challenges our understanding of democracy and the need to develop our ideas about democracy beyond elections and representation. Also, our notions of borders, belonging and identity need to be addressed and discussed. Teachers hold diverse views on citizenship education, ranging from conservative through mainstream to radically innovative. All of these views need to be respected and used as a starting point in developing ways to educate and support teachers. Instead of investing too much in textbooks and manuals, we need to support teachers in the time-proof skills of finding and asking the right questions and addressing problems together with their students. The way universities can foster this professional development is in giving an example: ways to produce, transmit and employ knowledge to tackle the problems of humanity.

Swart:
In teacher training, students do not only need to learn what and when they should do things, but also why. The task of education is to create value-driven citizens with social feeling. The future teacher’s personality is central to the future professional, so connect professional competences with personal characteristics, beliefs, moral purposes etcetera. This kind of teacher is prepared for today’s challenges in education and can promote the notions of citizenship. Citizenship education needs the organisation of communication and dialogue about controversial feelings.

Discussion:
Students are free in their political choice, but they have to acknowledge that they are part of this society and they have to take responsibility for their choice. This is what teachers have to teach their students. Citizenship education is about enabling and empowering people to make decisions. As an example, a British contributor states that in the Brexit discussion a lot of people aren’t enabled to make an informed choice.

We should engage in a discussion about the educational system: is it a system where we consider each other as human resources with a set of skills? Or are we providing people with a critical mindset who can participate in society?

There’s a difference between teaching and mentoring. It’s important to give students examples, otherwise education would be plain transferring of knowledge.
A teacher teaches how to interact with other people in a correct manner.

Teachers at all levels should have the pedagogical skills to teach students how to engage in critical thinking.

Teachers should be supported in their professionalism; students should be involved in asking (research) questions.

Teachers have to recognise the problem of polarisation: we have to listen to each other and show empathy. However, in different countries there are different controversial issues.

Recommendations:
Where do we need the government to support us?

1. Coherency in policies: we should talk about European citizenship more.
2. Upgrade the profession of the teacher.
3. Education is not just instrumental: respect that we need people to educate for active citizenship and not only see education as an instrument for the economy.
4. Join forces between DG Education and DG Research. Shift from a market-oriented program to a Europe-building project. We are now facing issues that have nothing to do with putting products on the market.
5. How can we foster development of our academics, our researchers to become better facilitators of learning?

‘If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow.’
- John Dewey
3. Restructuring Teaching Digitally

Breakout sessions round 1
Jeff Haywood (Professor of Education and Technology and Vice-Principal Digital Education), Edwin Bakker (Professor Leiden University), Anka Mulder (TU Delft Vice-President Executive Board)

Introduction Haywood:
“The changing pedagogical landscape”
Contribution based on a study by the European Commission, which had the purpose of exploring what the government can do to renew the system:

Despite the shift to student-centred learning and developments and opportunities in technology-enhanced education, the majority of European higher education institutions has made little progress in adapting the courses that are offered accordingly. The overall objective of the study is to examine to what extent government strategies, higher education regulatory and accreditation, funding, quality assurance, assessment and certification frameworks support or hinder new modes of learning. In particular if they support or hinder the increased use of technology in the teaching and learning process.

Purpose of higher education in Europe:
Education that is on-demand, self-paced, location-flexible, relevant to life and career now and in the future, global and local, personalised to learning place, style and speed, affordable, high value-added, and in a wide range of subjects!

Recommendations:
1. At European and national/regional levels, all policies and processes (including legislation, regulation, funding, quality assurance, IT infrastructures and pedagogical support for teachers) must be aligned to prevent conflicting actions and priorities. These policies and processes should support and promote innovation in pedagogies and greater use of technology.
2. A common agenda should be agreed between the stakeholders in higher education that addresses the challenges of the present as well as shaping a roadmap for the future. This agenda should allow sufficient flexibility to develop concrete actions, particularly at national and regional levels.
3. All countries should put in place measures to support universities in their innovation in pedagogies (including learning design and assessment) and in greater use of technology.
4. National governments should consider requiring certification of university teaching practice, both initial and continuing (CPD), innovation in pedagogy and use of technology should be a core part of this certification.
5. National governments must review their legislative and regulatory frameworks and practices for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education, to ensure that they encourage, and do not impede, the provision of more flexible educational formats, including degrees and other ECTS-bearing courses that are fully online.

