Under the High Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic

Under the Patronage of Ms Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the European Commission

Proceedings of
UNICA 2010
STUDENT CONFERENCE

Rome, September 22-25

Europe Through Student’s Eyes
UNICA Student Conference
"Europe Through Students’ Eyes"
Rome, 22-25 Sep 10
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word from the UNICA President</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising Committee</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating Universities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speeches:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Androulla Vassiliou</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Luigi Frati</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Renato Lauro</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Guido Fabiani</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Paolo Parisi</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Marzia Foroni</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pavel Zgaga</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Michele Bagella</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Eric Corijin</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inga Bostad</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

Articles:

- Internationalisation at universities: problems and challenges 28
- The European mobility programmes: towards the 20% mobility by the year 2020? 36
- What is the role of university in the contemporary society? 44
- Unity and diversity in future of Europe: the challenge of multiculturalism 48
- Innovation, formal and informal education: can universities nurture the creativity of students? 54
- The Bologna Process and the development of the European Higher Education: quality, employability and social issues 66
- Student mobility and the enlargement and consolidation of the European Union 72
- High quality universities with low fees: is it possible? How to choose the best university to study at? 78
- Sustainable Development and Greener Universities 87
- Hard vs. soft skills - are European Universities providing graduates with both? 96

Reviewer’s Short Biography 98

Conclusions 99

At the Capitoline Hill 105
The Rome UNICA Student Conference 2010 marked the 10th anniversary of the organisation of this biannual event by the UNICA Network. It gathered nearly 300 students from more than 30 capitals of Europe, who spent four days examining and debating heatedly on the state of higher education in Europe. Their lively discussions, which often were given impulse by the presentations of experts and keynote speakers, showed that their genuine enthusiasm and intense interest in the discussed matters more than compensate for their lack of expertise.

Education may constitute a considerable force in overcoming the challenges our societies are facing nowadays. Through their deep involvement in the debates, the participants of the Rome UNICA Student Conference 2010 rose to those challenges and made a substantial contribution. I congratulate them warmly.

I would like to extend my most sincere congratulations to the organizers of the Rome UNICA Student Conference: University of Rome La Sapienza, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Roma Tre University and the partner university, University of Rome “Foro Italico” for the highly effective organization, carefully prepared programme and hard post-conference work, all exhibited by the document at hand.

Stavros A. Zenios
UNICA President
February 4th, 2011
Conclusions and results presented by students during the last UNICA Student Conference (Rome, 22-25 October 2010) embody not only a summary of the general frameworks followed by each group during the working sessions; but they also provide interesting ideas and emerging insights that can be discussed in the next future in our Universities:

**Universities are a crucial space for meritocracy:** they create opportunities for large group of people to advance socially and economically. Let us imagine the university as a social laboratory in which the students, following the instances of the Bologna process, could express themselves and cooperate together in order to play an active role in both the contemporary and future society. Our global society tends indeed to become more and more impersonal and, in this scenario, the university seems to be one of the few, if not the only environment in which people can interact and compare ideas. Such a university would be capable of transforming students into active and conscious citizens.

**University appears as a more and more profit-oriented company** with a risk of devaluation of diplomas and deterioration of level of studies; the excellence in education must not be based only on an elite’s formation, but in high teaching standards.

**Scientific research as function of increase of economic growth:** one of the key performance indicators considered to assess the role of education in a country is its spending in relation to productivity. For example, the average expenditure on tertiary education in Europe is just over 1.1% of GDP and the percentage of Italian expenditure is just over 0.8%. In Italy, costs for research and development approximately are 22 billion dollars (17.53 billion €). Italy ranks tenth in the international ranking after the United States, Japan, China, Germany, France, South Korea, UK, Canada and Russia. In percentage, Italy presents datum is 1.1% of GDP, lower than the average of European countries which is estimated at 1.8%; but higher in respects to countries such as Hungary, Poland, Greece and Slovakia.
Best universities related to expenditures made for students: an excellent correlation is evident from the international University ranking. Universities should also organize competitions between and within themselves in a bigger scale and in every field on an international level to foster creativity and give birth to new and original ideas.

Low fees are possible for high quality universities, also with state support as golden mean between free market and responsible public government intervention;

Expectations to the universities are highly demanding. An important presumption for the prosperity of Europe is a well prepared specialists who represents a great set of hard and soft skills. The result of education should not only be well-trained professionals, but university graduates must be fully conscientious members of society; whilst the lack of practical education should be reduced by providing practical training to students according to their curricula.

Quality, ranking and funding: in order to have a high quality university the attraction of best academics and students is needed. This can be achieved with a mix of increased competition more mobility and further financial resources. To enhance autonomy of universities, it is necessary to eliminate financial constraints through diversification of financial resources without reducing public funding.

