



Newsletter No. 3

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European Asylum Curriculum (EAC)

EAC phase II

Kick-off

The second phase of the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC) project started on March 7-9 with a kick-off in Stockholm, Sweden, introducing the 14 involved experts from the GDISC countries¹ and the Odysseus network to EAC concepts and methods. Thorough discussions on content, methodology, detailed planning etc. were held in workshops on each module to be developed: International Refugee Law and Human Rights, Inclusion, and Interview Technique. (*For further information on all EAC modules in the Curriculum, please visit the GDISC website www.gdisc.org.*)

All experts were introduced to a different technique in order to draft texts in an e-learning format for the EAC Online training. This format offers restricted space for text material and requires different drafting techniques. Although all experts weren't familiar with drafting in this specific format they began the work of developing the modules with great enthusiasm. (*See further under the heading "e-Learning" below.*)

During the second phase all units of the EU-Law module, which was developed in phase I, will be transformed into e-learning format

¹ In the current project phase the GDISC countries contributing to the development of the modules are Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark (yet not ERF partner), France, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Ireland, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

and tested along with the Interview Technique module. In the below you can read more about the testing process, to which the project currently is seeking countries that are interested in participating (*see further "Testing process" on page 3*).

Existing material

The project is making use of available material for the modules among the project partners and the GDISC countries. The Reference Group² is another important actor for the project and continues to support the development of EAC with relevant material as well as input on drafts etc. Other actors supporting EAC via allowing the project to use of available material are the Refugee Law Reader as well as the Canadian and American Immigration services.

E-Learning

Creating a common European training tool for officials working on asylum issues presents a number of challenges. On a national level, discrepancies exist in asylum training traditions, with some countries being more experienced than others. Heterogeneity is also a challenge on an individual level, as potential target group of EAC includes both newly employed case

² The EAC reference group consists of United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), International Association for Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ) and the European Commission (EC).

officers and experienced officials. It is also known to be difficult for working professionals to spend many days out of the office – a problem pervasive to vocational training. Last but not least, the fact that the target group is scattered all around Europe is an important variable to consider.

To address these issues, EAC relies on several core principles. The first is modularity: a "pick and choose" approach allows individual countries to choose the modules best suiting their particular needs. The second is a "train the trainers" approach, which will allow caseworkers from different points in Europe, thanks to a lever effect, to benefit from the EAC. The last one is e-learning.

E-learning can be broadly defined as the use of digital technologies to support, enhance or deliver learning. Benefits of e-learning are well known: the ability to reach distant audiences ("any place"), the ability to provide just-in-time training to professionals who can work at off-hours ("any time"), the reduction of travel costs, the ability to adjust to various learning styles, interests or rhythms, etc. Potential drawbacks include reduced social interactions, reliance on technology and ICT skills, or the fact that e-learning is not the best option for all subjects and objectives. To reduce potential drawbacks and benefit from the best of the two worlds, EAC relies on "blended learning", a mix of e-learning with face-to-face sessions. Every EAC course will include e-learning activities, allowing for self-paced study, as well as face-to-face meetings during which trainers and participants will meet to clarify difficult concepts, discuss advanced topics or address issues which are less easily solved online (like developing interpersonal skills through role play, for example).

e-Learning expertise

To maximize chances for success, the EAC Project Group decided, for e-learning aspects, to collaborate with the Centre for

Educational Technology (CTE) of the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB). The CTE has an extensive experience of e-learning projects, at a national as well as at an international level, and regularly helps various institutions to make the leap to online learning.

During Phase I of the EAC project, a first pilot unit from the module "Introduction to EU Asylum Law and Policy" was put online to demonstrate the feasibility of the concept. This first unit was tested by a number of caseworkers from different European countries. The participants were very positive in their evaluation of the course and gave previous feedback for the rest of the development process.

Workshop on e-Learning

Phase II of EAC now poses a far greater challenge as the four modules to be developed involve a dozen of content experts from 10 different countries. In close collaboration with the *Kennis- en Leercentrum* (KLC) of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service, the CTE developed a dedicated methodology to speed up the development process, to ensure homogeneity among the various course units, as well as to guarantee that the resulting courses will meet commonly accepted e-learning quality standards. In April, a 2-days workshop was held in Utrecht: it allowed experts to learn more about e-learning in general, about online strategies and methods, as well as to familiarize themselves with the development methodology. "It was very rich and inspiring... though we discovered that designing an e-learning course was more complex than we had expected!", commented Vigdis Vevstad, expert from the "Inclusion" module. Experts are now back in their countries working on their learning scenarios. The adventure has just begun...

