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MOOCs and online learning opportunities for the labour market

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This Knowledge Alliance is consisting of following full partners:

- The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, EADTU (lead partner)
- The European MOOC Consortium:
    - EduOpen (Italy)
    - France Université Numérique (FUN, France)
    - Futurelearn (UK)
    - Miriadax (SP)
    - OpenupEd (EADTU)
- Public Employment services:
    - ANPAL (IT)
    - VDAB (BE)
- Industrial sector organization:
    - Ocapiat (Food Industry, FR)

Part A. Executive Summary: MOOCS and online learning opportunities for the labour market (Peer Learning Activity)

Executive Summary: MOOCS and online learning opportunities for the labour market

The main goal of this knowledge alliance is to establish a structural collaboration between the MOOC platforms and the universities they serve with the labour market. The labour market is represented by public employment services, a sectoral organization and companies.

The project looks how MOOCs and online courses can be (co)-delivered in public employment agencies, in sectoral organisations and in companies, structuring the European market for continuing education/CPD for employment and career development.

The main purpose of the EMC-LM knowledge alliance is:

- To create a framework for structural collaboration on the development, delivery and use of MOOCs, meeting the needs of the EU labour market.
- To provide more complete and high quality MOOCs and digital education and training provisions for the European labour market.
- To implement a more structured outreach for continuing education and training and career development for the EU labour market.
- By doing this, to enhance the quality and strength of the European workforce in terms of employability, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- To raise the competitiveness of regions and member states.

MOOCs

A MOOC is a massive open online course aimed at unlimited participation and open and free access via the internet. Many MOOCs provide interactive courses with user forums or social media discussions as well as immediate feedback to quick quizzes and assignments. MOOCs are a recent development in distance education first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012.

MOOCs are for free, but in most cases a freemium model is used when students take an assessment for a credit or when a MOOC is part of a set of online courses (MOOC pathways, MOOC-based programmes)

For universities, one of the major opportunities for organising massive open online courses (MOOCs) was to take up social responsibilities (the third mission) in lifelong learning. MOOCs also helped to innovate pedagogies, when they were integrated in mainstream degree education. Also, MOOCs can act as an excellent marketing tool to attract new students. For researchers, they offer an opportunity to present research and innovation.

MOOCs are able to meet high quality standards, where they undergo a clear development and design process. They are easily accessible, flexible, scalable and high quality. They are suitable for up-skilling and re-skilling at the individual level, but also for social learning in small learning communities, learning through projects or in virtual seminars.

MOOCs are convenient for sharing and building knowledge. They can act as a stimulus for networking and collaboration in (sectoral, professional) knowledge and innovation communities/networks. As such, they can be part of rapid knowledge circulation.

MOOCs and the labour market

Jobs are becoming more flexible and complex. MOOCs can address identified competency shortages (e.g. training for supporting automated processes by a flexible or modular mode of delivery, and eventually through specific routes to corporate training. Or they can serve specific regional and local needs to enhance skills and capabilities (smart specialisation regions).

MOOCs can be key to training a flexible, adaptive and qualified labour force. Business and higher education institutions can work together to develop MOOC curricula and to offer continuing professional development at scale. MOOCs can also be reflective management tools.

The knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) will change into a knowledge square (adding society) and even a knowledge pentagon (adding nature). This requires a strong development of knowledge circulation, including opportunities for knowledge sharing, continuing/ professional and open education.

The knowledge alliance

In 2019, the knowledge alliance EMC-LM was initiated in order to establish a structural collaboration with respect to MOOCs and MOOC based-programmes. EMC-LM brings together MOOC platforms, universities, public employment services, sectoral organisations, companies and SMEs to meet the learning needs of the European labour market.

The platforms in the European MOOC Consortium have served about 25 million students. More than 400 universities and expert partners such as the British Library, are linked to these platforms, offering more than 4000 MOOCs.

Within the knowledge alliance, collaboration and synergies between all partners are encouraged in order to make credited MOOCs and MOOC-based programmes as effective as possible.

The ambition of the knowledge alliance is:
- To deliver online learning opportunities and MOOCs at scale in cooperation with companies and employment services European-wide
- To develop a structural approach to the labour market by collaboration with national sta keholders, agencies and enterprises (lifting national offerings to a European level)
- Generating win-win-win situations between MOOC platforms, universities and labour market organisations

The focus is not only on individual learners, but also on groups of learners in enterprises (in-company training), SMEs, sectoral organisations, public employment services, professional organizations/ networks (including alumni), knowledge and innovation networks. In the case of agreements with enterprises, not only a selection of single MOOCs are delivered, but also MOOC-based programmes awarded with a microcredential.

MOOC platforms and the labour market

MOOCs and MOOC platforms can play a huge role transferring knowledge into the business sector and more recently, MOOC platforms have developed different approaches to the labour market.

Many MOOC offerings which are relevant to the labour market are available on the European MOOC platforms for free to everybody. More recently, each of the MOOC platforms has started specific collaborative operations with sectoral organisations and companies, offering MOOCs for the labour market, e.g. white label platforms with agreed MOOC-based programmes for a specific sector or region, dedicated company spaces or group subscriptions for education and training for staff.

Each approach is interesting and platforms are now learning from each other together with labour market representatives in the knowledge alliance. These collaborative schemes are paid for by companies, sectoral funds, regions or through a personal learning account, which are now made available to individual learners in some countries (i.a. France, the Netherlands)

These developments show that MOOC platforms are not just providers of MOOCs, but they increasingly function as an interface between universities and the labour market (companies, public employment services, competence centres, knowledge and innovation communities or networks). An addition, they act as an interface between knowledge creation and the needs of the labour market with regard to innovation and entrepreneurship. They are supporting universities and reacting to the needs of the labour market.

As a consequence, for MOOC platforms, universities are the backbone for their offerings, because they typically create the courses and learning pathways. They will become more involved with companies as more of them get more interested in this type of learning methodology. What seems to have been missing so far for both universities and corporates is the link with the employment services. This knowledge alliance now includes employment services as a key voice in determining the content and target audiences for new training initiatives.

Moreover, the platforms create specific structures to fulfil the needs of the labour market. This leads to a triple win situation: platforms, universities and the labour market, , interacting together within the spheres of all three in a perspective of employability, innovation and entrepreneurship.

In some sectors (e.g. the food sector in France, served by Ocapiat in collaboration with FUN), platforms build a complete training system in which MOOCs and MOOC-based programmes play a pivotal role and by which companies and SMEs can be reached with a high visibility and easy accessibility.

MOOC platforms should be shared by all stakeholders: universities, learners, companies, sectors, public employment services, cities and regions. Individuals and the labour market should be able to find course offerings relevant to their profile and training needs in the long term as well as to switching careers.

Platforms should be a working space, inspired by MOOCs, but going further. Companies are looking for a variety of learning opportunities.

This is important for the development of a MOOC portal and the partners will see how they can integrate this idea within the next two years. Platforms, universities and the labour market are changing and this should be reflected in the proposed project portal.

It is also important that collaboration and co-creation of MOOCs between MOOC platform and stakeholders takes place.

The ambition of platforms in this project is to grow and to project their course offerings from the national level to a more European level. More courses in English will be developed and new partners

will be invited on board: not only universities, also NGO's and multilateral organisations (UNESCO, the Latin American Development Bank, etc.) For example, the FutureLearn platform is currently partnered with 49 specialist organisations such as the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.[1]

Skills gaps

In this knowledge alliance, public employment services are partners, and one of the tasks is to map the skills gap in each country. Fortunately, this has already been done in great detail across all of the 27 EU member states on a daily basis through employment agencies and recruitment websites. We have to make sure that we have instruments enabling us to link skills gaps and education and training, not only as an objective for the current project but also afterwards. This is why this knowledge alliance has been created. Online offerings are suitable for this as courses are immediate and flexible. This link is intended to be further developed over the next few years.

In some countries, regional initiatives observe latest job trends and which profiles are required. They are mapping what skills are needed to access these jobs. It could be upscaled as a really powerful tool for detecting what companies are looking for and then providing learning solutions..

At the European level, CEDEFOP delivers an expert analysis of the labour market as well.

What is needed for employment is adequate and appropriate education and training; part-time training options and lifelong learning; more credible continuing professional development (CPD); an improved management of work transitions; new routes through education, training and work; the validation and authentication of non-formal learning; the recognition of prior learning; and better services for learning.

The Common Microcredential Framework

All MOOC platforms in the European MOOC Consortium now build microcredential programmes. To this end, the platforms in the European MOOC platform have developed a standardized Common Microcredential Framework (CMF).

With CMF, we give the MOOCs and MOOC-based programmes more value. The CMF is delivering a microcredential of 4-6 ECTS as a new qualification, linked to the European Qualification Framework and guaranteeing quality criteria as applied by the platforms and the universities. In a transcript, it also says which competences are achieved by someone who completes the course successfully. According to a long experience of the partners in the knowledge alliance, the workload of 100 to 150 hours (or 8 to 10 hours study during 10 or 15 weeks) is substantial enough and manageable for learners in a continuing education context to award them a microcredential for further studies or for employment and career planning.

This is an answer to the rapidly growing online practice in MOOCs and short learning programmes in Europe and world-wide with a major variation in credentials awarded: micromasters, nanodegrees, mastertracks and many others. This huge inconsistency leads to confusion. The CMF will harmonize, valorize and recognize these qualifications.

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[1] https://www.futurelearn.com/partners

The qualification is stackable to broader educational programmes awarding a certificate or an academic degree (bachelor, master).

EMC universities have started developing programmes in line with CMF. After each coherent 4-6 ECTS learning programme, a standardized microcredential qualification will be awarded. Longer programmes can consist of series of such microcredential awards and leading to further certification; for example a graduate certificate or a degree (bachelor, master). This will offer a harmonization of the certification in continuing education.

Online microcredentials will also increase the opportunities for universities to strengthen their mobility schemes. They can serve perfectly as a mobility window offering a coherent set online courses for international exchange. In several European Universities alliances, virtual mobility will be developed and this model offers an attractive solution.

