



WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL DIMENSION AND
DATA ON MOBILITY OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

BFUGB13 3a

1 September 2006

Brief update to the BFUG Board June 2006

Summary of the terms of reference of the Working Group (WG) on Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries:

- to define the concept of social dimension based on the ministerial communiqués of the Bologna Process
- to present comparable data on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries
- to present comparable data on the mobility of staff and students
- to prepare proposals as a basis for future stocktaking

The work of the WG was presented at the BFUG meeting on April 6 2006 in Vienna. A discussion also took place, mainly on the issue of the social dimension.

The first WG meeting after the BFUG meeting was held on June 14 in Vienna at the Institute for Advanced Studies. At the meeting, the discussion at the BFUG was considered and analysed. The BFUG discussion was summarised as follows: There was general support for the work of the group. There were, however, some concerns about the wide range of starting points for the social dimension across the EHEA. Some members supported prioritising the list of possible actions, while others advocated leaving the list as a 'pick list' of possible options. Some were in favour of only focussing on areas that fall within the competence of Ministers responsible for Higher Education; others recognised the potential need to go beyond that. There were calls to elaborate on the rationale for the social dimension. At the same time, there was much concern about the possible cost implications of potential recommendations. Few comments were made on how to approach the group's data collection task. There would be further discussion on the social dimension at the October BFUG. Overall, there appeared to be a view that BFUG should not suggest any commitments that might be difficult to deliver and that it might not be appropriate to apply the current stocktaking approach to the social dimension.

At the meeting on June 14 the WG discussed how to take the work further considering the BFUG discussion. There was an agreement in the group that recommendations to the ministers concerning the social dimension – to be considered by the BFUG – should not be at the level of concrete actions, but rather on a more strategic level. The same procedure might be useful regarding mobility. Possible recommendations were discussed. Concerning data collection the conventional BFUG approach to stocktaking might not be appropriate. There is a need for contextualisation of data within the country concerned. Continued contact between the BFUG and the statistical collection agencies post London was discussed. The format of the final report of the WG was also considered as well as the relation between the WG and other groups and studies. However, these and other issues raised have to be considered more thoroughly at the next WG meeting. The next meeting will take place 11-12 September in Stockholm.

The subgroup on data collection has had two meetings so far. The subgroup consists of representatives of the WG and of Eurostudent, OECD, Eurostat, Eurydice, Unesco and Switzerland.

Composition of the Working Group

After the BFUG decision on the terms of reference for the WG were decided in November 2005 the WG has expanded. The group now has a better geographical balance. The members of the WG in June 2006 are:

Austria
Bosnia Hercegovina
Croatia (new member)
France
Ireland
Luxembourg
Russia (new member)
Sweden
UK

EUA
EU – Pan European Structure
ESIB

Meeting Schedule for the WG

11 – 12 September, lunch to lunch in Stockholm

13 October, post BFUG possibly continuing on 14 October

19 December, Zagreb

2007

6 February, London