



EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL

Update to the Bologna Follow-up Group, 2-3 October 2007

World Congress

Education International held its 5th World Congress on 22-26 July 2007 in Berlin (Germany). World Congresses are held every three years and this time more than 1686 participants representing 331 organisations from across the globe attended plenaries, workshops and events arranged around the theme "Educators - Joining Together for Quality Education and Social Justice". The Congress is an important policy forum for the whole education sector and EI was pleased to welcome the German President Horst Köhler to give a speech to the Congress. This year Congress delegates voted overwhelmingly for stronger solidarity in their common struggle for social justice.

The 5th World Congress adopted a number of resolutions specifically for the area of higher education, namely one on the "*Situation in the Higher Education Sector in France*" demanding, amongst other things, that higher education stays a public responsibility and that the state takes its responsibility to guarantee that. One resolution on "*Higher Education and Research as a Public Service*" pointing out, amongst other things, the importance of higher education as a public good that should be accessible to all and the need to keep education out of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). It furthermore defends academic freedom and the right of academic staff to conduct research and publish results without political or commercial censoring. Finally the Congress adopted one resolution highlighting the problems for fixed-term teaching personnel, "*Fixed-term Higher Education Teaching Personnel*" demanding that fixed-term teaching personnel are not discriminated against compared to permanent staff and that fixed-term contracts are not overused. The resolution also underlines that fixed-term personnel are entitled to the same academic freedom as other teaching staff. Apart from this the Congress discussed international migration, quality education, gender equality issues and social justice. The Congress also focused on the difficult situation many trade union activists experience around the world.

The resolutions and other Congress documents can be found at <http://www.ei-ie.org/congress5/en/documents.php>

Education at a Glance 2007

Education International is concerned that the OECD's policies are paving the way for increased privatisation of education, especially at the tertiary level, instead of promoting greater access to quality public education.

"Financing higher education through general taxation is the most equitable way of ensuring education as a social good in democratic societies," said EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen, speaking in reaction to Education at a Glance 2007, which examines internationally comparable indicators of education.

"The OECD consistently fails to call for greater public investment in education, but this year's report clearly calls for increasing privatisation of funding for tertiary education," van Leeuwen said. He criticized income-contingent student loans brought in by the Australian government, which the OECD presents as a successful example of private financing. "These income-contingent loans entrench regressive tuition fees and place a disproportionate burden on students from lower-income households," he said.

Once again the OECD indicators show both economic and social benefits for individuals and countries that invest in education. Countries with well-funded education systems tend to have the most successful economies and the highest levels of student performance.

International Conference on Higher Education and Research

EI's 6th International Conference on Higher Education and Research will take place at the University of Malaga, Spain from November 12 to 14.

It will focus on some trends and key issues for academics, researchers and non-teaching staff. The background for the discussion will be the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, its implementation and impact as well as some of the resolutions adopted at EI's 5th World Congress in Berlin (22-26 July 2007). These refer to global issues on higher education – brain drain, academic freedom, GATS and globalisation, and casualisation of labour and fixed-term contracts.

Higher Education and Research Standing Committee (H.E.R.S.C.)

The H.E.R.S.C. of EI will meet on October 11-12th to discuss current issues emerging from the Bologna Process, EU activity in the field of higher education, OECD Thematic Review on Tertiary education and the plans to introduce a PISA for higher education and any activities undertaken by the Council of Europe, ILO and UNESCO (CEART).