Internationalization at universities should be an important focus for the universities of Europe, as it enriches the quality of education and provides students with richer course supply, language, social and cultural skills. An international university should value cultural diversity, inclusion, transparency and democratic participation. To be effective, it should be part of the university strategy at all levels. The strategies and action plans must address the challenges of internationalization in a constructive and pragmatic way. It is important that the money for internationalization is earmarked during the budget process.

UNICA participating universities are advised to have strong cooperation among international relations offices. Also the national governments should actively promote and encourage participation in European mobility programmes. Increasing the number of mobile students is essential for the development of the European youth since it creates personal and academic benefits. The 20% to 2020 goal is a visionary target to aim at: however, the quality and stability of the mobility programmes are more vital in contemporary society.

Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo
Chairman of the Organising Committee
Rome February 1st, 2011
Organising Committee

Chairman: Prof. Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo
Coordinator: Prof. Luciano Saso

Sapienza University of Rome
Antonella Cammisa, Head of the International Relations Office
Benedetta Cassani, International Relations Office
Maria Grazia Cornacchia, International Relations Office
Grazia D’Esposito, International Relations Office
Micaela Lepore, International Relations Office
Pietro Lucchetti, Student
Paolo Maniglio, Student
Marino Midena, Press Office
Gaia Peruzzi, Faculty of Communication Sciences
Stella Teodonio, Faculty of Communication Sciences

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”
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Luigi Vespasiani, Press Office

Roma Tre University
Alberto Apruzzese, General Affairs
Daniela Basti, Graphic Design Office
Mariangela Carrocia, Press Office
Corrado Casale, General Affairs
Alessandro Coffaro, Rector’s Secretariat
Marco Mattiuzzo, Ceremony and Protocol Office
Monica Pepe, Press Office
Adina Pop, International Policies Office
Prof. Roberto Pujia, Conference Coordinator at Roma Tre

University of Rome “Foro Italico”
Emilia Angelillo, Head of the International Relations Office
Federica Fagnani, Communication and Public Affairs Area Coordinator
Prof. Lucia De Anna, Rector’s Delegate for International Relations

www.unicaroma2010.it
<table>
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<th>Participating universities</th>
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<tr>
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## Participating universities

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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Universidad Complutense de Madrid</td>
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<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
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</tbody>
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1. Internationalisation at universities: challenges and problems.
   chaired by Marketa Tokova, former President of Erasmus Student Network.

2. The European mobility programs (Erasmus, Erasmus placement, Erasmus Mundus, Leonardo da Vinci, Marie Curie, doctoral programs, etc.): towards 20% mobility by the year 2020?
   chaired by Veeli Oeselg, former Vice-President of Erasmus Student Network

3. What is the role of university in contemporary society?
   chaired by Magnus Maines, European Students’ Union

4. Unity and diversity in the future of Europe: the challenge of multiculturalism.
   chaired by Ewa Krzaklewska, former Vice-President of Erasmus Student Network

5. Innovation, formal and informal education: can universities nurture the creativity of students?
   chaired by Christoph Bachmann, Erasmus Student Network

   chaired by Francesco Planchenstainer, Italian Bologna Expert

7. Student mobility and the enlargement and consolidation of the European Union.
   chaired by Karina Ufert, European Students’ Union

8. High quality universities with low fees: is it possible? How to choose the best university to study at?
   chaired by Sarah Walk, Academic Cooperation Association

9. Sustainable development and greener universities.
   chaired by Alice Cannone, former Erasmus Student

10. Hard and soft skills: are the European universities helping the students develop both?
    chaired by George K. Charonis, European Students’ Union
Programme

Wednesday 22 September 2010
SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME

10h00-14h00 Registration
13h00-14h00 Welcome and Light Lunch

14h00-15h00 Opening ceremony
Luigi Frati, Rector of Sapienza University of Rome
Renato Lauro, Rector of the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”
Guido Fabiani, Rector of Roma Tre University
Paolo Parisi, Rector of the University of Rome “Foro Italico”

Welcome addresses
Stavros A. Zenios, President of the UNICA network
Representative of the Students at the Universities of Rome
Message from Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth
Marzia Foroni, Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research; and Italian Delegate of the Bologna Follow Up Group

15h00-16h00 Keynote speech
Pavel Zgaga, Director of the Centre for Educational Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia: internationalisation at Universities: challenges and problems

16h00-18h00 Posters presentations
1830-20h00 Rome Through Students’ Eyes (by bus)

Thursday 23 September 2010
UNIVERSITY OF ROME “TOR VERGATA”

10h00-10h30 Welcome addresses and plenary session
Eric Corijn, Professor of Social and Cultural Geography, Free University of Brussels: Cities and Universities

10h30-13h00 Tutors Round Table: Developing UNICA European Campus
10h30-13h00 Student forums
13h00-14h00 Lunch
14h00-16h30 Student forums
16h30 Cultural activities
20h00 Dinner at the University of Rome “Foro Italico”
Programme

Friday 24 September 2010
ROMA TRE UNIVERSITY

10h00-10h30 Welcome addresses and plenary session
Inga Bostad, Vice Rector, University of Oslo: University in contemporary society

