

Report endorsed by BFUG at its meeting in Prague on 12-13 February 2009

INTRODUCTION

When the European Ministers in charge of higher education met in London in May 2007, they confirmed:

Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension. (2.2, London Communiqué)

At the same time, the Ministers acknowledged the existence of many obstacles to mobility, most notably "issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements". Therefore, they agreed to work for decisive progress in removing these obstacles and to promote mobility of staff, students and graduates that is more equitably balanced between countries across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (2.3, London Communiqué).

To further this work, in the period leading to the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference the following Bologna Seminars were held, dealing with various aspects of mobility:

- "Fostering student mobility: next Steps? Involving the stakeholders for an improved mobility inside the EHEA", Brussels, 29-30 May 2008, organised by the French Community of Belgium.¹
- "Penalized for Being Mobile? National Pension Schemes as an Obstacle to Mobility for Researchers in the European Higher Education Area", Berlin, 12-13 June 2008, hosted by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).²
- "Let's Go! – Where To Now?", Lille, 6-7 October 2008, validation conference organised by Education International and the European Students' Union.
- "The Europe of Higher Education: Strengthening Pan-European Mobility", Nancy, 4-5 November 2008, organised by France.³

To provide information on the benefits of mobility while promoting the removal of barriers to mobility, Education International and the European Students' Union jointly organised the mobility campaign "Let's Go!", the results of which were presented at the validation conference in Lille (see above).⁴

To coordinate the different activities within the mobility action line into a coherent programme, building upon seminars and other activities of previous periods, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) decided to set up a coordination group on mobility (for details on the coordination group see the terms of reference in annex 1).

The group was also asked to analyse the results of the events and to integrate them into a concise report to BFUG, highlighting the main conclusions and recommendations. For this purpose, the present report takes the mobility-related issues identified by the London Communiqué as a starting point and presents the outcomes of the seminars in relation to each of the topics. The full reports and recommendations of the individual seminars are reprinted as annexes to this report.

After summarising some of the debates and recommendations that were of a more general nature, the report addresses the issues of visas, residence and work permits; recognition; social security and pension arrangements; financing mobility and further

¹ <http://enseignement.be/index.php?page=25072&navi=2273>

² http://www.hrk-bologna.de/bologna/de/home/1945_3448.php

³ www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Nancy2008.htm

⁴ www.lets gocampaign.net

incentives for mobility. In this context it is important to note that most of the issues addressed can in fact be both, a prerequisite for mobility and an additional incentive.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE MOBILITY EVENTS 2007-2009

The events organised in the 2007-2009 period confirmed the mobility of students, early stage researchers and staff within the European Higher Education Area as one of the core objectives of the Bologna Process and highlighted once more that, despite the progress achieved to date, considerable efforts are needed to overcome the many obstacles that still exist. There were, however, also critical remarks to be heard, highlighting possible negative consequences or side-effects of mobility (e.g. brain drain in the country of origin or "squeezing out" of national students in the receiving country). It was also stressed that higher education institutions had not the necessary capacities to accommodate a substantial increase in mobility, not all destinations had the same appeal or status, and not all students might wish to be mobile.

Nevertheless, at least for the time being, the implicit goal of "**mobility for all**" was maintained. It was stressed that there are many different types of mobility that need to be distinguished to be successfully promoted (short-term or long-term; within or between cycles; within exchange or joint programmes vs. free mover mobility; within the borders of the EHEA or beyond etc.). With the introduction of a three-cycle system, the Bologna Process is expected to foster degree mobility between cycles (vertical mobility) but there seemed to be a strong consensus that mobility within cycles (horizontal mobility) should be promoted, too. As in some countries "Bologna" is considered to make horizontal mobility more difficult (due to overloaded and inflexible curricula), higher education institutions were called upon to devise study programmes with adequate workload and to integrate opportunities for mobility in the structure of all programmes.

In general, a variety of mobility options was considered necessary to meet the needs of lifelong learning and an increasingly diverse student body. The seminars also stressed the importance of promoting staff mobility, especially the mobility of teachers and administrative staff, which, compared to the mobility of researchers, had been largely neglected in the past. In short, the underlying vision of most of the discussions could be described as "**mainstreaming mobility**".

In line with this, it was recommended that higher education institutions make the mobility of students, early stage researchers and staff, and internationalisation more generally, an **integral part of their institutional strategies** that should be developed by the higher education institution leadership, together with students, early stage researchers, teachers, and staff from the various support services (human resources, finances, etc.). Such a strategy would also involve a conscious language policy, as higher education institutions, taking into account the needs of mobile students and staff, have to strike a delicate balance between offering courses in the local or national language on the one hand, and using a widely spoken language on the other. As was recommended further, such institutional strategies should be embedded in a **multilevel strategy** aimed at large-scale mobility, involving the key actors at all levels.

Another important conclusion of the seminars was that not only the demand for mobility should be increased but also the offer improved, leading to an increase not only in quantitative but also in qualitative terms. **Improving the quality of mobility** would require, among others, a better integration of mobility periods into the curricula, more joint programmes, facilitating recognition of study periods abroad, better cooperation between sending and receiving institutions, better language training for mobile students and staff as well as for teachers and administrative staff at receiving institutions.

Last but not least, the various seminars highlighted the differences that exist between EHEA countries that are part of the European Union and those that are not, especially with regard to visas, residence and work permits, social security arrangements and access to European Union funding programmes. Attention was also drawn to the existing imbalances in mobility flows. While for the time being a full equilibrium was not considered realistic, the call for **more balanced mobility and reciprocity across the entire European Higher Education Area** was renewed and a variety of measures were proposed to make mobility the rule rather than the exception.

Visas, residence and work permits

As all mobility seminars made clear, the goal of achieving more balanced mobility across the entire European Higher Education Area is hampered by the existing visa regulations. In this context, problems encountered by students and staff from countries outside the European Union were mentioned most frequently.

The participants of the mobility seminars confirmed that not much progress had been achieved in this regard and that further cooperation was needed between the relevant authorities at national and European levels to come to visa procedures that are simple, transparent, free of charge, and that respect the needs of higher education staff and students.

Difficulties with getting work permits were highlighted as obstacles to mobility not only for academic staff (and their spouses) but also for students, especially for those who need to work to finance their studies. For many of them, mobility will only become a serious option if they are also given the possibility to work in the receiving country.

It was therefore recommended to make special provisions for higher education staff and students, allowing them (and their families) to get visas and work permits relatively easily and to get both simultaneously. For this purpose, closer cooperation between education ministries and ministries dealing with immigration issues was encouraged.

Recognition

As far as the recognition of qualifications and study periods was concerned, there was a general agreement that much work still had to be done for a proper implementation of the existing recognition tools (Lisbon Recognition Convention with its subsidiary texts, ECTS, Diploma Supplement, learning agreements, national qualifications frameworks etc.). The problems that were cited most frequently were connected to short study periods rather than to full degree mobility. There are still higher education institutions that do not use learning agreements and even if they do, recognition problems can occur. It was therefore recommended that all higher education institutions introduce transparent and fair procedures for recognition based on learning outcomes rather than to leave the decision to individual lecturers; that general use be made of transparent mobility contracts or learning agreements (also for free movers) at all higher education institutions; and that more joint programmes be established.

To facilitate the mobility of staff, it was recommended to also develop a tool for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications of mobile staff.

Social security / pension arrangements

The issue of national pension schemes as potential obstacles to mobility came to the fore at several occasions and the entire Bologna seminar in Berlin was dedicated to this highly complex issue (see annex 3). Discussions at the seminar focused particularly on the situation of researchers that are mobile within the European Union and took place in the context of the creation of the European Research Area and the more general discussion on improving the working conditions of researchers.⁵ However, seminar participants recognised the need to better understand also the situation of researchers from non-EU countries and to include them in discussions on these topics.

One of the main conclusions of the seminar was that **more and better information and advice** is needed about the different national pension schemes, supplementary pension schemes, the impact of mobility periods, and ways to avoid possible negative effects. Human resource departments of higher education institutions were seen to have a particularly important role to play in providing their staff (those considering a period abroad but also those already mobile and wishing to return) with such information, for which adequate training is needed. To improve the flow of information and to share responsibility and expertise, an information "cascade" system was proposed, with human resource departments at the centre, advising the individual researcher on the basis of

⁵ See the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers at http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/pdf/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf

information received from pension providers, research funders and mobility centres (see page 20). To put the individual researcher in a position to actually make use of the information provided, a sound financial education was considered important. One suggestion was that pension issues become part of doctoral training and/or institutional induction. The Lille seminar added the recommendation to encourage cooperation among higher education institutions for the sake of increased transparency and better information.

Apart from improving information, it was suggested to improve the actual **portability of pensions**; and to place a responsibility on research funders to provide ear-marked “top-up” support that has to be used for pension purposes. Private pension providers were expected to introduce innovative products specifically geared at mobile staff. Finally, the seminars called for more research to support evidence-based policy, and for a partnership of the relevant stakeholders (e.g. employers, funding bodies, pension providers, higher education institutions, mobility centres, and, where affordable, independent financial advisers).

Financing mobility

The seminars left no doubt that more funding from a variety of sources (both public and private) is needed at European, regional, national and institutional levels to further promote the mobility of students, early stage researchers and staff (e.g. for more, higher and portable grants targeting the entire EHEA; supplementary pension schemes; internationalisation of higher education institutions etc.). New partnerships for funding, for instance through cooperation with employers or private foundations, were therefore encouraged.