CMF is also discussed in the European Short Learning Programmes project in relation to a broader range of online short learning programmes (https://e-slp.eadtu.eu/)

This is for formal learning, but we should also pay attention to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which are covered by the ECTS Guidelines. These take into account the recognition of prior qualifications and prior experiential learning and have been further elaborated and adopted by many countries and universities.

Universities

What is needed in higher education and training is visionary policy making with an innovation mindset and an active engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. The dialogue with the stakeholders needs to be improved. This will result in the development of a more trusting and familiar working relationship resulting in higher quality and scalable education such as massive open online courses (MOOCs). Opportunities for collaboration should now be taken advantage of.

All this requires a cultural change within universities, which were currently completely orientated to degree programmes. Now, they have to be more flexible, more agile. The important challenge over the next few years is to move from a product to a service perspective in continuing education and professional development, improving career and consultation services for learners. They need also to engage with other stakeholders: businesses, companies, NGO's, policy makers, and so promoting a closer relationship to the needs of the market. In continuing education, they have to be more flexible and more agile, which is supported by online formats.

Universities are not well prepared for this in terms of continuous professional development of staff. Developing and delivering online continuous education requires specific competences of staff.

Also, collaboration is needed in order to create a sufficient range of online courses and MOOCs, meeting the needs of the economy and society at large. Therefore, European Universities alliance can play an important role and initiatives need to be taken. They can be inspired by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's "Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC's) where a more tailored approach is needed, involving other stakeholders.

Sectoral organisations

Digitalization is affecting all sectors in the economy. In this new environment, also education and training might shift paradigms from face to face to digital. This goes for hard skills, soft skills and digital skills. It will increase the effectiveness of education.

Sectors in the economy offer multimodal provisions for education and training: distance/face to face; synchronous/asynchronous; individual/collective learners.

Digital solutions might meet many of our challenges as they are flexible, scalable, accessible. They are also inclusive and personalized with learners being traced easily. Management may also be more streamlined.

The cooperation among MOOC platforms delivers different benefits: stimulating educational innovation adapted to the needs of companies; extending and supporting the access of companies to digital training; bringing the sector closer to universities; developing new paradigms for continuing education and professional development. It improves training for current and future employees. It contributes to knowledge circulation and innovation, continuing education, re-skilling and up-skilling.

Through the sectoral organisations, SMEs can also be reached in a systematic way.

Collaboration with sectoral organisations is important as they have observatories on educational and training needs as well. They also have funds to meet the needs in their sector. In some countries such as France and the Netherlands, personal learning accounts are offered in supporting learners in their education and training. All stakeholders pledge to collaborate to organize the best educational and training provisions. At the European level, this is now discussed with the social partners in preparation of the New Skills Agenda. Social partners (employers and employees) explore with the Commission lifelong learning as a social right that everybody is entitled to have, also for the labour market.

Employment services

Public employment services are led by the social partners and ministries of labour/social affairs in all EU member states. They are responsible for organizing education and training for the work force, responding to employment needs. They adapt rapidly with the economy and the qualification levels of the workforce. As a consequence, they are not only responsible for the training of the unemployed and the low-skilled, but also for the employed and the highly-skilled workforce. Public employment services organise training in local training centres/competence centres. They organize this training themselves or outsource it to private suppliers.

The public employment services are also responsible for collecting national data concerning the labour market, including competence profiles needed based on job vacancies. This evidence-base is of great help when setting up programmes to close gaps in competences.

For public employment services, the transfer of knowledge by MOOCs is an important instrument. Learning pathways of MOOCs should be built in a modular form. Within a MOOC, even shorter units might facilitate learning in smaller timeframes, as learners do not always have much available time. The modularity also creates opportunities for students to create their own learning pathways. This might be supported by artificial intelligence in the future.

Cost

Online learning in general is scalable and therefore cost-effective, because the fixed development costs are spread over large numbers of students and the variable cost is relatively low, compared with face-to-face education. Companies find the courses very cost-effective and also of a high quality, compared with other course modalities. The cost is in general lower than an equivalent face to face course, because of the scalability mentioned.

MOOCs platforms and universities use diverse business models. In principle, MOOCs are for free, but for the sake of sustainability for MOOC-based programmes, business models were needed such as offering
a freemium service, charging fees for additional services such as examinations and credits; partnership models with enterprises, and focusing on the development of human resources.

Governmental policies

Governments should develop a strong political agenda on continuing education and professional development to have an impact. In many countries, there is not yet a narrative on continuing education and instruments for the deployment of continuing education are lacking.

At the same time, funding of part-time education is not good in many European countries, not allowing enough flexibility in their systems as universities are only funded for learners completing a bachelor and master degree. This is contradictory to the needs for new competences, re-skilling and up-skilling.

European policies

Lifelong learning, continuing education and continuous professional development
are underdeveloped in large parts of the EU (see EU Education and Training Monitor, 2017). 40% of European employers face problems with *r*ecruiting employees with the right qualifications. Even though the workforce is in a real need of continuous learning opportunities, the current education and training provisions are not enough.

At the EU level, there is a very strong awareness of lifelong learning and the impact of continuing education. Hence, the policies on continuing education should start from the EU and reach out to the national levels. The European Commission should push this as a priority for all governments/member states. The Commission could develop a framework to be operationalised by national governments. In addition to attainment levels, this framework should also refer to funding.

One essential part of the Green Deal (the roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable) is the digital transformation at all levels in society. The skills agenda is growing in importance. According to the latest information, a new Skills Agenda would have been communicated by the end of March (but there is a delay because of the COVID 19 crisis). Where this agenda up to now has been mainly dealing with low skills, now also skilling for the more qualified are included as the economy is evolving. All levels of the European Qualification Framework are involved. Strong European policies and a policy framework are needed as national governments adopt more heterogeneous approaches to continuing education.

The knowledge alliance should also relate to recent work of DG Employment with regard to Europas' and the portal which will be developed there (end May 2020). This will include information on the

job market, learning opportunities and the e-portfolio of individual learners. It is also linked to the European Job Mobility portal (EURES) where pubic employment services make data available. In the future, they will also consider vacancies and required competencies according to the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification (not yet in operation). For digital skills, there is a link with DG CONNECT.

Later on in the year (June 2020), the revised Digital Education Action Plan will be published.

At the end of the year, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is on the agenda where universities and ministries discuss the impact of these developments on the Bologna process.

Part B. Full Report: MOOCs and online learning opportunities for the Labo ur Market (Peer Learning Activity)

Peer Learning Activity: MOOCs and online learning opportunities for the Labour Market

Welcome address

by George Ubachs, Managing Director EADTU, Coordinator EMC-LM

George Ubachs welcomed the participants to the Peer Learning Activity (PLA).
Thereafter everyone briefly introduced themselves.

The main goal of the EMC-LM knowledge alliance is to establish a structural collaboration between the MOOC platforms and the universities they serve with the labour market. The labour market is represented by public employment services, a sectoral organization and companies.

The project looks how MOOCs and online courses can be (co)-delivered in public employment agencies, in sectoral organisations and in companies, structuring the European market for continuing education/CPD for employment and career development.

MOOCs and digital continuous education/training are a flexible and scalable solution for a transnational, truly European response to the needs of the economy across Europe. They can keep innovative knowledge and skills of the workforce up to date and anticipate on careers of tomorrow. They should be a widely considered option for employers and employees to close knowledge and skills gaps in the economy and for developing/changing careers. In order to do this, EMC platforms develop a dialogue with social partners on the changing needs of European workforce and by strengthening the continuous education sector by collaboration with other organizations.

Main purpose of the EMC-LM knowledge alliance

- To create a framework for structural collaboration on the development, delivery and use of MOOCs, meeting the needs of the EU labour market;
- To provide more complete and high quality MOOCs and digital education and training provisions for the European labour market;
- To implement a more structured outreach for continuing education and training and career development for the EU labour market;
- By doing this, to enhance the quality and strength of the European workforce in terms of employability, innovation and entrepreneurship;
- To raise the competitiveness of regions and member states.

Objectives of the PLA

- Exploring common grounds and agenda for collaborations between European MOOC platforms, universities and labour market organisations for continuing education and professional development
- Defining a shared responsibility in education and training, connected with the needs on the labour market
- Investigating MOOC concepts and MOOC-based programmes for the labour market
- Exploring scopes by platforms, universities, public employment services and companies and preparing win-win collaborations
- Defining ways forward for collaboration and strengthening the knowledge alliance

Profile of participants

The results of the project so far will be discussed and validated by Knowledge Alliance partners and:
- University representatives: Vice-Rectors, university management staff
- European MOOC platforms: leaders and staff
- European University alliances, European networks;
- Public employment services: directors and staff
- Business representatives: directors of training, continuous professional development, e-learning
- National government representatives: Education and Training, Employment;
- European Commission: DG EAC, DG Employment

1. Results of the Convention "MOOCs for the European labour market"

18th of December 2019 by George Ubachs, Managing Director (EADTU) presentation available here

Setting the scene

George Ubachs (GU), coordinator of the EMC-LM project gave an introduction about European MOOC Consortium (EMC), the "MOOCs for the Labour Market" knowledge alliance (EMC-LM) and its aims. He presented the results of the December events (Staff and Leadership seminar; Empowering Seminar; General Convention of EMC-LM) and explained that EMC-LM aims to build a knowledge alliance with a structure and offerings that meet the needs of the labour market.

In 2019, the knowledge alliance EMC-LM started in order to establish a structural collaboration with regard to MOOCs and MOOC based-programmes. EMC-LM brings together MOOC platforms, universities, public employment services, sectoral organisations and companies to meet the learning needs of the European labour market.

The platforms in the European MOOC Consortium have served about 25 million students. More than 400 universities are linked to these platforms, offering more than 4000 MOOCs.

However, lifelong learning, continuing education and continuous professional development are underdeveloped in large parts of the EU (see EU Education and Training Monitor, 2017). 40% of European employers face problems with *r*ecruiting employees with the right qualifications. Even though the workforce is in a real need of continuous learning opportunities – the current education and training offer is not enough.

