



Pan-European Structure

Update to the Bologna Follow-up Group meeting, 13-14 March 2008

This document is meant as an update for the BFUG regarding activities undertaken by EI in the area of higher education and research in Europe since the last BFUG meeting in October.

With International Higher Education and Research Conference

EI held its sixth biannual international conference concentrating on higher education and research on the 12-14 November in Malaga, Spain. The conference dealt with current trends in higher education and research and discussed working conditions for academic staff, funding of higher education, doctoral students and work that the OECD is currently undertaking regarding assessing learning outcomes of higher education and the Tertiary Review. Furthermore the conference delegates devoted some time to discussions about how to work with gender equality both in higher education and research and within the unions themselves. The conference also highlighted the importance that universities and their staff work more intensively with the issue of climate change. The conference also gave consideration to the further uses of the UNESCO recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, and at European level, EI affiliates are being asked to consider using the Recommendation as a bargaining tool in the light of Bologna and other European developments. It is hoped that the Recommendation will be used as a benchmark in determining the direction in which the European higher education teaching and research profession is going.

EI's International Higher Education and Research Conferences always include a special discussion related to the region in which the conference is being held. As the conference was held in Europe this time the discussion of course, focused on the Bologna Process. The strategy for the Global dimension was presented by Barbara Weitgruber followed by a discussion on this and other parts of the process.

The conference adopted a statement regarding the OECD initiative on assessing learning outcomes of higher education, also known as PISA for higher education. EI regards this development with great concern and wants to underline that standardized assessment of students is not a straightforward method in any sector of education, and cannot be seen on their own as a measure of the effectiveness and quality of higher education. The quality of the educational experience students receive simply cannot be quantified in a performance-based test. Quality is a function of the "lived experience" of higher education including the conditions and activities of teaching and free enquiry. EI strongly asks the OECD governments to carefully consider if

standardizing testing of students, risking homogenised higher education in which teachers are encouraged to “teach to the test”, is a path they want to take. The full statement is available on <http://www.ei-ie.org/highereducation/en/policy.php>

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

EI's European committee in higher education and research met on the 28-29 February in Dubrovnik to follow up on the outcomes of the conference in Malaga as well as discuss the current developments in the Bologna Process. EI is highly committed to the discussion regarding the future of the Bologna Process after 2010 and part of this meeting was devoted to this issue. Furthermore the committee assessed the work undertaken in the Mobility campaign done jointly with ESU. Other topics discussed were academic freedom, climate change, researchers careers and matters relating to European Union work in the area of higher education and research.

EI and ESU Mobility Campaign

EI and ESU have been working on the campaign since its launch in November 2007. Intensive work is going on to create and launch our Mobility Campaign website. The website will include an interactive Wiki-style part where students and staff can exchange knowledge and mobility experiences. The website will also include a flash game and an online petition. The Campaign web site was officially launched in presence of the State Secretary for Science of Croatia, Dr Dražen Vikić-Topić, <http://www.lets gocampaign.net>

The Expert group assisting EI and ESU in this project met on the 3rd of March to give us input and advice to the work. The work on the national level is also well on its way with student and teacher unions setting up national campaign activities.

The Validation conference “Let’s Go! – Where to now?” concluding the campaign will be held on the 6-9 of October 2008 in Lille, France. During the conference participants will be given the opportunity to exchange experiences and outcomes from the national campaigns, as well as define future actions that should lead to mobility for all higher education staff and students.