

**The social dimension of the European Higher Education Area  
and World – Wide Competition**

Official Bologna Seminar

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**FINAL REPORT**

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## Introduction

Higher education systems have been undergoing massive changes in the last decade. Since 1999, one year after the Sorbonne Declaration, we used to call the changes “Bologna Process”. They have been driven by common needs of most European countries. The most important of them “*are the development of what is commonly referred to as the Knowledge Society and the increasing globalization or at least internationalization. The consequence of the former is that the demand for higher education as well as for high quality research is increasing dramatically. The latter is a consequence of increasing interaction in which few if any places of the world are untouched by developments elsewhere, and in which competition as well as cooperation are becoming increasingly important. Both dimensions are key aspects of higher education. It is a natural consequence both of the long-standing heritage of European universities, which are among our very earliest truly European constructs*<sup>1</sup>. It is an equally natural consequence of the far-reaching political changes in Europe since 1990, which, for the first time since the Council of Europe foundation in 1949 and the adoption of the European Cultural Convention in 1954, made pan-European cooperation possible.”<sup>2</sup> The key policies are agreed at European level and implemented nationally as well as within each higher education institution (further “HEI”). The term European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is on one side a reflexion of the fact that for the first time there is a pan European cooperation in reforming the national systems, on the other hand the EHEA is supposed to build on common European values. But what are these values which will make EHEA different from similar systems using Bachelor/Master structure and a certain quality assurance systems?

We often say that the higher education reform – the “Bologna Process” - has two sides: structural changes and social dimension. We also realise that social aspects are overarching and transversal issue touching all Bologna action lines as in longer run any real sustainable development will be possible unless social aspects are taken into account. **“The social dimension of the European higher education area and world – wide competition”** was the official Bologna seminar proposed by France in the Berlin-Bergen work programme. It was organised in cooperation with ESIB at the Sorbonne University, in Paris, 27 – 28 January 2005. And it was not by random. The Sorbonne Declaration was in fact the starting point of the Bologna Process. Thanks to this push of the 4 ministers from France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom today 40 and after Bergen possibly even more countries work together on better higher education for the future. The seminar focused on two lines in the Bologna Process – the transversal issue of social dimension and the action line dealing with promoting attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA<sup>3</sup>. Is there coexistence between them? Are they contradictory to each other or do they depend on one another? The seminar had specific

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<sup>1</sup> See Nuria Sanz and Sjur Bergan (eds.): *The Heritage of European Universities* (Strasbourg 2002: Council of Europe Publishing).

<sup>2</sup> See Sjur Bergan and Vera Stastna: The Bologna Process – a View from the Council of Europe, the article prepared for Benz/Kohler/Landfried (ed.), *Handbuch Qualität in Studium und Lehre*, Raabe Verlag Berlin 2004ff. Will be published most probably at the beginning of March 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The Bologna Process has nowadays 10 action lines. The first six action lines were introduced already in the Bologna Declaration: 1) adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; 2) adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles; 3) establishment of a system of credits; 4) promotion of mobility; 5) promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance; 6) promotion of the European dimension in higher education.

In the Prague Communiqué, three further ones were added: 7) lifelong learning; 8) higher education institutions and students; 9) promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area.

In the Berlin Communiqué, the last 10th line was added with a specific focus on: 10) doctoral studies as the third cycle and the synergy between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA)

focus on the attractiveness of the EHEA and on its link to academic criteria of quality to be maintained and put forward in mobility. There were plenary presentations, including one key note “Social dimension of EHEA and world-wide competition into perspectives” and in the workshops the topic was searched from four angles: “Social dimension, economic competition and attractiveness”, “Social dimension and criteria of quality”, “Social dimension and social cohesion” and “Social dimension and institutional international policies”. All the presentations – in plenary as well as in workshops were of high quality, stimulating equally excellent debates which all together brought lots of food for further thinking and elaboration of the topic as well as the conclusions. The participation at the seminar was quite large and covered different backgrounds. There were more than 180 participants from 33 European countries (including 24 out of EU25) and from 2 countries outside Europe (Australia and Argentina). They were representatives of Governments, HEIs as well as students and experts involved in quality assurance. There were quite a few members of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), including its President. And this was very important. They faced above their “normal” responsibility to push forward the recommendations and mutually agreed conclusions at home also a challenge to bring them into the discussion at BFUG meetings in March and April at which the Bergen Communiqué of Ministers would be discussed.

The seminar rather concentrated on the competitiveness of EHEA and social dimension than on the issue of world – wide competition. This is also clearly seen from the background materials, contributions of speakers as well the conclusions. Those who participated at the seminar could benefit from excellent presentations in the plenary session performed by Mr. *Francois Fillon*, Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research, Mr. *Daniel Vitry*, Director for International relations and Cooperation of the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research, Ms. *Vanja Ivosevic*, President of ESIB, Mr. *Eric Froment*, President of EUA, Mr. *Klaus Schnitzer*, Coordinator of the “Eurostudent project”, Hochschul-Informationssystem GmbH, Mr. *Dionyssis Kladis*, Professor at the Peloponnese University in Corinth and Mr. *Jean-Marc Monteil*, Director for Higher Education at the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research. The key note was presented by Mr. *Elie Cohen*, Professor at Dauphine University in Paris and policy advisor to the Director for International Relations and Cooperation. The introductions to the working groups were presented in group 1 by Mr. *Jean-Emilie Charlier*, Professor at the Catholic University of Louvain and at the Catholic University Faculties of Mons, Mr. *Malcolm McVicar*, Vice-Chancellor of the Central Lancashire University of Preston and Mr. *Stephan Vincent-Lancrin*, analyst in the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD; in group 2 by Mr. *Marek Frankowicz*, Professor at the Faculty of Chemistry at the Jagellonian University in Krakow, Mr. *Eivind Vad Peterson*, responsible for international relations, National Union of Students in Norway, Mr. *Jean-Loup Jolivet*, director of the Comité national d'évaluation (CNE) representing Mr. *Michel Levasseur*, vice-president of the CNE ; in group 3 by Mr. *Roberto Moscati*, Professor at the Milano Bicocca University, Mr. *Guy Neave*, Professor and scientific director at the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies and research Director at the International Association of Universities, UNESCO, Mr. *Aldrik in't Hout* and Ms. *Ellemiek Etman*, Ministry of Education of the Netherlands ; and in group 4 by Mr. *Fidel Corcuera Manso*, Professor at the University of Saragose, director for International Relations within Agencia nacional de evaluacion de la calidad, Mr. *Achim Meyer Auf Der Heyde*, Secretary General of the Deutches Studentenwork and President of European Council for Student Affairs and Mr. *Olivier Audeoud*, Rector of Paris X – Nanterre University, President of the Committee for International Affairs of the French Rectors' conference (CPU). The discussions in workshops were summarised by the group rapporteurs from ESIB – Mr. *Jean-Baptiste Prevost*, Mr. *Nikki Heerens*, Ms. *Nele Spaas* and Mr. *Andrzej Bielecki* and supported

by their moderators - Mr. *Elie Cohen*, Mr. *Karl-Axel Nilsson*, director of the Office of Evaluation at the Lund university, Mr. *Pedro Lourtie*, Professor at the Technology University in Lisbon, Ms. *Marie-Francoise Fave-Bonnet*, professor at the Paris X – Nanterre University. The plenary sessions were moderated by Mr. *Daniel Vitry*, director for International Relations and Cooperation of the Ministry of National Education, Higher education and Research and Mr. *Germain Dondelinger*, President of the Bologna Follow-Up Group, who chaired the final discussion on the conclusions of the conference.

