

3rd U.S.-EU Education Policy Forum

**The 21st-Century Student,
Qualification Frameworks and Student Learning**



Washington, DC
November 9-10, 2011



Joint Statement

The 3rd US-EU Education Policy Forum took place in the context of the [U.S.-EU Agreement in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training](#). The Forum was organized by the U.S. Department of Education and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture. It was co-chaired by Dr. Martha Kanter, Under Secretary and Dr. Eduardo M. Ochoa, Assistant Secretary of Post-Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, and Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture, European Commission.

In addition to representatives from the European Commission and the U.S. Department of Education as well as the U.S. Department of State, the following prominent experts from the academic and philanthropic communities participated in the Forum: Mr Jamie Merisotis, Mr Dewayne Matthews and Ms Holly McKiernan (Lumina Foundation), Dr Keith Bird (Kentucky Community & Technical College System), Dr Anthony Carnevale (Center for Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University), Prof. Em. Tim Birtwistle (Leeds Metropolitan University, UK), Ms Carolyn Campbell (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK), Dr Dominic Orr (HIS - Institute for Research on Higher Education, DE), Ms Hanne Shapiro (Danish Technological Institute, DK) and Dr Robert Wagenaar (University of Groningen, NL).

Aligned with the 2010 [Joint Statement](#), the discussions focused on two strands: a) the **21st-century student** and b) **qualifications frameworks and student learning**. The discussions were framed by the challenges posed by the global economic and financial crisis and looked in particular at the contributions

of post-secondary education to help our economies and societies emerge stronger from this crisis.

Mr Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture at the European Commission stated: *"For the European Commission and the other European participants the topic of the 3rd U.S.-EU Education Policy Forum was timely and promising: we expected an interesting exchange of views, and the two-day discussions exceeded our expectations.*

The Forum allowed for a stimulating discussion on how governments and international institutions can promote the development of higher education institutions that respond to demand and are accountable on outcomes. In its Communication on the modernization of higher education, the European Commission set out just a few weeks ago the key policy issues for the EU: we need to boost graduate numbers, improve the relevance and quality of teaching, provide more opportunities for students to develop their skills through study or training abroad, encourage international co-operation to boost higher education performance, train more researchers, and strengthen the link between education, research and business. The Policy Forum showed that, on these critical issues, dialogue and cooperation with U.S. experts and the U.S. Department of Education is extremely useful for us.

There are many differences between the US and Europe, but diversity enriches, and the European Commission shares with the US Department of Education a determination to modernize higher education. The key is education - but not just any education: for the 21st-century student, the cognitive skills that are the easiest to teach will be also the easiest to be outsourced or digitalized. This is why we must all develop open institutions, effective qualification frameworks, and new ways of learning".

Dr. Martha Kanter, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, stated: *"Increasing access, improving quality and accelerating completion are the cornerstones of American higher education policy proposals for the 21st century. Together, the EU and U.S. are examining lessons learned from the Bologna Process and Qualifications Framework initiatives in a variety of countries to better define what college and university graduates know and are able to do upon graduation. We know that the knowledge and skills essential for student success in a more globally connected workforce and world need better definition.*

They are integral to achieving President Obama's 2020 goal of increasing the number of U.S. college graduates to 60 % or more by the year 2020.

On both sides of the Atlantic, we need citizens who have the capacity to solve problems that result from the globally connected world in which we live, are able to lead and participate in a prosperous workforce, and who are prepared for informed, effective participation in democratic life across continents. Higher education has a crucial role to play: it must bridge the dichotomy between giving students the knowledge and skills relevant to future jobs and conveying the critical thinking and civic values for our democracies to prosper in our fast-growing knowledge economy.

The U.S. and EU goals to significantly increase the proportion of students completing higher education, our mutual efforts to advance study abroad opportunities, and our interest in continuously improving the quality and performance of our higher education institutions are of paramount importance. These are areas where our interests converge.

I am convinced that today's discussions will deepen the transatlantic cooperation that we have enjoyed since 1993 and help us leverage our capacities to sustain and strengthen our world-class higher education systems."

Mr Prats Monné and Dr Kanter concluded: *"Europe and the US share one overriding priority: to find the path to job creation and growth; and for all our economies the only path leading to quality jobs and sustainable growth is education. Through well targeted investment in education, we can not only provide our citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to keep our societies thriving and prosperous, but also give more of our citizens access to, and help them complete, higher education. In this respect, we recognize the need to improve the quality of higher education to meet the needs of the 21st-century student, strengthen the civic health of our societies, and prosper in the global economy. Higher education, and in particular its internationalization, play a crucial role in ensuring growth, creating jobs, and advancing our democracies for the global common good. We are therefore committed to meeting again in one year's time in Brussels to discuss the contributions of higher education to the global knowledge economy. By then, we will also review the results of the joint US-EU Tuning project, in particular its contribution in increasing focus on learning outcomes and improving completion rates."*

Next steps in cooperation

The Parties agreed to focus US-EU cooperation on the contributions of higher education to the knowledge economy and society, and to make this the topic of the next forum in Brussels.

One of the key drivers of the exit strategy from the global economic crisis as well as of productivity and long-term growth will be increasing student competencies and skill levels. Policies and programs can benefit from increased customization to ensure that more graduates acquire the competencies critical to the employment and societal needs of the 21st century and to match knowledge, skills and jobs far more effectively than in the 20th century.

Given these crucial imperatives and today's need for job creation in both the U.S. and the EU, the Parties will focus their next steps in policy development and bilateral cooperation in 2012 on acquiring a better understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship through university-business cooperation; on the critical issue of the international competition for talent; and on knowledge and skills development as well as student and labor mobility to increase prosperity in the knowledge economy. In particular, they decided to:

- launch a study on university-business cooperation,
- organize a dissemination seminar on skills and mobility, and
- hold an expert seminar on credit recognition.

Building on the eighteen years of experience gained from the Atlantis program, the Parties agreed to explore ways to strengthen their exchanges and cooperation in the field of education and, more specifically, on cooperative efforts to increase the internationalization of post-secondary education institutions, also with a view to ensuring a smooth integration of U.S.-EU cooperation and exchanges aligned with the future EU Program for education, training and youth for 2014-2020.

The European Commission welcomed the fact that the US will participate in the forthcoming International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, organized by the Commission from 14th to 15th December 2011 in Brussels (Belgium), as well as in the third Bologna Policy Forum from 26th to 27th April 2012 in Bucharest (Romania), as a sign of the active and constructive involvement of the US in the European and global discussion on the modernization of higher education.

Finally, both Parties welcomed the second Annual General Meeting of the [OCEANS network](#) which took place from 15th to 17th September 2011 at Parsons New School for Design in New York City, and recognized the benefits of student mobility and the [Fulbright-Schuman](#) grant program, which provides valuable and continued support to the transatlantic mobility of professionals conducting research in the field of US-EU relations.