There seemed to be a general agreement that higher education institutions need to be properly equipped to deal with large-scale mobility and also need to be given concrete incentives to increase mobility. At the Lille seminar, student and staff representatives issued a strong plea against a commercialisation of higher education and against the use of mobility for profit purposes.

The seminars acknowledged that lack of funding still constitutes a major obstacle to mobility, especially to the mobility of students. One of the recommendations therefore was that financial support systems should be developed and expanded to foster mobility. Student representatives particularly called for more grants (rather than loans) that should not be offset by high tuition fees. Moreover, it was recommended that grants and loans should generally be made portable.

The substantial differences in living costs and amounts allocated as grants in the different countries of the EHEA constitute a major obstacle to mobility. The Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS)⁶ was presented as an example of good practice how to overcome this obstacle: Each country participating in CEEPUS pays comprehensive grants linked to the local cost of living to its *incoming* students and teachers and has to pledge at least 100 scholarship months per academic year. The scholarship amount is thus related to the economic strength of the country concerned. Higher education institutions could contribute in a similar way by offering services like board and lodging, insurances, or free language courses. Other proposals included to set up a European Mobility Fund and to make use of the EU social and structural funds.

In general, it was agreed that more mobility programmes were needed at institutional, national, regional and European level, and that the latter should cover the entire European Higher Education Area. Such mobility programmes should not only support students and researchers but also teachers and administrative staff.

There seemed to be a broad consensus that increasing mobility also meant widening access in the sense of reaching out to underrepresented groups (e.g. immigrants or students from lower socio-economic status). One proposal in this direction was to ear-mark part of the mobility funds for students from underrepresented groups.

⁶ www.ceepus.info

Further incentives for mobility

As a basis for future evidence-based policy-making, it was suggested to do more research on the motivations for mobility and especially on the motivations for not being mobile, as such research could reveal new mobility obstacles (and as a result also new potential incentives) that had not been considered before.

Access to **quality services** in terms of information, guidance, and accommodation was regularly mentioned as one important condition for successful mobility. At the Nancy seminar, it was therefore suggested to set up a European network of national agencies dealing with these issues.

Higher education institutions were called upon to provide **reliable, transparent and easily accessible information** on mobility opportunities in general, on study programmes and types of degrees, on visas, work permits, and social security issues, as well as on facilities available for international students and staff, taking into account the different target groups (with particular attention to underrepresented groups). Information and advice should also target students and staff returning to a country and should clearly **highlight the added-value of mobility**. Employers were considered to play an important role in this respect, too.

To widen participation in mobility and to meet the needs of different types of staff and an increasingly diverse student body, it was suggested to **diversify the types of mobility** offered, including for instance short study visits, language courses, summer schools, and placements, and to implement flexible curricula that include "mobility windows". By integrating mobility opportunities into the structure of the study programme, such "mobility windows", defined in terms of specific learning outcomes, would offer students (and to some extent also staff) the possibility to study or work abroad for a specific period of time. Alternatively, the period could be used to study at another institution in the same country, at another faculty of the same university, or to do an internship.

The importance of **language learning** was stressed regularly and it was proposed to encourage higher education institutions to offer courses free of charge in a variety of languages and to grant credits within any degree programme for language learning, be that a foreign language for national students or the local language for international students. Students at all levels should be given the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages.

When students go abroad they often learn a new language and even take courses in the local language. They also get to know different cultures, values, traditions, and learn how to deal with it. Higher education institutions should be encouraged to recognise this social and cultural experience as **informal learning** by granting students credits for their mobility periods.

Higher education institutions should also develop **reward mechanisms that encourage academic and administrative staff** to organise and facilitate mobility of students as well as to become mobile themselves, recognising their crucial role in motivating students to go abroad. Mobility should contribute to career advancement rather than to hamper it and inviting guest lecturers should be seen as an essential element of excellent teaching, contributing to an "internationalisation at home".

Taking mobility and internationalisation as indicators for quality, it was suggested to include the level, and in particular the quality of mobility as criteria in the frameworks of internal as well as external **quality assessment schemes**.

Governments in turn could link incentives for increasing student and staff mobility, both incoming and outgoing, to the funding they provide to higher education institutions and could include **mobility targets in the "performance contracts"** agreed between higher education institutions and public authorities.

Data collection

Already in the London Communiqué, the Ministers had asked Eurostat and Eurostudent "to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna

countries" (3.4, London Communiqué) and a first report will be available by the 2009 ministerial conference.

The seminars of the 2007-2009 period confirmed that data collection is notably deficient and more and better data on student and staff mobility is needed (e.g. on mobility flows, funding opportunities, motivations for being mobile and especially for not being mobile). Governments were therefore called upon to commit themselves to collecting reliable and comparable data on a regular basis.

Taking this one step further, it was proposed at several occasions to use this data to measure progress against concrete mobility benchmarks at European, national, and/or institutional level.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The basic conclusion from the mobility seminars that took place in the run-up to the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference is that many obstacles to large-scale mobility still exist and that a lot of work remains to be done to make mobility the rule in the European Higher Education Area. The obstacles are well-known and various measures to overcome them have been proposed. What is needed now is a **firm commitment** at European, national and institutional level **to create mobility opportunities for all**.

As the seminars indicated, the philosophy of mobility is changing. There seems to be a trend towards more organised mobility; universities will have to consider curricular integration of mobility opportunities more than in the past, the importance of joint programmes will grow; degree mobility will increase; mobility periods within the different cycles (ERASMUS-type mobility) will be shorter; and the demand for short-term mobility (also including summer courses, placements etc.) will grow. Another trend that has been noted is that mobility between Europe and other parts of the world appears to grow faster than mobility within Europe.

In the context of the discussions on "Bologna beyond 2010", fully engaging in lifelong learning practices and reinforcing the social dimension of higher education have been identified as priorities for the future development of the European Higher Education Area to meet the demographic challenge of an ageing population. This will also have consequences for mobility.

The number of young people in Europe is decreasing, which is expected to lead to more competition between higher education institutions to attract the "brightest minds", also reinforcing the trend towards more mobility from outside Europe. At the same time, a greater diversification of mobility will be needed, taking into account the specific needs of (part-time) students that combine work and study and of students with families to look after. Students from non-traditional backgrounds may generally need extra incentives to become mobile.

Against this background,

the mobility coordination group agreed on the following recommendations:

- increase and diversify the funding available for mobility at all levels (institutional, national, regional and European);
- increase and diversify the forms of mobility;
- integrate opportunities for mobility in the structure of all study programmes;
- provide transparent and fair recognition as well as credit transfer on the basis of learning outcomes and according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- offer better information, guidance, and counselling to students, early stage researchers and staff;
- give students at all levels the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages;

- make special provisions for higher education staff, early stage researchers and students, allowing them (and their families) to get visas and work permits relatively easily;
- recognise, both in terms of career advancement and teaching load, the work done by academics who are responsible for student mobility or who are mobile themselves.
- make (the quality of) mobility an integral part of quality assurance at programme and institutional level;
- develop national action plans for large-scale mobility, with clear benchmarks for inward and outward mobility, and include the national action plans in any future stocktaking exercise.
- explore the possibility of a common European Higher Education Area benchmark for mobility.

Making mobility work requires a comprehensive and strategic approach involving key ministries, higher education institutions, employers, staff and students. Therefore, it is crucial to devise a multilevel strategy to make substantial progress in increasing mobility after the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference.

Annex 1: Terms of reference

Name of the coordination group Mobility
Contact person (Chair) Gayane HARUTYUNYAN, Armenia
Composition (Please ensure the necessary balance with regard to geography, size, old vs. new, countries vs. organisations etc.) <u>Countries:</u> Armenia (Chair), Austria, Belgium/French Community, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Russian Federation, Spain <u>Organisations:</u> Education International, ESU
Purpose and/or outcome To coordinate the different activities within the mobility action line into a coherent programme, building upon seminars and other activities of previous periods.
Reference to the London Communiqué <p>2.2 Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.</p> <p>2.3 Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area. At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA.</p> <p>3.2 In our national reports for 2009, we will report on action taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff, including measures for future evaluation. We will focus on the main national challenges identified in paragraph 2.3 above. We also agree to set up a network of national experts to share information, and help to identify and overcome obstacles to the portability of grants and loans.</p>
Specific tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To coordinate the different activities (EI/ESU campaign and 4 Bologna seminars) by advising the organisers.▪ For each event, the coordination group has assigned a contact person who will act as adviser to the organisers and take care of the liaison with the coordination group as a whole.▪ To analyse the results of the various events and to integrate them into a concise and coherent report to BFUG, highlighting the main conclusions and recommendations.▪ To provide input for the stocktaking exercise, e.g. by commenting on the questions proposed by the stocktaking working group.

Reporting

Minutes of working group meetings will be made available to BFUG (by the Bologna Secretariat).

BFUG should also receive regular reports and updates.

To allow for good communication with BFUG as a whole and for the necessary consultations, progress reports should be submitted at least two weeks before each BFUG meeting. In between BFUG meetings, updates can be circulated by the Bologna Secretariat via e-mail.

