



EUNEC-newsletter 17 April 2008

1 EUNEC as European organisation acting in the field of education and training

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) awarded EUNEC with a Framework Partnership Agreement (2008-2010) with a Specific Operating Grant for 2008. This means that EUNEC will be recognised and granted as **European organisation** acting in the field of education and training under the Jean Monnet Programme (call for proposals n°28/07). This gives the network the opportunity to present an ambitious project 2008-2010. This project will be presented on the General Assembly of 18 June. You can find the EUNEC **annual plan 2008** on the website (www.eunec.eu).

2 EUNEC Executive Committee

The **Executive Committee** of EUNEC met on March the 17th in Madrid. The Committee evaluated the daily working of the network and prepared the annual plan for 2008, with special attention for the conference on learning outcomes in Madrid. You can find the **minutes** of the meeting on the website (www.eunec.eu).

3 EUNEC conference 'Learning outcomes: a gadget or a new paradigm? (Madrid, 16-18 June 2008)

European countries are increasingly referring to **learning outcomes** when setting overall objectives for their education and training systems and when defining and describing qualifications. Instead of focusing on input factors like the duration, location and particular pedagogical method underpinning a qualification, attention is directed towards what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process.

Learning outcomes can have diverse functions:

- as reference level descriptors;
- as a vehicle for quality assurance;
- as a tool for relating theoretical and practical learning;
- to link learners' cognitive, skill and affective learning;
- in the formulation of lifelong learning policies;
- as a lever for reform or modernisation;
- for legibility or transparency of learning.

Considerable experiences have been made in European countries in this field. An increasing number of countries are furthermore setting up National Qualifications Frameworks based on learning outcomes, other countries are considering moving in this direction. The launching of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) – both based on learning outcomes – have increased the attention to learning outcomes and may be seen as catalysts for national reforms in this field.

The expectations to the learning outcomes approach are thus higher than ever before. Many see this shift as an opportunity to tailor education and training to individual needs, to improve the links to the labour market, to improve the way non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes are recognized and to guarantee the quality of education and training. Others, however, see these expectations as unrealistic and exaggerated. The shift from input in the education process to learning outcomes can also be seen in the broader perspective of more autonomy and the capacity of policymaking of schools.

To examine the issues that arise from this shift, **Cedefop** has commissioned a 32-country comparative report, entitled **Rhetoric or reality: The shift towards learning outcomes in European education and training policies and practices**. The preliminary findings of this report were discussed at a Cedefop conference held on 15-16 October 2007 in Thessaloniki. The conference examined policy reform in light of the learning outcomes approach and how the approach affects teaching and assessment. The comparative report (QCA – Tom Leney, Jean Gordon and Stephen Adam) is expected to be completed by December 2007.

What does EUNEC want to know with this conference?

EUNEC wants to deal with the following questions during this conference:

- (1) What are learning outcomes?
- (2) What is the benefit of the shift towards learning outcomes? What are the pitfalls? What are the consequences of this shift?
- (3) Learning outcomes in primary education, vocational education and training, general education and training, higher education?
- (4) What are the links with other main issues in education?
 - Quality assurance and autonomy of schools and institutions;
 - Qualification systems (EQF/NQF/NQS)
 - New learning paradigms (modularisation, ECVET, competence based learning, active learning...)

EUNEC also wants to exchange impressions and experiences out of the member councils. Therefore, EUNEC foresees a lot of time in the programme for workshops.

You can download the programme of this conference on the website (www.eunec.eu).

4 A State of Affairs of the European Education Policy

It is not easy to keep up with all the activities in the European education policy. For that reason, the EUNEC secretariat made a **State of Affairs (March 2008)** of all the running processes in the European education policy. You can find this document on our website (www.eunec.eu). The document of 18 pages is a treasury of information on:

1. The European Commission
 - 1.1 Overview of the activities of the peer learning clusters
 - 1.2 The European Institute of Innovation and Technology
 - 1.3 Promoting a personal adoptive language
 - 1.4 The ECVET proposal of the European Commission
 - 1.5 Expected documents and events in 2008
2. The conclusions of the European Council (14 February 2008)
 - 2.1 Draft 2008 Joint Progress Report

- 2.2 Key messages in the field of education and training for the Spring European Council
- 2.3 Other business
- 3. Recent publications
 - 3.1 "No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education" (OECD)
 - 3.2 Eurydice study: 'School Autonomy in Europe: policies and measures'
 - 3.3 What skills will Europeans need in the years to come? First EU forecast of skill needs is published by CEDEFOP
 - 3.4 Study on the impact of Comenius, the EU programme for schools
 - 3.5 Study on the impact of the Leonardo da Vinci programme
 - 3.6 Studies ECVET (ECVET Connexion and ECVET Reflector)

5 Questions

You can send all questions and remarks on EUNEC and this newsletter to eunec@vlor.be