**The aim of this report is to bring rather an analysis of the issues that have been raised, to try to put the various ideas together and, on the basis of the presentations and the discussion to try to identify some issues that should be taken for further consideration in the upcoming years till 2010 when the agreed basis of EHEA should be established, as well as for direct conclusions possibly for the preparation of the Bergen Communiqué of Ministers.** Everybody who is interested can find the presentations, papers, background material, conclusions by the rapporteur general and the Recommendations presented at the end of the seminar at the official Bologna web site<sup>4</sup>, under the headline of this seminar.

## **Some reflections on the Bologna Process and social dimension**

Prof. Moscati in his paper reminded us that the higher education, which we used to have, was education of “elite”. Usually there was about 15 – 20%, i.e. the best, of almost exclusively fresh graduates of secondary schools entering higher education systems. Nowadays we face about 50-60 % of 18/19 years old cohort entering the system of higher education. This means there is a change in the role of higher education. Next to traditional

- preparation of the intellectual elite of the nation and their individual development, and
- maintenance and development of an advanced knowledge base strongly interconnected with research and development

there is preparation of a significant part of population

- for labour market
- to be active citizens in democratic civil societies
- for individual development, connected with the ability of lifelong learning till late age

These changes, of course, call for redefining missions of higher education institutions. The Bologna Process is an opportunity how to respond to them. The Knowledge Society cannot be reached without knowledge. The political decision concerning high numbers of students in higher education is thus a logical consequence of the developments and most European countries – not only in European Union – have already taken this decision.

Ms. Vanja Ivosevic, the President of ESIB, reminded us about the fact that there were the students who have brought the two words – “social dimension” - on the agenda of the Bologna Process (in Prague 2001). In their Brussels Student Declaration from 18 November 2001 they claimed that “*a democratic and inclusive higher education means allowing people to access it on an equitable basis. The promotion of student well being means creating a social environment that guarantees all the necessary provisions to ensure that the students are able to excel in their studies and to become active citizens.*” In their policy papers ESIB dealt with mobility issues<sup>5</sup>, commercialisation of higher education, namely GATS – General

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<sup>4</sup> See [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no).

<sup>5</sup> ESIB Policy Paper on Mobility

Agreement of Trade Services<sup>6</sup>. They expressed their fears that higher education is considered as an economic rather than social tool and the concerns it brings to quality of education, its accessibility, democracy etc. They have strongly been opposing the tuition fees. They also expressed their belief that Bologna Process “*is something completely different than the process of commodification. The Bologna Process promotes co-operation and conceives education as a public good .... However, (they warned) a wrong implementation of the Bologna Process can lead to further commodification of education.*”<sup>7</sup> In the same paper they found education “*a right not a privilege and ESIB will work for assuring that this right prevails.*” However, there was nothing about the responsibility of students themselves e.g. concerning the preparation for studies, successful performance during higher education studies or necessity of hard work to finish in reasonable time what was started.

The EHEA builds on its action lines as well as on a set of commonly shared underlying principles and values, which include smooth international mobility of students and higher education institution staff; autonomy of higher education institutions and academic freedom; student participation in higher education governance; public responsibility for higher education, openness towards countries, Parties to European Cultural Convention which want to and make steps towards reforms of their higher education systems following the action lines and shared principles; and recognition of national models realized within the commonly agreed European frame.

The three key priorities agreed in Berlin Communiqué for period 2003-05 were “*to promote effective quality assurance systems, to step up effective use of the system based on two cycles and to improve the recognition system of degrees and periods of studies*”<sup>8</sup> There are three pillars without which we cannot proceed any further. However, often they are seen namely from their structural side unless we realise that all action lines as well as the above mentioned principles are closely interconnected and their real success is dependent on the balanced implementation which takes care after social aspects. The main aim of EHEA is its competitiveness, sustainable competitiveness, and attractiveness in global scale and from the vast majority of the contributions it was clear that the speakers were convinced that this cannot be realised without social cohesiveness.

I would like to reflect on the three priorities.

### Restructuralisation of study programmes.

In Europe we have more or less succeeded in agreement about the characteristics of the three levels which were introduced in overarching European qualification framework<sup>9</sup>. However it is necessary to realise that a study programme must fulfil a number of requirements. It has to have among others a reasonable and meaningful content, a profile enabling employability of graduates and continuation in a higher cycle programme, a study programme, especially the first cycle study programme, has to enable graduation for reasonable number of students, thus bringing them to their highest potential and minimising the student drop out. This is

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<sup>6</sup> ESIB Policy Paper on the Commodification of Education

<sup>7</sup> ESIB Policy Paper on the Commodification of Education

<sup>8</sup> “Realising the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003

<sup>9</sup> See the materials for the Bologna seminar dealing with European Qualification Framework, organised in Copenhagen in January 13-14, 2005:

interconnected with curriculum, pedagogical methods as well as different forms of delivery including the distant form or combinations with it.

In the past there was a certain bottle neck before the students were accepted to a higher education institution. For the future the bottle neck has been moved between the first and second level. Diversification of the first cycle study programmes will enable students to opt for more practically oriented study paths and thus to get through a study programme and complete it successfully. When restructuring the existing long programmes this strategic factor must be taken into account. The continuation in higher level must be then based on the principle that graduation in the lower level programmes gives access to the next higher level. This means, in correspondence with how the “access” is defined in the UNESCO/Council of Europe Lisbon Recognition Convention<sup>10</sup>, the right to apply for admission. But this cannot be changed for any guarantee that the applicant will be admitted. Some students demanded at the seminar that this access “*should be free*”. However what does it mean? Having on one side some 50-60% of 18/19 – year cohort in higher education and on the other hand wanting to confirm traditionally high level of graduates at Master’s study programmes in Europe would not work if we pretended that all students have the potential to graduate at Master’s level. In U.K. and USA, where there is already the two cycle system in place for years, there is only minor part of Bachelor’s graduates who continue. As mentioned before, students should be brought to their highest potential. One could imagine relatively free access at the first level but then the admission should be merit based, depending on the knowledge, competencies and abilities of the applicant. No *numerus clausus*, no obstacles in the form of high tuition fees.

In a concrete realisation it is even more difficult. The curriculum in the first cycle programmes could be very different, there should be an opportunity to return back later after some working experience etc. One possible model could be development of „preparatory“ programmes which will enable to balance the knowledge and skills of applicants. An important challenge here is also recognition of former learning, including that outside higher education, as well as practical experience.

