

*Dr. Per Nyborg, Council of Europe representative*

## **Realising the Potential of Mobility**

Increased mobility of students and staff is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process. Yet, as pointed out previously by the Council of Europe, the “Bologna vision” of mobility is incomplete and inconsistently articulated. In part, this has to do with inadequate consideration of objectives and means to reach them, in part with the interaction between higher education policies and other areas of public policy. It may also have to do with difficulties in reconciling pan-European goals for mobility with national goals. For student mobility this is obvious where substantial study fees may be charged from incoming students. What kind of mobility do we want to encourage, and how can it be realised?

This seminar deals with mobility of students and staff. As a Council of Europe representative, I shall remind you of the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention to student mobility. In simple language, it expresses that *each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences*. It also states that *each country shall provide adequate information enabling other countries to ascertain whether the quality of the qualifications justifies recognition*, and that *all countries shall promote the use of the Diploma Supplement*.

Unlike the Bologna Declaration, the Recognition Convention is formally binding.. We must assume that *all* member states in the future European Higher Education Area will have ratified the convention by 2010. That will give the EHEA at least one formal leg to stand on, whatever steering structure might be decided for the EHEA post 2010. The convention may also be made to cover additional themes by subsidiary texts. Why not use it more actively for the EHEA?

Although the Lisbon Recognition Convention is a formal structure and the Bologna Process is an informal one, the two operate basically the same way: Each country takes responsibility for developments within its own HE system.

There are challenges related to mobility that are not met by the Lisbon Convention or the Bologna Process. Financing mobility is one of them: There is no money in the Bologna Process itself, the money is with the EU programmes. We may have to take into account what can be achieved between the 45 “Bologna” states as compared to what can be achieved by the inner circle of EU states. Do we want to do that?

The Bologna Process relies primarily on higher education policies to reach its goal. However, it will not be possible to establish a European Higher Education Area without also considering measures from other areas of public policy.

This can be illustrated by the goal of increasing academic mobility, formulated at the same time that many European governments seek to limit immigration. It is not obvious that the simultaneous goals of increasing academic mobility and limiting immigration are compatible, nor is it obvious that governments are prepared to consider specific rules for academic mobility. Up to now, we have seen little of that.

For staff mobility, the issues of social security and pension rights are of fundamental importance. Labour laws are radically different among countries within the Area. They have an impact on higher education, for instance regarding regulations concerning hiring and firing of staff, permanent and temporary contracts. It is not easy to establish special regulations for academic staff, not even in a single country, and certainly not without an understanding with the social partners.

On this background, I would like to make some comments to the report to this conference by Conor Cradden. For the first time in the history of the Bologna Process, staff mobility is in focus. Already the opening statement in the report is an important input to the Bologna Process: The mobility of academic staff can be justified on *either* socio-cultural *or* labour market grounds. In the former case, mobility is intended to benefit the HE system in both the “sending” and “receiving” countries, in the latter case, the needs of a single institution or HE system are privileged. Up to now, no distinction has been made. I believe we have to do that.

The socio-cultural element and the market related element of the Bologna Process are not incompatible, but there is a danger that the market element may be obscured by the socio-economic considerations. Lifting obstacles may be necessary, but full deregulation may lead to brain-drain in the poorest countries.

The market-driven element is closely related to the EU Lisbon strategy *to make Europe the most dynamic and competitive economy in the world*. But this is not the Europe of 45, it is the Europe of 27. The other “Bologna” states are outsiders. Is this why we never articulated mobility in the Bologna Process? Should perhaps the Bologna Process more clearly focus on the socio-cultural elements of mobility, leaving the market-oriented elements to the EU and the Lisbon Strategy?

Cradden comes up with four categories of mobility: traditional academic exchange, early career training and experience, importing cheap academic labour, targeting the international labour market. The best way for the Bologna Process to contribute to mobility may be to focus on the exchange element in academic mobility – the two first of Cradden’s four categories – leaving the market oriented elements to the EU and others. Academic mobility and exchange should be supported by individual countries and their HE institutions, a “Bologna” mobility that could supplement the EU mobility programmes.

The “Bologna” Ministers responsible for higher education would have to come up with some money, not only nice words about mobility. I don’t believe in a “Bologna” mobility fund operated by an undefined European superstructure, but there are other ways and means: Ministers may provide funds for supporting their own outgoing students, for incoming students from poorer countries, for bilateral and multilateral exchange programmes such as for instance the Fulbright programme, for joint degree programmes, for institutional cooperation.

One condition for making the EHEA a reality is for the Bologna Follow-up Group and the Ministers to more clearly define its objectives – for mobility as for other elements in the process, such as the mobility-related global dimension. These objectives should be defined in a way that gives all participating countries the same standing, thus they should be separate from the Lisbon strategy.

There should be a dialogue between the BFUG on one hand and the Commission and the EU Presidency on the other, but this is not easy as the EU Presidency also chairs the BFUG. Perhaps the steering structure for the future European Higher Education Area should be a little more separate from the EU structure than it has been for the Bologna Process. In any case, the EU will be a central partner in the future governance of the EHEA. The Council of Europe may take the role as a spokesman for those states that Cradden has categorised as zones C and D, i.e. states not on the threshold to EU membership.

This seminar indicates that in addition to the universities and the students, also the social partners should be recognised as important players and partners – not only in the field of mobility but in HE policy in general – and be given an equal opportunity to influence the process towards the European Higher Education Area.