

## PART C. Description of the project

### C.1.1 Summary of the project

The Thematic Network "Dietitians Improving Education and Training Standards" (2006-09) successfully published first cycle competences, influenced education policy change and increased web-based and innovative communication between higher education (HE) and the dietetic profession. But to effectively contribute to policies and practices averting the European health crisis (WHO, 2007) and poor nutritional health of its children (EU, 2007) dietitians need to make effective use of lifelong learning increasing their competence and attain a high quality of performance, creativity and innovation.

To support the Lisbon Strategy the project aims to:

- work with higher education to create, define, embed lifelong learning thereby raising the expertise of dietitians in Europe becoming a world quality reference
- work with National Associations to ensure demonstrable worldwide quality of LifeLongLearning
- strengthen research capability and capacity in new graduates ensuring development of a knowledge triangle in dietetics
- develop, in partnership with enterprise and others, work based learning/placements to embed good and diverse practice

#### Products:

- A lifelong learning 'toolkit'; competences at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle
- Systematic promotion of HE in LLL and increased transparency of qualifications
- Innovative ICT-based education materials with the cooperation of HEIs and enterprise
- ICT 'literate' network of dietitians across Europe
- Conferences, publications and guidelines on teaching enquiry based learning
- An e-journal to promote an evidenced-based approach

**Impact:** LLL, pedagogic tools and a world quality reference approach to practice will improve the effectiveness of European dietitians working cross-border and 'fitness to practice safely' in strategic areas of nutritional health, eg clinical/tertiary care, food service and industry, primary care and health promotion (EDBS, 2005). ICT 'literacy' will ensure a sustainable network.

### C.1.2 Why does the consortium wish to undertake this project?

The European Community faces serious health issues concerning diet and physical activity (EC Green Paper, 2006; EC White paper, 2007; WHO, 2008) and initiatives for primary and secondary prevention (Euroaspire III and the EU Platform for action on Diet, physical activity and health) are developing

([http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/nutrition/platform/platform\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/platform_en.htm)) in a wide variety of settings especially in arena of public health (Green paper; on the European workforce for Health Com(2008) 725).

There are in excess of 28,000 dietitians in Europe who constitute a well trained workforce to implement these strategies. But certain key attributes are required; to be

- fully able to undertake and evaluate health promoting interventions and publish findings (enquiry led-learning)
- develop and use contemporary communication and pedagogic/education methods (ICT)
- continually enhance their own expertise and relevance (LLL)
- flexibility and preparedness (placements) to work in novel areas of food and health

Reports (2009) 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 from TN DIETS ([www.thematicnetworkdietetics.eu](http://www.thematicnetworkdietetics.eu)) revealed enquiry based learning was not taught in each European HEI, introducing dietetic students to a diversity of workplace placement environments was not universal and only about 50% of HEIs taught students about LLL. Of greatest concern was the poor engagement with ICT. If HEIs do not use ICT to teach and European dietitians use ICT to support nutritional health education or share best practice effective health improvement will be jeopardised.

This proposal uses these key findings to propose a project which will build on previously identified best practice, raise quality of dietetic education, use of ICT and publish/exploit findings to improve healthcare education in Europe.

### C.1.3 Aims and objectives

#### Aims to:

1. create dietetic specific 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle competence statements and encourage increased offer at postgraduate level
2. improve the educational/pedagogic quality and the diversity of dietetic practice placements
3. increase the understanding of dietitians of Life Long Learning and encourage greater engagement thereby enhancing competence of dietitians
4. increase the use and application of ICT in education by dietitians

5. embed enquiry based approach to learning at 1st cycle degree
6. share innovations, inform other networks and contribute to improved healthcare in Europe

### **Objectives to:**

- a) define and publish 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level specific dietetic competences and a framework for their use (include ECTS)
- b) produce pedagogic standards for dietetic placements and guidance for placement opportunities in non-clinical areas
- c) publish a 'toolkit' for LLL, a database of current education provision at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and future needs
- d) use social networking and other innovative ICT engage European dietitians and HEIs in use of e-learning, an ejournal and other Network products
- e) make available tools for enquiry learning and courses for first cycle dietetic students through use of technology
- f) publish, disseminate and exploit the outcomes of the Network to benefit other healthcare professionals

By engaging the expertise of the DIETS2 Network partners and through innovative use of ICT (eg Facebook) HEIs will enable dietetic students to learn about enquiry based learning, LLL and how to reach new environments to support better nutrition. Then at PG level dietitians will have improved access to courses, work standards and the means to record their progress towards supporting change in nutritional health. Methodical dissemination and exploitation will benefit other healthcare professionals and support strategic goals for European health improvement.

### **C.1.4 Impact and Sustainability:**

There will be three main target groups or beneficiaries in the short term:

- **Higher education academic and managers**

Higher education is in continual development and quality enhancement to availability of programme materials (ecourses); greater knowledge of ECTS at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and access to databases of LLL programmes and the identification of 'gaps' will support future planning of educational provision. improved pedagogic practice in placements enhance quality of education.

