Educating Engineers for Global competitiveness

15-19 September 2014

Birmingham (UK)

Incorporating the UK Biennial EE Conference

www.sefi2014.com
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FROM SEFI AND ITS MEMBERS

Recent developments

April began with the submission of the first Knowledge Alliance project in which SEFI is involved, under the leadership of the University of Florence. The Project EERE - EE for a Resilient Europe, in cooperation with SEFI, the University of Braunschweig, the University of Birmingham, the UP Valencia, KU Leuven, ISEP, and several regional authorities and companies aims at developing resilience through a local problem based approach.


The conference included a panel debate, led by Alex Tarchini from our Corporate Partner Mathworks, who also sponsored the event. Representatives from Sony, AlfaLaval, Chamber of Commerce in South Sweden and the Reactor Institute Delft discussed the extent to which academia keeps itself sufficiently up to date with industry requirements. The panel featured representatives from the engineering industry and chambers of commerce as well as from academia. All the presentations are available on http://www.sefi.be/?p=3856. We hereby would like to thank our colleagues from CESAER and from Lund University of the excellent cooperation as well as Mathworks for its financial support.

On 7 April, SEFI organised its first debate in Brussels, on the theme of “Engineering Education Facing the Challenges of the crisis in Europe”. The event was organised in close cooperation with the Hellenic Presidency of the European Union, and was hosted by the Permanent Representation of the Greece at the EU.

The event started by three introductory presentations given by Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Prof. M. Moropoulou on behalf of Mr Kyriazis, Secretary General for the Hellenic Ministry for Education and Religious Affairs and by SEFI President, Prof. Kamel Hawwash. Questions from the audience (35 representatives from other organizations involved in engineering and engineering education, from academia, from industry, from the European Commission and other policy makers) were answered by Commissioner Vassiliou and Prof. Hawwash. This first part was followed by a panel discussion that brought together high rank leaders of Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, Delft University of Technology, Belgium Building Research Institute (BBRI)/ European Construction Technology Platform/ Eurekabuild and Solvay S.A., namely Dr. A. de la Bourdonnaye, Dean R. Fastenau, Mr. J. Vyncke and Dr. Ms C. Malcorps and led to very interactive discussions with the attendees. Many thanks to all those who attended the event, to the Hellenic Presidency, to the Representation’s officers and to the panelists who in spite of their over busy agenda accepted to be with us for this exiting debate. A paper presenting the conclusions of this first debate will be finalized, under the leadership of Prof. P. de Vries (SEFI AC/WG Chair, TU Delft) for the beginning of May.

(The speeches of A. Vassiliou and A. Kyriazis as well as pictures of the event can be found on www.sefi.be)

From left to right, Dr. A. de la Bourdonnaye, Dr. C. Malcorps, Dean R. Fastenau, and Mr. J. Vyncke.
Further to the discussions held during these two major events for SEFI and the engineering education in Europe, it is proposed to launch a SEFI Ad Hoc Committee on Skills. In the first instance, the committee on Engineering Skills will be a virtual group and we will then consider holding face to face meetings as appropriate.

In April too, SEFI was represented at the 2014 EUA Conference organised on 3-4 April in Brussels (ULB) - see later in this issue - as well as to the 6th International Conference on Computer Supported Education in Barcelona.

April ended with the submission (30 April) of two Strategic partnership projects under the leadership of SUPMECA (Paris, F) and KU Leuven (B).

The first one, EPICES (European Platform for Innovation and Collaboration between Engineer Students) will allow developing a European collaborative at a distance project-based learning framework and method, based on already existing and still developing technical platforms, i.e. collaborative and engineering tools, and brings together SUPMECA, Aalto University, Riga University of Technology, Politecnico di Torino, Universitat Politecnica de Valencia, Universita di Napoli Federico II and SEFI.

The second one, readySTEMgo brings together SEFI, the Hamburg University of Technology, the University of Zilina, the University of Birmingham, Politecnico di Torino, Budapest University of Technology and Economics and Aalto University, under the leadership of KU Leuven in order to develop an early identification of STEM readiness and targeted academic interventions.

