

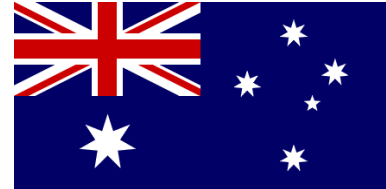
4th European Union – Australia Education and Training Policy Dialogue

International Education



Brussels, Belgium

12 March 2012



JOINT STATEMENT

The fourth EU-Australia Education and Training Policy Dialogue was undertaken in the context of the [2007 Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Education and Training](#), the existing [EU-Australia Partnership Framework](#) and in knowledge of the future EU-Australia Framework Agreement currently being negotiated.

The Dialogue was organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and the Australian Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE). The Dialogue was co-chaired by Mr Jordi Curell, Director, Higher Education and International Affairs, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, and Mr Colin Walters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Education International, Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.

To support the discussion the following experts were invited to join the representatives from DG EAC and DIISRTE in the 2012 Dialogue: Dr Carol Nicoll, Chief Commissioner, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), Professor Jennie Lang, Pro Vice-Chancellor International, University of New South Wales, Professor John Hearn, Deputy Vice-Chancellor International, University of Sydney, Ms Nadine Burquel, Secretary-General, European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities (ESMU), Ms Irina Ferencz, Policy Officer, Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), Ms Gudrun Paulsdottir, President, European Association of International Education (EAIE), and Mr Allan Päll, Chairperson, European Students' Union (ESU).

Opening the 2012 Policy Dialogue Mr Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General for Education and Training, took the opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the European Union and Australia and the 10th anniversary of bilateral projects. He noted that while this was only the fourth formal Education and Training Policy Dialogue, the education relationship between Australia and the European Union had been developing for some time through well established collaboration between our respective education institutions, academic exchange and cooperation and ever increasing student mobility. The Policy Dialogues had formalised a growing and significant partnership which had played an important role in our shared fifty-year history.

In line with the [2011 Joint Statement](#), the theme for the 2012 meeting was international education with particular focus given to quality of provision, wellbeing of students and mobility.

Both parties acknowledged that international education has delivered a wide range of benefits: to students, institutions and more widely to the host and destination countries. Long-term benefits include increased business, cultural, diplomatic and research links. Educational exchanges and collaborations pave the way for productive economic

relationships that yield long-term rewards. Internationally trained graduates now play a major role in the political and economic life of many countries.

International interest in the quality of education and educational providers is increasing, with debate on international standards and the comparability and compatibility of education systems. International collaboration in education and training has increased with countries sharing good practice and moving to better align their educational systems, to agree on common standards, to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, and to support student and labour market mobility.

The 2012 Education and Training Policy Dialogue provided the opportunity to share information about recent developments and to enhance and strengthen transparent quality assurance mechanisms and processes. In his opening address the leader of the Australian delegation, Mr Colin Walters, noted that the Australian Government has recently introduced a number of significant reforms to ensure international students have high quality education, training and social experiences.

Mr. Curell presented the main features of the EU Internationalisation Strategy which will be adopted by the European Commission in 2013. One of the most pressing issues for the EU at the moment is to satisfy the future need for highly skilled graduates. Acknowledging that education has become increasingly a more global matter, this strategy will look *inter alia* at how the EU can increase its attractiveness as a destination for students and scholars from around the world. The strategy will also outline how, in an increasingly competitive global environment, the EU can cooperate effectively with other countries and regions on higher education.

Competition in international education increasingly demands high international academic standards. High quality and sustainable international education requires quality assurance mechanisms, regulation of providers and monitoring of course and programme standards. This forms the basis for mutual trust, cooperation and recognition.

Both parties stressed the importance of student wellbeing and they shared experiences and approaches on the best ways to support international students. A high quality student experience underpins quality learning, and it is essential that students feel safe, supported and well informed.