Therefore, we need to look for different or at least at complementary market mechanisms to reach out to all regions in Europe and to create an online space for continuing and open education within EHEA. The focus should not only be on individual learners, but also on clusters/groups of learners, served by other stakeholders than universities, e.g. alumni and professional organizations/networks (including alumni), public employment services, sectoral organisations, enterprises (in-company training), SMEs. Therefore, a structural collaboration with these other stakeholders should be sought.

For meeting the needs of the labour market, we have also to explore the potential of MOOCs and online short learning programmes awarding a microcredential as part of higher education systems.

The EMC-LM Knowledge Alliance therefore:
1. Makes a validated state of the art analysis on the position of MOOCs in the labour market
2. Creates a framework defining the role of MOOC platforms, universities, employment services and companies/sectors in organizing MOOCs and digital continuous education and training
3. Strengthens the European MOOC platforms by sharing expertise and by collaboration
4. Empowers universities, employment services, sectors and companies in (co-)developing, (co-)delivering and using MOOCs for CE, CPD/CVT in order to integrate MOOCs and digital education and training in current offerings EU-wide.

This PLA is contributing this, reflecting on the first results of the project.

MOOC platforms and the labour market: some models of collaboration

Recently, MOOC platforms have developed different approaches to the labour market. Each approach is interesting and platforms are now learning from each other together with labour market representatives in the knowledge alliance.

Catherine Mongenet outlined the approach of France Université Numérique (FUN). In 2014, the first MOOCs were launched. Courses on FUN have mainly a francophone audience, with a global outreach (19% in Africa). Some courses are in English. FUN serves more than 7 million learners (a growth of +1,8 million in 2018) for 590 courses. FUN had 1300 runs of MOOCs since the beginning of the platform. It delivers certificates through proctored examinations awarded with ECTS.

It encourages also new methodologies such as SPOCs (specialized online courses) for continuous education and professional development, designed for specific groups of learners. FUN delivers also collections/series of courses (pathways consisting of several MOOCs), which form coherent programmes of study.

FUN has partnerships with the socio-economic world (sectoral funds), start-ups (R&D), as well as K12 education for the orientation to higher education. In this framework, MOOCs or SPOCs are designed on specific topics after a call for tenders to universities to create MOOCs.

White label platforms are specialized platforms (using Open edX) co-designed with stakeholders who train groups of learners (e.g. employees or employers). A white label platform entails that the other party is responsible for the editorial design, but the backend is the same as the FUN platform. They have been created for:
- The National Centre for Lifelong Learning for Civil Servants (CNFPT)
- ADEME (National Agency for Environment and Energy)
- Inter-professional sectors
- The Chamber of Commerce of Luxembourg

Recently, FUN-Parténaires was established for collaborations with the corporate sector: businesses and sectoral organisations.

Matthew Hodges (MH) outlined the approach of Miríadax, which is the number one platform in the Spanish and Portuguese languages with 6,5 million enrolments.

Miriadax offers more than 1000 courses with more than 100 universities (3700 teachers). More than 6,6 million students have been enrolled on its courses. Course subjects are varied but technology is more predominant. 50% of the content is technology-related and feedback has confirmed that students are looking for courses which increase their employability. A series of certificates are provided from prestigious universities and institutions.

Two years ago, they launched private company spaces as a new service to companies. In a company space, companies have their own personalised private space on the Miriadax platform, targeting their own employees. This is promoted as a way of saving money and is growing in popularity. A space is provided to promote the value of developing talent within a company, in addition to managing, monitoring and certifying the training of employees. With MOOCs, the cost of training will be reduced to enable a greater impact on staff in companies. As a side note, The Telefonica Foundation has a high profile project (Conecta Empleo) for reskilling and upskilling the Spanish labour market.

Companies pay an annual fee for have a number of pre-selected MOOCs from Miriadax in their space, entailing the running of private editions.

MOOC-based microcredential programmes

All MOOC platforms build now MOOC-based programmes delivering microcredentials. To that end, the platforms in the European MOOC platform have developed a standardized Common Microcredential Framework (CMF) (see further). In CMF, the common qualification is stackable to broader pathways awarding a qualification or an academic degree.

Matthew Hodges explained the use of microcredentials at Miriadax. A student can take a course for free and receive a free certificate of completion after more than 75% completion of a course. A certificate of achievement is given after having achieved 100% of a course. Eligibility for an academic accreditation certificate includes receiving academic validation and passing the assessments with a student identification system (biometrics). There is an optional associated fee of 40-50 € for a course if the student wishes to have a certificate. When the student follows a "specialist" pathway/itinerary of a coherent set of MOOCs, he/she will receive a microcredential qualification from the awarding institution.

The demand for such pathways is growing. Access to the specialist itinerary is paid, allowing institutions to determine a maximum number of students per course and the assessment may include a biometric system in order to guarantee the identity of the student. The pathway may also include an ad hoc course associated with a final task to qualify for the specialisation. There is an automatic recognition of courses passed that are part of the pathway.

Miriadax also developed a blockchain scenario, which has already been used by several universities in their MOOC offerings.

The quality of MOOCs

MOOCs are able to meet high quality standards, which are incorporated in the quality criteria requirements during the design process.

Rebecca Ferguson clarified some aspects of MOOC design at FutureLearn. Most forms of learning do not scale very well. Lectures do scale, but have limitations. FutureLearn adopted an approach of massive learning online. What is most distinctive for FutureLearn, is that any learning activity has a conversation associated with it. It can consist of sharing resources, developing and ranking ideas or collecting observations. The design model of FutureLearn is based on conversational, interactive, social learning. This results in a huge amount of engagement from the learners that enriches the courses.

GU added that FutureLearn has 70 quality checkpoints along the design process of courses before they are allowed/published on the platform.

The cost-effectiveness of MOOCs

Online learning in general is scalable and therefore cost-effective, because the fixed development costs are spread over large numbers of students and the variable costs is relatively low, compared with face to face education.

The cost structure of MOOCs is the same, by when they are delivered for free, no costs will be repaid by fees. This is an issue in the business model for MOOCs. Universities each have their own business model and motivations to develop MOOCs as they can be integrated in degree and continuing education programmes. MOOCs are also an instrument for recruitment of master and doctoral students, attracting talent from everywhere in the world.

For credited MOOCs (after assessment) and MOOC-based programmes (awarding microcredentials) there is a fee associated. This fee is in general lower than an equivalent face-to face-course, because of the afore mentioned scalability. Fees can strongly vary from country to country according to the funding rules for universities. In European universities, education is considered as public good, in Anglosaxon countries rather as a commodity.

MOOCs also fit easily into the HR policies of companies or sectoral programmes, because of their accessibility and flexibility by which they can be studied anywhere and anytime. For the same reasons, they can also fit well in career development programmes of competence/job centres of public employment services. Qualification awarded by CMF-based programmes are designed in such a way that they are manageable for learners with a job.

The ambition of the EMC-LM knowledge alliance

Within the knowledge alliance, collaboration and synergies between all partners are sought to make credited MOOCs and MOOC-based programmes as effective as possible.

The ambitions of the knowledge alliance are:

- to deliver online learning opportunities and MOOCs at scale in cooperation with companies and employment services across Europe
- to develop a structural approach to the labour market by collaboration with national stakeholders, agencies and enterprises (lifting national offerings to a European level)
- to achieve win-win-win situations between MOOC platforms, universities and labour market organisations

2. Empowering the labour market by MOOCs and online learning opportunities.

MOOCs for employability, innovation and entrepreneurship
by Rebecca Ferguson (OUUK) *presentation available here*

Rebecca Ferguson (RF), OUUK gave a presentation on a study on MOOCs for employability, innovation and entrepreneurship under leadership of Rob Farrow from The Open University.

A validated state-of-the-art analysis of MOOCs for the EU labour market was made by a Rapid Evidence Assessment. The perspective was to create a framework defining the roles of MOOC platforms, universities, employment services and companies in organizing MOOCs and digital continuous education and training.

She explained what the most effective forms of learning with MOOCs are; what is needed to support employability, innovation and entrepreneurship in European labour markets; and how MOOCs can systematically support continuing education (CE), continuing professional development (CPD) and career development in Europe. MOOCs should be understood as part of a lifelong learning strategy.

Employment and higher education

Employment issues in European countries are related to aging and a shrinking workforce; a friction in the transition between education and work; a wide skills mismatch; a lack of problem-solving, communication, digital and entrepreneurship skills; a shortage of digital specialists; a wide variety in the quality of training options; and a lack of focus on SMEs.

What are needed for employment are adequate and appropriate education and training; part-time training options and lifelong learning; more credible continuing professional development (CPD); an improved management of work transitions; new routes through education, training and work; the validation and authentication of non-formal learning; the recognition of prior learning; better services for learning.

Innovation and higher education

Innovation goes along with competition, but also co-operation. High level Innovation and business networks will grow. Innovative organisations will generate and absorb knowledge and therefore, more flexible learning opportunities, accessible to all, are needed.

Barriers to innovation are related to an inertia within the tradition of vocational education and training; a resistance to change among institutions and staff who do not wish to rethink basic assumptions; slow access to the market and a lack of agility.

What is needed in higher education and training is visionary policy making with an Innovation mindset and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Dialogue with stakeholders should be improved. creating a reflective attitude towards technology. This will result in trust and familiarity in relation to high quality and scalable education such as massive open online courses (MOOCs). Opportunities for collaboration should be taken.

Entrepreneurship and higher education

Entrepreneurship combined with innovation leads to economic growth, supplying highly skilled labour. Therefore, an entrepreneurial mind-set an entrepreneurial thinking is needed. Entrepreneurial education is becoming more developed but collaboration between researchers, teachers and entrepreneurs should be promoted in order to foster a more agile orientation to collaborative efforts.

However, entrepreneurial education is in an early phase of development and the uptake of entrepreneurial education is low.

