

CLAIU Celebrates 20 Years !

It started at the end of 1988 when seven countries met to establish the 'Liaison Committee of University Associations', abbreviated into CLAIU as it was called in those days.

CLAIU was created as a 'de facto' association aiming to become a forum of consultation and collaboration among the engineering associations of all the EU member states.

The objectives were the following:

- Promotion of science, technology and techniques through fundamental and applied research.
- Maintenance of the high standard of the long-cycle engineer's education as well as continuing education, linked to scientific research.
- Safeguarding the quality and integrity of the long-cycle engineers' profession.
- Elimination of restrictions regarding the free circulation and professional practice of equivalent types of education, based on equality throughout the European Union.
- Upholding the professional interests of engineers and their engineering titles.
- Representing theoretically scientific long-cycle education rooted in fundamental concepts, both within the European Union and in the rest of the world.
- Establishment and development of the external relations required to realise the objectives above.

The working languages of CLAIU are English and French.

The seven founding members were Belgium, Spain, Greece, Luxemburg, Portugal, Italy and Germany.

Belgium took the initiative to establish the brand new organisation and also proposed the first representative for the presidency, Prof.dr.ir. Ludo Gelders who told us: « *CLAIU's establishment was necessary because it gave visibility to the scientific long-cycle education profiles which were in danger of disappearing, by the adoption of European regulations'. Their loss would damage both the professional engineering practice and the technological development of Europe* ».

Some years later when Ing. Giovanni Angotti took up the presidency seat in 1994-1996, he told us:

« *During my Presidency, the aims which inspired the creation of CLAIU as a Council of national associations of engineers holding the highest education level in each of the member States, were maintained.*

CLAIU's main objective was to safeguard the cultural, educational and professional engineering integrity at the highest level, without prejudice to the awareness of the importance of the coexistence of different education standards in Europe and the world.

In that year, CLAIU approved its REGISTER as an autonomous contribution for the purpose of facilitating the free movement of all European professionals. At that time, almost one and a half million engineers satisfied CLAIU 's requirements. The Register was, in fact, designed to be a formal representation of the academic and professional qualifications of all engineers in the European Union.

CLAIU 's Register was formally presented to the European Commission where it was highly regarded, particularly by Commissioner prof. Ing. Antonio Ruberti."

The Greek Ing. Christos Sinanis, President from 1993-1994, remembered it this way:

“I was President of CLAIU during the first years of its foundation and I was the second president after Ludo Gelders, who was then president of KVIV. When I took up the Presidency in 1993, the President of the Consiglio Nazionale Degli Ingegneri, Giovanni Angotti, joined the Board, as he would become the future President of CLAIU. During this time, we were mostly engaged, besides the development of the organisation, with the CLAIU Register. This Register was based on a very simple idea. Since the associations of Engineers which were members of CLAIU were recognized as equal and all of them as representative of Engineers of the highest educational level in their countries, it was sufficient for the Engineers of any specialisation to be members of these associations in order to be recognized equal as well. The trusting relationship among the associations of the member states of CLAIU was a guarantee for the proper operation of the Register and the facilitation of the mobility of its members. The member-organisations of CLAIU rendered the same services to their own members and the mobile engineers. When there was an interruption of procedures imposed by the recently adopted Directive 89/48, the organisations of the member states of CLAIU assisted with the materialisation of equivalence. The Directive, as we all know, concerned graduate Engineers with three and more study years, so it could be applied to Engineers of the highest level in each country, but of course not for all applicants. The CLAIU Register has been valid since then until the present day. I remember with emotion, the passion and fight shown by all representatives of the member states of CLAIU, in order to promote the Organisation.”

The CLAIU Register was established in 1995!

Within the Register there is, for each of the CLAIU- member countries, information about : academic titles, existence or not of the academic title protection, list of educational institutions, admission conditions to commence engineering studies, programme curriculum and study duration, access to the engineering profession and corresponding regulations and engineering association(s). Since 1995, this Register has been updated regularly and takes into account sometimes very complex national conditions.

Chronology of the Presidencies!

