

Action Plan - Priorities for 2010/2011

Revised during the 3rd Board of Directors

1. Campus Europae scope and reach

Campus Europae focus has historically been in academic and curricular cooperation, with the first subject committee meetings going as far back as 2001/2002. Over time, and particularly since the start of the pilot projects in 2004/2005, cooperation amongst member universities extended greatly through the creation of the CE coordinators circle (dealing with administrative matters and student support), the student council, and the language experts circle. This went hand in hand with efforts to improve student mobility beyond the strict realm of curricular compatibility, and as such Campus Europae can currently add value to a student's stay abroad not only with regards to academic recognition but also language learning and the acquisition of study related professional experiences while abroad. Campus Europae is increasingly the "Erasmus +", a designation coined by former commissioner Jan Fígel.

In spite of increasing cooperation across a number of areas student mobility amongst the Campus Europae member universities has not increased as expected: for three consecutive years the number of CE Movers is of around 120. This is largely because to become a CE Mover students are expected to have an allegiance with the area of activity of the subject committees, and only then it is offered to them the possibility to partake a CE language course or study related internship. Considering the type of intensive preparations necessary to establish recognition matrices this criteria constitutes a considerable bottleneck which can now be removed so as to improve the reach of CE. In fact there is no reason why students moving between two partner universities for the necessary length cannot be offered the possibility of benefiting from the infrastructure that has been developed over the years, rendering the programme more flexible and student-centred. In such a design the CE Degree plays the pivotal role of inspiring and encouraging students to fulfil the Campus Europae ideal of being abroad for two year long periods, which in turn should conduce to a much keener awareness of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe.

This approach should also do away with the persisting misunderstandings about how Campus Europae articulates itself with other mobility programmes. It is clear that, when applicable, student exchanges amongst Campus Europae member universities shall be organized on the basis of Erasmus from an administrative workflow as far as bilateral contracts, learning agreements and student grants are concerned. Campus Europae member universities do not have the interest or resources to reinvent or establish parallel administrative workflows, as the role of CE is that of, through intensive inter-university cooperation, render student mobility more enticing and fulfilling.

Accordingly the Board of Directors decides:

- 1) *That outgoing students moving within the Campus Europae network for the appropriate length of time shall be able to partake the different advantages*

offered to them and combine them in the way that best suits the objectives of their stay abroad;

- 2) *That the competent services will inform students interested in studying abroad about CE irrespectively of their academic background and alongside with Erasmus and/or other available programmes.*

2. Academic recognition and subject committees functioning

One of the cornerstones of Campus Europae, as well as of ERASMUS, is the guarantee each student must have of full recognition of the credits gained in the host university, though the replacement of an equivalent number of credits of the home University.

Since the beginning, CE devoted the best of its efforts to creating conditions for the implementation of this principle, looking to establish mechanisms that make recognition an easy and standard procedure, and to this effect the subject committees were established. In these committees, professors were given by their university authorities the capacity to identify the courses that can be recognised when taken in the other partner institutions. It must be stressed that this is a unique opportunity for building mutual trust and confidence, only made possible due to the financing of CE. Indeed such subject committees were also put in place in the early days of ERASMUS (the ICPs), but were put aside in the middle 90's as the programme expanded and funding for ICPs could no longer be sustained.

The work of the subject committees has been an ongoing process, and the widespread implementation of Bologna study cycles and new study programmes has at times proven a most difficult obstacle to overcome. However considerable progress has again taken place since 2009, thanks to the stabilization of the European curricular landscape and the further development of the subject committees working methodology. As of February 2010 compatibility matrices in Biology, Physics, Biochemistry, Computer Sciences, Electronic and Electric Engineering, Teacher Training and Education and Law with an average number of cooperating universities per subject area of 6 (min 3, max 13).

However, it is necessary that there be an explicit commitment from the Universities about the guarantee of the recognition of the matrices. While some Universities will take for granted such recognition, others are still facing some problems about it. Therefore it is important that each published compatibility matrix is explicitly endorsed and validated by the concerned Universities. The Law subject committee has worked on a template of a draft agreement that can and should be signed by cooperating universities. In cases where the signature of such documents may be deemed difficult an alternative procedure would be a statement of the kind provided by the University of Gazi (see annex).

Furthermore the Subject Committees are asked to continue to expand the number of study programmes and cycles to which such provisions are available, as well as keeping the existing compatibility matrices up to date. Whenever that is not feasible or desirable the scope of cooperation should be broadened onto the development of joint study programmes, staff mobility or joint research ventures.

