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**"The social dimension of the European higher education area and world-wide competition"**

*Proposal from France for a seminar within the framework of  
the "Bologna Process" between Berlin and Bergen*

⇒ **Time :**

- ✓ End of January 2005 (Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>/ Friday 28<sup>th</sup>)
- ✓ Duration : 1,5 day

⇒ **Organization :**

French ministry of national education, higher education and research < setting up of a Steering Committee.

⇒ **Place :** Paris (La Sorbonne ).

⇒ **Expected public :**

International seminar with representatives from countries and organizations involved in the follow-up of the 'Bologna Process', representatives from national student organizations and Rectors' Conferences, representatives from other intergovernmental organizations (OECD, EIB)

⇒ **Overarching 'Bologna Process' themes :**

- ✓ Social dimension of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- ✓ Mobility
- ✓ Attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA

⇒ **Relevant section of the Berlin Communiqué :**

*'Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social inequalities both at national and at European level. Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility.*

*Ministers take into due consideration the conclusions of the European Councils in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) aimed at making Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' and calling for further action and closer cooperation in the context of the Bologna Process.*

*'Ministers agree that the attractiveness and openness of the European higher education should be reinforced. They confirm their readiness to further develop scholarship programmes for students from third countries.*

*Ministers declare that transnational exchanges in higher education should be governed on the basis of academic quality and academic values, and agree to work in all appropriate fora to that end.'*

⇒ **Brief outline of the topic of the seminar :**

The Berlin Communiqué (september 2003) refers both to the social dimension of the European Higher Education Area and to the attractiveness and competitiveness of such an area based on the EU Lisbon strategy (2000).

The seminar proposed by France in collaboration with ESIB will focus on these 2 guidelines of the 'Bologna Process' and will try to evaluate potential links between them : can they possibly coexist, are they contradictory to each other or do they depend on one another ? The seminar will have a specific focus on the promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and on its link with academic criteria of quality to be maintained and put forward in transnational exchanges.

⇒ **Working method of the seminar :**

The seminar will combine several working methods together: various presentations and debates will be developed and there will be working sessions focusing on more specific topics. A General Rapporteur will be appointed for the seminar.

⇒ **Working languages :**

French and English

⇒ **Draft programme :**

After an opening session (1<sup>st</sup> morning) presenting an overview of the central issues at stake, working groups will be set up in the afternoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> day, and a closing session (morning of day 2) will give reports from working groups, and a general report and recommendations will be adopted after a final debate.

Working groups (WG) will focus on the following issues:

✓ **WG 1 : Social dimension and attractiveness**

*How does/ could the social dimension contribute to the competitiveness of the EHEA ?*

The Berlin Communiqué states that the social dimension is of great importance and must counterbalance competitiveness ; which leads to raise the 2 following questions : are the social dimension and competitiveness antagonistic ? Doesn't the former one contribute to the latter one ? This workshop notably will address issues such as the strong actions to be promoted in order to enable a wider access to higher education and a better success of the students' population and will try to find out how these 2 aspects can constitute factors of attractiveness for the EHEA.

✓ **WG 2 : Social dimension and criteria of quality**

*The opening up of the EHEA based on academic quality and values : how can it be achieved?*

Can the EHEA's attractiveness be based on the highest academic quality and avoid any 'door-to-door canvas' phenomenon in terms of grey matter taken from third countries ? How can the social dimension be integrated into the concern for quality assurance ? This working group will notably focus on the issue of having students and researchers-to-be recruited from third countries and on its consequences (cf. 'brain drain' and 'brain gain' phenomena).

✓ **WG 3 : Social dimension and social cohesion**

*How can a greater social cohesion be achieved in the EHEA ?*

Social cohesion is put forward as an important feature of the EHEA in the 'Bologna Process' and in the general political debate in Europe ; but in the same time some trends are at work : democratization and 'massification' seem to reach their limits to-day ; and policies based on excellence might introduce and/or reinforce social inequalities. In such a context how can the States manage to curb these inequalities ? How can the different schemes of financial support to students be compatible and contribute to the mobility of students in Europe ? How can the development of disadvantaged areas in Europe be avoided and how can a greater social cohesion be achieved in the EHEA ?

✓ **WG 4 : Social dimension and institutional international policies**

*The social dimension and its impact on the international policies of higher education institutions.*

How can national incentive policies for the international opening up of higher education institutions (HEI), and notably for mobility, take the social dimension into account ? How to link a policy of international opening up and policies of equipment and student life is an issue to be raised. What are the consequences of the social dimension's taking into account by the HEI on their own international policies ?

⇒ **Expected outcomes :**

- ✓ Recommendations for the Bergen ministerial Conference
- ✓ Written report to be sent to the BFUG, organizations participating to the seminar, higher education institutions through their national Rectors' Conferences ; and to be available through Internet.