

**The**

**BONN DECLARATION**

**on university-enterprise cooperation in the context of  
lifelong learning**

The Bonn Declaration is the principal outcome of the conference on 'University-Enterprise Cooperation: building on new challenges from past experience', held in Bonn in June 2007. The conference was co-funded by the European Commission in the framework of SOCRATES Accompanying Measures Project 130023-AM-06-EMC. The positions taken in the Declaration are those of the project partners and conference participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the Commission itself.

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#### **I FOREWORD**

1 The Bonn Declaration derives in the first instance from discussions held within the ERASMUS 2 stakeholder consultation group, convened by DG Education and Culture in 2006-7 to consider the scope of the university-enterprise cooperation strand of the new Lifelong Learning Programme [LLP].

2 A subsequent SOCRATES Accompanying Measures Project culminated in the Bonn conference of June 2007 – ‘University and Enterprise Cooperation: building on new challenges from past experience’.

3 The principles and recommendations set out in the Declaration are the fruits of the pooling of experience by universities, employers, national agencies and public authorities. They draw on experience of previous generations of EU-funded programmes, notably COMETT, LEONARDO DA VINCI and SOCRATES, as well as on a wider range of knowledge transfer activities.

4 Broadly speaking, the term ‘university-enterprise cooperation’ is to be read in its conventional usage. ‘University’ means a higher education institution [HEI], whatever its position in a given national or regional binary system. ‘Enterprise’ covers the range of employers and self-employers, whether large, medium or small, whether private, public or voluntary sector.

5 However, the university-enterprise distinction is not as clear-cut as before. The for-profit higher education [HE] sector is growing. Public-private partnerships will become more numerous. HEIs must become more entrepreneurial if they are to make good the decline in public funding.

6 At the same time, fee-paying students with a significant burden of debt, and who are not risk-averse, will opt for more entrepreneurial modes of behaviour while on course. A rising number of student micro-enterprises will create challenges for curriculum designers and project managers.

7 These are trends that, if consolidated, will change the landscape of university-enterprise cooperation. Their implications drive deep into the preoccupations current in HE: mobility, recognition, pedagogy, quality enhancement, student support systems, funding and governance.

8 It is important that HE stakeholders monitor the trends closely and that the consequences are open to public scrutiny and debate.

## II PREAMBLE

1 European higher education is a public good. Personal fulfilment, citizenship and economic growth are its triple top-line objectives. Within this framework, it has a major role in realising the Lisbon Agenda. Effective knowledge transfer, innovation, and deployment of human capital, all these imply much higher levels of inter-sectoral and transnational cooperation.

2 A converging HE sector is better placed to address the needs of the European labour market. The Bologna Process therefore sets a high priority on employability and self-employability. To this end it seeks to achieve a major cultural shift: from a traditional teacher-based model to one focused on student-centred learning and on competence-building.

3 Recognition, mobility, quality assurance and qualification frameworks are now firmly based in a consensus that is regularly re-affirmed. As the European Higher Education Area [EHEA] nears completion, and as curriculum, governance and funding patterns evolve, a new context for university-enterprise cooperation emerges.

4 The contribution of HEIs to the knowledge society is necessary but insufficient. Other stakeholders must match it. Together, they must create a favourable climate based on an alignment of interests, an appropriate regulatory framework and tangible added value for all parties.

5 Who are the other stakeholders? In LLP, they are the HEIs, the enterprises, and the public authorities including the European Commission. However, in terms of the European policy and programme framework, the scope for university-enterprise cooperation goes much wider than LLP. This Declaration also addresses the broader context.

## III UNIVERSITY-ENTERPRISE COOPERATION: MUCH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, BUT THERE REMAINS MUCH MORE TO DO

1 University-enterprise cooperation has been on the European agenda at least since the early days of the COMETT programme in the late 1980s. What began then was continued in LEONARDO DA VINCI and now features in LLP. The principal preoccupations have not changed. They can be followed through a long series of reports and policy papers, from ...

- 1988 – IRDAC opinion on COMETT
- 1991 – ERT report – Reshaping Europe
- 1991 – IRDAC Working Party 11 – Skills shortages in Europe
- 1991 – IRDAC Working Party 11 – Schools and Industry

- 1992 – Commission Communication on the cooperation of HE and industry in Europe: advanced training to the benefit of competitiveness
- 1994 – IRDAC Working Party 17 – Quality and Relevance – The challenge to European education: unlocking Europe’s human potential
- 1994 – ERT report – Education for Europeans: towards the learning society

... to recent Commission Communications ...