### Quality assurance

When implementing systems of quality assurance our mechanisms for quality evaluation as well as accreditation are usually based on the content of the study programs and the state of personal and material preparation of higher education institutions to deliver the program. The evaluation of institutions and/or a study program and its broader personal and material aspects concentrate, at least in my country, namely on three basic aspects: qualification of the teaching staff, quality of the study programme offered, and standards of academic and research activities. In my country, and I am afraid in many European countries as well, no or very little attention is paid to the social dimension, e.g. the aspects dealing with life of students and their studying conditions, tutorship and guidance from the side of the institution. All factors described above are not our goals themselves. They rather create means how to achieve quality higher education – this is our aim. Thus if we want to speak about quality higher education in future the social dimension and equal opportunities should become its important signs.

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10 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in European Region, Lisbon, 11 April 1997

## Recognition

Legal standards concerning recognition are in the Bologna Process given by the UNESCO/Council of Europe Lisbon Recognition Convention. The Ministers in the Berlin Communiqué invited all countries, Parties to the Bologna Process, to ratify the Convention<sup>11</sup> and with the help of the ENIC and NARIC networks further the implementation of its principles. There are three texts related to the Lisbon Recognition Convention which should contribute to better implementation of its principles: The Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education were both adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2001, next Convention Committee in 2004 adopted the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees.

Fair recognition is a key aspect of EHEA and it is closely interconnected with its social dimension. An important transparency instrument which could make the whole process easier is the Diploma Supplement. Ministers invited all countries to provide each graduate since 2005 with this document. It should be issued in a widely spoken language and delivered free of charge. The document is expected to serve the purposes of academic as well as professional recognition. It will also contribute to better visibility and understanding the “Bologna reforms” outside Europe.

## **The development of the theme of social dimension in the Bologna Process**

In his presentation Prof. Dionyssi Kladis reminded the audience about the irreplaceable role the students play to improve the social characteristics of EHEA. The topic of social dimension was not mentioned in the Bologna Declaration which rather stressed the structures and means how to achieve competitive EHEA. The social implications appeared in the Student Göteborg Declaration (March 2001), the document preceding the Prague Ministerial Conference and expressing the students position to the Bologna Process. In the Prague Communiqué (19 May 2001) Ministers “*supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community*”. The Communiqué further emphasized the “*social dimension of mobility*” and of lifelong learning and “*the use of new technologies to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life*” “*Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process.*”<sup>12</sup> More prominent position was given to the social dimension in the Prague-Berlin work programme. There were two official seminars – “Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area” organised by the Greek Presidency to the European Union in Athens, in February 2003, and “Student Participation in Higher Education Governance”, seminar organised by Norway in June 2003. The other two seminars from the official programme interconnected with social aspects were those on “Flexible Learning Paths, organised in Brussels in February 2003 and on “Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning”, Prague, June 2003, which stressed the need of possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level including the recognition of prior learning as an integral activity of HEIs. Further more they emphasised needs for flexible

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<sup>11</sup> For the updated list of ratifications see <http://conventions.coe.int> and search for CETS 165.

<sup>12</sup> “Towards the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001.

learning and improvement of opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, to follow the lifelong learning paths into and within higher education. The results of these actions were reflected in the Berlin Communiqué: *“Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics..... aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social inequalities both at national and at European level. Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility.....”*

*Ministers take into due consideration the conclusions of the European Councils in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) aimed at making Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' and calling for further action and closer cooperation in the context of the Bologna Process.....*

*Ministers agree that the attractiveness and openness of the European higher education should be reinforced. They confirm their readiness to further develop scholarship programmes for students from third countries.....*

*Ministers declare that transnational exchanges in higher education should be governed on the basis of academic quality and academic values, and agree to work in all appropriate fora to that end.”<sup>13</sup>*

In the Berlin-Bergen work programme for the first time the social dimension got the label of transversal issue covering all the action lines and principles. As Prof. Kladis stressed, it is not only something to do with methodology, it is an important political approach. The work programme included several seminars which should have an impact on elaborating the topic of the social issues as well as attractiveness and competitiveness of European Higher Education Area: there was the seminar on “Bologna and the Challenges of eLearning and Distance Education”, the conference on “Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research”, organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 23-24 September 2004, the Dutch European Union Presidency Conference “Designing Policies for Mobile Students” in Noordwijk on 10-12 October 2004, the seminar on “Employability in the Context of Bologna Process” in Bled, on 22-23 October 2004 and this event

If we want to implement our goals we have to think deeply and carefully about the systems of funding, including the different sources of funding, about student grants, loans and other forms of support. Building on the discussions and recommendations from these seminars, in funding higher education systems particular attention must be paid to the requirements of meeting equal opportunities of all individuals. The pressure for cost-sharing in higher education will increase and students and their families will be forced to greater share of costs on education – direct as well as indirect (e.g. living costs and expenses during studies). Any tuition fees, student grants and loans schemes should be researched through the prism of equal opportunities and social cohesion, which will also lead to higher effectiveness and efficiency of the system<sup>14</sup>. Dr. Schnitzer, when presenting last developments in the EUROSTUDENT research, showed that in most searched countries grants have been more or less slowly replaced by loans. He warned about huge differences among countries. Even in some EU countries only 5% of students can afford to take loans simply because they would not be able to pay them. As the consequence students sometimes move to countries with more friendly

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<sup>13</sup> “Realising the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003

<sup>14</sup> See the materials from the Conference on Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research, Strasbourg, 24 September 2004, Council of Europe.

systems of higher education (“fee migration”) and often stay, as these countries offer better employment possibilities (“job mobility”). And it is necessary to mention that the research so far was targeted namely into old EU countries, slightly touched new EU members and did not touch at all countries, members of the Bologna Process outside EU. The contribution of Prof. Eric Froment, President of the European University association (EUA) was very much along the same lines.

We can support the recommendations from the seminar dealing with public responsibility. Equal opportunities must become “*fundamental building block*”<sup>15</sup> of EHEA. And another important issue was raised at this seminar. For the first time there was very firmly stated that next to the **public responsibility FOR higher education and research there is also public responsibility OF higher education and research, where the role of HEIs and students is absolutely irreplaceable.**

Discussions on social dimension, social cohesion or equal opportunities would be incomplete if mobility was not mentioned. As stated in the Report from the Noordwijk seminar, mobility is “*a connecting point between two main clusters of issues from the agenda – structural and social dimension of the Bologna Process*”<sup>16</sup> The important message from this seminar that the “*problem of incompatibility of various national systems does not refer only to structural dimension (e.g. compatible degree structures; common European framework of qualifications etc.) but also to social dimension (e.g. compatible student support schemes, portability of grants and loans, etc.) of the Bologna Process*”<sup>17</sup> was also delivered here. Mobility is in the very core of the Bologna Process and easy mobility is one of the basic principles of EHEA. Where are we now? In reality already the seminar in Noordwijk clearly pointed out that there are many challenges and obstacles to mobility and smooth mobility in particular. Also the presentations in plenary, e.g. that of Prof. Kladis, as well as in working groups namely in that on “*Social dimension and institutional international policies (including mobility and portability of students grants and loans)*” showed that the problems lay among others in differences among different groups of Bologna countries (old EU members and EFTA countries, new EU members and countries outside EU and EFTA) as well as in particular countries themselves. These problematic issues are connected with new structures in higher education systems, with economic, social and linguistic issues, legislative frameworks and immigration and security policies. The countries with weaker economy cannot afford to support mobility of their students at all. It has serious consequences – e.g. only children from rich class can travel and study abroad. Or scholarships from richer countries and/or institutions in richer countries are offered to gifted young people or excellent teachers. They usually later stay in the country because they are offered much better conditions. And this aspect is even deepened when there is a competition between HEIs and/or national systems to attract either those gifted individuals or to attract foreign students who are paying and thus bring significant income for the institutions. This means that there is a legitimate fear of brain drain from “*teaching – intensive*” area of South – East in the direction to “*research intensive*” area in North – West<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See the „Recommendations addressed to public authorities in States Party to the European Cultural Convention and to the Bologna Follow-up Group”, Conference on Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research, Strasbourg, 24 September 2004, Council of Europe.

