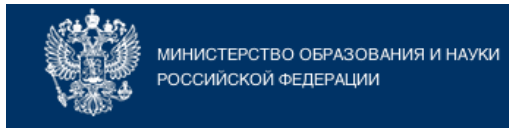
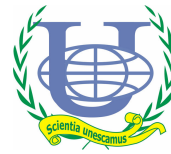




Russian Chairmanship of
the Committee of Ministers
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Ministry of Education and Science
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**International Seminar co-organized by the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia together
with the Council of Europe within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship of the
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Making the European Higher Education Area a Reality: the Role of Students

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General Report

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Introduction

The seminar on “Making the European Higher Education Area a Reality: the role of students” was co-organized by the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, and the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The conference took place at the premises of the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russian on November 2-3, 2006. Participants included academics and Ministry officials from Russia and from a number of other countries, representatives of ESIB and other national and international student organizations, representatives of national and international organizations active in higher education and a team of international experts.

Alexander Efremov, Acting Rector of the University, welcomed the participants and placed the seminar in the wider context of the current emphasis in national policies aimed at strengthening human rights, improving democracy, fostering cultural cooperation and youth exchange, in Russia’s effort to contribute to a Europe without dividing lines. The Peoples’ Friendship University is a real-life example of building an international educational process and a leading university in implementing the Bologna reforms in Russia also by involving its students in this effort.

In his opening speech, Sjur Bergan, Head of the Department of Higher Education and History Teaching of the Council of Europe, underlined the significance of the seminar being held in Russia, and even more so as the initiative came from a university. He also pointed to the fact that the Peoples’ Friendship University is a most appropriate venue for such a seminar due to its being a truly international university with a strong multicultural identity. It was also the venue for a conference on student participation in higher education governance in July 2004, again co-organized with the Council of Europe. Tatsiana Khoma, member of the Executive Committee of ESIB, also pointed to the fact that the conference itself, as well as the high participation of student representatives, is a good sign and a good example of open discussion on the role of students. The Bologna Process should be solid and the fact that the conference is held in Russia is encouraging.

The theme of the seminar is most timely: since we are at the implementation phase of the Bologna Process, and, as Sjur Bergan pointed out, it is inconceivable to imagine the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) becoming a reality without the active contribution of the students. The acknowledgement of the role of students in the realization of the EHEA increased together with their actual participation in its shaping. However, as Lars Ekholm, former Secretary General of the Association of Swedish Higher Education representing the European University Association (EUA), remarked in his opening speech, as the student influence has increased over the years, so have their responsibilities. The success of the Bologna Process now depends on the constructive and efficient cooperation among the three partners of a triangular relationship: governments, universities and students. Larisa Efremova, from the Department of International Relations of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, emphasized the importance of integration of the Russian higher education into the international landscape, by keeping at the same time its traditional values. However, this integration cannot be achieved without building of a broad consensus between the academic community and the government. Perceptions of the Bologna Process among the government, the academics and the students often differ. It is very important that governments, higher education institutions and students reach an agreement first as to what

are the important issues to be addressed through the Bologna reforms and then to attempt to find commonly accepted solutions.

The Role of Students in Making the European Higher Education a Reality: a historical perspective

As is widely known, the Bologna Process leading to the creation of the EHEA took its name from the University of Bologna where the Ministerial Conference of 1999 took place and where the Magna Charta Universitatum was signed in 1988. However, what could be very significant to the Bologna Process at the stage it is now and to the particular conference is the history of its establishment, which Germain Dondelinger reminded us of. The university as an institution, including its name, is the ultimate outcome of a student initiative in the 12th century. The students of Law in Bologna organized themselves in guilds (*universitates*) to better protect their rights in the face of civic impositions and in order to better organise their studies. The university was originally created by the students for the students, and in essence, this is how things still are. The Bologna Process, by its name, in fact carries a much more powerful and comprehensive symbolism than what we usually associate it with, also as regards the role of students, who are equal partners of the academic community and need to be treated as such.

However, as Sjur Bergan reminded us, in Bologna in 1999 the students were not present and in the Bologna Declaration there was no mentioning of student participation. At the Prague Ministerial Conference in 2001 though, the students through the ESIB were there, and in the Communiqué there are important statements about the students being “full members of the Higher Education community” and “competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area”. There is also the statement “Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other Higher Education institutions”.

Since Prague, the students’ presence in the Bologna Process has been formal and their influence ever increasing. In the Berlin Communiqué there is an even more clear and straightforward reference to the role of students in Higher Education governance specifically, with strong statements: “Students are full partners in Higher Education governance”. It is also stated that “Ministers note that national legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout Europe”. At the same time though, attention is called to the discrepancy between legal provisions for participation and actual involvement. Consequently, Ministers “also call on institutions and student organisations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in Higher Education governance”. It is true that effectively promoting and achieving actual student involvement is one of the biggest challenges to all countries, for a number of reasons that will be analyzed further below in this report.

Student Participation in Higher Education Governance: the rationale

Sjur Bergan, as well as Jerzy Woznicki, president of the Foundation of Polish Rectors, recalled that it is generally acknowledged that the main purposes of higher education are at

least the following four, as have been defined in CoE documents and as have been adopted by the Ministers in Bergen:

- preparation for the labour market
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies:
- personal development
- development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base

These four purposes are complementary. None of these goals can be attained to the fullest possible degree without the active involvement and participation of the students. Student participation is important for higher education but also for the larger society. It is worth exploring the role of students in promoting all major purposes of higher education, as the spectrum, degree and quality of student participation is seen by many as a good indicator of the state of the affairs as far as democracy and citizenship in society at large are concerned. In that sense, the role of Higher Education institutions goes far beyond the provision and generation of knowledge, as they are considered appropriate places to educate young people in democratic values and practices as well.

The research project “Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility”¹ of the Council of Europe reflects this concern. In his *Foreword*, the author of the general report, Dr Frank Plantan of the University of Pennsylvania, writes:

“This study postulates the notion that universities can become key institutions for the transmission of democratic values through direct engagement in democratic activities, democratic education on campus. [...] It is focused on institutions of Higher Education as strategic institutions in democratic political development” And he quotes Dr Ivar Bleiklie, one of the participating researchers, who expressed this argument as follows: “First, students need to learn how democracy works – through participation in student organisations and university decision-making bodies, and by developing a conceptual understanding of democracy. Second, they need to learn that democracy works by experiencing that they can influence events and their own living conditions through participation”.