10h30-13h00 Tutors Round Table: Higher Education Reforms
10h30-13h00 Student forums
13h00-14h00 Lunch
14h00-16h30 Student forums
16h30 Cultural activities

18h30 Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill): Meeting of the UNICA President and Steering Committee with the Mayor of Rome

20h00 Dinner at Villa Mondragone

Saturday 25 September 2010
SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME

10h00-13h00 Final Presentation of the Student Forums, Rome declaration, Awards and closing ceremony
Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo, Chairman of the Organising Committee
Roberta Angelilli, Vice-President of the European Parliament
Maria Kelo, European Higher Education Expert
Maria Sticchi Damiani, Coordinator of the Italian Bologna Expert Group
Rectors of the participating Universities
Stavros A. Zenios, President of the UNICA network

Conclusions: Luciano Saso, Conference Coordinator, Rector’s Delegate for International Mobility

13h00-14h00 Lunch
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear students,

I would like to start by saying my warmest “Thank you” to UNICA for inviting me to be with you today. Unfortunately, I cannot be with you in person. I will have to rely on this message to show you all my support for your initiative, as well as my personal interest in your network.

To start with, I would like to commend your idea of launching an internet poll to select the topics for your conference. I think it’s a brilliant move, and the outcome is there to prove it. The ten topics that have emerged from your poll are a spot-on picture of the challenges and opportunities of Europe's higher education today.

Also, your decision to open the debate to your members through the Net reminds me of what we do at the European Commission. In the policy areas under my responsibility, every major initiative is prepared by what we call a 'public consultation' through the Net. We have received plenty of good ideas; but what I like most about these consultations is that they take full advantage of the civic potential of the Web. This is Internet at its best; a space for inclusion, engagement, and democratic participation to all.

I commend initiatives like yours, which stoke the debate on Europe's universities. I cannot think of debates that are more crucial for our future prosperity and social well-being.

Universities have always been vital for Europe's economies and societies, and they are more so in these times of crisis. Young people are being hit particularly hard by the crisis; among the other things, it is a shock for me to think that about one young European in five is unemployed.

A good study programme – exciting, challenging, and focussed on the students' job prospects – is the best insurance policy you can get against unemployment and social exclusion. And I'm not thinking about universities only; schools and training centres are just as important. All of Europe's systems of learning must be involved.

So – today more than ever – we need to reform our universities and research centres. And your ten topics have identified all the main reforms. Your keywords are internationalisation, mobility and multiculturalism. You also speak of innovation, hard and soft skills, and the Bologna process.

It seems to me that we are speaking the same language across the board. And let us not forget the most important issue of all. We need to persuade Europe's education authorities – that is, national and regional governments – to resist the temptation to cut higher-education funding as they struggle to rein in public spending. Let me make this point clear; I'm not calling for preservation of the status quo. Universities can save more money; they can become more efficient and should diversify their sources of funding. But universities remain vital for our future growth, jobs, and social welfare. Depriving them of resources would be short-sighted and misguided.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dear students, I'd like to congratulate you again for this initiative. Let me wish you a very productive meeting in Rome, and all the best for the future of UNICA. Thank you for your attention.
Dear Students,
Dear Colleagues,
Distinguished Guests,

I would like to welcome the over 250 Students and all of you who came to Rome for the UNICA Student Conference “Europe through students’ eyes”. Sapienza University was a founding member of the UNICA network which has reached now more than 40 universities from the Capitals of Europe. We appreciate all the activities implemented by UNICA in the last twenty years in different areas such internationalisation and mobility, higher education reforms, development of new policies and strategies, research and linking to Society and I would like to take this opportunity to confirm our strong commitment in all of them.

Sapienza University, the largest university in Europe with about 145000 Students, 5000 teaching staff members and 5000 administrative staff members, is accomplishing a new deep reform, according to the guidelines traced by the Italian Minister of Higher Education. They go towards a higher accountability and a strong evaluation of research and teaching even in the allocation of the budget to the Departments. Students’ needs and future are in the hearth of the reform and Students must be fully involved in the development and in the application of the strategies and policies of our Institutions. In this connection, we think the UNICA Student Conference is a very useful tool. In particular, I appreciate its format requesting the selection of up to ten students per country, asking them to prepare very well in advance and communicate online for several months before the final meeting. I read some of the abstracts they submitted for this conference and I was impressed by the originality of their ideas. I am now looking forward to hearing their final results at the Rome declaration which will be released on Saturday.

I would like to thank very much the Organizing Committee including several International Officers, Press Officers, Professors and Students belonging to the Universities of Rome “ Sapienza, “Tor Vergata”, “Roma Tre” and “Foro Italico.

