

Present:

Paul Bennett, NATFHE, United Kingdom,
President
Gerd Köhler, GEW, Germany
Jens Vraa-Jensen, DM, Denmark
Pedro Gonzalez, CC.OO, Spain
Joel Kuortti, FUURT, Finland
Marc Olivier, SNCS, France
Michel Deyme, SGEN-CFDT, France
Yves Baunay, SNES, France
Gabor Szabo, FDSZ, Hungary
Colum O Cleirigh, IFUT, Ireland
Daltun O Ceallaigh, IFUT, Ireland
Joseph Fenech, MUT, Malta

Sigrid Lem, NARW, Norway
Hanna Witkowska, NSZZ, Poland
Manuel Pereira Dos Santos, FENPROF,
Portugal
Malcolm Keight, AUT, United Kingdom
Vladimir Pavlikhin, ESEUR, Russia
Nikolay Kolobashkin, ESEUR, Russia
Jana Soskova, OZPSaV, Slovaquia
Graham McCulloch, Observer, Australia
Dr. Scheuerman, Observer, USA
Virginia Ann Shadwick Observer, USA
Monique Fouilhoux, EI Coordinator
Alain Mouchoux, ETUCE General Secretary

Excused: Janez Stergar (ESWUS, Slovenia) & Bert Fredriksson (SULF, Sweden)

1. The report of the meeting of the 29 & 30 September 98 was approved.
2. **Comparability/mobility and European higher education qualifications (the Sorbonne agreement)**

Discussion paper written and presented by Paul Bennett and Gerd Kohler.

Four governments initiated the Sorbonne Declaration, but many others have taken an interest in it and more than twenty have already signed it. Most of the participants thought that the Declaration represent a new stage in higher education and research policy in Europe. There were many different reactions but most of the participants insisted on the need for trade union organisations and their European leaders to have their own agenda as well as a good co-ordination on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the Declaration and its likely consequences.

It was decided that EIE would ask its member organisations to analyse the Declaration and send back their views on it. This information would enable the development of a coordinated, proactive trade union strategy at the European level. It would also be appreciated if member organisations raised the issue with their governments and informed the Secretariat of the results of their action. These results would then be communicated to other countries' organisations.

In view of the developing proposal by European governments (the Sorbonne Declaration) and globally by the World Trade organisation, which pose contradictory challenges to European higher

education. EI (Europe) should organise a round table on the higher education and research unions' agenda for the future of European higher education in 2000.

3. Pay and conditions database

Gerd Köhler reviewed the situation and indicated that studies on European Union countries had been completed by researchers and would be presented during a colloquium to be held at Kassel University in mid-April. Invitations had been sent to the trade unions of these countries.

4. EI World Conference on Higher Education

It will be held next Autumn. The location and date are still to be confirmed. The main themes of this Conference will be, among other things, research funding, union strategies, teachers' salaries and working conditions and the place of higher education and research in EI. Our organisations will be asked to perform different tasks as well as the drafting of different papers. Half a day will be dedicated to the challenges facing higher education in developing countries. Between 100 and 120 participants are expected.

5. UNESCO activities

A change took place at the head of the UNESCO Higher Education Division. Mr. M. A. Diaz retired and has been replaced, since 1 March 1999, by Mr. Seddoh, former Minister of Education in Togo.

World Conference on Science

The Conference on Science is organised jointly by UNESCO and the International Council for Science (ICSU). It is going to be held in Budapest (Hungary) from 26 June to 1 July and should gather over 1,000 participants. A draft Declaration was circulated to the organisations who were asked to send back their remarks as soon as possible. The number of invitations has been limited to two people from each organisation. Its content will be restricted since it will be limited to pure science. Social sciences and the humanities are excluded.

It was agreed that a paper be prepared focusing two basic principles: the preservation of research autonomy and its democratic nature. Current trend is the interventionism. A document will be prepared and submitted to the organisations for remarks. It is an opportunity for EI to take a position on these issues.

