

Update for the Bologna Follow-Up Group Meeting

Lefkosia (CY), 28-29 August 2012

PAST EVENTS

EURASHE held its **22nd Annual Conference** in Riga (Latvia) on **10th-11th May 2012**, which successfully addressed two themes that are among priorities for the future agenda for European professional higher education, namely **lifelong learning and the welfare society**. We reflected on the modernisation of the welfare society and the role of (higher) education in this, while noticing the trends in LLL, action-oriented learning, transformational learning, trends of e-learning and distance-learning. These are essential features of professional HE. An overall conclusion was that societal challenges can be solved by stimulating innovation only. Europe is considered an example of good practice, but what are HEIs doing to stimulate innovation, also in the field of societal welfare?

The conference also showed the results of the **FLLLEX project**, *The Impact of LifeLong Learning Strategies on Professional Higher Education* (www.flllex.eu). The research within the FLLLEX project compared a situation and conditions for life-long learning engagement of higher education institutions throughout and concluded that although there are substantial differences among the countries on systemic level, integration of life-long learning agenda within strategies of individual higher education institutions lays mostly within their own remit and initiative. For such purpose the project introduced a self-assessment instrument (RADAR).

On **4th July 2012** an international Seminar *“Higher education cooperation between the Caribbean and Europe: challenges and opportunities”* took place in the ACP House, in Brussels. It was the final event of an Erasmus Mundus project called **CaribErasmus** (www.cariberasmus.eu), in which EURASHE represented the European Higher Education Institutions and which involved partner associations in the whole Caribbean region, and a number of research institutes in Europe.

The objectives of this project were to promote mobility opportunities offered to Caribbean students and researchers by the Erasmus Mundus programme; to discuss the main barriers to Europe-Caribbean academic cooperation and mobility and advance on possible shared solutions. It was the last in a series of seminars that were all held in the partner countries (Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Trinidad & Tobago), and which led to the production of a **White Paper** that will stimulate consultation and reflection among relevant stakeholders, in particular decision-makers in the field of Higher Education from Europe and the Caribbean on strategies to enhance cooperation in the field of HE between the two regions.

The partners now want to link their project to the Bologna Policy Forums, by organising a regional and thematically focused event in the Caribbean region, thus meeting the need for peer learning among academics and among academic networks, in cooperation with regional and European stakeholders.

Projects and Services to member institutions and the higher education community

HAPHE project

As from Autumn 2012 **EURASHE and its members**, will be conducting an E.U. funded pilot project aiming at *Harmonising Approaches to Professional Higher Education in Europe (HAPHE project)*.

While the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has contributed significantly to harmonisation of HE in Europe, the 'Professional' Higher Education sector is still in significant flux. The wide variety of systems which now fall under the umbrella term of 'Professional' HE, makes it difficult to transnationally analyse this sector, hinders recognition of qualifications, and limits the ability of soft-policy tools to strengthen its growth.

To address this issue, the HAPHE consortium intends, to bring together a group of field experts, who, through a wide consultation with stakeholders from education, business and society, will harmonise approaches to professional higher education (predominantly at European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6 and above) throughout Europe.

By strengthening the PHE sector, and improving the transparency of PHE provision, the consortium wishes to enhance employability of European HE as a whole, to contribute towards a more cohesive Higher Education Area, and to support the modernisation of European HEIs, through encouragement of increasing responsiveness to the labour market and society.

Revision of the ESG for QA

At the latest Ministerial meeting in Bucharest (April 2012) the Ministers, following the report of the E4 group on the implementation and application of the “European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance” (ESG), expressed their intention to “revise the ESG to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope”. For this purpose they asked the E4 in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), to prepare an initial proposal and submit it to the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

At a first meeting on 10th July the E4 organisations, Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR met, discussed and agreed on a work plan for the revision of the ESG, which will be presented to the BFUG in its meeting in August 2012.

The above cooperating stakeholders will take the process forward in consensus and as equal partners, through a steering group involving all stakeholders, which will monitor the work of a drafting group of experts and practitioners of the ESG. In line with the work plan of the BFUG, the jointly developed 'initial proposal' from the part of the stakeholders will be presented to the BFUG in February 2014.

EQUNET project

From 2010-2012, eight leading European stakeholders and research organisations (the MENON Network, Scierter, CEPS (University of Ljubljana), HIS, ZSI, ESU, EURASHE and EDEN) have joined forces in the **EquNet project** (www.equnet.eu) with the aim of enhancing equity in European Higher Education through networking among all interested stakeholders, gathering research on the topic, engaging with actors in the field through advocacy and through consultations, while proposing policy solutions to decision makers and networking with peers, experts and stakeholders. An **international workshop** will be held in **Brussels on 7 November 2012**, on the theme: *"Equity in European Higher Education: State of the research, problems, ideas and perspectives"*.

FUTURE EVENTS

EURASHE will organise a '**Seminar on the Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance**' on **27 and 28 September 2012** in **Nicosia, Cyprus**.

The event, which will take place under the Auspices of the **Cyprus Presidency of the European Union**, is organised in cooperation with the **European University Cyprus (EUC)**, and the **Open University of Cyprus (OUC)**, member institutions of EURASHE. The seminar is built upon two themes, **Internal QA processes & instruments for improvement**; and **Implementation of the ESG for QA in the institutions**.

The seminar wants to inform participants of the results of the survey on a possible revision of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), provide experts and grass roots people with expert hands-on support in implementing the ESG, and aims at building new partnerships in a 'Forum for practitioners' working on institutional level.

On 13-14 December 2012 EURASHE holds its annual '**lifelong learning seminar**' in **Prague, Czech Republic**, this time entirely devoted to the theme of **Recognition of Prior Learning**. This initiative is linked to our continuous efforts to promote the concept of RPL in the

Bologna Process, and is a joint engagement towards and in cooperation with our partners in the BFUG Network for Recognition of Prior Learning. The seminar should focus on systemic measures promoting RPL including the aspects of quality assurance, comparison of approaches throughout Europe, and it should also allow learning about institutional experience and problems. The scope and programme is still under a discussion with partners from the RPL network.

In **2013** EURASHE will organise its **23rd annual conference in Split, Croatia on 9th -10th May**, to celebrate the country's joining the European Union, in conjunction with HE events organised by the Croatian Ministry of Education. The conference will focus on what is the ***key role of professional higher education institutions in regional development***, through education, (continuous) training and (applied) research, thus claiming their part in the knowledge triangle.