But beyond ideology and politics in the broader sense, there are very good practical reasons that make student participation a necessity: First of all, it is one of the major requirements in the effort to achieve a broad consensus within the academic community on whatever new directions higher education pursues at institutional or national level. This consensus is particularly needed in periods of wide and radical reforms such as the ones often brought about in the framework of the Bologna Process.

Second, students have proven to be competent partners. The student perspective is invaluable. The students have a particular view on higher education, which is extremely important when making decisions on higher education matters. Nobody knows better than the students themselves what the actual workload is, how the learning processes take place and what the learning outcomes are. The quality of education is something they experience first hand. A priori evaluation activities of measures to be taken, assessment and feedback are much more

¹ Frank Plantan, *Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility* : CD-ESR (2002) 2
http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Higher_education/Activities/Universities_as_sites_of_citizenship

comprehensive and broad if students have taken part in the process, especially since their experience in areas such as mobility –and obstacles to it- or allocation of credits is extremely important. Curriculum development becomes more output oriented when there is student involvement, as students are very sensitive to employability matters. Stocktaking activities and surveys among the students are a very valuable instrument in monitoring what actually happens when implementing reforms.

Their constructive and positive role in Higher Education governance and matters in general is acknowledged and their participation is sought for nowadays by all major players in Higher Education and by all competent authorities and organisations at European level; by the European Union, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ENQA

Finally, student participation is above all a pedagogical issue. It is in line with the reciprocal character of the educational process and enhances quality in education, being one of its constituents. Real quality education without student participation is extremely difficult to conceive nowadays.

Student Participation in Higher Education Governance: from theory to practice

The session, chaired by Viktor Chistokhvalov, Head of the Center for Comparative and International Education of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia and member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group, focused on the reality of student participation in higher education governance. Student participation in higher education governance is formally realized through the representation of the student body at departmental, institutional, national and international levels. However, as Annika Persson-Pontén, Deputy Director at the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science and Chair of the Bologna Working Group on the Social Dimension pointed out in her presentation, student influence should not be only formal but also informal, both collective and individual, at the formal meetings and on an informal, day-to-day basis. This abides with one of the fundamental principles of democracy, the ability of a person to influence his/her own situation: Students can –and should- influence higher education by having an active stance and a saying on all matters concerning and affecting their studies, directly or indirectly. This influence is optimized not through conflict but through on-going co-operation with the academic staff and the university authorities.

The legislation concerning democratic student representation in higher education governance is largely in place throughout Europe. Largely, but not completely: as was pointed out by Tatsiana Khoma, there are still cases where the necessary legal provisions for the establishment and operation of student organizations at all levels are missing. In addition, the existence of student representatives by itself does not guarantee genuine student participation as will be discussed further below.

An important consideration is whether student participation is influential on all issues and levels. As the evidence from the two Council of Europe surveys² on Student Participation in the Governance of Higher Education Annika Persson-Pontén carried out suggests, students usually have voting rights in the governance bodies but not in all countries, or not at all levels and sometimes not on all issues. Student influence is often stronger on social and environmental issues and weaker on issues related to budget and student admission. As for

² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/CompletedActivities/CoE_student_survey_EN.asp#TopOfPage

participation in quality assurance, students evaluate courses and programmes in about half the countries. Regarding the level, student influence seems to be strong at institutional level, weaker at department and national levels. Regular contact of students with the government and the parliament was found in a narrow majority of the countries. In the majority of the countries there are regulations about how student representatives should be elected, and usually this is through direct elections. Political student organisations are illegal in about half the countries. Although it is possible to find candidates to fill positions, participation in student elections is generally low and the division of power between student organisations at national and institutional level is not always clear.

From the surveys it appears that special consideration is needed as regards student participation at the highest and the lowest levels (national, department); the relation between formal provisions and actual practice; the role of student organisations (division of power); the low participation in student elections and the dissemination of information on student rights. Many of these issues and some further considerations were discussed also by the rest of the speakers and the audience.

An important factor influencing student involvement is meaningfulness: Students need to feel that their opinions are actually heard and acted upon. If they feel that their presence is only a formality they will be de-motivated from contributing their views. This is a very real problem, also reflected in the Berlin Communiqué, which raises the issue of **actual** student involvement.

What is more, beyond the official student representation and the formal and informal exercise of influence, and even beyond the student participation in the elections once a year, lies the issue of the real participation of the general student population in the various functions of the student organisations and in the life of the institution. Here we are faced with a paradox: The Bologna Process needs quality input from the students, which can only be generated through their active involvement. However, the more higher education studies are intensified, the more competitive they become, the more students tend to disengage themselves from the collective, focus exclusively on their studies and turn to the individual sphere.

This phenomenon is not limited to higher education as was evident in the survey *Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility* mentioned earlier in this report. Students are not less active in student organizations and student life because they are more active in civic activities outside of the institutions. Rather, many students – as well as other citizens – seem less interested in and committed to the public sphere and concentrate on the private sphere. They do things for themselves but not necessarily for a broader societal purpose. Except the loss for the Bologna Process, and for higher education in general, this stance has detrimental effects mostly for two of the four main purposes of higher education: preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies and personal development, which, as was demonstrated by Ewa Krzaklewska, is considerably enhanced through the students' active participation in the various student organisations and activities.

A conscious effort needs to be made to encourage students in turning their interest to the public sphere. At a very practical level, the organisation of studies should allow for the time needed for such activities for all students, and there should be special provisions for student representatives so that they do not suffer academic or financial loss because of their involvement in student organisations.

The Role of Student Organisations in Making the European Higher Education Area a Reality.

During the session on the role of student organisations, Tatsiana Khoma presented ESIB –the National Unions of Students in Europe- its function and objectives and spoke about the role of the student organisations in general; Jerzy Woznicki provided an example of how student organizations can contribute to the creation of EHEA at national level, and Sergey Georgievsky, vice-president of the Russian branch of European Youth Parliament talked about the role of student organisations in Russia.