International education also plays an important role in the development of domestic education systems. International study and research programmes and the internationalisation of curricula give domestic students, researchers and staff a broader international perspective. Enhancing academic mobility remains a high priority and both parties outlined current initiatives to facilitate opportunities and exchanges through scholarships, internships and mobility projects. Furthermore, the parties recognise the importance of embedding international mobility within more advanced international academic cooperation projects, such as the development of joint curricula, joint degree programmes, and collaborative research.

Both Parties are concerned to ensure that the reputation and integrity of international education continues to be held in high regard and expressed commitment to remaining focussed on both quality and sustainability and pursuing partnerships with other like-minded governments.

In addition, the Parties remain committed to recognition and qualification frameworks supporting the continuation of the Bologna Process and look forward to taking part in the Bologna Policy Forum to be held in Bucharest in April 2012, particularly given the focus on balanced mobility and the desire to reduce the diverse obstacles to mobility between the various higher education areas.

Concluding the Dialogue Mr Curell and Mr Walters agreed that it is imperative that both parties continue to work together to promote and ensure that the reputation and integrity of international education continues to be held in high regard. They agreed that it is important to remain focussed on quality and sustainability, to lead by example and to pursue partnerships with other like-minded governments.

The success of the Dialogue again demonstrated the strength of the bilateral relationship. International education is about people and partnerships. It forges people-to-people ties that last and provides benefits far beyond the life of individual projects. International education results in shared experiences, knowledge and understanding which underpin the economic, social and cultural development of our respective countries and regions.

Next steps in cooperation

Future Policy Dialogues: The Parties have renewed their commitment to future policy dialogues in the areas of *Quality and Recognition* (2013) and *Lifelong Learning* (2014).

Education, Productivity and Economic Growth: Recognising the very strong role of education and training in preparing for participation in the workforce, enhanced productivity and economic growth the Parties agreed to hold a further forum in Brussels in November 2012. This forum will seek to share information about current education and training initiatives to boost productivity, including methods of evaluation to demonstrate cause and effect. A small working group, led by the Australian Embassy, AEI Brussels and DG EAC will be established to plan and convene this forum.

Bilateral Academic Co-operation projects

The Parties looked forward to the outcomes of the 8th round of bilateral co-operation projects with their focus on joint/double degrees. Both Parties expressed their strong support for continued mobility projects and exchange and collaboration opportunities. In view of the significant and continuing growth in higher education participation in the Asia-Pacific, the current review of Australia's place in the Asian Century and recognising the role of four key third party members: Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of South Korea, the Parties agreed that the 2013 Project Directors' Conference will be held in Australia.

Alumni: Recognising the very important role of alumni in promoting international academic exchange and collaboration, DIISRTE and DG EAC will work with the Alumni Association [OCEANS](#) and other alumni networks to host a significant networking event in Brussels in May 2012. The Parties also agreed to organise a second pre-departure workshop for Australian students going to Europe in October 2012 in Melbourne.

Qualification Frameworks

Both Parties welcomed the results and recommendations of a recently finalised [study on the potential role of qualifications frameworks in supporting the mobility of workers and learners](#). They agreed to further investigate possible linkages between the European Qualifications Framework and the Australian Qualifications Framework, based on solid and transparent quality assurance procedures which would improve trust of qualifications frameworks and hence facilitate mutual recognition.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Both Parties appreciated the launch of the EU-Australia joint study on early childhood education and care to exchange information on policy settings and research on ways to promote educational attainment including social development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and fostering social inclusion. The final report of the project, including a literature review, will be completed by August 2012.

Joint Expert Seminar: Both parties renewed their 2011 commitment to a Joint Expert Seminar to feature the outcomes of previous policy dialogues and to inform the future policy dialogues on quality and lifelong learning. This seminar will take place from 14 to 19 October 2012, in Australia.

2013 Visit by Commissioner Vassiliou: Both DG EAC and DIISRTE look forward to the visit to Australia by Commissioner Vassiliou in 2013 and welcome the opportunity to celebrate the growing collaboration and opportunities for further dialogues of mutual interest and support.