Deadline for final report (draft version): 15 January 2009

Deadline for final version: 1 March 2009

Chair and Secretariat will send a draft report to the coordination group by the end of November 2008 for discussion at the December meeting (see below).

Meeting schedule

There should be no working group meetings in the last two weeks before any BFUG meeting (see point on reporting).

First meeting: 23 November 2007, Vienna

Second meeting: 19 September 2008, Yerevan

Third meeting: 30 January 2009, Vienna

Liaison with other action lines

Exchange of information and cooperation with the working groups on data collection, stocktaking, and global dimension as well as the coordination group on social dimension will be organised via regular e-mail correspondence and meetings with the chairs when necessary as well as through the Bologna Secretariat.

Additional remarks

Bologna Conference on student mobility
Fostering student mobility: next Steps?
Involving the stakeholders for an improved mobility inside the EHEA
Brussels, 29/30 May 2008

Conclusions and Recommendations

Florian Pecenka, Rapporteur Général

1. Introduction and context

The conference *Fostering student mobility: next Steps?* was organized by the Ministry of the French Community Belgium with support of the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research and official representatives from Croatia, Spain, the Netherlands, the European Students' Union and the Bologna network on student support. It took place at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, on 29 and 30 May 2008. The Conference was attended by about 150 delegates from government departments, higher education institutions, bodies responsible for higher education mobility, rectors' conferences, teaching staff as well as European and international inter- and non-governmental organizations.

The conference stood in the context that mobility is one of the action lines of the Bologna process, even if many obstacles remain. A first challenge that is faced by Austria and the French Community is the asymmetric mobility linked with what we call degree mobility. It consists in a large number of foreign students, generally with similar language who are entering Universities to study and after finishing their studies go back to their home country. The consequence is a massive squeezing out of national students and a serious threat to national health care systems.

One of the remaining challenges to foster mobility inside the EHEA is also the portability of grants and loans. With a few exemptions, grants and loans for students are confined only in their home country. Countries hesitate to open their student loans and grants for portability, so that students can study abroad without necessarily having studied in their home country.

On the other side, European Universities are struggling to be more attractive to foreign, but also national students. Therefore the question raised is how can Universities get more attractive on national but also on international level?

The conference was made up of plenary presentations and discussions, as well as three parallel working groups. The approach to the theme was comprehensive, ranging from fundamental and overarching aspects such as the beginning of mobility in Europe thanks to ERASMUS and its further development through the Bologna process, to the question of the impacts of Bologna on mobility such as the various types of mobility and the search for statistical data. Overall, there were four different plenary presentations, next to the introduction by the organizers, the report of the *rapporteur général*, and the three parallel working groups. The seminar was chaired by Prof. Marcel Crochet. Prof. Vincent Vanderberghe (BE, UCL and OECD), Aldrik In' T Hout (NL, Bologna Network) and Prof. Pavel Zgaga (University of Ljubljana) were working group chairs.

The present report tries to capture the essence of the presentations and discussions of the conference, rather than attempting to recapitulate or deal in detail with the individual presentations of the conference. All information about plenary sessions and working groups can be found on the homepage. The report is structured into a section consisting of the *rapporteur's* conclusions and another one containing the recommendations of the seminar.

2. Conclusions

The *first conclusion* to be drawn is perhaps an obvious one, but it needs to be stressed nonetheless: *student mobility has remained one of the main action lines of the Bologna process. Mobility in a broad sense has a high value for the European society of knowledge.* There was an agreement at this conference that mobility is part of the mission of Europe's higher education institutions. But there was also consent that *while the Bologna process has certainly pushed positively student mobility, much remains to be done.* To foster mobility, portability of grants and loans needs to be further implemented, because, it is indispensable for mobility. Mobile students' integration is an added value for host and sending institution. The advantage of the EHEA is its institutional, cultural and national diversity.

The *second conclusion* directly proceeds from the first. It says *that student mobility is a complex phenomenon and the Bologna process has brought new forms and possibilities of mobility (vertical/horizontal mobility, joint programmes, etc.) which have made even more complex our common understanding of student mobility.* Mobility has grown from a simple idea in which students go abroad to a complex issue, where social, economic, financial and cultural issues have to be considered. Mobility no only means going abroad with Erasmus or another international program, but also the possibility to decide on its own to make a full degree study abroad. Institutions and countries have to implement new tools or develop them further to satisfy demand.

Therefore, and this is the third conclusion, it is necessary *to get data and statistics on student mobility in order to get a realistic picture, to compare, to evaluate and to implement efficient policies at national and European levels.* Experts working in the field of student mobility have found out that in most of the Bologna countries there is a shortage of statistical data on student mobility. In some countries mobility data exist, but only on a general level. Before being able to act on student mobility, especially in the field of portability of grants and loans, countries need an overview of student mobility. This picture is only available through statistical data that do not exist to date.

Beside the statistical problem, the fourth conclusion addresses another issue: *When access is restricted (i.e. through numerus clausus), mobility offers the possibility to circumvent the obstacles and find new opportunities to study abroad. Such a situation, often called "bypass mobility", creates deregulations both in sending and host countries.* In recent years countries observed a significant increase in the so-called degree mobility. Such mobility is often provoked by countries with access restriction to certain studies, so that students are forced to go abroad to study where no such restrictions are in place. Departing from the actual challenges faced by the French Community of Belgium and Austria, participants at the conference noticed that such bypass mobility is more common within the EHEA than it is generally thought. It was noted, that countries seem to be quite reserved to approach this problem. Some delegates reported similar problems in their own country.

Consequently the *fifth conclusion* is that *bypass mobility should be discussed in a way to identify types of sectors/fields in which it is occurring and develop specific or universal solutions. Countries should also consider good practice and examples of application.* The causes of bypass mobility are often the linguistic proximity of two countries and in consequence public perception is a brain drain combined with a sort of mobility where a state finances with its tax money the education of another country. But the consensus also was that a general solution can't be found, each bypass mobility problem needs its own solution, if there is any solution. Discussion turned less on possible solutions to the problem, but more that a general discussion should be opened about possible negative effects or consequences for countries, if mobility increases in a way, that a state encounters serious problems to assure continuity and supply of fresh working force.

The *sixth conclusion* comes back to portability of grants and loans. *Mobility remains inaccessible for many students due to administrative, institutional and financial obstacles. While portability of grants and loans efficiently tackles the financial obstacles, very few countries have implemented or even discussed this possibility.* Discussion concentrated on the fact that grants are highly relevant to stimulate mobility and should be seen as a key element. But on the other hand it's unclear to what extent portability helped to

improve mobility. Apart from financial obstacles, there are differences between EU and non-EU countries in handling portability of grants and loans. Therefore portability of grants and loans should be included in the stocktaking process.

The seventh and last conclusion deals again with the fact, that *student mobility in the EHEA remains quite unbalanced. A limited number of countries and institutions attract most of the mobile students. Unbalanced flows of mobile students are persisting.* The Bologna process should contribute to brain circulation and not to brain drain. But another issue is how the Bologna process can attract immigrants already living in the EU. One solution could be that institutions should be more aware about the special needs of immigrants and mobile students, such as an effective student information point.

3. Recommendations

Based on the above observations and conclusions, the conference delegates adopted the following recommendations.

Recommendation I

Mobility remains a challenge within the Bologna process.

European Ministers in charge of Education should set mobility of students, staff, researchers and graduates as one of the main action lines of the new Bologna process era. Operational objectives such as portability of grants and loans should be defined more precisely. Implementation of mobility measures and policies should be defined, assessed and guaranteed through the Bologna coordination method.

Recommendation II

More and better statistical data are needed to give governments a basis for further improvements.

National governments should commit themselves to systematically collect comparable, reliable and quality data (quantitative, qualitative and good practices). These data should be compiled and analyzed at national and European level through specially-mandated bodies.

Recommendation III

Access to higher education and mobility programs should be favored.

National governments should favor access to higher education and mobility programs, together with high standards of quality. Democratization, mobility and quality are essential components of the EHEA. They will also increase the attractiveness of their national higher education systems.

Recommendation IV

Governments should further improve the financing of mobility.

National governments should implement new means of financing mobility through simple, equitable and transparent procedures. The network of experts on student support is highly appreciated. National governments should take part in the network in order to share good practices.

Recommendation V

National governments should pay further attention to mobility within the EHEA.

National governments should tackle the consequences of the unbalance of student mobility in the EHEA. Therefore, better information at institutional, national and European level on mobility programs is needed. Moreover, national governments and institutions should reinforce the organization of joint/double programs and diplomas, under transparent procedures and conditions.

Recommendation VI

A general debate on bypass mobility from governments is requested.

National governments should be aware of and recognize bypass mobility and find commonly adequate solutions. Therefore, mutual comprehensiveness and commitment for joint solutions are fundamental.

Recommendation VII

New strategies to boost attractiveness of higher education are needed.

Higher Education institutions should be encouraged to develop diverse strategies to attract diverse students groups with a special attention on challenges faced by students during their academic life.

Penalized for Being Mobile? National Pension Schemes as an Obstacle to Mobility for Researchers in the European Higher Education Area

Official Bologna-Seminar hosted by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF),

Berlin, 12-13 June 2008

Summary of Proceedings

The goals of creating a knowledge-based economy and a European Research Area (ERA) have received ever increasing attention. The EU-wide discussion on the Lisbon Agenda reveals a growing awareness of the fact that research and researchers – whether in the private sector or at publicly funded universities and research facilities – represent the heart of Europe's future competitiveness.

