

***12 March, 9.10 – 10.30, Vienna (4 speakers)***  
***Social dimension (cf. para 16, 17 Exec Summary)***

The Bologna tools and new degree structures are likely to promote greater diversity in the student body. *Trends 2010* data show that an increasing number of European HEIs have begun to rise to the challenge of attracting and teaching a more diversified student body, and to introduce institutional policies which are more inclusive and responsive.

The data indicate, however, that there are still three groups of potential students for which about only one third of HEIs have policies in place. These are students from ethnic minorities, immigrants and students without formal qualifications who need to rely on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), but RPL is a practice found in 54% of *Trends* respondents and only 17% give full-degree equivalence.

In the majority of European countries, lifelong learning is considered as a set of activities provided outside mainstream education, in relation to which Bologna

tools such as learning outcomes and academic credits are only rarely defined or attached.

Therefore, as stated in the EUA LLL Charter, there is a clear need for European HEIs and national authorities – together – to connect policies in order to create accessible, flexible and transparent student-centred learning and to monitor and evaluate implementation continuously. This is necessary in order to ensure that all education provision is seen within a lifelong perspective and in specific national, regional, local and institutional contexts.

The importance of student services has been relatively ignored as policy priority throughout the Bologna decade even although it is central to the shift towards a student-centred approach and to a stress on student attainment.

The *Trends 2010* questionnaire data on this topic and the site-visit reports suggest that career guidance is the fastest growing area, followed by growth in psychological counselling services. This indicates that

the focus is moving, to a certain extent, from providing student guidance primarily during the pre-admission phase to improving student retention and preparing students for employment.

In conclusion,

- First, legal frameworks must ensure the institutional autonomy necessary to enable European HEIs to engage in creating strategies and provision for promoting broader and wider participation in higher education.
- Second, a student-centred approach to lifelong learning must be adequately resourced, for instance, to support the development of new teaching methods and course material that are tailored to the needs of learners and employers.
- Third, to enhance further the development and the potential success of the social dimension of the EHEA it will be vital for both national authorities and HEIs to be able to collect data on the social

background of students and their attainment.

- Fourth, in some countries, the organisation of student services is shared by a variety of bodies, thus requiring good collaboration at national, regional and local level. As their primary responsibility HEIs need to ensure that students have access to the services they need. It is also incumbent upon institutions to establish local and national links where necessary, e.g., by pooling resources with other HEIs and cooperating with national and local bodies and student organisations that have responsibilities in this area.