Testing process

The 2 modules on EU-Law and Interview Technique will be finalised by September. Content, methods, the e-learning component and the “train the trainers” concept will be tested thereafter. A minimum of 4 countries are needed for testing each module, and the project is therefore seeking at least 8 countries to participate in the testing process. The project will promote a diversity of countries for the test since it is significant to obtain feedback from a group representing a variety of experiences and needs in line with the actual target group. Yet it shall be noted that a couple of testing alternatives are available and it will be possible for all countries interested in testing the modules to do so – although some may receive limited support from the EAC team. Countries interested in testing the modules are therefore encouraged to announce their interest to the EAC team as soon as possible (*see further deadlines on page 4*).

How to test the modules

The Dutch EAC team member Ms. Minke Vorstenbosch is responsible for the testing process and explains that there are two options available for countries interested in testing the modules:

- One option is to take part in the “train the trainers” session organised for national trainers before testing the modules in the national setting. The participants will also receive assistance from the EAC team while planning their test training “back home”, mainly with feedback on questions raised by the trainers. The EAC team will then visit some of the national training sessions “onsite” for support and evaluation.
- Another option is to receive access to the Online training (the e-learning part of the modules) and test the modules with limited support from the EAC team. Yet feedback to the project via questionnaire is compulsory.

Countries interested in testing the modules in line with the first option will be asked to send 2 national trainers to a “train the trainers” session at the Dutch *Kennis- en Leercentrum* (KLC) in Utrecht, the Netherlands. (Participants have to cover their travel cost.) The trainers will receive a 3 day training on content and methods of the module(s), and will thereafter be able to perform the EAC training “back home”.

Ms. Vorstenbosch emphasises that the trainers need to make preparations before testing the modules in the national setting. She provides the following advice:

- Try the e-learning part of the module and become familiar with the Online training. This will take approximately 1 day.
- If you take part in the testing process with assistance from the EAC team you will attend the “train the trainers” session on content and methods for the module at the KLC in the Netherlands. During the session you will also receive information on how to administer the Online training, which will allow for a thorough test of the e-Learning component.
- The trainers need to make preparations on content, methods and logistics for the test training back home. Approximately 4 days will be needed for this aim. In addition, 4 days per module is estimated for the actual training.

All countries testing the modules will take part in the evaluation of the test, which is estimated to take 1 day.

Deadlines

If you are interested in testing the modules, please contact Ms. Minke Vorstenbosch or Ms. Louise Wahlström (project manager) for further information (see contact information below). Please be aware of the time frame and deadlines presented in the box on next page.

Deadlines for the testing process

- May 26, 2007: Deadline for response from countries interested in the testing process to Minke Vorstenbosch.
- Second week in June 2007: Reply from the project to selected countries participating in the testing process with assistance from the EAC team. Names requested for 2 national trainers.
- End of June 2007: Deadline names of national trainers. Minke Vorstenbosch will contact the national trainers for further information regarding expectations, planned activities and dates etc.
- Mid September 2007: "Train the trainers" session on **EU-Law module** and in the Netherlands
- End of October 2007: Training on the **EU-Law module** held in the countries by national trainers.
- End of November: Testing results and evaluation of the **EU-Law module** communicated with Minke Vorstenbosch
- Mid November 2007: "Train the trainers" session on **Interview Technique module**.
- Mid January 2008: Training on the **Interview Technique module** held in the countries by national trainers.
- Mid of February 2008: Testing results and evaluations of the **Interview Technique module** communicated with Minke Vorstenbosch.

Contact persons:

Minke Vorstenbosch
Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation
Service, International Project Bureau
Phone +31-70 7795375
Mobile +31-622504331
Email: MVORSTEN@IND.MINJUS.NL

Louise Wahlström
Swedish Migration Board,
Division for European Affairs and
International Cooperation
Phone +46-8- 5539 7838
Mobile +46-708+365 111
Email:
louise.wahlstrom@migrationsverket.se

What's next?

Planning for remaining modules

The project group is currently planning for developing remaining EAC modules. (For further information on all EAC modules, please see the Curriculum on the GDISC website www.gdisc.org). Since the European Commission has advised the project to apply for funds via the European Refugee Fund (ERF) Community Action Program, the EAC team faces the challenge of dividing the development of remaining modules into project proposals in accordance with ERF regulations for project support. The ERF Community Action Program is expected to announce a "call for proposal" in July, and the EAC team consequently prepares project proposals to be suggested at the GDSIC Annual Conference in June, asking the countries for their active participation in and contribution to the projects.



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The project is executed under the auspices of the General Directors' Immigration Service Conference (GDISC), and managed by the Swedish Migration Board. Contact persons at the Swedish Migration Board are Louise Wahlström (Project Manager) Phone +46-8- 5539 7838, or +46-708+365 111 and Göran Larsson (Expert) Phone +46 11 15 61 91, or +46 708 15 61 91.

For further information please visit www.gdisc.com