

**BFUG**  
**February 2009**

## **LIFELONG LEARNING COORDINATING GROUP**

### **FINAL REPORT FOR BFUG**

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper is the final report on the work of the Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group 2007-2009.
2. BFUG is invited to note the activities that have taken place to promote lifelong learning in a higher education context since the London Ministerial conference.

#### **Progress since May 2007**

3. A number of activities have taken place to promote lifelong learning and improve the understanding of the role of higher education within it since the Ministers last met in London in May 2007.
4. First, a conference on “Universities and Lifelong Learning” was held in Bled under the Slovenian Presidency in March 2008. Discussions at the event illustrated that there was significant diversity in the approaches being taken to lifelong learning. There did not appear to be much, if any, Governmental co-ordination of the approaches being taken by different institutions. There appeared to be no common understanding of what was meant by the term “lifelong learning” in a university context. Very few institutions had developed a lifelong learning strategy for their institution. The outcomes of this event can be found at:  
[http://www.mvzt.gov.si/en/arhiv\\_predsedovanja\\_mvzt\\_svetu\\_eu/eu\\_higher\\_education/conference\\_III/](http://www.mvzt.gov.si/en/arhiv_predsedovanja_mvzt_svetu_eu/eu_higher_education/conference_III/)
5. This was followed by the EUA Autumn Conference held at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam in October 2008. This event was entitled “Inclusive and responsive universities – ensuring Europe’s competitiveness”. Attended by some 300 university leaders, the event explored the challenges of making Europe’s universities more inclusive and responsive. The recently adopted EUA Charter for Lifelong Learning was used as a basis for discussion. A stakeholder panel at the end of the conference debated possible next steps for promoting the lifelong learning agenda. All presentations, including the report of the General Rapporteur Hanne Smidt, can be downloaded from:  
<http://www.eua.be/events/rotterdam-conference/presentations/>

6. Next, the Dutch Government organised a third event in cooperation with EURASHE, EUA and ESU at the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam-Diemen on 11-12 December. The planning of this event was 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.

7. Entitled the 'Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Quality Assurance and the Implementation of Procedures (in Higher Education)' the event considered:

- 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.

Discussion suggested there was a lack of coordination and comparability in the application of RPL. It was suggested RPL should be included within quality assurance procedures as a matter of urgency. Further suggestions included the need to develop common principles and guidelines for RPL at the national and European level; the full integration of RPL within national qualification frameworks; and the need to develop and maintain knowledge centres and networks of RPL. Full details of the outcome of this event can be found at [www.dashe.nl/events/bologna/rpl.html](http://www.dashe.nl/events/bologna/rpl.html)

8. In addition, and also in preparation of the Amsterdam-Diemen seminar, EURASHE organised a fourth seminar on "Lifelong Learning at Institutions of Professional Higher Education". This event took place in Prague on 16-17 October 2008. It focused on the 'daily practice' of lifelong learning at institutions of professional higher education. Areas of specific interest were: 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. Full details of the outcomes of this event can be found at: <http://www.ssvs.cz/reg/>

9. EURASHE has also recently published "Lifelong Learning: Impediments and examples of good practice". This is the first in a series on Lifelong Learning and contains the recommendations and conclusions from the Bologna seminar on recognition of Prior Learning. Copies can be ordered from the EURASHE website at: <http://www.eurashe.eu/RunScript.asp?page=105&p=ASP\Pg105.asp>

## **EUA Charter**

10. The publication of the EUA Charter for Lifelong Learning was a significant step forward in promoting lifelong learning in a university context. Drafted by EUA at the request of the French Prime Minister, the Charter was adopted by the EUA Council in July 2008. Since then it has been presented and discussed at various meetings, including the meeting of the Directors General for Higher Education in Strasbourg; the Bologna Follow Up Group in Paris; and the Bordeaux Ministerial meeting of Ministers of Vocational Education and Training.

11. EUA is planning to encourage further debate about the role of universities in lifelong learning over the period 2009-10. This includes plans to discuss the Charter at the national level and at the 5<sup>th</sup> EUA Convention, taking place in Prague in March 2009. Information about this event can be found at: <http://www.eua.be/events/eua-convention-2009/home/>

## **Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group**

12. The primary role of the Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group was to ensure complementarity across the three lifelong learning related events included in the Bologna Work Programme for 2007-2009. We also reviewed the conclusions and recommendations of these events, with a view to making some proposals for the next Communiqué. With this in mind, the group last met on 9 January. A copy of the notes of that meeting is attached as Annex A.