The Board of Directors decides:

- 3) *That each University should formally endorse the work carried out by its representatives in the elaboration of compatibility matrices in one of the forms suggested above, which is to be signed by the responsible for recognition at Faculty/Department level and/or by the Rector or his/her delegate for such matters;*
- 4) *That Subject Committees shall deepen their outcomes driven approach to the planning of future meetings and prioritize the updating and expansion of the number of study programmes and cycles to which compatibility matrices are available. This is particularly the case for the 2nd cycle, as most matrices refer to the 1.cycle.*

3. Language learning and Hook Up!

Considering that:

- the Campus Europae language strategy is moving towards earlier learning of the foreign language of the host university and a reduction of the length of the CE funded intensive language courses before the start of the academic year;
- the e-learning part of the CE language strategy can start as soon as a student decides to go abroad, which is usually around March-April and that after an average of 3 months, the student can move onto the next level;
- that the completion before this coming summer of the elaboration of online language courses at A1, A2 and B1 levels in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme project "Hook up! Campus Europae Language Learning Gateway" and the delivery of online interactive language courses at these levels before the end of the academic year, make it possible for prospective CE Movers to start learning the language at their home university.;
- the adoption of "Hook up!" will give students, staff and international students access to all the languages of the network (including their own), and promote ICT and lifelong learning,

The Board of Directors decides:

- 5) *To favour the conditions for the provision of online language courses in the form of easing access to internet in the campus, libraries and language laboratories for students committed to language learning;*
- 6) *To actively encourage CE Movers to take part in the online language courses offered by Hook up! before, during and after their stay abroad;*
- 7) *To organise at A2 level the face to face intensive language courses for CE Movers four weeks before the start of the academic year which students should be strongly advised to follow;*
- 8) *To organise an "end of stay abroad" test to ascertain that CE movers have completed the B1 level and timely communicate the results to the EUF Secretariat;*
- 9) *To continue supporting throughout the academic year the involvement of staff and students in Hook up!*

10) To find ways to disseminate Hook Up! amongst its administrative and academic staff, and amongst its enrolled and prospective international students.

4. Study related internships

The Bologna meets Lisbon project was launched with a view to:

- allow exchange students to combine a stay abroad with a study-related internship which would allow a fuller immersion in the host society from a cultural and linguistic while developing skills and experiences that would enhance their future employability;
- to gradually develop such internships into micro knowledge transfer projects which would contribute to expand and consolidate cooperation between universities and companies;
- to find complementary financing for students who cannot go abroad unless they find alternative sources of income, test the possibilities to develop a pan-European loan system and establish a rational of financing mobility on the basis of living costs differences.

Although the aims and financial design of the project have been reviewed positively at a number of expert conferences as of 2009/2010 its implementation is still far from ideal, with only 9 out of 18 universities making internships available to exchange students, and a much smaller number of agreements with entities able to provide students with mobility loans (although in some countries these are not necessary by virtue of the capacity of the national student support systems).

Considering that since 2010 the European Commission is starting to express interest in the development of the financial support system first envisaged by CE and the complexities of setting up the Bologna meets Lisbon in its full and original design without a stronger cooperation with the member universities,

The Board of Directors decides:

- 11) to renew efforts to increase the number of destinations where study related internships can be offered to students, notably through cooperation with partner organizations which can effectively take over the responsibility of finding such internships;*
- 12) that the financial design of the project shall be reviewed to consider the possibility of eliminating the combination of loans and grants, with students receiving the bulk of the honoraries they internship may command.*

5. The CE Degree awarding

At the last Board meeting in March 2009, the general concept of the CE-Degree was discussed and, given the legal difficulties of joint and/or double, multiple degrees, it was accepted that, for the time being, a separate degree will be issued by the EUF, after the candidate completes the academic degree(s).

The degree will be awarded to those students who have completed two CE-cycles, and have fulfilled the academic as well as the language requirements in each cycle. The requirements to be awarded a certificate for one cycle are:

- Acquisition of at least 45 ECTS credits at the host university and recognition of the equivalent number at the home university, based on a concluded Learning agreement,
- a B1 level in the language of instruction of the host university

In addition to two certificate qualifications, a student must be awarded an academic degree totalling 240 ECTS credits or more.

Before issuing a degree, the student will have acquired a certificate in his first year abroad. The Secretariat will record all issued certificates to facilitate the identification of potential degree-candidates. It is indispensable that, for the degree as well as for the certificate, the Secretariat receives ample and reliable information. Therefore, the information regarding the academic results – and their subsequent recognition – must be centralized and then forwarded. The same applies to any form of language certification.

Ultimately, the procedure which leads to the award of a CE-Degree can be initiated either by a student, or by a university. In cases where a student has changed universities, the CE Secretariat shall give note to the relevant university when a student has fulfilled the relevant criteria.

The procedure will be the same for the award of a CE-Certificate. Upon proposal from The Secretary General, that may demand if deemed necessary, further information from the universities, the President will have the power of decision in the event of complaints related to the non-award of the degree,

The Board of Directors decides:

13) The requirements to be awarded a certificate for one cycle are:

- *Acquisition of at least 45 ECTS credits at the host university and recognition of the equivalent number at the home university based on a concluded learning agreement;*
- *a B1 level in the language of instruction of the host university.*

In addition to two certificate qualifications, a student must be awarded an academic degree totalling 240 ECTS credits or more

b) That information necessary to issue any certification given by CE must be submitted by the home university; as regards academic achievements the coordinator will be responsible, as regards language competencies the FLTEX expert. The university must safeguard the efficient internal flow of information;

14) That a workgroup of interested universities will be set up to look into ways the existing configuration of the CE Degree can be upgraded into a joint Degree.