I am sure this event will be very interesting, pleasant and productive for the Students and all of us. Welcome again to Rome!
Renato Lauro
Rector of University of Rome Tor Vergata

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you all to the tenth edition of the Unica Student Conference.
First of all I would like to thank the UNICA member Universities for being here and the Steering committee for organizing such an event.
In line with a conference which joins and blends the European University Capitals together, I am pleased to inform you that this event has been organised through its whole process by the four Roman public Universities together, in close and active cooperation.
I have always believed teamwork and joint efforts are great issues, and even more so during such hard times we are going through in Europe these days, both at University level as well as economic, cultural and political changes. Growth entails advantages and disadvantages, but times of crisis are best overcome if we stick together.
As European Universities we are aware of being a major force in shaping the Europe of Knowledge and of the responsibility which this brings. As a consequence we should be enabled to secure the resources which will permit us to fulfil our mission in a way which allows us to compete with the higher education systems of other continents. Moreover, European Universities are invited to help to shape Europe’s future and we welcome here this opportunity through your participation!
Students are the core of the University reform and the Unica Student Conference intends to give you the opportunity to express your opinions and ideas in the forum and in the final Rome declaration. I’m sure this document will have a strong impact in the future decisions concerning Higher Education policies.
The topics you will discuss during the meeting are very actual and relevant nowadays. Universities have an important social role in forming new generations of professionals, developing both their hard and soft skills and this conference is an expression of it.
The very title of the Conference “Europe Through the Students’ Eyes” stress the importance of the role you are invited to play in the following days.
In conclusion, I welcome you again and I wish you a pleasant stay in Rome and a fruitful and challenging Conference!

Guido Fabiani
Rector of Roma Tre University

Dear students, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon, I am delighted to be here with you today, for the opening of the UNICA Student Conference.
First of all, let me convey my thanks to the UNICA member universities, to the Steering Committee and Secretariat for their contribution to the organisation of the conference.
I am pleased to know that the universities of the capitals of Europe are represented in this event by almost 250 students. You have an impressive agenda for the next three days.
Debating on the role of universities in Society today is a complex task, when the pressure is greater than it has been for many years. We are all familiar with the challenges of the European Higher Education Area, and I know you will be dealing with these matters in the following days, in fact the topics selected are a keep representation of the various tasks we have to cope with. At the same time we are all aware of the consequences of the financial crisis within our universities, and I am sure this will be discussed in the conference. Nevertheless there are also more general issues to consider: - the direct contribution universities might make to the wider world of which they are a part, the strong belief that universities should ‘reflect’ that wider world, and should contribute to its progress, in a concrete and practical way.
Higher Education is a fundamental force guaranteeing sustainable development, economic progress and social improvement.
Universities are engines of progressive social
transformation, contributors to the wealth and prosperity of society; places to grow the new generations of engineers, doctors, lawyers (or whatever it might be)... I should probably just say capable and cultivated human beings.

You are here to discuss these issues and possibly offer decision-makers a declaration that reflects your point of view; a fundamental point of view, through our students’ eyes. Of course, this will take place in a very special location: the city of Rome, where old and new melt together in a singular mixture. It is a wonderful social, cultural, architectural and natural environment. Then there is the punctuality – but you can’t have everything.

I guess some of you have already visited Rome, some of you are here for the first time. Rome is a beautiful and rich city, it has a lot to offer to students and scholars and I truly believe that you are about to begin a unique and enriching experience on various levels. I can still recall my experience as student, the sensations and impressions. I therefore know that you will return home filled with newfound knowledge and enthusiasm, new perspectives and approaches, contacts, information and many other things. But more than anything else, it is that sense of permanent possibility that we carry away with us that makes these years so important. It also leaves us with one of the things most worth having in life: A mind and thoughts of your own.

Without any further ado, I thank you for being here today, and again, welcome to Rome, we are honoured to have you here and I wish you success on your deliberations.

Paolo Parisi
Rector of the University of Rome “Foro Italico”

It is a very great pleasure for me to join my distinguished colleagues, the Rectors of the three main State Universities of Rome, and welcome you all, students and staff from the various universities of Europe, at this important gathering.

My own institution, the Fourth State University of Rome, takes its name from the famous “Foro Italico”, a world-renowned monumental sport complex designed and built in the late 1920s for and around the National Academy of Physical Education, which, after several transformations, was recently upgraded into the newly established university of today. We have greatly diversified the original study areas and, although still centered on sport and movement, we have considerably expanded both teaching and research, from the classical areas of Physical Activity in Education and Sport Coaching, to a variety of new areas such as Wellbeing, Health and Prevention in relation to sport and lifestyle, or Sport Management, Tourism, Communication, Social Integration,
Cooperation, etc. Even so, that is why - though being a State university of a European capital to all effects - because of our recent origin, relatively minor dimensions, and largely vocational character, we are not yet part of the Unica consortium, which we however look forward to joining. But we greatly appreciate the possibility granted to us of being part of this event, along with our elder sisters -- Sapienza and Tor Vergata (in both of which many of us and I myself have taught for several years), and RomaTre.