The results of both the Knowledge Alliance and Strategic Partnerships projects should be known in August in order to possibly start next October/November. We hereby congratulate the respective teams of our active members of UNIFI (C. Borri and E. Guberti), SUPMECA (A. François and A. Lanthony) and KU Leuven (G. Langie) for their fantastic work in succeeding to submit these applications for new projects on time.

On our May agenda are several meetings (7-8 May) with European Commission high rank officers at DG Connect and DG Enterprise & Industry and with European SchoolNet to discuss possible future cooperation, a meeting of our Administrative Council in Birmingham on 21 May, preceded by an General Assembly of the European Engineering Deans Council (EEDC aisbl). Several matters impacting both SEFI and EEDC in the future will be on the agenda, as well as the preparation of our SEFI General Assembly to be held next September in Birmingham on 19 September in the morning and the finalization of the SEFI Orientation Paper 2014-2019.

Launching a Task Force on Engineering Skills

The recent inaugural SEFI Debate, held in Brussels the 7th of April, highlighted the pressing need for a deeper understanding of the challenges facing engineering education in Europe in relation to engineering skills. The question of whether engineering graduates have the skills that both they and industry require for competitive Europe is regularly raised. The extent to which the question is raised in different European countries is not clear and SEFI believes that it is well placed to collate information, through its network, to establish this. This is the reason why SEFI President, Professor Kamel Hawwash, announced the establishment of a SEFI Task Force on Engineering Skills (TFES) at the Debate and he is now keen that we move ahead with it.

The remit of the Task Force on Engineering Skills will be as follows:

Establish the committee with a good spread of membership.
Collate most recent reports on engineering skills from member countries.
Analyse the data and develop a position paper.
Set out the scope for future work in this area and the mechanisms for this, including possible grant applications.

If you would like to contribute to this or to join the TFES, please email Mr Jacques Schibler communication_office@sefi.be by the 15th of May. It would be useful to have an indication of the reason for your interest and the contribution that you can bring from your own country.

SEFI Mathematics Working Group 2014 Seminar

The next seminar of SEFI’s Mathematics Working Group (MWG) will be jointly organized by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT) in Dublin from June 23 to 25, 2014. The main themes of the seminar are:

Transition to higher education for traditional and adult learners
Learning mathematics through project work
Experiences with working with mathematical competencies
Working with engineers to develop the curriculum
Using technology to improve mathematics education

The keynote speakers will include Rolf Biehler, University of Paderborn, Germany, and Chris Sangwin, University of Loughborough, UK. Moreover, we will have 23 paper presentations, about 10 posters and 5 software demonstrations from all over Europe. Also included in the programme are discussion blocks on the main issues in the mathematical education of engineers and on the favorable use of technology. More information can be found on the web-site of the seminar: http://www.it-tallaght.ie/events/MWGSeFi_17/index.html. 70 to 80 participants from all over Europe are expected to attend the event. Everybody interested in the mathematical education of engineers is cordially invited to attend.

EdX Global Forum #FutureEDU conference in Delft mixed with a SEFI Open Workshop on Open and Online learning

TU Delft is organising this year's EDX Global Forum #FutureEDU for the edX community. The first day of this event is an edX-consortium meeting just for edX members. On the second day the conference is open for a broader audience. On Saturday the TU is hosting an additional Open Workshop on 'Online and Open Education' organised by the SEFI Working Groups of Educational Technologies and Curriculum Development. Especially the combination of the two events makes this attractive. More specifically, the Joint Workshop on Saturday, 9:00 - 12:30 will be devoted to the topic "Motivation in active learning both in on line and in presental education". After an introductory presentation by a qualified researcher on the matter, the work will be carried out in small groups.

More information about the conference: http://futureedu.edx.org/ and for more information on EDX: https://www.edx.org/

Politecnico di Torino: the “MANUSKILLS” Project

SEFI HQ has hosted earlier in March a meeting of this project lead by Politecnico di Torino, as part of the Service we offer to all our members.

Envisioning an advanced ICT-supported build-up of manufacturing skills for the Factories of the Future

ManuSkills is a project funded by the European Commission that is experimenting with a wide range of innovative delivery mechanisms such as serious games and teaching factory, supported by the use of social media augmented by gamification and leveraging the distribution channels preferred by young talents.

In addition, the project is exploring the pedagogical frameworks best suited to the personalization of individual learning needs taking into account the industrial demand.