MOOCs to support the labour market

Jobs are becoming more flexible and complex. MOOCs offer opportunities for flexible delivery of education. They can be change agents that balance the needs of different stakeholders. Collaboration with companies and workplace collaborations can lead to more authentic professional development.

MOOCs can address identified competency shortages (e.g. training for automation) by a flexible or modular mode of delivery, eventually through specific routes to corporate training. Or they can serve specific regional and local needs to enhance skills and capabilities (smart specialisation regions).

MOOCs could be key to training a flexible, adaptive and qualified labour force. Business and higher education institutions can work together to develop MOOC curricula and to offer continuing professional development at scale. MOOCs can also be reflective management tools.

Business models for MOOCs

MOOCs platforms and universities use diverse business models. In principle, MOOCs are openly available and therefore free, but for the sake of sustainability, business models have been used. These include:

- integration with mainstream education (bachelor and master degrees, elective courses honours courses,…) supplementary courses, upselling, offering credits, additional services
- Freemium models, charging fees for additional services such as examinations and credits; free learning followed by paid content
- partnership with enterprises, focusing on human resource development
- funding by governments
- philanthropy (funded by charity/foundation/NGO)

Within these models, various features can be used:

- MOOCs as multi-sided platforms, facilitating stakeholder interactions
- Certification model, retains degree as gold standard
- Advertising model, using data to serve adverts
- Job-matching model, using data to address job market asymmetry
- Subcontractor model, outsources core HEI functions to the MOOC platform

MOOC offerings for the labour market: an industrial sector's perspective
by Irène Azar (OCAPIAT) *presentation available here*

Irène Azar (IA) gave a presentation on OCAPIAT (l'Opérateur de compétences pour la Coopération Agricole, l'Agriculture, la Pêche, l'Industrie Agro-alimentaire et les Territoires) and its collaboration with France Université Numérique (FUN). OCAPIAT is the operator for the food sector in France. The food sector embraces 184,000 companies with 1,2 million employees. 85% of the companies are SMEs. OCAPIAT has 350 collaborators in 49 branches.

Ocapiat and training for skills

The four missions of OCAPIAT are:
- information and raise awareness raising on skills development
- diagnose and analyse skills needs
- develop and train skills
- manage and pilot skills development.

These missions are all related to employability, innovation and entrepreneurship in the French food sector.

OCAPIAT has certain specific challenges, offering training for a wide range of jobs from low-qualified to high-qualified. It is often difficult to recruit learners and the course offerings are wide-ranging and unequal. Many employees are not familiar with digital literacy, especially in SMEs. Human resources development varies in maturity.

Digitalization is affecting the entire sector. In this new environment, education and training might also change paradigms from face to face to digital. This goes for hard skills, soft skills and digital skills. This has the potential to increase the effectiveness of education.

OCAPIAT is delivering services for all companies in the French food sector and their current and future employees. It is delivering segmented offerings with services adapted to the size of the companies: <11, 11 to 49, 50 to 299, 300 and more.

Collaboration with FUN

OCAPIAT offers multimodal provisions; distance/face to face; synchronous/asynchronous; individual/collective.

Digital solutions might meet many of our challenges as they are flexible, scalable, accessible. Inclusive and personalized. Learners can be traced easily. The management will be better streamlined.

From the 1st of March 2020, a digital campus will be in place (FUN Campus[2]CAMP'NUM). However, in order to develop online learning modalities of all types, OCAPIAT had to rethink everything. This is supported by the pedagogical and innovation partnership with France Université Numérique (FUN).

Cooperation with FUN and the University of Caen began several years ago with the objective of strengthening the human resources skills of companies in the French food sector. They developed a MOOC called 'Train and develop skills in our sector' with four sessions. 40,000 learners registered for

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[2] https://www.fun-campus.fr/

the course. The University of Caen awarded the credits and therefore recognition by the state is given. This recognition is important for the learner, but also for the organisation because of the eligibility for funding under a new law.

Knowledge and innovation communities

OCAPIAT is organising network cooperation' or knowledge and innovation communities including companies, research centres and pedagogical partners (such as FUN).

The cooperation with FUN delivers different benefits:
- it stimulates educational innovation adapted to the needs of companies;
- it extends and supports the access of companies to digital training;
- it brings the food sector closer to universities for developing new initiatives in skills development;
- it improves training for actual and future employees.

A partnership protocol is drawn up and MOOCs are prepared according to needs and the expected impact of digital education. Experts are recommended and MOOCs are developed, eventually in a broader collaboration.

Challenges and success factors

Key challenges in the food sector are related to HR policies, strategies and frameworks; the increasing needs for skills development; and the effectiveness and quality of training activities.

Key success factors for education and training in the sector are: a shared vision, the desire to innovate constantly; collaboration and networking between the sector and universities, FUN, research centres (creating knowledge circulation, re-skilling and up-skilling); and an agile approach to the companies.

New opportunities support innovating education and training in the food sector: open innovation between the companies and between companies and universities; new educational paradigms for continuing education and continuous professional development; and new good practices.

Next steps are: to implement skills development in SMEs; to develop a learning culture; and to encourage investment in skills both for the individual leaners and for companies.

PH added that using microcredentials for virtual mobility indeed will indeed increase opportunities for universities to strengthen their mobility schemes. It also creates also an opportunity for open universities to be more involved in mobility schemes.

This is also a perfect mobility window in traditional universities, which is already demonstrated with mobility schemes based on micromasters. In several European University alliances, virtual mobility will be developed and this model offers a very attractive solution. In the Common Microcredential Framework (CMF), we indicate what this means in terms of credits, EQF level, learning outcomes/ competences, content and assessment.

CMF is also discussed in the European Short Learning Programmes project and this is going in the right direction as microcredentials are a means to make academic continuing education manageable. The workload of 100 to 150 hrs or 8 hours study during 12 to 15 weeks is quite substantial.

3. Parallel Session 1: 'The role and opportunities of online learning and MOOCs for continuing education'.

MOOC offerings on the European MOOC platforms are available for free to everybody. Recently, each of the MOOC platforms has started collaborative initiatives with sectors and companies, offering MOOCs for the labour market, including white label platforms, company spaces or group subscriptions for education and training of their workforce.

After assessment, MOOCs can be awarded with credits. If they meet the criteria and are aligned with a credit-awarding body such as a university, those who successfully complete MOOC-based programmes are awarded a microcredential qualification. To harmonize, valorize and recognize these qualifications, European MOOC platforms have developed a Common Microcredential framework offering a microcredential qualification after a workload of 4-6 ECTS.

How collaboration with the labour market works

The majority of European MOOCs are developed by universities and some of them are linked in pathways or courses that meet criteria related to the European Qualification Framework. Developers make sure that they have also a professional orientation in order to be relevant for continuous professional development. In other cases, courses that originate in an industry-university cooperation can be developed into accredited courses by universities.

Miríadax

Miríadax offers a platform which can be used by universities to develop and deliver MOOCs as was reported by Matthew Hodges. Agreements with universities are signed concerning particular MOOCs and universities follow specific design steps for their MOOCs so that the overall offer is consistent and has the same look and feel. Universities are the experts. The platform also promotes these MOOCs on behalf of the university via various Miríadax channels.

Beyond this, Miríadax develops dedicated company spaces for MOOCs and MOOC pathway programmes on demand. In principle, the MOOCs are still the same MOOCs as those developed by the universities, but there is a huge variety of MOOCs that exist. The MOOC platform can recommend certain MOOCs after a joint analysis of the needs with the companies.

Rosanna Perez of Miríadax also works with companies to transform and develop MOOCs that meet their needs, employing a pedagogical approach that puts the learner at the centre.

Most of the MOOCs of Miriadax are technology-oriented, which is great as companies show a great interest for technology related MOOCs. MOOCs can be offered in a pathway and adapted. For example, a course on big data can be completed with examples from the sector. It will be seen with the university concerned how some aspects of a course can be changed in order to comply better to the needs of the sector and or company. Last year, companies have asked more of this and like this way of working together to create an adapted offer. there is of course a cost issue but companies find the courses very cost-effective and also of a high quality, compared with other course modalities.

According to companies, the company space delivers a more coordinated approach to education and training; it is faster and cheaper than traditional professional training approaches. It can easily be fitted to the market.

The AI Campus (Stifterverband, Berlin)

In Germany, the Hochschulforum Digitalisierung started the *AI Campus* at the Stifterverband in Berlin, building MOOCs in Artificial Intelligence in diverse domains of application, freely accessible to all. Florian Rampelt says that these MOOCs are made to be useful for companies all over Germany as AI is developed in all sectors. AI Campus is thinking about MOOCs in connection with open educational resources in these areas, published using a creative commons licence. They wonder if smaller artefacts, pieces of MOOCs, can be used as OER in other courses or learning situations, notably also in companies. The answer by Miríadax is that this depends on the universities involved as they own the courses. The Miríadax platform wasn't set up to do that and if Miríadax moved in this direction, this would require new discussions and contractal changes with its partners.

AI Campus tries to use a creative commons licence for all MOOCs on its platform, as they are mainly produced by public funding. An open licence makes the property issue perhaps more difficult, but the educational resource more open.

In Spain, universities differ in this respect, some use an open licence, others don't.

France Université Numérique (FUN)

France Université Numérique (FUN) is a service provider to universities for developing MOOCs, which can be generic courses or courses which have also a relevance for companies, as mentioned by Cathérine Mongénet and Gilles Bensaid. Universities understand that courses which are open and free on the MOOC platform can be re-used by companies, dedicated to purposes of continuing education. These courses are very much appreciated by companies. As there was no sustainable business model for MOOCs at the universities and companies need digital solutions for education and training for their workforce, it was important for universities and companies to link up. When courses are relevant for the labour market and sufficiently labour market oriented, integrating them in continuous education and CPD can help to make MOOCs sustainable for all. This is particularly the case for courses in big data, marketing, artificial intelligence, human resources, management, etc. A circle is then created where universities get their course paid back and new courses are developed.

