



SEMINAR FOR BOLOGNA AND HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM EXPERTS:

*'The Social Dimension of Higher
Education : Building Excellence
& Equity'*

READER

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CHAPTER 1: MESSAGES FROM THE ORGANIZERS

An introduction to the Open Space method

The Higher education Reform Experts seminar in Nicosia will bring together National Experts, Professors, Students, Senior Educationalists and Policy Makers to focus on the issue of the Social Dimension. Collectively the participants bring unparalleled enthusiasm expertise, experience and authority on this topic. As well as providing background information, policy updates and thought provoking presentations, the organisers want to create a space in which everyone can discuss issues related to the topic that are of interest to them. Open Space is the way that we will do this.

The Open Space methodology provides an opportunity for all participants to contribute to understanding and managing issues related to the Social Dimension. Open Space recognises that everyone brings some expertise or experience that they can contribute to the seminar. Everyone will have an opportunity to lead a discussion, make a presentation, highlight issues and solve problems using the Open Space approach.

Open Space creates an environment where everyone can contribute. At the end of the morning on Tuesday you will be invited to raise specific questions or issues to be explored further in the afternoon session. Alternatively you may have heard something during the seminar and thought that your experience or expertise could contribute to a solution or further debate. Or you may have prepared a presentation in advance of the seminar. During the pre lunch session ideas to work with in the afternoon will be generated and during the lunch break they will be sorted into thematic groups. The aim is that in a fifteen minute session we will create a structure and format for the afternoon that addresses the questions, issues and concerns of everyone at the meeting.

In other words the organisers are sharing the responsibility to you to help ensure that you get the most from the meeting. The organisers will provide the space, the structure and the expertise in teaching and learning whilst you will be invited to bring the content. Both parties fulfilling these responsibilities will create a fruitful experience for us all.

You can find out more about Open Space here;

[http://www.openspaceworld.org/tmnfiles/choosingopenspace\(Bolton\).html](http://www.openspaceworld.org/tmnfiles/choosingopenspace(Bolton).html)

Social Dimension: What do we mean by it?

The social dimension of the envisaged European Higher Education Area aims at: **equality of opportunities in higher education**, in terms of: access, participation and successful completion of studies; studying and living conditions; guidance and counselling; financial support, and student participation in higher education governance. This implies also equal opportunities in mobility, when it comes to portability of financial support, removing barriers, and providing incentives.

Both enhance the quality, attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area.

Food for thought

The questions below have been developed by the Social dimension Working Group (set up after the Bergen ministerial meeting) back in 2007. We believe these topics of debate are still relevant and we would like to invite the Nicosia participants to reflect upon them prior to attending:

'In time for the next ministerial meeting in 2009 the WG suggests that the countries should report to the BFUG on their national strategies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to show their impact. All stakeholders concerned should actively participate in and support this work at the national level. The countries should use the overall objective as a starting point for their work and formulate a strategy in line with national priorities:

We strive for the societal goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We therefore pledge to take action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity. The development of a strategy should be followed by a national action plan that includes monitoring mechanisms. Ideally, the strategy and action plan will be based on a national debate on the social dimension and the future priorities of that country depending on the current situation. In order to facilitate a national debate on the social dimension the WG proposes the following structure and topics for such a debate:

- **Measures to promote equal opportunities**

What obstacles are there to equal opportunities within higher education?

What protection is there if a student is discriminated when applying for, being admitted to or carrying out studies? Is there a framework for appeal?

What action would be the most effective to achieve equal opportunities in higher education?

- **Measures to widen access to and participation in higher education for underrepresented groups (gender, ethnic origin, immigration, socio-economic status and background, disability, geography etc.)**

What groups are under represented in your national higher education system today? Is there data to show access to higher education by gender, socio-economic background, disabilities, prior immigration, region etc?

What obstacles to widened access and participation are there within your higher education system? At other education levels?

What actions would be appropriate for the different groups to achieve widened access? Are targeted outreach activities needed?

- **Study environment that enhances the quality of the student experience**

A, Provision of academic services

B, Provision of social services

What kind of academic or career guidance is provided for the students in your country? What is the student – staff ratio?

Are there retention measures adapted to different groups or individuals with different needs? Is the academic success of student tracked? What would be/has proven to be the most efficient retention measures?