ManuSkills is addressing two stages of the young talent pipeline (i.e. teenagers and young adults), where for the youngest target the focus is to make manufacturing education more attractive, whilst for the elder one the focus is to facilitate transformative deep learning of individuals, with reduced time-to-competence.

The efforts of ManuSkills are converging into an integrated web platform where different experiments are being developed, e.g. EcoFactory, a serious game on sustainability in manufacturing, and LEGO Unit, a combination of simulations and quizzes to introduce manufacturing processes.

The platform will also allow the possibility to follow specific learning patterns among the different experiments, according to the age and the experience of the user. A precise path of competencies to be improved will also be provided.


FROM PARTNERS

INQAAHE-EASPA Global conference

The first global INQAAHE-EASPA conference “Subject-Specific and Specialized Accreditation - Potential for Cooperation and Cross-Country Accreditation” will be held on Monday, 26 May 2014 from 09.00 - 13.00h in Tallinn, Estonia at the Nordic Forum Hotel.

Keynote speeches will include welcoming on the Role of subject-specific accreditation agencies within INQAAHE by Carol L. Bobby, President of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education and Current trends in higher education in Europe by Adam Tyson, Head of Unit, DG Education and Culture, European Commission (tbc). Other presentation will be from ASPA: State of the Art of subject-specific accreditation in the US by Laura Rasar King, Incoming Chair American Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, from APQN: Moving towards subject-specific accreditation in Asia by Jagannath Patil, President Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), from EPBS: the role of the profession in the development of field-specific qualifications by Marie Culliton, President, European Association for Professions in Biomedical Science, and from CONAET: Initiatives for mutual recognition of accreditation in the area of tourism by Rafael Gutierrez Niebla, President Consejo Nacional para la Calidad de la Educacion Turistica.

A detailed agenda can be found here.

The Forum is open to members of external quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation agencies, professional associations, societies and federations, representatives of Higher Education Institutions, Global disciplinary networks in HE quality assurance, other entities dealing with quality assurance and certification of higher education study programmes, schools or professional individuals from around the globe.

More information and registration on: www.easpa.eu

EUA 2014 Annual Conference

Around 350 university leaders and representatives from the higher education sector gathered on 3-4 April for the EUA Annual Conference, hosted by the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in Belgium. The theme of this year’s conference was “Changing Landscapes in Learning and Teaching”.

Discussions highlighted that the importance of the core university mission of learning and teaching has been rising in recent years, and is likely to grow in the future. Participation in higher education, which has already increased substantially, is set to rise further. In addition, Europe is facing demographic and economic changes, and higher education is expected to play a critical role in lifelong learning.

More diverse student bodies and growing pressure on universities to respond to different economic and societal pressures mean it is likely that universities will need to provide more flexible learning paths and individualised support for learners. Plenary session presentations also demonstrated for example, that diverse student populations provide an opportunity to mix different groups of learners so they benefit from “cross-learning”; there was also discussion of combining traditional research-based learning with practical and experiential learning.

A number of speakers pointed to the fact that while today’s students, with exposure to new technologies, have different approaches to learning that need to be taken into account, this does not mean that at the same time they do not benefit from more traditional approaches of knowledge generation and presentation, which studies have shown, are particularly appreciated by students.

The potential of ICT to enhance teaching and learning was a central theme throughout the event, with new technologies transforming environments for students, teachers and universities. While ICT may not be a “silver bullet” to address all the challenges universities face (including massification and budget cuts), discussions highlighted that it offers an enormous opportunity for the reorganisation and enhancement of learning and teaching. This will require strategic approaches from university leadership and resources.

The conference also included a session dedicated to the topic of massive open online courses (MOOCs) on the final afternoon. This was an opportunity for several European universities to share their experiences with developing MOOCs and to discuss with participants their potential and that of e-learning more generally for the future of European higher education.

Meanwhile, presentations by representatives of institutions from China, Brazil and the US confirmed that other regions around the world are facing many similar changes and challenges as Europe. The conference discussions also highlighted the increase in higher education of both cooperation and competition, not only internationally but at other levels as well (including national and regional). The point was made that universities, wherever they are located, will increasingly need to be part of competitive “ecosystems” while at the same time maintaining a focus on cooperation that is crucial to developing high-quality education in a globalised world.
Prof. J. Rutkowski from Silesian University of Technology (PL) and member of SEFI Administrative Council, gave a presentation on “Flipping the Classroom, Engineering Course Case Study”.

