



## Newsletter No. 2

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# European Asylum Curriculum (EAC)

### What have we achieved up until now?

#### *Achievements*

The GDISC countries have contributed to the development of EAC both via the survey on their national training situation and training systems (part of the needs assessment), as well as through their active participation during the EAC Conference in Madrid, June 2006. During the Conference workshops on the content, methods and implementation, participants emphasized their need for a practical training tool focusing both on knowledge and skills. The countries expressed their interest in testing the first modules and providing further input into the development of the remaining modules, both with expertise engaged in developing the modules as well as via an evaluation.

Based on the recommendations and suggestions from the Madrid Conference, and with active input from the reference group (consisting of ECRE, UNHCR, IARLJ and the European Commission), the Curriculum and the pilot module on EU-Law is developed and currently being finalised. An e-learning method with a temporary Web-solution is developed as part of the EU-Law module, thereby providing the target group the opportunity to test the e-learning method and provide further input to the development of EAC. The final draft Curriculum and one of the sub-modules of the EU-Law module will be presented at the GDISC Annual Conference in Prague (October 11-12).

The draft Curriculum, which will be available on the GDISC Website, contains thirteen modules with content and methods. The specific content and methods for each module will however be decided in more detail when developing the modules, thus allowing further input from existing experience and expertise as well as the target group. It may also be noted that a trainer's manual will be developed along with the modules. Yet the methods considered so far are presented under each module in the draft Curriculum.

The EAC will in other words be elaborated further and the modules will be produced with support from the European countries' experiences and expertise as well as with input from relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the practitioner's feedback when "testing" the modules will be essential.

### *Next phase*

The project group is currently developing an application for funding next project phase via the European Refugee Fund's Community Actions Programme.

Next project phase will run over a period of 18 months, and as suggested by the Madrid Conference the main task will be to develop the EAC modules on "International Refugee Law and Human Rights", "Inclusion" and "Interview Techniques". When these modules are finalised they will be tested (along with the pilot module on EU-Law) by the GDISC countries as agreed during the Madrid Conference. The project group therefore encourages countries interested in making use of the produced material in their national training and at the same time provide input to the development of EAC to commit themselves to test the modules. Accordingly, the project group asks GDISC countries interested in testing the modules to present the project group with a contact person within their organisations to co-ordinate the testing.

Moreover, active participation from the GDISC countries is fundamental for developing the modules of the EAC. Based on the experience when developing the pilot module on EU-Law, a team of experts will be given the task to develop each module under the facilitation of one project member and in collaboration with a team working on methods. The modules will thereafter be adjusted based on the practitioners input when testing the modules. Countries willing to support the development of the modules are therefore asked to, as soon as possible, contact the project group.

When the modules are tested (most likely in the beginning of 2008), a Conference will be held with aim to present the result as well as to discuss remaining questions and challenges regarding implementation etc. Thereafter, with the GDISC countries input and engagement, the remaining modules will be developed and a complete EAC will thus be finalised during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final project phase.

EAC Phase II will be co-ordinated by the current EAC project-group, (consisting of representatives of Sweden (project-leader), the Netherlands, Spain, Czech Republic and the Odysseus Network), hopefully enlarged with a representative of the UK. In addition, other GDISC countries are invited to contribute to the project with experts contributing to drafting the modules.

It may be noted that implementation and future developments including co-ordination, language and maintenance for the final EAC will be discussed during Workshops at the GDISC Annual Conference in October 2006.

## Some participants' responses on the EAC Working Conference in Madrid, June 1-2 2006

We made a short summary of the evaluation forms that were handed out during the Conference.

82% of the participants expressed that the conference was 'very good'. The awareness of content and goals of the EAC was also assessed as 'very good' (82%), the agenda of the conference (68%), the conference material (73%) and the overall organisation (86%).

The participants appreciated the workshops on content, methods and implementation.

