



## **Official Bologna Seminar proposed by France in the Berlin – Bergen work programme**

**"The social dimension  
of the European Higher Education Area  
and world-wide competition"**

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# "Which Social Dimension for the European Higher Education Area?"

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# The Social Dimension in the Bologna Process

- The Bologna Declaration (1999)
- From Bologna to Prague
- The Prague Communiqué (2001)
- From Prague to Berlin
- The Berlin Communiqué (2003)
- From Berlin to Bergen
- The Bergen Communiqué (2005)



# The Bologna Declaration

- No reference to the Social Dimension
- Emphasis on the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area
- Non-participatory procedures towards Bologna:
  - Fairly weak or non-existent involvement of the signatory countries
  - No student involvement

# From Bologna to Prague

- Broadening of the debate on the Bologna Process across Europe
- Stronger involvement of the participating countries
- Involvement of the students
- The Social Dimension appears on the agenda of the Process

# The Prague Communiqué (I)

The Social Dimension appears for the first time in an official Bologna document

- as a general concept
- with reference to specific issues such as mobility and lifelong learning
- also through the statement "Higher Education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility"



# The Prague Communiqué (II)

- The Social Dimension appears in a rather non-systematic manner in the Communiqué
- "the need to take account of the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process" was "recalled by the students"
- Ministers asked for further improvement in all issues regarding the Social Dimension through a wider and more systematic analysis on the way to Berlin

# From Prague to Berlin (I)

- The Social Dimension appears high on the agenda of the European debate
- Official Bologna events which focused specifically on the Social Dimension:
  - The Athens Seminar on the Social Dimension (February 2003)
  - The 5th European Student Convention of ESIB on Genuine Mobility, in Athens (February 2003)



# From Prague to Berlin (II)

- Other official Bologna events which dealt with the Social Dimension issues as well:
  - The Prague Seminar on Lifelong Learning (June 2003)
  - The Oslo Seminar on Student Participation (June 2003)
- Wide and active involvement of the signatory countries and all participating actors and organisations in drafting the Berlin Communiqué

# Recalling the conclusions of the Athens Bologna Seminar (I)

- The Social Dimension of the EHEA should be seen as a value in itself as well as one of the conditions of competitiveness
- The social component should be given considerable concern with regards to research as well
- Wide access to higher education →
  - Progressive introduction and defense of free education
  - Quality and accountability
  - Maintenance of public support
  - Efficient use of available resources

# Recalling the conclusions of the Athens Bologna Seminar (II)

Establishment of an adequate social support infrastructure for the students:

- Grants, portable as far as possible
- Loans schemes
- Health care and insurance
- Academic and social counseling
- Job and career services



# Recalling the conclusions of the Athens Bologna Seminar (III)

Providing a genuine student mobility:

- Information mechanisms on student mobility opportunities
- Portability of all financial student support from home country
- Equal access for mobile students to the social support systems of the host countries
- Improving participation of disadvantaged social groups
- Solidarity in the EHEA to combat disparity between European countries

# Recalling the conclusions of the Athens Bologna Seminar (IV)

- The development of a social student policy should be considered as a joint responsibility of governments and higher education institutions
- In a higher education environment characterised by institutional autonomy, the higher education institutions have to actively contribute to the enhancement of social cohesion and equity

# Recalling the conclusions of the Athens Bologna Seminar (V)

- Supplementary policies combating drop-out through flexible learning paths, ECTS and alternative delivery modes
- Promotion of the European co-operation in the Social Dimension of the EHEA. Need for more (and more qualitative) information. Collection and dissemination of best practices. Study assignments for comparative analyses and comparable policy criteria



# The Berlin Communiqué (I)

The Social Dimension gains a prominent position in the Preamble of the Berlin Communiqué

.....together with the reaffirmation that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility

# The Berlin Communiqué (II)

Balance between

- the need to increase competitiveness and
- the need to improve the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area

....with the aim to

- strengthen social cohesion
  - reduce social and gender inequalities
- within each separate country and in Europe as a whole

# The Berlin Communiqué (III)

In the main body of the Communiqué the specific references to the various aspects of the Social Dimension are now made in a systematic and coherent manner:

- Equal access
- Student retention
- Student mobility
- Lifelong Learning



# Equal access

“Ministers stress their commitment to making higher education equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means”

However, difference with U.N. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 13:

“Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education”

# Student retention

“Ministers stress the need for appropriate studying and living conditions for the students so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background”

“Ministers also stress the need for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students”

Combating drop-out and “brain waste”  
and ensuring the triptych:  
“Access - Progress - Completion”

# Student mobility

- Importance of mobility “for the academic and cultural, as well as for the political, social and economic spheres”
- “Ministers affirm their intention to make every effort to remove all obstacles to mobility within EHEA”
- “Ministers will take the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants”
- “Ministers also agree to undertake the necessary steps to improve the quality and coverage of statistical data on student mobility”



# Lifelong Learning

- Prague Communiqué: Lifelong learning strategies should also aim at improving “social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life”
- Berlin Communiqué: “Ministers stress the need to improve opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, to follow the lifelong learning paths into and within higher education”

# From Berlin to Bergen (I)

Work Programme 2003-2005 for the Bologna Follow-Up Group:

- "The Social Dimension of higher education might be seen as an overarching or transversal action line"
- Need for a survey for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students in the various countries

# From Berlin to Bergen (II)

Official Bologna Seminars related to the Social Dimension:

- "Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, September 2004
- "Designing Policies for Mobile Students", EU Dutch Presidency, Noordwijk, October 2004
- "The Social Dimension of the EHEA and world-wide competition", Paris, January 2005



# Strasbourg Seminar

## Council of Europe (I)

Higher education and research to be viewed as strategic investments rather than as consumers of resources. Thus, public funding must remain a major source of their support

Public responsibility for higher education and research to be understood as a multidimensional concept, including primarily:

- Legal infrastructure
- Elaboration of policy
- Provision of funds
- Further development of the Social Dimension

# Strasbourg Seminar

## Council of Europe (II)

Higher education institutions, while exercising increased autonomy, can meet Society's multiple expectations, keeping with the values of democratic and equitable societies:

- Personal development of learners
- Preparation for active citizenship in democratic societies
- Development and dissemination of advanced knowledge
- Preparation for the labour market, also by establishing appropriate bridges between higher education institutions and the world of work

# Strasbourg Seminar Council of Europe (III)

To respond to increased pressure for cost-sharing in higher education, public authorities should stimulate further research and debate on the impact of...  
**tuition fees, student grants, bursaries, loans, etc.**

on aspects such as...