- On ‘the role of universities in a Europe of knowledge’ (2004)
- On ‘mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy’ (2005)
- On the follow up to the informal meetings of Heads of State and Government at Hampton Court (2005)
- On ‘the European Institute of Technology: further steps towards its creation’ (2006)
- On ‘delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: education, research and innovation’ (2006)
- On ‘efficiency and equity in European education and training systems’ (2006)

2 What has been achieved? A great deal, if one looks at the sum of individual mobilities, university-enterprise partnerships of short duration, transnational networks which remain viable during one or two contract periods. Too little, if one looks for potential that has been fully exploited and valorised; or if one looks for enduring university-enterprise collaboration within a stable matrix of HEI-business-governmental relations, appropriate university strategies and infrastructures, a Europe-wide network of professional knowledge transfer practitioners, high levels of SME involvement, a pan-European placement network engaging all relevant agencies.

3 What has changed? There are three new elements. First, there is the greater sense of urgency brought by the Lisbon Agenda. Secondly, there is the Bologna Process, which seeks to make HE systems more transparent and more inter-operable. And thirdly, the new challenges which confront society at large: the demographics of ageing; globalisation; climate change and sustainable development; the irreversible rise of information and communication technologies; the elimination of regional disparities in Europe.

4 LLP represents a new opportunity to seek durable solutions to frequently addressed problems. This opportunity must be taken.

## IV CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS FACTORS

1 The competitiveness of Europe depends on the capacity of education and training systems to produce and adapt the quantity and the profiles of qualified workers. The nature of technological qualifications required by the

knowledge economy and the rapidity with which they evolve make it impossible for enterprises – individually or collectively – to take up the challenge on their own.

2 Moreover, competitiveness requires innovation. This means that access to knowledge and qualifications must anticipate the emergence of new markets. Networks capable of mobilising resources in the framework of strategies elaborated by enterprises cannot be implemented overnight. They develop organically over time, with collaboration between the knowledge-producers and knowledge-users. These networks are now integral to the innovation process; they imply permanent yet flexible links between HE and enterprises.

3 A partnership between different actors is built on a shared interest in solving a particular problem, whether it be student placement, transfer and assimilation of research, innovation or spin-off. It is a forum in which knowledge is shared for mutual benefit, and thrives only if the partners cannot obtain the same results on their own. It is characterised by the sharing of responsibilities, risks and results.

4 Closer collaboration can be achieved if a ‘dividend of quality’ results from shared effort in such fields as:

- the pedagogical component of the process of knowledge transfer and the real contribution which training makes to this transfer;
- the quality of diplomates, measured in terms of their preparation for current and future markets;
- the existence of high quality training materials and courses, available to enterprises as well as to HEIs themselves;
- the capacity of HEIs to adapt to changing needs;
- better return on investment in R&D through joint training programmes;
- the realisation of cost savings in training.

5 HEIs and enterprises – but mainly HEIs – must build a university-enterprise cooperation strategy into their mission and institutional plan, both from a general point of view and in relation to specific target sectors where this cooperation can determine success or failure.

## V THE STAKEHOLDERS

The productive interaction of the major stakeholder groups depends on full awareness of each other’s culture and circumstances.

### V.a Higher Education Institutions

1 All HEIs have internal stakeholders – students, academics and administrators – but the legitimacy of external stakeholders is less well

recognised. Yet without them, there can be no coherent institutional strategy regarding university-enterprise cooperation.

2 Aligning the skills base with current and future needs is critical to the growth of the knowledge economy. It implies an outcomes-based model of HE provision, conceived in a lifelong learning frame. Indeed, lifelong learning must become the core business of HEIs.

3 Making the switch to student-centred learning, in terms of pedagogy, curriculum, quality assurance, funding and infrastructure, is an urgent task. The Bologna Process and its associated actions (e.g. the Dublin Descriptors, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, the Tuning Programme) are showing the way. HEIs must follow.

4 The embedding of skills and placements in Bachelor and Master curricula and the building of links with employers are context-dependent. Disciplines, regional labour markets, national frameworks are all diverse. The exchange of good practice renders this diversity intelligible and facilitates mobility.