What kind of study environment is there at the higher education institutions? Do student have access to information, electronically or by other means? What is the condition of libraries, lecture halls and seminar rooms?

How do students in your country live? Is housing available, of acceptable standard and affordable?

Is targeted support provided or needed for specific student groups?

Is counselling available if students run in to personal difficulties?

• Measures to increase formal and actual student influence on and participation in higher education governance and other higher education issues

Are there formal provisions for student influence and participation at all governance levels, in consultative as well as decision-making bodies?

Are there formal provisions for student evaluation of the education? Are the formal regulations followed-up with actual practices?

Are there informal ways of student influence and participation as well? Do students have an influence on all issues related to higher education?

Are students aware of their rights? Do students have organisations that can organise elections to fill elective posts? Is it possible to find enough candidates to fill the posts available? If not – how could this be improved?

• Finances in order to start and complete studies

What kind of information and guidance is provided for students regarding financial issues?

How does the average student make his or her living during studies? What kind of state support is provided? Is it appropriate for all groups and individuals?

Do certain groups run the risk of being excluded from, or not able to finish their studies, due to financial reasons? Which are these groups or individuals? What could be done to help them?

Are students informed about possible employment possibilities after finishing their studies? How is the labour-market relevance of the studies secured? Are former graduates tracked to follow-up their employment rates?

• Monitoring: The participating countries should establish national measures to monitor and evaluate the impact of the national strategy and action plan.

What monitoring mechanisms would be the most appropriate?

How could success in strengthening the social dimension be measured short-term and long-term? What quantitative and qualitative data are needed?

How is the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation allocated and divided?

*Are there student surveys carried out to measure the impact of a social dimension strategy?
How can student surveys be used in this work?*

- **Stakeholder involvement**

Which stakeholders should be involved in the development of a strategy and an action plan?

What should be the responsibility of the different stakeholders when carrying out the agreed strategy and plan?'

(Key issues for the European Higher Education Area – Social Dimension and Mobility
Annex 2 'Suggested approach of the work on national strategies on the Social Dimension'
Working group for Social Dimension, May 2007)

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE

Counteracting Social Exclusion - A Role for Higher Education?

Michael Cooper,
European Access Network

HEIs have many different roles to play, creating new knowledge and providing society with the competencies that are needed being perhaps the ones that first come to mind. However, to my mind, one of the most important tasks these institutions have is to provide opportunities for individuals to realise their potential. Naturally, HEIs maintain that is what they do but I would claim that this is only partly true. Even in the so-called developed countries, there are many members of society who, for one reason or another, are excluded from higher education. It may be for reasons of ethnicity, sex, age, or social or geographical conditions. Many of these individuals are excluded not only from higher education but even from society as a whole. My argument is not that every individual should receive higher education but that everybody should have the opportunity. There is a great deal that HEIs can do to improve the situation and I believe there is a major role for you as Bologna and Tempus experts to play in advising institutions on methods and procedures designed to smooth the pathway into, through and out of higher education.

If HEIs are to make a real contribution to counteracting social exclusion, then a great deal has to change. In the first instance, it is a matter of attitudes and mindsets within the institutions themselves. It is my considered opinion that widening access to higher education enhances the quality of the education in at least three major ways: intellectually – through the diversity of ideas coming from a diverse student body; morally – through the concept of an egalitarian society; and pragmatically – in that widening access is good for business.

There are, however, many within academia who maintain that widening access leads to a reduction in the quality of the education in that it means alternative admission requirements, lower entry standards, more academic support and longer study periods. The result is, they claim, that there is a perception of an erosion of quality, with negative effects on reputation and lower ranking, which means that the institution attracts fewer students and thus loses income.

This argument relies on how you define quality. Quality is always relative to something, it is measured against a norm. It involves standards either perceived or imagined. If you believe that widening access leads to lower quality because it results in lower ranking, then you are arguing that quality is ranking and that reputation is a stand-in for excellence.

Once an institution has concluded that widening participation is in fact advantageous then the next stage is to determine how to proceed in attracting a wider range of potential students. There are three main aspects to this, which for simplicity's sake we may term: in, through and out, in other words, information and admission, retention and completion leading to employment.

It is of importance that the institution develops and maintains a proactive approach to the community, interacting with young people while they are still in school (even in primary school), determining what type of education various groups in the community need, devising means of evaluating prior learning, both traditional and experiential, and perhaps first and foremost developing an appropriate language to facilitate communication. There are many examples of what may be achieved: developing programmes for young children, encouraging current students

to go out into the community to mentor schoolchildren, providing relevant training for immigrant groups etc.