That is particularly so because - precisely on account of our vocational focus on sport, movement, and the body, with the related emphasis on sport values and ethics -- we have a very special feeling for the young people and are very close and responsive to their energy, physical and intellectual, and enthusiasm.

We live a challenging time, in Europe and the world. A time of global crisis, which we very much experience in the university system but that affects all areas, the economy, the geopolitical system, individual societies and human society as a whole, indeed the whole planet and its frail and increasingly threatened equilibrium.

The role of the young generations, and particularly the role that can be played by you, the more motivated and committed students of Europe, is and will be crucial. It will be through your energy and determination, your eagerness for change, novel ideas, skills and creativity, that our society, our planet, our values will be changed and the future will be shaped -- a future that in fact largely belongs to you, who will live in it.

Be welcome, and enjoy the meeting and your stay in Rome.
Distinguished Rectors and professors, dear students,

it is very difficult to address such an audience with many expectations and more knowledge and personal experiences on Europe than we imagine.

In speaking to you, I have to bare in mind some facts which are taken for granted from your perspective but which are, for others, symbols of revolutionary changes. Let me spot few of them:

The first is freedom of movement. For many of you crossing national borders has been easier and cheaper, with low costs company and youth hostels. Hopefully future visa regulation will allow this to all of you. Consequently, you can more often meet people coming from different societies and cultures, you shall take advantage of the opportunities that other European countries offer you, and you will lay the foundations of the Europe of the future.

The second change is wider access to all kind of information through the internet and the spread use of technological tools. You are familiar with mobile phones, mp3 players and, of course, computers. You take advantage of the share of knowledge in “wikis” and can have an overview of many university campuses through satellite pictures. How can you be supported in making the best use of them, not only to have some good time off but also to improve your knowledge, skills and competences?

The third – but I recognize that is a bit more tricky – is the use of a single currency, for the ones in the € area. This factor makes you part of one market where exchange of goods and services involves so many organizations and firms that competition is hard and the range of possible choices is astonishing.

On the negative side, your future is not so rosy. I’m sure it will not surprise you if I mention the difficulties to enter the labour market, or if I refer to the fact that many of you or your colleagues might not be so enthusiastic to leave their hometown to find better opportunities. I assume that you feel the gap between your everyday life and a society which looks “old” and “elderly oriented”.

Far from being the magical wand against all the wrongs, higher education has a role to play in your future lives and careers. To be able to play it, universities and other higher education institutions must keep on innovating and adapting to the trends I just mention, and to many other maybe less relevant for you now.

Within the European debate on what educational system we envisage, the core missions of higher education have been enriched and systematized. In one of the most recent Ministerial Conference, Leuven/LLN 2009, Ministers affirm that (quote) “The aim is to ensure that higher education institutions have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes such as preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation”.

The first big step, back in 1999, has been the decision taken by Ministers for higher education that certain challenges can be faced only through intergovernmental cooperation. In the Bologna
Declaratıon, 31 Ministers affirmed that (quote) “A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space”.

This Europe of Knowledge is a system of easily readable and comparable degrees – thanks to the three cycle structure, the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, the frameworks of qualifications – where curricula are updated and students are at the centre of the learning process – thanks to the definition of reference learning outcomes, measurement of students workload, students participation in quality assurance.

Its main features are mobility of students and staff, full recognition of learning related activities - including the ones taken in mobility periods -, full recognition of academic qualifications and prior learning, attention given to employability and graduates career.

A central role is played by quality culture and quality assurance. The first one is the pre-condition for any qualitative assessment that universities and higher education institutions wish to undertake within their own structure. It encompasses open and active commitment, willingness to engage in such a process by the different decision making layers of the institution, clarity and consistency of procedures and, last but not least, effective follow up mechanisms.

Quality Assurance, instead, defines the system with which the aims of a certain activity are chosen and the related procedures are agreed, in order to guarantee its fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose, within a reasonable duration of time. It implies a constructive process towards improvements.

On another front, the European Union – despite its limited competencies on educational systems – tried hard to keep high in the agenda educational issues and financial support to the knowledge triangle (education – research – innovation and knowledge transfer).

Some achievement have been reached with the Lisbon Strategy and there are lots of expectation on the recently approved Europe 2020 Strategy.

Back from past to present. 2010 represents a turning point of the European debate: the commitment of the Bologna Process to create the European Higher Education Area has been quite successfully met. Last march, in Budapest and Vienna, 47 Ministers for higher education celebrated this important achievement.

Nevertheless, while celebrating, Ministers were well aware of the fact that not all the policies and tools agreed have been followed up and implemented at acceptable levels. It would be unwise for me to try to convince you, who live the everyday University life, that ECTS are used correctly, that there are no barriers to mobility and recognition and that the learning process is students centered.

The policy cooperation at the European level has been extremely intense and open to all stakeholders, higher education institutions, students, quality assurance agencies, European institutions, labour market and teacher unions. What shall be the guideline towards 2020 is (quoting again the Ministers in Budapest and Vienna)” the full and proper implementation of the agreed objectives and the agenda for the next decade set by the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué. In close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders […] We acknowledge the key role of the academic community - institutional leaders, teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students - in making the European Higher Education Area a reality”.