FUN also launches calls for tender to universities for MOOCs in demand by the public administrations and companies (as was the case with OCAPIAT). Then, SPOCs are developed (specialized online courses), which later can be developed to MOOCs. Also, existing MOOCs can be developed into SPOCs. In the case of co-funding, like OCAPIAT, the company is one of the owners of the MOOC concerned. Most of the MOOCs developed with FUN are owned by the universities, but in some cases, they are co-owned by a public organisation or company.

FutureLearn

Rebecca Ferguson reports that *FutureLearn* is developing MOOCs with universities according to a strict learning design scheme, including quality assurance at some 70 quality checkpoints or traffic lights. A university, developing a MOOC, is always very alert as it is responsible for the MOOC. Quality assurance from the universities is therefore applied to these courses. If the courses award academic credit, they must adhere to the standards of the QAA, the UK's quality body for higher education.

FutureLearn has many non-university partners https://www.futurelearn.com/partners, but a university typically works with them to develop courses and universities must be involved if academic

credit is associated with the course. For example, The Open University's Cyber Security Operations microcredential has CISCO material integrated within it. In this way, the product will also be suitable for those working in manuy organisations and can be delivered on FutureLearn.

Miríadax also works in this way sometimes, e.g. in a collaboration with the Prado Museum. So, a lot of dynamics of play emerge in practice, bringing together academia and non-academia, the platform having an intermediate or an organisational role.

Universidade Aberta

Universidade Aberta in Portugal is organising short learning programmes for continuing education. Some of these programmes are open. Open means for them that they are accessible to everyone and for free.
They produce 50 courses in cooperation with companies in a year. Part of these courses will be delivered as a MOOC as well, which is determined in the contract with the company. This is also interesting for the company, because it shows willing and interest in creating social impact. Companies pay a fee, but the MOOC is for free.

Leiden University

Michelle Olmstad reported that Leiden University created MOOCs with teachers, who wanted to share their results, not for the sake of marketing. Their most well-known MOOC is "Mindfulness" on Coursera. They have now joined FutureLearn.

Leiden University is interested in microcredentials, but they do not know how to move forward with them. Smart choices have to be made in order to have impact. Innovative pedagogies have to be used to bring MOOCs to a different level. Business models have no priority so far.

KU Leuven Association

KU Leuven is organising 20 MOOCs with edX. Recently, the university started main educational strategies for digital and continuing education.

Monica Quintens reported that also the university colleges of the KU Leuven Association have also become interested in the development of online short learning programmes for continuing education, bringing content of value for employers and employees. They are looking at SLP as a real opportunity for continuous professional development and further career development.
To this end the Association KU Leuven has established a Working Group with all colleges (UCLL, Thomas More, Vives, Odissee, Luca School of Arts). They're preparing a first joint pilotproject with microcredentials, based on the Common Microcredential Framework, in co-creation with employers.

University of Derby

After some hesitation, the University of Derby has started to develop MOOCs. It have developed a small portfolio of MOOCs with social impact. The one on "Autism and Depression" attracted 25,000 learners. The link with research in these MOOCs was very satisfying: every time there was an academic intervention the engagement raised. It achieved a retention rate of 48% on a course on "Dementia". Learners were people working with dementia, and it really impacted people. The sector was impressed, and the staff have been invited by the Prime Minister.

The MOOCs helped to position lifelong learning/part-time studying at the university. £3.1 million of new registration fees on these programmes have been generated because of these MOOCs.

Microcredentials could be a way to position and recognise this even better across different platforms and universities.

Public employment services

For public employment services, universities have relevant knowledge for the labour market, useful to teach the skills of tomorrow via MOOCs. MOOC-programmes/pathways need to be modular in a way that learners can combine them in accordance to their needs. Also within a MOOC, modularity should be a principle, because learners at work prefer to learn by smaller units.

Maybe AI can play a role in adapting leraning pathways to individual students.

Education for entrepreneurship is also an important issue, for SMEs and for larger businesses.

MOOCs are one aspect of knowledge circulation. Networking and collaboration in (sectoral, professional) knowledge and innovation communities/networks should be stimulated.

Academic MOOCs and microcredentials

Koen Nomden of DG Employment appreciates that MOOCs are there and produced by the universities. They can support the labour market. Are MOOCs only to be developed by universities? Of course, trust is an important factor. FUN answered that they collaborate with companies and look for the right expertise at universities. MOOCs or SPOCs can be developed in collaboration with labour market organisations as well, but universities are awarding credits and microcredential qualifications aligned with the European Qualification Framework. These MOOCs guarantee the quality of an academic process producing them. Sometimes, private companies deliver training which is not always at the level and quality requested and they have a clear for-profit orientation. FUN and universities in France at the other side avoid market distortion against companies by calculating the full cost of a MOOC/SPOC made for companies to the companies.

In the framework of this project, we are speaking of only courses delivered by MOOC platforms and their universities, and which respond to academic criteria and EQF. Qualifications are only given after a substantial course of 100-150 hours of study (4-6ECTS - see the Common Microcredential Framework). Companies often organise very short courses (10 hours or less) which are training very specific competences in the sphere of vocational training. A training organisation can't deliver an academic microcredential. Microcredentials are based on learning outcomes/competences by a university and are also stackable to broader degree programmes (bachelor, master). Together with the transcript, this delivers a complete service and universities are able to maintain their identity and reputation in the world of MOOCs.

Florian Rampelt of AI Campus noted that continuing education foresees also microcredentials in a broader sense. Microcredentials not always bring ECTS credits. Non-formal learning can give micro-credentials of another kind. In Germany, SAP has its own platform of which universities are not aware, with almost 1 million learners. They are not delivering ECTS credit. They use this for further education of their staff and of for people using SAP products.

Piet Henderikx says that microcredentials associated with the European MOOC Consortium and the respective universities however are specific in this sense that they are only for formal learning and meet agreed academic criteria (ECTS, EQF level, fair assessment, ID identification, transcript). Other microcredentials are also useful and a university may recognise them with the procedure of prior experience or prior learning. This is also a possibility for the SAP courses, provided that they fit into an academic programme and the university can give exemptions for them. For informal learning, badges for engagement or completion may be delivered, e.g. also for MOOCs, but these are another sort of microcredential.

EMC universities start developing programmes in line with the CMF. After each coherent 5 ECTS learning block, such a microcredential qualification would be awarded. Larger programmes can consist of series of such blocks each delivering already a microcredential and further leading to for example a graduate certificate in a certain area. This is already the case in many UK universities. This will lead to a harmonization of the certification in continuing education, which is now chaotic at all levels as is demonstrated by the fact that we don't know among the many available certificates what is their value is exactly.

Florian Rampelt of Campus AI refers to the Bologna Digital initiative, preparing the Bologna Policy Forum (Paris, 2018) which was dealing with ECTS bound microcredentials as well. A joint framework and common standards for microcredentials are really needed, contributing to its validity.

An employer or a university can always appreciate the value of a badge of attendance for non-formal learning or a MOOC, although assessment is then likely to be required in a process of accreditation of prior learning.

Opportunities of learning with MOOCs

For Irène Azar of Ocapiat, one of the advantages of MOOCs is to reach employees rapidly with high quality courses which are delivered all over the country and in extra-territorial regions. They are easily accessible and for the French food sector, MOOCs are organised in a multi-modality framework. With FUN, a complete training system has been built and with FUN, end users get real experts from the universities. They deliver the support for building and delivering the MOOCs. They also guide Ocapiat throughout the whole process and every year the MOOCs are updated. Also, the MOOCs have a great visibility, which facilitates the cooperation with Ocapiat clients. Florian Rampelt says that German companies appreciate the curating function of MOOC platforms. They help to select content so that learners are not overwhelmed by what is available. The MOOC platforms set certain standards. Also, AI MOOCs help them to reflect on new technologies which can be used in their companies, e.g. the experience of the German railway company implementing chatbots. The connection between companies and universities, which is made by the platforms, is important. Companies are in need of knowledge transfer and education by the universities, but this currently doesn't work well. MOOCs and MOOC platforms can play a huge role in the transfer of knowledge into the business sector.

Learning and skills gaps

The Telefónica Foundation plays this role as well, says Matthew Hodges. In an amazing project in Spain, you can select different provinces in Spain and see the latest job trends and graphics and which profiles are required. It goes even further, mapping what skills you need in order to be able to get into these jobs. You see the learning gaps. The next part is to advise learners which MOOCs to take. This can also be developed in a wider European perspective. It could be upscaled as a powerful tool for detecting which skills companies are looking for and then coming up with learning solutions.

OCAPIAT has observatories for each of its branches to explore the needs of the labour market for skills development.

In this knowledge alliance, we are collaborating with public employment services. One of the tasks for these employment services is to map employment in each country. They do this in great detail in all of the 27 EU member states and they are updated daily. What the Telefonica initiative does is vital to connect needs to MOOCs and other scalable training initiatives. This, we have to keep in mind for the next two years. We have to make sure that we have instruments enabling us to link skills gaps and education and training, also after the project. This is why this knowledge alliance is created. Online offerings are really suitable to this as courses are immediate and flexibly available. This link must be developed further over the next years.

Koen Nomden of DG Employment referred to CEDEFOP, which started to analyse vacancies online in a broader European perspective in order to analyse in real time the skills needed by the labour market. They should then also be connected with the training offerings we have.

Conclusions Parallel Session 1

- For universities, one of the major opportunities for organising MOOCs was to take up social responsibilities (the third mission). It was also the smartest choice to engage lifelong learners and to innovate pedagogies, when they were integrated in the mainstream. Also, MOOCs are an excellent marketing tool to attract new students. For researchers, they offer an opportunity to do research in online education.

- Online course and programmes are easily accessible, flexible, scalable and high quality. They are suitable for up-skilling and re-skilling at the individual level, but also for social learning in small learning communities, learning through projects or in virtual seminars. They are convenient for knowledge circulation and learning in companies, professional organisations, and knowledge and innovation communities. A priority for companies is to educate for entrepreneurship.

