

## **First ever EU Conference dedicated to the Future of Commercial Communications Education takes place in Brussels**

**Brussels, 9 May 2007:** The first ever EU conference dedicated to the Future of Commercial Communications Education, organised by The European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA) and hosted by the Haute Ecole EPHEC on 27 and 28 April 2007 in Brussels, saw 65 delegates from over 12 EU countries, representing schools, universities and the advertising business, explore how to teach and train future marketers in the current fast changing media environment.

According to Xavier Oliver, president of the European Foundation for Commercial Communications Education (EFCCE), created by EACA to bring academia and agencies closer together, "The aims of this first conference and of the Foundation are threefold: first: provide the market with better prepared students; second: bridge the research gap; third: make sure both the industry and academia become better at sharing programmes, teachers and students." He added: "The European advertising business needs to "shine" as much as its American counterpart and promote the industry to the wider public, as current perceptions are not always positive".

The conference underlined that conference attendees shared the same concerns and were aware of the urgent need for industry and academia to work more closely together and create a common language. However two questions proved to be particularly controversial and initiated many other debates: are universities producing students directly employable by agencies and can universities keep up with the pace of change in the market place?

Many speakers and research papers illustrated the new environment in which the advertising business is now evolving: the mix between traditional and non-traditional media that opens new possibilities for interaction; the explosion of media and channels that has created a complex map of touchpoints and far more complex purchase pathways; digitisation where consumers are no longer passive recipients of communication but the leading stakeholders in brand stewardship.

It is difficult enough for agencies to remain ahead of these curves so it is doubly difficult for educational establishments unless both fields work together and share more of their respective learning. The conference proved the need for the industry to engage far more with academic institutions if they are to receive the talent they need.

The EFCCE will take up the challenge and answer the questions coming both from the educational and industry side: is the advertising industry offering enough internships and work-sponsorship programmes? What should be taught to future advertising professionals and how? How to develop the potential of future advertising professionals? Why do agencies not always look for communications or marketing graduates and often find that better thinkers come out of different areas of study?

The EFCCE has defined a full range of projects it will soon be developing such as:

- set up EU wide research projects on subjects still poorly researched such as creativity to move beyond today's preoccupations
- create an exchange project which would expose academics and professors to commercial communications from a two-week experience inside an advertising agency/company
- build up a common network of guest lecturers
- launch an EU level competition between the students of the foundation's academic members
- work on international modules the founding members could use in each of their schools and universities

The EFCCE already comprises ten academic founding members and the conference has offered an opportunity to considerably enlarge the foundation's membership.

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**To view the full programme of the conference:**

[www.eacaeducation.eu/?/2007\\_conference/programme/](http://www.eacaeducation.eu/?/2007_conference/programme/)

**To view the speaker's pictures and biographies:**

[www.eacaeducation.eu/?/2007\\_conference/speakers/](http://www.eacaeducation.eu/?/2007_conference/speakers/)

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#### **Notes for editors**

#### **About EACA**

EACA – the European Association of Communications Agencies - represents 29 national associations of commercial communications agencies, the 14 largest international agency networks operating in Europe, 8 international media agency networks and 9 national associations of integrated communications agencies.

#### **About EFCCE**

EFCCE – the European Foundation for Commercial Communications Education - was launched by EACA to promote excellence in commercial communications education and research and to further exchanges between the European commercial communications sector and academic partners.