

## EUCEET 111 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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### REPORT OF THE WORK OF GROUP H: DEVELOPING A SYNERGY BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL WORLDS

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#### INTRODUCTION

The proposal to extend the work of EUCEET into a third phase had included a commitment to establish a group (Group H) to consider how to develop synergy between the academic and professional worlds. Initially this was considered to cover the recognition of professional qualifications, the development of CDP and the validation of acquired experience. In considering these topics, it was envisaged that Group H would, by bringing together academic and professional develop a 'common platform' in civil engineering, this being defined as a set of criteria of professional qualifications which are suitable for compensating for substantial differences which have been identified between the training requirements existing in the various Member States for a given profession.

The work of Group H was scheduled to begin at the General Assembly, held in Santander during March 2007, and an agenda and terms of reference were drawn up in advance of the General Assembly, to form the basis of discussion at two sessions scheduled as part of it. The remainder of this report summarises the discussion and outcomes of these discussions.

## OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

In opening the first session, CJK outlined the project, introduced the terms of reference and gave a brief account of preliminary discussions held with professional bodies in the UK concerning the development of a common platform in civil engineering. He then invited Fernando Branco, the current Chair of the ECCE Standing Committee on Professional Recognition and Mobility, to give a full account of ECCE's position concerning the common platform. His presentation is attached to this report. Both presentations pointed out a number of difficulties facing Group H in its task of elaborating a common platform.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Discussion within the Group made it very clear that we would face considerable difficulty in our appointed task and the Group rapidly concluded that the terms of reference which had been drawn up were far too ambitious. The main problem was that the common platform was seen primarily as a matter for the Profession, not the Academic community, and that EUCEET, an organisation comprised mainly of academic institutions, would find it difficult to take the lead in such a project. Furthermore, the different stakeholders have quite different roles in this matter. Universities start by preparing students with the fundamentals of the discipline and generic skills such as IT, communication and presentation, etc. Industry must find, employ and retain competent, useful and creative staff. Regulators (Governments or Professional Bodies) need to be able to assess and compare qualifications and work experience. The main reason for our difficulties in relation to the Common Platform are set out below:

- Discussions had been under way on this topic for many years and the most obvious routes to a common platform (eg the FEANI EurEng) had already been shown not to be suitable.
- The task was clearly a very difficult one, yet the number of professionals choosing to work in other countries and not being able to do so had been remarkably small, mainly freelance professionals. Would it be worth the effort to set up an inevitably complex bureaucracy which would probably only benefit a small number of people?
- At various times, policy had switched from the idea of a common platform for the whole of Engineering to one of a CP for disciplines within Engineering.
- Even amongst like-minded people working in civil engineering, it was difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a definition of civil engineering acceptable to all Member States.
- There was a conflict between the drive to regulate and control professions and the predominant 'free trade' ethic, which would not easily be resolved and which EUCEET was not well placed to influence.

On a more positive note, the need to protect the title of civil engineering was recognised, as was the principle of allowing appropriately qualified people to practice their profession in any country. This being so, members saw an important role for Group H in assisting ECCE in its deliberations on the common platform, but not in taking a lead in this matter.

Members also saw a number of tasks for Group H which could be given more prominence. This included the idea of collecting and disseminating information on professional recognition, industrial needs and innovative examples of collaborations between industry and academe which would be beneficial for students.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed that the terms of reference prepared before the meeting would need to be revised extensively in the light of discussions. This task was begun during the General Assembly and the revised document is attached here. The main points are to collect information on what Industry looks for when appointing engineers, to understand the nature of current interactions between Industry and Academe and to gather information on innovative interactions and good practice.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING METHODS

Revised working methods are set out in the terms of reference. The main task would be one of collecting together information, so some sort of letter of request or questionnaire would be needed. This would require careful drafting which would be undertaken by a small sub group.

## FUTURE TASKS

It was suggested that in order to assist in overcoming the problem of recognition, EUCEET might offer a 'Quality Badge', perhaps along the lines of the Eurobachelor offered by the Chemistry Thematic network. This could be considered in a future forum and if appropriate, be included in the terms of reference as a task for the Group later in the programme.

It was also suggested that a workshop should be held to which representatives from a number of companies might be invited to discuss the question of what Industry looks for in its young engineers. Such a workshop might also be a forum for posters illustrating innovative interactions with Industry and examples of good practice. In addition to the possibility that it might be held at the next General Assembly, Roode Lias invited Group H to hold a meeting in Tallinn. This will be considered by the Management Committee in the light of the available funding and other proposals for meetings

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