EUA President, Professor Nazaré, closed the conference by underlining that the conference title, confirmed by the discussions that had taken place, does not only mean that the (learning and teaching) landscape is changing but also that universities have the potential to actively change the landscape. Presentations from the conference are now available on the conference website.

More on www.eua.be

ASEE Members Choose their President-Elect

Joseph Rencis of Tennessee Tech University was elected president-elect of the American Society for Engineering Education in a recent membership-wide vote. He is currently Dean of Engineering, Clay N. Hixson Chair for Engineering Leadership, and Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the school. Rencis will serve one year as president-elect, beginning in June 2014, before assuming the presidency in June 2015. Rencis has previously been on faculty at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the University of Arkansas. He has a Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University. He has served in a variety of leadership roles at ASEE.

SEFI would like to congratulate him for his election. More on this election and other appointments on www.asee.com

Monday 15th - Friday 19th September

Birmingham 2014

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Prof. Seeram Ramakrishna, National University of Singapore

Dr Keith Willey, University of Technology, Sydney

Susan Scurlock, Primary Engineer

Dr Cynthia Atman, University of Washington College of Engineering

Prof Alice Roberts, Professor of Public Engagement in Science at the University of Birmingham, Clinical anatomist, author and broadcaster

Final Paper Submissions

Paper deadline extended to Monday 12th May

WWW.SEFI2014.COM
## CALANDER

### May 2014

**10-11 Cambridge, UK**  
6th International Materials Education Symposium, Granta Design ([link](#))

**21 Birmingham, UK**  
SEFI AC meeting, SEFI HQ, 11:00 - 16:30

**21 Birmingham, UK**  
EEDC extraordinary general assembly, 09:00 - 16:30

**26-27 Aalborg, DK**  
Launch of the UNESCO Aalborg Centre for Problem Based Learning ([link](#))  
Françoise Côme to attend.

**29-31 Tashkent, UZ**  
UZ Forum: International Scientific and Practical Conference ([link](#))

### June 2014

**5-7 Delft, NL**  
EdX Global Forum in Delft mixed with a SEFI Open Workshop on Open and Online learning ([link](#))

**9-10 Florence, IT**  
QUEECA FORUM, Project and Management Board meetings ([link](#))  
Françoise Côme to attend.

**10-12 Amman, JO**  
2nd Arab-Euro Conference on Higher Education (AECHE) ([link](#))

**15-17 Bordeaux, FR**  
ACA Annual Conference 2014 ([link](#))

**15-18 Wroclaw, PO**  
6th Congress of the Cartagena Network of Engineering CNE-RCI ([link](#)) SEFI will be represented.

**19-20 Valencia, ES**  
International Meeting Valencia Global 2014, organised by Universitat Politècnica de València ([link](#)) F. Côme will give a presentation.

**23-24 Katowice, PO**  
3rd International Symposium of Young Researchers on Transportation Problems, Silesian University of Technology ([link](#))

**23-25 Dublin, IE**  
SEFI Mathematics WG Seminar, Institute of Technology Tallaght ([link](#))

**24-27 Palo Alto, US**  
14th IACEE World Conference on Continuing Engineering Education ([link](#))

**25-27 Katowice, PO**  
6th International Scientific Conference on Transport Problems, Silesian University of Technology ([link](#))

**30 Brussels, BE**  
SEFI Bureau meeting, 10:00 — 16:30

**15-18 Indianapolis, US**  
ASEE Annual Conference 2014 ([link](#)) and ASEE International Forum (with Profs. Hawwash and Murphy in charge of the SEFI plenary session)

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Please find the complete list of our upcoming events on [www.sefi.be](http://www.sefi.be)

**The SEFI/IFEES International Higher Engineering Education Events calendar**

This calendar created by SEFI with the participation of IFEES is built on a Google calendar frame.

It provides useful details and links, and allows direct integration in your calendar.

The calendar is available directly through the [SEFI homepage](http://www.sefi.be).
INTERNATIONAL PRESS REVIEW

eLearning

New digital opportunities to ensure high quality education

The European Parliament has adopted a Report on new technologies and open educational resources by a large majority with 544 votes in favour and 41 against. Milan Zver MEP led negotiations on behalf of the EPP Group.