<sup>16</sup> See the report of the Bologna seminar “Designing Policies for Mobile Students”, organised by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in Noordwijk, on 10-12 October 2004, prepared by Pavel Zgaga

<sup>17</sup> See the footnote 16

<sup>18</sup> CHEPS Scenarios – The European higher education and research landscape in 2020 : see [http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats\\_new/higher\\_education\\_events/chepsconference/index.html](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats_new/higher_education_events/chepsconference/index.html)

As Bologna reforms of structures will have been implemented a new type of mobility will have appeared. It was called at this seminar “vertical” mobility and will be international as well as national. Students after having finished their first degree (Bachelor’s) will move to another university to study at the second (Master’s) level, or to study Ph.D. after completing the second cycle. This mobility will also bring a lot of challenges, namely between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle as described above under the chapter dealing with study programmes.

## **The approaches to the social aspects and the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EHEA**

Ms. Ivosevic, the President of ESIB stressed that there are HEIs which play crucial role in social cohesiveness of future Europe. She reflected namely on living conditions, services, literature, studying conditions in general. She clearly stated that international students are not only a source of further income. Social cohesiveness is not for free, however expenses interconnected with quality higher education are not pure expenditures but should be rather seen as investments. She warned about tuition fees which could bring further social inequalities. In his presentation Prof. Froment mentioned also world – wide competition. He pointed out that this competition is about economic strategy but also about the social and cultural values. European society and leaders have to decide, how they want to respond to this challenge. And definitely, as we speak about the Knowledge Society, higher education system is an important part for the game.

In the Berlin Communiqué Ministers stressed “*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... .. the need for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students.*” One example how we could proceed further is the project “EUROSTUDENT 2005 – Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe”. The main sponsor of this project is the German Ministry for Higher Education and Research (BMBF). The project was formerly targeted to some EU, EFTA countries and Switzerland. By Socrates the EU-Commission devoted additional funds to start work with new EU Member countries in this period (until June 2005). However it still does not cover relatively high number EU countries and no country, Party to the Bologna process, outside EU. There are 11 active partners – usually old EU countries, there is only one new EU member, Latvia. The new members of EU and candidate countries joint as observers. Mr. Schnitzer pointed out that it is necessary to find ways how to finance data collection as in these countries data are usually not available. The subject areas: *demographic characteristics, access to higher education, study performance, social make-up of the student body, accommodation, funding and state assistance, living expenses-student spending, student employment and time budget or internationalisation* seem highly relevant. In the light of the statement from Berlin Communiqué, it would be desirable to enlarge such research, at least in selected subject areas to the whole Bologna Area, using possible funding in Socrates as well as Tempus programme. Dr. Schnitzer also clearly stated that widening access for underprivileged groups is not only socially cohesive activity but rather action with economic importance.

Many questions about future development and many concerns were formulated by Prof. Kladis. I would like to mention some of them:

*What does it mean a socially cohesive EHEA? Shall it be a one-speed or a multi-speed process? Shall we create one circle or more than one concentric circle? And what does attractiveness mean? Is it attractiveness for “brain drain” or is it for “brain gain”? (e.g. Erasmus Mundus?)* The situation in different parts of Europe varies significantly. It varies in the old EU and new EU countries and even more if we look beyond EU. E.g. it concerns percentage of GDP devoted to higher education (less than 1%) but also GDP as such is significantly different, quick and strong changes in some parts of Europe leading to some kind of instability including funding, lack of experience in application of various funding models, sometimes the changes are limited and conditioned by the political “wing” being in power. How shall we answer these challenges in the future?

*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?*

*Are there any alarming signals emitted from the European debate which need to be analysed and decoded? Are we flirting with a generalised application of tuition fees in Europe?*

*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?*

He pointed out that there are two sides of one coin: competitiveness, attractiveness and excellence as one, social cohesion, public responsibility and academic values & principles as another side. He speaks about excellence and not simple quality. One of his concerns was about two-speed Europe. He reminded about the three scenarios prepared by CHEPS – Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies – at the University of Twente. One of the three models introduced, the Octavia – the Spider Web City introduced a Europe wide web of universities and it explicitly preceded “research intensive” area in North – West and “teaching – intensive”<sup>19</sup> area of South – East. Thus it was quite legitimately possible to presume a move of think tank from one part of Europe – the poorer one to the richer. It would have an impact not only on different developments of the higher education systems in these two areas, on the student mobility which would be one-way in case of the gifted students and young scientists (brain drain) but consequently on the economic development and social status of people living in both areas. And we could hardly speak about competitiveness, attractiveness and sustainability of EHEA. How could we avoid these scenarios which exclude whole regions? Prof. Kladis suggested that social dimension and social aspects of the Bologna reforms as well as of the whole EHEA became the priority in 2005-07.

In his key note Prof. Elie Cohen linked social aspects, knowledge – based economy and opening to the world. He pointed out that globalisation is based on economic factors and opening up leads to widening opportunities for the higher education sector. He also raised number of questions – e.g. about international standards shared by HEIs. Could we see then more harmonisation or more unification? And in higher education and research can we avoid the unification? He also tried to define what we mean under social dimension. There were 4 items and again interesting questions:

- 1) *access to higher education – change in access rate – it seems the increase has been stabilising.* Have we met the demand for higher education? The statistics in some

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<sup>19</sup> CHEPS Scenarios – The European higher education and research landscape in 2020 : see [http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats\\_new/higher\\_education\\_events/chepsconference/index.html](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats_new/higher_education_events/chepsconference/index.html)

countries signal that there is stagnation in growing number of students entering into higher education. Are there new hurdles which have led to this “*premature*” stop, he asked, or are there hidden potentials? He pointed out that the impact of lifelong learning has to be increased. We all agree to it but in practice the situation is different – once people enter job market they do not come back. Why?