Improving the attractiveness of research careers and promoting mobility, not only within the ERA, but also throughout the extended European Higher Education Area (EHEA), are widely viewed as the requirements for successfully developing excellent teaching and research in Europe. The importance of mobility was emphasised by the 46 Bologna ministers in their London Communique (May 2007) as well as by the Members of the EU Competitiveness Council (Internal market, Industry and Research) in Brussels (23.11.2007). The Report of the ERA Expert Group 'Realising a single market for researchers' (2008) further stresses the importance of mobility identifying 'policy options' to ensure 'more attractive careers for researchers and to progressively eliminate the obstacles hampering their mobility' (p7).

This report identifies the relationship that exists between the attractiveness of research careers, the importance of mobility and the demand for 'researcher-friendly social security and supplementary pension systems'.

Growing awareness of these relationships and, more specifically, concerns that issues associated with pensions may hamper mobility and that mobility may generate serious problems for mobile researchers' pensions status encouraged the HRK to host an official Bologna Seminar. This seminar followed the 2007 London Conference and anticipated the 2009 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Minister Conference.

The seminar, "Penalized for Being Mobile? National Pension Schemes as an Obstacle to Mobility for Researchers in the European Higher Education Area" took place in June 2008. It was attended by 110 European experts from universities, mobility centres, national and regional governments, the European Commission and representatives of private pension schemes.

The seminar included a review of selected case studies and recent research evidence, illustrating the impact of on-going academic mobility on pensions status. A series of working groups then provided the opportunity for participants to raise concerns and discuss policy options.

This short report provides an overview of the key substantive issues discussed at the Seminar and their policy implications. Moreover discussions also focused on the process of change. It also sought to carefully contextualise this within a sound understanding of the dynamics of research careers. The report is therefore organised into three broad sections:

1. Defining the 'Problem'
2. Supporting Effective and Evidence-based Policy-Making Processes
3. Identifying Policy Options

Section 1

'Problem' Definition and 'Causation'

Effective policy-making demands a clear understanding of the phenomena in question. Many of the issues discussed relate not to the technical matters of preserving and transferring accrued pensions rights but more broadly to the nature of employment, working conditions and career development within universities.

The following section distinguishes causal factors linked to the nature of scientific employment from more 'pension specific issues'.

The Employment Context

The following 'characteristics' of research careers were identified by participants as key factors shaping engagement with supplementary pensions schemes (and investment for retirement more generally):

- The extended 'pre-employment' qualification period,

The extended 'pre-employment' qualification period, including the first degree and a Masters, delays the opportunity to engage with pensions schemes (contribute). In some countries where degrees have been shorter (such as the UK) this might delay possible contribution until the age of 21 or 22; in other countries (such as Germany or Portugal) graduates are often older. This level of diversity can be expected to diminish with the development of the Bologna Process.

- Employment Insecurity

High levels of employment insecurity, including the use of fixed-term contracts particularly on externally-funded post-doctoral positions inhibit 'voluntary' contributions. Uncertainty over future career development and whether or where researchers will secure permanent employment, generally discourages engagement with voluntary schemes.

A number of more specific dimensions to the employment status include:

- non-taxable/insurable 'student' status for doctoral researchers in some national contexts extends the 'pre-employment' qualification period for a further 3 or 4 years, delaying contributions
- the use of distinctive non-taxable/insurable 'fellowship' status especially in international and mobility post-doctoral fellowships, delays contributions⁷
- privileged 'civil service' status for established researchers providing secure pension rights and generous employer contributions, inhibits mobility.
- Low remuneration

Low remuneration in research careers, relative to careers demanding similar qualifications and experience, coupled with high living costs in research locations (especially in global cities) restricts the affordability of supplementary pensions. In such contexts pensions take a relatively low priority in comparison with such factors as accommodation, living costs and childcare.

- Mobility Patterns and Career Progression

The specific emphasis placed on mobility in career progression systems, results in on-going, repeated and often geographically diverse forms of mobility. Unlike other forms of

⁷ Participants were alerted to the fact that legislation is currently in place to promote the non-discrimination principle. These provisions could be actively promoted to prevent institutions from developing specific schemes, with limited social obligations and responsibilities, targeted at non-national researchers.

mobility (such as corporate mobility for example) researchers are primarily moving on their own initiative and with relatively low, if any support (between jobs rather than within jobs). They are usually moving as public sector employees.

- **Grant Funding**

The nature of research funding and its relationship with working conditions (contractual security and remuneration, for example) requires the involvement of all stake-holders (including research funders). In the case of externally-funded positions (typical of post-docs), it is often difficult to pin down where financial and corporate responsibility for pension provision lies (with the funders or employers).

The extent and nature of these factors (the extended 'pre-employment' qualification period, insecurity, pay, mobility patterns and funding mechanisms) reflects the quality of career progression systems and working conditions which vary significantly between countries, institutions, sectors and disciplines (field).

Pensions Specific 'Problems'

The general features of research careers in some cases prevent and in others deter membership of statutory and supplementary schemes.

The Seminar also identified more specific factors related to the operation of supplementary schemes themselves. These included:

- Marked complexity and diversity in the organisation of pensions systems (national, regional and institutional) contributing to information deficits.
- Marked and continued diversity in the predicted purchasing power of pensions (in the context of mobility)
- Declining trust in statutory and supplementary pension schemes and the predictability of returns on 'investments'
- Extensive 'vesting' periods deterring entry into and limiting the value of contributions⁸

Section 2

Supporting Effective and Evidence-based Policy-Making Processes

The question of how best to develop policy or to promote action in this area was seen as key to a successful outcome. The following issues were identified:

- **Pragmatism**

There was a consensus that, where possible, full and imaginative use should be made of using existing legal and policy mechanisms (at least at this stage) rather than 're-inventing the wheel' or engaging in more radical developments which may generate their own problems.

- **Partnership and Shared Responsibility**

A strong consensus also emerged supporting the need to fully engage with all stake-holders, agencies and individual researchers in order to ensure comprehensive and participatory policy-making.

The European Commission within its current Communication to the European Council and the European Parliament "Better careers and more mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers" (23.05.2008), proposes a partnership with the Member States. This partnership is designed to promote a number of actions that have been identified as

⁸ This was highlighted as a problem in the German context specifically but not exclusively

priorities including meeting the social security and supplementary pension needs of mobile researchers.

These efforts therefore have to be considered in this context. The partnership approach offers the opportunity for close cooperation in the framework of the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area concepts. The Communication invites Member States to adopt national action plans setting out specific objectives and activities.

Relevant stake-holders were identified as including:

- The employers of researchers (universities and research institutes)
- The funders of research contracts (research funders)
- Bodies representing researchers (social partners and the European Universities Association, for example)
- Pensions providers (in the statutory and private sectors)
- Individual researchers themselves

Shared responsibility and effective engagement with all stake-holders was also seen as essential to the promotion of joined-up thinking – both horizontally within the European Commission and National Governments and vertically to ensure dialogue between all the actors involved at these different 'levels' (European, National, Regional (Federal) Institutional).

- Evidence-based Policy

Participants were acutely aware of the risk associated with policy interventions. Full engagement of stake-holders to support effective participatory planning is one means of avoiding policy externalities ('collateral damage'), ensuring that policy delivers in the way it is intended to and meets the needs of researchers.

Effective policy-making also rests on sound evidence. This process can be significantly aided by careful research and sensitive forms of ex-ante impact assessment.

The emphasis in such research endeavours should be on assessing the views of individual researchers in order to promote individual autonomy and agency and informed decision-making (see below).

- Simplicity and Transparency

One of the biggest concerns expressed by all parties was complexity and awareness. This led to a recommendation that any policy interventions should seek to reduce complexity and support clarity and certainty.

Section 3

Policy Proposals

Using Current Initiatives and Policy Momentum as the Vehicles for Change

As noted above, there was a strong sense that it was better to utilise existing opportunities and work with current policy agenda and momentum. This reflects both a sense of pragmatism but, more importantly, a concern that many of the causal factors identified as shaping the relationship between mobility and pensions reflect more general characteristics of research careers.

Researchers are often moving between positions out of necessity rather than choice and these positions are often unattractive. On that basis a strong mainstreaming element would improve the position of all researchers, especially at early career stage and support all forms of mobility. Research institutions presently rely upon fixed-term employment contracts as a source of flexibility. It is important that in seeking to promote employment stability for researchers, a level of flexibility is maintained within the system.

Research institutions should carefully plan how they will match labour needs with short term grant funding in a way that conforms with the letter and spirit of Directive 1999/70/EC on fixed-term work. The Directive envisages that contracts of indefinite duration should be the general form of employment relationship whilst fixed-term contracts are appropriate where they respond to the needs of both employers and workers.

The Commission Communication on a European partnership for researchers flagged up the importance of attractive employment and working conditions for researchers in the EU (COM(2008)317 final).

The Researchers' Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Employment of Researchers

The Charter and Code were designed to improve the attractiveness of research careers. They are a core constituent of the European Research Area Process. As such the measures proposed constitute a vehicle to support the mainstreaming of researchers' employment rights, working conditions and career progression systems.