The first tests of this new bottom-up approach will be the match of the “202020 benchmark” (20% of graduates with mobility experiences by 2020) and the match of the hidden benchmark on the social representation of student body within higher education, which should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations Last but not least, and I sincerely hope that you will take this input in your work for this conference, all the true supporters of the European Higher Education Area, of its core values and innovative visions must improve their “pr and communication skills”. Too much mis-communication has been done around it, either by blaming the European Higher Education Area of failures it was not responsible for or by “throwing” it in the national context without adequate support, information, follow up mechanisms.

To conclude, I would like to share with you the conviction that students must contribute more to the realization of the European Higher Education Area. We have to take care of it and you have to make your voice and proposal heard.
With an occasional celebration in Vienna on 11 March 2010, 46 European countries mark that a common European Higher Education Area is now constructed. Yet, how does the reality of European higher education look like today; what are the main challenges and what should be the key considerations for future? The lecture tries to address these questions in an analytical way. First, internationalization of higher education is addressed in a historical context; its “neutral” definition (J. Knight) is discussed as well as the difference between internationalization and Europeanization. On these bases, the process of Europeanization of higher education is discussed more in details. The European Union HE agenda, in particular the importance and impacts of launching Erasmus and Tempus programmes is analysed. As the next step, we present the Bologna Process and its developments; in particular its strategy for “the external dimension”. In the central part we present some facts and figures on how is Europe performing in higher education today. Surveys and reports of the last few years are used which allow comparative insights both into countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as well as some other strong higher education players worldwide (e.g. USA, Japan, Australia, etc.). Four main issues are discussed: (1) educational achievements in population, entry, expenditure and graduation; (2) issues of employment and employability; (3) mobility, international students and (4) “attractiveness” of higher education systems (EHEA). This review allows for making some concluding remarks on European Higher Education strengths and weaknesses (focussing mainly on quality, qualification frameworks, diversification, academic excellence and the social dimension) as well as to address the key issues of further internationalisation of both individual European national systems as well as the common European Higher Education Area.
It is a great pleasure for me to give you all a warm welcome to the 6th Student Conference “Europe through students’ eyes” from September 22nd to September 25th 2010, organized by the UNICA network. The Faculty of Economics of the University of Rome Tor Vergata is honoured to host this important event that has attracted more than 300 students, that will discuss very important topics such as exchange programmes, Bologna Process Reform and so on. I hope that the discussions will provide important suggestions not only for the Academics, but also for those from public institutions, in view of the Policy Makers around the world. Therefore, I want to thank the UNICA network for this important opportunity to have so many scholars coming from more than 30 different countries at Tor Vergata.

The School of Economics at Tor Vergata is a Young Faculty. It is 20 years old, but from the first years of its activity, the School was oriented to the internationalisation of its degree programs. Today we are taken an important step in this direction. For this reason I want sincerely to thank the International Relations’ Offices of the Universities of Rome that have spent a lot of time and energy for the organisation of this event. To all of them, I want to express my personal gratitude and the gratitude of the Faculty for their work. I hope that their efforts will be repaid by the success of this conference. Welcome to Rome, thanks once again for being present, Welcome to Tor Vergata.

Enjoy the Conference.
Why not start with the United Cities of Europe?

The world is caught in a profound transformation process. The European unification process is both a reaction to and a part of that globalisation process. It has irreversibly shifted the balance between the world system en the system of nation states, that are not capable anymore of decisively regulating the processes on their territories. Globalisation takes place, it takes place in cities. In the beginning of the twentieth century only 10% of the world population lived in cities. In the beginning of the 21st century that is more that 50% and in the most developed continents it is up to 80%. In 2025 more than 5 billion humans will live in cities. Homo Sapiens becomes an urban species. Cities are also the centres of innovation and new economic activity. Those new economies tend to function in a space of flows, in a network of metropolitan nodes. All that changes fundamentally how we live and how societies are can be organised. We need to enter into a new mental map. The world is no longer only full of countries with their territorial range and their diplomatic international relations. The world system is also a network of interconnected world cities governed by their interdependencies. So we have to think cities as nodes for political and social reconstruction. We have to reformulate urban governance, urban democracy in the framework of global governance and global democracy. And we have to realise that a city is not a country, that urban culture is not a tradition, an identity but a constructed and hybrid culture. And that is why arts and innovation are so important in the creative city. These profound transformations challenge the European unification process. It is basically an interstate arrangement led by a single market dynamics. It is based on increased mobility, on free movement of capital, goods, services and persons. It accounts for half of the regulations of our daily life. But… social and cultural reproduction is still contained in the myth of the independent nation state. Education and cultural policies are dominated by national elites, are oriented towards integration in national communities. Intercultural thus becomes inter-national. There is no place for any form of “Europeanness”. But: a city is a place of strangers. Urban society is not build on cultural commonness, there is no gradual transition between “Gemeinschaft” and “Gesellschaft”. Cities are better equipped to produce the imaginaries that fit the realities of the European globalisation. Therefore we have to complement the European map of countries – with each their own flag, language, culture, traditions – with a new mental map that shows the centre periphery tensions in Europe, that render the interconnected metropolitan regions, that allows for intercultural intoxication. That is why I do present urbanity also as a mental state. National culture is based on a common history that stands for tradition and identity and can be represented in national institutions governing a territory. Urban culture is much more based on a common destiny, on a project for very differently rooted people. It is thus hybrid, mixed and under permanent construction. It is difficult to represent without a participatory democracy that allows for permanent coproduction of society. And it functions more in an interconnected network than within a container.

