

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN**

**THE NATIONAL UNIONS OF STUDENTS IN EUROPE (ESIB)**

**AND**

**EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL (EI)**

**INTRODUCTION**

ESIB- the National Unions of Students in Europe is the umbrella organisation of 50 national unions of students from 37 countries and through these members represents over 10 million students.

Education International (EI) is the world's largest educators' federation representing 26 million members through its 319 member organisations.

In many countries ESIB member National Unions of Students work closely with EI member trade unions within the field of education and indeed are seen as natural partners campaigning on many issues of joint concern. As representative of the two main stakeholders within the higher education sphere, namely the students and the staff of the institutions, this link is important to recognise and build upon. This partnership will also look at ways in which these relationships at the national level can be strengthened through encouraging our members to develop similar partnership agreements. This is especially important at the European level where there has been little joint work and this partnership looks to build on the links that already exist at the national level to create a dynamic partnership at the European level that helps to set the higher education policy agenda.

**PARTNERS**

As partners we agree to:

- Meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual concern and once a year to have a joint meeting of the relevant representatives of our organisations.
- Invite representatives and speakers of each others organisations to seminars and meetings as appropriate.
- Investigate ways in which we can work more closely together and issues of joint concern.
- Advertise each others events and organisations to our members as appropriate.

**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREAS**

When establishing links between our two organisations, and looking to develop common campaigning strategies, it is first important to elaborate our joint areas of agreement in

higher education policy. This should come in the form of a Joint Statement between ESIB and EI on the future of higher education at the European level. This statement would be symbolic of future co-operation as well as being a lobbying and campaigning tool in itself. This joint statement would be disseminated widely amongst both our members and within the higher education more generally.

This statement would address issues such as:

- Campaigning against the threats posed by the increase in trade in educational services and intellectual property rights.
- Governments moving away from public funding of higher education, the impact that this will have on its future including the introduction of tuition fees, which both ESIB and EI restate their opposition to, as well as highlighting the benefits that higher education brings to society.
- Working for an alternative future higher education based on the principle of an accessible higher education defending academic freedom.
- Investigating the implications of brain-drain and raising awareness and campaigning against these.
- Joint work between ESIB and EI on the issues surrounding employment rights of young researchers

#### **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CO-OPERATION**

This co-operation between our two organisations has been best exemplified over the past few years through joint work at the UNESCO level through the World Conference on Higher Education which led to more work on issues such as trans-national education and GATS. This joint co-operation at the UNESCO level should be developed and it should be looked at how ESIB can work more closely with EI in this framework and within the TUAC.

EI has indicated a desire to support the work of ESIB through a financial contribution and this can be used to fund specific joint areas of work between our two organisations. This joint work can come on two levels, on the organisation support and also on the content level. On the organisation level it would be useful to have a joint meeting between the Executive Committee of ESIB and the Pan European Higher Education and Research Standing Committee of EI which could discuss joint issues of concern and further and future co-operation. In 2004 this meeting could take place towards the end of the summer break or early in the autumn to plan the work for autumn and in future could take place in January between the new Executive Committee of ESIB to help set the agenda for the coming year. Support could be in the form of supporting the production of an ESIB publication or a joint publication of common interest, which would be sent to all ESIB members and to the EI Pan European Higher Education and Research affiliates and would include a statement about the ESIB/EI co-operation and support.

The financial support at the content level could include joint projects or being partners in each others projects. A project that is currently being discussed within ESIB is on the commodification of education, particularly relating to the funding of higher education and the issue of tuition fees. This could be an initial way to build links between our organisations. Also EI Pan European Structure could consider cooperation on the

delivery at the European level , of the EI global strategies on Trade liberalisation and globalisation of higher education

## **CONCLUSION**

There are many ways in which our two organisations can come together to fight for a fairer education system for all and by developing a common strategy we are more likely to build on the strengths of our membership.

Signé à Bruxelles le 12 Juillet 2004

For ESIB

For EI

**Karin Bagge**  
General secretary

**Fred van Leeuwen**  
General Secretary