This policy initiative promises greatest impact in terms of the factors identified in Section 1 (pre-employment qualification period, insecurity, pay, mobility patterns and their relationship with career progression systems and funding mechanisms).

Improving the quality of employment in early career research would increase the financial autonomy of researchers and encourage them to exercise independent and informed decision-making (and to be able to afford to action it). Advances in this wider arena would reduce the need for more paternalistic or prescriptive policies or 'special' measures.

Participants were also keen to utilise the opportunities generated by the Bologna Process (and the development of the Common European Higher Education Area) to advance these more general issues and extend them to a wider group of countries.

In the longer term, participants were keen to encourage policy-makers to situate policy in the field of pensions within a wider commitment to the improvement of social security and working conditions for all researchers.

Supporting Informed Decision-Making and the Exercise of Agency

Information deficits were identified as perhaps one of the greatest problems facing researchers who move between jobs, between sectors and between countries.

Even if the quality of research careers increased the financial viability of pensions, researchers would need significantly improved information and advice to mitigate the impact of mobility on pensions and support sustainable mobility.⁹

The European Commission has called for more accurate information on the implications of moving between jobs, countries and sectors for researchers. It specifically identifies the need for more targeted information on pensions as one of the proposed priority actions:

"Commission and Member States [need] to ensure that researchers and their employers have access to readily available and targeted information on the application of EU social security rules and on the implications for supplementary pensions of transnational mobility, including through improving existing sources at EU and national level such as the EULisses website" (COM(2008)317 final: 8).

At the present time researchers suffer from a lack of accurate, reliable, co-ordinated and comprehensible information and advice. Many researchers simply do not understand the pensions situation and are unable to assess the impact of moving on their future financial status in retirement.

⁹ Better information on pensions not only promotes mobility but also, critically aids return moves.

Participants were clear that providing more information or more information providers, alone, will not solve the problem. Researchers need sound financial education to promote awareness of the importance of pensions.

One suggestion was that pension issues become part of doctoral training and/or institutional induction.

Advice on Pensions is a complex issue and derives from a range of sources including:

- Mobility Centres
- On-line, internet, advisory systems¹⁰
- Research Funding Bodies
- Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] (including a disparate range of potential source such as human resource departments; international or European offices, research units and higher degree offices)
- Pensions Providers
- Dedicated centres to support mobile researchers (such as Foundation Nationale Alfred Kastler, France)
- Where affordable, independent financial advisors.

Participants agreed on the degree of complexity and diversity and the need for improved co-ordination. However different opinions were expressed as to where the main locus of activity should be. Some argued for a strengthening of Mobility Centres to enable them to give direct advice to researchers.

This 'option' was felt by others to be of limited value, however. Mobility centres may be located some distance from institutions or personnel at these centres may lack adequate training on pensions. Furthermore, if it is recognised that pensions issues reflect more general characteristics of research careers and affect all forms of mobility (between jobs, sectors, regions and countries), then a more mainstreamed approach is required. Such an approach would place direct responsibility on the institutions responsible for the employment of researchers.

This approach runs less of a risk of marginalising the needs of geographically mobile early career researchers and encourages institutions to ensure that all their staff, irrespective of contractual status, are treated equally.

Participants felt that while many bodies within universities had a responsibility for researchers (including for example international offices or research finance offices), the 'proper' location for the provision of this kind of information and advice is within the main body of institutions' human resource function.

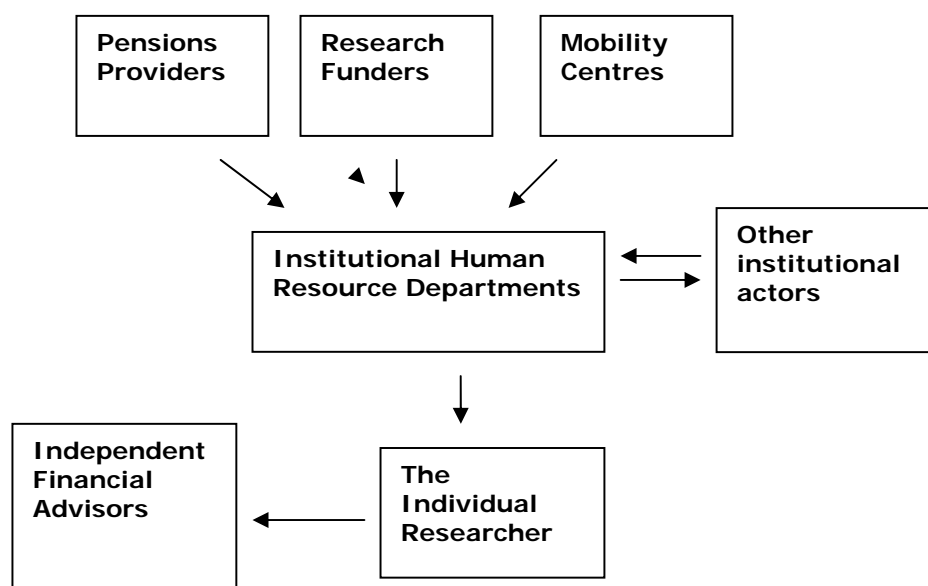
Institutional Human Resource Departments were identified as the optimal conduit for information flows and the 'natural' body to interface directly with individual researchers. They should provide carefully tailored, personal advice (as they do for most permanent academic staff). This may require additional training and the provision for dedicated staff specialised in pensions.

This does not take the pressure off other agencies. Indeed there was strong concern that Mobility Centres should be enabled to provide better information and to organise networks of experts in the relevant institutions. Pension providers should issue information packages in different languages and help to organise the training of institutional human resources experts.

A 'cascade' system was considered useful to improve the flows of information and to apportion responsibility more effectively.

¹⁰ Participants called for better use of existing structures such as ERAMore/Euraxess and EULisses website http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_security_schemes/eulisses/jetspeed/

Proposed Information Cascade



New Pensions Products?

Many participants expressed some surprise that pensions providers both in the supplementary and private sectors had not exercised greater initiative in developing more innovative and flexible pension products, tailored to the needs of an increasingly mobile knowledge economy – and the flexible labour markets associated with this.¹¹

Once again this type of initiative needs to be underpinned by sound research on consumer behaviour and career contexts.

Whilst many participants placed an emphasis on the role of private providers in this area, others expressed disappointment at the reluctance of existing supplementary pensions providers to respond to the needs of the wider population of researchers (rather than the needs of staff in traditional permanent positions).

Pensions Top-ups?

One idea shared by participants was to place a responsibility on research funders (in the main) to provide ear-marked 'top-up' support for pensions purposes only as a component of the 'compensation'¹² or 'remuneration package'.

A National Pensions Register?

Participants considered the idea of creating a tool for surveying national pension rights through a National Pension Register.

This tool could be developed for teaching and research staff as a pilot group. The register would consist of a data bank and a user friendly, internet based application that could be accessed by mobile staff with a password at any time to receive reliable information on pension rights.

11 The European Commission's Communication on Flexicurity identifies new forms of social security provision as a component of flexicurity COM(2007) 359 final adopted 27 June 2007.

12 The concept of compensation is widely used in mobile careers in the private and NGO sector to provide incentives for certain forms of mobility.

A Pan-European Pensions Scheme for Mobile Researchers?¹³

Participants discussed the concept of setting-up a European pension fund for researchers (for supplementary pensions) based on the IORP Directive of the European Council and the European Parliament of 2003. Such a fund could potentially ease the situation of mobile scientists as they would have only one institution to communicate with in regard to their occupational pensions until they reach their pension age.

The fund would coordinate different payments of pension according to the national rules and tax regulations.

There was some concern over how this might work in practice and how it would interface with existing (compulsory and/or employer subsidised schemes).

A European Commission document, for example, notes that participating in a pan European pension scheme would "require the possibility of opting out where researchers are obliged to participate in a domestic pension fund by law" (COM(2008)317 final: 7).

Further Research to support evidence-based policy-making

Participants encouraged further research placing responsibility on all stake-holders to support such work.

Once again there was concern that any research should be taken in partnership rather than in isolation.

Two specific suggestions were mooted:

1. The first was specifically concerned to design and evaluate a feasibility study to assess the potential of a pan-European pensions scheme (above).
2. The second represented a more general desire to support evidence-based policy-making through the funding of a larger cross-national study.

General Rapporteurs: Professor Louise Ackers and Dr Liz Oliver, University of Liverpool

30 September 2008

13 In the context of the elements of 'causation' discussed above (Section 1) participants questioned whether it was possible and justifiable to distinguish research careers from other forms of employment-related mobility and afford researchers 'special treatment'. In conclusion, participants felt that although research careers had special features (described above in Section 1), other mobile knowledge workers often face similar issues. It was also important to remember that researchers also work in the private sector, in industry, and care needs to be taken not to discourage this form of inter-sectoral mobility by distinguishing academic researchers.

Bologna Seminar 'Let's Go! – Where To Now?'