ESIB currently has 45 organizations from 34 countries, representing over 10 million students. There is wide diversity across Europe as to the structure and form of national student organisations. However, some basic criteria for membership in ESIB include the following: national student unions need to be controlled and run by the students on a democratic basis (i.e. with participation of various student groups in the decision making process; student representatives have to be elected through democratic elections); they have to be representative of the student population in their countries and open to all students; they need to be autonomous and independent in their decision-making from the institution authorities, from the government and from political parties³, and accountable to the students they represent.

Through ESIB, students are represented at European level, but what happens at national and local level is very important. To this end, ESIB is preparing a European Students Rights Charter. For student organisations to be effective, as pointed out by Jerzy Woznicki and Tatsiana Khoma, they need to be fully autonomous, properly financed, well organised, well rooted in their respective student communities. Above all, they need to be legal entities, because otherwise they are limited in their activities, decision making and often face problems. This point was also made by Sergey Georgievsky, since in Russia the legal framework for the operation of student organisations is missing and student representation is largely based on older structures which are largely outdated. Sergey Georgievsky gave an overview of the situation in Russia as regards the role of student organisations. The accession of Russia to the Bologna Process in 2003 was a landmark, as since then the students for the first time have a right to participate in governance, and have the right to transparency and publicity. However, a lot needs to be done in this area as well, as currently there are two kinds of student organisations competing for power, with minimal rights and duties and without protection from interference.

Once student organisations have the rights, a major challenge is the exercise of these rights on behalf of student organisations for true influence on the learning environment and on higher education matters. A point raised by seminar participants was that sometimes student organisations limit themselves to “light” activities, overlooking the truly big issues. The role of student organisations is a crucial one not only in representing the students and defending their rights but also in effective dissemination of information on student rights and on all other matters concerning the students, including the Bologna Process.

Jerzy Woznicki argued that the role of student organisations, now that we are in the final stage of the Bologna Process, should be stronger than ever before, especially at institution and faculty levels, because these are the levels that will eventually determine the success of the

³ ESIB members can be politically sensitive and engaged but not aligned with a particular party.

Process. Student organisations need to exercise true influence by pushing for the necessary reforms in areas such as genuine first and second cycle degree structures, increased mobility, scholarships, flexible and updated programs of study, quality assurance. Student organisations should work in close cooperation with the academic staff at institutional level and with the rector's conference and the government at national level, as is the case now in Poland. In analogy, at international level, as was pointed out by Nina Gustafsson Åberg, ESIB has chosen to help students by being inside the Bologna Process, contributing the students' point of view, fighting for it, and disseminating information. And Ewa Krzaklewska pointed to the need to also take account of the input of a broad range of student organisations or networks.

Especially as regards the Bologna Process, efficient dissemination of information to the student body is essential if students are to play the constructive role described by Jerzy Woznicki: Is the student body properly informed about the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area and are they convinced about the benefits this will have for them? This issue was raised by one of the participants. In some countries maybe the answer is yes, but in others the answer is no, or certainly not enough. Students cannot push for something they don't know much about, they are not convinced about, or – even worse- for something they are misinformed about, considering it suspicious and threatening. It has happened that governments have been using the Bologna Process as a pretext to pass unpopular measures or major reforms without having achieved first the necessary consensus in the academic community and sometimes even without these reforms being truly related to the Bologna Process. ESIB has contributed to proper information with publications such as Bologna with Student Eyes (2005) and the Black Book of the Bologna Process (2005) to name but a few. But the real challenge is dissemination of information at national and local level.

The Social Dimension of Higher Education

In the session on the Social Dimension, chaired by Katia Dolgova-Dreyer from the Council of Europe, Germain Dondelinger, from the Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research of Luxembourg, member of the CDESR Bureau of the Council of Europe and Viktor Chistokhvalov analysed the various aspects of the Social Dimension. However, the discussion of the issue was not limited to the particular session, as Annika Persson-Pontén in her presentation on student participation also referred to the social dimension, as did a number of other speakers and participants throughout the seminar.

As summarized by Annika Persson-Pontén, the basic principle of the social dimension is that everyone who has the possibility to profit from higher education should be able to enter and complete higher education. The social dimension aims at reducing social gaps and at strengthening social cohesion. The rationale for upholding the social dimension is multiple: the promotion of equal opportunities, the increased prospects for the development of our society, the enhancement of quality of higher education. Tatsiana Khoma pointed to the fact that the social dimension is important not only for the individual students but for the society as a whole, as it ensures the highest possible contribution of students to the society.

This vision of higher education as contributing to social cohesion is part of the welfare state model of social cohesion. Education acts as a public instrument for the re-distribution of wealth, investing in social mobility and in the younger generation. In the not-so-distant past there was increased demand for secondary education. In response, governments took

measures to improve access to it. In analogy, the current increased demand for higher education should lead to increased attention to the social dimension of higher education; in other words, the adoption of all provisions and measures needed in order to have conditions of equal access, progress and completion of higher education studies. Has this been the case? Not necessarily. The reasons are many and well beyond the scope of this report. A first plausible explanation might be that the cost of higher education is higher than that of primary and secondary education and at the same time the competing claims for funding by other areas of public policy are more intense than in the past. It is costly to uphold the social dimension, and this presupposes that, as in all matters concerning education, the money spent need to be seen as an investment of society that will yield a very significant future return.

The role of students in upholding and promoting the social dimension is indicated by what both Germain Dondelinger and Annika Persson-Pontén remarked: at the outset of the Bologna Process the emphasis was on competitiveness, transparency and attractiveness, with no reference to the social dimension. The social dimension surfaced in the Bologna Process from Prague on, together with the students and mostly due to them. However, this is not indicative only of the role of students, but also of the fact that there is a dichotomy, as Germain Dondelinger pointed out, between the social and the economic dimension of the Bologna Process. And although in subsequent seminars and Ministerial conferences⁴ the concept was further defined to encompass a number of elements, it still tends to be somehow elusive and vague.

