

**BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL DIMENSION AND DATA ON MOBILITY  
OF STAFF AND STUDENTS  
NOTES OF MEETING OF 19 DECEMBER, LUXEMBOURG**

**Present**

Annika Pontén, Sweden, Ministry of Education, Research and Culture (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)  
Michael Hörig, EUA  
Germain Dondelinger, Luxembourg  
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  
Barry Conroy, Ireland  
Cornelia Racké, University of Maastricht (observer)  
Ann McVie, Secretariat (notes)

**Apologies**

Sanja Brus, ESIB

**1. Opening of the meeting**

Annika Pontén welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Brian Conroy. Brian explained that he was attending the meeting on behalf of Brian Power, who would be the permanent Irish representative, following Pat Dowling's retiral.

**2. Report from the meeting of the Data Collection Subgroup**

Germain Dondelinger circulated a first draft of text from the subgroup for inclusion in the Working Group's report. At this stage, the text only considered the social dimension; there would be a further meeting of the subgroup to consider mobility. Graphs would also be added at a later date.

Germain Dondelinger outlined the approach taken by the subgroup and summarised their conclusions. He highlighted that fact that there were no specific data collections on the social dimension. Rather, such data that were available were part of wider, more general, data collection exercises. He suggested that a positive outcome of the exercise had been improved communication between data collections agencies, particularly between Eurostat and Eurostudent. The subgroup's discussions suggested that there were a number of data gaps. Priority areas for further work could be to collect data on retention and employability.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- It might be helpful to identify who was responsible for the data collection and describe the agencies referred to in the text.

- There were mixed views on whether the report should identify disadvantaged groups. It might be preferable to identify groupings within the student population: age; gender; etc. This approach acknowledged that under representation might vary across the groupings according to subjects and other factors. For example: females being under represented in science and engineering, but over represented in teaching.
- As a first step, it might be helpful to analyse graduation rates, before commissioning cohort studies. There would also be merit in analysing data on the links between school and higher education.
- There was a need to be clear that, in the context of the report, “indicators” referred to data indicators, not stocktaking indicators. The report should also make clear where the data collection agencies were being asked to develop new indicators or provide new data by 2009. More generally, both the rationale for, and the benefits of, the recommendation should be explained.
- There would be a need to explain the rationale for recommending that action plans are developed at a national level in line with national priorities, at the same time as asking for improved comparable data at the European level.
- Asking Eurostat and Eurostudent to develop more comparable data had the advantage of allowing numerical data to be augmented by contextual data. As an agency of the EC, Eurostat offered the further advantage of not being dependent on any future evolution of BFUG beyond 2010.
- The Working Group’s report should acknowledge that the group had asked Eurydice to produce a report on the financial support systems available to students across all 45 countries.
- The recommendation might be expanded to include a suggestion that countries take part in Eurostat and Eurostudent. It might also be helpful to link the format of the recommendation with the overall objective for the social dimension, by addressing entry, participation and completion of higher education in the recommendation.
- The main gaps in the data concerned: incomplete data on socio-economic groupings; parental educational background; and immigration.
- There was a need to make explicit the fact that the subgroup had gone beyond the original request from the Ministers, and to explain the reasons for this.

***It was agreed that:***

*Data should be linked to entry, participation (the educational process) and completion of higher education.*

*The recommendation should make clear that a report comprising the available data would be produced for 2010, and include a description of the areas to be addressed.*

*One organisation should be given this task in cooperation with other data providers and with the support of a technical working group including BFUG representatives.*

### **3. Report from other meetings**

#### **Communiqué Drafting Group**

Ann McVie reported that the Communiqué Drafting Group had now started work. The suggested text from the Social Dimension Working Group had been incorporated in the first draft, albeit in an abbreviated form. The overall objective for the social dimension had however been retained.

#### **Stocktaking Working Group**

Ann McVie advised that there had not been a further meeting of the Stocktaking Working Group since the last meeting of the Social Dimension Working Group. The Stocktaking Working Group would next meet on 12-13 February, to discuss its draft report. Work to analyse the National Reports was underway. Current plans suggested that individual scorecards might be checked with the country concerned at the end of January.

