



14./15.06.2022

President`s Report

Dear all,

As this is my last EUPHE-meeting as President, I will give a short summary of our activities in the last 2 years.

After the founding phase under Jean-Michel Nicolle, who took the initiative for EUPHE, we had the task of consolidating and expanding EUPHE. Unfortunately, this term was overshadowed by the COVID pandemic, which not only made it impossible for EUPHE members to meet in person, but also severely restricted our activities in Brussels.

I must say, for someone like me, who likes action, it was no delight, ending up as a COVID President.

Nevertheless, we were able to make a certain progress.

1. Extension of Membership

In 2020 SWPS from Poland and HECA from Ireland joined EUPHE. SSVZ from Slovenia followed in 2021, so that we extended our network to 8 countries.

We have sent further inquiries to non-state universities in Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania, but so far there has been no response. We are still in talks with Croatia, where Lidija Simrak is trying to get the Algebra University in Zagreb to become a member of EUPHE. As she informed me last week, Algebra will now join EUPHE. We have sent her the application form.

In the EUPHE member countries, we represent around 700 non-state universities with 1,4 million students, which is a pound to grow on.

2. Establishing working relationships with European and International Institutions

Despite the COVID restrictions, we have been able to establish working relationships with the European Parliament and the EU Commission. I recall our video conferences with the Chair of Comm Cult, Mrs Verheyen, and the representatives of the Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture in December 2021.

After the COVID restrictions have been lifted, it will now be a matter of establishing contacts with the other Directorates-General relevant to research and higher education and arranging the date for the hearing in the CommCult, promised by Ms. Verheyen in order to present EUPHE and the comparative study there.

Furthermore, in February 2022 we submitted the application for membership of EUPHE in the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe. Participation there would significantly increase the impact of our network. The Council of Europe has informed us that our membership is under review by the relevant bodies and we will receive notification later this year.

At the General Assembly in December 2021, we also discussed whether we should apply for UNESCO and ENQA memberships, but the majority decided not to do so for the time being.

3. Comparative Study

We used the time of the COVID restrictions to create a comparative study of non-governmental higher education in the EU. This was certainly EUPHE's most important project and it showed that we can work across borders and achieve important results.

The study has now been published in three languages and is available in print and as an e-book. For the first time there is a general overview of the non-state higher education system in Europe, which serves as a information-platform for all, interested in higher education

Again, I have to express my gratitude to all of you for your support, which made possible this study.

The study was not only handed over to representatives of the EU Parliament and the Commission, but also to government representatives in some member countries and to political and administrative bodies.

It has brought the growing importance of non-state universities to the attention of politicians, scientists, ministries and media.

As a result of this, the German federal government has now launched also a research project that will only deal with non-state universities.

4. New EUPHE Website

A very laborintensive project was the development of the new EUPHE website. The work was completed in April and the website was launched in May. EUPHE now has a very attractive website accessible in all the languages of our member countries.

Thank you all for the great support of the project, without which we could not have done it, very specially to Christiane, our secretary and to Darko and Mario from our webdesigner DIGITAL TALENTS.

It will now be important to keep the website up to date in order to make it a sought-after information platform on all topics relevant to non-state universities.

5. Modification of the EUPHE Statutes

As of January 1st, 2020, the new Companies and Associations Code (CSA) applies to associations in Belgium that were founded before May 1st, 2019. Associations such as EUPHE, which already exist when the new code comes into force, must therefore adapt their statutes to this new legislation by the end of 2023 at the latest.

The Board agreed that we should make this modification as soon as possible and has presented a draft that we will discuss today. After the decision we will take it to the notary and to the Belgian courts to register.

6. Monitoring

We have continuously monitored the initiatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission and have contributed on them. As examples, I would like to mention the initiative for microcredentials, but also for the creation of a common European higher education area.

Particularly important for us are the decisions of the European Court of Justice, which in the past two years has ruled 2 important decisions (EU Commission/Hungary; EU Commission/Latvia).

We can see the positive trend that the ECJ has a very private university-friendly decision-making practice, which has significantly strengthened our position vis-à-vis the governments of the member states.

7. Membership fee

To keep EUPHE active, the General Assembly has taken last December the decision to increase the membership fee for association members from 1000€ to 1500€ and for Institutional members (single universities) from 500 € to 750 €

8. Conclusion

I want to leave it at that and, as the outgoing President, I would like to thank you for your trust and for the good and friendly cooperation.

It showed that Europe is actually growing together also in the field of higher education and that we can achieve more together than as lone fighters.

Despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic, EUPHE has continued to grow together over the past 4 years and is on the way to becoming a competent representation of the interests of non-state universities.

In order to strengthen this bond and make it a good tradition, I had this plate of honor designed, which bears the names of the presidents and is handed over from the incumbent president to his successor at the end of a term of office. I hope it will become an ongoing symbol of our friendship and cooperation.



Klaus Hekking