- Recent developments are unseen, as MOOC platforms are not just providers of MOOCs, they provide an interface between universities and the labour market (companies, public employment services, competence centers, knowledge and innovation communities or networks)... or as an interface between knowledge creation and the needs of the labour market with regard to innovation and entrepreneurship. They are supporting universities and listening to the labour market. They create structures to fulfil the needs of the labour market. This is a triple-win situation: platforms, universities and the labour market in a perspective of employability, innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Microcredentials for MOOCs and SLPs are a strategic choice for universities. New pathways for education awarded with these new qualifications create an opportunity to bring universities and employers together. With the Common Microcredential Framework, we give these MOOCs more value. The CMF is delivering a microcredential of 4-6 ECTS as a new qualification, linked to the European Qualification Framework and guaranteeing quality criteria as applied by the platforms and the universities. They also say which competences are achieved. This is for formal learning, but we should also pay attention to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which is covered by very concrete procedures of the ECTS Guidelines. They foresee the recognition of prior qualifications and prior experiential learning and are further elaborated and promoted by many countries and universities.

- It is very important that we map competences/skills gaps and higher education and training offerings in every region, country and at the European level. In the knowledge alliance, employment agencies play a core role in this with statistics on employment and vacancies on a daily basis in every region. At the European level, CEDEFOP delivers an expert analysis of the labour market.

- MOOC platforms should be shared by all stakeholders: universities, learners, companies, sectors, public employment services, cities and regions. The labour market should be enabled to find specific curricula (MOOCs and other online provisions like online short learning programmes) to meet needs. Individuals should be able to find course offerings according to their profile and training needs in the perspective of longer and switching careers.

- Platforms should be a working space, inspired by MOOCs, but going further. Companies want to find all relevant training opportunities. This is important for the development of a MOOC portal and we will see how can integrate this idea in the next two years. Both universities and the labour market are changing and this should be reflected in the portal that will be developed by EMC-LM.

- For public employment services, the transfer of knowledge by MOOCs or SLPs is important. Pathways of MOOCs should be built in a modular form. They are seen as an important tool to develop skills for tomorrow. The modularity creates also opportunities for students to create their own pathway. This might be supported by Artificial intelligence in the future.

- Skills gaps should be matched with courses that are planned or already available. Skills gaps are inventoried by the public employment services in every EU member state, by CEDEFOP and OECD (meta-studies).

- The focus of platforms should be on individual learners as well as on companies. The mission of MOOC portals for delivering open education for individual learners remains very important.

- MOOCs are one aspect of knowledge circulation and creation. Networking and collaboration in (sectoral, professional) knowledge and innovation communities/networks should be stimulated.

- The knowledge alliance should also relate to the recent work of DG Employment with regard to Europass and the portal which will be developed there (end May 2020). This will include information on the job market, learning opportunities and the e-portfolio of individual learners. It is also linked to EURES – the European job mobility portal – where pubic employment services make data available. In the future, they will think about vacancies and competencies required according to the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification (not yet in operation). For digital skills, there is a link with DG CONNECT.

- For the European Commission, it is also important that collaboration and co-creation of MOOCs and SLPs take place. Also, the recognition of MOOCs is important. Therefore, all stakeholders should be able to share and to communicate.

4. Parallel Session 2: 'The agenda for continuing education and professional development.'

These sessions dealt with what to do next and how to connect and collaborate to contribute to continuing education and professional development in the future.

Each stakeholder expressed the agenda for the future to share interests and join activities.

MiríadaX

Matthew Hodgson talks about where they see themselves as a key player in the ecosystem with other stakeholders like companies, employment agencies, etc. Obviously, they have developed much more progress with universities than with other stakeholders. Universities are the backbone for Miriadax, because they are creating courses and pathways. But they will get more involved with companies as more companies become more interested. What we missed so far was the link with the employment services which we now meet in this knowledge alliance. They see engaging with the Spanish employment agency as a next development. This is an area which they see as weakness at the moment. They will start a common conversation in the coming months and it will become high on the agenda, in terms of seeking common ways of working together.

Miriadax is also looking to create more diversity in the length of courses: short and longer courses, perhaps of 200 hours. They want to get younger people through these longer courses as well, which are then certified by the Spanish government.

Employability is very high on the agenda, not just in Spain, but also in other countries. Therefore, lifting course offerings from national to more European countries is another objective. More courses in English are set to be developed.

The ambition is to grow and to try to get new partners on board: not only universities, also NGOs and multi-laterals (UNESCO, the Latin American Development Bank,…). But Miriadax recognises that the backbone of the platform will always be university-based.

FUN

Fun has already a long course catalogue with MOOCs for free which are relevant for companies.

With FUN-Parténaires, FUN is now developing a B2B market, selling to companies.
A new labour law has created a *personal training account* for employees with vouchers (500€), with which they can chose their own relevant training.

In a wider European context, this personal learning account is in the political mandate of Commissioner Nicolas Schmit (Social Affairs). This is now discussed with the social partners in preparation of the New Skills Agenda. They are a little bit sceptical, emphasizing the sectoral needs. Anyway, as education and training become part of social life, social partners are exploring with the Commission how lifelong learning may be considered as social right that everybody is entitled to, as well as a key component for the labour market.

This personal learning account in France creates new opportunities, business to business and also business to consumer. For both, FUN-Partenaires is now developing strategies, reaching out to job seekers and to employees.

The personal learning account is accessible by a mobile application in order to support the consumer: you can choose the course which you want to follow with your mobile.

The marketing for these courses can be done by the university or by FUN-Parténaires. In the latter case, FUN keeps a percentage of the fee. This is more efficient for universities, because the marketing of FUN has a very broad reach.

Advice for career development is organised as a specific public service and not paid for by the learners (Conseil de Développement Professionel). It is paid by the public administration and includes a guidance system for career development.

Therefore, FUN doesn't organise guidance for individual learners. However, it does give advice to companies/sectors on choosing courses for their employees and the marketing of courses is also dedicated to companies.

FUN is working with all business sectors.

The target for FUN are French-speaking countries, so much broader than France. More than 20% of the courses are already taken outside of France.

For exploring the education and training needs, they use the data of the public services in France. They are also in direct relation with professional organisations and the employment agency. In each professional organisation in France, there is kind of observatory. So, they don't need to set up a new organisation for this. There is already too much data. What they possibly need more in France is one single point where data is integrated.

AI Campus

The AI Campus German platform is dedicated to artificial intelligence in all areas (medicine, law, engineering, ..). It is set up in collaboration with higher education institutions and the business sector from the very beginning (October 2019). They decided (Hasso Plattner Institute, University of Potsdam) to be a partner of the MOOC platform, as HPI is involved in SAP and SAP has its own platform.

AI Campus has launched a call for tenders for higher education institutions and others in order to develop online learning formats such as MOOCs in the field of artificial intelligence. The feedback is that some 30% of the applications are from companies or collaborations between companies and higher education institutions (Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Bahn, local tech initiatives, and others).

They set up the platform from the beginning with priority for the higher education sector, but also with a lot of cooperation opportunities between these institutions and the business sector.

The platform is dedicated to AI, in response to a study of the AI skills gap and data literacies. By doing this, higher education institutions are willing to collaborate across states. Regarding the international perspective, Luxembourg is collaborating as well. They have a shared competition call and provided additional funding. The University of Luxembourg will probably be involved.

As the Federal German government is funding this initiative, they have asked for German to be the main language as there is a huge skills gap, but the portal is going to be set up in German and in English (July 2020). All the courses will be in German or English.

The portal will be set up per sector and certain sectors will be prioritised, starting with medicine, engineering, education and law. But the call is open to all sectors. The portals are going to contain more information/content than only MOOCs.

Up to now the call for tenders was most important as HEI's had to start developing courses. The platform is developed by HPI in open source. From July, approved courses are going to be developed. They will also partner with other AI initiatives in order to integrate these courses and learning materials already available. So, curating is also very important because there is a demand and sometimes there is an offer, but it is not visible enough. So they are bringing two pillars together: developing new content, where a gap is seen and also curating high quality educational material, using strict standards.

Up untill now, it is all for free, as they are legally not allowed to have a business model connected to the project during the first three years of project period.

The website is conceived a portal and it contains the LMS or platform, developed by HPI in open source.

The Open University, UK

The Open University is focusing on microcredentials and possibilities around that. Microcredential programmes will be scaled up next years. They help learners as well to see if they can be converted to programmes of the Open University per se.

The Open University wants to develop more offerings that relate directly to employment. At the same time the UK is developing apprenticeship opportunities and the Open University is currently one of the largest university suppliers of apprenticeships.

At the same time, funding for part-time education is not good in England and Wales. This has hit the university very hard in the past years. This is contradictory to the needs for new competences and reskilling.

University of Derby, UK

The online degree programmes of the University of Derby are both part time and full time, as students are in a work situation and mainly over the age of 25. These programmes offer a series of qualifications at the bachelor level: a certificate, an advanced certificate, a diploma and finally a bachelor.

This makes these programmes suitable for lifelong learners. There is no specific offer for continuous professional development as lifelong learners can follow these part-time studies or a part-time online degree programme.

They have also short online courses. Many of these courses have emerged from academic degree programmes, but are more vocationally-oriented. They offer a certificate, based on the number of hours for the course.

UOC (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

The Open University of Catalonia is an online university, focusing very much on lifelong learning and employability.
The main focus is on degree education at the bachelor, master and PhD level. Most students are part-time.

The portfolio of certifications is flexible and stackable. Microcredentials are high on the agenda. The smallest unit is 2 ECTS, then 4 and 6 ECTS. There is an expert certification after 15 ECTS, a postgraduate certification after 30 ECTS and then a master.

So, every four units might lead to a microcredential. They are working very hard to deliver microcredential qualifications, starting from 4 ECTS. It is a big challenge, because it requires an adaptation of the learning management system (LMS). It also requires adaptation from the university, which was completely organized for degree programmes. Now, it has to be more flexible, more agile.