Once students are admitted to the institution, it is essential that the right services are available to ensure that they are completed their programme satisfactorily within a reasonable period of time. A wide range of services are required from social support with regard to housing, finances and possible psychological needs to academic support including advice and help with course work, language support etc. However, it is not sufficient merely to provide support services for students, it is essential that the institution critically examines its teaching and examining methods and adopts a flexible approach, selecting methods appropriate to the students' needs. These methods may differ considerable but they should all be student-centred. One particular method that may well be appropriate for some groups of non-traditional students is work-integrated learning. To be able to provide these social and academic services, it is important that the staff of the institution, both academic and administrative, receive the necessary training. This is particularly vital when the institution is catering for students coming from another culture.

The third stage in the process is assisting students to find employment. This not only entails providing an education that will lead to employability but also aiding the students in concretely accessing the labour market. Careers guidance, work placements, cooperation with employers and labour markets days within the institution are some of the means that may be employed.

My point is then that it is the mission of HEIs to provide all members of society with an **opportunity** to complete an **appropriate** and **relevant** course of study.

In preparation for our discussions, I would suggest that **you give consideration to the following two issues in particular:**

- 1. What measures do institutions in your country take to counteract social exclusion and to implement the social dimension?*
- 2. What role do you believe that you as Bologna and Tempus experts can play in facilitating these processes?*

CHAPTER 3: CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE SEMINAR KEYNOTES

The challenges of strengthening inclusive and responsive universities

Michael Hörig,
Programme Manager, European University Association

The higher education landscape in Europe has changed considerably in the last decade. Not only did the Bologna Process introduce a new degree structure and matching supporting tools, the overall context has changed as well, with a significant increase in both student numbers and higher education institutions.

At the EUA Autumn Conference on “Inclusive and responsive universities” that took place in Rotterdam on 23-25 October 2008, EUA members from all over Europe adopted the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning.¹ The purpose of this Charter - written in the form of commitments from universities in addressing the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, with a set of matching commitments for government and regional partners to make - is to assist Europe’s universities in developing their specific role as lifelong learning institutions forming a central pillar of the Europe of Knowledge.

Universities seem to be increasingly aware of the need to strengthen their lifelong learning (LLL) strategies. The EUA project ‘Shaping Inclusive and Responsive University Strategies (SIRUS)’ therefore seeks to support universities in developing LLL strategies and thus implementing the commitments made in the Charter. The underlying assumption is that many universities already contribute substantially to lifelong learning (LLL), but that these approaches are confined by national legal frameworks and financial provisions, and are often not guided by institutional strategies for LLL.

This presentation will reflect upon the general policy context regarding the role of universities in lifelong learning, present the commitments made in the European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning and elaborate on the progress of the SIRUS project.

Looking for data, strategies and exemplary practices to improve equity in higher education

Dominique Orr,
Eurostudent

¹http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/European_Universities_Charter_on_Lifelong_learning.pdf

The task of assuring fair and equitable higher education within the EHEA was perhaps most clearly formulated in the London Communiqué from 2007. Here it states: “We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.” (Para 2.18) In this short contribution, I shall introduce the objectives of the Bologna Working Group on the Social Dimension and how we are attempting to find the relevant information in order to facilitate progress in this important area of higher education development.

Start-Up for Life.

Education for Entrepreneurship as a key for Social Mobility among marginalized populations. The Israeli Case-Study.

Miri Yemini,

Director of Entrepreneurship & Innovation Centre at Shamoon College of Engineering (SCE)

The Entrepreneurship Center at SCE advances the scholarly endeavor by promoting an environment that fosters creativity, innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship.

This lecture discusses a novel approach taken by the largest engineering college in Israel - Shamoon College of Engineering (SCE) - to enhance its students' entrepreneurial intentions and activities. Engineer-Entrepreneur Program will be discussed in detail and the contribution of various program modules (the college, students, community, industry and the next generation involvement) to the total entrepreneurial approach of engineering in institutions of higher education will be clarified.

