



WORKING GROUP ON THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION
OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

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Interim Report to BFUG Meeting; Vienna, 6-7 April 2006

Working Group on the External Dimension of the Bologna Process met at its first meeting on 8 February 2006 in Brussels. The meeting was very well attended (only two members excused) and a broad set of issues was discussed and developed. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research prepared a preliminary agenda for the meeting; during preparatory activities, Ministry also contacted Prof. Pavel Zgaga and invited him to join the Group as the rapporteur; he confirmed and attended the meeting.

At the beginning, reference was made to the Terms of Reference for the WG, decided by the BFUG meeting in Manchester in November 2005. Since the main task of the Group is to draft a strategy for the external dimension of the Bologna Process, participants of the Group analysed possible approaches. There will be three Bologna seminars on external dimension (Vatican 30 March – 1 April 2006, Athens 25 – 26 June 2006; Oslo 28 – 29 September 2006) and it is expected that they will bring best possible input to the strategy document. Prof. Zgaga presented a draft plan of work; the aim is to combine findings from all three seminars with discussions at the consecutive WG meetings, information and contributions from members and consultative members as well as analysis of his own.

Participants of the meeting discussed also their expectations; they presented activities and/or strategies for internationalisation of higher education from a perspective of their countries and/or organisations and, finally, proposed and/or made remarks on most important objectives.

After the meeting and based on these inputs and discussions *General Working Plan* was made containing timelines, key tasks and a draft structure of the Report. Members have kept active contact via e-mails and exchanged so far important information and documents to be studied until the next meeting of the WG.

Within the scope of the WG on the External Dimension the following *key issues* seem to be most important:

- In most of views expressed so far, the “external dimension” (could/should we find a new phrase?) is defined by triangle *attractiveness – competition – cooperation*. There is a complex dynamism among these three categories and potential tensions as well. The WG will focus on these aspects during its further work; understanding of these aspects is of vital importance for a sound strategy for the external dimension.

- Attractiveness of the EHEA and its competitive as well as cooperative potential would remain an abstract issue if it is not connected to *information* on the EHEA and European higher education systems; therefore, *information* is another key issue in drafting a strategy. Parallel to it, *capacity building* should be also strengthened.
- Strategy should contribute to higher attractiveness; what could be main tools and levers: a branding campaign, attractive (joint) Master programmes, broadening the scope of Erasmus Mundus programme, research opportunities, students' rights, smart immigration policy, improved recognition?
- Considerations on the external dimension of the Bologna Process bring forth strong *ethical elements* and a need for *intercultural dialogue*. The relationship between brain drain and brain gain is only one of them. On the other edge, discussions show that potential attractiveness of European higher education is linked also with history, academic traditions and values. These aspects should be incorporated in the strategy.
- A lot of *analytical work* has been done already. ACA Report on Perceptions of European Higher Education in Third Countries (sponsored by the European Commission) provides deep insights into the real processes that dominate global trends in higher education mobility; the Report is extremely important for further work of the WG.
- During last few years several *dialogues on higher education cooperation in global community* have been launched and different needs for cooperation – also within Europe – have been expressed. File rouge should be found in these dialogues, that is another important horizon of the foreseen strategy.
- It is important to know what a strategy on external dimension means from *outside of Europe*, who are our *partners outside Europe* and what should be our priorities when (world) *regions* are mentioned. Meetings and discussions with partners from outside Europe is important to understand ourselves and our motives.
- *Latin America and Caribbean* have already entered into broad and structured cooperation with the European Union; we should build upon this practice.

Many WG members will attend the Vatican seminar on 30 March – 1 April. Next WG meeting will take place in Vienna on 7 April afternoon.