**equality of opportunity, system efficiency, social cohesion, long-term impact on public funding etc.**



# Strasbourg Seminar Council of Europe (IV)

Building the democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive Knowledge Society is a shared responsibility:

- Responsibility of public authorities
- Public responsibility of all other actors
- Public responsibility for higher education
- Public responsibility of higher education

# Noordwijk Seminar Dutch EU Presidency (I)

Two challenges in designing policies to facilitate and further mobility:

- Transparency
- Student support

Mobility as a connecting point between

- the structural dimension and
  - the social dimension
- of the Bologna Process

# Noordwijk Seminar Dutch EU Presidency (II)

Three approaches for student support policies to improve mobility:

- Student support provided by the host country
- Student support provided by the home country (portability of student support)
- A pan-European solution through the establishment of a European fund for student support

A network of student support experts should be founded in order to address the issue of portability of student support in a broader economic, social and cultural perspective



# The Vision for Social Dimension (I)

To develop a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area by 2010

- One-speed or multi-speed?
- One circle or more than one concentric circles?

Social cohesion:

- Reducing social and gender inequalities in higher education (at national level)
- Reducing the gap between countries (at European level)

# The Vision for Social Dimension (II)

The University and the Society: A two-way relationship

- Way-in: Public funding
- Way-out: Quality and accountability

Precondition: University autonomy

The Market as a third, independent, actor or as part of the Society?

Higher education as a public responsibility: A two-way perspective

- Way-in: Public responsibility for higher education
- Way-out: Public responsibility of higher education

# The Vision for Social Dimension (III)

Integration of students into the Society:

- Relevant competences for sustainable employability
- Active citizenship in a democratic Society
- Cultural and intellectual integration



# The Vision for Social Dimension (IV)

Two sides of the coin (at national and European level):

- Competitiveness + Attractiveness + Excellence
- Social cohesion + Public responsibility + Academic values and principles

Academic values and principles:

- Academic freedom
- Academic ethics
- Academic ethos

Plus institutional autonomy

# The Vision for Social Dimension (V)

Attractiveness: For "brain drain" or for "brain gain"?  
(Erasmus Mundus?)

Excellence (and not simply Quality):

- Only for universities in a restricted number of countries?
- Only for universities with a new "elite" of students?
- Inclusive or exclusive? Who may be excluded systemically?
- Market or academic perspective?

## Concerns (I)

Does the Social Dimension retain the momentum gained in Berlin?

Are there any alarming indications that the Social Dimension starts losing its momentum?

And what can we do?



## Concerns (II)

- Are there any alarming signals emitted from the European debate which need to be analysed and decoded?
- The three scenarios of CHEPS for the European landscape for higher education and research in 2020
- The tendencies of European governments (Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education in Nijmegen, November 2004)
- Are we flirting with a generalised application of tuition fees in Europe?

## Concerns (III)

- Is mobility only for EU countries?
- Are all European governments moving indeed towards fostering student mobility and removing all obstacles?
- Are any European governments still keeping their borders tight?
- How fast and how genuinely the integration of flexible lifelong learning paths into the European higher education systems is proceeding?

# The Way Forward (I)

- The prominent position that the Social Dimension has gained in the Berlin Communiqué is a significant improvement
- Efforts need to be continued to strengthen the position of the Social Dimension within the Bologna Process and to safeguard what has been achieved so far



# The Way Forward (II)

- The commitments taken by the Ministers in Berlin regarding the Social Dimension have to be implemented
- It is the responsibility of governments to implement these commitments
- On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the higher education community and the Society at large to ask or even push for the implementation of these commitments

# The Bergen Communiqué (I)

A general statement of this type:

*"The Social Dimension of higher education should be considered an overarching and transversal action line for the Bologna Process"*

# The Bergen Communiqué (II)

The Social Dimension must be included among the priorities for which stock shall be taken in view of 2007

Specific attention for stocktaking in view of 2007 should be given to the survey for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students in the various countries



# The Bergen Communiqué (III)

The Social Dimension should be considered in a two-way perspective regarding the relationship between higher education institutions and Society at large:

- Public funding
- Quality and accountability

With institutional autonomy as a precondition

Higher education should be considered a public responsibility in a two-way perspective as well:

- Public responsibility for higher education
- Public responsibility of higher education

# The Bergen Communiqué (IV)

Genuine implementation of the Bologna reforms requires shift

- from the governmental and the system level
- to the institutional level and, moreover, to the level of the higher education community

However, the reforms at the national level should be perceived in their European dimension and not in an "ivory tower" perspective

How to "redynamise" the European Dimension?

# The Bergen Communiqué (V)

No need for new themes

Need for deepening existing themes

Need for synergies between existing themes, e.g.

- Mobility as synergy between structural and social dimensions of the Bologna Process
- Lifelong Learning as synergy between competitiveness, social cohesion, employability and structural dimension of the Bologna Process

Above all, need for ensuring genuine implementation