General and Workshop Reports

Validation Conference

Lille, France, 6-7 October 2008

- General Report -

Education International and the European Students' Union are committed to the topic of mobility, to the Bologna Process, to internationalisation of our higher education systems. Achievements have been made since we first developed the idea of a joint campaign between the two organisations, almost two years ago in a Bologna Seminar in London, as a preparation of the previous Ministerial Summit. At that seminar, we developed no less than 27 recommendations to improve and incentivise student and staff mobility. But we also realised that what we had cooked up was not very revolutionary: we knew the problems, but needed more political commitments. This is why we decided to launch the Let's Go Campaign: to move from rhetoric to action, to push for commitments at the only level where real progress can be made. National student unions and teacher unions have tried to hold their Ministers, their higher education institutions accountable for commitments that have been made. This conference, this report, is the wrap-up of that work, and wants to look ahead: WHERE TO NOW?

We have drawn five important lessons from this work, which we put before you to provoke and continue our shared ambitions.

Europe must enable more students and staff to go abroad

Since the very start of the Bologna Process, a consensus about the benefits of intra-European mobility has existed among both policy makers and stakeholders. We need to be clear on what the vision is to which we have all subscribed.

- Is it mobility within the European Union or mobility within the European Higher Education Area?
- Is it for building academic and cultural cooperation within Europe or is it patching up the gaps in funding through high fee paying students?
- Is it mobility for the upper middle class or for all?

No, it is a vision of a European Higher Education Area, in which everyone has the chance to be mobile and will benefit from an internationalisation of their education.

It can be argued that most action lines within the Bologna Process directly or indirectly contribute to student and staff mobility. The EI/ESU mobility barometer however shows that the weather is pretty calm, while the implementation of the Process should be stormy. While indirect policies to support mobility have been successfully implemented, there have been rather few direct commitments to mobility by governments and institutions. This picture is confirmed by statistics, where they are available. In terms of staff, where we have developed research, we know that the picture is not good. In terms of students in the European Higher Education Area, we can already say with certainty that more than 95 percent do not finish their degree with an academic mobility experience.

But while we keep discussing statistics and policy recommendations, the need for mobility is increasing: we urgently need to establish a true European Higher Education Area.

Europe has a shrinking youth population. By 2020, Europe will have 9 million less young people than it has currently. While the world is increasingly asking for a workforce that has an international outlook, governments are quickly losing the chance to support their citizens in this effort. If these statistics pertain, less and less people will be going abroad, seriously risking European welfare. Academically, this translates into another challenge, as complex research topics such as the problem of global warming urgently require a pluralistic, well educated and international academic community.

The idea of living together is under great pressure in the European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Process started in a time of violent inter-European conflict in 1999 with an explicit aim to increase intercultural understanding. Now, almost ten years later, we cannot say that this problem has disappeared from our European agenda.

Europe is internationalising slower than the rest of the world. We have established in the barometer that the influx of students from non-Bologna countries is increasing quicker than mobility between Bologna countries. While students and staff from non-Bologna countries are increasingly getting and taking the chance, we must ask ourselves why we don't give Europeans the same opportunity.

Can we then rhetorically ask if the Bologna Process has been a farce if so little students and staff are mobile, in line with the cynic's view on mobility? No, rather the contrary: it has been a unique and successful process for convergence of higher education policies. But we can learn that the Process doesn't move without explicit commitments.

2. European students and staff need a strong statement against academic capitalism

A clear tension exists between commercial and socio-cultural arguments for mobility. Universities have been able to make large amounts of money by attracting foreign, fee-paying students, mostly from outside the European Higher Education Area. At a time when university budgets are tighter than ever before and a financial crisis is draining public budgets, students and staff express their distress about an increase in academic capitalism. Effects of this commercialisation of higher education include a lack of attention for intra-European mobility, a lack of integration of international students and staff and an unbalanced mobility between the European Union member and non-member states. In the coming months, the Bologna Process will need to make a choice in which direction it can develop student and staff mobility. A large scale exchange within the European Higher Education Area cannot become a reality if new support schemes would be offset by higher fees, while higher education staff becomes more insecure about their employment conditions.

But the Bologna Process requires a broader paradigm for mobility than just socio-cultural exchange. Another important feature that needs to be established is that mobility and diversity must lead to an increase in the quality of the education in our classrooms. Having different views, conflicting visions leads to more discussion and understanding of the frontiers of knowledge, an attitude fundamental for good research. The level of mobility and internationalisation should therefore be established as an important indicator of the quality of our education systems. But again, this needs a strong statement against academic capitalism, which threatens to reduce international education to a ready-made microwave meal.

3. More money for mobility

Current funding schemes for student mobility are unprepared and underdeveloped for a large scale increase in numerical terms. More and higher grants that target the entire European Higher Education Area are a necessity. But if we have learned one thing from the campaign it is that it is easier to ask for money than to get it. Institutions at different levels need to be tempted to invest in an internationalisation of our systems. Higher education institutions themselves need to shift funding towards internationalisation, while making it an institutional priority. However, the implementation of the Bologna Process been unilaterally paid for by higher education institutions for far too long. Ministers,

prime-ministers, finance ministers need to match the efforts of the higher education community to increase mobility by a strong financial commitment. Equally, European institutions should further develop and expand the funding schemes they offer for mobility. The European Union high level forum on mobility provides important momentum towards this goal, although funding must equally be made available for non-EU countries.

As in the case of student mobility, incentivising staff mobility will need an expansion of current funding schemes. However, the national dimension of social security and pension systems make this problem highly complex. As these systems are a matter of social dialogue, tripartite discussions and negotiations on staff conditions need to be developed and unions need make sure that mobility is on the agenda. Equally important are however an increase of information and supplementary pension schemes for those staff who take the step to be mobile.

For both staff and students, a model of multi-level coordination of financing mechanisms at European, national and institutional level seems to be the only viable solution towards a quick and vast increase of available funding for mobility. However, we need to ask ourselves who will take the lead.

4. Where to now: A strategy for mobility

The barometer describes an interesting paradox within the Bologna Process: while all action lines which indirectly support mobility have been largely successful in their implementation, direct action can hardly be found along the European Higher Education Area.

Because of this conclusion, it seems that we are stuck with the vast complexity of mobility. All workshops and panels at this validation conference, all previous Bologna conferences, in particular the more recent ones in Brussels and Berlin, develop a broad range of needed reforms of all aspects of our education, social and immigration regulations. Making mobility work therefore requires a comprehensive and strategic approach involving key ministries, higher education institutions, staff and students. In this light, it will become highly necessary to draft a multilevel strategy that will start increasing mobility after the upcoming ministerial conference.

We would like to try to kick off the debate on such a strategy, because it will need to tackle mobility from a qualitative approach. We envisage two elements of this discussion, a charter combined with explicit goals to increase mobility.

A charter is a modern way of integrating the complexity of a problem into a shared text, which can address student and staff mobility equally. Important is that a charter is not something that is imposed by a governmental body, but rather developed by those stakeholders, institutions, students and staff, who experience problems and decide to take the lead. We believe that within the Bologna Process, students, staff and institutions have developed the authority to be able to develop such a tool.

The strategy however also needs a goal to go with a method. One of the most important strengths of the Bologna Process is its power to commit to clearly defined goals and taking stock of their progress in a systematic way. Such a strategic approach therefore needs clear goals, with clear deadlines. Twenty percent of all European students should finalise their degrees which include a substantial mobility period by 2020. Furthermore, a substantial increase in the number of mobile staff must be seen in the same timeframe.

5. Momentum for mobility needs a broadening coalition

Throughout the campaign, students and higher education staff have taken the lead to put and keep mobility on the political agenda. They have formed a normal, a natural coalition on a topic, in which they share their experiences and frustrations. We jointly recognise and congratulate the two groups in their work. The tools that have been developed, in particular the barometer and the petition have a direct political use, are unique in the Bologna Process and can have a long lasting effect if they are used in the future. In some

countries, the campaign has led to positive change and interesting new coalitions. It is clear: higher education staff and students can be stronger when they work together.

Our ideas will however not be very successful if they are not taken over by those who set the conditions of going abroad. In particular, we need to engage higher education institutions in our debate and challenge them to claim a key responsibility for mobility. In London, we said that mobility is an institutional responsibility, now we would like this to be a joint project and we invite higher education institutions to join our work on mobility in the future.

Being realistic, we also need to continue to engage and convince governments of our case. This is why we, teacher and student unions will continue our petition to make mobility a reality for all, towards the Leuven/Louvain-la Neuve ministerial conference, scheduled for April next year.

Through the campaign, EI and ESU have taken the lead in the discussion on the future of mobility; we can even say the future of the Bologna Process, which has developed towards a key motor of the internationalisation of European higher education. Money, energy and countless hours of sleep have been invested in the goal of creating a single European Higher Education Area, in which everyone is able to move. But we are not tired; we grow more enthusiastic by seeing all of you with us at this conference, by a growing momentum for our mobility. But all efforts need to be strengthened.

- Workshop Reports -

Working Group 1 - Financing Mobility

Chair: Vanja Ivošević

Contributor: Stef Beek

Rapporteur: Pedro Gonzalez Lopez

Introduction

Financing large-scale mobility probably remains one of the biggest challenges for the success of the European Higher Education Area. While the Bologna Process has facilitated some political commitments as well as exchange of expertise in this field, actions are mostly undertaken to increase the portability of already existing financing schemes, rather than develop new tools. For researchers and teachers, the inflexibility of pension arrangements have been addressed, but no real solutions have been agreed upon. For administrative staff, the problem has not been formulated in any of the Bologna communiqués, let alone a framework for solutions. A far-reaching political agreement on European financing or a multi-level financing of mobility of students and staff therefore continues to be remote, despite the desperate calls from students, staff and many experts.