“The usage of new technologies and open educational resources encourages economic growth in the EU and at the same time enables users to be more efficient and also more competitive on the job market”, highlighted Zver.

New technologies and open educational resources can contribute significantly to putting a lifelong learning process and achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives into practice. Data shows that currently, 63% of nine-year-olds do not study at a highly digitally-equipped school and only 20 to 25% of students are taught by digital confident and supportive teachers.

Increased use of digital resources within the education systems is important because it enables young people to absorb new knowledge in an innovative way. In Europe, data shows that going online is a part of children’s activities from a very young age (7 to 9); 15-16 year-olds spend an average of 118 minutes per day on the Internet. The use of new technologies allows learning in a variety of environments, making it easier for students to cooperate while at the same time enabling the learning process to be more adapted to the individual.

In addition, the large increase in the number of educational programmes and other educational resources that are available online for free can help ensure quality education for young people, which is extremely important given the high rate of unemployment among the youth.

“Open or freely available educational resources, respectively, represent tremendous opportunities for the future of education and the exchange of useful information. This is an area legislators need to monitor well in order to provide for rules that will be fair to all parties concerned, in particular to help the end user - knowledge-eager Europeans”, concluded Milan Zver.


Brand new European adult learning platform goes into production

The Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe - known as EPALE - is a new initiative funded by the European Commission. The platform is the latest development in the EU's long-term commitment to promoting high quality adult learning in Europe. It will be open to teachers, trainers and volunteers, as well as policy-makers, researchers and academics involved in adult learning.

EPALE will deliver a range of distinctive features, making it the primary site for adult learning in Europe. The site will offer interactive networks, enabling users to link with others all around Europe, engage in discussions and exchange good practice.

A calendar of European and national events will keep users up to date on professional development opportunities. News feeds and feature articles by leading experts in adult learning will ensure that the latest adult education policy and debates are accessible to EPALE users.

EPALE will be multilingual, so users in any Member State can make full use of the site and its many resources. It is going to be an open membership site meaning that users can connect with other adult learning professionals, practitioners and volunteers throughout Europe.

Each participating country will contribute information, events, resources, etc. The site is set to become a permanent feature of the adult learning landscape. Future users can already get involved: by taking the survey found on the EPALE site, they can help shape the content of the site. http://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/

Please also note that an EPALE twitter account has been launched; you might want to start following it: https://twitter.com/EPALE_EU

Should you have any question on EPALE and on this survey, please send an email to EACEA-EPLUS-EPABLE@ec.europa.eu
Research finds Harvard course cohort had high hopes, but avoided collaboration and failed to use new skills at work

Students taking massive open online courses (Moocs) end up learning in a “passive” way and fail to use their new knowledge in their jobs, a new study suggests.

It is the latest evidence to dampen claims that Moocs could displace, or at least seriously disrupt, traditional campus-based higher education.

The study surveyed almost 400 participants in Fundamentals of Clinical Trials, a Mooc developed for health professionals by Harvard Medical School, offered through the US-based edX platform.

Students started off with high hopes that they would gain new skills to do their jobs better and boost their careers, explained Colin Milligan, a research fellow at Glasgow Caledonian University and co-investigator on the project.

But when they were questioned during their course, the students simply wanted to complete the programme or get good marks, he said, rather than actually put their knowledge into action.

The design of the Mooc had encouraged students to step on to a “treadmill” of absorbing content and then taking a test, he said, rather than applying it in real life.

Some students also had ambitious goals to swap their expertise with course mates but ended up doing “as little [interaction] as possible”, added Allison Littlejohn, principal investigator on the project and director of the Caledonian Academy, a research centre at the university.

The research, which was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, aimed to gauge the educational impact of Moocs. “There is a lot of rhetoric about Moocs but few studies about how people actually learn,” Professor Littlejohn said.

Moocs for people in work could be improved by incorporating exercises where course mates had to speak to one another, she said, in order to make use of their existing experience.

As part of the Mooc, students could also be asked to use their new knowledge at work, and also to reflect on what they had learned, she said. “Don’t think of a Mooc as a course in a box. Think of it in terms of your work and your life,” Professor Littlejohn added.

