

E.C.C.O. A.I.S.B.L.

EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF CONSERVATOR-RESTORERS' ORGANISATION

SHORT NEWS

September 2007

Firstly, apologies for the confusion that arose in the distribution of the last edition of the Short News which meant that many organisations did not get the News until late in July. This was due to a misunderstanding in protocol with the advent of the position of Office Administrator and has since been rectified. This edition of the 'Short News' is some what lengthy but much has arisen since the GA which requires due consideration by all.

The committee has met once in Dublin on the 20th-21st July. Up until then the work of the committee was dominated by E.C.C.O.'s involvement in the European Conservation Practitioners Licence (ECPL) project and intense discussion with regard to the implications and applications of the European Qualifications framework (EQF).

ECPL

Following the GA, the President attended a meeting of the ECPL project in Florence, in June 2007, subsequent to which E.C.C.O. formally signed up, together with ENCoRE, as official collaborators to the 1st phase of the project, to becoming an official partner in the sequel to be known as the European Conservation Restoration Licence (ECRL) and in this way to take part 'in the creation, legal stabilisation and administration of the final body which will award the ECRL'. The aim of the first half of the project was to clarify the conservator-restorer's professional level position in EQF and subsequently to produce Minimum Common Standards using the established EQF descriptors in twelve areas of specialization and sample curricula for three of the chosen specialisations.

Participation in the project is conditional on the understanding that all project activities take place within an agreed framework which refers to all E.C.C.O. official documents and statements. It was added that E.C.C.O. has commenced its own overview of all relevant documents pertaining or leading to the professional status of the conservator-restorer with a view to harmonizing them within the Descriptors for the EQF and that these will include those of the proposed ECPL/ECRL document.

On behalf of E.C.C.O. and using ECPL funds, Maura Borelli, a member of E.C.C.O. and former consultant for the Italian Ministry of Culture on the definition of qualification frameworks for the Cultural Heritage field, was proposed and commissioned to undertake an evaluation and harmonization of the review of the Minimum Common Standards and the sample curricula. These documents were submitted to the committee prior to its meeting in Dublin July 2007. At the meeting questions were raised as to the general value of the curricula and discipline descriptors provided as these tend to go out of date.

It was agreed that the project was rushed and that E.C.C.O. would have more control and influence over the sequel. For this reason two of the documents, issued in delay at the very final stage, will have a box at the top of the page with a clear reference to the fact that the text has not been agreed with ECCO and ENCoRE.

The first part of the project was officially closed at a ceremony in Malta on the 25th of September 2007.

VDR/ ICON European Qualifications Framework

The recent proposals by the boards of VDR and ICON to their membership body, to cede from E.C.C.O. is deeply regretted by the E.C.C.O. committee as much as it is unwelcome in terms of its potential divisiveness. Although the consequent discussions have in fact adversely influenced the ability of E.C.C.O. to act with agility, promptness and incisiveness in its daily basic /political actions such proposals also coincide at a crucial time when E.C.C.O. is obtaining institutional recognition for the profession as a result of the work done in previous years. They do however, open a discussion on the development or view of ourselves as professionals arising as a result of a different interpretation in the way forward.

Background

The basis for the constitution of E.C.C.O. and its on-going work to define the professional status of the conservator-restorer and have such status universally recognised, has focused on educational requirements and as a consequence the means to their delivery.

This has translated into the E.C.C.O. recommendation/guideline that the conservator-restorer attains professional status, i.e., the right to work autonomously on completion of an MA degree in conservation/restoration. It is further stipulated that this MA degree should be preceded by 5 years full time education/training in conservation-education.

The delivery of this education is placed in the context of university or recognised equivalent. This has been the basis of E.C.C.O.'s engagement with ENCoRE in order to support and promote this route.

While articulation of the Guidelines has acted very successfully as a benchmark for professional status, acute differences in delivery, evaluation and equivalences of education/training have emerged. This is not just a problem for E.C.C.O., it is a problem for Europe. Some of these problems were highlighted at the GA.

As a means to finding equivalence the Bologna framework has been introduced into Europe which is set within the overarching framework of the European Qualifications Framework. This was first published in September 2006.

European Qualifications framework

The EQF is a mechanism which allows equivalences of qualifications to be found by equating the Learning Outcomes that education provide.

These Learning Outcomes describe the skills, knowledge and competences that must be attained for each level on a scale from 1-8. The MA degree is the equivalent of level 7 on the EQF.

It was proposed and mandated by the last E.C.C.O. GA, Brussels, April 2007, to cease work on the Draft Professional Profile and to concentrate instead on writing up the descriptors for the Learning Outcomes for Level 7 on the EQF.