The next important challenge is to move from a product to a service perspective. This is the challenge which will take the university 5 to 10 years. It needs to improve its career services, to improve its admission and study advice system, and give more advice to its students.
The university also needs to engage with other stakeholders: businesses, companies, NGOs, and policy makers. The goal is to create a service that promotes a closer relationship between the needs of students and the market.

Currently, students have an advisor, who has a more academic profile more than a career advisor would have. This new field needs to be introduced to these advisors. This will involve the introduction of all the labour market information and changing the way in which programmes are designed.

The university is also trying to introduce more AI tools, which will add value to the task of the advisors, who have multiple tasks, not only academic ones.

National policies

Governments should develop a strong political agenda on continuing education and professional development to have an impact. In France, this has helped all recent initiatives.

In many countries, there is not yet a narrative that relates to continuing education and of course, instruments for deployment are lacking.

At the EU level, there is a very strong awareness regarding lifelong learning and the impact of continuing education. Hence, the policies on continuing education should start with the EU and reach out to the national levels. The European Commission should push this as a priority for all governments/member states. It can develop a framework to be operationalised by national governments as the competence for education and training is at this level. As well as attainment levels, this framework should also refer to funding.

Also, collaboration is needed in order to create a sufficient spectrum of online courses and MOOCs, meeting the needs of the economy and society at large. Therefore, European Universities alliance can play an important role, and initiatives are being taken. They can be inspired by the EIT KICs. A tailored

approach is needed, involving other stakeholders and platforms like employment services, sectoral organisations, NGOs and companies. This requires a rethinking of the role of universities with this regard, including the role of teaching staff who need to collaborate/interact with the other stakeholders.

The knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) will become into a knowledge square (adding society) and even a knowledge pentagon (adding nature). This requires a strong development of knowledge circulation, and of continuing, professional and open education.

National governments need to think about how their policies and strategies help in the generation of cooperation with stakeholders including businesses, NGOs, innovation communities, etc.

A common framework for recognition and quality assurance needs to be established under the leadership and with the support of the European Commission.

EU policies

The big priorities of the European Commission are in the Green Deal. One essential part of this deal is the digital transformation at all levels in society. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

The Skills Agenda becomes more important. According to the latest information, a new Skills Agenda will be announced by the 25th of March, focusing on re-skilling and up-skilling. Where this agenda up to now was dealing with mainly lower skilled workers, now it also includes skills for the highly qualified as the economy is evolving. All levels of the European Qualification Framework are to be considered.

In the context of the new Europass policy, the EC will not just deal with levels of qualifications, but also with content and will try to push member states to take this up as the competence for education and training is firmly set in this sphere. Information about skill gaps and future needs will be shared at the European level, so that users and career advisors see what (new) qualifications are needed.

Later on in the year (June 2020), the revised Digital Education Plan will be published.

At the end of the year, the EC will deal with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

DG Employment continues to observe trends. MOOCs are very important in filling the gap in continuing education. We are not sure how much the awareness in institutions and national governments there is regarding their role in continuing education and professional development and MOOCs for the labour market.

This awareness is a real challenge and the project marketing plan should play a role here.
Of course, we should also consider the issue of quality assurance. We can assume that the quality of MOOCs being produced by universities are generally underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms at the institutional level. But national education frameworks are both on education and training and all offerings should be quality assured. This is even more important now as we see that more and more governments open up the delivery of qualifications by private providers.

The Standards and Guidelines (ENQA) are relevant, but also the EFVET Principles take into account not only the learning outcomes/competences achieved but also the process, e.g. by the results of the

feedback loop with learners' evaluations and qualifications which do not belong to the formal qualification framework.

Conclusions Parallel Session 2

- For MOOC platforms, universities are the backbone for their offerings, as they create the courses and pathways. But they will become more involved with companies as there is more interest. What has been missing so far is the link with the employment services which is now present within this knowledge alliance.

- The knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) will change into a knowledge square (adding society) and even a knowledge quadruple (adding nature). This requires a strong development of knowledge circulation, continuing/professional and open education.

- The ambition of platforms in this project is to grow and to push their course offerings from the national level to a more European level. More courses in English will be developed and they will attract new partners - not only universities but also NGO's and multilaterals (UNESCO, the Latin American Development Bank, etc.).

- Platforms and universities want to develop more offerings around employment (continuing education, professional development). They focus on microcredentials and possibilities around this. Microcredential programmes will be scaled up throughout the next few years and learners will be able to access wider (degree) programmes from there.

- This requires a cultural change from within the universities, which have been traditionally organized for the running of degree programmes. Now, they will have to be more flexible and more agile. The next important challenge over the next couple of years is to move from a product to a service perspective in continuing education and professional development, improving career and consultation services for learners. They need also to engage with other stakeholders: businesses, companies, NGO's and policy makers in promoting a closer relationship with and listening to the needs of the market.

- Universities are not well prepared for this in terms of continuous professional development of staff. Developing and delivering online continuous education requires specific competences of staff.

- Also, collaboration is needed in order to create a sufficient range of online courses and MOOCs, meeting the needs of the economy and society at large. Therefore, European Universities' alliance can play an important role and initiatives are being taken up. They can be inspired by the European Institute for Innovationa and Technology´s "Knowledge and Innovation Communities", where a tailored approach is needed, involving other stakeholders.

- For exploring education and training needs, the data of the public employment services will be used, which are updated on a daily basis, and complemented with other national sources (professional and sector organisations, in Eurostat, CEDEFOP, OECD).

- Collaboration with sectoral organisations is important as they have observatories on educational and training needs as well. They also have funds to meet the needs in their sector. In some countries, *personal learning accounts* are offered to support learners to participate in education and training. All stakeholders are to collaborate to organize best

educational and training provisions. At the European level, this is now discussed with the social partners in preparation of the New Skills Agenda. Social partners explore (along with the Commission) lifelong learning as a *social right* that everybody is entitled to, as well as important for the labour market.

- Governments should develop a strong political agenda on continuing education and professional development to have an impact. In many countries, there is not yet a narrative on continuing education and of course, instruments for the deployment are lacking.

- At the same time, funding of part-time education in many European countries is not supported very well, where there lacks flexibility as they are only funded for learners completing a bachelor and master's degree. This is contradictory to the needs for new competences, re-skilling and up-skilling.

- At the EU level, there is a very strong awareness about lifelong learning and the impact of continuing education. Hence, the policies on continuing education should start from the EU and reach out to the national levels. The European Commission should push this as a priority for all governments/member states. It can develop a framework to be operationalised by the national governments. Next to attainment levels, this framework should also refer to funding.

- One essential part of the Green Deal is the digital transformation at all levels in society.

- The skills agenda becomes more important. According to the latest information, a new Skills Agenda will be communicated by the 25th of March. Where this agenda up to now has been addressing mainly low skilled workers, it will now also include skills for the highly qualified as the economy is evolving. All levels of the European Qualification Framework are considered. A strong European policy and a policy framework are needed as national governments adopt very heterogeneous approaches to continuing education.

- A common framework for recognition and quality assurance needs to be established under the leadership and the support of the European Commission.

- In the context of the new Europass policy, the EC will not just deal with levels of qualifications, but also with content. The EC will try to push member states to take this up as responsibility for education and training lies at this level. Information about skill gaps and future needs will be shared at the European level, so that users and career advisors are able to see what (new) qualifications are needed.

- Later this year (June 2020), the revised Digital Education Plan will be published. At the end of the year, the EHEA is on the agenda.

5. Public Employment services: recent developments

Le Forem
by Christine Piret and Yves Mangan

Le Forem is the public employment service of Wallonia in Belgium. As they were not present at the PLA, they have shared written input.

Regarding online learning opportunities and MOOCs for the labour market: They are now implementing a digital strategy for online learning opportunities and MOOCs with the aim of creating easy access to digital services for jobseekers and businesses.

They work on proof of concepts with data mining, machine learning and artificial intelligence in order to help them position a jobseeker on the labour market.

As a public employment service, they also have in Wallonia the responsibility to organize VET for unemployed people, workers and students. Therefore, they have a network of about 57 Vet-centres (among which there are 24 Competence centres see PPT in attachment explaining the network) and specific partners.

As far as their trainers are concerned, they created with Ifapme and Formation Bruxelles, a trainer's training centre called FormaForm[3]. They also have developed a MOOC which is used and promoted through FormaForm.

They also have a close relationship with education partners and work closely with Open Classrooms[4].

With regards to training, they have an e-learning platform based on Moodle with e-learning contents used in their training centres (blended learning) or directly via the web with coaching services.

VDAB (public employment service of Flanders)
by Carl Callewaert

Public employment services, led by the social partners, evolve as they are not only responsible for the training of the unemployed and for the lower-skilled, but also for the employed and the highly-skilled workforce. The Belgian employment services basically organize this training in local training centers, organized by themselves. Some other employment services outsource training to private suppliers. They also organize competence centers such as those of Le Forem and they see career guidance a future task for them to develop.

The employment services in Belgium are also responsible to collect all the data concerning the labour market. They set up collaborations with companies on competences their employees need. So, we get a solid overview on what competences are already there, based on real evidence. This is of great help when setting up programmes aimed at reducing the competences gaps.

This approach is not always easy, as companies do not always fully share their strengths and weaknesses in this respect.

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[3] www.formaform.be
[4] https://openclassrooms.com/fr/

VDAB is also publishing all vacancies in Flanders and competences are described in these vacancies. This data is currently available for consultation. With artificial intelligence, this will be connected with other data and we can make an in-depth analysis of the labour market. In this respect, the three Belgian employment agencies work together in *Jobnet* where they exchange data on the competences of their employees. In this way, a more complete picture of the labour market is created: statistics on the labour market are now complemented with competence profiles.

Public employment services are very important partners in this knowledge alliance, and we look forward to cooperating with more agencies in the European Network of Employment Agencies (ENPES).

6. The recognition of continuing education and MOOC based programmes by microcredentials

The Common Microcredential Framework
Examples of CMF-based programmes and wider endorsement by Matthew Hodges (MiríadaX)
presentation available here

Matthew Hodges gave a presentation about the Common Microcredential Framework, which was followed by a discussion.