Prof. dr. ir. Ludo Gelders (BE) 1989-1992
 Prof. Dr. Dipl.-Ing. Werner Freise (GE) 1992-1993
 Dipl. Eng. Christos Sinanis (GR) 1993-1994
 Dott.Ing. Giovanni Angotti (IT) 1994-1996
 Ingeniero Alejandro Mira-Monerris (SP) 1996-1998
 Ingénieur Jean-Pierre Wagener (LU) 1998-2000
 ir. Boudewijn van Nederveen (NL) 2000-2002
 Engenheiro Francisco Sousa Soares (PT) 2002-2004
 Prof. Ir. Emile Peeters (BE) 2004-2008
 Chartered Engineer Denis Mc Grath (IE) 2008-

On the occasion of CLAIU's 20-year anniversary, former president Alejandro Mira Monerris (1996-1998) sent us the following words:

“CLAIU is now nearly twenty years old and many members still do not appreciate the tremendous effort that was required to reach this stage and the significant role played by the members. Wrongly perceived by some as an elitist engineering minority striving to perpetuate its social and professional status, CLAIU has been able to enthusiastically safeguard the academic and professional rights of degree-qualified engineers with scientific and management education (2nd Cycle/ Master/Doctorate). It has withstood strenuous political and academic pressure, even from its own members.

Nevertheless, CLAIU has always been aware of the existence and professionalism of other types of engineer. It understands that it is not only essential for the engineering domain but also for academic education intended for assignments and responsibilities different to those of CLAIU Engineers.

On a personal note, I think highly of the commendable atmosphere of CLAIU meetings. During my ten years as the representative of Spain (two of them as President), any disagreements were sorted out in a professional manner and with a spirit of intelligent comradeship.

I sincerely wish CLAIU a successful future as the stronghold for the representation of the CLAIU Engineers.”

CLAIU reinforces the dialogue

Jean-Pierre Wagener said: ‘during my presidency from 1998-2000, CLAIU focused on strengthening the dialogue with other countries. A meeting was organised at Dusseldorf with the representatives of VDI- Germany; another meeting took place in Luxemburg with the secretary general of OIAV- Austria. Other contacts were introduced with SIA-Switzerland and France (set-up of a working group).

A new logo for CLAIU was designed and a website established.

The relations with FEANI (European Federation of national engineering associations) were strengthened. CLAIU presented a proposal of collaboration during the FEANI General Assembly in 1998 which was explicitly welcomed by Kruno Hernaut, president of the FEANI-EMC (European Monitoring Committee). At the end of June 1999, Luxemburg notified the press about its objectives and goals. CLAIU realised from this that press relations should be integrated in CLAIU’s actions’.

CLAIU and the Bologna Declaration

During the General Assembly at The Hague on 29th September 2000, CLAIU submitted its view on the Sorbonne/Bologna Declaration. CLAIU is very supportive of this Declaration, which aims to improve the mutual exchange of qualifications in Europe on the basis of a greater transparency of degrees. CLAIU stresses that the implementation of the Bologna Declaration should also facilitate the mobility of engineers in the European Union. CLAIU stresses its preference for two profiles of engineer, resulting in two different types of engineering education, to be named the long-cycle, more scientific engineering education (5 years) and the short-cycle, more practical oriented engineering education (3,3 1 /2 or 4 years). CLAIU strongly stresses that the ‘Master of Science in Engineering’ title should be reserved for graduates of the 5 years’ cycle education degree. Furthermore, CLAIU states that the implementation of the Bologna Declaration should also establish accreditation organisations in countries where such an organisation does not yet exist.

It was in this context that ir. Boudewijn van Nederveen, who was CLAIU- president from 2000 to 2002 sent us the following message :

« The years since 1999 were focused on the Bologna Declaration and needed an active exchange of views between European countries. CLAIU was, at that time, limited to the Benelux and four Mediterranean countries. It therefore actively approached France, Germany, United Kingdom and Ireland. This resulted in the CLAIU Seminar of 2003 on “increasing the competitiveness of engineering education and the engineering profession in the European Union”. The Bologna Declaration modified the higher education framework all over Europe into a Bachelor-Master system. The introduction of the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE) and new accreditation agencies in a number of European countries resulted in a distinction being made between the long-cycle and short-cycle structures of engineering education.”