Broadly speaking, this can be attributed to two reasons: the social dimension is not vertical and is not as straightforward as are the rest of the priorities of the Bologna Process. Rather it is horizontal and transversal, as it touches upon all aspects of higher education. It is most evident and tangible in issues such as public responsibility for higher education⁵, public support to higher education institutions, fostering of free education, equal and fair access, social support schemes for students beginning from entry to progression and completion of their studies in due time, removal of obstacles to disadvantaged groups currently under-represented in higher education⁶, removal of obstacles to mobility of students⁷ and academic staff and promotion of lifelong learning and flexible learning paths. It is also connected to the role of higher education in promoting democratic values and citizenship.

A second reason is that, as was demonstrated by Germain Dondelinger, there is wide diversity across Europe as to the actual policies and practices related to the social dimension. What is more, policies closely related to the social dimension such as access, including access to mobility (e.g. visa regulations, work permits, health insurance and social security, portability of grants and loans, recognition of foreign qualifications) and financial support to students, do not depend exclusively on the higher education institutions or the Ministries of Education but affect and are affected by other areas of public policy. The scope of such public policies though, is determined by how the nation state defines itself and how much integration it seeks.

⁴ For official Bologna seminars on the issue, see http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/en/bologna_seminars/index.htm. "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area", Athens. 19-20 February 2003. For a CD-ROM publication with the contents of the seminar contact: a.spyrop@uop.gr Re: Athens Bologna Seminar and http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Bologna/Bol_semin/Sorbonne/index.HTM "The Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area and World-Wide Competition, Sorbonne, Paris, France, 27-28 January 2005

⁵ For a thorough analysis of the issue, see: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/PublicResponsibility/Documentation_EN.asp#TopOfPage

⁶ See <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/institutes/access/eaa/ean3.html>

⁷ See <http://www.esib.org/5convention/index.html>

An example of this diversity in national policies and of the inter-dependence of public policies at national level was provided by Viktor Chistokhvalov, who gave an overview of the situation as regards the various aspects of the Social Dimension in the Russian Federation. The landscape of higher education in the country is changing rapidly, with a spectacular increase in the number of institutions, both public and private, and in the number of students, but also with a dramatic increase in the number of fee-paying students. Positive steps have been taken, such as ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, certain legislative provisions for student participation, but in areas such as mobility for instance, a lot remains to be done: the adoption of ECTS and the diploma supplement, the improvement of recognition procedures, more efficient dissemination of information to students as regards the new degree structure, better financial support schemes for students, quality assurance, social security and health insurance of mobile students, reduction of red tape for visas, etc.

The Social Dimension: beyond the policy documents

Germain Dondelinger raised a number of issues as regards the social dimension that go beyond what has been expressed in the policy documents of the Bologna Process so far. He suggested that the term “equitable” instead of “equal” for access may be more appropriate, as it reflects fairness, levelling out inequalities, so that people can move up the social ladder. Ideally, higher education should reflect the diversity in the population of a country. To this end, out-reach strategies, anti-discrimination legislation and positive discrimination measures are taken. These policies echo the U.N. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the overarching concept of “equal opportunity” as it was defined in Europe in the 60’s and 70’s, and challenge the principle of student selection on the basis of merit. But who should have the responsibility for such support systems, the state or the institutions? And should quality assurance also take into account social policy objectives, or should it function only on the basis of academic standards?

Besides, as was also pointed out by Martina Vukasović and Lars Ekholm, it is not enough to take such measures at the level of entrance to higher education. Participation in higher education is very much a matter of socio-economic and cultural background, and pro-active measures need to be taken at the level of primary and secondary education, if we are to effectively widen access.

As mentioned already, policies related to the social dimension in general and to the socio-economic conditions of students are diverse across Europe. This diversity came to the surface through the Bologna Process and so did the need for comparable data on this issue. This is reflected in the establishment of the Bologna working group on the social dimension. There have already been some efforts to gather such data, and an example is the Eurostudent Project.⁸

However, since the social dimension is multi-faceted, special attention needs to be paid to the collection and interpretation of appropriate data. For instance, some preliminary findings from research seem to point to a tendency for students from Southern Europe to live at home. A reading of these findings may be that the students freely choose to stay at home due to certain cultural traits of the particular society and that the need for subsidized student accommodation is less in these countries. However, did the particular survey also investigate if the students had a choice as to the place of studies to begin with? Living at home while studying may simply mean that there is neither sufficient financial support by the state nor by the family

⁸ http://www.his.de/Abt2/Auslandsstudium/Eurostudent/index_html

(simply put, families often cannot afford to send their children to study in another city, let alone country). This may go as far as influencing the choice of the field of studies - which is often based on what is available locally- and resulting in loss of potential and talent, not only to the individual student but to the whole society, if we talk in terms of human capital.

Closely related to the socio-economic conditions of students is the issue of fees. The United Nations Covenant on Human Rights states that higher education should become free for all.⁹ ESIB has a clear position against fees¹⁰, some European countries have no fees at all, others have them only in some of the second and third cycle studies, others have them in all cycles. When there are fees, the proportion of fees to the total cost of studies also differs from country to country, although the tendency is to keep them relatively low.

An argument for fees is that studies free of charge is actually more unjust than charging reasonable fees, since the lower classes pay taxes for a good they rarely benefit from (as access rates are much lower among them), thus in essence supporting the studies of the wealthier, and that public support should be used to ensure participation in higher education of those qualified but unable to support themselves during their studies, and not benefit those whose participation would not be affected by their economic background. According to this view, it is better to have fees and set up an effective grant and loan system to avoid the financial barrier to access. However, there is always the possibility that, because of the existence of fees, the state may eventually withdraw part of its own funding, so that institutions end up with the same total amount of funding, and families, especially of the middle class, face a greater burden. In addition, this line of argumentation seems to be taking for granted that students coming from a more privileged economic background should remain fully dependent on their families during their studies, and that their relationship with their parents is a good one (the parents will accept the student's choice of field of studies and will fully support him/her throughout his/her studies).

The social dimension also encompasses the social relations that exist among people. This includes the participation of students in the decision making processes and the sense of belonging to and sharing the values of the academic community. As to the second, Germain Dondelinger pointed to the fact that over the last few years there has been a shift from the so far prevailing ideal of the community of scholars to a more corporate profile, both on the part of the institutions and on the part of students. The university is no longer as strongly oriented to the functions of the nation state and as distant from the market as it was in the previous two centuries; the economic dimension has entered higher education more than ever before. This does not make higher education less central to the society -on the contrary, the emphasis on the knowledge economy gives the university a most strategic role-; nevertheless it does affect the character of higher education and differentiates the notion of public good.