Some "interesting" quotes are:

- ◆ 'To have such a curriculum will be a road map for our country / department.'
- ◆ 'The EAC has the potential to add significant value to our existing training programme'
- ◆ 'As a small country, everything can be seen as an added value!'
- ◆ 'It will be a very useful toolbox in the field of Asylum.'
- ◆ 'Thank you for inviting us for such a ver useful conference, we are looking forward to other activities.'
- ◆ 'I know that it's not possible, but I would like things to go faster and it would be great if training could start in 2007.....'

### The Curriculum

During the conference's workshops on the content, methods and implementation of the EAC the European countries emphasized the need for a *practical approach* to training in the field of asylum. An interaction between training in knowledge (theory related to international and European legal instruments) and skills (the necessary practical competences for a case officer) was considered very fruitful.

#### *Practical approach*

The practical approach will be evident in the various training methods used in EAC modules. The so-called *cased-based method* will be the leading principle in most of the modules. Several of the knowledge modules will be based on *self-training* (e-Learning) and will require active participation of the trainees. Another leading principle in EAC is blended learning, which means that most modules consist of an e-Learning component aiming at acquiring a basic knowledge of the theory and a face-to-face session aiming at deepening of understanding. A final important aspect of this practical approach is that the EAC will provide a training tool that covers international and European dimensions of asylum policy, but still flexible and allowing each country to apply their national legislation.

#### *Curriculum*

The input from the workshops on Content resulted in a series of training modules on an initial level (for new case officers) and an advanced level (for more experienced employees): The Curriculum. We have also placed the individual modules in a logical order – a proposed "Learning Path". The learning path is only a suggestion since the objective of the EAC is to provide countries with a "tool-box" that allows them to *pick and choose* modules based on their respective training needs.

## **“Anywhere, anytime, just-in-time, just enough”**

### **EAC and e-Learning**

One of the two most preferred learning methods for EAC mentioned in workshops on methods during the Madrid conference was e-Learning (the other one was case based training). Although none of the participants attending the workshops on methods used e-Learning in their daily (training) practice, they definitely saw benefits of e-Learning in EAC.

#### ***Definition of e-learning***

There are various definitions on e-Learning. In the USA, e-Learning is associated with complete on-line learning. In Europe, e-Learning is often a combination of on-line learning and classroom teaching. e-Learning uses multimedia methods and the internet. The quality of learning will be achieved by simplifying access to sources of knowledge and services, the exchange of knowledge and best practices and by working together irrespective of physical distance. In EAC, we will use e-Learning the ‘European way’.

#### ***Benefits of e-Learning***

e-Learning has some great benefits that, in combination with a face to face training session, can increase training results significantly. The most apparent benefits are:

- *Students can learn in their own pace: anywhere, anytime, just-in-time and just enough.*
- Knowledge offered to the students is always up to date.
- e-Learning integrates learning and working: students can easily find information on the training platform for the daily work practice.
- e-Learning will give students the opportunity to interact on line with other students and the trainers
- e-Learning can save time and expenses, such as travel, training and accommodation
- Learning will go faster; more students can learn at the same time.

#### ***EAC and e-Learning***

The positive approach to e-Learning as a method expressed during the Conference along with the benefits mentioned above resulted in co-operation between training experts at the University of Brussels (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and the EAC project team. The training experts are building a pedagogically sound e-Learning platform for the first training module to be available in e-Learning format: The pilot module ‘Introduction to EU Asylum Law and Policy’.

## Call for EAC-Focal Points

The input from the participants at the Conference was very useful. Moreover, the project will need frequent feedback from the target group during the process of developing the EAC. We therefore encourage all GDISC countries to appoint a Focal Point as a contact person for the project. The Focal Point would be able to provide input to the project and coordinate information to and from your organisation to the project, and possibly provide answers to various questions that may occur from the project. Such questions could for instance be:

- a name of a possible expert to help us develop a certain module
- whether or not your country would be interested to one of the modules in practice
- We need someone who we will be able to address our project updates to.

Therefore we would like to ask those countries not yet appointed a Focal Point for the EAC project, to please do so as soon as possible.

Furthermore we would like you to discuss with your General Director if your organization would like to be further involved in the following phases developing the EAC Project.

