

BFUG
September 2008

LIFELONG LEARNING COORDINATING GROUP

UPDATE FOR BFUG

Purpose

1. This paper provides a short update on the work of the Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group. BFUG is invited to note the current situation and that the Group will meet early in the New Year, to consider possible input to the next Communiqué.

Feedback from initial meeting

2. As advised at the last BFUG, the Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group held an initial meeting on 12 March, the notes of which are attached at Annex A. We discussed how to take forward our agreed terms of reference and had an initial discussion about the outcomes of the Slovenian Presidency event on “Universities and Lifelong Learning”. http://www.mvzt.gov.si/en/arhiv_predsedovanja_mvzt_svetu_eu/eu_higher_education/conference_III/

3. We also discussed the likely focus of the events on lifelong learning being organised by EUA and by the Dutch Government, in cooperation with EURASHE, EUA and ESU. We noted that the EUA conference would be considering the draft Lifelong Learning Charter and the social dimension, while the Dutch Government event would be focussing on the accreditation of prior learning. The Group was therefore reassured that the events would compliment one another and would help improve the understanding of the role of higher education in lifelong learning.

Progress since March 2008

4. Since the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group, full details of these events have been published.

5. The EUA event will take place in the Erasmus University, Rotterdam on 23-25 October. Entitled “Inclusive and responsive universities – ensuring Europe’s competitiveness”, the event will explore the role of universities in promoting social equity and a more inclusive society, with a particular focus on universities taking a strategic approach to lifelong learning. Participants will also consider the importance of developing a shared European approach to these issues and identify the challenges for universities in developing institutional strategies that enhance social inclusiveness whilst integrating lifelong learning. Full details are available at: <http://www.eua.be/events/rotterdam-conference/welcome/>

6. After broad consultation over the last few months, the EUA Council has adopted the European Universities’ Charter on lifelong learning. EUA will be presenting the charter at next month’s BFUG.

7. EUA has also recently published an eight supplement to the EUA Bologna Handbook, which looks in detail at lifelong learning in European universities.

8. The Dutch Government event, being organised in cooperation with EURASHE, EUA and ESU, will take place in the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam-Diemen on 11-12 December. Entitled the 'Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Quality Assurance and the Implementation of Procedures (in Higher Education)' the event will consider:

- the role of a government and other stakeholders in promoting RPL and make an inventory of the most relevant and effective instruments
- RPL, quality assurance and quality codes or principles for RPL, in national and a European context
- how Higher Education Institutions and other organisations in higher education are implementing and developing effective procedures for RPL
- and the 'costs and benefits' of RPL in relation to all stakeholders.

Full details of this event can be found at www.dashe.nl/events/bologna/rpl.html

9. The planning of this event has been informed by a network of RPL experts drawn from countries participating in the Bologna Process. BFUG members were invited to nominate an expert to take part in this network.

10. As a precursor to both these events, EURASHE is organising their fourth seminar on "Lifelong Learning at Institutions of Professional Higher Education. This event will take place in Prague on 16-17 October. It will focus on the 'daily practice' of lifelong learning at institutions of professional higher education. Areas of specific interest will be: tertiary higher education and its links to Higher Education, addressing new target groups of learners, links to labour market and employers, and the accreditation of prior learning.

11. It is expected that the seminar will provide input for EURASHE's planned survey of 'good practice of lifelong learning'. This will result in a publication on lifelong learning strategies, expected to issue in December 2008. Full details of this event can be found at: <http://www.ssvs.cz/reg/>

Next steps

12. The Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group is planning to meet in early January. We will discuss the outcomes of the Slovenian Presidency, EURASHE, EUA, and Dutch Government events, with a view to considering the conclusions and recommendations arising from each event and suggesting some points for inclusion in the next Communiqué.