We thus have to deal with a cultural deficit in the European unification process. It is a state without a
nation. Market driven. With multiple national cultures. And with a weak ad hoc intercultural dialogue. It will not be possible to create a sense of European citizenship within that framework. There is no collective imaginary to relate to. So we have to consider “City-zenship”. Is not the European city the founder of the interconnected market economy, of the European world system and also of the idea of an autonomous citizen, part of a democratic rule? Maybe we have to think urbanity as a basis for European culture, for Europeanness. I’ll stop with a more general thought. It took us a century, the Century of Enlightenment, to think the possibility of living together without sharing religion. The separation of state and church, religious freedom, lay democratic state forms are considered to be foundational principles for the west. It is still a challenge in big parts of the world. We abolished state religion, but we introduced state culture. The nation state is based upon the idea of a common culture to ground the nation and to legitimize the state. It led to the 20iest century, to what Hobsbawn called the Age of Extremes, to two world wars, many national conflicts, and to the darkest episodes of human history. Is it not time to reconsider that principle and to think the separation between state and culture, to abolish state culture, to accept multicultural societies and states? It might be unthinkable as freedom of religion was in the beginning of the 18th century. We might think of the 21st century of a new Century of Enlightenment, the century of the city. We might try to imagine an archipelago of active regions, glocal societies in urban networks… We might consider urbanity as post-national culture. Be it only as an intellectual exercise. It might give us some tolerance.
In this lecture I connect some of the ideals and values of the university in contemporary society with the frameworks of our current quantitative society.

In his paper entitled “What are universities for?”, Geoffrey Boulton says that “The ‘Western’ university has been remarkably successful as a breeding ground for creative people, new knowledge and great ideas and as the principal location for national research bases. In continually supplying the innovative energies and instincts that are so fundamental to our future in the 21st century, universities have led the way in addressing the complex challenges of today’s national and global societies.”

According to Boulton the challenge for universities now is to articulate clearly what they stand for, to speak the truth to the authorities, and to be steadfast in upholding freedom and autonomy as crucial values to safeguard the future of society. The challenge for governments is to recognize and support these values with appropriate mechanisms of accountability that do not undermine universities effectiveness.

It is the entire university enterprise that is most important – not only the part that the government is willing to pay for. Human society is not segmentable in the sense that governments often want to support specific policy actions. It is a complex, interacting whole, which needs to be understood as a whole. But, what exactly is the core of the university’s “offer” or “utility” to society? It is, first of all, its students, according to Boulton. The minds of students, their general education, their ability to be analytical, ethical and critical.

Is it not precisely that ability to think independently, to pose critical questions, and their commitment and participation that characterize young people in Norway (which is my home country) as well as in Europe today. Much of our current education policy also based on double standards. On the one hand, education claims to promote inclusion and respect for the individual, investigative pedagogy and the ability to pose critical questions and make ethical choices, while, on the other hand, we are seeing more quantitative exams, final evaluations and focus on pre-defined learning outcomes linked to materialistic values – produced in society and in the society of the university.

In my lecture I also search for the correspondence between freedom and education, or freedom in education: What amount of the learning methods and curriculum ought to be selective and decided by the school, the single teacher or the pupil - and how much compulsory and part of a common culture and an historical-social canon? How should we open up the academic rooms for the students ability to think independently, to pose critical questions, make ethical choices and participate in the social debates?

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1 The lecture is based on my lecture held at the CESE conference Uppsala University Monday 16 August 2010; “Existential education and the quest for a new humanism: How to create disturbances and deeper thinking in schools and universities?”; and will be published in the proceedings of this conference.

2 Boulton, Geoffrey (2009); “What are universities for?” Lecture EUA Prague 2009, University world news, 3. August 2010
According to the French poet and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, it is even immoral to maintain inequality between the sexes, because it implies that both women and men are untrue to themselves. Disabled people are too in a situation where both the individual and the people representing them may experience a rigidity of roles and dependence that in turn obstructs their possibilities for self-realization. This freedom of choice in life, expectation and roles that forms us, these issues should also be a part of university education – at least sometimes and in general terms or universally phrased. So as to make the empathy Marta Nussbaum addresses in her new book Not for profit – why our universities needs humanistic values.

