

**BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL DIMENSION AND DATA ON
MOBILITY OF STAFF AND STUDENTS
NOTES OF MEETING OF 14 JUNE 2006, INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES,
AUSTRIA**

Present

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

Apologies

Pat Dowling, Ireland
Victor Chistokhvalov, Russian Federation

1. Welcome to the Institute of Advanced Studies

Annika Ponten welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Victor Chistokhvalov, from Russian Federation and Pat Dowing from Ireland.

Martin Unger welcomed everyone to the Institute of Advanced Studies and explained the history, purpose and organisation of the Institute.

Annika Ponten thanked Martin Unger for hosting the meeting and for organising the dinner, hosted by the Austrian Ministry for Education, Research and Culture, the previous evening.

The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2. Report from Meetings

BFUG April 6

Annika Pontén provided some feedback from the last BFUG meeting. There was general support for the work of the group. There were, however, some concerns about the wide range of starting points for the social dimension across the EHEA. Some members supported prioritising the list of possible actions, while others advocated leaving the list as a 'pick list' of possible options. Some were in favour of only focussing on areas that fall within the competence of Ministers responsible for

Higher Education; others recognised the potential need to go beyond that. There were calls to elaborate on the rationale for the social dimension. At the same time, there was much concern about the possible cost implications of potential recommendations. Few comments were made on how to approach the group's data collection task. The discussion concluded with an agreement that there would be further discussion on the social dimension at the October BFUG, to agree what the group should produce for the London Ministerial meeting. Overall, there appeared to be a view that BFUG should not suggest any commitments that might be difficult to deliver and that it might not be appropriate to apply the current stocktaking approach to the social dimension.

Annika Pontén had hoped for a steer from BFUG on how the list of possible actions might be prioritised. BFUG had however asked the working group to take this forward. Taking account of the points raised at BFUG, she suggested that options included providing an explanation of the rationale for the social dimension and the ultimate goal for the social dimension, supported by 2- 3 strategic objectives. There was however a need to link any such framework to the group's data collection task, including data on mobility. Ministers could perhaps be asked to produce a national action plan, along the lines of that being sought on recognition. Views were invited on these suggestions and how else the group might take its work forward.

In discussion the following points were made:

- ESIB drew attention to the fact that they had recently issued a policy statement on the social dimension.
- It was recognised that there would be two separate outputs from the working group: a suggested input to the London Communiqué; and a report of the group's work. The report could include a range of illustrations of possible actions on the social dimension and a recommendation that a working group be set up post London to elaborate the basis of a national action plan on the social dimension.
- Any national action plan should include data monitoring and details of any actions taken as a result of evaluation of that data. A number of countries did not however routinely collect data. Setting up new data collection measures would be costly for the countries concerned. The WG could, however, by asking the right questions push the collection of data at national level.
- There were two separate issues relating to data; the development of in-country collection arrangements; and the development of robust and comparable pan EHEA data sets. Further, there was a need for data to be relevant to the objectives set by each country for addressing the social dimension and mobility.
- Should the group recommend that each country take part in the Eurostudent survey? This might be too specific and directive. Rather, asking Ministers to report back on progress might be a more inclusive and progressive approach.

It was agreed that:

- The group would reflect further on these issues at its next meeting.

3. Data collection/continued development of the concept of the social dimension

Germain Dondelinger reported back on the second meeting of the data subgroup. The meeting had resulted in all participants having a better understanding of the purpose of the exercise and a clearer articulation of the issues the group had to address. This included, for example, how to define ethnic groups within the resident population. He would be circulating a chart to the subgroup to collect available data within the areas of equal/widened participation and the economic conditions of the students during June/July. The subgroup would meet in September to consider the results and again in November/December to discuss the draft report from the subgroup.

