



Education & Research Group Annual Report 2004-05

Introduction

This report summarises the work of the Education & Research Group (ERG) since the Annual General Meeting of the NSC in June 2004 and introduces the ERG work programme for 2005-2006.

Structure of the ERG

The ERG has developed a new way of working which aims to respond to the new emphasis of the NSC on political involvement for its thematic groups. The ERG now has the following structure:

- i. ERG Political Group (currently ERG Chair, Vice-chair(s), supported by the ERG Co-ordinator and the officers of the Chair and Vice-chair(s)). This group has met once.
- ii. Small Working Group. This group meets to take forward the practical work of the ERG, and will have met on four occasions during the time period covered by this report.
- iii. Ad hoc Group – currently to prepare the NSC Lisbon Seminar. This group has a membership which has varied as needs arise, and has currently met twice. The next NSC Co-ordinators' meeting, to be held immediately prior to the NSC General Assembly, will subsume this group for part of its meeting.
- iv. The main ERG group. Since the General Assembly of 2004 this group has met on three occasions.

Chair, Vice Chairs and Co-ordinator

Chair	Councillor Alexander Thomson, Fife Council
Vice-chair	Councillor Bernard Cailliau, Regional Councillor, Nord Pas de Calais
Second Vice-chair	Vacancy – until October 2004 this was held by Councillor Birgitte Johansen, North Jutland, who was elected to the Danish national government.
Co-ordinator	Ann Brown (vacancy for a co-ordinator supported by a county/region)

Meetings

ERG Political Group – 23 March 2005 in Lille, Region Nord Pas de Calais

The meeting set out to establish the areas of responsibility and professional interests of the chair and vice chair in relation to the work of the ERG. There was a mutual understanding of common issues, particularly surrounding problems of economic and social re-generation in communities which had suffered industrial decline.

Potential roles for the chair and vice-chair were identified with reference to the NSC document "The future of the NSC". Chairman Alec Thomson will oversee the general strategy for the ERG and Vice-chairman Bernard Cailliau will take the lead on issues surrounding youth development including professional and social inclusion of young people and integration into Europe.

The implications of the Lisbon Strategy for the work of the ERG were discussed, together with the forthcoming seminar proposed for autumn 2005. This would be led by the ERG, and offered to all the thematic groups of the NSC.

In order to gain a geographical and professional balance ideally the vacant second vice-chair would be sought from a northern country and might have an interest and responsibility in continuing education (adult and higher education) and technology.

Political issues which are important for the ERG included:



- Issues around training and apprenticeship;
- Integration into society of young people (often from outside EU), health, housing, access to culture;
- Implications for education and training of the knowledge-based economy and high level technology;
- How to develop young people with new economies in mind;
- What measures are being taken to combat unemployment, and what happens to young people who still can't get a job after receiving a course of training?
- How do young people come to understand what Europe is about?

Small Working Group

This group met on 17 February 2005 at Stansted Airport and produced a draft of the ERG Work Programme.

This group also formed part of the Ad hoc group which met on 18 April 2005 to discuss a provisional programme and arrangements for the proposed NSC Lisbon seminar to be held in the autumn of 2005.

Part of the group met in Gothenburg on 16 May 2005, following the identification of Västra Götaland as the host for the Lisbon seminar, to discuss the hosting and practical arrangements.

The ERG group

29 September 2004 in Aalborg, following the ERG conference. This meeting was attended by 22 people.

15-16 December 2004 in Brussels. Brussels was chosen so that the group could obtain some expert input about Education programmes and to look at possibilities for taking forward the recommendations of the Aalborg conference. The meeting was attended by 12 people.

31 March 2005 in Ipswich. This meeting agreed the draft work programme and discussed the proposals for the joint Lisbon seminar. Discussions took place on how the outcomes of the Aalborg conference could be combined with the Lisbon seminar. The meeting was attended by 14 people.

The next meeting of the ERG will take place on 3 November, in Trollhättan, following the Lisbon Seminar.