#### **Council of Europe events**

Zenan Sabanac reported on two recent events organised by the Council of Europe to encourage greater regional cooperation in the context of the Bologna Process. Both events had discussed the need to improve visa processing arrangements for students and academic staff. He offered to circulate for information the conclusions from each event.

#### **Portability Working Group**

Annika Pontén advised that the next meeting of the Portability Working Group would take place on 16-17 January. In the meantime, the group had proposed some short text for the London Communiqué, suggesting that an informal network be set up to exchange information to facilitate the portability of grants and loans.

#### **External Dimension Working Group**

Annika Pontén confirmed that the External Dimension Working Group had produced a draft strategy for consideration by BFUG. There was one point that could be of particular interest to the Social Dimension Working Group. This concerned the proposal to develop standards and guidelines for legal, social and academic framework conditions for international students, scholars and academic personnel.

#### **Qualifications Working Group**

The Qualifications Framework Group had last met on 15 December. The group was expected to recommend that national qualification frameworks should be designed to be compatible with both the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA and the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

## **EUA seminar on doctoral studies**

Hélène Lagier gave a short report from the recent EUA seminar on doctoral studies that had taken place in Nice. Delegates had highlighted the need to take cognisance of the social dimension and ensure adequate support for part-time students. The draft conclusions from the event would be circulated for information.

## **Erasmus studies**

Hélène Lagier also drew attention to the recently published research reports examining the social dimension and employability in the context of the Erasmus programme. Both reports identified a number of points that were relevant to the group's work.

## **Moscow event on the role of students in the Bologna Process**

Victor Chistokhvalov gave a short report from the recent Moscow event on the role of students in the Bologna Process. The conclusions from the event would be circulated for information. It was likely that there would be follow up event that might be part of the Bologna Work Programme for 2007-2009.

## **4. National Reports**

Ann McVie circulated for information the extracts from the National Reports received to date on the social dimension and mobility. The deadline for receipt of the National Reports was such that she had not yet been able to analyse the information submitted. There appeared however to be a strong emphasis on financial support in the sections on the social dimension. Subject to prompt receipt of the remaining National Reports, a summary of the entries on the social dimension and mobility would be produced by the end of January 2007.

## **5. Discussion of the draft final report**

Annika Pontén outlined the suggested structure and content of the final report. She did not anticipate any difficulties incorporating the sections on data into the suggested structure. Once this, and associated graphs, had been incorporated into the outline, the report would be quite sizeable. She invited comments on the draft report.

In discussion the following points were made:

- There was a need to broaden the scope of mobility, as described in section 3.3.
- It might be helpful to make it more explicit that there were different issues in each country, and a range of possible solutions, depending on the circumstances in each country. It might be possible to provide illustrations of this in the report.
- The section on the social dimension of mobility might fit better after the general section on mobility.
- The report should explain the evolution of the group's thinking. Rather than having a specific section on the results in relation to the group's terms of reference, it might be preferable to embed this throughout the report.

- To be consistent with the suggested approach that action should be taken at the national level in line with national priorities, the list of actions should make clear that these were possible actions, and were not prescribed. Similarly, the reference to standards and guidelines for a social, legal and academic framework should be deleted. It might however be helpful to suggest some core questions for discussion at national level in the annex to the report, to stimulate debate at the national level on their strategy for the social dimension. There was a discussion about whether the rationale or the proposed objective could serve as a definition of the social dimension.
- There could be general references to lifelong learning and developing flexible learning paths, taking care not to duplicate work on these points being taken forward under stocktaking.
- There should be greater emphasis on the economic argument for supporting the social dimension and incentives for HEIs to promote mobility.

***It was agreed that:***

*Group members should forward any further comments on the draft as soon as possible to Annika Pontén, together with alternative text.*

*The group would focus on mobility first during its next meeting.*

**6. Next meeting of the Working Group**

10 am, 6 February 2007, in London (venue to be confirmed)

Post BFUG, on 6 March 2007 (optional)

Ann McVie  
Bologna Secretariat  
22 December 2006