Germain Dondelinger finally argued that the social dimension of higher education needs re-definition. A possible model is one suggested by Frank Newman in the framework of the Futures Project (est. 1999)¹¹, according to which higher education serves the needs of society in three ways: socializing students to their role in society (which includes socializing to the community through civic engagement and democratic citizenship, socializing to the life of mind as in critical thinking, socializing to the profession), providing all citizens with social mobility, and upholding the university as the home of disinterested scholarship and unfettered

⁹ For the full text of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in particular for higher education (Article 12,c), see. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ceschr.htm>

¹⁰ For ESIB's argumentation against fees see <http://www.esib.org> (Documents ► Policies and Statements)

¹¹ <http://www.futuresproject.org/index.html>

debate. The latter is important for the definition of the social dimension of research in general and of research universities. “Pasteur’s Quadrant” (1997), designed by Donald E. Stokes, dismantles the false dichotomy between basic and applied research and supports the argumentation that the research function of a university is a public good and has a social dimension. Consequently, the social dimension needs to infuse the three main missions of the university: teaching, research and innovation, and the Bologna Process needs to go beyond the dilemma of social vs economic dimension, look beyond the instruments it has created and set these tools in the context of clearly defined purposes.

International Student Experience: Mobility

As Evgeny Martynenko pointed out when introducing the session on mobility, achieving the goals of the Bologna Process largely depends on how well we organise and support mobility. During the session, Bernd Wächter, director of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), presented an overview of common perceptions of and claims about mobility –the “promises” made -, pointing to the fact that more evidence is needed to substantiate these claims. Ewa Krzaklewska, vice-president of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), described the function of the Erasmus Student Network, the findings from surveys about student mobility, the areas where steps need to be taken to improve the conditions for mobile students and the students’ role in fostering mobility. Gennady Lukichev, Head of the National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC), presented us with data on student mobility at global, European and national level and Russia’s policies as regards both incoming and outgoing students. The issue of mobility and the related national policies was also extensively addressed by Larisa Efremova in her presentation on the first day of the seminar.

According to the data provided by Gennady Lukichev, especially since 2003 when Russia joined the Bologna Process, there has been an increase in the number of institutional agreements and in the number of both incoming and outgoing students from and to “Bologna countries”. Russia is trying to make its higher education attractive to foreign students also through a number of intergovernmental agreements. Universities participate in programmes and partnerships more and more actively. Currently 604 Russian universities receive foreign students, and the target is to raise the ratio of foreign students to 1,6% of the student population. As a result of these policies, there has been a 50% increase in the number of foreign students in a few years, but still the number is comparatively low, and the number of outgoing students is still much higher than the number of incoming students.

The imbalance was explained by Evgeny Martynenko: On the one hand, great emphasis is placed on education by Russian families; Russians value the intercultural added value of mobility, and can now afford to pay for it more than they did in the past. On the other hand, the system still has weaknesses creating obstacles to incoming mobility such as the still under-developed infrastructure, the language barrier, poor accommodation, differences in curricula, problems with visas and health insurance. A new Law which will come to force next year, is expected to alleviate problems with visas. Viktor Chistokhvalov emphasized the need for increased funding of mobility, especially for students from a poor socio-economic background, and Larisa Efremova pointed to another important factor: It is not enough to have policies on mobility; these policies need to be transparent, properly supported at all levels, and clearly communicated to all; students, institutions and employers.

The need for data on mobility

Mobility is a “mantra” of our times, as Bernd Wächter humorously put it, and to such a degree that we rarely pause to think about it. He reminded us that international mobility is not the rule; rather it is the exception, as a very small percentage of the world population voluntarily lives outside of their country of origin. The tendency is rather for people to “stay put”, so we clearly need to justify our claims when advocating it.

As far as academic mobility is concerned, although the numbers increase, the percentage of mobile students tends to remain the same. And a paradox brought up by Martina Vukasović is that mobility is often more difficult within the same country than outside of the country.

In any case, mobility is costly. According to the data provided by Gennady Lukichev, currently about \$ 40 billion income is generated by mobility for countries, which of course means that – at least - \$ 40 billion is spent on it. Consequently, when advocating international mobility, one should give good reasons for it, stating clearly the expected benefits and demonstrating that these benefits actually occur. However, this is rarely the case, as mobility is seen as a good in itself, not in need for further justification. As a result, there is very little evidence on the actual impacts of mobility.

Academic mobility does not exist in a pure form. Its nature depends on a number of factors, such as duration, purpose of studies, direction, etc. and the reasons and the benefits from it may not be what we assume they are. Reasons and benefits may also be quite different for individuals than for institutions, higher education systems or governments. So there is a need for longitudinal studies on mobile students.

The “promises” of mobility

A common claim in the rationales for mobility schemes is that mobility enhances quality of education. However, as Bernd Wächter pointed out, this quality is usually not adequately defined, or not defined at all. If by quality is meant “quality of higher education” in purely academic terms, then this claim holds true only in cases where a student goes to an institution and a department of higher academic quality than the one he/she originates from (as has been the case with organised mobility from developing to developed countries for capacity building of human resources in the home country). Another such case is joint degrees, where two or more institutions bring their resources together to achieve a level of overall quality which none of them would achieve alone. In all other cases, the claim is not very plausible. Mobility will enhance quality of education of the person involved, but in the broader sense of *Bildung*, in that he/she will become more mature, gain better knowledge of the world, of another language, of another culture.

A political “promise” is that mobility contributes to international understanding and consequently to world peace. In addition, education cooperation is seen by many countries as part of their foreign policy. Mobility probably does contribute to better understanding and hopefully more empathy, but not necessarily to liking a country and its people more than before. The outcomes of mobility in this sense are probably more complex than just reduced or increased liking.