Special attention will be spotted to the approach of using entrepreneurship as a main tool to promote social mobility among socially excluded population. The program has been extremely well received both at the college and beyond, with the government granting it massive support. We found that the entrepreneurial intentions of the students participating in the program were enhanced compare to students who didn't participate in the program. Moreover, we found positive effect of the program on the general grades' average and self-esteem perceptions of the participating students. Despite its uniqueness, the program is applicable in any academic institute, especially in areas with features similar to Israel's.

CHAPTER 4: SELECTION OF DOCUMENTS, ARTICLES and RECENT CONFERENCES

Framework of the Social Dimension in the Bologna Process

With the [London Communiqué](#) of May 2007, Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process confirmed the relevance of the social dimension:

"Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society.

We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity."

The social dimension has been an integral part of the Bologna Process since the first ministerial follow-up meeting in Prague in 2001. The social dimension was included in the Prague Communiqué at the suggestion of the student representatives. In subsequent communiqués the social dimension has been recognized as crucial for the success of the European Higher Education Area.

With the 2005 Bergen Communiqué, Ministers declared the social dimension an integral part of the Process of creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA):

"The social dimension of the Bologna Process is a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. We therefore renew our commitment to making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. The social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access."

Given that considerable differences exist in relation to the social dimension of higher education between the countries participating in the process of creating the European Higher Education Area, it was not considered appropriate to narrowly define the social dimension or to suggest a number of detailed actions for all countries to implement.

Instead, the 2005-2007 social dimension working group, which had been set up after the Bergen ministerial meeting, **recommended that each country develops its own strategy, including an action plan, for the social dimension.** To help countries with devising national strategies on the social dimension and to facilitate the necessary national debates, the working group proposed a structure and topics for such a debate (see Annex 2 of the 2007 working group report 'Key issues for the European Higher Education Area – Social Dimension and Mobility' on 'Background documents' on the Nicosia Seminar website: <http://nicosia2010.bolognaexperts.net/>).

Widening access and participation to European higher education

Efstathios Michael, Chair of the Social Dimension Coordination Group (2007 - 2009) first Working Group on Social Dimension.

Published in 'Bologna 1999-2010: Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives' (presented at the Bologna Ministerial Anniversary 2010, Austria, Hungary).

The concept of the 'social dimension' in the Bologna Process has been appearing in ministerial communiqués since 2001. However, only in 2007 did the European Ministers agree on a common definition for the objective of the social dimension, as proposed by the working group led by Sweden:

"We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations."

The first working group on social dimension (2005–2007) recommended this broad approach given the "considerable differences and challenges in relation to the social dimension of higher education between the participating countries". The Ministers further agreed to report on their "national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness". Therefore it called upon each country to develop a strategy, including national action plans, to ensure a country specific approach. Furthermore, it was recommended to work towards comparable and reliable data on the social dimension.

The national strategies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures illustrating their impact were presented to the Ministers in 2009. These national reports showed a great variety in national policies regarding the social dimension and bridging the differences between the Bologna countries was deemed quite difficult. Most countries have taken some action in order to enhance participative equity, but only a few have set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on this issue. Even fewer have made efforts to create an integrated strategy by considering synergies between government actions and institutional practices, funding arrangements, lifelong learning strategies, recognition of prior learning, cultural and linguistic minority issues, student guidance and counselling services, communication policy, social policy, anti-discrimination protection, tax system etc.

During the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, the Ministers identified the social dimension as a key issue regarding priorities for the decade to come. They agreed upon the goal that:

"Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade. For the first time, it was also noted that efforts to achieve equity in higher

education should be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system.” There still seems to be a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in, and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity of our populations.

In order to achieve the ministerial aspirations set out in 2007 and 2009, and given the differences between the Bologna countries, national level initiatives have to be supported at the European level by the sharing of good practices on the one hand and the development of comparable and reliable social dimension data on the other hand. It is only through political commitment in combination with the tools for measuring and comparing achievements that progress can be reached.

National Strategies: Ireland

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008–2013 of Ireland is one example where progress has been achieved.

In its report on the social dimension of the Bologna Process Ireland states that “Ireland has achieved an unprecedented expansion in educational opportunities over the last four decades and has now reached entry rates to higher education in excess of 55 per cent. Assessment of future skills needs in the National Skills Strategy predict that entry rates to higher education should reach 72 per cent by 2020.

The overarching single goal of the Widening Access strand is to develop initiatives to underpin the concept of lifelong learning and to improve access rates to third level from designated under-represented groups, in order to achieve the envisaged rates of participation in higher education”.

