

**5th European Union – Australia Education and Training Policy Dialogue, 4 March
2013, Sofitel, Melbourne**

Rethinking Education: challenges and opportunities

Joint Statement

Globalisation and technological development are radically changing the landscape of tertiary education. Both Australia and the EU are seeking to manage this step change in tertiary education proactively in order to succeed in facing the common challenges in an uncertain global economic market: with the societal consequences of unemployment and skills shortages as well as the global challenges of climate change, food security, sustainable environments and ageing populations. Both parties are stressing the importance of education and training for sustainable growth, as underlined in their respective *Australia in the Asian Century* and *Europe 2020* strategies. These strategies show that there is ample scope for both parties to work together, learn from one another and collaborate.

Numbers of International students are growing and they are more demanding: they expect to choose what they learn, how they learn and when they learn, according to their individual needs and interests. And they are ready to do it in their country of origin, abroad or via courses offered online. Digital education and the emergence of massive open online courses (MOOC) is bringing new opportunities to reach potential students who may not be able to travel but are eager to participate in higher education offered abroad.

It is against the backdrop of these common challenges that the fifth European Union – Australia Education and Training Policy Dialogue was held in Melbourne on 4 March 2013. The Dialogue continued the discussions held in Brussels at the fourth European Union – Australia Policy Dialogue in March 2012 and a Policy Forum on Education in Industrialised Economies: Skills, Innovation and Economic Growth on 19 November 2012.

The 2013 Dialogue was co-chaired by Mr Colin Walters, Head of the Australian Delegation and former Head of the International Education and Science Division of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) and Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director General of Education and Culture (DDG-EAC) at the European Commission.

Building on these strategic conversations the parties agreed to focus on three areas for further exploration and collaboration:

1. Strategic partnerships

Both parties agreed on the need to reinforce the knowledge triangle via strategic partnerships of key stakeholders, including tertiary education providers, research communities, business, industry, government and the broader community. These strategic partnerships shape the knowledge economy through the development of transferable skills, discovery and innovation.
It was agreed to:

- encourage and facilitate collaboration in industrial doctorate programs, for example the successful experience of the Marie Curie Actions, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, and the planned Australian innovation and industrial precincts.
- encourage and facilitate collaborative teaching and research training opportunities between Australian and European universities and colleges in areas of mutual concern, for example, water management or climate change.

2. Entrepreneurial and digital education to support careers of the future

Recognising the important role of entrepreneurial and digital education and training for employment, productivity and economic growth it was agreed:

- to develop and share understanding and best practice strategies to ensure successful transitions into post compulsory schooling, training and work through apprenticeships, formal and on the job training
- to explore the preparation of young people for future careers as entrepreneurs in small business through education and skills development
- that the European Commission, in order to explore new ways of cooperation with Australia on the key theme of digital education in view of the next Policy Dialogue, undertook to carry out a study on the effective use of ICT to address access to, and provision of quality higher education and implications for funding models.

3. Qualifications

Recognising the need to support student and labour market mobility via transparent quality assurance procedures and mutual recognition of Australian and European qualifications frameworks it was agreed to:

- continue existing work on the linkages between the European Qualifications Framework and the Australian Qualifications Frameworks
- reaffirm commitment to the International Education Co-operation Programme, ICI-ECP, (Encounter program) through the ninth call currently underway and the tenth call to be released before the end of 2013
- ensure the outcomes of the ICI-ECP in terms of development of joint curricula, are fed into the policy work on recognition of qualifications

Discussions have highlighted the potential for cooperation and exchange of views on digital education; therefore this will form the topic of discussion for the sixth Dialogue to take place in November 2014 in Brussels.

A suggested theme for the Dialogue in 2015 is innovation in education and research training to take place in Australia in 2015.