



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**



**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Vassiliou welcomes launch of first pan-European university MOOCs (massive open online courses)**

Partners in 11 countries have joined forces to launch the first pan-European 'MOOCs' (Massive Open Online Courses) initiative, with the support of the European Commission. MOOCs are online university courses which enable people to access quality education without having to leave their homes. Around 40 courses, covering a wide variety of subjects, will be available free of charge and in 12 different languages. The initiative is led by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) and mostly involves open universities. The partners are based in the following countries: France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, UK, Russia, Turkey and Israel. Detailed information about the initiative and the courses on offer is available on the portal [www.OpenupEd.eu](http://www.OpenupEd.eu).

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, welcomes the new initiative: *"This is an exciting development and I hope it will open up education to tens of thousands of students and trigger our schools and universities to adopt more innovative and flexible teaching methods. The MOOCs movement has already proved popular, especially in the US, but this pan-European launch takes the scheme to a new level. It reflects European values such as equity, quality and diversity and the partners involved are a guarantee for high-quality learning. We see this as a key part of the Opening up Education strategy which the Commission will launch this summer."*

Professor Fred Mulder, chair of the EADTU task force on open education and UNESCO chair in Open Educational Resources, is leading the initiative. *"We have much to offer in Europe by fully exploring the possibilities created by the MOOCs revolution, but with a broader perspective on opening up education. Our aim is to respond to the need for a more accessible system of higher education, which puts the learner at the centre. The European MOOCs will provide quality, self-study materials and a bridge between informal learning and formal education. Some of the courses attract formal credits which will count towards a degree, for example. And we cherish diversity both in language and in culture,"* adds Mulder, who was Rector of the Open Universiteit in the Netherlands from 2000 to 2010.

EADTU President Will Swann says: *"For decades, the open universities of Europe and their partners have brought the highest quality of teaching and learning to all who seek it. The pan-European MOOCs initiative shows our collective passion to further innovate. We look to expand with a growing range of courses from the launch partners, and we will welcome new partners from across the world who share our vision and practice of flexible, responsive higher education."*

## Background

Commissioner Vassiliou, together with Prof Mulder and EADTU President Swann, will launch the European MOOCs initiative in a webcasted international press event hosted by the Open Universiteit in the Netherlands on Thursday 25 April (11:00-12:00 CET). They will be joined by Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General of the Commission's Education and Culture directorate. You can view the event online: [www.ou.nl/moocs](http://www.ou.nl/moocs). Media wishing to participate in the chat should register in advance on this site.

## What about the courses?

Courses range from mathematics to economics, e-skills to e-commerce, climate change to cultural heritage, corporate social responsibility to the modern Middle East, and language learning to writing fiction. Each partner is offering courses via its own learning platform and at least in its home language. The current choice is from the 11 languages of the partners (see list below), plus Arabic.

Courses can be taken either in a scheduled period of time or anytime at the student's own pace. They typically involve from 20 to 200 hours of study. All courses may lead to recognition: a completion certificate, a so-called badge, or a credit certificate that may count towards a degree. In the latter case, students have to pay for the certificate, with the cost ranging from € 25 to € 400, depending on the course size (the hours of study involved) and institution.

## Launch partners and contacts

TR	Anadolu University <a href="#">Cengiz Hakan Aydin</a> / +90 222 3201304 or +90 532 2372821 (m)
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FR	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche <a href="#">Anne Boyer</a>
RU	Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics <a href="#">Maria Tatarinova</a> / skype - mary1621
NL	Open Universiteit in the Netherlands <a href="#">Marga Winnubst</a> / +31 45 5762646
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The informal partnership allows institutions to collaborate to offer access to MOOCs across Europe and beyond.

EADTU members who are planning to join the initiative include: Open University of Cyprus, DAOU/Aarhus University (DK), Tallinn University (EE), Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (ES), FIED Fédération Interuniversitaire de l'Enseignement à Distance (FR), Hellenic Open University (GR), AGH-University of Science and Technology Centre of eLearning (PL), Maria Curie Skłodowska University (PL), and University of Ljubljana (SI).

Other potential partners interested in joining should contact EADTU.

## **What is Opening up Education?**

Commissioner Vassiliou, together with Vice-President Neelie Kroes, responsible for the digital agenda, will launch the Commission's new Opening up Education initiative this summer. It aims to promote the use of ICT and open educational resources at all levels of education in order to provide current and future generations of students with the skills they need.

## **European Association of Distance Teaching Universities**

EADTU is an institutional network of Europe's ten open and distance/online universities, 14 national associations of conventional universities organising distance/online education for off-campus students, and two 'dual mode' – campus-based and online – universities. EADTU's activities are supported through the Jean Monnet action, part of the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme.

## **For more information**

European Commission: [Education and training](#)

EADTU: [www.eadtu.eu](http://www.eadtu.eu)

[Androulla Vassiliou's website](#)

Follow Androulla Vassiliou on Twitter [@VassiliouEU](#)

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