Students with special needs

In Hungary, students with special needs are awarded additional points in the competition for admission to higher education.

HEIs also receive supplementary funding for each student with a disability they admit. This funding has to be used for special equipment and services for these students.

In Sweden HEIs have to spend a minimum proportion of government funding on disabled students. In Norway all HEIs are required to have action plans to ensure equal access for students with a disability.

Other countries reserve a specific number of places for candidates with a disability. Several countries have taken legislative initiatives to approve laws forbidding any discrimination of persons with a disability.

Several countries offer special learning assistance for disabled students, and make special examination provisions. Some countries, like e.g. the Netherlands, support a national Expertise Centre, which offers advice to students and higher education institutions on specific issues and practical problems.

Measures 4 underrepresented groups

Examples of these are the Office of Fair Access in the United Kingdom, the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland and the Wider Access Regional Fora in Scotland. These agencies approve and monitor agreements in which individual institutions set out the measures they will put in place to safeguard fair access to higher education for low income and other under-represented groups. They also encourage flexible delivery opportunities. Similar individual access plans, formulating measurable objectives on widening participation in higher education, also exist in Sweden.

Who gets a degree? Access to tertiary education in Europe 1950 – 2009.

Education Policy Centre at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague (Jan Koucký, Aleš Bartušek and Jan Kovařovic)

Although limited by the data available, the study can still contribute to the understanding of two central problems: how the inequalities have changed in twenty-five European countries during the last sixty years, that is during the period of an unprecedented expansion of tertiary education, and what has been the relative weight of four main factors of socio-economic background – of the education and occupation of both parents.

Below the reader will find the study's preface. The full document can be downloaded from the Nicosia Seminar website, under 'Background documents': <http://nicosia2010.bolognaexperts.net>

PREFACE

The study *Who gets a degree? Access to tertiary education in Europe 1950–2009* (both in Czech and English) is the output of the fourth stage of the project Inequality in Access to Higher and Tertiary Education in the Czech Republic and other European countries, carried out since 2007 by the Education Policy Centre (EPC) at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague and supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.

The objective of the *first stage* of the project in 2007 was to find out whether, to what extent and how it is possible to use databases of the first two rounds of the European Social Survey conducted in 2002/2003 (ESS-1) and 2004/2005 (ESS-2) for the purpose of examining and analysing the degree of inequality in access to tertiary education in the Czech Republic and other European countries. Another aim was to develop, on the basis of analyses of the combined set of data from the first two ESS rounds, indicators and a model (models) of inter-generational transmission of inequalities in access to tertiary education, and to interpret the outcomes. Finally, the third objective was to propose implementation of the project in the following stages.

The output of the first stage of the project was an analytical study *Inequality and Access to Tertiary Education: European Countries 1950–2005*, published as an EPC working paper in 2007. The study contained a definition of basic theoretical and conceptual contexts, a proposal for methodological approaches and the actual analysis of 22 European countries (the analysed overall set of data included 72 694 respondents). The study was developed in both Czech and English versions to be used as part of the OECD project *Tertiary Education Review*; in the final report (OECD 2008) the outcomes of the study were indeed used and quoted. The English version of the study was sent to some thirty international experts for comments. The comments received were used by the authors during the second stage of project implementation.

The objective of the *second stage* of the project in 2008 was to develop a more extensive comparative analysis of inequality in access to tertiary education in 23 European countries. In order to achieve it, authors were building on the theoretical basis prepared, tested and commented upon during the first stage as well as, and most importantly, the methodological approach which, however, had to be both upgraded and updated on the basis of the comments and other innovation proposed. The empirical data from the ESS database were expanded to include the relevant data from the third stage of ESS-3 of 2006/2007 and complemented by data from a special Czech national survey conducted at the turn of 2007/2008. The new data made it

possible not only to update but also to expand considerably the analysed sets of respondents in most European countries (the analysed set of data included 115 695 respondents), which, understandably, brought a number of major benefits.

The main output of the second stage of the project was the analytical study ***Who Is More Equal? Access to Tertiary Education in Europe***, published by the EPC in 2009. The study was first presented during a major UNESCO conference “Forum on Higher Education: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness” in Bucharest in May 2009. It was also presented at some events organised by the Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2009 (for example at the meeting of Directors General for Higher Education and Presidents of Rectors’ Conferences, at the meeting of the Standing Group for Indicators and Benchmarks of the European Commission, or at the meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group). Because the EPC is participating in a European project EQUALSOC, the study was discussed at the Tallinn workshop, and made available on the EQUALSOC website.