Although the Bologna Process has so far not managed a European political agreement, several financial arrangements for mobility do exist. Most famous is probably the Erasmus programme, which aims to help 3 million students become mobile by 2013. Other bi- or multilateral schemes, such as the CEEPUS-programme also exist to stimulate student mobility. Moreover, several governments have recently decided to top-up these grants by making their national grants and loans system portable (as the Bologna Process requires), or even adding extra support schemes. Higher education institutions also contribute in various ways, by making available accommodation, providing several services and sometimes adding more grants. However, these schemes are not adequate and are not coordinated enough to stimulate large scale student mobility.

For staff, the available support highly depends on their form of employment and the reasons for mobility schemes. Conor Cradden (2007) describes that staff mobility can fit in either a market on socio-cultural paradigm, leading to different forms of support. There are grants, fellowships, short-term contracts or even tenured employment to go abroad. However, financial obstacles remain the biggest problem for staff to go abroad.

This working group analysed the existing financial schemes and discussed what type of policies are viable and needed to stimulate a large increase in the numbers of mobile students and staff.

Recommendations

The group concluded that there should be a multi-level approach to increasing financing for student and staff mobility. Funds should be increased on all levels. Any strategy for mobility should take all these levels into account.

- Action should be taken in congruence at the European, national and European level with precise responsibilities for each level. This recommendation is in line with the report of the EU-High Level Forum on Mobility.

Financing for mobility should be considered as a right, no matter the evaluation or qualifications of students or staff.

- Currently, many grants or fellowships are merit-based, allowing only the best students to go abroad. Not only does this policy sustain socio-economic differences, but it also prohibits a large group of students and staff to go abroad. In order to greatly increase the numbers of students and staff to go abroad, these restrictions from obtaining financial means should be removed.

A better balance should be sought between students and staff in the European Higher Education Area and the EU/EEA-area.

- Several legal provisions exist within the EU-area, linked to the principle free movement of people. Therefore, a great imbalance in treatment of EU/EEA-residents exists within the EHEA. This difference in treatment has financial aspects such as visa, work-permits, (portability of) grants/loans and tuition fees. As the Bologna area is considerable larger than the EU/EEA-area, there is also an imbalance in access to mobility schemes such as Erasmus¹⁴. Likewise, EU-grants cannot be used to travel outside the EU/EEA-area. Finally, as many South-East European countries do not have well-established loans and grants systems, portability makes little sense. Measures should be sought to improve the balanced flow of mobility.

Higher education institutions should take the responsibility to balance differences in living costs between countries and regions and provide free language courses.

- As higher education institutions operate in a local context, they are well suited to calculate local living expenses. Furthermore, by opening up or starting to provide various services in fields like accommodation, cafeteria, insurances, etcetera, higher education institutions can relatively easily make a great difference. Furthermore, as higher education institutions often have language institutes, free language courses should be provided to those who want to go abroad.

Targeted funding should become available for non-typical students and staff.

- As working group 3 has concluded, the group of students and staff who are able to go abroad is very homogeneous. In order to diversify this group, targeted support is necessary.

European level funding for teachers and administrative staff should be developed.

- As mentioned above, there is nearly no exchange programme for teachers or administrative staff. However, these groups have a profound impact on the experience of local students. Therefore, in order to internationalise higher education institutions fully, these groups need to be stimulated to go abroad as well.

The debate on tuition fees should take into account the need for more mobility.

- Increasingly, higher education institutions and governments are increasing fees for both national and international students, having a negative effect on mobility

¹⁴ Even though an 'Erasmus Mundus' scheme exists in which non-EU students participate, only a very limited amount of students from the EHEA area participate in it.

figures. Grants for mobility therefore become largely offset by higher fees and thus obsolete. Moreover, as the cost for higher education increases, it becomes a higher risk to study abroad (as many factors of studying abroad or unknown).

Income and other taxes for moving students and staff should be rationalised.

- Tax regimes are often a very hard nut to crack for both students and staff who are mobile. While tax-agreements between different countries often exist, it is hard to make sense of them on the individual level. Information should be increased and efforts should be initiated to rationalise taxes on the international level.

Working Group 2 - Mobility For Sale

Trade Agreements and the International Higher Education Marketplace

Chair: Mike Jennings

Contributor: David Robinson

Rapporteur: Inge Gielis

Introduction

Education services form a growing market for international trade. Global student mobility is increasing but is partly driven by commercial motivations. The Bologna Process increasingly attempts to compete in this market by raising the attractiveness of its education system. In this context, the participants of the workshop see worrying trends for student and staff mobility.

An important development within higher education and research in recent years has been the emergence of the international trade in education services. Higher education is today a multi-billion euro global business. The OECD estimates that the trade in higher education services amounts to around 3% of the total global trade in services. By far, the largest component of this trade in educational services is represented by students who travel to study abroad. For countries such as Australia, Canada, the New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, tuition fees collected from foreign students represent a significant share of total revenues received by higher education institutions. Europe is attempting to compete in this market by increasing its overseas promotion activities, particularly in Asia, and by raising fees for international students.

Risks of high fees for 'third-country' or international students

Countries and higher education institutions are increasing tuition fees for international students. In the Anglo-American countries, international students have become an important and even essential source of revenue. Australia in particular has aggressively marketed its higher education, mostly in Asia, and this international trade now brings in more than \$US 4 billion annually. Many European countries are now looking to follow this example. According to ESU's survey 'Bologna With Student Eyes 2007', only a few countries in Europe have not introduced or raised tuition fees for incoming international students.

The dynamic between the institution and the student is changing as a result of this rise.

- There are many risks to take into account. Students become paying customers who can 'vote with their feet'. What effect will this have on the quality of education? What if students who are willing to pay do not meet the standards to get admitted?

High fees pose a risk for equal access to mobility programmes (see also working group 3).

- Few exceptions aside, mobility is already limited to a happy few who can afford it. Posing higher fees immediately neutralises other instruments such as available grants to diversify or stimulate mobility.

The 'student market' could give foreign students a bad image.

- They are often regarded as a threat to our education systems. Attention needs to be given to the integration and well being of these students. Foreign students do not get the same treatment as domestic students.

Universities could get too dependent on international fees.

- There are several risks involved when higher education institutions become too dependent on their fees as a source of income. First of all, if the number of international students declines, it can easily lead to lay-offs. The academic integrity is at risk if the programming of higher education institutions depends on potential markets. In order to change the attractiveness of the institution, it can shift to more vocationally oriented courses, endangering the generalistic function of higher education. Smaller programmes are endangered if they do not attract enough foreign students.

Marketing campaigns have a bad effect on honest and reliable student advice

- Marketing campaigns are an increasingly used tool to attract students from overseas. As these campaigns have only one goal: to attract as many students as possible, they do not provide unbiased information and may lead to false expectations. This has a negative impact on the quality of the advice and materials that agencies for internationalisation give to foreign students and academic staff. Other tools that higher education institutions use to attract students, despite all their methodological problems and potential dangers, are rankings which promote their position.

Regulation of mobility in trade agreements

Numerous multilateral, regional and bilateral trade and investment agreements have emerged in recent years that raise new challenges for higher education policy-makers and stakeholders. For the education community, one of the most important international trade agreements, and one that has served as a template for bilateral and regional agreements, is the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Established in 1994, the GATS is a multilateral agreement that defines restrictions on a broad range of government measures that affect the trade in services, including education services. Such restrictions are legally enforceable and can be backed up by WTO-endorsed trade sanctions.

The GATS treaty recognises four modes of supply. They can also be applied to mobility.

- cross border supply: program mobility;
- consumption abroad: student mobility;
- commercial presence: institutional mobility;
- presence of natural persons: staff mobility

Several countries have made commitments in the GATS to enhance free trade, also in education. These commitments are legally binding, meaning, that when countries agree to liberalize the trade in higher education in the GATS, policies developed with respect to the mobility of students and staff will have to conform to GATS rules. Under the GATS, public regulation can be seen as a trade barrier that will have to be removed. Labour market regulations and quality assurance mechanisms could be endangered as well.

Some of the measures and regulations that would be potentially illegal include:

- conditions relating to nationality (such as the requirement in hiring procedures that preference be given to instructors who are citizens or landed immigrants);
- regulations that require a minimum number of instructors and staff to be citizens or landed immigrants;
- limits on the number of higher education providers permitted to operate;
- regulations that favour public or non-profit providers over for-profit providers;

- regulations that require foreign higher education providers to partner with local institutions;
- restrictions of student loan and student aid programs to citizens or landed immigrants; and
- restrictions of public subsidies to domestic schools or natural persons.

Recommendations

Students and staff need a statement against academic capitalism. The participants ask the ministers of education to reaffirm that they will not make any GATS-commitments at their next ministerial summit in Belgium in 2009. Mobility and cross-border education should be regulated by non-commercial regulation.

- Education and consequently, student and staff mobility, should not be seen as commodities and therefore should be excluded from the GATS. While the participants note that regulation is necessary, they do not see trade agreements as the correct framework. The Bologna Process already recognises two alternative instruments to regulate mobility. Firstly, the Lisbon Recognition Convention regulates and safeguards admittance criteria. According to the convention, access to higher education can only be granted to students who meet the corresponding level of previous education in their countries. The second instrument is formed by the OECD/UNESCO 'Guidelines For Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education'. These guidelines state that exporting education should be of the same quality as domestically provided education. The working group participants express their concern that these guidelines are not legally binding and will be overruled by trade agreements. Therefore, trade agreements continue to pose a risk to the European Higher Education Area.

