

1. Introduction

The Higher Education Network of Radiographers in Europe (HENRE) is one of a number of Socrates Erasmus thematic networks co-financed by the European Commission (EC) with the aim of helping Higher Education Institutions create forums to analyse and study the state of development of particular academic disciplines, to encourage the European dimension and to improve the quality of education and training across Europe.

HENRE has been developed as an academic forum for radiographers in Europe and encompasses the whole notion of pre registration education at undergraduate level as well as the issues of life long learning including continuing professional development and research.

In the long term, it is HENRE's policy aims for advancement and mutual recognition in the field of radiography education to enable co-operation and mobility across Europe. As radiographic education is so variable throughout Europe, the intention is to provide assistance to those European radiography professional bodies and through them, the appropriate Higher Education institutions who wish to develop undergraduate degree level radiography programmes and to advise on potential resources. Many European partners will be in the position to offer advice and practical guidance on the way forward especially where close contact with clinical partners in the field are recognised and welcomed.

2. Radiography in Europe

Traditionally, the development of the radiography profession in the various European countries has taken different paths with the result that the quality, the level and the nature of the performance of radiographers and the educational level has not been the same throughout Europe. Consequently, mutual academic and professional recognition is not yet applicable throughout the EU.

The difference in educational status of radiographers throughout Europe is identifiable as in many countries radiographic education lies outside the University system. It has become apparent through the Socrates student exchange system that there are many issues of mutual interest and concern in the education and training of radiographers that would benefit from closer co-operation between the European partners offering radiographic education.

In some European contexts, graduate level radiographers are encouraged to undertake an expanded role in areas conventionally seen as within the province of a medically qualified practitioner. The UK has led the field in this area of development and it has become apparent through links established in several European countries that radiographers are keen to identify ways forward in role development and expansion. In addition, within the diagnostic sphere, the use of different imaging modalities has required the development of programmes of study to enable radiographers to qualify in specialist areas, for example in diagnostic ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). This is an important development for radiography education.

The European dimension in the education and training of radiographers will benefit from and be strengthened by the close co-operation and discussion between the European institutions that presently offer radiographic education. This in turn will enable further exploration of the quality issues concerning the academic curriculum and content and relate strongly to the proposed standards of proficiency for radiographers that are being developed in a number of European countries. Educational benchmarks and standards of competence and proficiency are important markers for all European partners as they are heavily influential in the development of a harmonised European radiography profession.

3. The Higher Education Network for Radiography in Europe

The Higher Education Network for Radiography in Europe (HENRE) has sought to enable the development of a European dimension in the type and quality of radiographic educational provision and has attempted to achieve this through the exchange of experiences that radiographic educators have both in the HE sector and elsewhere. In many European countries, a considerable percentage of the education of radiographers takes place in the clinical environment so there are already strong links established as a tripartite arrangement between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the clinical departments within public-sector health care establishments and the professional and statutory bodies.

HENRE has begun to develop a network of educators to share in the experience of learning and teaching innovation and to identify those areas where harmonisation is achievable. At the same time the aim has been to enable the pan European development of continuing education to respond to the rapid developments occurring in imaging modalities and the necessity of maintaining a quality imaging service in times of radiographer recruitment shortages.

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 initiated the strategy for the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 to allow European competitiveness in Higher education in the increasingly important International arena. The Tuning programme is the European Universities response to Bologna with its goal to tune rather than harmonise educational programmes across the European Union. The development of the Tuning methodology in relation to educational structures in Europe has been a timely opportunity for radiography to begin to develop a pan European generic and subject specific competencies approach to education. HENRE is thus playing a central role in describing and updating radiography qualifications making considerable strides in relation to the Bologna agenda.

HENRE has, through the work of one of its subgroups commenced the exploration of the difference in educational status of radiographers throughout Europe and has identified that in some countries radiographic education lies outside the higher education system. Those countries in this position, through being partners within this project, have access to the expertise of other partners who have experience of university level education and are already engaged in the HE sector and thus gain from their advice and guidance particularly in the field of curriculum development. This will be built on through processes to identify and establish intended learning outcomes (ILOs) at both programme level and module/unit level particularly in relation to a qualifications framework; benchmarks and the notion of educational level, quality standards and the translation of CATS points to ECTS points. Again, the Tuning methodology has provided an opportune moment to assist those countries where radiography education lies outside the higher education system and partners have started moves towards setting up of degree programmes one such example being Slovenia.

The focus for a **European dimension** has focussed on three areas:

- Research to determine the European dimension in radiographic education – existing radiography programmes
- Exploration of learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) methods used in radiography education
- Continuing professional development (CPD) and Radiographer Role expansion

The rationale and thus the general aim behind the work of HENRE has been to enable radiographers throughout Europe to liaise about the changing role of radiography, and within this context to develop, harmonise and improve standards of professional practice and education. This should eventually enhance mutual academic and professional recognition between European countries thus breaking down the barriers to the movement of labour and skills across Europe. Issues of both employability and professionalism are to be addressed by HENRE through standards in first post competency agreements. It is the goal of HENRE to substantially increase the active participation of non-academic partners reflecting the wider social role undertaken by degree-educated radiographers.

4. The HENRE Main Objectives

- Establish links across radiography education in Europe by bringing together radiography practitioners, educators, professional bodies and the health services to ensure that the benefits to society are met through an educated workforce of radiographers.
- Map and enhance radiography education across Europe through the exploration of the learning & teaching methodologies and to identify mutually beneficial good practice and design.
- Investigate common subject benchmarks and to define and update for generic and subject specific competencies using the Tuning methodology.
- Work closely with other EU projects in promoting the production of European wide modules and link as complementary activities within Erasmus Mundus.
- Promote co-operation and mobility in the education of educators and students to the benefit of society.
- Pursue the links between research and education as they relate to quality assurance and enhancement.

Target Groups

Institutions, professional societies and public health care bodies involved in radiography education and continuing professional development

Main Activities

The main activities were to develop the activities of the 3 subgroups:

Three sub groups were set up with specific tasks related to the above objectives to investigate the following:

SUB GROUP 1: The nature of the European dimension in radiographic education – initial radiography training

SUB GROUP 2: Development of learning and teaching methods used in radiographic education including e-learning, active learning and Context /Problem Based Learning (C/PBL) opportunities

SUB GROUP 3: Development of Continuing Professional Development in relation to the use of different imaging modalities and role expansion whilst at the same time maintaining a quality service with fewer radiography staff members

Main Outputs

- Radiography programme directory and first cycle competencies
- E-learning report and appropriate learning & teaching materials such as Reusable Learning Objectives (RLO's)
- Mapping of CPD opportunities

Direct Beneficiaries of the Thematic Network in radiography

The direct beneficiaries include:

- Institutions, both academic and clinical, who are involved in the undergraduate education of radiography, will benefit from the publication of subject specific competencies and from the exploration of a qualifications framework for radiography
- Individual teachers and practitioners in the field of radiography will become aware of the educational possibilities afforded through continuing professional development activities and the possibility of much wider transnational access to educational resources in Europe
- Student radiographers who will be able to reap the rewards of close co-operation amongst radiography educators through the identification of good practice.
- Medical staff in hospitals will be able to see and understand the potential benefits accruing from an educated workforce within radiology
- The European wide health sector, which includes patients and other stakeholders, should benefit in the long term from the co-operation between radiographers across Europe