The aim of the ***third stage*** of the project in 2009 was to develop a Czech national study (only in Czech) that would describe and explain in more detail the situation and development trends as regards access to tertiary education in the Czech Republic. The study drew on the Czech data from ESS and, most importantly, from the aforementioned special Czech national survey of 2007/2008. The Czech national study, of course, made use of the analytical procedures already developed and the available results of comparisons with other European countries. Moreover, it showed other conceptual, methodological and empirical approaches and new directions in analysing access to tertiary education.

The project has continued in 2010 by the ***fourth stage*** introducing several major developments. The EPC has made use of the comments to the previous studies, and has used new data from the fourth stage of ESS-4 of 2008/2009. These data, again, has made it possible to update and further expand the database, to extend the sets of respondents and also to increase the number of countries included in the study. The analysed set of data created by combining national sets for 25 European countries includes a total of 160 685 respondents. The size the individual country sets normally ranges from 4 to 8 thousand respondents. The study ***Who gets a degree? Access to tertiary education in Europe 1950–2009*** that is now presented is the output of the fourth stage of the project. The study is for the first time presented at the international conference “The Social Dimension and Responsibility of Universities” organised by the Spanish presidency of the EU in Malaga, May 2010, and at the final conference concluding the project EQUALSOC in Amsterdam, June 2010.

The project will continue in 2010/2011 by the ***fifth stage***. Its most important contribution will be in changing the focus, and not limiting it only on access to, and outcomes of, tertiary education. Instead new analyses will try to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationships between family background, access to education, the position of graduates on the labour market and their social status that is they will include also effects of tertiary education. The fifth stage of the project will be completed by an extensive comparative study the working title of which is ***Tertiary Education Between Origin and Destination***.

About the study. The initial chapter places the study within a broader context. The first part of this chapter explains what economic, political and social reasons resulted in expanding higher—or more precisely tertiary—education, and describes how the enlarging of access to this education changed its roles and functions. It is concerned with key concepts, as equal opportunities, inequalities in access to tertiary education and a gradual establishment of the *equity* principle as one of the main objectives of current education policies. The next part then deals with expansion of tertiary education, which not only facilitates a much higher participation rate, but also

necessarily results in diversification of tertiary institutions and changes in their structure. It discusses some interpretations of the impact of expansion on the development of inequalities in access to tertiary education. The final part is dedicated to the Bologna Process and explains the focus of this study.

The second chapter presents the empirical sources of analyses and explains, always using specific examples of two countries, the main methodological approaches developed. It describes the analysed set of ESS data and the variables used, and it explains the method of defining the age cohorts representing the individual historical periods. Moreover, the chapter describes the model used to analyse inequalities in access to tertiary education and the resulting indicator—the Inequality index. Finally, it describes the principle of revising the Inequality index values for the youngest age cohort in the most recent period.

The third, and the longest chapter presents the main results of the analysis of the level of inequalities in access to tertiary education in 25 countries over the last sixty years, and also the results of other subsequent analyses. It assesses the overall level of inequalities in access to tertiary education according to the Inequality index, and documents the development of inequalities in Europe as a whole and in various countries. The chapter tracks the development of the family background structure for various generations of young people, the changing education and occupational profile and social status of their parents and the changes in the impact of various family background factors. Finally, the chapter analyses the influence of expansion of tertiary education on the level of inequality.

The annex to the study presents the results of the analyses carried out for Europe as a whole and for each of the 25 countries examined. The short (one-page) profiles of all countries have been developed using a uniform approach and style. They contain the same indicators which makes them comparable. Before studying individual countries it is advisable to study the profile of Europe which, in addition to providing the results of the analysis, refers to the terms and concepts used, and describes how the indicators have been identified, what they mean and how they can be interpreted.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework's RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) Toolkit

OVERVIEW

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations such as through life and work experiences.

Learning from experience is different from 'formal learning': it is largely unstructured, it is more personal and more individualised and is often unconsciously gained. It is, however, just as real as learning acquired in a formal academic setting. In addition, it can be more permanent as it is not readily forgotten or lost.