‘Stop thinking within the faculties. Flip the classroom.’
- Edwin Bakker
‘Should institutions have more money or should they use their resources more efficiently? "Leadership" is important to foster change! And investments in young teachers and lifelong learning.’

Obstacles:
Durability of existing pedagogies, faculty skillset/student skillset, less student enthusiasm for radical change than the hype implies, risk of action by individual universities is high, lack of incentives, actual barriers (financial, legal, regulatory) interlocked curricula physical estate, lack of platforms.

Interesting example:
The strategy of the University of Edinburgh is that in the future each student has to follow at least one online course before graduation.

Insights:
Alignment of all regulations and processes is necessary if we want to change the higher education system. Between government/legislation and the implementation by the teacher there are a lot of chains. The legislation and frames of each chain should be aligned and not contradict each other.

Statements:
There should be incentives and resources for institutions to organise change, and more time for teachers to organise change.

Edwin Bakker:
‘MOOCs as drivers for change.’

The first MOOCs were “top-down”, now there is a bottom-up movement of the teachers. The first MOOC was of the participants; the role of the teacher was not very large. Bakker has drawn inspiration from his MOOC. It has given him awareness of how strong his own cultural influences are in his teaching.

Benefits of developing a MOOC are: the use of the MOOC on the campus before a flipped classroom, and other colleagues learning how to make a MOOC.

According to Bakker, the MOOC is a marketing instrument, and can be used as a program to help student switch to the bachelor or master level. It is important to use the MOOCs on campus as a innovative way of teaching and not just letting the students watch a MOOC during class. For this, it is important that we do not use the same instruments for quality assurance for online education.

Insights:
It is important to pay attention that we not only develop and implement a MOOC, but also maintain and update the MOOC. This is not a part of our current education system.

Recommendation:
Support institutions in the recognition of MOOC’s.
'It’s very important that we collect the proper data in our universities.'

Round-table on "Social Inclusion"
With Farid Tabarki (Studio Zeitgeist), Ron Bormans (Rotterdam University), Maurice Crul (Rotterdam University), Tony Gaynor (Oscail, DCU), and Khadija al Mourabit (Philosophy and Brain UvA student)

'Diversity is increasingly important in higher education. The Dutch student population has a wide variety of migrant groups: about fifty percent in universities of applied sciences and one third in research universities is of immigrant descent. Universities need to represent this diversity. Professor Crul pressed the importance of educating the growing numbers of refugees coming to Europe. They present an important group, need higher education to enter the labour market and most of all need a sense of belonging, of being welcome. The refugee crisis calls for unorthodox measures, such as allowing them to enroll in English-taught study programs rather than having to learn Dutch. Role models play an important role. Social inclusion is more than fixing deficiencies in immigrant student groups. It should be about valuing diversity and broadening the system of higher education to make use of this diversity.'

Recognition of prior learning, including informal learning, is an interesting way to improve access.

'A third of the students in research universities are of immigrant descent. Only a third of youth under 1 year old is of Dutch decent. The future is not just intelligent white boys.'
4. Future skills: preparing students for a global society

Breakout sessions round 2
Barbara Oomen (Dean University College Roosevelt), Samuel Abraham (Rector of BISLA), Fernando Galan Palomares (Chairperson ESU), Luc Soete (Rector Magnificus, Maastricht University)

Oomen:

Dutch University Colleges (UC’s) are considered by some to be the biggest recent innovation in the Dutch system of higher education. How do they do this? All UC’s have this in common: they are all selective (motivation), they’re all small (never more than 25 students in class), they all put a big emphasis on teaching, they are all international and seek to make the most out of this by stimulating global citizenship. And most important: they all offer a bachelor degree that is all about liberal arts and sciences.

Because the world will continue to change in the future, UC’s want to equip students with multidisciplinary knowledge. Students have the possibility to combine different subjects. Therefore, no student has the same combination. UC’s want to equip students with the skill of critical thinking. Research is being taught at the master/PhD-level, but Roosevelt does this from day one. Other 21st century skills are being stimulated by being an academic community (campus, living together, students are selected on their ability to do so), leadership, cooperation, (moral) entrepreneurialism. As for teacher training, UC’s consider teaching to be about more than just knowledge. Roosevelt attracts teachers that love teaching and permanently discuss education.