Dr Milligan acknowledged that while it was true that all learners, not just those on Moocs, could be “a bit lazy or time pressured”, it was still important that those taking the free courses were incentivised not to “take the easy option” and avoid interacting with their course mates.

Professor Littlejohn said that the research team would be speaking to Mooc platforms such as the UK’s FutureLearn and the US-based Coursera about the results to help design more engaging programmes.

Source and further information: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk

Funding Opportunities

ERC Starting grant competition

The European Research Council has announced that a total of 3 272 proposals were submitted in the 2014 European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant competition – the first one under the new EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020 – which closed on 27 March. In this call, the distribution by the three ERC domains was as follows: 1 494 proposals were submitted in “Physical Sciences and Engineering”, 1 030 in “Life Sciences” and 748 in “Social Sciences and Humanities”.

The ERC said that after years of substantial increases in the number of applications received, this meant “the demand for Starting Grants has stabilised” and this “development can be partially explained by the recently introduced restrictions in re-submissions rules.” The results of this call are expected to be published in the autumn of 2014.

For more information, please click here.

Source and further information: erc.europa.eu
**Internationalisation**

Better entry and living conditions for non-EU students and researchers

The EU would offer talented non-EU students and researchers better living and working conditions so as to boost its member states’ long-run competitiveness, under draft rules backed by the full Parliament on Tuesday. The rules would also clarify entry and residence conditions for foreign trainees, volunteers, school pupils and au pairs. The EU spends 0.8% less of its GDP on R&D than the US and 1.5% less than Japan, prompting many of the world’s best researchers and innovators to go there instead.

This update of EU rules, backed by 578 votes to 79 with 21 abstentions, would create better conditions to make the EU more attractive to third-country nationals seeking opportunities to do research, study, take part in a student exchange, or do paid or unpaid training, voluntary service or au pairing.

"Other countries in the world are doing a better job than we are in attracting competent and well-qualified workers. We often have complicated bureaucratic procedures (...) we need simplified, clearer rules to make the EU more attractive. More foreign students and international exchanges would boost economic growth, promote innovation, create more jobs in the long term and make our member states more competitive", said rapporteur Cecilia Wikström (ALDE, SE).

**More time to set up a firm**

After finishing their research or studies, third-country nationals should be entitled to stay in the member state where they studied or did their research for 18 months in order to seek work or set up a firm, MEPs say. The Commission had proposed that this period be limited to 12 months. Researchers’ and students’ family members would also have the right to stay and work for the same period, Parliament points out.

**Stricter deadlines**

MEPs suggest a 30-day deadline (compared to the 60 days proposed by the Commission) for member states to accept or refuse applications. They also added a 30-day deadline for deciding on an appeal against a refusal.

**Reasonable fees**

Member states may require the payment of fees for handling applications. However, these fees should not be as excessive or disproportionate as to hinder the aims of the legislation, MEPs stress, adding that if fees are paid by the person concerned, he/she should be reimbursed by the host entity or the host family.

**Mobility for volunteers too**

Under the Commission proposal, researchers, students and trainees would have the right to move to other EU countries and carry out their activities there for up to six months. MEPs propose to extend this right to volunteers.

**Next steps**

The European Parliament voted on its first reading of the draft legislation, in order to consolidate the work done so far and hand it over to the next Parliament. This ensures that the MEPs newly elected in May do not have to start from scratch and enables them to build on work done during the current term. The new Parliament may, nevertheless, decide to start afresh, if a committee so requests and with the agreement of the conference of the leaders of the political groups.

*Source and further information: [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)*

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**Internships**

Better traineeships for better jobs - Council recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council adopted on 10 March a Council recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, making thus one of the important steps towards improving the position of young people on the EU labour market.

Recommendations give an overarching framework as to how member states should ensure that national legislations respect the principles set out in the document, and remind of the [Youth Guarantee](http://www.europarl.europa.eu) adopted in 2013, which guarantees that all young people up to the age of 25 “receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education”.

