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# The Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World – Wide Competition

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Concluding Remarks

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- Is there coexistence between competitiveness and social dimension?
  - Are they contradictory to each other or do they depend to one another?
  - Is social cohesion a condition for economic development or vice versa?
  - **For sustainable development social cohesion is a necessary precondition.**
  - Bologna reforms – Berlin: legislation, structures, means → **Bergen: shift towards principles and values**
  - **Social solidarity and stress on social cohesion - traditional European values**
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# Massification of higher/tertiary education

- Political decision
- Education one of the main factors in dividing societies in the future
- Access- underprivileged – hidden talents
- Preconditions for successful completion – bring students to their highest potential
  - Different learning/ studying opportunities (curriculum, profile, the learning paths, methodology)
  - Guiding, tutoring
- Responsibility from students – responsible citizens – members of the community – not pure consumers

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# Funding HE systems

- Decline of funds X increased numbers of students
- Competition with other sectors
- Share of costs with students and families
- Funding system – a mean used for establishing more comprehensive frameworks, taking into account social dimension of our future scenarios.
- Making equal opportunity - “*a fundamental building block*“ of the European Higher Education Area

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# Funding HE systems

- EUROSTUDENT
- Public responsibility for HE&R
- Public responsibility of HE&R
  - Irreplaceable role of HEIs as well as students

# What does social dimension mean?

- European value
- “.... includes all provisions needed for having equal access, progress & completion of higher education (i.e. first, second, third cycle).”
- 1) Access to higher education – incl. LLL opportunities,  
2) Implementation of “well being” conditions for students,  
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,  
4) Employability of graduates

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# At European level?

- Differences among European countries
- How to reduce this gap?
- And do our policies tend to it in practice or do they work opposite?

# Mobility

- Easy mobility is one of the basic principles of EHEA
- Competition between HEIs and/or national systems to attract
  - gifted individuals
  - foreign students who are paying - significant income for the institutions.
- Brain drain
- Vertical mobility – BA → MA



# Some further concerns

- 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?
- Are the inclusions of flexible LLL paths really taking place?
- Competitiveness, attractiveness and excellence being one side, as social cohesion, public responsibility and academic values & principles the other side of the same coin.

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# Shared responsibilities

- European level
  - Not to enlarge but minor the existing gaps
- National level
  - Focus on underprivileged groups
  - LLL
  - Social cohesion part of QA system
  - Cooperation between HEIS and employers
    - based on mutual listening to each other

# Shared responsibilities

## ■ Institutional level

- Restructured study programmes- diversified needs of student body; the programmes enabling to bring students to their highest potential - diversified learning outcomes, competencies as well profiles - minimising the student drop out
- Cooperation with employers
- Social dimension and equal opportunities included into internal evaluation
- Flexible learning paths, recognition of prior learning
- Systems of guidance and counselling

## ■ International organisations

- Platforms for cooperation, sharing experiences and promotion of best practice

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# Towards Bergen

- **Social dimension a priority 2005 – 2007** and possibly beyond
- Lisbon European Council in 2000 .....Europe has also to have the potential “***of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion***”
- Complex issue going often beyond responsibility of the sector
- Ministers members of the Government

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# Towards Bergen (1)

- 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 based on collection of comparable data on social and economic situation of students in all Bologna Member Countries, build on existing initiatives, and report back at the next conference in 2007.

# Towards Bergen (2)

- 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.

# Towards Bergen (3)

- 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 to the multiple outcomes of higher education. They furthermore call international organisations as ENQUA, EUA, ESIB, EURASHE and others active in quality assurance at European/ international level to promote best practices.

# Towards Bergen (4)

- Realise that easy 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, which are connected with new structures in higher education systems, with economic, social and linguistic issues, legislative frameworks and immigration and security policies, they call upon the BFUG to organise an analytical study on these issues in all Bologna Member Countries and report back in 2007; they furthermore call the national authorities to undertake all possible steps to ease the visa procedures for foreign students and scholars.