5 Course delivery, career guidance for students, the organisation of transnational student and teacher mobility, and the management of knowledge transfer cannot function independently of each other. They require integration at the level of strategic planning, as well as operational structures that favour synergy. HEIs are well placed to host and facilitate the activities of professional intermediary bodies that bring together industrial liaison officers, career guidance counsellors, knowledge transfer experts and other relevant actors.

6 Entrepreneurship education, which includes social enterprise and which does not depend exclusively on models exported from business schools, is an important element of curricular reform. It too must be set within the lifelong learning frame. The Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe is a good starting point, although it has yet to gain a strong lifelong focus.

7 Consumer education and corporate social responsibility [CSR] are also bodies of knowledge and practice that should inform curriculum design on a transversal basis and at all levels. Along with entrepreneurship education, they are drivers of the interdisciplinary inquiry on which innovation thrives.

8 At doctoral level, the challenge is to incorporate transferable skills into structured programmes. This means adequate funding and support systems that maximise employability. The career structure of early-stage researchers must be made more secure.

9 At all Bologna levels work placements must be fully integrated – backed up by appropriate cultural, linguistic and professional preparation, and supported by training agreements, supervision, mentoring, recognition of achievement and evaluation in an effective quality assurance framework.

10 Mobility instruments – the European Credit Transfer System [ECTS] and those included in the EUROPASS bundle (Diploma Supplement, Europass CV, Europass Language Portfolio and Europass Mobility) – are indispensable. They expedite inter-sectoral and transnational mobility and guarantee its recognition.

11 Lifelong learning means a sustained attempt to diversify HE constituencies. It draws in new target groups – e.g. young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, and black and minority ethnic businesses – and requires innovative modes of attendance (executive release, part-time, short course, virtual, etc). It means shedding the ideology of ‘full-time-ism’.

12 HEIs produce knowledge, but they also absorb it, legitimise it, de-legitimise it, redirect it, transform it. These processes are necessarily self-critical, transparent and democratic. They must be backed by open access to learning and reference resources and by the nurturing of open innovation.

13 University-enterprise cooperation has little chance of success if relevant stakeholders do not have a voice in formulating mission and strategy. It is important, within the movement towards institutional autonomy, to change governance structures accordingly.

14 HEIs require adequately resourced and professional university-enterprise units, with access to senior management and to the strategic planning function. They must be central rather than peripheral; their deliverables must be defined in relation to the other core practices – teaching, research, curriculum design, staff development, quality assurance.

15 Professional knowledge transfer staff deal on a day-to-day basis with their counterparts in enterprises, handling placements, intellectual property rights [IPR], collaborative and contractual research contracts. They must be familiar with the Responsible Partnering guidelines.

## **V.b Enterprises**

1 There now exist compacts and instruments – such as the Responsible Partnering initiative and the Lambert Agreements – which indicate how business and industry can best work with HEIs and public research organisations [PROs]. They favour fair dealing in contract and IPR negotiations and are the basis for relationships of trust.

2 Sustaining cooperation across different institutional cultures requires a long-term commitment of time, labour, skills and finance. The return on investment can be significant, in terms of human resource development, high value-added innovation, new market creation, but this is not necessarily the case.

3 Commitment to the values of corporate social responsibility will help minimise risk, by introducing into day-to-day business practice the long-term holistic considerations that favour university-enterprise cooperation.

4 The emerging qualifications frameworks will be the reference points for labour market needs analyses, skills shortage analyses, career guidance, continuing professional development, cross-border hiring and posting of workers. It is important that employers familiarise themselves with the new frameworks, as well as with EUROPASS mobility instruments such as the Diploma Supplement.

5 Employers' organisations and chambers of commerce are instrumental in helping enterprise regard HEIs as privileged partners, rather than paid service providers in the knowledge supply chain.

### **V.c Governmental organisations**

1 The responsibility for publicising and explaining the Bologna reforms lies principally with the signatory governments. They therefore have a responsibility to adapt their public employment structures accordingly.

2 If the Bachelor qualification is to afford effective access to the labour market, it must do so in both private and public sectors, and from both sides of national binary lines.

3 It is up to governments to remove all impediments to progression from Bachelor to Master, including across binary lines. Nationally imposed quota systems favour social inequality, low social mobility, low economic growth, and high professional protectionism.