Another set of “promises” for students, institutions and countries is economic. The mobile student is assumed to have better prospects of employment in both home and host countries, of finding a more interesting and better paid job. There is some indication from the limited

research conducted so far that indeed, mobile students are more likely to end up working in jobs with international character, more job satisfaction, but not a higher pay. Institutions may gain income from fees, and may secure their research base where there is shortage. But what is brain-gain for one country is brain-drain for another. At national level mobility is often seen as a means to increase knowledge of foreign markets and even to increase exports to the countries of the ex-incoming students. At European level, mobility is seen as an aid in promoting European integration, the single market, growth, employment. However, none of these claims has been verified through research, and some of them are so vague that they cannot be either verified or falsified.

Bernd Wächter concluded by giving us a “word of warning” based on his personal observations: mobility is highly addictive: once a person starts, (s)he is unlikely to stay put afterwards. Contrary to what is commonly thought, mobility is not a harmless activity: it is unpredictable. At personal level it has the potential to disrupt peoples’ lives. At system level, large-scale mobility can challenge the *status quo*, since system differences eventually become mobility obstacles, creating pressures for system change and harmonization. This has actually been the case with the Erasmus Programme, which, in the way described above, contributed to the emergence of the Bologna Process.

The student perspective

The effect of mobility on higher education systems was emphasized also by Ewa Krzaklewska, who gave us the student perspective on the reality of mobility through participation in the Erasmus Programme: Students in mobility act as agents of change, questioning existing practices and demanding solutions, setting forward issues of recognition and other issues not previously viewed as important, resulting in changing structures.

Ewa Krzaklewska presented the findings of two Erasmus Student Network surveys in 2005 and 2006 in which the cultural, social and academic impact of a wide range of mobility experiences was investigated. In the findings of the surveys, this impact appears to be largely positive, especially as regards mobility as a life experience, and in the areas of language learning, building of cultural competence and social networks abroad. Satisfaction with studies ranks quite high as well. There is a large degree of overall satisfaction among the students who experienced mobility. It is indicative that almost all would recommend mobility to a friend.

However, there is noticeable dissatisfaction with the practical dimension of mobility due to problems such as lack of information or limited access to information prior and during one’s stay, inadequate funding resulting in mostly economically privileged students having access to mobility, problems with accommodation and with the local language, problems with recognition of studies or study periods abroad, often also due to incompatibility of curricula, lack of representation of foreign students at the host institution and a general lack of equal rights among foreign and local students, visa problems, etc.

Of these problems, some need to be dealt with at national / institutional level. Financial, visa and work permit problems and lack of recognition fall in this category. For problems of a more practical nature, voluntary work under the principle of “students helping students”, such as the one done through the Erasmus Student Network, is one of the most effective means to support mobile students. Help can be offered in a variety of ways: “buddy” programmes, orientation weeks, social events, help-desks, student representation. Help is needed before, during and after the exchange.

The benefits from such volunteer activity and from mobility are many for all: incoming students, who find trustworthy helpers, volunteer students, who become more positive towards becoming mobile themselves and gain a considerable non-formal learning experience, the local student community, which takes on a more international character, and the institution, whose image is enhanced through the increase of satisfaction of foreign students, and whose international connections are promoted. Consequently, institutions should encourage the establishment of local student groups supporting mobility and student unions should consider exchange and international students in their policies.

The learning environment

Regardless of the perspective one may take as to the underlying motives behind the Bologna Process, the ultimate pre-requisite for the realisation of the European Higher Education Area is common: improvement of quality, and increase of the visibility of that quality to the outside world. A dimension of quality of paramount importance is the one related to student learning and the learning environment. Accordingly, within the Bologna Process there has been a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning. It is not accidental that the emphasis on the learning environment increased as students became more active in the process, setting forward issues of quality in this respect. However, it should be noted here that whereas increased emphasis on learning presupposes the students taking responsibility for their own learning, this by no means diminishes the governments' and the institutions' responsibilities for the quality of the learning environment, as will be discussed further below.

What is a good learning environment?

Learning in terms of internal processes falls into the realm of psychology and takes place everywhere, in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Seen from the perspective of higher education studies, the formal setting can be referred to as the internal learning environment, whereas the other two settings as the external learning environment.

As a general initial statement, a good formal learning environment is one that is aware of and takes account of the fact that different people learn in different ways different things, accordingly providing for a variety of access criteria, teaching approaches, learning tools and facilities and student evaluation. It is also one that helps students develop not just subject-specific knowledge and skills but generic, transferable knowledge and skills for life.

Through the three speakers presentations in this session which was chaired by Stephan Neetens, we had a well rounded overview of the main issues related to the learning environment. Lars Ekholm discussed learning environment in a broader context by following an ideal student from secondary education to Lifelong Learning (LLL), i.e. before admission, during her studies and after graduation, in what could be the ideal higher education setting. Martina Vukasović, director of the Centre for Education Policy of the Alternative Academic Educational Network of Serbia and a former President of ESIB, took a practical approach, presenting mostly an analysis of the internal learning environment, i.e. of the various features of the formal learning setting of a higher education institution. Lars Lynge Nielsen, acting president of EURASHE, focused more on the learning process itself and how it can be enhanced by constantly pursuing the optimal learning environment. In the 40 minute lively discussion that followed many of the issues were further explored and commented upon.

Establishing the Perfect Learning Environment: Mission Impossible?

According to Lars Lynge Nielsen *establishing* the Perfect Learning Environment is indeed “Mission Impossible” since the learning environment is not finite and therefore can never be *established*. On the contrary, the learning environment should be understood as a never ending performance where the actors are the teachers and the students interacting with each other, and the students also interacting among themselves; the stage is the combined physical, psychological and social factors surrounding this process; as for the play, it is rewritten every time the actors and/or the stage change. We know that we are very close to the perfect learning environment, the one that will best stimulate and enhance the learning process, when we come to realise that we in fact cannot establish it, but we constantly have to pursue it.

Access to higher education

Both Lars Elkholtm and Martina Vukasović pointed to the fact that, so far, whereas there has been plenty of emphasis on the relationship between higher education and the labour market, the relationship between higher education and secondary education has been largely neglected with negative effects on both. The higher education learning environment should become more flexible and open so as to acknowledge cultural traits, knowledge and skills students from usually underrepresented social groups may have. Student admission procedures and in particular interviews as a means of admitting students were also discussed extensively during the session. There was consensus that interviews are a very valuable tool but that a variety of criteria need to be employed in order to ensure fair access. In order to help with successful choice of studies, the higher education institutions need to provide accurate information on the programs of study and the employment rates of previous graduates.