Online practice in MOOCs and online short learning programmes is rapidly growing in Europe and world-wide. There is a major variation in credentials awarded for them: micromasters, nanodegrees, mastertracks, etc.

This huge inconsistency leads to confusion. Clarity is of utmost importance for learners, universities and employers. The current situation is hindering the breakthrough of MOOC programmes, continuing education and CPD in general and career development while careers become longer and more varied.

Therefore, the European MOOC Consortium has developed the Common Microcredential Framework[5].

The Common Microcredential Framework

With this framework, EMC partners aim to:
- Lay the foundations for a new qualification to address the needs of learners, employers and academia
- Enable courses to be recognised by a formal academic qualification
- Enable courses to be stackable towards degrees across different higher education institutions

EMC hopes to see this framework used more widely by European universities and agencies to facilitate collaborations.

The main formal characteristics of a microcredential in CMF are:

- A total workload of no fewer than 100 hours and no more than 150 hours (4-6 ECTS);
- Be levelled at Level 6 or level 7 in the EQF (or 4-5 in combination with ECTS);
- Provides a summative assessment that enables the award of an academic credit;
- Operates a reliable method of ID verification at the point of assessment;
- Provides a transcript that sets out the learning outcomes for a course with the title of the course, learning outcomes/competences, main content, ECTS points earned, grades.

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[5] For a complete description of the Common Microcredential Framework, see:
https://emc.eadtu.eu/images/EMC_Common_Microcredential_Framework.pdf

Courses should be designed so that the number of hours per week is manageable by students. Courses aimed at employees or workplace competences should combine theory and practice to ensure they are relevant in the workplace.

The course might request a level of prerequisite or pre-knowledge. In these cases, a test at the beginning to determine current knowledge levels, and a plan to offer an introductory module are recommended.

A CMF microcredential is:
- accredited
- rigorously assessed
- standardised
- transferable
- stackable
- a pathway into other qualifications

Although microcredentials provided by private training providers are work-relevant and practical, they are not accredited and neither standardised nor comparable.

Current practice at Miríadax

Universities are now starting to show a lot of interest in this new form of accreditation. For example, at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, students can take three MOOCs that together form a microcredential programme.

Current practice at FutureLearn

FutureLearn is developing pay-as-you go pathways for lifelong learning, ranging from a few weeks to a few years of study:
- short course
- microcredential
- graduate certificate
- graduate diploma
- bachelor degree
- postgraduate certificate
- postgraduate diploma
- masters degree

Microcredential learning pathways consist of stackable units, leading to a microcredential qualification after successful completion of 100-150 hours of study, in line with the CMF.

Current practice at FUN

FUN is launching microcredentials as defined by CMF. Microcredentials programmes need a recognition or accreditation by the Ministry of Labour in order to be eligible to be followed by learners and funded through the personal learning account of the learner.

In France, there is an ongoing discussion about using competences as descriptors instead of learning outcomes. The use of new taxonomies is advised (ESCO) and Catherine Mongénet (FUN) mentioned that it is a big issue in France right now to make courses based on competences.

If this position is taken, this will require a cultural change in universities in many countries, where staff is about to finish course forms with learning outcomes as a description of courses. If competences are well defined (knowledge, skills and attitudes), it will help course design.

Discussion

Àngels Fitó Bertran from UOC agreed that a workload between 4-6 ECTS is a good option. It would be also very successful for virtual mobility, in particular mobility windows. She noted that standardising this would be the future of online learning.

Mathew Hodges stated that standardised microcredentials will also help with mobility between MOOC platforms and with the integration of MOOCs in collaborative programmes. So, it is important that universities produce their programmes according to the standardised features of the CMF.

George Ubachs says that therefore, it is important to get as many universities as possible on board. The current recognition will then be strengthened. In this respect, MOOC platforms are important as they represent more than 400 higher education institutions. As a consequence, the value of the programmes increases for universities and for employees and employers.

PH added that using microcredentials for virtual mobility will increase opportunities for universities to strengthen their mobility schemes. It also creates an opportunity for Open Universities to be more involved in mobility schemes.

This is also a perfect mobility window in traditional universities, which has already been demonstrated with mobility schemes based on Micromasters of the edX platform. Students can follow Micromasters under certain conditions in a network of universities, which delivers credits in their home university programme. In several European Universities alliances, virtual mobility will be developed and this model offers a very attractive solution. The CMF indicates what this means in terms of credits, EQF level, learning outcomes/competences, content and assessment.

CMF is also discussed in the European Short Learning Programmes project and this is going in the right direction as microcredentials are a means to make academic continuing education manageable. The workload of 100 to 150 hrs or 8-10 hrs study during 10 or 15 weeks is really substantial. Students in continuing education receive an award which they can show to their employer or to the university (in order to access further study opportunities). It is a very good organisational standard for continuing education. Both in academia and on the labour market, everybody can easily understand the value of this microcredential. Consequently, introducing this microcredential is a big innovation.

The representative of DG Employment explained that a future challenge might be the recognition of digital education and microcredentials by employers. There is a clear need for more coordinated action and awareness raising. Also, quality assurance is needed to create trust.

However, the attitude to online education is changing, also thanks to the programmes of the European Commission which include digital education and blended and virtual mobility, online collaboration and flexibility. The European Universities alliance call has sparked real change and the alliances have picked up on blended and online education and on virtual mobility, as explained by the

representative of EAC. Virtual mobility as a complement to physical mobility facilitates mobility for everyone in higher education.

Julie Stone (University of Derby) raised the question of how to ensure the link between employers and universities in an agile way. Mathew Hodges answered that when we developed CMF around two years ago, we had a lot of input from FutureLearn. They did a lot of research on the UK labour market. They were sure that we didn't only meet academic requirements, but also those of the employment sector. When we looked at it at the European level (the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Belgium, France,…) and from the perspective of our existing networks, this seemed to also have a European relevance. We didn't start from a blank sheet of paper. We made sure that this was not just about universities, but also about companies.

FutureLearn has a special space for these CMF programmes, which is also a trigger for other universities. Students are going to look for these, because accreditation gives extra value to these courses.

The representative of EAC communicated that there was a call out from the European Commission, Erasmus+, KA3, policy experimentation on recognition and validation. Microcredentials might be an interesting topic to be investigated.

Closing remarks and next steps

GU concluded the meeting with a short summary of the day.

The day started with a reflection of the report on the current role of MOOCs in the labour market. After that we looked at changing approaches and good practices by different stakeholders. This was followed by thematic group discussions that explored a basis of collaboration by finding a shared agenda. We concluded that we are in sync and connected.

Talking about MOOCs for the labour market, we need quality, to be relevant and to be recognised. We will cover this in our future actions.

Based on that we can start creating a framework on future collaboration. EADTU will draft a report on this and is looking forward to collaborating with other members of the knowledge alliance. We will make a real change in the educational system, with plenty of work to do over the next two years.

Annex 1: Agenda PLA 6 February 2020

Peer Learning Activity: MOOCs and online learning opportunities for the Labour Market

Agenda 6 February 2020
House of the Dutch Provinces

09.00 - 09.30 Registration

❖ 09.30 – 09.40 Welcome address *by George Ubachs, Managing Director EADTU, Coordinator EMC-LM*

09.40 - 10.30 Introduction to the PLA and its objectives

o Results of the Convention "MOOCs for the European labour market" 18th of December *by George Ubachs, Managing Director (EADTU)*

As a main result, the Convention has clarified that MOOCs and online learning opportunities create a win-win for learners, the labour market and higher education institutions as all partners are inevitably involved in new schemes for scalable solutions for continuous education meeting the needs of the labour market. Micro- credentials based on MOOCs and online learning programmes are also part of a global movement for a highly qualified work force.

10.30 - 11.00 Session 1. Empowering the labour market by MOOCs and online learning opportunities.

o 10.30 - 10.45 MOOCs for employability, innovation and entrepreneurship *by Rebecca Ferguson (OUUK)*
o 10.45 – 11.00 MOOC offerings for the labour market: a sector's perspective *by Irène Azar (OCAPIAT)*

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break

❖ 11.30– 12.15 Session 2. Parallel Thematic Sessions on MOOCs and online learning opportunities for the labour market in collaboration with MOOC platforms and higher education institutions.

Engaging and aligning employers, employment agencies, universities and MOOC platforms in a dialogue for continuing education and professional development.

Participants are divided into two parallel groups attending both thematic sessions that are facilitated by experts. To be finished with feedback and discussion between the groups to draw overall conclusions of the working groups.

GROUP 1 – Plenary Room The role and opportunities of online learning and MOOCs for continuing education Expert moderator: Irène Azar (OCAPIAT)	**GROUP 2 – Glass Room** The role and opportunities of online learning and MOOCs for continuing education Expert moderator: Cathérine Mongenet (FUN)

  o   12.15 – 12.30 Expert moderators' conclusions

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch

❖ 13.30 – 14.15 Session 3. Parallel Thematic Sessions on a shared agenda for MOOCs and online learning opportunities

Participants are divided into two parallel groups attending both thematic sessions that are facilitated by experts. To be finished with feedback and discussion between the groups to draw overall conclusions of the working groups.

GROUP 1 – Plenary Room The agenda for continuing education and professional development. Expert moderator: George Ubachs (EADTU)	**GROUP 2 – Glass Room** The agenda for continuing education and professional development. Expert moderator: Pierpaolo Limone (EduOpen)

  o   14.15 – 14.30 Reporters' conclusions

14.30 – 15.00 Coffee break

- ❖ 15.00 – 16.00 Session 4. Recognition of continuing education and MOOC based programmes by microcredentials

  - o The Common Microcredential Framework. Examples of CMF-based programmes and wider endorsement *by Matthew Hodges (MiriadaX)*

- ❖ 16.00 - 16.30 Closing remarks and next steps

Annex 2: Common Microcredential Framework

[Common Microcredential Framework](#)