

Student Mobility

The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, convening in Stockholm, Sweden, on 30th and 31st October 2008:

Whereas:

- The stated goals of the Bologna process are to facilitate student mobility through the reduction of mobility restraints and to improve employability by providing comparable degree and quality assurance standards among the member countries of the European Union;
- International study experience and knowledge of foreign languages is deemed absolutely necessary for students in order to succeed in today's labour markets
- The ERASMUS program has been successful in stimulating student mobility and in shaping a European identity for several generations of European students attending higher education
- The dissemination of knowledge and advanced research is a fundamental element of the Lisbon strategy and that the forces of globalization are particularly powerful in the field of research and higher education

Noting that:

- Standardization of university degrees alone does not imply standardization of studying conditions nor an improvement over existing studying conditions;
- Governments and universities are forcing the implementation of the Bologna process without proper quality assurance and in an "à la carte" approach, with certain action lines being implemented and others ignored, thus further degrading study conditions contrary to the goals of the process;
- The individualization of curricula by students according to their personal preferences, needs and interests can be impeded by the rigidity brought by excessive implementation of modularized courses;
- While a common degree structure in Europe will promote the mobility of the European workforce and thus increase the competitiveness of European undergraduates as well as

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employers, the employers in the respective member states have to be made aware of the contents of the new degrees as their length can differ compared to the old systems;

- Student mobility is further hindered by the continuing existence of strict visa requirements among certain European countries and with the rest of the world.
- Students' concerns are not properly taken into account in political discussions in many Bologna member states and participating higher education institutions;
- The external objectives of the Bologna process are to “[increase] the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education” and a European higher education system that “acquires a world-wide degree of attraction”;
- The Lifelong Learning Programme, notwithstanding its importance in the framework of the over-arching EU policy goal represented by the Lisbon strategy, has been assigned for the period 2007-2013 an amount considerably lower than what was actually requested by the European Commission.

The ELDR Party:

- Calls all actors concerned with the implementation of the process for joint quality assurance to be taken into account when implementing the Bologna process. Quality assurance should be the main topic of the next follow-up-Conference;
- Demands from all actors concerned with the implementation of the process that representatives of students and students' organisations, acting in representation of the main stakeholders of the reform process, should be included in political and administrative discussions on all levels;
- Calls the Member States for more autonomy for universities when establishing new degree courses in order to promote competition and diversity;
- Calls for an opening of the Bologna process to countries that are not part of the Council of Europe;
- Calls on universities to foster mobility through more cooperation with other European Universities, local exchange programs and

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scholarships, joint and double degree programs as well as more language courses;

- Calls on universities to implement ECTS via the learning outcome approach by linking the credit points to a properly measured student workload, thus improving comparability and allowing mobility without discontinuance;
- Calls on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council to accurately monitor and analyse the mobility trend in Europe and the Lifelong Learning Programme statistics, whilst taking into account joint quality assurance, in order to appropriately evaluate the opportunity of assigning further funds to the Programme, in particular to the Erasmus strand, if deemed necessary by involving universities and students in a public consultation and fostering a wide European debate.
- Supports EU efforts to increase global opportunities for future generations of European students, while recognizing that the full potential of the current ERASMUS Mundus program has not yet been realized
- Proposes that higher education should be made available for talented European students not just in the EU or in the US/Canada, but in emerging economies such as China, India, Vietnam, Brazil, South Africa or anywhere else in the world where students find educational opportunities
- Notes that ERASMUS Mundus second phase proposals by the European Commission introduce positive but insufficient reforms to the program, and therefore proposes further reforms to ERASMUS Mundus with the following elements:
 1. Maintained focus on the promotion of global student exchange and on the two strategic objectives of the current program: quality in higher education and intercultural understanding with third countries. No new objectives should be introduced, such as objectives related to e.g. external affairs, structural institutional cooperation in higher education, linguistic diversity or social improvement.
 2. The introduction of a selection process based strictly on academic criteria rather than on geographic quotas or other criteria related to EU external affairs.

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3. Elimination of the requirement that European universities must design specific ERASMUS Mundus master courses and form groups of at least three universities from different EU member states, in order to receive funding and foreign students under the program.
4. Elimination of all other current requirements unrelated to quality in higher education and intercultural understanding with third countries.
5. A streamlining of funding through a general scholarship program in order to avoid excessive administration and foreign student dependence on authorities in their home country or university.
6. A selection process run by an independent EU body such as the Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in cooperation with national higher education agencies. Unlike today, selections should not be made by the European Commission.
7. An extension of the program to PhD students and researchers.
8. The introduction of a new Schengen visa category for students from the rest of the world.
9. Reciprocity as a rough guide between the EU and partner countries in terms of the number of foreign students who receive funding to study in the EU compared with the number of European students who study abroad under the program.
10. Each member state should take measures to further enlarge the percentage of students going abroad and to attain the 10% envisaged by the European Commission. In a second phase this percentage should be raised to 20 or even 30%.

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