- 2) *development and implementation of “well being” conditions for students*, grants, loans and how to survive during studies. He stressed e.g. high tuition fees or the state of economy in Europe and necessity of support schemes for students. How can we change this trend which leads to decreasing student support in Europe?
- 3) *making schemes aiming to improve the efficiency of academic work for opportunities of success of students during studies with special attention to underprivileged groups-* means in reality create e.g. system of guiding and tutoring students during their studies and thus find new efficient way to fight against drop out.
- 4) *employability of graduates* – HEIs and academia play important social role in this field and have important responsibility to contribute to access to good and sustainable jobs for their graduates – how can this be improved? Adapting teaching to labour market? Definitely not exclusively but Prof. Cohen stressed that partnerships with private business and other economic players should be established and he was convinced that it is possible to find a compromise how to combine demands of employers with academic values.

In the discussion during the seminar it was also suggested that the problem of lack of funding, especially in the direction of development more socially cohesive systems should be addressed to the EU. Could be some structural funds devoted to education and not only to agriculture? We have to move another step in the development of higher education systems otherwise we would not respond to the needs of massive higher education but we would rather contribute to elitism. And Knowledge Society could not be build without knowledge spread widely.

Competitiveness and social cohesion - both aspects in an efficient higher education system must be balanced. Prof. Cohen remembered us that the famous statement from the Lisbon European Council in 2000 which stressed the necessity to make Europe “*the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*” has a second part, less often quoted, that Europe needs also “*sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*”.

## **Working groups**

As already stated in the headline, **the working group 1** concentrated on the relationship between social dimension and competitiveness of EHEA. *How does/could the social dimension contribute to the competitiveness?* The discussions showed the complexity of the problem. The participants, however, stressed that historically the strength of Europe and consequently its competitiveness was just the aspect that it took care after the society and used education as a mean. **Social cohesiveness is a necessary precondition for economic growth and stability:** the social dimension must be considered in terms of access but also in terms of completion of successful studies for the great majority of people reaching the best possible level and fulfilling their potential at its best; so the social dimension directly contributes to the rise of the qualification level and to the development of the economic process towards the

Europe of Knowledge. In this sense the costs of higher education should be rather seen as investments into future prosperity than expenditures only. And it is, of course, costly but as one participant said, “excellence does not thrive out of the desert” and therefore, corrective measures against inequalities for access to higher education and the best conditions to provide higher education to a mass of students must be developed. And since the costs are foreseeable, it is quite tempting “trying to get by with what we have”, even if this will most probably be more expensive in the long run. Unfortunately the positive impact can only appear far beyond the mandate of the government which had made the decision.

Participants further discussed some concrete steps which could be taken e.g. how to decrease the dropout, especially in some disciplines and areas, which is even higher with the groups they come from the backgrounds where higher education is not traditional.

The participants also stressed that we often speak about competition between institutions but there is also a very strong aspect of co-operation and networking. However, it seems that a competition between national States how to attract foreign students – either gifted or paying ones - has emerged. We should be careful as we must create EHEA which is competitive as a whole, without “winners” and “losers”, otherwise we all will be losers.

Attractiveness/competitiveness and social dimension do link with each other; they do not compete with each other. The international attractiveness/competitiveness is based on it. Students and teachers go to a country where they find better conditions – for study and research but also social ones. Valuable degrees and a possibility to find a good job are essential and thus become a sign for a quality higher education system. The participants thought that so far within Bologna we rather stressed the economic side of the reforms forgetting that without social dimension we will not really be competitive and European (see above). **The social dimension is not a European handicap, on the contrary, it is a factor of attractiveness and competitiveness with e.g. Australia or U.S.A.**

The questions were raised concerning appropriate funding systems. Also the question of who will pay and who will manage the social system. It is, of course, connected with most effective support schemes which will take into account country differences. **Social cohesion issues, widening access etc. were considered investments.** But then also certain quantification is needed – **investment also means the amount we can afford to pay and what we get in reward.** And who pays the price of these investments, who benefits from the rewards? The participants stressed that these are key questions which need further consideration as no easy solutions exist.

So, the social dimension is a prerequisite of the economic development and a constituent element of the EHEA and therefore must **be considered a priority from Bergen onwards.**

**In the working group 2** there were the questions: *Should social dimension be included in processes of duality assurance? Who should be concerned with it? (HEI, national agency/level, higher education as a whole). Which types of criteria should be set? How can quality assurance take social dimension into account? How the HEIs look at students?*

The discussions led to the following conclusions:

To integrate social dimension to be important part of quality assurance is necessary. Quality assurance is not only about teaching and learning itself. The main aim of any quality assurance systems must be improvement : it is not just a matter of “to be or not to be” but

quality assurance is a process to be developed starting from available results after audits and allowing HEI to have corrective measures to improve. Thus the working group participants stressed importance of sharing good practices and being discouraged from the bad ones. Social dimension can provide a framework for and a bridge between quality and equality; in other words, because a focus on equality only would lower quality whereas focus on quality only is a threat for equality, social dimension is what can help us to find the appropriate balance. Also the necessity to take into account different levels and different forms of quality assurance (internal & external quality evaluation, evaluations, accreditation, audits) was discussed. The group agreed that it is necessary to share responsibilities in ensuring quality assurance. The EHEA as a whole is responsible. They very much recommended the ‘Bologna tetrahedron’ presented by Mr. Frankowicz as a model for social dimension, which can be analyzed from the 4 following points of view:

“Bologna Tetrahedron”	Quality	Prerequisites for higher education	Processes	Outcomes and results
State	Quality standards imposed by law	Equal opportunities guaranteed by law	Social assistance guaranteed by law	Recognized qualifications
Subject	Quality of study programmes	Appropriate profile of the candidate	Preparation for future role as a professional	Subject knowledge, professional competences
Higher education institution	Quality of study process	Appropriate “immersion” mechanisms	Support for students, inclusion of students in decision making	Feedback from alumni (how to improve the functioning of HEI)
Society (including market)	Accountability, fitness for purpose (how to respond the needs of the labour market ?)	Good “systemic” co-operation with external stakeholders	Formation of attitudes, transferable skills, etc ...	Employability

Actors are “inter alia” ministries, HEIs, teachers and students, as well as representatives of the labour market. The responsibilities are linked to the multiple prerequisites, purposes and goals of higher education that come from the different levels and actors involved. Prerequisites for higher education can be equal opportunities for all, a specific profile of students, co-operation with external stakeholders etc. Different purposes of higher education are personal development, preparation for the labour market with a long-term perspective, preparation for life as an active citizen in a democratic society and improvement of an advanced knowledge base in society. All have influence on the comprehensiveness of the social dimension as well as that of quality assurance.

It’s not desirable to define a list of concrete “minimum” criteria/standards for social dimension. Such a list would be always limited and there will always be different perceptions and “hidden variables” (beyond teaching and research) related to quality assurance; if a consensus on what should be guaranteed to students could be reached, how to guarantee aspects of the social dimension would always vary according to countries. The participants underlined that more information and knowledge on social dimension provisions is needed in different countries. Besides more information there is also a need to define more concrete ‘aspects’ of the overarching Bologna action line on social dimension that should be guaranteed in every country, every HEI within the EHEA, not actual standards/criteria. E.g.

sufficient financial support for all students, but the actual amount is dependent on the actual study & living costs in a country/region.