4 National and regional governments are principally responsible for constructing viable lifelong learning frameworks. These hitherto have been, in the words of the Trends V report, a 'rhetorical priority'.

5 Governments are also responsible for creating the conditions in which new businesses can emerge from university-enterprise cooperation activities. These include: technical support, access to finance, a favourable regulatory framework and law enforcement.

6 By contributing to the development of effective quality assurance systems, governments can sustain the professionalism of HEI-based knowledge transfer agencies. At the political level, there should exist a body tasked with assisting HEIs to adapt their governance and internal structures, so that the conditions for successful university-enterprise cooperation are optimised.

7 Finally, governments are responsible for extending and explaining the social benefits that accrue from the strengthening of the knowledge triangle.

## V.d The European Commission

1 The Commission's commitment to lifelong learning, innovation and university-enterprise cooperation is not in doubt. LLP, the priorities of the structural funds and of FP7, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme [CIP], and the initiatives on entrepreneurship and consumer education all bear witness to it.

2 Complementarity and coherence in policy need to be replicated at programme level. HEIs, students and above all employers, have to be persuaded that participation is worth their while. The necessary interoperability of programmes and the streamlining of procedures depend on a higher level of inter-service collaboration by Directorates General.

3 Inter-service collaboration will help reawaken the synergies achieved in previous programmes. Unfortunately, diachronic knowledge has not been systematically accumulated; valuable experience has been lost. It is important to create a multi-level framework that allows this experience to be retained.

4 Significant opportunities exist within LLP to

- produce a compendium of good practice along the lines of the PAXIS Manual for Innovation Policy Makers and Practitioners, but centred on HEIs; it should contain clear guidelines on relation building and effectively extend the Responsible Partnership initiative to cover mobility and placements;
- mandate LLP National Agencies to valorise and capitalise all enterprise placements;
- refine the ERASMUS Quality Commitment for student placements, with the assistance of all stakeholders, to the point at which it has currency and authority beyond LLP;
- launch a European quality label for enterprise placements and for light-touch management procedures;
- promote training and mainstreaming activities that professionalise knowledge transfer in an inter-sectoral and transnational context;
- construct a European platform for the sharing of good practice in university-enterprise cooperation;
- provide support, in future LLP calls, for HEIs willing to formulate a genuine strategy and to establish adequately resourced structures and platforms for university-enterprise cooperation;
- open a portal at EU-level to act as a space for placement transactions – partner search, observatory of national, regional and sectoral trends and policy frameworks, links to other EU programmes, and so on.

5 There is scope for a more extensive networking of knowledge transfer units via the LLP National Agencies – and of the national agencies themselves with the EU-funded centres such as the Business Innovation Centres [BICs], the Euro Info Centres [EICs], and the Innovation Relay Centres [IRCs].

6 It is urgent that the Commission achieve a consensus among users of ECTS as to the system's status, principles and procedures. Transnational inter-sectoral student mobility, particularly when incorporating study and work placements, cannot function effectively without it.

7 It is urgent, too, that the Commission secure acceptance of the IP Charter, while continuing to seek agreement among Member States regarding the European patent.

## VII CONCLUSION

1 The EU Research Advisory Board [EURAB] considers that successful innovation depends on university-enterprise cooperation, but also on the close engagement of both parties with civil society. The knowledge society cannot afford to stifle creativity or to reject accountability.

2 The design of curricula, the setting of the research agenda, the assessment of impact – these and many other tasks require societal validation as well as specialist professional input.

3 How to involve NGOs, consumer groups, the media, the social partners and others in effective programme and project management is therefore a question that HEIs and enterprises must address.

4 The Aho Report on Creating an Innovative Europe (2006) supplies the economic argument for this inclusiveness. The linear innovation chain, with its sequential division of labour and the randomness of its outcomes, has become an anachronism. Public authorities must therefore – through public procurement, fiscal incentives and benign regulation – pump-prime demand-side innovation and help create lead markets. This is not possible without the collaboration of HE, enterprise and civil society.

5 The Bonn Declaration appeals therefore for the empowerment of all stakeholders. It sees an urgent need for structured dialogue and decision, greater cooperation within and between relevant agencies and bodies, and a better understanding of the dynamics of the knowledge society. On the basis of these, effective and sustainable university-enterprise cooperation can be built.