

BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL DIMENSION AND DATA ON MOBILITY OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

NOTES OF MEETING OF 6 FEBRUARY, LONDON

Present

Annika Pontén, Sweden, Ministry of Education and Research (Chair)
Myrna Smitt, Sweden, Ministry of Education, Research and Culture
Martin Unger, Austria, Institute of Advanced Studies
Ann Fritzell, Education International (Swedish Association of University Teachers)
Germain Dondelinger, Luxembourg
Sanja Brus, ESIB
Keith Andrews, UK, Department for Education and Skills
Melita Kovacevic, Croatia
Victor Chistokhvalov, Russian Federation
Hélène Lagier, France, International Department, Authority of Education
Zenan Sabanac, Bosnia Herzegovina
David Crosier, EUA
Ramnik Jain, UK, Department for Education and Skills
Cornelia Racké, University of Maastricht (observer)
Ann McVie, Secretariat (notes)

Apologies

Brian Power, Ireland

Opening of the Meeting

1. Annika Pontén welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Report from other Meetings

BFUG Board Meeting

2. Ann McVie gave some feedback from the recent Board discussion about the report from the Social Dimension and Mobility Working Group. The report had been well received and a number of constructive comments made. Discussion had centred on: the reference to the social dimension in the draft communiqué text; the appropriateness, or otherwise, of applying the Bologna stocktaking methodology to the social dimension; the progress made on identifying comparable data; and the need to explain more fully the relationship between recommending that national action plans be developed, while continuing to improve the availability of comparable data.

It was agreed that:

Ann McVie would circulate the appropriate extracts of the draft Communiqué text to the Working Group for comments. Comments would be directed to Annika, in order that she might write to the Communiqué Drafting Group on behalf of the Social Dimension and Mobility Working Group.

Subgroup on data collection

3. Germain Dondelinger reported on the recent meeting of the data subgroup. The group had started by discussing mobility.

4. It was expected that the subgroup would be able to provide a definition of mobility for 2005. In the interim, some, albeit incomplete, data on mobility could be provided for the Working Group's report. This was consistent with the group's terms of reference to identify the data gaps. The group had concluded that the 'traditional' stocktaking approach was not appropriate for mobility or the social dimension. In order for the data to be reliable and comparable, data gathering had to be entrusted to international data gathering organisations. The group was recommending that a series of data indicators be developed by data experts, working under the supervision of the BFUG. Eurostat had indicated that they would be willing to take the lead on gathering data for all countries within the Bologna Process, working in conjunction with Eurostudent. This approach would be complementary to the recommendation that countries develop their own national action plans on both mobility and the social dimension.

Discussion of the final draft report

5. Germain Dondelinger led a discussion on the draft report from the data subgroup. He explained that the draft was currently with the data providers for comment. The resultant draft would be then circulated to the full Working Group. The layout and formatting of the final version would be much clearer. Many of the current tables would be replaced with clearer examples. Further data on mobility would also be added. No difficulties were anticipated in incorporating the text within the overall report from the working group.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- A reference should be added to the text that Eurydice was producing its report on student support systems in response to the interest in this area stimulated by the Social Dimension and Mobility Working Group.
- The language should be 'user-friendly' with all tables being clearly explained.
- Comments on the identified data gaps could added to each section. Key conclusions might also be helpful.
- There was a need to include as many data as possible, on staff and student mobility, as well as on the social dimension.
- The limitations of any data should be clearly explained. "Trends" data, for example, was based on responses from HEIs. It was not evaluated in any way.
- There was support for including a section on employability.

- The recommendation should refer explicitly to Eurostat, Eurostudent, and the development of data indicators. It should also make it clear that data gathering would be across the EHEA.
- There was a need to be very clear about the purpose of the data indicators, clearly differentiating them from stocktaking indicators.
- The final Communiqué text should contain the key components of the Working Groups recommendations. Ministers would not be asked to adopt the report in full.
- It should be recognised that there were funding implications inherent in the group's recommendation. The detail of the funding mechanisms could, however, be addressed at an appropriate time.

It was agreed that:

Germain Dondelinger would revise the draft text to reflect the comments made.

Draft Framework Report

6. Annika Pontén outlined the changes made to the overarching draft report since the previous meeting. Comments were invited on the latest draft.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The text on the rationale for mobility from the previous draft should be reinstated. This would provide a better balance with the objective for the social dimension.
- There was some repetition in the current draft which could be deleted.
- There was a need to increase the emphasis on both the need to increase applications amongst underrepresented socio-economic groups and the economic argument for the social dimension.
- The current text on visas should be edited, to make it clearer it was offering examples of the type of difficulties encountered.
- It might be helpful to refer to some of the actions to support mobility in the EC Directives on guest researchers and student mobility.
- The need to work to mitigate prejudice should be added to section 3.1.
- The text should make it clear that actions to promote mobility applied both within and outwith the EHEA. Due cognisance should be taken of 'brain drain' issues, without however setting any limitations on mobility. The EI report on mobility might provide useful text on this point.

- The references to the ACA report should be reduced. The report might also make clearer the limitations of using ‘nationality’ as the basis of any data indicator on mobility.
- The text should not contain any references to individual countries when referring to information drawn from the National Reports.
- The report might make clearer that there should be greater effort to promote staff mobility, particularly amongst teaching staff. There was considered to be merit in including in an Annex some guide questions to prompt discussion at the national level. The text should make it clear that they were not prescriptive in anyway, and care should be taken to minimise the reporting burden on participating countries.
- The reference to being unable to define the social dimension should be clarified. It should make clearer there was no common definition of the social dimension across the EHEA.

It was agreed that:

Working Group members would offer any further comments on the draft by Wednesday 14th February. Draft text should be provided, rather than general comments.

Annika Pontén would review the text, including the section on ‘Taking Stock of Progress for 2007’, to reflect the comments made.

Germaine Dondelinger would circulate links to the relevant EC Directives to group members for info.

Zenan Sabanac or Sanja Brus would provide Annika Pontén with examples of difficulties in obtaining visas by 22nd February.

Report for BFUG meeting 5-6th March

7. Following a short discussion, it was agreed that the report for BFUG would be largely based on the report given to the Board, augmented to include some examples of the data that would be included in the final report.

Analysis of National Reports on the social dimension and mobility.

8. Martin Unger presented the analysis undertaken on the information from the National Reports on the social dimension. The analysis had to be treated with some caution. The questions in the National Report template were very open, and countries were not given any guidance on how to respond. The ‘story’ they told could therefore be incomplete and did not necessarily reflect the full picture in the country concerned. The analysis did, however, offer some interesting findings and could provide the basis for groupings of countries within the EHEA. This might, in due course, provide some interesting benchmarking information. In the short term,

however, it was agreed that the most appropriate use of the analysis might be to include it as a supplementary annex in the final report.

Date of Next Meeting

6th March, in Berlin, between 2-6pm.

The next draft of the report would be circulated to group members a week before the meeting. If this was not possible for any reason, the meeting would be rescheduled.

AOB

No items were raised.

Ann McVie
Bologna Secretariat

27 February 2007