



BFUG (ES) 20_14d

Education International

Update to BFUG 18-19 February 2010

1. Projects

EI is a partner on a project “Time for a New Paradigm in Education: Student Centred Learning” (T4SCL) for which ESU has received funding from the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme. The aim of the project is to increase the understanding of student centred learning among the policy makers and student representatives at both the national and European level, while opening the debate to stakeholders through sharing good practices and research. The project is encompassing numerous activities including: research (both desk research and surveys to EI and ESU’s member organisations); a student centred learning toolkit; creation of a pool of trainers; and a series of conferences.

EI is also participating on the Advisory Board of the project “The Impact of Lifelong Learning Strategies on Professional Higher Education in Europe” (FLLLEX), led by KH Leuven – Leuven University College, in partnership with EURASHE and a number of professional education institutions, ESU, Business Europe, and different VET and professional education providers associations. This project aims at identifying challenges and implications of LLL incorporation into European HEI planning to play a role in their national LLL strategy.

2. Hands up for Education! – EI’s Campaign on the Global Financial and Economic Crisis

EI prepared a specific analysis of the crisis’ effects on higher education in Europe based on the answers to the EI follow up survey on the impact of the global economic crisis on the education sector sent out in August 2009, as well as data that was submitted by higher education and research unions for the February 2010 HERSC meeting. The analysis tries to answer three main questions: what happened, what are unions doing and what does the future hold in stock?

In the Scandinavian region, investments in higher education have been announced or have already been budgeted for. In these countries, higher education and research are seen as a way out of the crisis and they adopted a recovery strategy in which the (higher) education sector has a great responsibility (i.e. Sweden, Norway). In other countries however, often those that were hit hardest in the crisis, higher education and research have fallen victim to sharp cuts in public sector expenses. Central and Eastern Europe seems to be hardest hit by the crisis, as 5 out of 7 countries surveyed in this region face budget cuts. The most dramatic case is Latvia, which has seen reductions in higher education spending of up to 49 %. Many governments have turned to help from the IMF, which has acted as a sort of a global ‘fire brigade’ against growing public deficits but this aid always arrives with the so-called ‘conditionalities’. For example in Serbia, where public sector expenses had to be cut, this means that some salary payments have been suspended and that higher education institutions are urged to make more money by charging higher tuition fees.

In general, unions report that they have been formally involved in negotiation or consultation processes with the government but not being the central decision-makers in formulating a



response to the crisis. Many unions have taken a pro-active approach and are trying to make coalitions. In some countries that have cut higher education spending, unions report that they have been ignored or even under attack. With a few exceptions, unions are quite pessimistic about the future. Unions fear that budgets will be frozen or that more reductions will follow. As a result, many unions fear that salaries and working conditions of academic staff can further deteriorate. A few are already planning actions and projects to pre-empt these measures.

EI will soon also publish a detailed survey on the effects of the crisis on education worldwide. In the same time, at the moment we are revamping the website dedicated to the campaign.

3. EI's Higher Education and Research Standing Committee (HERSC) Meeting

The EI HERSC met on 11-12 February in Brussels. The Committee members elected Jens Vraa-Jensen from Denmark as the Chairperson and Krunoslav Pisk from Croatia and Dominique Lassarre from France as the vice-Chairpersons.

Besides the ongoing matters, the main issues on the agenda were the impact of the financial and economic crisis on higher education in Europe, preparations for the Ministerial Anniversary Conference in Budapest and Vienna in March and stronger involvement of EI in quality assurance in the provision of higher education. Since its last meeting, HERSC has created two Sub-Groups on Quality Assurance and on Doctoral Education. The Sub-Groups have agreed about plans of work, including the update of the EI's Policy Paper on Quality Assurance.

The most recent developments in the European Research Area and future plans of the Commission in the field were presented by Peter van der Hijden, policy officer from Research Directorate-General of the European Commission.

The next meeting of HERSC will be held in Leuven from 14-15 October 2010.