Furthermore the group concluded that quality is a common responsibility for teachers and students. To involve students from the beginning creates better conditions for doing the work then at a later stage.

There are 3 modes of student participation:

- 1) input (evaluations)
- 2) co-decision maker in all committees
- 3) student participation as quality indicator as such

The following definition of social dimension was suggested: *“The social dimension includes all provisions needed for having equal access, progress & completion of higher education (i.e. first, second, third cycle).”*

#### Other observations from the discussion

Social dimension becomes more important within the EHEA, and in parallel more and more the obstacle for a real EHEA. There are large inequalities between countries, HEIs, even between different disciplines. However, diversity between countries should not be used as an excuse to no change and/or improvement of social circumstances. A lot is expected from changing attitude towards outcomes/results of study programmes/study process. But not only from the immediate employability angle, is it also important to look at longer term effects of higher education programmes.

International mobility could increase wider access. It brings new groups - foreign students as well as migrants.

#### **Finally the participants recommended to the Ministers in Bergen:**

**Quality assurance mechanisms, both internal and external, must integrate the social dimension including all aspects of living and studying conditions and relate to the multiple purposes of higher education.**

**The working group 3** started from the conclusion that in the two years following the ministerial conference in Berlin, there has not really been done considerable work on the social dimension, no substantial progress was achieved. The participants strongly agreed **that the social dimension and social cohesion should really be set as a priority in Bergen and taken as a transversal objective, involved in every action line. And this needs more concrete elaboration.** The interventions of the participants also warned that the Bologna reforms and implementation in different countries sometimes is bringing opposite effects than social cohesion or bringing real social aspects into Bologna Process and enabling all people their full potential.

A key problem raised in the workshop was the lack of data on the social cohesion in higher education. The workshop welcomed initiatives such as EUROSTUDENT surveys. **The participants stressed that collection of comparable data on the social, cultural and economical backgrounds and situations of students should be enlarged to all the states having signed the Bologna Declaration.** This stocktaking will serve as a tool to evaluate and compare social progress being made, or not made, in the Bologna Process. This stocktaking and data analyses should as well enable to measure the possible negative impact of the wrong implementation of other Bologna-action lines on higher education.

In order to build up a more socially coherent higher education system, policies should be developed to take away the financial, social and cultural barriers causing the under representation of less privileged groups in higher education. But the workshop participants warned to limit the scope to equal opportunities to access to the first cycle of higher education and establish access barriers at the second or third level.

They also stressed that the first generation students from low income families run a far bigger risk of retention and drop out. Therefore, measures to enhance social cohesion in higher education should pay equal attention to access and to completion. And last but not least it was also stressed that the social, economical and cultural background is again determining the job opportunities of graduates. There should be guidance and counselling services developed serving not only for the access to the labour market but as well for a better pedagogical orientation.

Further there was a strong agreement on the need to raise awareness about the social dimension and implications of the Bologna Process amongst all higher education actors and stakeholders. The working group considered the social dimension as essential to create student-ownership of the Bologna Process. **Instead of seeing students as passive customers they should be given a more positive and active role in higher education assuming that they are full members of the higher education community.**

A social cohesive EHEA is of course impossible without a well developed social dimension in the international mobility. It was assured that there still a lot can be done to expand the portability of grants and loans. There was a discussion on the threats and challenges caused by the recent developments in the European Court of Justice's decisions and cases. The participants agreed on the objective to provide for every student moving abroad within EHEA (for a short or a long time period) a sufficient financial support in the form of grants and loans. It is an extremely complex issue which could not be solved at this meeting. The participants therefore decided not to interfere with the conclusions and the recommendations of the Bologna Seminar in Noordwijk dealing with this specific problem. It was also mentioned that **the social dimension of mobility is not only a matter of financial support but e.g. the visa problems still need a lot to be done.**

**The working group 4** discussed institutional international policies. They discussed barriers and obstacles to mobility. The working group participants pointed out that a new type of mobility, which is a consequence of two cycle structure (Bachelor/Master) of study programmes implemented has emerged, different needs and expectations than the "classical" programme exchange students. They called it "vertical mobility". The discussion in the working group led to these conclusions:

**The "3 A's" (in French) :**

**- A 1 : "Accueil" (welcome)**

The participants stressed the importance of the role played by the student associations. These associations could help in guiding and tutoring student, partners in mobility. However, it might still be insufficient. It has serious consequences in the case of e.g. recognition of the study results achieved but also in very different aspects, e.g. access to housing.

**- A2 : “Accompagnement” (counselling)**

A help in social, professional and cultural integration for all students is necessary. If this is not performed carefully it could lead to “ghettoisation” of foreign students

**- A3 : “Accès et Départ” (coming in and going out)**

There should be measures taken which to certain extent could help to decrease the financial and social barriers – i.e. to offer different choices, explain why mobility is beneficial by ex-mobile students and professors and help with proper preparation in a foreign language.

**Further conclusions** were made that there is extremely important to create partnerships - political, social, economical in the region and maybe also abroad. The institutions cannot themselves solve everything. **Survey on social dimension is necessary as there is a lack of statistical data. It was also stressed that equity and democratisation are central words namely because of big inequities existing between the 40 EHEA countries and inside them. And mobility should not be a privilege;** the participants rather spoke about a “right to mobility”.

## **Conclusions**

The questions in headline of the conference were: *“Is there any coexistence between competitiveness and social dimension?” “Are they contradictory to each other or do they depend on one another?”*

Most of the speakers, including Mr. Francois Fillon, Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research, showed that there is coexistence between competitiveness and social dimension. And moreover – if we want to create future Europe, which will be dynamic, attractive and competitive, such a Europe must be based on the principle of social solidarity. These two approaches have to be well balanced though. This Europe has to have its excellence in top research, and high quality, broad and competitive tertiary education sector. Already in the Berlin-Bergen work programme social cohesion got the label of a transversal issue covering all the action lines and principles. It is not only a matter of methodology, it is an important political approach.

Mr. Guy Neave pointed out in his presentation a question – *“Is social cohesion a condition for economic development or vice versa?”* The participants of the seminar felt that for sustainable development social cohesion is a necessary precondition. And this has reflections in economy. Moreover the social solidarity and stress on social cohesion belong to traditional European values. Bologna reforms so far rather concentrated on legislative changes, implementation of reforms of study programmes, quality assurance systems, recognition tools (ECTS, Diploma Supplement) etc. We more or less have them implemented. It does not mean we could stop our work, a lot has to be done, and we will only be able to evaluate in future, in some 5-10 years what an “animal” we have created. But a real step forward, we could make in Bergen, is next to the structures and means (in Berlin represented by the three priorities) move towards principles as e.g. easy mobility, and common European values which will make European Higher Education Area (EHEA) different from similar systems using a Bachelor/Master structure and quality assurance systems.

