



Education International Europe

Higher Education and Research Standing Committee

Brussels 23 - 24 March 1998

Present:

Georges Vansweevelt (ACOD) Belgium
Tom Egholm (DLF) Denmark
Jens Vrad Jensen (DM) Denmark
Kari J. Pitkanen (FUURT) Finland
Anneli Meurmann-Solin (OAJ) Finland
Jean Pierre Mailles (FEN) France
Hélène Cassimatis (SNCS) France
Michel Deyme (SGEN-CFDT) France
Yves Baunay (SNES) France
Gerd Köhler (GEW) Germany
Gabor T. Szabo (FDSZ) Hungaria
Tibor Szécsényi (TDDSZ) Hungaria

Eugene Wall (IFUT) Ireland
Joseph Fenech (MUT) Malta
Manuel Pereira Dos Santos (FENPROF) Portugal
Ryszard Mosakowski (Solidarnosc) Poland
Nikolai A. Kolobashkin (ESEUR) Russia
Vladimir S. Pavlikkin (ESEUR) Russia
Anna Kubova (OZPSaV) Slovakia
Andres Predin (ESWUS) Slovenia
Pedro Boj (FETE-UGT) Spain
Malcolm Keight (AUT) United Kingdom
Paul Bennett (NATFHE) United Kingdom

ETUCE : Alain Mouchoux, General Secretary

IE: Fred van Leeuwen General Secretary, Monique Fouilhoux Coordinator

Apologies: Erika Eechkout (ACOD) Belgium, Trond Eskeland (NARW) Norway and Bert Fredriksson (SULF) Sweden

1. Preliminary remarks :

This being the first meeting of the Committee, Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary of EI opened the meeting by welcoming the participants, and transmitted the apologies of Lars Erik Klason, President of the EI/E Regional Committee, who had been retained in his country. He then reminded participants of the decisions taken within the European region by EI/E and ETUCE in order to bring about a process of restructuring and reallocation of tasks in order to achieve more coherence and to eliminate any repetition of work. The ETUCE, for its part, will be responsible for representing the interests of European members towards the European Union and EFTA institutions and for political negotiations with the same. It was therefore within the framework of the adoption of the EI/E work program that the decision was taken to create a Standing Committee for Higher Education and Research as a continuum of the committee which had previously existed within the ETUCE, but which would integrate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This Committee is consultative in nature, and is responsible for *"identifying and/or evaluating problems facing this sector and/or developing policy"*.

With regards to the Committee's work in practice, Fred van Leeuwen explained that, in order to ensure a certain level of coherence and continuity of work between the EI/E Regional Committee and the Standing Committees, the Regional Committee had decided to nominate, from within its' members, Presidents of the Standing Committees. He informed participants that Paul Bennett, member of the

EI/E Regional Committee, had been named as President of the Committee. He also explained that the administration of the committees would be undertaken by the EI Secretariat, and that the Committees would no longer have a bureau. The President will meet when necessary with members of the EI Secretariat in order to prepare and implement the various activities.

Alain Mouchoux, General Secretary of the ETUCE then provided participants with additional information, notably concerning the role of the ETUCE, particularly in the education sector. He stressed the complementary nature of the work to be undertaken between EI/E and ETUCE. He also noted that a consultative group would be established within ETUCE with the aim of:

- Developing policy with regard to the financing of higher education in the EU/EFTA countries,
- Promoting the establishment of a database on the salary and working conditions of higher education personnel in EU/EFTA countries;
- Developing a code of practice for research, including contract research ;

The ensuing discussion involved all participants and enable clarification of a number of points, notably on the respective roles of the different structures and on the role, function and competencies of this committee.

Monique Fouilhoux, EI Coordinator, then informed participants that an information pack had been prepared for them which included, among others:

- The UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Personnel, adopted at the last UNESCO General Assembly,
- The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights also adopted the last UNESCO General Assembly,
- The latest **Key indicators on Education in Europe**

She also provided some further information on the forthcoming UNESCO World Conference on higher education which will be held in Paris from 5 to 9 October. It is expected that between 30 and 40 representatives of EI member organisations will take part through the various possibilities for participation. EI will organise a preparatory meeting on 4 October and will coordinate activities throughout the conference. Information was also provided on the World Scientific Conference, to be organised by UNESCO in Budapest in 1999.

2. Adoption of the agenda :

The agenda was adopted

3. Higher Education : Action Programme

- Data Base related to pay and working conditions

On the agenda for several years now, this activity has proved difficult to implement for financial reasons. However, a resolution now appears to be in sight. Gerd Köhler (GEW) provided a certain number of detailed explanations concerning the acquisition of key basic data which would allow for comparisons to be made. It would now seem that the question of financing is about to be resolved

and that the researchers who will undertake the work are currently being identified. Prior to beginning their work, they will have to prepare a preliminary report, which could be the focus of a colloquium. The study will consider the current situation in EU member states and in the USA. It would obviously be very useful to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but this does not appear to be possible at the present time. **The committee therefore recommends that the work be brought to a successful conclusion under the guidance of the ETUCE within the framework of the work undertaken by the 'advisory panel'.**

- Regional seminars on professional development

These seminars continue to lie within the ETUCE's field of competence. Malcolm Keight (AUT) recalled that the 1st seminar had brought together representatives from Spain, Ireland and the United Kingdom in Crawley (UK) in June 1997. Alain Mouchoux indicated that the second seminar would be held in Brussels from 7 to 9 May and would bring together representatives from Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. **The committee recommends that the ETUCE continue with this program.**

- Survey on funding

This survey, launched by the ETUCE, has been widened to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Paul Bennett proceeded to give an initial analysis of the responses received, while stressing that this was not an in-depth survey and that we need to obtain more detailed information. He asked that the EI Secretariat undertake a more detailed survey into the data already published in this field by other organisations such as the World Bank, OECD and UNESCO.