In collaboration with the SCQF RPL Network and other stakeholders, we have developed an RPL Toolkit for use by learning and training providers, employers and human resource personnel. It contains a detailed explanation of RPL, how it fits with the SCQF, explains

the process for organisations and provides a number of activities to support facilitators working with learners.

THE TOOLKIT

It has been published in 2010 and it is based on the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) guidance and resources for mentors and learners that was developed by the SCQF Social Services RPL Working Group for the Scottish Social Services Council.

It has been developed for use by learning and training providers, employers and human resource personnel. It contains a detailed explanation of RPL, how it fits with the SCQF, explains the process for organisations and provides a number of activities to support facilitators working with learners. Annexes 2 and 3 contain handouts and activities that can be copied for learners.

Learners might want to map their prior learning against a particular job requirement or particular qualification or learning programme. Learning providers and employers will need to be aware of the wide range of learning provision that is available in the relevant field or sector.

Some learners might be aiming to undertake a formal programme of learning at a college or university or as part of workplace learning and might therefore be seeking SCQF credit. Others might want to benchmark their skills and learning gained through experience as part of their personal development or for career planning. Whatever the reason for embarking on the RPL process, this generic RPL Toolkit can be used by all organisations to support learners or employees in the recognition of their prior learning. The reader/user is free to adapt and tailor the activities and the exercises in Annexes 2 and 3 to suit the particular needs and goals of his/her learners and the purpose of the RPL activity.

The toolkit can be downloaded from the following website:
<http://www.scqf.org.uk/RecognitionofPriorLearning/Recognition-of-Prior-Learning-Home.aspx?>
It can also be found among the list of background documents on the Nicosia Seminar website:
<http://nicosia2010.bolognaexperts.net/>

Higher Education Empirical Research Database (HEER), The Open University UK.

The Higher Education Empirical Research database comprises summaries of evidence-based published research on a range of topics related to higher education (including aspects of Social dimension). It is intended for use by policy-makers, academics and researchers in higher education. The HEER database has been developed by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) of the Open University.

Interested people can register for an account and consult its findings on the following website:
<http://heerd.open.ac.uk/>

Some Recent Conferences in the topic of Social Dimension in Higher Education

18th European Student Convention: ‘Social Dimension – The Lost Dimension?’, 16 – 18 October 2009

The 18th European Student Convention (ESC) was co-organised by European Students’ Union (ESU) and The Swedish National Union of Students (SFS). The convention was held at Södertörn University, Huddinge, Sweden from October 16th to 18th 2009.

During the 18th European Student Convention participated reflected around the theme “Social Dimension – The Lost Dimension?” According to the organizers, the Social Dimension has been one of the most neglected areas of the Bologna Process in the last ten years, despite strong cases for inserting it on the high priority agendas of all national authorities within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Participants also looked into the status of the social dimension at the national and European level. Special attention was given to student support services and strategies for widening participation.

Further information can be found on the following website: <http://www.sfs.se/esc> and on the European Students Union main one.

The **Convention’s Reader** can be found under ‘Documentation’. Pages 26 onwards are of special interest as they raise important questions and gather the students’ view in the topic.

‘Recognition of Prior Learning: Sharing European principles and practices’, Brussels, 17 February 2010. This conference was organised by QAA Scotland/Scottish Government in collaboration with Ireland and the Netherlands.

Over 70 delegates from 28 countries attended QAA Scotland’s event on sharing practice and principles of the recognition of prior learning (RPL), held in Brussels on 17 February 2010.

The event was organised with the Scottish Government and colleagues in Ireland and the Netherlands in order to present and share practice, and included a series of plenary and workshops. The RPL process in Scotland involves considering the learner’s prior formal or informal learning in order to gain entry to further study or to gain credit or exemption towards a degree.

In other countries in Europe, RPL can be used as a major route to award a degree. It is a significant area for development within higher education in Europe as part of the Bologna Process.

The main conclusions of the event were around streamlining RPL provision and learning from other countries’ examples, potential areas engaging with workforce development strategies and employers, and different approaches to the quality assurance of RPL. A European RPL network to share practice was also proposed

Further information can be found on the following website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/events/RPL/RPL.asp> Special attention should be paid to the **conference's final report** which can be downloaded from the same conference's website and which can be found among the Nicosia Seminar background documents.