First European Seminar

It was under the Portuguese presidency of Francisco Sousa Soares (2002-2004) that CLAIU organised its first European Seminar. The seminar took place in Leuven (Belgium) on 11 and 12 April 2003 and had a lot of success both in the number of participants and quality of guest speakers. Subjects were the implementation of the Bologna Declaration, quality assurance and accreditation, study of engineering programmes and internationalisation. The seminar resulted in recommendations being made to the educational world, the media, government authorities on both a national and international level, professional associations and companies.

In 2004, Engineers Ireland (IEI) became a member of CLAIU. This was an important step forward in the short history of CLAIU as Ireland was the first Anglo-Saxon country to join a European association with a Latin member base.

In 2006 the Chamber of Engineers of Malta (CoE) and the Engineering Academy of the Czech Republic also became members.

CLAIU becomes an international non-profit association

Under the Belgian presidency (2004-2008) statutes were drawn up for CLAIU to become an international non-profit association. In order to convey its Europe-wide policy, CLAIU changed its name to CLAIU-EU. CLAIU-EU now stands for Council of Associations of long-cycle Engineers of a university or higher school of engineering education of the European Union. During this event an academic lecture was organised with guest speaker Philippe de Buck-Van Overstraeten, Secretary General of UNICE who gave a speech on ‘The engineer’s contribution to European research’.

Second European Seminar

The lecture of the Secretary General of UNICE was in fact the introduction to the second European Seminar of CLAIU on « The Engineer within the European Union of Knowledge » The seminar assembled a panel of highly qualified guest speakers . It took place in Brussels in the auditorium of the Royal Military Academy on 9 and 10 February 2007. The seminar’s aim was to illustrate the existence of a continuous line between research, innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit.

Research is essential and must be sustained, developed and encouraged. But research alone, executed in isolated laboratories has little input on the development of society. It must be linked with innovation in order to achieve new, innovative and practical engineering solutions for society. The conclusions and recommendations of this seminar were published in several publications of national engineering associations.

A few months later (9 and 10 November 2007) SEII and CLAIU organised a round table discussion in the Palace of Academies in Brussels on « What engineers for a competitive Europe? ».

Accreditation of Engineering Institutions

The EUR ACE (Accreditation of European Engineering Programmes) project subsidised by the European Commission, aimed to examine the accreditation of the engineering schools, polytechnics and other institutions of engineering education.

This project was succeeded in 2006 by the establishment of ENAEE, the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education. ENAEE aims to create confidence in the accreditation systems of engineering programmes and promotes the accreditation practice for engineering programmes in Europe. In 2007 CLAIU-EU became an Ordinary Member of ENAEE.

CLAIU-EU Website

CLAIU had already established a bilingual website (F/E) in 2000.

In 2005, the website was modernised and became a dynamic tool for the CLAIU-EU members. The site provides information on the organisation, the members and topics for discussion. On the site there is also the Register (see above) and the activities organised by CLAIU-EU and its members. For more information please visit www.claiu.org

Finally, a message from the new President, elected on 14 March 2008:

« Having completed twenty successful years in promoting the Master Degree in Engineering as the European standard for engineers, CLAIU-EU is moving forward in the new environment where Europe will more than ever need Master degree, « long-cycle » engineering graduates in order to further develop and sustain the knowledge-based economy envisaged in the Lisbon agenda. CLAIU-EU will continue to co-operate with other European organisations such as FEANI, in its work and activities. CLAIU-EU particularly welcomes the establishment of the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE) and expects to work closely with ENAEE on the accreditation issues associated with the pursuit of the CLAIU-EU mission as we move forward together into the next twenty years»
Denis McGrath, Chartered Engineer.

Ann Van Eycken, Secretary General Prof. Ir. Emile Peeters, Past-President