SUMMARY OF THE PHYSICS GROUP "1st MEETING of TUNING II"
(Brussels, May 9th – 10th, 2003)

The meeting run in a smooth and easy way.

1. Opening remarks: After welcoming the new Romanian partner, it was stated that the Physics SAG and EUPEN would like to conduct a TUNING-EUPEN consultation with EUPEN institutions from C/EE countries. The call was sent out earlier and some 10 candidates already sent in their expression of interest for this consultation project. Three candidates however are not eligible (from AL, MD and YU).
Some basic opening questions were: "what does it mean implementation of Tuning? is it a theoretical project? how to cope with the lack of interest by most of our home colleagues?". Apart from particular dissemination (i.e. information) activities, tried on a national or on an individual basis (see also below), it was felt that *"in the present phase it would be enough starting to take care of the issues raised by Tuning"*. However F. Cornet, Spain, reported about a very concrete Spanish Pilot Project aimed at using the Tuning Methodology in practice.

2. State of Affairs: each SAG member reported about the level of implementation of the Bologna Reforms in her/his country. It was quite clear that things are moving in the European HE landscape and that the Blue Book should be updated. However, fear was expressed that *divergence* might occur rather than *convergence*.

3. Fine tuning of first and second cycle descriptions: we discussed the Management Committee request for producing a 3-page summary of the Tuning I results (a simplified document of the results described in the Blue Book), aimed at identifying common reference points and at giving guidelines about how to develop level indicators and describe a course. It was stressed that *average* guidelines should allow for *variations* in order not to loose in precision.

4. Applying competences in practice: written hand-outs were distributed by Gent, Helsinki, Patras, Trieste. In the subsequent discussion, the need not to forget the wider scope of University education was stressed. University education – even though paying attention to its *utilitarian* aspects, like developing competences useful in the job market – should always keep in mind that students expect much more than that (e.g. physics teaching should educate to a full understanding of nature, to its laws and beauty).

5. ECTS as an accumulation system: Two concrete examples of workload measurement were presented, relating to a basic and to an advanced Physics course unit in Padova: they respectively show a gaussian-like and a bi-modal distribution for the students study hours. The subsequent discussion touched upon several points, some of them still *hot*, in the perception of some members (at least). Part of the discussion focused on the possible correlation between *individual* workload and *individual* mark; it was (again!) stressed that ECTS credits refer to average workload and that credits and marks are quite independent. As a possible common conclusion it was stated that "credits are not isolated, but may show correlation with students' study habits and performances and with learning outcomes" (in addition to be linked to contents!). A new point for discussion was identified in the percentage of failed exams, which can be tolerated, when conferring the final degree. In the perspective of privileging the measurement of learning outcomes above all other aspects, the member from Trieste launched the somewhat provocative idea of establishing a "European exam" – commonly agreed at European level and independent of the country – to test the individual student level of preparation after a Ba level or a Ma level degree (i.e. an examination test, which is similar – *mutatis mutandis* – to the US advanced G.R.E. – Graduate Record Examination, useful to access their doctoral studies).

6. Quality assurance: the TEEP process was illustrated both in general and with respect to Physics. Several critical remarks were expressed, also from the very point of view of the role played by Tuning in the whole process. It was strongly suggested to organise a meeting with the 5 representatives of the TEEP participating Physics Deptments (all EUPEN members) and then to give a constructive feedback to the TEEP and/or Tuning Management Committee. A basic concept, as identified in the discussion, is the Academic level of the institution (including its commitment in research), which should be assessed too. The subject-specific competences, whose actual development is closely linked both to the academic level and to the actual content of the degree course, should be then consistently used in the QA mechanism. Shifting from an input based to an exclusively output based procedure is misleading. TEEP, as a matter of fact, didn't care about contents and seemed to be only concerned with (certain) procedures and their effectiveness. Moreover the ENQA evaluators did not yet seem to have a European-wide vision. Concerns were then expressed about giving too much power to ENQA (see Berlin draft Communiquè). A concrete proposal, aimed at improving the TEEP approach, would be to rewrite the self-evaluation manual, in order to include aspects, which in addition to the learning outcomes may give information about the academic standard of the concerned degree course (including contents, link with research, possible social role of the degree course, etc). A good starting point seems to be the Dutch *'Protocol for the External Assessment of Educational Programmes 2000-2005"*, WWW goldmine, p.263 of the Blue Book. The idea was to pick up the good points, link them to physics and find out the role of the Tuning ideas in this framework (homework for the SAG members?).

7. Consultation of relevant actors (stakeholders): the need of sharing the Tuning I results with the enterprises, which took part in the early Tuning consultation on generic skills, was stressed. Some cases of good practice were reported. Finally the idea of a questionnaire to understand whether the employers are satisfied with Ba graduates was proposed. A preliminary list of possible Physics stakeholders was also made.

8. Other business: each member made a quick report informing how Tuning was spread to her/his colleagues (at different levels). Written reports were produced in 3 cases, oral presentations in other 4 cases; special country wide initiatives are planned in 2 cases (Spain and Italy); difficulties/scepticism of various kind were clearly reported in 5 cases.