This aspect of the EQF can be said to reflect *educational requirements*, i.e., what knowledge content is required.

The broader remit of the EQF takes into account Lifelong Learning: the skills, knowledge and competences that a person may already bring with to fulfil a Learning Outcome

This affects *delivery of education* or how knowledge is acquired and ultimately evaluated.

VDR/ICON

In practice, then VDR have, for historical reasons as well as reasons of the Bologna Agreement, conservators-restorers working in the field of conservation with knowledge and competences limited to a BA degree whom they feel should have the possibility of having their work experience evaluated so as to find equivalence with an MA degree. Using the EQF these BA conservator-restorers, if they so wish, should be able have their Knowledge, Skills and Competences assessed and upgraded accordingly so as to acquire full professional status.

This is also central to the position of ICON that, the ‘delivery’ or the ‘way’ in which education is acquired needs to move beyond the strictly academic route to encompass other modes including internships and work practices which are subject to evaluation using the EQF as the Framework in which to find equivalence.

Herein lies the cause of divergence or ‘interpretation’ which has contributed to the board of VDR and ICON wishing to part company.

ECCO believes that it is important not to pass over the very basic problem of defining how to obtain and how to control the quality of knowledge/competences the conservator-restorer’s work needs at the highest possible level.

Descriptors

Whether these routes are a reflection of cultural differences or differences in educational standards/qualifications the EQF, by focusing on Learning Outcomes, has been seen as the tool to translate and measure acquired knowledge.

This is why the work of writing up the Descriptors for the Learning Outcomes has become so important for the profession. It informs the reason why E.C.C.O. felt it important to have an input into the ECPL project subsequent to a former request received in November 2006 by Jan Figel , EU commissioner for Education, Training and Culture to form a working group to develop and write the Descriptors for the profession. Such a group was initiated immediately after the GA.

Evaluation

Who gets to evaluate? This is something that, at present, each country works out for itself. In some countries, the profession of conservation-restoration is regulated and education and qualification is stipulated by law. Elsewhere, all nationally recognised qualifications are governed by a National Qualifications Framework which must tie into the EQF. Qualifications from Level 7 upwards are awarded by Higher Level Education authorities such as universities or a recognised equivalent. Any work practices or courses must be structured so as to accord with the granting of such a qualification.

Access/Accreditation

At the GA April 2007, the committee was mandated to focus on Level Seven corresponding to the Masters Degree. This qualification confers professional title on the C-R and traditionally has entitled the bearer to work autonomously within the field of conservation-restoration. However, a consensus is emerging whereby further professional experience should be required and validated prior to autonomous work on public patrimony as a guarantor of professional expertise in the practice of conservation-restoration.

This may take the form of professional accreditation. Such accreditation is undertaken by many professions subsequent to professional qualification. Granted that it is a regulated profession, Architects, by law, must now undertake accreditation prior to autonomous professional practice.

While recognised that full professional status is acquired on obtaining a level 7 qualification access to the practice of the profession of conservation-restoration does begin in some countries, at level 6 with a Bachelor degree under the supervision of a fully qualified professional C-R., In this regard, it is a matter of common sense, that the Descriptors for Level 6 must also be addressed.

In summary

These are the issues which are current to the debate in which the committee finds itself since the GA last April 2007.

Much emphasis has been placed on the academic route to access the profession starting at Level 7 and this position is reflected in all official E.C.C.O. documents to the extent that occupations/activities in conservation-restoration below Level 7 are seen as a 'related occupation' to be carried out only under the supervision of a professional conservator-restorer and not as a means or 'route' to delivering a professional conservator-restorer. In using a Framework that assesses 'life long learning' such knowledge that is acquired 'en-route' may be taken into consideration if compared to the optimal (highest standard) required education.

This is a shift in emphasis and perspective and is one that must necessarily be accommodated in the official language and outlook of E.C.C.O. if we are to find a way forward together. This is not for the committee to decide but is a matter for the entire membership.

The last committee meeting gave rise to a series of agreements or consensus points with which we all felt would help to move the situation on. These are as follows:

- That the training for the role of conservator-restorer should involve Higher Level education, structured by a university or similar nationally recognised institution
- That as a minimum, a conservator-restorer, wishing to set up in business practice alone should at least have reached EQF Level 7 (university masters Level) learning
- That the evaluation of a conservator-restorer's Level 7 learning should be formally assessed by a nationally recognised education institution
That conservator-restorer's who have just completed their education, to whatever level, ought ideally to be supervised when they first commence work
That a 'safe' level of autonomy of a conservator-restorer in practice starts with completion of education but further practical experience should be required developed over a varying length of time after completion of education
- That a formal statement by E.C.C.O. defining the learning outcomes expected of a conservator-restorer's education should include a recommendation of best practice' – i.e., the ideal way of developing conservator-restorer's learning if a nation's education system permitted it and assuming that any subject of conservation teaching was available.

