

## Report of Workshop 1: Organisation and structure of the HELP Network

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Discussion in Workshop 1 focused on the structure of the new HELP Network as envisaged in the draft Action Plan (2006-2010) presented in the Consultation document. It was guided by six sets of questions, which are presented below, together with the recommendations which evolved from the discussion.

1. *What types of organisation should be brought together in the HELP network? What rights and obligations should HELP members have? How will an organisation or individual become a HELP member?*

There was consensus that membership, by application, should be as inclusive as possible. The following potential members were listed: higher education institutions, including university faculties, language centres and other pertinent administrative units; subject centres; European and national associations and networks of various kinds; individuals who share the aims of the HELP initiative, notably individual members of higher education institutions. Associate membership would be granted to organisations from outside Europe.

It is to be expected that the broad-based membership of the new network will facilitate cooperation between many European networks and organisations, leading to productive synergies, as well as avoiding duplication of effort.

2. *If, as foreseen in the Consultation document, the HELP Network is to be run by a steering group, who will its members be and what advisory, supervisory, or executive functions and responsibilities will the group exercise?*

It was recommended that an advisory board and an executive should be formed. Management of centralised activities will be the duty of the executive, whose members will also sit on the advisory board. Accountability of the executive to members will be effected through the advisory board.

3. *In the HELP Network, what structure will define the relationships between project coordination / management, the advisory board, and leaders of decentralised activities? What mechanisms should be put in place to combine central planning with devolved responsibility for theme-specific activities?*

In addition to the advisory board-executive structure foreseen (cf. 2. above), theme-specific activities should be coordinated by group leaders, who will report at meetings of the executive. Careful scheduling of meetings will reinforce effective coordination of central planning and group activities.

4. *The Consultation document foresees that ultimate responsibility for HELP should rest with the CEL/ELC board. At the same time, it envisages that HELP will be run by a steering group chaired by a representative of a member institution. Should the CEL/ELC have a lead role in, and ultimate responsibility for, the HELP network, as envisaged in the Consultation document? If so, what responsibilities should be attached to the role of the CEL/ELC and how should its role be reflected in the HELP structure?*

The CEL/ELC will continue in the role of contractor to the Commission for centralised activities and will have a leading role in the HELP Network. A consortium structure is envisaged for the HELP Network, a loose structure bound by a signed formal agreement. This consortium structure will facilitate the pooling of ideas and encourage initiatives on the part of members, so that, for example, groups of members will be able to launch projects on specific themes, applying for funds to appropriate sources, including contracting directly with the Commission.

5. *Given the expected size of the HELP Network and its resolve to implement an ambitious action plan, professional support must be provided by a central office, again as foreseen in the Consultation document. What functions should this central office perform, what human resources and infrastructure will be required for its efficient performance, and how should the office be financed?*

The central office will be located at the Freie Universität Berlin, with an additional facility located in Brussels. The principal functions of the central office will be the following:

- liaison with members of the HELP Network, with the Commission and the Council of Europe, and with other stakeholders
- the maintenance of databases, including a closed-list members' database
- Publication of the work of the HELP Network through a website and a newsletter
- coordination of thematic activities
- investigating, and informing the membership of, funding possibilities
- dissemination of HELP Network activities
- dealing with enquiries and correspondence

In the context of these functions, two further points were noted. First, effective performance of the functions listed will clearly require professional, and therefore appropriately financed, IT support. And second, not all the functions of the central office need be carried out in Berlin and Brussels; for example, database maintenance could be located in another EU Member State.

6. *What functions can strategically important HELP Network partners, such as European associations, be expected to perform?*

The following functions were suggested in the Workshop session:

- dissemination of HELP Network activities at, for example, conferences
- monitoring developments in the implementation of university language policies
  - o monitoring the role of key organisations in these developments,

- monitoring the impact of the HELP Network itself
- policy development through member organisations working together
- promotion of policy development through the lobbying of authorities at different levels
- contributing specialist knowledge to network activities
- involvement in theme-specific activities
- forging, through the HELP Network, a link between higher education institutions, employers and associations

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