4. EI's Work towards the 2010 Anniversary Conference

EI has prepared a report on academics' views on the Bologna Process and its implementation in the home institutions. The report will be published and presented for the Bologna Anniversary Conference in Vienna on the 12th of March 2010, along with a Declaration which will be based on the outcomes of the report and EI's policies. The Declaration will, besides an overview of our positions toward the current state of affairs in the EHEA, also present a vision for the Bologna Process 2020.

5. International Students' Platform

EI supported and attended an International student Follow-up meeting to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education held in July 2009, from the 13th to 15th January 2010 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The purpose of the meeting was to reinforce international cooperation and build a global student movement by designing a plan for further cooperation and a strategy to ensure the involvement of the student movement in the follow-up of the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education.

6. CEART and WTD

EI published its triennial report to the Joint ILO-UNESCO Expert Committee on the Application of the Recommendations on Teachers (CEART) in September 2009. EI presented its report at the 10th CEART session which took place at UNESCO in Paris from 28 September to 2 October. EI's



report was based on a study undertaken in the past years through the collaboration of its 401 member organisations, as well as a number of commissioned reports on the status of teachers in various regions. The EI report to CEART addressed key issues such as working conditions and remuneration, academic freedom, collegial governance, security of employment and tenure, and HIV/AIDS. http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/2009_EIReporttoCEART_en.pdf.

EI worked intensively with UNESCO to organise publicity material and activities for World Teachers' Day 2009. The theme for World Teachers' Day 2009 was "*Building the future: Invest in Teachers NOW*" in view of the global shortage of teachers and the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on education budgets and teachers' salaries and recruitment. EI, together with the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF issued a joint communiqué calling upon governments, communities, national and international institutions everywhere to act decisively to achieve Education for All. The joint communiqué also called for mechanisms that protect teachers and that ensure that education investments match demand at all levels of education.

7. Higher Education Caucus – EI Europe/ETUCE General Assembly, Warsaw, Poland, 23 November 2009

Main priority issues that have been discussed, along with the achievements of EI that have been presented, were concerning the Bologna Process and the EU Lisbon Strategy. Increasingly, unions are concerned about the use of the Bologna Process for other priorities, as an excuse for the governments of cutting public budgets, introducing precarious conditions of work, adoption of the privatization discourse, introduction of "numeri clausi" through restriction of access to master level studies, commercialization of higher education, the rankings etc. It was pointed out that the trade unions have the responsibility to explain to colleagues that these issues are not a comprehensive part of the Bologna Process itself and that the HERSC and its subcommittees will deal with these issues, also discussing further cooperation with the European Students' Union which can address the discontent which has been noticeably spread over Europe.

8. WTO

EI representatives attended the Seventh WTO Ministerial Meeting which took place at the WTO Headquarters in Geneva from 1-2 December 2009. The meeting brought together trade ministers from 153 countries. Unlike previous ministerial meetings where the focus was squarely on negotiations, the purpose of this meeting was to engage in a "broader evaluation of the functioning of the multilateral trading system". EI played a key role in lobbying against the further extension of GATS commitments in education as well as underlining the dangers of proposed rules on domestic regulation. Prior to the Ministerial Conference EI issued a statement to the Ministerial Conference.

9. World Intellectual Property Organisation

In 2009 EI applied for Observer Status with the World Intellectual Property Organisation. As the international organisation representing educators and researchers, EI argued that it has an intrinsic interest in the two fields of intellectual property: copyright and related rights, and industrial property (specifically patents). In its application, EI stressed that the role of educators and researchers is key in terms of their contribution to local, national, regional and international development, and that in turn; EI has the responsibility of contributing to the debate on their right to intellectual property and the protection of their work. EI stressed that is therefore uniquely placed to contribute to the work of WIPO by bringing a balanced approach to issues of



patents and copyright. In September EI's application was considered by WIPO's General Assembly, which decided to accept EI as a permanent observer member.

10. Future EI events

EI is currently preparing two important internal conferences, concerning higher education issues, coming up this year. The first one is the Conference for EI Affiliates in OECD Countries, which will take place in New York from 8-10 March 2010. The theme for this conference is *Education beyond the Crisis: Responses to New Challenges*.

Another one under preparations is the International Higher Education and Research Conference, which will take place in Vancouver, Canada on 10-12 September 2010.