Abraham:

Samuel Abraham pleads to revitalise the bachelor degree, as it does not have a good reputation in most universities. The division between bachelor and master is being criticised.

What does this mean for the EU-agenda:

- A broad bachelor program to allow students to explore their courses and thereby make the most out of their talent.
- Undergraduate research should be emphasised, doing research together with the students, also the first year students.
- Investing in training of academics.
- Asking: what is the purpose of what we do? Educating people to face challenges of the future world.

Abraham:

Samuel Abraham pleads to revitalise the bachelor degree, as it does not have a good reputation in most universities. The division between bachelor and master is being criticised.

Liberal skills need to be enhanced, by teaching critical thinking, intellectual skills, curiosity and reading great texts that are important for our defense mechanism for extremism.

Knowledge is not enough. If our students have the skill of critical thinking after having finished their bachelor, we will have more success in defending democracy.

What does education mean? A few days ago Neo-Nazis have entered the Slovakian parliament. One of the reasons is complete failure of education. It is important that education is not only about skills, but also about being a global citizen. What is the future of democracy? How do you respond to those that do not respect your rights as a citizen and as an equal human being? These questions should be asked and discussed with youngsters, otherwise they will get their answers from the wrong places. Many skills can be learned; the base comes from the family, but not all.

‘University College is also about leadership, about communication, about entrepreneurship. These skills add depth to academic studies that students will later remember.’

Galan Palomares:

The challenges societies are facing today are in general very different, hence future skills are difficult to predict. We need a higher level of flexibility and different skills, such as creativity, communication and critical thinking.

How to get these skills? There are different ways of how we teach and of how we assess the students. We need three aspects:

1. Empowering students to take responsibility like equal partners;
2. Empowering the teachers; also to value their teaching, not only their research;
3. Supporting environment: academic freedom and student participation, accessible higher education.

Voting results of the statements:

- Bachelor students should devote half of their first year to intellectual skills: Yes 70%, No 30%
- Academics should not teach at university without proper pedagogical training: Yes 80%, No 20%
- Stimulating undergraduate research has to be put on the Modernisation Agenda as an extra priority: Yes 60%, No 40%
- Education for global citizenship should be a core objective for universities: Yes 75%, No 25%

However, it is difficult to define global citizenship.

‘University College Roosevelt contributes to the idea of educating global citizens, rooted in a local context.’

Discussion:

The discussion centred around the question whether broader bachelors (like those of Roosevelt Academy) should be pursued.
The University of Twente underscored that we should be careful. Students have different interests. There is room for more broader bachelors and more specialised bachelors. It’s all about balance: not specialising too late, but also not too early, and having specialised programs that are infused with intellectual skills. This view was supported by a German colleague who pointed out that the bachelor should fit the institution.

Samuel Abrahams emphasized that we should differentiate ourselves from the US, where they only have broad bachelors. Intellectual skills should be addressed in all years, not only in the first. At the University of Warsaw they have a liberal arts master which has a lot of students that have finished a specialised bachelor and want to broaden their view in the master.

**Recommendation:**
There seemed to be a consensus in the room that diversity is key: broader bachelors should exist next to more specialised ones.

**Quotes:**
- ‘Educating global citizens: not only global citizens, but root students in the region.’
- ‘Example from Roosevelt Academy of having regional roots: medical students do research on older people that find meeting older people, who are very lonely because they seldom get visitors, most memorable and useful.’

‘Acquire a flexible fundament of skills.’
- Samuel Abrahams
5. Preparing engaged citizens and the civic responsibility of universities

Breakout sessions round 2
Anthony Camilleri (Senior partner Knowledge Innovation Centre), Mary Tupan (Executive director ECHO), Nienke Fabries (Program manager student mentors Rotterdam), Adeel Kan (Mentor Rotterdam South), Annelou Molendijk (Mentor Rotterdam South), Jet de Ranitz (Chair of the Executive Board of Inholland)

IDEAS Database with international good practices about diversity and inclusive excellence:
The database (http://equityideas.eu/) currently contains 53 good practices. In all cases, evidence is provided in qualitative and/ or quantitative terms. Many of these cases are also sustainable without large financial contributions.