13. Following the meeting, we offered the draft text below as an initial contribution to “draft zero” of the Communiqué:

- Institutions should be encouraged to develop lifelong learning strategies as part of their institutional policies.
- Just as initial learners, lifelong learners should be at the centre of their education. This means that HEI management systems should deal with lifelong learners as an integral part of their education provision and quality assurance, respecting the differences between different learners and their needs.
- As employers need to trust qualifications, the recognition of qualifications and of prior learning should be part of regular quality assurance procedures and be related to the three cycle structure. This should apply to all forms of lifelong learning and cross border provision.
- Procedures for the recognition of prior learning should be made more open and transparent, for the benefit of potential learners, students, staff, institutions and employers.

- Practice across the EHEA should be shared and analysed, in order to improve understanding of different approaches and the interests of different stakeholders.

## **Conclusion**

14. Considerable progress has been made towards increasing the understanding of lifelong learning in a higher education context over the last two years. Much, however, remains to be done, before lifelong learning becomes fully integrated within all higher education system across the EHEA. In particular, significant effort is required to enhance the development and application of the recognition of prior learning. This should be recognised in the developing “Bologna beyond 2010” report and the emerging Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué.

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**Meeting LLL coordination Group 9 January 2009 in Scotland House, Brussels**

**Present**

Ann McVie	by telephone from Scotland
Svetomira Apostolova Kaloyanova	Bulgaria
Emmi Helle	ENQA
Michal Karpisek	EURASHE
Hans Daale	EURASHE
Marlies Leegwater	Bologna Secretariat

The plane in which Ann McVie was going to arrive at Brussels returned to Edinburgh airport. At 10.30 she was still in Edinburgh and it was decided that she would stay there and that we would be in touch by telephone.

1. Those present in Brussels were welcomed.

They agreed to bring elements to the fore resulting from Seminars in Brdo, Prague, Edinburgh and Amsterdam on various aspects of LLL, which would preferably be added to the draft zero Communiqué as action lines for LLL.

The following action points were drawn up:

Institutions should be encouraged to develop LLL strategies as part of their institutional policies.

Just as initial learners, LLLearners should be at the centre of their education. This means that HEI management systems should deal with LLLearners as an integral part of their education provision and quality assurance, respecting the differences between different learners and their needs.

As employers need to trust qualifications, the recognition of qualifications and of prior learning should be part of regular quality assurance procedures and be related to the three cycle structure. This should apply to all forms of LLL and cross border provision.

Procedures for the recognition of prior learning should be made more open and transparent, for the benefit of potential learners, students, staff, institutions and employers.

Practice across the EHEA should be shared and analysed, in order to improve understanding of different approaches and the interests of different stakeholders.

Of related nature is an outcome of the ENQA seminar on transnational education:

A mapping exercise of the transnational education provision offered in the EHEA will be taken up by the E4 and other interested parties.

Then we moved to the agenda:

2. The minutes of last meeting in Slovenia were approved.
3. Recent activities of LLL were reviewed.

It was noted that EUA will be organising events to take forward their LLL Charter.

The outcomes of the recent EURASHE event and the Amsterdam seminar were discussed. There was support at the Amsterdam seminar for taking forward in HE the quality assurance approaches that have been developed in the framework of LLL and VET. There was also support for continuing to share and analyse cross border experiences. It was recommended by a working group. No actual decision was made to maintain the network. The need for a network could however be kept under review and set up if it was considered to be useful.

4. Stocktaking responses on flexible delivery paths and the recognition of lifelong learning

As a member of the stocktaking working group, Ann McVie has been analysing the sections of the national reports relating to lifelong learning. They showed a mixture of developments: in some countries much is going on: in other countries, work is at a much earlier stage. The analysis gave rise to the suggested action line on increasing the openness and transparency of procedures. It also suggested there might be a need for institutions and governments to provide more information to the general public about LLL opportunities, including procedures for recognising prior learning, and to improve guidance and counselling for LLLearners.

5. The Beyond 2010 report is considered adequate regarding LLL.
6. Input to the Communiqué; see point 1
7. Any other business

It was agreed that:

This would be the last meeting of the coordination group on LLL.

Marlies Leegwater would prepare a report of this last meeting.

Ann McVie would insert the outcome of this last meeting into the overall report of the Coordination Group on LLL to the BFUG.

ML 09-01-2009