Different opinions were expressed. Several participants mentioned the possibility of sending out a new, more detailed, questionnaire to all the European organisations. For other participants, reliable data already existed and we should therefore not try to enter into competition with these sources. Our energies should be concentrated on a trade union analysis of this data.

Following an in-depth discussion, **the committee recommends that EI/E undertake the research of all available data in this field and forward them to all the organisations concerned in Europe for a trade union analysis, which could then be presented to the next meeting of the Higher Education and Research Committee.**

- Casualisation

Malcolm Keight (AUT) indicated that this is becoming an increasingly worrying problem in the United Kingdom, and his organisation had therefore decided to launch a campaign on the issue. All the participants understood the link and coherence between casualisation and the previously discussed question of financing. Indeed, it is the financing crisis which had led most of the time to the increased levels of 'flexibility' in terms of personnel.

The participants proposed that this question be more widely considered by sending a questionnaire to all member organisations. A draft questionnaire was prepared, discussed and adopted. It will be sent, along with the minutes of the meeting, with a deadline for response by 15 June.

- Mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications

Alain Mouchoux recalled the contents of the European Commission's Green Paper on obstacles to mobility and the published document, approved by the ETUCE General Assembly in June 1997, which represented an initial trade union analysis on the issue. He also indicated that the Commission was currently re-discussing this issue and that pilot projects, notably on the mobility of teachers, students and researchers, were being prepared. Paul Bennett gave an analysis of the partial results of a survey conducted amongst member organisations. **The committee recommends that discussions be widened during the next meeting on the basis of a brief working document to be prepared and distributed to organisations in advance.** Gerd Köhler (GEW) will prepare material for this discussion in conjunction with the question of harmonisation.

- SOCRATES, LEONARDO and TEMPUS

Alain Mouchoux outlined the scope for application of these programs by presenting a historical overview of the evolution of the various programs. He also indicated that certain of the Central and Eastern European countries could be eligible for certain aspects of the programs. The programs are scheduled to run for four years, ending in 1999. He also reminded participants that the ETUCE had written to all member organisations concerning the implementation of SOCRATES. **The committee recommends that the ETUCE continue its work of reflection and analysis on all the European Union programs which are of interest to the higher education and research sector.**

- Diversification of Higher Education

A discussion was initiated by Paul Bennett who provided some background information based on an article he had written for an Australian publication concerning the 'Dearing Report'. What do we mean by diversification? Diversification of the training on offer? Diversification of content? Diversification of methods, target audiences? **This is an important issue which the committee recommends be put on the agenda for the next meeting.** Member organisations are invited to forward relevant information and their comments on this issue to Paul Bennett by 15 June. On the basis of the information received, the President will prepare a discussion paper on diversification and other recent trends in higher education, accompanied by proposed elements for a proactive trade union response.

- Relations with University Rectors and student's organisations

Relations with the Conference of European Rectors (CRE) and ESIB (European organisation grouping together all the national students' associations) lie within the ETUCE's field of competence. Nevertheless, the committee welcomed, thanks to the ETUCE, a representative of ESIB who gave a presentation on the organisation and its main lines of policy and thought. She stressed the fact that students often have the impression of being forgotten, particularly in terms of the participation of students within the governing bodies of higher education establishments. During the following debate, the possibility of organising a colloquium on the question of quality in higher education was mentioned.

Alain Mouchoux then outlined the current status of relations with the CRE, which are conducted in a very unequal manner. Formal, institutional relations are satisfactory, but each time there is a desire

to go a little further, obstacles appear. Each participant was asked to prepare a written report on the current status of relations with the conference of rectors at the national level for the next meeting.

4. Research : Action Programme

- 5th Framework Programme

Alain Mouchoux provided some detailed information on the development of the program. He thought that it would be possible to obtain the document adopted on first reading by the European Parliament in the coming weeks. He committed himself to informing ETUCE member organisations and the two international of the outcome of this question. All of the participants expressed their regret that the discussion on the 5th Framework Programme were being held without a prior in-depth evaluation of the 4th Framework Programme.

- 3rd seminar on research/ establishment of a research policy,(eg : code of ethics, research training, mobility of researchers...)

A report was distributed to participants. Organised by the ETUCE, the seminars had resulted in a number of ideas and proposals which it now appeared necessary to regroup in the form of a summary document to be forwarded to the ETUCE Executive Board. These ideas should also be used at the national level. **The committee recommends that the program of seminars be pursued by the ETUCE and that EI/E take contact with the ETUCE in order to implement the seminar's recommendations.**

5. Miscellaneous

Quality in education

The Committee notes the ongoing work within EIE and ETUCE on quality, and **recommends that if a colloquium on quality is organised, a specific workshop within the colloquium programme is devoted to developments which have taken place since the ETUCE Bruges colloquium on quality in higher education including :**

1. **Teacher education and educational research as means of support for quality in education as a whole;**
2. **Professional development of higher education teachers and researchers;**
3. **Evaluation or appraisal and their links to funding allocations;**
4. **Quality issues relating to school/higher education interface.**

In any case these issues will be the subject of continuing work by the standing committee

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 29 and 30 September in Luxembourg.