Ann McVie
Lifelong Learning Directorate
Scottish Government
+44 (0)141 242 0179

**LIFELONG LEARNING CO-ORDINATING GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING: 12 MARCH 2008**

Present

Efstathios Michael, Cyprus
Hélène Lagier, France
Lela Maisuradze, Georgia
Foteini Asderaki, Greece
Darinka Vrečko, Slovenia
Nadezda Uzelac, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Ann McVie, UK - Scotland (Chair)
Marlies Leegwater, Secretariat and Netherlands
Bruno Carapinha, ESU
Michael Hörig, EUA

Apologies

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Svetomira Apostolova – Kaloyanova, Bulgaria
Stefan Delplace, EURASHE

Main points of discussion

Discussion of Terms of Reference and approach

1. The Terms of Reference for the Co-ordinating Group were agreed. It was noted that, in line with the commitment in the London Communiqué, the group would consider how the recognition of prior learning might be improved. The event being organised by the Dutch was expected to focus on this aspect of lifelong learning and would usefully inform thinking in this area.

2. In line with the Terms of Reference, the group's main role would be to ensure co-ordination across the different events being organised on lifelong learning. The group would not produce any report. The group would however consider the conclusions and recommendations arising from each event and suggest some points for inclusion in the next Communiqué.

Slovenian Presidency event on "Universities and Lifelong Learning"

3. Group members who had taken part in the Slovenian event provided some feedback. The main points arising from the discussions included:

- There was significant diversity in the approaches being taken to lifelong learning. There did not appear to be much, if any, Governmental co-ordinating of the approaches being taken by different institutions.

- Some institutions had separate lifelong learning departments. Others had a more integrated approach. Views were mixed on which was the more effective approach, or whether Government should have a greater co-ordinating role.
- There was no common understanding of what was meant by the term “lifelong learning” in a university context. Very few institutions had developed a lifelong strategy for their institution.
- There appeared to be a number of challenges to overcome. There was a need, for example, to ensure an integrated approach to quality assuring lifelong learning provision from the outset. What was the added value of delivering lifelong learning in a university context? How best might higher education institutions respond to competition from the private sector.
- National Qualifications Frameworks could be a useful tool to support the development of lifelong learning.
- The event had made a useful start to the debate, by facilitating an open discussion about lifelong learning.
- Full details about the event can be found at: http://www.mvzt.gov.si/en/eu_higher_education/conference_III/

EUA Charter on Lifelong Learning

4. Michael Hörig gave an update on the Lifelong Learning Charter being developed by EUA. He explained that the French Prime Minister had asked EUA last December if they would elaborate a Lifelong Learning Charter. The intention was to elaborate a charter produced by higher education institutions, for higher education institutions, and with recommendations for the wider world. It was expected to identify the role of different partners within lifelong learning. EUA was planning to organise a stakeholder sounding board during April, leading to a first draft being circulated for discussion at the EUA Council meeting in July.

5. The draft charter would subsequently be discussed at EUA’s autumn conference taking place in Rotterdam in October. The event on lifelong learning was entitled “Inclusive and responsive universities: ensuring Europe’s competitiveness”. The event would therefore have a social dimension focus.

6. The charter was expected to be finalised by the end of October, for presentation to the European Ministers at their informal meeting taking place in Bordeaux in November.

Action point: Michael Hörig to circulate the draft programme for the Rotterdam event to group members.

Dutch event on lifelong learning

7. Marlies Leegwater gave a short overview of the Dutch event on lifelong learning, which was being organised in cooperation with EURASHE. The event would take place in Amsterdam on 11-12 December. The focus of the event would be the

accreditation of prior learning, but the programme would not be finalised until after the outcome of the previous events on lifelong learning was known. It was possible that the event might suggest there was a need for broad principles or guidelines on the recognition of prior learning at the European level.

Action point: Marlies Leegwater to circulate the draft programme for the Rotterdam event to group members.

Bologna Secretariat website: entry on lifelong learning

8. Ann McVie explained that the Secretariat had asked the group to produce some short text for the Bologna website on current developments in lifelong learning the EHEA.

9. It was agreed that Ann would circulate some draft text to group members for comment. Links would be included to the relevant sections of the websites for EUA, ESU, Slovenian Presidency and possibly the EUCEN network.

Action point: Ann McVie to circulate draft website text to group members for comment.

Action point: Group members to suggest any further links for the website entry.

Next meeting

10. It was agreed that the group would try and meet immediately after the Amsterdam event on 12 December 2008.

Action point: Marlies Leegwater to advise if it would be possible to hold a meeting in Amsterdam on 12 December 2008.

Ann McVie
7 April 2008