

## **Séamus Puirseil**

**Tuesday 19 June 2007**

### **11.30 Working Groups**

#### **Working Group 6, Enhancing Regional Employability through Quality Assurance.**

The Working Group was chaired by Mr Christoph Hansert, Head, Higher Education Management and International Consultancy Projects, DAAD.

The group received a written input from Dr Andreas Keller, Member of the Standing Committee on Higher Education and Research Pan-European Network, Education International. In addition it received oral inputs from Dr Frank Stefan Becker, Corporate Responsibility Corporate Citizenship, Siemens AG and spokesman of the Working Group on Engineering Education of the German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers Association (ZVEI) and Dr Benjamin Jacobs, President, Central American Federation of Professional Colleges and Associations. The inputs and discussion provided an interesting, lively, informative and fascinating session. Dr Becker spoke from the perspective of a multinational company with 475,000 employees in 190 countries of whom 36% have an undergraduate degree. Siemens need international teams and have partnerships with 600 universities worldwide. He emphasised the importance of internship and international placement in the design of programmes. In general he indicated three significant areas for attention in programme design:

- Content of programmes
- How do you teach it?
- What success does the programme have?

The working group agreed that tracing studies on student success and employment were of great benefit.

Dr Jacobs made it clear that Central American experience is that it is the best graduates who get the jobs. He stressed the importance of good preparation of professors and the use of quality assurance tools in order to ensure regional acceptance of graduates. While there is an increased interest in transnational quality assurance there are financial and informational deficits. These deficits and long lead teams in introducing quality assurance systems are significant constraints.

The group welcomed Dr Beckers guidelines for universities which were:

1. Universities should talk to their customers in industry.
2. They need to determine the skills and knowledge needed by industry.
3. Students should be acquainted with the work environment.
4. Universities should facilitate international exchanges.

5. Universities should invite external experts to talk to students on business and social topics.
6. Students are fascinated by application of the theories they learn in their studies. Universities should engage students in projects which have specific goals.

The general discussion was wide ranging and informed by the experiences of members in many parts of the world.