



Partners Network Meeting Open Session: Presentations

**Friday 7 November 2008: 11.00 – 13.00
University of Tallinn, EE**

MINUTES

Present:

See attached signed list. In addition to TULIP partners, 5 university delegates from the EUCEN Conference were welcomed to the open session.

Frank Hont, UNISON NW, chaired the session.

1. Presentation - 'University LLL in Europe' by Professor Michel Feutrie, President of EUCEN

The PowerPoint presentation is attached.

The following points were included:

- LLL is not an option but a necessity.
- For the first time LLL was a major theme at the recent Conference of European University Rectors (EUA), at which the European Universities Charter for LLL was launched.
- The issue is – will this Charter be enough? Will governments sign up to it? It requires the commitment of both universities, governments and other stakeholders to make it work.
- The question is – 'will universities still focus on the younger generation or are they ready to adopt as a major focus of LLL older adult learners?'
- We need to be careful of the 'individual competitiveness' agenda.
- 2 operational processes underlying ULLL – Bologna with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Copenhagen process for vocational education.
- Reports by the relevant Ministries in the various European Member States on Education & Training 2010 made little reference to LLL.
- EUCEN's BeFlex Project and the Trends V Report found similar results – with a low percentage of university respondents stating that LLL was very important to their individual mission.
- Key word in ULLL is 'diversity' – in approach and in both partners and services. The term itself has many different interpretations within the university community. Services include flexibility of provision, counselling of learners, APL.
- Challenges for HEIs are how to combine the different priorities of:
 - research and LLL
 - contribution at European /national/ regional/ local level
 - social inclusion and acting as a world company
 - how to combine answers to reflect the differing needs of employers (often requiring short term solutions) and individuals (who want life-wide as well as lifelong learning to ensure continuity and progression of learning)
- Issue of who should pay for LLL ?

Questions and comments:

It was noted that the recent first World Forum on LLL in Paris had not invited any universities to attend.

Discussion followed about whether ULLL is a real guarantee of opportunities for older learners. It was also noted that the revision of the Lisbon Process in 2005 revised the concept of LLL with probably too much emphasis on employability and not enough on the individual's societal development.

2. Presentation - 'The challenge for TUs in the Public Sector to engage their members in ULLL' by Ms Liz Snape, Head of Policy Development, Unison, UK

With her background in the Women and Work, UK government commission, the presenter's focus was upon giving *everyone* a chance. The following points were included:

- Often women workers represented by UNISON (Trade Union) are very low paid with an individual holding a number of part time jobs. So the emphasis is often on developing them as a person and focusing on their contribution to society and not just development for the workplace.
- The term 'continuing education' implies that a person has already been educated, but LLL is about also giving the opportunity to learn to those who have not had the chance before.
- The journey to get LLL at the heart of a trade union isn't easy.
- **Access** to university LLL is a major issue for TU members to engage in learning.
- ULLL is always available to higher level employees (e.g. managers) but not always to the lower paid workers and TUs need to address this.
- Should a trade union supporting its members pay for just a few to go to university on a more full time basis, or should it spread support across more members and allow them to gradually build up their learning – through flexible part-time ULLL opportunities?
- Unison has learning representatives and has a tradition of learning within the TU. The 'Return to Learn' programme has a long history within Unison and provides learning opportunities for those with no learning experience.
- There is a history of trade unions working with universities in the UK to provide LLL for members– e.g. Unison has sponsored 1000 members to join the 'openings course' at the Open University. This course provides a general introduction into the world of learning. It allows learners to come into learning in their own way and time e.g. discussion groups at work in the lunch break. Unison is also working with the University of Liverpool in providing Reading Groups after work as a way to access ULLL.
- There is a need to recognise learning from experience in allowing learners to obtain qualifications - both life-skills and at work.
- Individual learner support is key and the union learning reps assist in this. Newcastle University works with Unison to allow learning in the workplace at the pace of the individual.
- Finance is a big impediment to LLL for TU members – not only in terms of paying for courses but also being allowed to have time off work during working hours – TU s have to address this.

Questions and comments.

The discussion noted that:

- there is a 3rd partner in the LLL process for TU members – the employer.

- many opt for professional development when they want to access LLL
- The first step often for those who have not had a good prior educational experience is 'learning about learning'.

3. Presentation - 'The view of STTK and also ETUC on LLL and universities' by Dr Petri Lempinen, Senior SAdviser in Social Economics & Education Policy Dept, STTK , FI

The following points were included:

- In Finland the workforce numbers c. 2.5 million, of which 2 million are in trade unions. There are 2 TU confederations that reflect the interests of 'blue collar' (c. 600,000 employees) and 'white collar' employees.
- The culture of learning in TUs is essential.
- Issue – if you have 600,000 learners how can you individualise the learning?
- Need to ensure that what ETUC and TUs are engaging in regarding LLL doesn't become too theoretical e.g. debates about European Qualifications Framework (EQF) /ECVET (Vocational Ed & Training Framework).
- ETUC resolution on higher education 2 years ago included the contribution of LLL both as an opportunity to continue an individual's education (e.g. CPD) or to access learning as a 2nd chance where an individual had not had a first opportunity.
- The strong link with employers is necessary in providing ULLL opportunities for TU learners.
- There are 4 roles for TUs in this debate:
 1. Social dialogue – development of the learning systems in your own country
 2. Collective bargaining with employers – re training access and funding
 3. As promoters and providers of vocational and TU training
 4. Working with institutions who provide training and learning opportunities, in order to influence content to match the skills and learning needs of their members
- The links between TUs and universities need to be at both high and lower levels (and between these levels) to ensure change
- Issues for the workforce include:
 - the blurring of the dividing line between work and leisure time with new technology making the worker available when at home.
 - Continual change in working life means that workers need to constantly learn in order to keep up with changes in their existing jobs.

Questions and comments.

The discussion noted that:

- There is a demographic time-bomb with the smaller number of younger students and employees – so are employers preparing to train their *older* workforce?
- Given that historically employers are often looking for short term solutions, how can TUs and universities get employers to think about medium-long term learning opportunities for employees?
- With financial limits, to what extent can TUs and Universities individualise learning opportunities? It was noted that individualised learning is also autonomous learning and that if an individual is not ready for that then they aren't ready for individualised learning. Also often learners want to participate in group activity/learning, as there are cultural/social/intellectual issues of being part of a learning group.
- In FI there are 360 competence-based qualifications (many for both 'white' and 'blue' collar) – how do they map onto the EQF and how do they link into HE?

- Can apprenticeships for training be developed into a model for ULLL, e.g. can an apprenticeship system be applied as a way of accessing work-based learning (WBL)? Would this be useful for workers?
- In FI partnerships have been key to developing access to ULLL, especially with TUs.

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