

eucen and the National Networks for University Lifelong Learning (ULLL)

Procedure for emerging National Networks

Background

eucen has been actively working with existing National Networks for University Lifelong Learning for almost two decades. It has invited them to use **eucen** as a platform for exchange at network level.

Since 2009 **eucen** has allowed National Networks to have the status of Full Members¹ which can nominate a delegate to represent the Network in **eucen**'s General Assembly. One member of **eucen**'s Steering Committee is formally appointed to liaise with the National Networks and to chair the meetings with the National Networks delegates. Regular services for National Networks in **eucen** are:

- Organisation of the “National Networks Forum”, inviting all delegates of National Networks to meet in the framework of **eucen** conferences
- Allocation of a space on the **eucen**'s website for the National Networks
- Preparation and analysis of a yearly survey
- Recommendation of speakers for events at national level upon request

Creation of new National Networks for ULLL

eucen has actively supported the creation of new National Networks by providing information and sharing experience. At the invitation of a promoting group, **eucen** is prepared to hold a network development workshop at national level.

Upon request **eucen** can lead a workshop to help building a National Network. An experienced member of **eucen** in the creation and/or management of a National Network will help the new emerging group to define and start up their own National Network. One of the crucial points that emerging groups need to decide is if their network will be formal or informal.

Formal or informal?

The National and Regional Network members met at the **eucen** Paris Conference in November 2006 to discuss the question of whether national networks for University Lifelong Learning function best as an **informal group** or as a more structured **formal network**.

The discussion and the answers to a questionnaire that had been circulated prior to the meeting, reflected the following advantages and disadvantages of formal or informal groups.

¹ See **eucen**'s *Internal Regulations for the rules on allocation of membership categories*

Informal groups

- Can be more appropriate in smaller countries with fewer universities engaged in LLL
- They are not too bureaucratic and have greater flexibility e.g. in arranging meetings
- Only the motivated people will be involved, so ensuring that the activities lead to action back in their own institution
- They can be used as a way of seeing if there is a need for networking and possibly could develop into a formal network as a second phase

Formal networks

- They have a formal recognised position at national level i.e. greater visibility, which assists in lobbying government, etc
- They are more likely to be able to take advantage of external funding opportunities
- To join such a network is a formal commitment by the rector of the university and member universities may be more likely to fund attendance at network meetings
- There is a critical mass of opinion, for example the network might produce common documents for guidance about common issues e.g. quality assurance. This in turn supports the local members as a resource to be used in their own institution
- Most networks charge fees (either as an annual membership fee or a fee for their services) and this may discourage some small universities from joining.
- Many networks do not have paid staff and so they rely on members giving their own time to undertake the various duties

This is not an exhaustive review of this topic but outlines some of the points considered by **euken** network members to be relevant to any country thinking of setting up a ULLL national network.

How to proceed if you represent a group interested to explore the possibility to create a national or regional network of ULLL?

Please contact the Executive Director of **euken** at carme.royo@euken.eu who will contact the member of the Steering Committee appointed to liaise with the National Networks. They will contact you back to further discuss the next steps to take.