The Quality Framework should increase transparency of the traineeship conditions such as the skills acquired and mentoring, working hours, remuneration etc. in order to prevent anything that might lead to unfair treatment of trainees. One of the aims of the Framework is also to facilitate the transition from education to work and increase employability of young people, who are dealing with unemployment in record numbers.
HE stakeholder organisations present proposal for revised ‘Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area’ (ESG)

The E4 Group (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students’ Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)), in cooperation with Education International (EI), BUSINESSEUROPE and European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) have on 18 March published a joint proposal for a revised version of the “Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)”. The current ESG, adopted in 2005 by European Ministers, are used by institutions and quality assurance agencies as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance (QA) systems in higher education. Moreover, they help to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and are also used as criteria by the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), which is responsible for the register of quality assurance agencies that comply with the ESG.

Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in quality assurance as well as in other Bologna Process action lines such as qualification frameworks, recognition and the promotion of the use of learning outcomes, all these contributing to a paradigm shift towards student-centred learning and teaching. Given this changing context, in 2012 the Bologna Process Ministerial Communiqué invited the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE) in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR, to prepare an initial proposal for a revised ESG “to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope”. The proposal for a revised version of the ESG, published and presented at an event in Brussels (on 18 March), has been forwarded to the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), which oversees the Bologna Process in between Ministerial meetings. As requested by Ministers, the organisations responsible for the proposal have sought to make the ESG clearer, particularly in terms of their structure and in order to avoid potential confusion with their interpretation. The proposal, which presents the joint views of all of the organisations, reflects the recent changes in the EHEA and shows the way forward, we believe, by making a more explicit link to the learning and teaching process in the section on internal QA and defines the relationship of QA with other Bologna Process developments that have taken place since 2005 (including those relating to Qualifications Frameworks and learning outcomes). The proposal will be discussed at the next BFUG meeting in April. The expectation is that the proposal will be adopted at the latest at the next EHEA Ministerial Meeting that will take place in Armenia in 2015.

Source and further information: www.eua.be

Mobility

EU and Tunisia establish their Mobility Partnership

Tunisia and the EU today formally established a Mobility Partnership. A joint declaration was signed by Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Mr Tahar Cherif, Tunisian Ambassador to Belgium and the European Union, and the Ministers of the ten EU Member States involved in the Partnership: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom. This Mobility Partnership aims to facilitate the movement of people between the EU and Tunisia and to promote a common and responsible management of existing migratory flows, including by simplifying procedures for granting visas. The EU will also support the Tunisian authorities in their efforts in the field of asylum, with a view to establishing a system for protecting refugees and asylum-seekers. Through this Partnership, the EU and Tunisia will not only develop their bilateral relations in the fields of migration, mobility and security, but will cooperate together to better meet the challenges faced in the Mediterranean’, said Ms Malmström in the margins of the Home Affairs Council in Brussels. One of the initiatives that will come out of the implementation of the Partnership is that the EU and Tunisia will begin negotiations on an agreement to facilitate the procedures for issuing visas.

Source and further information: www.eua.be
“I’ve just returned from my fourth visit to Saudi Arabia and with each visit find myself more impressed by the women I meet. At first glance, the female population of Saudi Arabia seems inaccessible—robed and veiled in black, they seem like graceful black clouds floating by you everywhere you go. But when I have been privileged to enter those spaces where women can remove their veils, I find myself in the company of extraordinary talent—engineers, medical doctors, nuclear physicists. These women are innovators and entrepreneurs developing conversational robots, introducing new mathematical formulae, managing dental clinics. I am equally impressed by the students I’ve met, like the young woman who had started an undergraduate computer club to provide female students with more opportunities to explore technology creatively and collaboratively since there were only limited course offerings in this field for girls. Women may not be able to drive a car in public in Riyadh but this is somewhat symbolic—or perhaps appeasement directed towards conservative constituencies—while they make significant advances in other ways.

As a woman from the US and a product of the feminist movement of the 1970s, I do find the public constraints on women daunting, but these do not eclipse the increasingly influential role that Saudi women are playing in higher education and the society at large. From 2009 to 2012, the number of women in the workforce increased by 28% to a total of 647,000. Still, a Middle East analyst quoted in the Bloomberg press affirms that educated women remain an underutilized resource that the Saudi economy cannot afford to overlook. There are still many challenges ahead for female university graduates entering the job market. New NGOs such as the Al Nahda Philanthropic Society for Women are helping women learn how to approach job interviews with confidence since this is a relatively new dynamic for both women and male employers. Additionally, it is difficult to create work environments that function for everyone since working together in close proximity may be uncomfortable for some men and some women. Work environments now fall into different categories—segregated, semi-segregated and unsegregated relaxed (where men and women work side by side)—making different kinds of accommodation to an increasingly mixed gender work force.