6. Quality in Mobility – The Role of an Ombuds(wo)man

From 2004 to 2010 the main quality assurance instruments within Campus Europae have been the questionnaires circulated to the CE Movers, and while they have provided most useful information they are also inherently limited with regards to their scope and reach. Considering how quality assurance has become increasingly important in the context of the Bologna Process and the need of monitoring the development and efficiency of the various aspects of the Campus Europae programme it is deemed necessary to develop more potent ways that allows Campus Europae to assert its commitment towards furthering excellence in student exchange.

The proposal here presented seeks to take into account the following needs and objectives:

- to create a permanent and institutional instance which will oversee all dealings pertaining to quality assurance within Campus Europae;
- to implement a more holistic strategy towards retrieving information about the experiences and needs of students moving within the CE network; while questionnaires “pull” vital information they seldom provide a coverage of more than 60% of the exchanged students; CE can improve on the way students are encouraged to “push” their experiences and views as well as address them in a more systemic manner.

These can be best achieved by the creation of a CE Ombudsmen who would provide an obvious contact point exchange students could directly address when faced with situations where they would see fit to engage the help of a third party and act as a mediator when their resolution would require further cooperation amongst member universities.

Inaugurating an Ombudsmen position within CE would be a natural follow-up to the challenge Campus Europae has set forth for the European Parliament to ponder on the usefulness of a European student exchange ombudsmen, and its quick implementation could provide a practical example of policy entrepreneurship by the network.

The CE Ombudsmen would receive strong administrative support by the Secretariat and liaise both with the Secretary-General and the Student Council with a view to:

- Continuously improve the quality, design and analysis of the questionnaires circulated amongst students exchanged in the CE network;
- Establish a registrar of all issues and complaints raised by mobile students, to be complemented with records of interviews held yearly across the network;
- Find ways to ensure ex-ante recognition pathways set forth by the subject committees are being honoured and are proving efficient guarantors of academic recognition;
- Invite interesting partners to a working seminar to prepare applications for an ECTS label.

The Board of Directors decides:

- 15) *To appoint a CE ombudsmen for a term of two years with the objectives specified above;*
- 16) *That the mandate of the ombudsmen will be as outlined above;*
- 17) *To recommend member universities, and notably their administrations, to liaise with the ombudsmen in finding ways to improve student's mobility experience.*

7. The Brussels Conferences 2010: "European Citizens and European Identity The Contribution of Universities"

Prof. Leonidas Donskis, Vytautas Magnus University Kaunas and Member of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the European Parliament, offered to support the continuation of EUF-CE-conferences in Brussels. The first of these conferences have been organized under the patronage of former Luxembourg Minister, Erna Hennicot-Schöppges, MEP - EPP, in 2007. The title of the conference was discussed between Prof. Donskis and Prof. Ehmann and represents the priorities of EUF-CE.

The half-day conference is planned for the 17th of November 2010 in the European Parliament, Brussels. The EUA, ESU and ECSTA will be invited as well as MEPs and representatives of the Commission. The costs for EUF-CE participants and one or two key speakers will be taken by EUF-CE. The whole number of participants will be limited to 40 persons.

The Board of Directors decides:

- 18) *To endorse the notion to resume events in Brussels, the proposed plan and it recommends a balanced participation by university representatives, representatives of the Subject Committees and the Student Council.*

8. The Luxembourg Higher Education Forum 2011: "Human Rights in Higher Education"

The Luxembourg Higher Education Forum is a initiative of the European University Foundation – Campus Europae in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the University of Luxembourg and the Institute Pierre Werner, which aims to:

- to put Luxembourg on the map of the Bologna Process debates;
- to enhance the visibility of the organizers and provide a platform to liaise with new universities and partner organizations.

Given the organizational requirements that a high level conference entail this would be a bi-yearly event, starting in 2011. After first discussions between EUF-CE and the mentioned partners the topic of the forum is set to be "Human rights in higher education". Not only this is a topic which links with issues such as participation, citizenship and social responsibility but also one to which there is considerable

expertise in Luxembourg, as the Luxembourg University is the likely recipient of a UNESCO chairmanship on the subject. Such a topic also will provide an opportunity to liaise with high level political stakeholders and also allow to establish cooperation with Council of Europe, Unesco and ETUC.

The Board of Directors decides:

19) That the Luxembourg Higher Education Forum is as an important step to strengthen the founding targets of Campus Europae and may contribute to the discussion about the role of universities in contemporary Europe, thus supporting the active/leading role of EUF-CE in the organization of the Forum.