Massification of higher/tertiary education has become a reality and in fact it is the political decision which most European countries have already taken. Massification is also a

significant challenge in terms of social cohesion. Education may well become one of the main factors in dividing societies, and also important social stigmas, since there is less and less place for those without qualifications. It means in reality not only to create equal bases for access in our legislation but also to work with those groups which usually do not enter higher/tertiary education. They have equal opportunities but they do not use them, possibly also because they are not motivated or do not know how. It starts already much earlier, at basic and/ or secondary school level. In reality nobody checks whether they have abilities to enter and complete higher/tertiary education. These people themselves, as well the whole society, may only benefit if proper instruments are found and right incentives use to bring them into higher/tertiary education. Anybody should try his/her talent, to use it for the highest education possible, and benefit from it regardless his/her social background. Equal access in legislative terms is a necessary precondition but far from being enough. Widening access for underprivileged groups is not only socially cohesive activity but rather action with economic importance. And it is not the full task these students also usually need some guidance and educational support during studies.

This brings us to the question: Is access already a success? The practical experience shows that definitely not as all countries face high dropout – if not generally at least in some disciplines. The social dimension of the EHEA thus should integrate the processes of access to higher education, which must be followed by different learning/ study opportunities – e.g. reasonable freedom to design curriculum, profile, and the learning paths which include flexibility, professors and teachers who think more carefully about methodology. This also requires responsibility from students but they should be guided and shown their possibilities. Student body has changed but students in any case should be treated as responsible citizens, members of the community rather than pure consumers. Furthermore students need to have certain economic standard which would enable them, as already stated in the Berlin Communiqué, to “*successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background*” How far have we proceeded? Do we learn from examples of good practise carefully enough?

We all face, at all levels, the challenge about how to get more money into the systems of higher education. The public funds have been declining on the one hand, and on the other hand, numbers of students have grown significantly. The system of education must compete for funding with other sectors – e.g. health or social affairs. Unfortunately in this case there could easily be the social aspects which suffer. Following the opinion of the experts gathered here part of funds, which come to the higher education system, should regardless if from public or private resources, be invested into social dimension. We should realize that finances or systems of funding are not our goals themselves. They make much more sense if they serve as a mean used for establishing more comprehensive frameworks, taking into account also social dimension of our future scenarios. Making equal opportunity must be “*a fundamental building block*”<sup>20</sup> of the EHEA, which we want to create by 2010, and make it grow far beyond this date. All the aspects mentioned above should be researched through the prism of equal opportunities and social cohesion. Sometimes when thinking about social systems, we rely only on public funds and usually consider social dimension as almost exclusive responsibility of the government. Definitely it is an important public responsibility but not exclusively. The conference on Public Responsibility showed that there are shared responsibilities. There is **public responsibility for higher education and research** and there is also **public responsibility of higher education and research which creates irreplaceable**

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<sup>20</sup> See the recommendations from the Official Bologna seminar on Public responsibility, organized by the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, September 2004 –[www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no)

**role of HEIs as well as students.** And this responsibility of HEIs and students was also mentioned several times by the speakers here.

To bring the topic of the social dimension and equal opportunities further into the Bologna Process is very important now. In Berlin our priorities were based on structures, quality assurance and recognition, bases, on which we can build EHEA. But they are not our goals themselves. They are necessary means to achieve a higher education of quality, which will be attractive and could compete at any level. And this will not be possible without social aspects being taken seriously into account and becoming our priority. For the future if we speak about quality in higher education social dimension and equal opportunities should become important signs of it. How to achieve this is not an easy task. It requires co-operation at all levels – at institutional, national as well as European level All countries have to work on it, it could not only be privilege of the rich ones. International organisations as ENQA, EUA, ESIB, EURASHE and others active in quality assurance at European/ international level should be active and promote best practices which could be shared.

Social dimension of the EHEA will be one of the values which would make the area truly European. The tasks we face are extremely complex and they are no simple solutions. There is long list of questions which were formulated at our seminar. It started already with the definition of social cohesion, or social dimension within the Bologna Process. The working group 2 tried to find an answer: *“The social dimension includes all provisions needed for having equal access, progress & completion of higher education (i.e. first, second, third cycle).”* Mr. Cohen saw it in four dimensions: *access to higher education – incl. lifelong learning opportunities; development and implementation of “well being” conditions for students; making schemes aiming to improve the efficiency of academic work for opportunities of success of students during studies with special attention to underprivileged groups; and employability of graduates.* Most of these aspects were also stressed by Prof. Eric Froment, President of the EUA.

Let me repeat once more some questions formulated by the experts as these are crucial issues: *What means social cohesion on European level e.g. with respect to differences among European countries? How to reduce this gap? And do our policies tend to it in practice or do they work opposite? Do we create a multi-speed Europe?* The situation in different parts of Europe varies significantly. It varies in the old EU and new EU countries and even more if we look beyond EU. How shall we answer these challenges in the future?

Mobility is in the heart of the Bologna Process and easy mobility is one of the basic principles of EHEA. It is only logical that when speaking about social solidarity and about social dimension of the Bologna Process, mobility is discussed. And not by random, after the French EU Presidency focused on mobility and its promotion by the removal of its obstacles in 2000<sup>21</sup>, mobility was again the priority of the Dutch EU Presidency last year with a specific focus on the core question of portability of grants and the follow up has been organised. Where are we now? As described in previous chapters, there is a legitimate fear of brain drain

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<sup>21</sup> The Action Plan for mobility adopted by a resolution 2000/C 371/03 on 14 December 2000 recommended a set of measures aimed to define and democratize mobility in the EU, to promote appropriate forms of funding, to increase mobility and improve the conditions for it. The crucial issue of mobility was then further developed by the Recommendation 2001/613/CE (10 July 2001) about mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers.

from “*teaching – intensive*” area of South – East in the direction to “*research intensive*” area in North – West<sup>22</sup>.

As Bologna reforms of structures will have been implemented a new type of mobility will have appeared, so called “vertical” mobility and will be international as well as national. Students after having finished their first degree will move to another university to study the second one. Or they will move to another institution to study Ph.D. after completing the second cycle. This mobility will also bring a lot of challenges, especially the transition between the first and second cycle. Moving from one to another HEI in the same or very similar discipline already signals problems and what about if it will be a bigger shift between disciplines? Some students also pointed out that Bologna could be misused to reduce access to the second cycle and stressed that this access must stay open and be merit based, without any financial obstacles or “*numerus clausus*.”

Realising that smooth mobility is a key principle of EHEA and aware about many obstacles it brings and challenges to be overcome - between different groups of Bologna Member Countries as well as in particular countries themselves, which are connected with new structures in higher education systems, with economic, social and linguistic issues, legislative frameworks and immigration and security policies, it is important to have proper facts and the BFUG should organise an analytical study on these issues in all Bologna Member Countries and report back to the Ministers in 2007. Furthermore the national authorities should undertake all possible steps to ease the visa procedures for foreign students and scholars.

And further concerns have been expressed, let me again stress some of them - *Shall we retain the momentum the social dimension has gained in Berlin? Or are we already losing it? Are there signals which need to be recoded?* The questions also paid attention to lifelong learning paths. *Are the inclusions of flexible LLL paths really taking place?*

And to make the whole thing more complicated Prof. Kladis put even more aspects together and stressed competitiveness, attractiveness and excellence being one side, as social cohesion, public responsibility and academic values & principles the other side of the same coin.