Civic engagement activities empower students in bridging their sense of belonging at the university and sense of belonging to their own communities. It helps to enhance student success, which also helps the aims of the institution.

It is recommended to engage with communities to change the aspirations of young people. To create programs inside the community, then bring young people into the university. We should prevent “castes” within higher educations, and provide safe environments for students. There should be comprehensive, holistic programs of support, and 24/7 reference points such as counselors or buddies to help prevent drop outs. Also, we should bypass administrative barriers for students to enlarge entrance chances, while the focus of cases should be on preparation, access, success, transition to the labour market.

‘Civic engagement empowers students in bridging their sense of belonging at the university and their sense of belonging in their own communities.’

EMI Centre of Expertise Social Innovation Rotterdam South. Mentors of Rotterdam: The EMI (http://www.emiopzuid.nl/info-21/home) is based on grassroots and encourages the idea of “just do it”. Students from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences are mentors of high school students of diverse backgrounds (VMBO). They are in weekly contact, looking together what their grades are, and making sure to talk about personal questions. The high school students get better results, while the students learn about the background of high school students and how to motivate pupils. The project has been running for a couple of years, and is now in the phase of scaling up, aiming to grow from 500 students to 1200 students a year. Some specific studies like teaching and healthcare provide many mentors.
For these students the new skills and knowledge are a direct plus in their later professional lives.

These students can be mentor as part of their curriculum (which is also part of the funding base, other part is private funding). EMI teaches the mentors how to do the coaching, also how to understand that the mentees are of diverse backgrounds. This program bridges the three worlds of school, home and the street.

'We need a lot more data, in terms of having a better analysis of where students from different social backgrounds end up in their career. That's where research can really support the process.'

Discussion:

What is role of research?

Mary: If you want to monitor the sustainability of these programs you need sustainable funding. The commitment of the institution for at least 5 or 6 years is necessary.

Camilleri: Moving forward is also to know about different types of education, like flipped classrooms and improving equal opportunities.

We need to find out in what ways we can show the proven success. The usual methodologies seem insufficient in grasping the complexity of these issues.

Goddard: From an urban geography point of view: many programs are rooted in local specific context. How can you maximise this to other contexts? What changes in the society around the university do you need in combination with the initiatives of the university itself in order to create successful and sustainable programs?

Camilleri: There are different ways of making programs sustainable: inspire people to work for a program in kind and come up with new chapters and participants each time. Or inspire people and companies to donate money.

If you want to make grassroot initiatives sustainable in the long run, it has to become an entity on its own. We have to distinguish between emerging practices, good practices and shared practices.

It is necessary to create room for innovation. Usually it is the other way around.

Recommendations for the European Commission:

1. Rewarding innovation is where policy makers can make a difference.
2. Make funds available to enable research programs.
3. Give credit and recognition to the students, mentors, teachers that do this type of work.
6. Recognition of online education

Breakout sessions round 2
Anka Mulder (TU Delft Vice-President Executive Board), Ulrike Wild (Wageningen University Director online and open learning), Timo Kos (TU Delft Director Education and Student Affairs), Gerdien de Vries (TU Delft Assistant Professor Public Management and Organisation)

Mulder:
In a pilot with seven universities worldwide, Delft University of Technology is working on a coding system for the recognition of MOOCs. This would allow our students to benefit from education from pilot partners, without going abroad. Only a few campus students are currently using MOOCs to expand their studies. Gaining credits for such a course is crucial for traditional students. Online education will never replace campus education, but it certainly could enrich it.

Insights from the discussion:
Online means more than only MOOCs. There’s a whole range of online (sometimes different) activities, for different kind of groups: campus students, online students, business students and life long learners. There is not a lot of (thorough) evidence yet, but universities are looking at the effect of using forms of online education on the quality of teaching. Studying in “flipped classroom” invites students to study at home first and use time on-campus for discussion. Pass rates went up from 71% to 89%, and 60% of the students preferred this kind of education. What happens with the credits? There are pilots around the world, one pilot is Kiron University. It’s an experiment, set up by German students, to help refugees. There are many things to solve (what’s it worth? What are the requirements?) but you need at least trust and a coding system.

