

EU-Australia Education & Training Policy Dialogue

Melbourne AUSTRALIA | 15 April 2011

JOINT STATEMENT

The third EU-Australia Education & Training Policy Dialogue took place in Australia 10-15 April 2011. The Dialogue was organised by the Australian [Department for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations](#) (DEEWR) and the European Commission's [Directorate-General for Education and Culture](#) (DG EAC). It was co-chaired by Ms Jennifer Taylor, DEEWR, a/g Deputy Secretary, Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care, and Ms H  l  ne Clark, DG EAC, Director for Lifelong learning programme and policies.

The purpose of the EU-Australia Education & Training Policy Dialogue was to exchange views on common challenges, to share experiences and best practices in selected policy areas and decide on appropriate joint follow-up actions. The agenda of the meeting focused in particular on early childhood education and care and the importance of high-quality, accessible early learning and care opportunities for young children.

The Policy Dialogue was organised in the framework of the [2007 Joint Declaration on Co-operation in Education and Training](#) and the [EU-Australia Partnership Framework](#). The dialogue took place over a week and involved site visits to Australian early learning centres as well as meetings to discuss in detail governance arrangements in Australia – in particular how State and Territory governments work with the Australian Government to deliver a national early childhood agenda.

Along with representatives from the European Commission, the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Community Services NSW and the Department Education, Early Childhood Development, VIC, the following experts participated in the 2011 Policy Dialogue: Dr Maria Herczog (Eszterh  zy K  roly Teacher's College, Hungary), Professor Edward Melhuish (Birkbeck College, UK), Professor Dr Mathias Urban (University of East London, UK), Professor Alison Elliott (University of Sydney), Professor Collette Tayler (Melbourne Graduate School of Education), Dr. Tim Moore (Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne), Elizabeth Death (KU Children's Services) and Pam Cahir (Early Childhood Australia).

In closing the 2011 policy dialogue, Colin Walters, Group Manager, International Group, in the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations spoke to the broader context of the EU-Australia relationship. Mr Walters and Ms H  l  ne Clark, Director for Lifelong Learning Policies and Programmes at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture agreed that the dialogue was a success and looked forward to establishing stronger bilateral links as a result of productive face-to-face meetings.

The success of the third EU-Australia Education and Training Policy Dialogue attests to the importance of continued bilateral cooperation. In the area of Early Childhood Education and Care, over the past week it has been obvious that there are significant mutual benefits for supporting such a dialogue and promoting high-quality education across education sectors.

There has been significant progress in our strategic engagement since the inaugural policy dialogue on higher education reforms held in Melbourne in 2009. The ideas featured in the first dialogue have fed into a larger reform agenda in Australia and the pilot Tuning Australia

project was well received by the sector and initial results reinforce the importance of continued EU-Australia collaboration in the area of tertiary education.

The bilateral relationship continues to grow from strength to strength, with an emphasis on broadening and deepening our relationship more generally and, in particular, in the area of education and training. In a strategic planning meeting held in Brussels in November 2010, we reinforced our commitment to EU-Australia cooperation and agreed to pursue a formal education agreement. Looking at the significant benefits of the dissemination of information and strategic interchange that has been encouraged by previous policy dialogues we welcome the opportunity to participate in a high-level dialogue on the area of international education in 2012.

The EU and Australia have well established student and academic exchange projects which support mobility and the development of joint curricula. These educational exchanges and collaborations pave the way for productive relationships that bring long-term rewards and have a positive impact on the domestic tertiary education institutions. In the eighth round of bilateral projects, to be announced at the end of this year, we will focus on development of joint curricula and anticipate long-term sustainable bilateral links in this area.

It is clear that Australia has close ties to Europe, and the mobility of students and workers continues to be an area of common interest. In December 2010 an Australian delegation travelled to Europe to participate in a [peer learning activity](#) and a [policy dialogue](#) on qualifications frameworks. The results of the joint study on the role of qualifications frameworks in facilitating the mobility of workers and learners are expected to be finalised in the middle of the year. The study furthermore explores the potential added value of a single [European Qualifications Framework](#) (EQF) for cooperation with non-EU countries.

Whilst an international perspective is clearly beneficial when considering a mobile global workforce, it has been equally useful in the early childhood education and care discussions we have had this week. It has been encouraging to share common goals around access and quality as well as provision of early childhood services to the most vulnerable. The fact that we have a common vision for early years education is reassuring, and implementing an agenda along these lines in Australia and in Europe is a significant task. Having the chance to draw on international experience in a format such as this is extremely valuable and expands the evidence base for policy making.

There already exists a strong EU-Australia relationship in the area of education and training that is underpinned by ongoing cooperation and collaboration. In looking ahead we have agreed on key joint actions that highlight our existing approach to working together and support mutually beneficial outcomes.

Conclusions and Follow-up actions

- 1. Bilateral Agreement in Education and Training:** To further support the existing [productive relationship](#), the Parties will look to launch negotiations on a bilateral agreement in education and training at the end of the year.
- 2. Policy Dialogues:** The Parties have committed to future policy dialogues in the area of International Education (2012), Quality and Recognition (2013) and Lifelong Learning (2014).

- 3. A policy paper on Early Childhood Education and Care.** The paper will focus on the role of Early Childhood Education and Care in promoting educational attainment including social development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and in fostering social inclusion. In achieving this, the Parties will engage in a mutual exchange of information, drawing on available research and evidence-based practice.
- 4. Joint EU-Australia Qualifications Frameworks Study.** DG EAC and DEEWR are looking forward to the results of the joint comparative study launched as a follow-up to the 2010 policy dialogue. This joint project is investigating mobility and the role of qualifications frameworks in supporting such mobility.
- 5. Bilateral academic Co-operation Projects.** The Parties welcome the decision to launch an ^{8th} round of joint international cooperation projects at the end of 2011. This round will focus on joint/double degrees.
- 6. Professional Mobility:** To further strengthen the bilateral relationship, DG EAC and DEEWR will explore opportunities for professional exchange of members of their staff through existing mechanisms.
- 7. Joint Expert Seminar:** DEEWR and DG EAC will support a seminar in 2012 in Australia that will feature the outcomes of previous policy dialogues and inform the future policy dialogues on quality and lifelong learning.
- 8. Alumni Association.** DG EAC and DEEWR welcome the first Australian [OCEANS](#) event held from 7 to 8 April 2011 in Sydney. The Get to Know Europe workshop, jointly funded by DG EAC and DEEWR, targeted Australian students interested in heading for Europe on exchange. In light of the success of this event, both Parties will continue to further disseminate information about, and support the activities of, the alumni association.