

PRESS RELEASE

26 September 2006

European Association for International Education

Largest EAIE conference to date – success!

The 18th Annual EAIE Conference held from 13 to 16 September 2006 in Basel, Switzerland, was the biggest gathering of the EAIE since its foundation in 1989. The event attracted 2269 participants from around world – an increase by over 200 from the 17th Annual EAIE Conference held in Kraków, Poland. The University of Basel hosted the conference and the main conference venue was the Congress Center Basel.

Extensive programme emphasized networking

With 86 sessions, 28 workshops, 17 poster sessions and 4 seminars the conference programme provided participants with the opportunity to explore innovations and developments in the internationalisation of higher education. With networking being one of the main reasons for people to attend the conference, ample opportunity was provided for participants to make contacts – such as during the information day on Swiss higher education where small groups of participants visited 12 Swiss higher education institutions, and by means of the annual networking challenge and a variety of social events. New this year was the ‘speed-networking session’ hosted by Fiona Hunter, incoming EAIE President, which one French participant deemed as the “most useful event” she attended at the conference. Indeed, by Saturday afternoon it was difficult to find space on the message board and partner search board – both were awash with messages and business cards left by enthusiastic participants.

The EAIE Exhibition too, gave participants the chance to meet with representatives of more than 130 education-related organisations, both in the public and private sector. In fact, the exhibition stands were completely reserved several months in the lead-up to the conference. As a result, several organisations opted to share stands to ensure their representation. One exhibitor commented that on Thursday and Friday alike, there was such a steady flow of participants that he scarcely had time for a coffee break.

For the approximately 600 newcomers that attended the conference a welcome session and lunch were organised and both were well attended. The winner of the EAIE newcomers’ draw was Sally Wilson of the International Education Directorate from the University of Queensland, Australia. Bjørn Einar Aas, the incoming EAIE vice-president who drew her name during the Closing Plenary, was pleased to award her a fee waiver for the 19th Annual EAIE Conference to be held in Trondheim, Norway.

Keynote speaker on achieving excellence

This year, the keynote speaker was Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, Chairman and CEO of Nestlé S.A. He spoke at the Opening Plenary on ‘Quality beyond operational excellence’. Stating that, “the globalisation of markets is not only touching companies, but also increasingly educational institutions and personnel recruitment,” he proposed the first requirement in a globalised world is the need for qualification levels “to be transparent from the outside and comparable across the world.” By drawing parallels between aims of the Codex Alimentarius in the food industry and the Bologna protocol – that is to harmonise quality assurance standards – Mr Brabeck argued that, “the application and respect of standards alone, however, does not lead to excellence.” Ultimately, he expressed that a basic framework of rules and governance, quality assurance beyond minimum standards, communication, trust and an open-mind are all necessary building blocks for so-called ‘quality beyond operational excellence’.

Latvian Professor honoured for contribution to higher education

During the Opening Plenary Andrejs Rauhvargers was honoured with a Constance Meldrum Award for Vision and Leadership. Prof Rauhvargers is a leader in the field of recognition of foreign qualifications and is currently the Secretary General of the Latvian Rectors’ Conference. For more information on this prestigious award please go to: <http://www.eaie.org/news/pressreleases/PressSeptember2006.pdf>.

.....
Not for publication:

For more information please contact Janny van Wijk at the EAIE Secretariat on telephone +31-20-525 49 83, fax +31-20-525 49 98, e-mail wijk@eaie.nl

Top-notch evaluations overall

Of the 838 participants that submitted an online evaluation, 99% said they would attend another EAIE conference in the future. 93% ranked the overall quality of the conference as 'good' or 'very good' with 'very good' being the highest possible rating. The occasion to network and meet partners was much appreciated. One participant commented on the "uplifting ambience" of the conference. Another stated the best aspect of the conference was the "opportunity to meet with like-minded people from across the world that were very open and welcoming." The programme too received positive feedback, as it was "well selected and covered the most important topics and issues in a logical structure." Another participant mentioned it was well designed because there was "sufficient time for meetings/networking and sessions." Most criticism was regarding the catering and seating facilities, although one participant mentioned that, "the sessions this year were very good (...) I had problems to choose which one to attend." As one participant put it, "Overall, everything was extremely well planned and executed which meant that it was easy to participate and get around the venue / city - it removed any fears I may have had!"

Further information

More information regarding the EAIE and the conference can be obtained from the EAIE Secretariat, PO Box 11189, 1001 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands, tel +31-20-525 49 99, fax +31-20-525 49 98, e-mail eaie@eaie.nl or consult the EAIE website: www.eaie.org

.....
Not for publication:

For more information please contact Janny van Wijk at the EAIE Secretariat on telephone +31-20-525 49 83, fax +31-20-525 49 98, e-mail wijk@eaie.nl