Inside higher education

Once a student is inside higher education, he/she is likely to encounter a mixture of good and bad features: good teachers in poor buildings and the opposite, a rich learning experience in certain aspects but a poor one in others, etc. However, if we are to define standards, some of the more tangible features a good learning environment should have would be along these lines: Well-organised studies with known demands on the learner, content of studies defined according to learning outcomes, good organisation of timetables and class schedules, balanced distribution of student workload and authentic implementation of ECTS, improvement of student-teacher ratio, efficient use of ICT and library facilities, accessibility of the various facilities by students with physical disabilities, to name but a few.

Quite often, problems in the above mentioned areas are attributed to poor financing, especially in this era of massification of higher education. In the face of this reality, Martina Vukasović focused on things that still can be done to alleviate problems, mainly in the direction of better allocation of existing resources and better cooperation and sharing of these resources among the various departments/faculties of an institution.

A less palpable but essential element of the learning environment is the teaching methodology. Speakers and seminar participants referred extensively to the quality of teaching per se and the ways to enhance it, both at the level of recruitment of teaching staff and at the level of in-service training and evaluation. Academic teachers are not necessarily adequately trained for academic teaching or PhD supervising in a pedagogical sense and excellence in research does not automatically ensure excellence in teaching, since the two functions (teaching –research) are separate, interrelated but not necessary conditions for

quality teaching. In its turn, excellence in teaching does not ensure excellence in learning, since learning styles differ and teaching techniques should be inclusive, in other words diverse, to address the needs of a heterogeneous student population.

The learning environment: a matter of attitudes?

As Lars Lynge Nielsen explained, four very common fallacies are often at work in terms of the learning process and the learning environment: One is ideological: education is usually made to meet the needs of institutions and teachers according to certain set standards. As a result, individual learner differences and needs are usually not taken into account. The so-called technological fallacy will lead to a tendency to act upon certain general pedagogical norms, again not taking into account individual differences. A common psychological fallacy is that what is being taught is actually identical to what is being learnt. And there is also the utopian fallacy that education can cure all that is wrong, in other words to believe that we can overcome environmental, socio-economic and political obstacles through education alone.

The teachers' attitude to their role as regards teaching and learning also largely determines the students' attitude to their own learning and in this way the general quality of the learning experience. It so happens that the teachers' (and, consequently, the students') attitudes depend on a mixture of biographical, disciplinary, institutional and wider social conditions, suggesting that this is an area more difficult to affect with direct measures than, say, ICT or library facilities. This also implies that whatever changes are sought in this area, they will probably take considerably more effort and time than in other, more tangible and less multi-dimensional areas. Nevertheless, it would be worth starting any efforts to reform from this very point, since the learning environment is much more than just a well equipped building; above all, it is the people involved in the teaching-learning process.

A good example of how attitudes affect the learning environment is the case of infrastructures: As Lars Lynge Nielsen remarked, what we really need to enhance is the learning process, not the teaching one. Ideally, the requirements for the physical environment depend on the kind of learning we want to take place there, so there should be a variety of rooms and spaces to allow for a variety of learning experiences. However, when designing a building, more often than not it is the teachers' and the institutions' needs that are taken into account and not the learners' needs, so we often end up having the perfect teaching environment, not the perfect learning environment. But even when we make one such, again, there are barriers to overcome such as the mental barrier of tradition, which may very quickly alter the function of even the most well-designed classroom (e.g. a circular seating arrangement allowing for peer interaction and a consultative role for the teacher) to the traditional rows of seats, a blackboard and a totally teacher-centered process.

Teaching and research, learning and work

The relationship between teaching and research and its impact on the learning environment is generally seen as a positive one. Ideally all academic staff should be PhD holders and the academic teacher should - ideally again - combine teaching and research in the right proportions; however, students often criticize teachers for openly showing that research is their first priority; teaching comes second, thus degrading the learning environment. The important question here is: How much and what kind of research is useful for students' learning in the particular subjects and profiles? A proper balance needs to be sought between too much academism (i.e. too much research) and too little (poor academic background) in order to ensure an optimal learning environment. A lot depends on the type of higher

education institution (Research vs. Teaching oriented), on the study program, on the level of studies and the individual student needs. Above all, it is important that choices for the students do exist.

A similar question needs to be answered when it comes to the learning-work link. How much work-related experience needs to be included in the learning environment? Again, the answer should be the result of careful consideration within each field, profile and institution.

Beyond formal learning

The non-learning elements of the learning environment may not be as much focused on, but it is a fact that having a balanced mix of diverse activities improves the overall well-being of students and their performance in various aspects of life, including the ability to learn. What is more, learning and development of various transversal skills and competencies do take place through participation in such activities. Institutions should provide for a **rich student experience**, and allow students space and time for participation in sports, cultural activities, student unions, etc. In addition, much valuable learning takes place outside of the formal higher education setting. Again, students should be allowed the time for such learning. It was also discussed that, if we are to promote flexible learning paths, procedures for recognition of prior and experiential learning, extra-curricular competences, (informal and non-formal learning) should be developed, and the possibility of linking ECTS credits to such learning experiences could be examined. In the ensuing discussion, the latter was a particularly hotly debated points, with strong views being expressed both in favour of and in opposition to this suggestion.

What happens next?

Lars Ekholm emphasized the vital importance of the reciprocal relationship of a higher education institution with its former students for both. It is important that higher education institutions follow their graduates' on to the labor market, and collect data on their employment on a longitudinal basis and that feedback is sought from graduates on the content of studies so that institutions can better prepare their current students for their future careers. The opinion of graduates is a valuable tool also when designing lifelong learning programs. In general, higher education institutions will benefit from including alumni in their program boards, since this is one more way of linking the university to society at large and the professional world. And the former graduates should feel that their bond with their Alma Mater is strong and vivid, and that they can always return to update their knowledge and skills. This, unfortunately, is not so often the case. Although life-long learning as a concept has been around for more than 20 years, very little has been done in this direction, especially as regards higher education.

Who is responsible for improving the learning environment?