‘Recognition of MOOCs opens up higher education to students all over the world, we are taking the first steps now in our pilot.’

Suggestions for the European Commission:
• Expand the Erasmus+ programme with online education.
• Stimulate and facilitate the recognition of MOOCs by (European) institutions.

Comments:
• ‘Traditional students have three basic needs: social needs, bildung and education. We can’t do all of this purely online.’
• ‘We focus on traditional students, while MOOCs are interesting for life long learners as well.’
'MOOCs are like a bowl of fruits: There’s one for everyone’s taste.'

- Anka Mulder
"The teachers learn from the students as do the students learn from the teachers."

Plenary closing debate
Outcomes of the break-out sessions

Linking higher education to the outside world
Universities and future employers need to work together. The Maastricht University and DSM, for example, occupy one building together were students and workers come together. The essence is how (as universities) we can open our doors and create really meaningful encounters. Another issue is the language problems with international students, in relation to internships. Maastricht University teaches their international students the Dutch language, as a preparation for their internship.

Luc Soete (Maastricht University): We have to go back to much broader bachelor programs. Employers want an academic attitude: that has to be developed fully in the (broader) bachelor.

Preparing engaged citizens
Even the word “citizenship” varies between the European countries. It can mean something different in Western Europe and Eastern Europe. During one of the break-out sessions, there was being spoken about a project from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, where students act as mentors for high school students. By serving as peer coaches or mentors for schoolchildren in need of extra help with their work, students from Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences learn practical coaching skills and experience the dynamic urban life of South Rotterdam. Universities almost always have partnerships with other organizations (schools, local government). They bring value to the partner as well as the university and the student.

Potential of digital technologies
Anka Mulder (Delft University): Our own students don’t get ECTS’s for our MOOCs, that’s something we really should take a look at. We need to find out what works better in “traditional” education and and what works in the online discussion. Not everyone who wants to go abroad with the Erasmus+ programme, can go. There are some people who would like to have an ‘Erasmus Virtual Programme’.

Adam Tyson (European Commission): There was a request to put all the money in physical mobility. For the next program we have to figure out a good balance between physical and virtual mobility. Money is not always the problem, but we need to build up expertise, in order to decide what works better.

Teacher professionalization
Teachers need to learn how to engage in a dialogue with students, without setting aside principles and at the other hand leaving them free. We have to support teachers by giving them the time and money for professionalization and innovation.
Voting results on the statements "important aspects for the future of higher education" (120 votes):

1. Foster pedagogical skills in teachers: 22%
2. Foster research-learning relationship: 18%
3. Broaden bachelors and intellectual development: 17%
4. Support institutions in the recognition of MOOCs: 13%
5. Expand Erasmus+: add a virtual Erasmus: 11%
6. Give teachers time and money for innovation: 10%
7. Improve universities-employer interaction: 9%
First thoughts about the conference on The Future of Higher Education

Responses by guests

Jens Vraa-Jensen
Dansk Magisterforening

‘These years you see the policy of the European Commission developing where they see education as a driver for the economy, for creating new jobs, while we have always been saying: it’s also about educating citizens. Minister Jet Bussemakers was saying exactly that this morning – I think that’s very new. It’s a new development for politicians that they’re pushing the Commission to review their ideas of the mission and purpose of higher education. We’re very happy about that development. Education is a human right, not a tradable commodity. You also need the intercultural understanding in education. You’re working with human beings with different needs, different concepts of what they’re doing – and we should train teachers to actually meet these different needs in the classroom and be there for the purpose of actually educating.

I’m quite worried that everyone’s talking about “learning”. We learn in all these different circumstances each day. But participating in an education process, where you actually have this facilitator ask questions and who can explain things that you perhaps don’t understand, gives you a whole different understanding of what you can do with your new way of thinking and your new skills you have learned. I’m a geographer. It was never written in my curriculum that I could end up as a trade union bureaucrat. So people now say: “you don’t use your education”. But on the contrary: I use it every day, but it’s more an academic way of thinking, of problem solving I use.

Of course I don’t use very much of the knowledge about maps and other things I learned when studying geography, but the way of having studied in the university is absolutely essential for the work I do.’