Follow-up of the 1997 Recommendation

Regarding the UNESCO Recommendation, member states have been requested to make a report to the Director-General at least two months before the opening of the General Conference. A letter will be soon sent to the sector organisations inviting them to get in touch with the authorities responsible for higher education matters. EI had proposed that the follow-up of the recommendation application be entrusted to CEART and that teachers' representatives be allowed to take part in it. A joint document is being prepared at UNESCO and ILO in order to be submitted to the next UNESCO Executive Council and ILO Governing Body. EI will be consulted on the document and member organisations will be asked to comment.

Follow-up of UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education

The headquarters will co-ordinate the follow-up which will essentially take place at the regional level. A restricted follow-up Committee will be set up at a global level and will be chaired by the Conference President. NGOs should be represented. Furthermore, UNESCO's Director-General will present a first report on the implementation of the Action Plan during the General Conference to be held in October/November.

6. Brief remarks from US and Australian observers

In the USA, the problems are similar to those in Europe, i.e., the repercussions of sector privatisation on quality. Although these problems are well identified, no solutions have been found yet. The Australian representative described his country's situation and indicated that there is a dual funding of higher education and research, which means that it comes both from the government and the private sector. This implies that we have to defend not only teaching quality but also collective agreements. There have been many job losses during the last five years and a consequent loss of union members. It is therefore important to ensure that our sector claims, which reflect to world-wide concerns, are reiterated during the next World Congress. Otherwise our membership will not understand.

7. The WTO and the GATT Agreement: the challenges to public education - Presentation made by Richard Langlois, economist and EI consultant

Will the new round of negotiations, to be launched by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) this autumn, affect the world of education?

On the eve of the year 2000, global public expenditure in the education sector substantially exceeds one thousand billion dollars. Some see this immense bloc as a dream potential «market» for future investments. Indeed, following the example of other large-scale public services, public education is currently being attacked by the proponents of privatisation and deregulation, who would like to see the education sector dismantled by subjecting it to the electric shocks of international competition.

This process was already begun in 1994, as can be seen in the signing by the WTO of the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS), which aimed at the liberalisation of trading in services. Since then, there has been frank and open discussion of a desire to encourage an international trading of education services, treating them as if they were simple goods. The WTO was mandated to re-launch negotiations on the trading of services and a final decision should be reached in November, following the start of the "Millennium Round", i.e. the new round of negotiations in favour of global free trade. Some Member States would probably like to go further, an attitude which is causing increasing concern to EI and its member organisations.

International trade in goods and merchandise is a relatively simple concept as it deals with the exchange of material goods. A product is transported from one country to another, where it is sold. The trade in services, because of their immaterial nature, is a far more varied phenomenon. This variety can be seen within the education sector: study abroad, education delivered by foreign teachers, distance learning between countries, creation of foreign establishments. In addition, the global trade in education services is experiencing an extremely rapid growth, encouraged notably by the accelerated development of new information technologies.

The obstacles in the path of a liberalisation of trade generally take the form of non-tariff barriers. Within the education sector, these measures often stem from government regulations such as limitations on the mobility of students, the refusal to recognise foreign establishments - including the permission to award qualifications -, measures aimed at discouraging investment abroad, conditions relating to nationality, limits on the recruitment of foreign teachers, the existence of public monopolies, the financing of national establishments, etc. It is these measures that the promoters of free trade wish to see weakened, even abolished.

With the signing of the GATS, several countries agreed, in varying degrees, to open up their education sectors to international trade. In certain cases, according to the commitments which have been undertaken, this could lead to increased pressure in favour of the privatisation of education.

At the time when Education International is launching its global campaign in favour of a quality public education for all, the renegotiation of the GATS will no doubt adopt a particular approach. On the one hand, there is a great risk that the initiatives implemented by the WTO will conflict with the principles espoused by

the supporters of public education. On the other hand, these discussions put many things of a social nature at stake: erosion of national sovereignty, the capacity of governments to maintain social and cultural protection, etc. All the necessary ingredients are present for dealing directly with those trade union organisations that operate in the public sector, including the field of education. This is an issue to be monitored closely.

