

Working group on Social dimension and data on the mobility of staff and students in participating countries.

Draft

Terms of reference

Mission statement:

- to define the concept of social dimension based on the ministerial communiqués of the Bologna Process
- to present comparable data on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries
- to present comparable data on the mobility of staff and students
- to prepare proposals as a basis for future stocktaking

In the Bergen communiqué it states that the social dimension in the Bologna Process is a constituent part of the EHHA. The ministers therefore renew their commitments to making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and they stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. Furthermore it is stated that the dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students in e.g. financial aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access. The Ministers stressed these actions during the Bergen conference.

The collection of data on the social and economic situation of students implies fundamental responsibility that rests with the home country to make sure that there is equitable access to higher education. Data will be collected within in the following domains: access and participation rates, social make-up of student body, student income/living expenses as well as the provision of guidance services, but a few other parameters could be added after the definition of the concept has been determined.

The Bergen communiqué targets two groups for the task of presenting data on mobility, i.e. staff and students. Questions pertaining to the mobility of the former are related to working conditions (terms of employment) pension schemes, access schemes, access to labour markets and are given specific treatment according to whether mobility is short term, medium term or definitive access to long term employment.

The mobility of students is determined by number of factors including the financial support systems of the sending country and is thus related to the issue of portable grants as well as by the conditions (housing among others) of the receiving country. This point relates to the internationalisation of higher education.

The BFUG working group is to define the extent to which existing data are already collected and to identify any gaps as a basis for future stocktaking. This also means that the BFUG working group should prioritise the data that are collected or would require being collected and should endorse a restricted number of key indicators.

It also arises from the above that the working group has three broad missions: to define the concept of social dimension, to collect and explore data and to prepare proposals as a basis for future stocktaking.

Organisation of work

The working group will be led by a steering committee including e.g. Luxembourg, Sweden, ESIB and others established by the BFUG. The work will be organised along three broad projects and with subsequent subgroups working with a) and b) and c) will be the responsibility of the steering committee:

- a. Definition of the social dimension using the previous communiqués as a starting point for discussion
- b. The collection and exploration of data with three strands: socio- and economic situation of the students based upon the definition, mobility of students and mobility of staff. This group needs support from experts in the field and of statisticians.
- c. Recommendations on the scope of a future stocktaking exercise on the social dimension and on mobility, according to the definition emerging from subgroup (a) and the availability of comparable data as identified by subgroup (b).

Preliminary time schedule to be elaborated into a work plan:

- December 2005: First meeting and establishment of the steering committee and the sub-groups. At this meeting an initial discussion on the definition of the social dimension will take place.
- February 2006: The two sub-groups meet as a working group where the definition of the concept of social dimension will be finalised and for the fine-tuning of data collection.
- February 2007: working group seminar led by the steering committee where the indicators for future stocktaking are defined.

The work should be supported by Eurostudent, OECD, Eurostat and others.

Resources

Considering the tight time schedule and considering the need to cover all the 45 participating countries, it may be necessary to foresee two full-time experts for the duration of the project (November 2005-June 2007). The working groups meetings should be organised and financed by the hosting countries. Socrates funding should be applied for.

Chairs

Sweden is willing to lead the steering committee and subgroup a).
Luxembourg is willing to lead subgroup b).

Proposed membership

Austria
Bosnia Hezegovina
France
Ireland

Ukraine
UK

EUA
EI – Pan European Structure
ESIB
Eurostudent
OECD
Eurostat