Kees Bal
HZ University of Applied Sciences

‘In the Netherlands there’s a debate going as to how to include the university of applied science in research. Traditionally research is in the domain of the classical university, but that scale is tipping. I’m curious if this debate seeps through to a European level. The European Union enables all kinds of research projects – how open will those projects be for the universities of applied sciences? Europe is very important, if only for the banal reason that it sets a course and grants money for research. Why? One of the most interesting things I heard this morning was that of the civic university: a university that is connected with and rooted in society. I think universities of applied sciences can be an important link in that process. They already conduct research close to citizens, and also their volume and thus their reach is way bigger.’
First thoughts about the conference on The Future of Higher Education
Responses by guests

Indra Weber
Academic Corporation Association

‘Today is very interesting because it gives an overarching perspective and there are many focal points that people are touching on. The issue of creating more diverse environments seems to be very important, and of course focusing on the refugee crisis. But also considering the phenomenon of diversity itself and how the international aspect plays into that. How can we foster that overall into more equitable education? But there are also the break-out sessions that I attended: the teacher level, the academics level. What is their identity, and how is their identity not only connected to research and but also to pedagogy? How can we foster that more, to create new types of learning environments and more engaging learning environments for students, to teach these new skillsets, that we are looking for?

I think the dominant discourse for today and for the European Union in general is: what is the purpose of education? What is our purpose in terms of conveying certain kind of values that education stands for? And how do we actually embrace these values in our education? How do we get all the different stakeholders that are here today that of course have individual approaches, but yet all embody somewhat these common values, to integrate this into education and to bring this further?’

Olena Rusnak
Ukrainian Association of Student Self-Government (UASS)

‘In Ukraine we’re just developing this direction of student involvement and engagement in decision making, in quality assurance. We’re developing local student unions. We’re not perceived as partners though, so to speak, it’s not an equal relationship. We’re trying to promote a lobby for student involvement in decision making. On a national level, we’ve developed these norms of student involvement, but not all administrators are happy about this and want to implement these norms. Ukraine is involved in different EU-

programs, for example Erasmus Plus, and we have European partners in curriculum development. All this is very useful for us. We can learn more about what we can be taught about from Europe. Take online education, which is a new program for Ukraine. Here we can look for partners from universities with best practices. There have been international partnerships since a long time, and that’s good.

Today was very positive. I cannot contribute as much in the EU Modernisation Agenda as we’re not stakeholders, but we can learn very much from people here, from European partners. From an educational perspective, Ukraine would very much profit from taking part in the European Union. Probably all the innovation in Ukraine comes from Europe. We don’t have universities with such long traditions as universities in European cities, so for sure we try to follow the best examples of these European universities.’
Manuel Vella
NCFHE

For us in Malta the accreditation of online learning is still a challenge that we are addressing. What I heard today was very interesting. A European context such as this one is a good place to share knowledge on online learning. Every nation will determine its own procedures but if we start by sharing our perspectives then, probably, we can work towards a more or less unified system. Since we already share a framework and a credit system for other (traditional) programmes, a similar or indeed the same but updated system is surely a good way to go.

Online learning has huge potential. Thus, what we as a nation understand quality in the delivery of online courses or blended learning to be, will affect our processes for the validation of non-formal learning: it will determine how to accredit and how to evaluate programmes and providers of online courses. It is, for instance, important to be able to envisage how long such courses will be valid for. We’re in the process of enhancing a culture of quality in the provision of education in Malta and we are working to instil the idea that all course need to be updated regularly and rather frequently. Naturally, this applies also and perhaps even more so to courses provided online.

Digital learning is a complex phenomenon, it demands a holistic approach. As far as I can understand, however, even those who are at a more advanced stage in these matters are encountering the same or very similar problems and challenges. That is: What to accredit? How to accredit? How to transform non-formal learning into formal learning? etc.'
Thank you all!

We would like to thank all those involved in the organisation of the event and its participants for their contribution to improve Higher Education in Europe.

The Netherlands’ EU-Presidency Team

Colofon

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With a team of creative professionals Visuele Notulen has cared for the visual report of this event. As an organization we aim to get a longer hold of the message and engage people more closely in the content of the day.