

ECIU puts Focus on Three Activities

The ECIU Graduate School, Improved Student and Staff Mobility and University-Industry Interaction will be the future focus points of ECIU, the European Consortium of Innovative Universities.

This follows the decisions from the last Executive Board meeting to focus on fewer activities and to sharpen the profile. 2003 will consequently see the consolidation of activities within these three broad areas. Other activities involving a more limited number of ECIU members will continue such as the Leaders for Tomorrow Programme.

ECIU Graduate School

The ECIU Graduate School aims at developing joint top educational products and placing them successfully on the international market. Valuable results have already been produced in different ECIU work groups, and now it is the time to discuss how these activities could be intertwined. To achieve this goal, it is mandatory that every side involved brings forward its experience and voices its expectations. Only then can the Graduate School be successful, says Wolfgang Bauhofer, Vice-President of the Technical University Hamburg-Harburg, Germany.

To start the Graduate School, an Internet site has been launched which contains top-level Master's programmes with a strong international character, offered by several ECIU universities.

Moving ahead, the Graduate School management is currently initiating the development of joint Master's programmes. Therefore, small task forces consisting of representatives of two or three ECIU universities shall be formed. The emerging programmes will either consist of best practice modules of the co-operating universities or be newly developed courses with innovative topics and approaches. Students would then study at two different ECIU universities. To enhance the international character of each programme, it is also envisaged to exchange lecturers. Appropriate Internet supported learning tools shall be incorporated as well, and every programme will be constantly monitored and improved.

All this would add scientific value and a strong European dimension to the students' formation. It would allow the Graduate School to gain more competence in administering cross-cultural European programmes and would help the universities to further develop their educational strength as well as to create more competence in strategic fields.

The ECIU Graduate School could develop into a common educational environment where the different ECIU activities such as student mobility schemes, web supported learning, programme accreditation, a research school, student recruitment and others could be integrated, Bauhofer concludes.

Improved Student and Staff Mobility

The Consortium has its own ECIU Student Exchange Programme, in which a study abroad period is always combined with an internship at a foreign company. The minimum duration of the study period is three months. The same applies to the internship, which normally follows the study period. Whenever possible, scholarships will be provided for participating students from the Socrates/Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci programmes of the European Union. Efforts will also be made to find paid internships for students.

The purpose of the ECIU Student Exchange Programme is to give students a competitive edge in today's global employment market. Students who have successfully completed both a study period at another ECIU university and an internship at a company based in the host country will be awarded a special ECIU Certificate signed by the Rectors of the participating universities.

Students will not be charged any tuition fees at the host university. All the universities participating in the ECIU Student Exchange Programme have International Offices offering quality services for both incoming and outgoing students

Furthermore a thematic working group is currently looking into how staff mobility can be furthered within the ECIU by setting up simple models for e.g. staff exchange.

Staff mobility will also be enhanced by the development of a management training programme, termed Leaders for Tomorrow, for academic and administrative staff in ECIU universities who have strong leadership potential. The objective is to establish a cohort of individuals who understand the European dimension of higher Education, are appreciative of the innovative culture in the partner universities, and will form a self-reinforcing network of knowledgeable individuals who will maintain and grow the entrepreneurial spirit of the participating universities. An important part of the development will be assignments conducted by multi-university groups to address emerging issues within a European context.

University Industry Interaction

Interaction with industry is one of the ways in which entrepreneurial activity has been shown by many of the ECIU members. Many universities are involved with local science parks in a variety of ways, providing a range of services including research capacity, infrastructural help and likewise many members of the consortium are involved in the development of incubators and in the generation of spin-out companies.

There is a strong need for better understanding of innovation and creativity in modern companies in which innovation in the science and engineering base is coupled with business and other skills. Universities within the consortium are heavily involved in developing courses in Entrepreneurship. Properly resourced and developed, such courses have the prospect of allowing the ECIU members to make a direct contribution to employment and prosperity in their regions, and provide a sustainable network for interaction with SMEs, which are the key to Europe's economic future. A European wide network of courses and funding for start-ups, ideally financed through the EU would allow would greatly enhance the reputation of ECIU.

Please read more about the ECIU, student and staff mobility and regional development on www.eciu.org and read more about the ECIU Graduate School on <http://www.tuhh.de/eciu-gs/>