The participation of women in higher education is particularly striking if one considers that the first women’s colleges were established as recently as 1970. According to UNESCO data, the gross enrollment ratio (percentage of the traditional age cohort graduating from secondary school that continues on to postsecondary study) has increased from slightly more than 25% in 2000 to more than 52% in 2012. Women now represent more than half of the university enrollment. Interestingly, and again according to UNESCO data, women represent more than half of the enrollment in science fields although a very small percentage of the enrollment in engineering. Improved participation and achievement is evident and likely to continue. The King Abdullah scholarship program that supports upwards of 100,000 students abroad reserves at least one-third of the scholarships for women. As a result, there is a growing number of women with PhDs earned abroad, returning home to educate more women—the trend seems unstoppable.

Of course some of the Saudi women I meet are impatient for change to take place more quickly but many more are at peace with their culture, their talent, and their ambitions. Those Saudi customs that stand out for foreigners are famil-
The World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors has approved US$150 million to finance 19 university-based Centers of Excellence in seven countries in West and Central Africa. These competitively selected centers will receive funding for advanced specialized studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-related disciplines, as well as in agriculture and health.

This landmark Africa Centers of Excellence (ACE) project, which will equip young Africans with new scientific and technical skills, will be financed through IDA* credits to the governments of Nigeria (US$70 million), Ghana (US$24 million), Senegal (US$16 million), Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Togo (US$8 million each). The Gambia will also receive a US $2 million credit and a US$1 million grant to provide higher education, including short-term training, to students, faculty and civil servants through the 19 ACEs.

(...) The continent faces a serious shortage of skilled workers in fast-growing sectors such as extractive industries, energy, water, and infrastructure, as well as in the fields of health and telecommunications. The result of having too few skilled workers in Africa’s extractive industries is that oil and minerals are extracted in Africa but processed elsewhere in the world, to the detriment of African industries and jobs. Africa also suffers from a shortage of trained health workers who can provide high quality maternal health services. This may partially explain why Africa’s maternal mortality rate has remained so tragically high at 500 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Further, Africa needs its own research and innovative solutions to tackle its development challenges including climate change, which calls for urgent measures to increase yields in agriculture; and infectious diseases, which continue to exact a heavy toll on families and economies. However, the researcher-to-population ratio is very low in African countries. Burkina Faso, for example, has 45 research and development (R&D) specialists per million people, and Nigeria has 38, in comparison to an average of 481 in Latin America and 1,714 in East Asia.

The new Bank-financed ACEs offer a regionally integrated way to increase high-quality R&D services that will help meet these challenges, yet are efficient and economical given limited public budgets. Coordination and knowledge-sharing among the 19 ACEs will be managed through the Association of African Universities (AAU), which has received a US$5 million grant for this purpose, and is an important regional partner. (...)

Source and further information: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)
SEFI is the largest network of higher engineering education institutions (HEIs) and educators in Europe.

It is an international non-profit organisation created in 1973 to contribute to the development and improvement of HEE in Europe, to reinforce the position of the engineering professionals in society, to promote information about HEE and improve communication between teachers, researchers and students, to reinforce the university-business cooperation and to encourage the European dimension in higher engineering education.

Through its membership composed of HEIs, academic staff, students, related associations and companies, SEFI connects over 1 million students and 158000 academic staff members in 48 countries.

To reach its goals, SEFI implements diverse activities such as Annual Conferences, Ad hoc seminars/workshops organised by its thematic working groups and committees, SEFI organises the European Engineering Deans Conferences, publishes a series of Scientific publications (European Journal of Engineering Education) and Position Papers, is involved in European projects, cooperates with other major European and international associations and international bodies (European Commission, UNESCO, Council of Europe, OECD).

SEFI also participated in the creation of ENAEE, IFEES, EuroPace, IACEE and more recently of the Institute for the development of Engineering Academics, IIDEA, and of the European Engineering Deans Council, EEDC.