The working group recommends to the members of the Bologna Process to define a clear paradigm of student and staff mobility. The working group notes that mobility should principally aim at fostering cultural diversity and exchange, academic learning and language. Moreover, the European Higher Education Area requires mobility to be balanced between East, West, North and South. Brain drain or exporting an inferior product should be avoided.

- What do we actually mean when we ask for more student and staff mobility. In whose interest is it? For what purpose? We have to define what mobility is for. It has to be made clear to what extent the Bologna Process aims to increase exchange of students and staff and to what extent it aims to sell education. When does the export of education hurt the aims of the Bologna Process?

Working Group 3 - Diversifying Mobility

Chair: Bettina Schwarzmayr

Contributor: Sjur Bergan

Rapporteur: Alma Joensen

Introduction

Although the Bologna Process aspires to create a European Higher Education Area for all students and staff, only a happy few are currently able to participate in it. Surveys on the socio-economic background of mobile students (ECOTEC 2006), confirm that mobility programmes are heavily dominated by students from high-income families. This working group was organised to discuss how student and staff mobility can be made more equitable, by stimulating more non-traditional groups to study abroad. This goal is intrinsically linked to the social dimension of the Bologna Process, an action line since the Prague Ministerial Summit in 2001. The main question to be answered is how the socio-economic background of the mobile student and staff body can better reflect the socio-economic background of the overall student and staff body.

Recommendations

The working group agreed that there should be more data available on why students engage and stay in mobility, and on the obstacles that prevent underrepresented groups from taking a study period abroad.

- The working group addressed the issue of how we can diversify the group that participates in mobility and include more students/ staff from underrepresented groups in society. We discussed the existing obstacles that prevent students and staff from underrepresented groups to participate in mobility, as well as looking at what motivates students to engage in mobility. The first conclusion of the WG was that there is data lacking on both the mobile students and those that aren't mobile. There especially needs to be done research on the underrepresented groups to further define the obstacles and their motivation.

Institutions should diversify the information they give to students and staff, by including information on the support services they provide in their institution.

- In order to diversify mobility, institutions need to keep in mind the different target groups. The measures that are being taken in order to make HEI's more equitable and accessible for underrepresented groups, vary between countries and institutions. Many institutions offer support service to students and staff with e.g. disabilities or children, and in some institutions this is also available for mobile students and staff. In order to diversify the group of people that engage in mobility, institutions need to keep in mind the different target groups, and make sure that the information on the service and support offered is there.

Governments should make special arrangements concerning visas and working permits for academics.

- People from the non-EU countries within the European Higher Education Area face extreme difficulties when it comes to mobility, due to visas that are needed in order for them to be able to access and stay in another country. Furthermore, working permits are usually not available for students and staff from non-EU countries, which adds up to the financial barriers of mobility. Governments need to take actions and make sure that visas and working permits are available for students and staff, by having different rules and special arrangements for academics.

The possibilities for a shorter or longer study periods abroad should be available.

- The fixed time frame of study periods abroad prevents many people from being able to engage in mobility, e.g. due to family or children. We need to amplify the diversity of options for students and staff, by making the time frame of study periods abroad more flexible.

Students should receive ECTS credits for engaging in mobility

- When students go abroad they often learn a new language and even take courses in the local language. Furthermore, when studying abroad, the student experiences and practices the societies cultural values. This experience should be recognised as an informal learning, and the student should be able to receive credits for her/his mobility period. This matter of recognition can be extremely motivating for students and encourage them to participate in a mobility programme.

Institutional language policies that address the balance between the local language and a widely spoken language should be established.

- The language barrier is a problem when it comes to mobility. Some institutions offer courses in English, while other institutions only offer courses in the local language, often due to national language legislation. Some students engage in mobility in order to learn a new language, and therefore wish to take courses in the local language. Other students wish to study in English or other widely spoken languages. The language barrier needs to be addressed by establishing an institutional language policy that addresses the balance between the local language

and a widely spoken language, by taking into account the needs of the mobile students and staff.

Countries should reserve a part of their mobility funds to diversify mobility.

- The working group especially discussed the financial barriers of mobility and the obstacles faced by students and staff from underrepresented groups. The barriers are not only there due to grants or loans that aren't portable, or the low amount of grants, but also due to part time jobs and working permits. Many students work with their studies for financial reasons, that are still existing when studying abroad. Students are afraid of either not receiving a part time job in the receiving country, or losing their job in their home country while taking a period abroad. Students from underrepresented groups, e.g. students with children, disabled students or students from low socio-economic backgrounds, need extra funding in order to be able to engage in mobility.

Working Group 4 – Mobility Quality

Chair: Manuel dos Santos

Contributor: Bruno Curvale

Rapporteur: Jens Vraa-Jensen

Introduction

There is a general notion that mobility increases the quality of higher education and research. An intercultural, international classroom allows for new exchanges, leading to new insights and thoughts. The 2007 "Working Group Report on Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students" stated that "Mobility also has positive consequences for the quality of higher education and the higher education institutions as well as for society as a whole". However, this notion remains under pressure by statements pointing towards mobility as 'academic tourism' or a merely personal experience.

The working group aimed at defining what the BFUG needs to do in the future in order to ensure high quality mobility, no matter if it is performed on short-term or long-term basis, to be available for all students and staff. It therefore defined quality in a broad concept, which leaves room for interpretation by the individual learner. Quality education, according to the group is an education that helps you to develop your skills; reach your personal objectives; to enter and stay in the labour market and anything that an individual might want to add.

Recommendations

A tool for mutual recognition of the professional qualifications of mobile staff should be developed.

- While recognition of programmes is regulated by the Lisbon Recognition Convention, a similar international tool for staff is not available. The working group expresses its concern that many problems in this field exist.

More attention should be given to professional development of teacher's language skills.

- The number of programmes taught in a foreign language (English) is in many systems seen as a parameter of quality, but professional development of the teacher's language skills is necessary – especially in domains where the teaching process mostly involves lectures.

It should be made more clear who is responsible for the quality in relation to mobility.

- This should include the responsibility for the creation of valid information systems and counselling services for transnational students as well as the guidance of students who would like to go abroad.

Assessing quality must always be based on the objectives of the higher education institution.

- As quality assurance plays an important role in improving mobility programmes, the objectives of higher education institutions should be taken more seriously in evaluations in order not to standardise the notion of quality education.

The social aspect of quality needs to be taken into consideration.

- Language addressing quality education tends to be technical and often reduces education to an operationalised set of rules. People are not robots, and the teaching process cannot be reduced to such basic rules. The discourse on quality education therefore needs to allow room for interpretation and innovation

Quality assurance must include students and staff and its main purpose should be development for the future - not control of the past.

High positions in rankings say little about the quality of higher education institutions.

- In particular, rankings endanger to reduce education to a set of technical indicators. Rather than facilitating honest information exchange and improving quality, they stimulate a blind competition between higher education institutions on arbitrary quality criteria.

The links between the home and hosting higher education institution should be strengthened.

- Quality can be reached if the home and host institutions have clear expectations and agreements about the type of education that is offered. Such agreements could be agreed upon in a contract.

Sufficient funding should be made available for increasing the quality of mobility

Working Group 5 - Pension Schemes And Social Benefits

Chair: Christine Roland Levy

Contributor: Peter Greisler

Rapporteur: Răzvan Bobulescu

Introduction

For staff to be able to be mobile there is a great need for improving the portability of pensions, making remuneration more predictable and securing the social and economic situation of staff. While the situation inside the European Union is far better than the one outside or between the EU and the rest of Europe, there still remains a lot to be done. Procedures need to become more efficient and better known. The problems connected to pension portability are still substantial, leading to great difficulties for staff to be mobile.

The workshop aimed at, building in particular on the Staff mobility seminar held in Berlin, further developing the proposals for how staff pensions can become portable in a near future. The workshop also aimed at exploring how the Ministries of Education can cooperate better with Ministries of Social Affairs, Labour, Interior, etc. in order for the problems with portable pensions to be solved.

Recommendations

Awareness of the specific situations of researchers should be increased, e.g. the lack of contributions to pension schemes and the lack of social benefits in the early stage of careers.

Higher education institutions are the key players along with intergovernmental and other partners. Higher education institutions should cooperate with each other to foster transparency and supply better information. They will then compete to be attractive for researchers and other academic staff, using for example attractive pension schemes.

In order to help Higher education institutions to fully play their role in providing information on pension schemes, their human resource departments should receive more training and information themselves. Therefore an information cascade is needed.

Regional or national mobility centers should be set up or developed. These centers and universities should build a network of experts.

The working group supports the idea of a partnership for researchers, including the generalisation of working contracts with obligatory contributions to pension schemes. More state funding for these schemes is however a necessity.

The working group likes the idea of a Pan European pension fund for mobile academic staff, but it is a very complex and sensitive project, so further research is needed. The group therefore supports the suggestion of the Berlin seminar (a feasibility study to assess the potential of such a pan European pension scheme, being a large evidence-based, cross-national study).