

October, 2004

## **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

More than 250 delegates from around the world gathered in Australia this week for an important forum to strengthen international education.

Australia hosted the joint *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation* and *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (UNESCO-OECD) Forum on Trade in Education Services.

The forum was a resounding success with delegates from Europe, Asia, the Pacific, North and South America, Africa and the Middle East sharing their perspectives on the cross-border provision of post-secondary education.

This is a rapidly growing area of education - the number of foreign students in OECD countries has doubled over the past 20 years to 1.8 million. Most of them are concentrated in just six countries, including Australia. Cross-border provision is also increasingly carried out in the students' home country. For example, from 1996 to 2001, off-shore enrolments of international students increased from 24% to 37% of all international students enrolled in Australian institutions.

The focus of the forum was on three areas of capacity building:

- Bridging the divide – sharing perspectives on cross-border provision of education;
- Trade capacity building – promoting understanding of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the trade negotiation process; and
- Building capacity in quality assurance and accreditation in higher education particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

Other delegates included Norwegian, Danish and New Zealand Ministers, high level government officials, OECD and UNESCO officials, policy makers, higher education institutions, private companies, unions, students, professional associations and quality assurance, accreditation and recognition agencies.

This third and final forum in a series was held in Sydney on 11-12 October. The first forum was in the USA during May 2002, and the second in Norway during November 2003.

Further information and key papers from the forum will be available shortly at:

[www.dest.gov.au/unesco-oecd/australiaforum.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/unesco-oecd/australiaforum.htm)

OECD and UNESCO are working collaboratively on guidelines for 'Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education'. It is anticipated that these guidelines will be completed in 2005.

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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
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