'The social dimension and responsibility of universities', 24 – 25 May, 2010. This conference was organised by the Spanish Presidency of the EU.

The aim of this two-day conference (24 to 25 May) was to bring about stronger dialogue between governments, universities and civil society bodies regarding the social dimension and social responsibility of universities in the construction of the European Higher Education Area. Equity of access to universities and their interaction with and commitment to social demands was also debated. Around 150 experts from Europe, Africa, Asia, and America gathered in Malaga and agreed that social dimension and equity are crucial to legitimize the process towards a European Higher Education Area.

The conference's conclusions and presentations from different speakers (Barbara Nolan, Jan Koucký, Ramon Flecha, Michael Hörig, Dominique Orr, etc) can be found on the following website: <http://www.educacion.es/eu2010/agenda/responsabilidad-social-universidades.html> Please note that this event's conclusions are also available on the Nicosia seminar's website.

'Inclusion through education and Culture', 14 – 15 October 2010.

The Conference was jointly organized by UNeECC (University network of the European Capitals of Culture) and the Compostela Group of Universities and was hosted by the University of Pécs.

In this European Year of 'Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion' the central theme of the UNeECC- Compostela Joint Conference was 'Inclusion through Education and Culture'.

Representatives from universities and other institutions of higher education that are a member of UNeECC and the Compostela Group of Universities and/or are located in cities which are, have been, or will be designated European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) as well as representatives of ECoC offices presented papers in three different conference tracks:

1. Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion
2. The Assessment of the European Capitals of Culture Programme
3. ECoC Programme and the Combat against Poverty and Social Exclusion

The Pécs conference touched upon key issues of present-day social and cultural policies in Europe and the role of Universities in them. Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the European Capital of Culture programme, the Joint conference also offered a possibility to hear presentations about the evaluation and the future prospects of the programme.

Further information and some of the powerpoint presentations can be found at: http://www.uneecc.org/htmls/welcome_page.html

CHAPTER 5: BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Please note that the following documents can all be found on the Nicosia Seminar website: <http://nicosia2010.bolognaexperts.net/>

General:

- *'Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training'*, 3013th EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE Council meeting. Brussels, 11 May 2010
- *'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions YOUTH ON THE MOVE. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union'*, COM (2010) 477 final. Brussels 15 September 2010
- *'Key issues for the European Higher Education Area – Social Dimension and Mobility: Report from the Bologna Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries'* (May 2007). Part II. Social Dimension (page 11 onwards)
- *'Enabling the low skilled to take one step up: Implementation of Action plan on adult learning'* (Public Open Tender EAC/27/2008, January 2010) Final Report and Case Study Reports by University of Florence, Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung and Institutul Roman de Educatie a Adultilor
- *'The Social Situation in the European Union 2009'* (EUROSTAT, February 2010) Chapter 5. Education and its Outcomes (page 230 onwards)
- *'Highlights from Education at a Glance 2010'* (OECD 2010)
- *'Bologna 1999-2010: Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives'*, Bologna Secretariat (presented on the occasion of the March 2010 Ministerial meeting in Austria – Hungary)
- *'The 18th European Student Convention: Social Dimension – Lost Dimension?'*, ESU 2009 Annual Convention's Reader (Stockholm 16 – 18 October 2009)
- *'The Social Dimension and Responsibility of Universities'*, Conference conclusions, Spanish Presidency of the EU, May 2010
- *'Equity Handbook: How you and your student union can help give people equal opportunities in Higher Education'*, EQUITY project (Lifelong Learning Programme), ESU, november 2009

Recognition Prior Learning:

- *'Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning. Pointers for policy development'* (OECD, March 2010)
- *'Recognising non formal and informal learning: Outcomes, policies and practices'* (OECD, April 2010). Executive Summary
- *'European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning'* (CEDEFOP, 2009)
- *'QAA Scotland/Scottish Government Seminar on Recognition of Prior Learning: Sharing European Principles and Practices'*, Seminar Report, (Brussels 17 February 2010)
- *'Facilitating the recognition of prior learning: Toolkit'*, (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, 2010)

Gender

- *'Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe'* (Eurydice, June 2010)

Access to tertiary education

- *'Who gets a degree? Access to tertiary education in Europe 1950 – 2009'*, Jan Koucký, Aleš Bartušek and Jan Kovařovic (Charles University Prague, Education Policy Centre 2010)