

Seminar on 'the social dimension of the EHEA
world-wide competition'

La Sorbonne, January 27th and 28th 2005

Increasing the EHEA's attractiveness by the strengthening up
of its social dimension

Outline of J.E. Charlier's contribution

Higher education can only strengthen up social cohesion if it is working in a genuinely fair way.

This implies at the same time that obstacles to access are removed, that conditions for training comfort are equal to every student whatever social background he/she has and that holders of the same degree do have the same opportunities of vocational, social and personal fulfilment.

The objective of free access to higher education remains crucial. It is necessary for it to be combined with the objective aiming to reduce as much as possible failures which consequences have a greater impact on the least wealthy students. Arrangements for guidance and advice on degree courses in order to enlighten students about their opportunities of success in the training they are willing to go into can be useful to bring these two objectives closer.

Student mobility must be encouraged as soon as training in higher education starts. It is likely this will imply, in a relatively short term, a recognition of prior learning in secondary education. This applies to every student from the European higher education area as well as to every student wishing to start studying in Europe without being from there.

Europe needs to produce large numbers of graduates from higher education from the second cycle at least. First cycle training will have therefore to provide both students with a stock of knowledge enabling them to fulfil themselves from a vocational, social and personal point of view and all those who have skills for it with competences for the undertaking of a second cycle.

One of the usual effects of higher education is to concentrate very competent professionals around famous centres. The objective of developing every area students come from, including those who do not come from the European area, implies that, whenever it is possible, training makes the diversity of their origins valuable and provides them with educational guidance and support if they have set their minds to try and make use of their own skills.

Universities will be able to increase their efforts to enrol students abroad, to offer offshore training courses or curriculums, to set up e-learning courses, if only they get incentives to do so and if financial support is available for this purpose.