- **Dietetic Associations and European dietitians**

Dietetic Associations require to ensure best possible quality of practice through the development of greater ICT/social networking greater sharing/dissemination and engagement across Europe is possible and together with a 'toolkit' emphasis on LLL will improve quality and provision

- **Students of dietetics and nutrition at 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle**

Students at every level will benefit from databases/the ability to network and especially the encouragement to share best and evidenced practice. Improving ICT competence and diversity of placements will open new markets for their work and benefit to community health.

And possible short term beneficiary will be National Ministries of Education and Health and policy makers as the Network disseminates its work proactively.

The Network through its extensive use of well briefed 'Key Contacts' (one in each Partner) will ensure proactive dissemination and exploitation and especially to the three main target groups using a variety of modes:

- **Direct face to face meetings/conferences**

Three conferences are planned and all partners funded to attend so that dissemination and feedback about DIETS2 activities can reach others through cascaded/multiplier effect information. Focus groups and workshops at conferences allow debate and learning about outputs.

- **Printed materials**

Reports, guides and 'trigger' papers will stimulate debate at the level of Associations and other group meetings. The Newsletters can be downloaded and contains significant briefing materials. The 'toolkit' and the competences will be mainstreamed through the Associations and HEIs. It is intended to make greater use of referred journals to submit outcomes of projects, mapping exercises and information about process activity as journal articles. Proceedings of conferences will enable poster research to be viewed.

- **Website and other electronic mechanisms**

Web streaming, webinars, blogs, podcasts plus the availability of e-courses/e-journal will mainstream the work on enquiry based learning. The wide use of virtual meetings and social networking sites by partners will progress the use of ICT. The website and its databases will be an interactive source of impact.

The DIETS2 Network aims to make a difference to dietitian preparedness to meet challenges of improving nutritional health through education. To do this dietitians must engage proactively at every level and the Network through its own activities presents a model. The target groups:

- **Dietetic Associations**

working at a level to influence education and health policy National associations influence national policy and implementation only if they have contemporary knowledge of Europe wide policy/data. DIETS2 aims to develop this inter-reliance, proactive partnership to develop Europe wide data and quality educational standards complementing the professional activity of EFAD

- **Food and pharmaceutical industries engaged in nutrition provision**

Student dietitians exposed early to the 'culture' of private enterprise will learn better how to work effectively in that environment. Similarly private enterprise working more closely with HEIs will appreciate the added value to their business of understand food and nutrition

- **Higher education improving quality of provision**

Improving quality and excellence of European education (Lisbon)

- **Commercial companies producing e-learning**

More provision of targeted nutrition/health resources could be brought about through greater intelligence by this industry of market trends benefitting a wide population group

- **Healthcare professionals to enhance working together**

Working more together will facilitate greater reach of healthful and reliable nutrition education

The Network has structured its modes of communication and deliverables to meet the challenge of the long term. Enhancing the use of ICT and social networking dietitians across Europe will more easily share information and confidently be ready to provide an evidence base for their propositions. Defining competence at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and plus a database together with more provision by HEIs of courses will cause greater interactivity between dietitians and higher education which will then have more interdependency. Communication and joint goals at a local, national and European level will mean stakeholders are more comfortable working with each other and self-sustaining. DEV1 will proactively work with private enterprise and develop local and other networks, partners will bring enterprise/SME networks and by proactively developing pedagogic materials first at local level these target groups can be reached as networks expand. The website will be of fundamental importance to store materials and make interactive easy. Social networking will also enhance this dialogue. Plans are proposed to seek funding for publishing of the e-journal on a European wide basis commercially. This would require a vision and investment for longer term sustainability but it would reach other networks especially in healthcare. DIETS2 has a clear sense of longer term purpose and sustainability through embedding those skills and products for potential long term benefit.

From 2010 the activities of DIETS will be sustained through the education group of EFAD as DIETS was recognised as vital to maintain the impact for the growth and development of the profession in Europe. DIETS2 will be a separate project but may eventually be taken into EFAD after 3 years, in particular to sustain the databases and other quality standards developed. Enhancing enquiry led learning also means that newly qualified dietitians are more likely to have the capability to present coherent arguments – embedding a change of culture. The website can have a sustained impact when HEIs realise the benefit of a central website for sharing and advertising their courses. Encouraging a wider diversity of placements and the pedagogic standards to ensure a quality learning experience also promotes wider understanding and sustains/embeds the impact of higher quality of placement learning.

Finally through referred papers and reports the dietitians and partners contributing will have a long lasting dissemination, mainstreaming effect. The work of the EXP work package and the Network Users Advisory Group will help to define further the strategic potential of these printed or web based materials. DIETS2 information can be made available internationally as well as on a European basis and the rate at which materials are accessed gives indication of impact.