Meetings attended by the ERG co-ordinator

The co-ordinator took part in a number of meetings with the other co-ordinators and the NSC Secretariat.

This has included:

- Representing the NSC at the Interreg "Updating Norvision" Workshop on "Facilitating Innovation" in Brussels on 9 May
- Meetings with the EDG and the C&T co-ordinators to plan the food conference proposed to take place in Scotland in 2006;
- Meetings to prepare for the Lisbon Seminar to take place in November 2005;
- Meeting to prepare the Education and Research Study tour for the NSC GA 2005;
- Updating meeting for NSC co-ordinators held by the NSC Secretariat, including training for updating the ERG webpages on the NSC website;
- Meetings of the NSC Executive Committee in Aberdeenshire and Ringkøbing



ERG Conference 2004 held in Aalborg – Lifelong Learning – from Strategy to Reality

This attracted nearly 60 delegates and focused on part of “Education and Training 2010”, which derives from the Lisbon Strategy. The conference was designed to provide interest at different levels (strategy, implementation and practice), through keynote talks, discussion, and workshops which provided. Delegates were also able to present their projects and organisations through the display section. The participants included politicians, officers of councils and provinces, and practitioners in various forms of lifelong learning. The workshops demonstrated some successful examples of practical approaches to lifelong learning including for example: informal ways of attracting hard-to reach learners; work experience initiatives including job rotation; technology and online learning; and holistic approaches to workforce development.

Details of the conference sessions and presentations of the speakers are on the conference website, together with the conference outcomes. This can be found at:

<http://www.northsea-education.org>

The ERG is indebted to the County of North Jutland for organising and hosting the Aalborg conference.

Outcomes from the Aalborg conference

Many of the outcomes of the conference can be further developed through the Lisbon seminar – others are reflected in the ERG Work Programme for 2005-2006.

Some outcomes still remain for further action, and it is anticipated that joint work with other thematic groups will provide a useful way of taking these actions forward, e.g. work with SMEs, culinary heritage etc.

One outcome of the ERG conference in Aalborg was to draw the attention of the ERG to the importance of the Lisbon Strategy for the whole of the NSC.

“Lisbon/Gothenburg” seminar

This seminar will be hosted by Västra Götaland and is planned to take place between 1 and 4 November 2005 in Trollhättan. This location demonstrates many aspects of economic and social regeneration, which can provide study tour examples to illustrate the theme of the seminar. The days of 1 and 4 November are set aside for travelling, study tours etc.

The seminar is for members of all the thematic groups, and is expected to involve up to 60 participants. The outcome of the seminar is to determine what the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies hold for the NSC, and what actions should be taken to ensure that the North Sea regions benefit from programmes and developments arising from this.

The ERG has taken the lead in planning this seminar, which has developed from the proposal for a joint meeting of the ERG with the C&T group, to take place in the autumn of 2005.

The programme is being developed in co-operation with the other thematic groups. In order to make sure that the wishes of each thematic group are reflected in the construction of the seminar, meetings have been held with other co-ordinators and views of the groups taken into account.

An important resolution put before the NSC Annual Business meeting draws attention to the importance of recognising that the Gothenburg Agenda impinges directly on the Lisbon Strategy, and that sustainable development underpins economic development. It is envisaged that the result of working with the other groups will ensure that all views are represented in the outcomes of the planning of the seminar.



Joint initiatives with other thematic groups

The ERG welcomes the opportunities presented by working in conjunction with other thematic groups.

Apart from the Lisbon/Gothenburg seminar, this work includes a culinary heritage event to be held in Scotland in the spring of 2006. Currently a publicity film for this event is being produced for the ERG by a university student.

Support for SMEs has been identified as an area of focus for the ERG as a result of the Aalborg conference. This is also an area of work for the EDG and the ERG anticipates that the group will be able to contribute to this through joint initiatives.

Ann Brown ERG co-ordinator
Ipswich 4 June 2005