

### I. Introduction

EUA's role in promoting the external dimension of the Bologna Process, and whether and to what extent the association should enhance its international activities, have been addressed briefly in the Action Plan 2006/7 and set out in more detail in a paper prepared by Pierre de Maret and discussed by the Board in January 2006. The importance of the international dimension of EUA's work is also addressed in the vision and strategy document adopted by the General Assembly in Hamburg (March 2006). The present paper draws on these documents and discussions in proposing a strategy and concrete activities for the period 2007 to 2009 in the context of the development of the European Higher Education Area. The document does not seek to develop a strategy and/or actions in relation to international research cooperation.

### II. Rationale

EUA needs an internationalisation strategy:

- In view of the internationalisation process affecting universities all around the globe, and thus also European universities;
- to be able to contribute to the success and recognition of European higher education worldwide;
- to enhance its own international competence in order to maintain its ability to continue providing expertise and support to members;
- to follow up on the objectives set out in the vision and strategy document and on commitments made in the Action Plan 2006/7 to present European HE developments and achievements to international partners;
- to ensure that the perspective of universities is sufficiently taken into account in the development of the 'External Dimension' of the Bologna Process that will be discussed by Ministers in London in 2007.

EUA will seek to engage in a dialogue on higher education policy development with partner organizations in countries whose universities are not members of the association. Following the pattern of its intra European activities, EUA's international engagement aims at establishing an interactive relation between higher education policy initiatives and concrete cooperation activities which should contribute to better understanding and more productive, long-term exchange and cooperation for the benefit of all parties and stakeholders involved.

### III. Principles and priority activities

As part of its responsibilities towards members and in line with its own mission and ethical values<sup>1</sup> EUA will:

1. Promote dialogue, exchange and cooperation with partners based on the principle of equal partnership, and considered as an opportunity for mutual learning for the benefit of all.
2. Offer partner organizations, i.e. university associations and university networks, in other parts of the world the opportunity to engage in a dialogue on the changing role of the university in society. Where relevant, EUA will join forces with European and international

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Glasgow Declaration: "Inter-institutional cooperation has been the hallmark of Europe's universities and is increasingly important in a globalised and competitive environment. Universities acknowledge that European integration must be accompanied by strengthened international cooperation based on a community of interests."

organizations to facilitate debate on the international dimension of higher education between major stakeholder and donor institutions.

3. Will gradually internationalize some of its ongoing activities, e.g. EUA conferences, seminars and workshops, and the Institutional Evaluation Programme, and beside targeted invitations and increased international promotion of EUA events will make a particular effort to secure funding for participants from less well developed countries.
4. Will also pursue, on a case by case basis, clearly defined joint initiatives and projects with selected international partners. Activities will focus on higher education policy issues and institutional development, where EUA has acquired a European, and also an international reputation. Joint projects will tackle issues such as quality improvement, degree structures and governance and autonomy that are of interest for universities both inside and outside Europe. Where appropriate, EUA may also contribute to the capacity building of partner organizations, drawing on existing efforts to support the development of rectors' associations in some European countries.
5. Will build upon the success of the Transatlantic Dialogue and other initiatives with North-American partners suggests as a model to be explored with partners elsewhere in the world, notably in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean Region, while being aware that different countries and regions may require different approaches. Regional Dialogue Groups will be created to prepare the ground for more significant activities. These may be organised during EUA conferences or at interregional events which would offer existing partners the opportunity to meet and further develop their cooperation, thus triggering new and better targeted initiatives.
6. Seek to make the most of existing collective knowledge and experience of its collective national Rectors' Conference members in this process as a means of generating the indispensable basis for a policy dialogue with partners, and of developing strong arguments for more political and financial support in the debate with governments and the EU Commission. Joint discussions and information exchange on this topic could also contribute to strengthening, collectively, the international outreach and activities of national Rectors Conferences.

#### **IV. Specific Actions for the period 2006-2009**

The following activities are suggested for the period 2007-2009:

1. Further development of existing exchange and cooperation with North American partners, in particular the continuation of the Transatlantic Dialogue on the basis of a careful assessment of the outcomes of recent meetings and their interest for both parties.
2. Facilitation of "Regional Dialogue Meetings" with partners in other regions (Africa, Asia, Latin America) as a service to our own members and to enhance international participation in EUA annual conferences. A proposal along these lines has recently been submitted for funding to the Erasmus Mundus programme. Should the project be accepted, the 2007 Lisbon Convention would serve as an opportunity for announcing this initiative, and for first planning and networking meetings. If the funding application is not successful EUA will nevertheless continue with the external promotion of Bologna Process and seek to ensure an increased participation of extra-European partners in EUA Conferences..
3. EUA has committed itself to following up the recently adopted EUA/CUIB Asturias Declaration in a prompt and concerted manner with its partners. A Dialogue Group or Cooperation Platform for Latin-America should be established this year and an activity agenda defined taking account of the rationale and principles set out in the Declaration.

4. EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme has in the past already successfully assessed institutions in other continents. These activities were not only beneficial to the institutions involved but also enhanced the international expertise of the team members and strengthened the Programme's, and EUA's international recognition. These activities should be continued and cautiously expanded. The Steering Committee already has one international member and the programme already uses, upon request, international experts on the expert panels.
5. Internationalization activities necessarily have an information component and generate specific information needs. The EUA Newsletter will step up its reporting on international developments and issues of importance for specific regions. EUA's key international partners will be included in the association's data base and mailing lists, and the EUA website, currently under revision, will include an enlarged area for international activities and events.

## **V. Resourcing increased internationalisation**

EUA's international engagement seeks to enhance its intra-European activities, and should in no way compromise their quality or volume. Nor is the intention to create a separate 'international department' within EUA, but rather to ensure that in future the international dimension is taken into account in the association's different areas of activity, both at policy level and in developing services

to members. However, any major increase in international engagement will require additional human and financial resources.

The European Commission invests considerably in higher education cooperation with different parts of the world and is thus an important donor. The present compartmentalization of EC funding in different DGs, geographical eligibility regions, programmes and programme actions is a major obstacle to launching cooperation initiatives with external partners. The EUA will therefore approach the respective Commissioners in this regard. Ideally, a fund for international higher education could be envisaged with a steering committee consisting of Government agencies and stakeholder organizations. An additional source for funding could be private foundations. It will be a priority for EUA to enter into a dialogue with major players in this area.

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