In discussion the following points were made:

- There was a growing consensus in the data collection subgroup that the conventional BFUG approach to stocktaking was not appropriate for the social dimension. There was a need for contextualisation of data within the country concerned, including a definition of the disadvantaged groups.
- There was a need to underline the goal of the social dimension as being for student participation in higher education to reflect the population as a whole.
- Focusing on the social economic condition of students might be less problematic than addressing uses of ethnicity.
- The rationale for the social dimension might be encapsulated in a sentence such as: “Successful participation in higher education should, for the sake of equality and fairness, [and for the sake of societal and economic development], [better] reflect the diversity of the population at the national level”.
- The group might suggest three sentences for the London Communiqué, covering; the rationale for the social dimension; the objective; and a request for Ministers to produce a national strategy and associated action plan for 2009.
- It might also be helpful to suggest that Ministers should ask BFUG to keep in regular contact with statistical collection agencies.
- While Ministers had agreed to remove obstacles to mobility, there was little sign of progress in relation to visas.
- Under mobility, there was a need to consider a number of categories: students; staff; long term; short term; horizontal & vertical mobility; within and outwith EHEA. However, distance learning should not be considered.

- There was little evidence of any increase in mobility since the inception of the Bologna Process. This was an issue that should be highlighted to Ministers when they meet in London.
- There might be a parallel need for a statement on the rationale for mobility to be proposed by the group for inclusion in the London Communiqué.
- It might be helpful to review progress against the EC's Action Plan for Mobility.
- The group might recommend that Eurostudent & other statistical agencies are asked to consider how they might improve data capture on mobility.
- There was a need for collaboration with the External Dimension Working Group over mobility; brain drain versus brain gain.
- Education International was holding a Bologna seminar on staff and student mobility in London on 8 – 9 Feb 07.

It was agreed that:

- Germain Dondelinger would circulate the data collection chart to the full working group for information.
- Annika Pontén would develop draft text as the basis of the group's contribution to the London communiqué. Group members should forward any suggestions to her.
- Germain Dondelinger would produce a data collection chart on staff and student mobility together with the relevant international organisations for circulation to the data subgroup and the full working group.
- Germain Dondelinger would invite ACA to join the data subgroup at their next meeting.
- There was a need to keep in close contact with the working group looking at the portability of grants and loans.

4. Discussion on the results from other groups and studies.

Helene Lagier explained that two studies would report soon on the Erasmus student exchange programme. The first on the participation in Erasmus was due to be published in October 2006. The second on the impact of Erasmus and employability was not due to be available until June 2007. An overview of the conclusions of the first study was however already available, and Helene led a short discussion on the reports findings.

In discussion the following points were made:

- The study showed that finance was considered to be the main barrier to participation in the Erasmus programme.
- It was difficult to assess whether there had been any progress made on equity within Erasmus since the previous study. The difficulty in assessing the results was compounded by the necessarily self selection basis of the sample and the lack of data on how the sample related to the general student population.

It was agreed that:

- The group would consider the results of Erasmus study further when the final report was published in October.

5. Final report: first discussion

Annika Ponten led an initial discussion on the format of the group's final report. She suggested that it be structured around:

- Rationale for the social dimension and for mobility
- Common objectives
- Current situation/data available
- Recommendations

In discussion, the following points were made:

- There might be a need to include a preamble in the report.
- There should be a section on data gaps.
- The subgroup would consider the extent to which the report should include what data is available or examples of the actual situation.

It was agreed that:

- Annika Pontén and Germain Dondelinger would take the lead on drafting the report. Information for the report would be drawn from national reports, as well as from working group discussions. The Secretariat offered to summarize the national reports on the issues of social dimension and mobility.
- The content and format of the report would be discussed further at the next working group meeting.

6. Future meetings

11 – 12 Sept , lunch to lunch in Stockholm

13 Oct, post BFUG possibly, continuing on Sat am.

19 Dec Zagreb (tbc)

6 Feb, London

7. Any other business

No items were raised

Ann McVie
Bologna Secretariat
26 June 2006