INTRODUCTION

EUCEN is registered in Belgium as an ‘a.i.s.b.l’ - an international not-for-profit association. EUCEN’s current President is Dr Michel Feutrie.

EUCEN was founded during a project meeting in Bristol (UK) in May 1991. The title of the event was “Towards a European Universities Continuing Education Network” and the participants agreed to continue to meet on a regular basis and to formalise the network as a registered Association. The universities participating in the meeting became the 15 founding members of EUCEN (Aalborg and Aarhus - DK; Bordeaux - FR; Bristol, Cambridge, Exeter and Oxford - UK; Galway - IE; Granada and Valladolid - ES; Hanover - DE; Leiden - NL; Liège - BE; Porto - PT; and Pavia - IT). The first Statutes were presented and approved in Liège in May 1992. The first General Assembly where new members were accepted took place in Spring 1993, at the EUCEN conference in Barcelona.

After the election of Prof. Manuel Assunção, as EUCEN President in May 2000, the Association made a radical change in its organisation, appointed professional staff and opened the Executive Office in Barcelona (ES), with the support of the University of Barcelona, the University Autonomous of Barcelona and University Pompeu Fabra. In the following years, EUCEN evolved from being a voluntary network into becoming now the largest Europe-wide multidisciplinary association in University Lifelong Learning (ULLL), supported by a professional staff team.

AIMS

EUCEN’s main aims are to contribute to the economic and cultural life of Europe through the promotion and advancement of lifelong learning within higher education institutions in Europe and elsewhere and to foster universities’ influence in the development of lifelong learning knowledge and policies throughout Europe. To achieve these objectives, the Association strives to: enable the exchange of experience and information between members on current lifelong learning regulations and policies and establish contacts with the relevant European bodies; provide contacts for members with lifelong learning policy makers and practitioners in a range of universities throughout Europe; harmonise levels of quality for University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) among members and to maintain standards for effective monitoring; contribute to the development of an effective university credit transfer system that would be acceptable within the network; influence European policy on ULLL; and support the development of high quality lifelong learning in European universities.

MEMBERSHIP

EUCEN membership is institutional. All universities within geographical Europe that deliver the highest academic degree in their country are eligible for full membership. In addition, EUCEN grants associate membership to similar institutions that are located outside geographical Europe or to European institutions that do not offer the highest degree or diploma in their own countries. National or international organisations concerned with university lifelong learning can apply for EUCEN affiliate membership. Currently, the Association has 212 members in 40 different countries within Europe, America and Asia.

EUCEN collaborates closely with all the National Networks for ULLL in Europe and has developed close links with other European networks (EAEA, EUA and EDEN) as well as international ones - UACE (in the US), RECLA (in Latin America), and ICDE (global).

ACTIVITIES AND REGULAR EVENTS

One of the core aims of EUCEN relates to ULLL in policy development at European level. A key activity in this regard is the publication of policy statements on behalf of the ULLL community. In September 2001 EUCEN coordinated a response to the Staff Working Paper on lifelong learning which was later developed by the European Commission into a Memorandum on Lifelong Learning; in 2003 the Association contributed to the Trends Report on progress in the Bologna Process; and in 2005 at the EUCEN conference in Bergen a Policy statement and recommendations on ULLL in the Bologna Process were produced for the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and European policy makers. In 2007, EUCEN responded to the European Commission’s...
communications and consultations on ECVET and on Adult Learning; and in 2009 again sent recommendations to the BFUG following the Leuven meeting. EUCEN is also represented in various stakeholder groups and is a member of EUCIS, the European platform for LLL.

The Association is also oriented towards institutional and professional development by organising conferences, seminars, workshops and study visits. EUCEN organises a conference twice a year in partnership with one of its member universities on a topical theme; one study visit per year – always in a different country; and one annual meeting with all the national networks for ULLL in Europe.

RECENT AND CURRENT PROJECTS LED BY EUCEN

- **BeFlex** - Benchmarking Flexibility in the Bologna Reforms (2005-2007), funded by DGEAC of the European Commission. It aimed to monitor the development of university lifelong learning in the reformed structure of higher education qualifications (the Bologna process) and promote ULLL.

- **BeFlex Plus** - Progress on Flexibility in the Bologna Reform (2007-2009), funded by DGEAC of the European Commission. This is a follow up to the BeFlex project and aims to compare results with those obtained there 2-3 years before; it also studies university regional collaboration.

- **DOLCETA** - On-line consumer education, funded by DGSANCO (up to 2010/2011). This is a website for all 27 Member States in all the official languages with consumer education targeted at adults, adult educators and teachers in primary and secondary schools.


- **OBSERVAL** - European Observatory of Non-formal and Informal Learning Validation (2007-2010), funded by the Leonardo programme of DGEAC. This projects aims to collect and analyse materials, debate the results, and provide an extensive and critical view on situations and practices of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe; it will also include looking forward to new ideas, new projects and new policy developments. All this will be on a special Observatory website.

- **EQF PRO** – Articulation between vocational and academic learning in University Education (2008-2010), funded by DGEAC of the European Commission. This project aims: to test in a lifelong learning perspective the level 5 and level 6 of the European Qualification Framework on 25-30 professional diplomas provided by Higher education institutions; to identify potential confusions in the classification of the qualifications at levels 5 and 6 of the EQF framework in different institutions or countries; to identify the nature and source of possible conflicts with other frameworks (e.g. National qualification framework, sectorial framework, local employment constraints...); and to propose guidelines to ensure a better presentation of the qualifications.

- **ALLUME** – A Lifelong Learning University Model for Europe (2009-2011), funded by DGEAC of the European Commission). This project will propose guidelines helping universities to become lifelong learning institutions, facilitating access and participation not only of young generations but also of populations already engaged in working life, providing opportunities and services for them to return to university several times during their professional and personal life in order to be able to contribute to a changing economy.

EUCEN has also benefitted over the period 2002-9 from an operating grant from the European Commission to help develop and maintain its infrastructure, improve services to members and develop new ideas.

Access to these projects’ web sites is available from EUCEN’s web page - http://www.eucen.org