

Addendum to Network report

The scope of the Network is to promote the portability of grants and loans in order to facilitate greater mobility of students. Portable student support is an efficient tool to facilitate greater student mobility as it removes/reduces the economic obstacles encountered by students studying abroad.

However, one of the challenges of the Network is the diversity of the student support systems of the European countries. Within the European Higher Education Area the differences in student support ranges from countries offering no support at all or very limited support to select groups of students studying at home universities, through to countries offering grants and loans to cover tuition fees and living costs at home as well as abroad as a general opportunity to all students. Student support is offered as direct as well as indirect support. Some countries offer student support as grants and/or loans paid to the student, while other countries offer student support as special benefits or tax deductions for the parents.

Supplying the labour market in the individual Bologna countries with new knowledge, linguistic skills and intercultural competences is one of the main purposes of portable student support by the strengthening of student mobility. Student support has traditionally been an area of significant financial importance to the member countries. This has led to a certain national sensitivity regarding initiatives challenging autonomy of the member countries in matters regarding the provision of student support. These differences make it very difficult to set specific targets for the promotion of portable student support for the Network as a whole.

The Network works to promote mobility through the promotion of portable student support but also seeks to examine challenges facing countries offering/introducing portable student support.

The Network has focused on promoting best practice in the field of portability among the members and has worked to facilitate the introduction of portable student support or expansion of existing schemes by sharing experiences bilaterally as well as across the Network on the best practices of existing student support systems.

Future activities

The Chairs concurred that the Network should not focus on “protective” measures, but rather work on the promotion of positive incentives for the portability of grants and loans. During the Oslo Chair meeting of October 2011, the Chairs therefore expressed their intention to work on the following issues:

I. Country information templates

To continue the exchange of information, an update of the country information templates will be followed through on a yearly basis, namely before NESSIE’s annual meeting.

II. Quality assessment criteria

In order to analyse the quality assessment indicators set for portable loans and grants (i.e. minimum recognition requirements or examples of criteria used as a prerequisite for a student support) and to develop best practices, the Network will exchange information, different practices and experiences made by the Members in this area.

III. Student Lending Facility

The Network will continue to play an active role in the further development of the student lending facility. For this purpose the Chairs will propose to develop a position on the European Student Lending Facility within the Network.

IV. Liaison with the Social Dimension Working Group

NESSIE should develop an active liaison with the Social Dimension Working Group and take part in the development of the Social Dimension Observatory. Norway would take part in the Social Dimension Observatory, if NESSIE should be invited to do so.