The answer given by Martina Vukasović is “all”: The public authorities need to provide a good legislative framework for the work of higher education institutions, which will strike a good balance between autonomy and accountability and provide incentives and possibilities for institutions to create good learning environments themselves. They also need to provide sustainable solutions for the adequate financing of higher education so that institutions have sufficient means to maintain and improve quality of the learning environment. Quality assurance needs to take account of the quality of learning environment according to criteria and standards agreed upon by the various stakeholders. Institutions, as explained further

above, need to focus on efficient use and allocation of resources and, to that end, even sometimes concede to politically challenging solutions such as integration of institutions or faculties. As for the role of students, once more it is crucial: Student unions need to cooperate with the public authorities and higher institutions on issues related to the improvement of student learning and to the enhancement of the quality of learning environment, and if necessary initiate and even demand changes in this direction. They can also directly improve the learning environment themselves, by providing a variety of activities on campus, organising study groups, etc.

An important question arises: Do we really have a choice as to making or not a most sincere effort to improve the learning environment if a genuine European Higher Education Area is to be? Not really. As Martina Vukasović concluded, “not improving the learning environment may very well lead to a European Higher Education Area existing only on mission statements, communiqués and speeches of irresponsible politicians, rectors or student representatives”.

Panel Debate: “Bringing the Bologna Process to its Goal: a Student Contribution”

The debate was chaired by Germain Dondelinger and panel members were Aleksey Shumakov, Vice Rector for Academic Work of Chelyabinsk State University, Nina Gustafsson Åberg, member of the Bologna Process Committee of ESIB, Victor Chistokhvalov, and Sjur Bergan. The debate also benefited from the audience’s active participation, with questions to the panel members and comments. It mostly explored actual student involvement and attitudes towards it in areas related to the Bologna action lines such as curriculum development and evaluation, quality assurance, including evaluation of academic staff by the students, and student participation in higher education governance, both in Russia and the rest of Europe.

Victor Chistokhvalov brought up the issue of inadequate funding as a detrimental factor both for the quality of studies and for student involvement. The percentage of students who have to work during their studies is extremely high in many European countries, with grave consequences. Lack of adequate funding (low salaries), together with lack of information also affects the implementation of Bologna reforms by the academic staff.

In Russia the role of students in curriculum development is limited since, for the time being, 85% of the content in all disciplines is defined by the federal government. Within the next two years this percentage will fall to 45%, allowing for greater student involvement. So far, and to the extent students have participated, they have been rather conservative in their approach as to the content of studies and influenced by perceptions as to what jobs are “in fashion”. Sjur Bergan commented that students are sensitive to fast changes in the labour market but they should not be unduly influenced by fads. It is important to choose a broad field of studies, since the labor market is only one of the considerations to be taken into account and one needs both subject specific but also transferable skills.

An issue brought up by seminar participants was the willingness of institutions and academic staff to accept student expectations and satisfaction as criteria for evaluation, as well as their willingness to share some of the powers they now have with the students. As Aleksey Shumakov remarked, in Russia the tendency on behalf of the academic staff seems to be more favourable towards participation of only the senior students in quality assurance, in the

development of study programs, etc., since they are considered to be more motivated and mature to express valid views on higher education matters than freshmen. Nina Gustafsson Åberg offered the counter-argument that such practice deprives the institutions of the valuable fresh look of a new-comer, and Sjur Bergan noticed that full student participation and on all issues, including evaluation, is a very important exercise in citizenship as it is related to taking responsibility. This was confirmed by Nina Gustafsson Åberg, who said that, as a student representative, she is ready to take individual responsibility and liability for her participation in higher education governance, and on all issues, including in bodies deciding for promotions of academic staff.

The debate closed with each of the participants focusing on a core issue. Sjur Bergan remarked that it is striking how everyone agrees that student participation is a necessary ingredient of higher education. The challenge is how to translate this into practice. Victor Chistokhvalov would like to see a law where the role of students and the provisions for it would become very specific. Aleksey Shumakov would also like to see very clear legal provisions and mechanisms for student involvement, but he would also like to see the proportion of active students maximized. Nina Gustafsson Åberg noticed that problems of this nature are met everywhere in Europe. The way to functional student participation is still very long and this makes such discussions extremely important.

Concluding remarks

The Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area is much more than action lines and priorities. It is a vision of Europe, that the present and future generations of students will have wider and more fair access to higher education, better quality of studies, better prospects of employment Europe-wide, and that this better quality higher education, the enhanced academic cooperation and exchange of students, academics, knowledge and ideas across the continent will contribute towards a more socially cohesive, democratic, inclusive and prosperous Europe.

As all visions, it needs to be clearly articulated, so that it can be shared by as many as possible, by the vast majority of the interested parties, not just the Ministers of Education, the Governments and the leaders of the higher education community. Higher education is an area most heavily loaded with individual and collective interests and expectations; with powerful traditions, well-established practices and institutions that are centuries old. Any attempted reforms require wide consensus and commitment by all stakeholders. The student body is the biggest stakeholder in higher education and the role of students in establishing the European Higher Education Area is a vital one.

So far the contribution of students in making the EHEA a reality has been quite significant. This has been acknowledged by the Ministers in their Communiqués and was emphasized by a number of speakers. Within the Bologna Process, in its official documents and procedures, the consideration of students as equal partners in higher education. on all issues is given, as was pointed out by Sjur Bergan. The issue at hand now is the role of students in the remaining years until 2010 and further than that, at national, institutional and department level. The seminar sought to explore how far we have gone in enabling students to play this vital role; how student involvement can be encouraged and how the impact of such involvement in higher education matters can be maximized.

However, the consideration of the student role in the implementation of the European Higher Education Area is only part of the bigger issue: As was repeatedly emphasized during the seminar, the students are not just the individual students, and their best interest is not just their own personal interest. The quality of education they get will directly affect not only them but the whole society they will live and work in. As Larisa Efremova succinctly put it, the future is found in the classrooms, not in the bureaucrats' offices. And the true question is "What future society do we want to make?" It is vital to ensure that the whole spectrum of purposes of higher education is addressed when planning and implementing educational policy. The role students are allowed to have is indicative of the role our society keeps for its future citizens. The extent that students are active in higher education governance and in the learning process is a good indication not only of the success of the institution and of the educational system as a whole, but also a good indication of how democratic we really want our societies to be.