Finally, we wish VDR and ICON membership well with their vote.

Theseus Project

This project is a very recent initiative by ICON in a bid attract EU funding for a proposal which involves 'the establishment of national networks of organisations which share an interest in developing and testing the EQF framework'. The project means to develop the Descriptors for the

EQF which will be promoted to, amongst others, academic and vocational institutions as a framework for curriculum development.

Apparently, some representatives from E.C.C.O. member bodies and E.C.C.O. Committee members that expressed a wish at the GA, to be involved in the EQF working group to produce EQF descriptors for the Learning Outcomes in conservation education were invited to join and discussions took place with universities in the UK, Ireland, Poland and Germany but that a deadline of 31st August limited participation.

There are obviously many professional interests at stake in the development of the EQF for ICON to initiate a project at EU level which parallels so closely the work of E.C.C.O. and E.C.C.O. / ENCoRE in the work of the ECPL. The Theseus project also covers the main area of study of the EQF working group as mandated by the ECCO GA in April 2007, when it was decided to cease work on the Draft Professional Profile and to concentrate instead on writing up the descriptors for the Learning Outcomes for Level 7 on the EQF.

Believing that internal procedures have to be respected by all the members, such as informing the Committee of actions which overlap with the work demanded by the GA and to be undertaken at common level, we hope that the work for Theseus will be based on the work E.C.C.O. has done and will be an integrated part of all our efforts on getting the EQF operational for our profession.

Council of Europe

In the last few years E.C.C.O. has managed to make interesting and important contacts in Europe and in the EU-Institutions collecting some successful results, of which the very last one is probably the highest recognition that our profession could have ever expected.

At the end of May Mr Daniel Thérond, the Executive Director of the Cultural Heritage Division of the Council of Europe, has asked the President of ECCO and the consultant Vincent Negri to write the *European Recommendations for Conservation-Restoration of Cultural Heritage*, together with the Heritage Division of the Council of Europe and ICCROM. The breath of this document will be much larger than the 27 EU members countries as it will reach 47 member countries of the Council of Europe and even extra European countries through their membership in ICCROM. We will soon be able to report of recent developments in this issue.

Ceplis

ECCO is represented in the Executive Bureau of CEPLIS (European Council for the Liberal Professions) through Michael Van Gompén former president and member of the Committee.

Office Administrator Post

The appointment of Stevin Davidson to the post of Office Administrator in November last was greatly welcomed. Unfortunately, due to pressure of work and family commitments Stevin can no longer continue in this post and has tendered his resignation.

His resignation also has implications for the storage of the E.C.C.O. archive as this was to be accommodated in an office close to Stevin's workplace.

E.C.C.O. would welcome the nomination of any member who would be interested in contributing to the work of E.C.C.O. for an agreed rate. A list of Duties and stipend are available from the General Secretary.

ECCO Reports

Heartfelt thanks are extended to Natalie Ellwanger who has so ably edited the E.C.C.O. reports for the last number of years. This has included much behind the scenes work with previous advertisers and also involved the somewhat thankless job of having to seek and remind people to submit their contributions.

Suvi Leukumaavaara has most willingly and kindly stepped up to the job. Good luck Suvi.

CEN

E.C.C.O. is not formally involved in the CEN project as it is a confederation of organisations. Neither has E.C.C.O. followed up with Liaison Status given that there is no possibility of veto or influence over any of the project outcomes. However through our membership we are very interested in the progress of CEN and would be interested in feedback from participating members. Members are invited to contact Susan Corr or David Cueco Aguilera, committee members, with any developments or information that is relevant to the practice of our work.

Complaints Procedure

E.C.C.O. is very keen to develop protocols on assessing and dealing with complaints. A transparent and open procedure which can be followed both by E.C.C.O. and the complainant needs to be articulated. If any member organisation has a model or suggestions which would be useful to the development of such protocols, the committee would be very happy to hear from you. Please contact Barbara Davidson, Gen. Secretary or Susan Corr, Deputy Secretary.

Next Committee meeting.

The next committee meeting will take place in Brussels on 12th- 14th October

Susan Corr

Deputy Secretary

27th September 2007