

**Address by Fred van Leeuwen**  
**EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL General Secretary**

Education International welcomes all of to what we believe will turn out to be a very important . We expect our discussions to provide further analysis of opportunities and obstacles relating to staff and students mobility , and to guide us in making another step forward in the Bologna Process. We also expect our discussions to generate ideas and strategies which you may take back home to your own organisations and institutions.

At the Bergen Ministerial Meeting in 2005, Education International's European group – to which are affiliated 138 education unions in 46 countries- was accepted as a consultative member of the Bologna Process. We think we can make a unique contribution to the work that is being carried out with regard to the European Higher Education Area. As the representative of teachers and researchers we have made every possible effort to ensure that organizations in all European regions are actively involved in the process. Some 200 participants from 33 Bologna countries are taking part of this seminar including participants from 16 Eastern European countries. We attach great importance to their involvement . The idea of 'inclusiveness' and 'meaningful involvement' of all stakeholders from a *pan*-European perspective is one that is ingrained in the process, and which EI is devoted to enhancing.

I am please to note that we have been able to mobilise the financial resources required to help meet the costs of some 40 participants, including students representatives , and to provide for simultaneous translation in French, Spanish and Russian. We can preach about the "*pan*-European perspective " about "inclusiveness" and about the " meaningful involvement of all stakeholders" yet if we do not put our money where our mouth is, some will stay behind. " Pan –European inclusiveness" is a somewhat sensitive subject which indeed will underlie all discussions during these bearing in mind that when mobility is concerned we are still far from having achieved equal opportunities for students and staff from all over Europe. EI as a global union federation is also engaged with the issues of worldwide mobility in an emerging global market place.

The mobility of students lecturers and other staff is key to higher education. For centuries mobility has helped our institutions to flourish. It has been a tradition for the older universities in Europe to attract scholars from outside their national borders. With the birth of the European Community in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, cross-border mobility within the EU countries has received an enormous boost. As for higher education, this year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EU's ERASMUS programme which, as we know, was not even the first programme of its kind. All of this to say that it came as no surprise when mobility was

listed as one of the action targets in Bologna declaration of 1999.[In the Sorbonne declaration one year earlier it had already been identified as a key factor].

Mobility is crucial to the Process in all its aspects as it gives substance to the idea of a *European* higher education area. Mobility is a tool to promote cooperation within and between disciplines across borders in Europe, to contribute to the personal and professional development of staff and students, and to create a European dimension to higher education,

Since the Bologna declaration in 1999, cross-boarder research, teaching and learning has grown enormously. Mobility has remained high on our agendas, as have related issues such as recognition of qualifications, and portability of grants and loans. Yet, aspirations relating to staff and student mobility have not yet been turned into reality except for a minority. Eight years on, we still have not achieved the "*effective exercise of free movement*" called for in the Bologna declaration. This is true for both students and staff, although most of the time discussions focus on obstacles to student mobility. I am afraid that the idea of staff mobility has been somewhat marginalized. *Why* is it the case? We need to collectively address the issues. What makes it more difficult for staff to move to and work for institutions across the border? What makes staff less mobile?

Perhaps we should first ask ourselves why we consider staff mobility *meaningful*. Why do we want people to cross borders? What's in it for the individual? And for the institutions? There are a number of issues that arise here, such as the academic and professional development and learning about good practice and about new methods of teaching and carrying out research, among others.

But then we also need to look at what makes mobility *possible* or *impossible* . Unfortunately, we must conclude that for quite a large number of colleagues, particularly from the new EU member states and from countries outside the EU, mobility remains a dream. Poor employment and social conditions, uncooperative employers or public authorities, the non-portability of grants: these are only some of the obstacles that need to be addressed, let alone the lack of a concerted pro-active policy.

In many of the national reports for the London Ministerial Meeting mention is made of the crucial role played by academia in driving mobility. So far, the Bologna process has produced a lot of policy. But, at this stage, much of the responsibility for realizing mobility plans still lies with the so-called Mobility Programmes of the EU. The national reports for the London meeting reveal remarkable differences between countries when it comes to removing obstacles to mobility. While effective measures are taken in some countries, in too many other countries little or nothing at all is happening.

We must insist that both the public authorities and the higher education institutions take responsibility for developing measures facilitating academic staff mobility. This requires extra efforts across-border between academics and institutions, but also better multilateral collaboration between European countries, both within and outside EU, where current laws and regulations sometimes slow down, hold back or hinder mobility. But we do not just want measures to be developed, taken and carried out. We want this to be done in a *responsible*

manner.

All of this needs to be done on the basis of partnership at all levels - European, national, and individual university level, and involving all players, including the representative organizations of staff and students.

In this respect, let me raise some issues that require careful consideration:

- It should be possible to receive grants for research that is undertaken outside one's home country, while avoiding the possibility of double grants, which would enhance inequality of opportunity.
- It is important to find solutions to the possible negative effects of long-term mobility including the notorious "brain drain".
- We need to consider that there are many different ways of promoting mobility, such as joint degrees, intellectual mobility, and mobility linked in terms of e-learning.
- I repeat : it is essential that both public authorities and higher education institutions take responsibility for mobility.

I suggest that during this seminar we address all of these issues. I hope that today and tomorrow we will be developing new ideas and strategies that will help us move forward on the mobility issue within the Bologna Process.

Finally, I would like to thank our partners in this seminar:

- ESIB, with whom we have collaborated closely, for all the work they have done in preparation for the seminar, and
- UCU, for being our hosts, for working together with us to organise this seminar here, at the TUC.

Thank you very much and let's make the most of our discussions