In spite and possibly also due to these facts the **participants of the seminar saw the political approach to create socially cohesive EHEA as the only solution. As the issue is so complex to step ahead means shared responsibilities and actions undertaken at all levels of the system.**

**At European level** the enlarging of the already existing gap between different parts of Europe should be avoided. On contrary certain solidarity is necessary and all possibilities have to be used. E.g. under the Tempus programme – it is at least a modest concrete way on how solidarity can be performed.

#### **At national level**

- The emerging and widening gap between those who benefit from higher education and come back all their life long and those who have never used this possibility must be stopped and hopefully decreased in future;

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<sup>22</sup> CHEPS Scenarios – The European higher education and research landscape in 2020 – See the CHEPS Web site - [http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats\\_new/higher\\_education\\_events/chepsconference/index.html](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats_new/higher_education_events/chepsconference/index.html)

- Examples of good practices and ways on how to make them a reality should be sought when there is success in motivating the traditionally disadvantaged groups and if they are successfully guided through higher education according to their talent and abilities;
- Social dimension and equal opportunities should become part of internal and external evaluation as well as accreditation/certification procedures;
- Discussions between higher education institutions and the employers in which both sides listen to each other and build on exchanged knowledge should be stimulated leading thus to better understanding of new structures and employability of graduates.

**With the full respect to academic freedom and institutional autonomy and their primary responsibility for quality the higher education institutions**

- Should take into account, when designing restructured study programmes, the diversified needs of contemporary student body; without any negative impact on the quality of programmes and/or their graduates, the programmes should have diversified learning outcomes, lead to reasonably diversified competencies as well profiles, should enable students graduation at their highest possible level and thus minimise the student drop.
- Should listen to the employers and needs of society and balance them with the academic quality, with the aim of enhancing sustainable employability of their graduates at the national as well European labour market;
- Should take social dimension and equal opportunities as important signs of quality in their performance and find appropriate ways on how to include them into their internal evaluation;
- Should make flexible learning paths including searching of possibilities of recognition of prior learning an integral part of their activities
- Should create proper systems of guidance and counselling for their students.

**The international organisations** in the spheres of their missions should create platforms where the best practices on how to bring social dimension further into the Bologna Process and how to make equal opportunities a reality could be shared;

From the presentations and discussions it implies **that the participants of the Conference urge Ministers meeting in Bergen, in May 2005, to make social dimension a priority for 2005 – 2007, and most probably also beyond.** As Mr. Cohen has reminded us, Europe has to have the potential *“of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”*. The issue is complex and goes beyond the sector of higher education or education. However several speakers have stressed that Ministers responsible for higher education are part of the Governments and should at least try to initiate actions. **On the basis of this it is possible to conclude that the Conference participants recommended that Ministers**

- Acknowledge that, beyond Bergen, the process of building European Higher Education Area should improve its social dimension and recognise it as the priority for 2005-07; they realise that national authorities, higher education institutions and students are the guarantees who can in common make it a reality. They ask the BFUG to organise an analytical study taking into account existing initiatives and based on collection of comparable data on social and economic situation of students in all Bologna Member Countries and report back at the next conference in 2007.
- As the basis for sustainable policies in higher education in Europe Ministers will stimulate creation of comprehensive frameworks within their countries as well as at particular institutions for funding the objectives of social equity and equal opportunities for all citizens, using for this purpose all sources of funds, public as well as private. They call higher education institutions as well as national authorities to undertake actions to create socially cohesive system of student grants (including mobility grants) and loans. Social background and economic level should not be a barrier to access to higher education, successful completion of studies and employment in “matching” jobs after graduation.
- Acknowledge that social dimensions and equal opportunities are important signs of quality of higher education, they urge higher education institutions as well as national quality assurance agencies/organisations/consortia, to elaborate quality assurance mechanisms, internal as well as external which will integrate the social dimension including all aspects of living and studying conditions and relate them to the multiple purposes of higher education. They furthermore call international organisations as ENQA, EUA, ESIB, EURASHE and others active in quality assurance at European/ international level to promote best practices.

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- 2) The materials and presentations prepared for the official Bologna seminar on “European Qualification Framework”, Copenhagen, 13-14 January 2005. See the official Bologna web-page: [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no), the item „Previous Seminars“ and the title of the seminar
- 3) The materials and presentations prepared for the official Bologna Conference on “Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research”, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 23-24 September 2004; namely the „Recommendations addressed to public authorities in States Party to the European Cultural Convention and to the Bologna Follow-up Group” and the General Report by Eva Egron-Polak. See the official Bologna web-page: [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no), the item „Previous Seminars“ and the title of the conference
- 4) The materials and presentations prepared for the official Bologna seminar “Designing Policies for Mobile Students”, Noordwijk, 10-12 October 2004; namely the General Report by Pavel Zgaga. See the official Bologna web-page: [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no), the item „Previous Seminars“ and the title of the conference
- 5) Bologna Declaration and the Communiqués of Ministers from Prague and Berlin: “Towards the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001. “Realising the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003
- 6) Materials from the Bologna Follow up seminar on “Exploring the Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area”, Athens, 19 -20 February 2003; namely Conclusions and General Report by Stephan Neetens
- 7) ESIB Policy Papers: the ESIB Policy Paper on Mobility and ESIB Policy Paper on the Commodification of Education. See the ESIB web page: [www.esib.org](http://www.esib.org) ;
- 8) ESIB Göteborg Student Declaration from the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Student Convention (March 2001). See <http://www.esib.org/policies/studentgoteborg.htm>  
ESIB Brussels Student Declaration from the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Student Convention (November 2001). See [http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/ESIB\\_position\\_paper.pdf](http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/ESIB_position_paper.pdf)
- 9) CHEPS Scenarios – The European higher education and research landscape in 2020, CHEPS, Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente, 2004 – See [http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats\\_new/higher\\_education\\_events/chepsconference/index.html](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/whats_new/higher_education_events/chepsconference/index.html)
- 10) Sjur Bergan and Vera Stastna: “The Bologna Process – a View from the Council of Europe”, the article prepared for Benz/Kohler/Landfried (ed.), Handbuch Qualität in Studium und Lehre, Raabe Verlag Berlin 2004ff (be published in March 2005)

- 11) Josef Benes, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic: “Strukturovani studijnich programu v intencich Bolonskeho procesu”, the presentation at the seminar on Structured Study Programmes, Prague – Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, November 2004
- 12) Josef Benes, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic: “Reflection on the Scenarios (Funding Perspective)”, presentation at the Directors General Higher Education Meeting on Higher Education in 2020, Nijmegen, 7-9 November 2004
- 13) Vera Stastna, Chair of the CD-ESR of the Council of Europe, presentation at the Opening Conference for the 50th Anniversary of the European Cultural Convention, Wrocław, 9-10 December 2004
- 14) Nuria Sanz and Sjur Bergan (eds.): The Heritage of European Universities (Strasbourg 2002: Council of Europe Publishing).