

Summary from the parallel Sessions and Conclusions

Martin Grabert, KoWi, Brussels

Higher Education:

- The Bologna process implies many changes to implemented by the universities and legislative authorities
- Striving for the "Knowledge- Society" requires a broadening up of third level education
- Working conditions change gradually and influence attitudes – a system of societal accountability might conflict with academic freedom
- Money is essential for any further developments – a shift towards the demand side of funding was noted
- The project of founding a new university in Luxemburg received a lot interest
- The process of the Europeanisation of universities is gradual but permanent – obviously there are different speeds of this process to be observed within the states present
- Multi-lateral accreditation of study courses should become the standard for all offers at the universities of the states present in this workshop

Innovation:

- Universities require a clear vision of what role the institution wants to play – a strategy is the basis for further activities
- Incentives are a clue for the willingness of academics to collaborate with companies – alongside with potential funds, more freedom for the own research can be an argument for the universities
- The understanding of the respective boundaries need to be understood – e.g. presently there is no legal basis for the university of Münster to found spin-off companies
- Direct contacts between universities and industry are the essence for effective collaboration
- One should agree some rules of conduct in the mutual interest of all partners

Research:

- A broad consensus that there are good reasons for the establishment of an ERC was perceived – it should contribute to fostering European competition in research resulting in higher quality of research
- An ERC should act within a given framework: it should focus on some key domains while avoiding interference (administrative/political) with curiosity driven research
- Funding of research infrastructures – in the ERC context - will become a more and more important question



- The 5000 universities which are affected by the Bologna process are not equal – a classification of them is mandatory
- A distinction has to be made between undergraduate education (with a strong regional relevance) and the research related postgraduate studies
- The Humboldtian model of the university should be complemented by more utilitarian approaches
- The interaction with the private sector is essential – in particular in respect to the Barcelona objective
- A Europe of different speeds is reality already
- Concrete proposals for joint doctorate training courses in life sciences were agreed which will be put on the tracks immediately

Conclusions:

Convergence can be observed in many respects discussed during the conference.

Nevertheless, the need for new barrier breaking action seems to be evident. These apply to changes in legal as well as in mental constitutions.

The competition for the “best brains” around the globe is under way. Demographic evidence can not be denied: 2010 the population of the 20-24 year old will be roughly: 6 million in Japan – 17 million in the US – 37 million in the larger EU – 125 million in India and China each.

The political will is there and has been documented in the “Münster declaration” – the concrete action has to follow up.

Encouraging is, among many others, the project of joint doctoral training in life sciences agreed by representatives of Twente, Leuven and Münster universities during the conference.

The mutual trust amongst participants seems to be the best prerequisite for the formalisation of quality assessment procedures.

Joint accreditation of study courses should become a topic on the relevant working level as soon as possible.

Joint meetings of the rector’s conferences with an agenda set by the urgent developments could be another means for intensifying the collaboration.

This conference gave many incentives in the domains of education, research and innovation and thus the creation of the European Higher Education, Research and Innovation Area.