8. Bert Fredriksson presentation on Research

Discussion was postponed due to the author's non-availability.

9. EI (Europe) strategy for higher education and research

An in-depth discussion was held. The majority of participants thought that EIE should develop its own agenda and include specific activities for this sector in its programme of action. In addition, several participants asked that member organisations be also invited to play a more important role in other activities since this sector may bring about a useful reflection on certain issues (for example, teacher training, continuous training...). **A draft plan of action was put forward and adopted by the majority of participants in order to be submitted to the regional Committee and the next regional Conference (see Annex).**

Furthermore, participants insisted once again on the need to overcome what certain still consider as a "duality" of structures between EIE and ETUCE. **A motion was adopted by the participants and will be submitted to the regional committee (see annex).**

10. ETUCE work

Alain Mouchoux, General Secretary of ETUCE, presented a first draft of the ETUCE Action Programme for the next two years. This programme will be discussed and proposed for adoption to the General Assembly next May. It will be, as far as possible, integrated to be complementary to the Internationals' programmes.

- **Quality**

Alain Mouchoux informed participants that the colloquium on quality initially planned for April would be postponed and would probably take place in Luxembourg.

- **Seminar on Professional Development**

This seminar which should have taken place in March was postponed. In fact, it will be changed into a Conclusions' Seminar aimed at all concerned organisations, and should take place in Strasbourg

- **Casualisation**

This trend concerns all sectors of education but particularly higher education and research establishments, even if the situation varies considerably from one country to another and beyond the European Union and it particularly affects women and young teachers. A survey covering all levels of teaching has been carried out and an interim report will be presented to the Luxembourg General Assembly. An ad hoc group was also set up and country meetings were organised. **It was decided that the answers to the questionnaire sent in by higher education and research organisations would be forwarded to the ETUCE ad hoc group.**

Alain Mouchoux also recalled that the negotiations which had been going on for several months between ETUC and European employers have succeeded and that a framework agreement on fixed-term contracts will be signed in the coming days.

- **Research - seminar, and other work.**

- * The 5th framework programme was adopted at the end of December and was made public. It is open to the six Eastern Europe countries which have started negotiations for their integration in the European Union.
- * The 4th seminar on research was held last February. It led to a debate with several experts from the GD V and GD XII. This seminar also gave the opportunity to examine in details the draft ETUCE Policy Declaration which will be presented for adoption during the next General Assembly.

- **Relations with Rectors and students' organisations.**

The relationships with ESIB, the European students' organisation are good but it was difficult to maintain a coherent follow-up due to the whole change in the leading team. New contacts will have to be established.

Concerning the Rectors' Conference, several communication problems have arisen. However, the participation of Professor Howard Newby, President of the Research Committee of the Rectors' Conferences in the European Union, in this seminar enabled the re-establishment of a dialogue.

The proposal for a future meeting linked to the seminar on professional development has been accepted. The dates will be 22 & 23 November 1999.

Annexes

Proposal for Action Plan

Produce, as a matter of urgency and in consultation with member organisations, a policy statement on the development of higher education, research and public responsibility across Europe. Such a policy should be designed to enhance co-operation between higher education institutions in order to achieve:

- Increased comparability of higher education qualifications,
- Mutual recognition of qualifications,
- Bilateral and multilateral curriculum development, and
- Increased mobility and opportunities for employment of graduates across European states

Proposal on dual structures and working arrangements

In considering proposals for the EIE Action Programme, the Committee drew attention to the difficulty of dealing adequately within the present dual (EIE and ETUCE) structures, with policy and implementation relating to, for example, comparability, mobility, casualisation, quality and partnership and asked EIE Regional Committee and ETUCE Executive Board to address this issue in 1999.