We are all unique and different, and therefore we all have different capabilities. It is my hope that we will get better at finding out what it is we are good at, even though we are different, and that we must get better at recognizing this diversity.

At the same time, we all know that we will have to face adversity at some point in life, sooner or later. That’s simply the way it is. It may appear that some people are successful in every area of life, but that is simply not the case. It just looks that way – from the outside. It is also good to have the strength to cope with adversity; having self-confidence and the self-assurance that I am not worth less if I fail. It is primarily our job as adults (parents, teachers, supervisors ...) to teach our children that it is essential to be able to cope with adversity and that no-one succeeds all the time. Not even us! We must dare to show our children that we too fail sometimes. Accepting defeat is also a great strength that proves that we know ourselves.

On encountering adversity, most people find that he or she is associated with others – and that our friends and family are the most important asset in life. Many people extol the virtue of “being yourself”. And indeed it is true in many ways – that each one of us must find out what we want, how we want to treat others, how we want to be perceived, and how we want to be remembered. At the same time, it is also misleading to say so. We are ourselves only in relationships with and in relation to others. We are connected to each other and the natural world around us – for better or for worse. This is something we cannot escape... It is a fact. But we also get to know ourselves through others; we look at our reflection in other people’s gazes and measure our own goodness, fairness and honesty in other people’s words and deeds. In this way, we are constantly learning new things about ourselves, by opening up to others.

Now, which values are going to shape the future? And, perhaps more importantly, which values ought to shape the future? These are major, complex questions, and it is challenging to answer them here in these self-realizing and excessively wealthy northern nations. In this lecture I try to demonstrated that philosophy and pedagogy are very closely related. Not least through Plato’s Academy we see a notion of general education or Bildung emerging related to the concepts of virtue or capability, and that mastering life is a matter of refining one’s personality or character. But in Plato’s ideal school, general education does not occur through passive acquisition of facts and skills, be it science, law or policy, but rather through self-knowledge where space is made for both learned ignorance and the conviction that insight and wisdom can be nurtured in every individual. In this platonics perspective - general education is about being deeply convinced of a claim, a reason or an argument, as opposed to being persuaded.

A person who is persuaded has accepted facts or skills without reflecting on them, whereas a person who is deeply convinced understands why and has a considered, personal, relationship to the knowledge they have acquired.

On the basis of this, we can say that the philosophical dialogue demonstrates how understanding and new insights can arise through the structure of dialogue, at the same time as we face the challenge of how the theories about the art of dialogue can be addressed or applied. Do we even want to liberate ourselves from false opinions? How much of our ethical ideals are expressed in our practice as partners in dialogue? Ought our ethical ideals to be reflected in our practice?

In other words, good dialogue or a good learning situation can teach us reverence, respect and how to take each other seriously, where taking each other seriously means striving to understand each other’s way of thinking and listening to what the other participant says with anticipation and curiosity. This all sounds very nice, but is it realistic? What about oppressed individuals who are neither interested in nor have the education or resources to participate in a learning dialogue? And what about language that serves to maintain class divisions, and culture and religion that distinguish us and separate us into social
ghettos? How easy is it to ensure reverence and respect then? And we have not even mentioned the difficulties linked to the widely held view that objectivity – that is, our views or perspectives from nowhere to paraphrases the American philosopher Thomas Nagel, provides the greatest insight into a problem.

On several occasions I have tried to argue for the existence of a camouflaged concept of knowledge that is currently lurking behind the rhetoric of the knowledge society. The Janus face of knowledge can be found both in governing documents such as the Norwegian Government's Research Reports and the Ministry of Education and Research's management-by-objectives perspective, and in the use of terms such as "learning outcomes" and "learning pressure". In this context, it is not only the short-term benefits that appear to be the objective of learning something, but the very idea of a formal, productive concept of knowledge. It is rather like the proverbial "sausage machine": with information being fed into the mind at one end, producing a quantifiable output at the other end that can be counted or weighed or evaluated. And if you increase the pressure at one end (an awful lot of learning), the process is accentuated and more is produced.

We have a responsibility to work with social scientific issues in teaching. What is important here is that science does not always provide answers since there are also social, economical, moral, etc issues that play a role in decision making. Once this is said, it is also important that we provide students with the capabilities to weigh arguments in light of science. This means that there is an important role for introducing "what we know" and "how we know" into the science classroom BEFORE we ask students to enter into discussion and argumentation. The scientifically literate citizen is one that will be able to seek information and process alternative arguments to scientific issues in society. However, once that is said, it is also naive to think that average citizens will have the expertise in science to "understand" all scientific arguments. Here we are over to ideas of who to trust, etc.

It is in this context that the concept of general education or Bildung as understanding, reflection and maturation becomes important. Knowledge without values is merely facts. It is my belief that at universities, which is my homeground – and the reason I was asked to chair the National Commission on General Education and Liberal Arts in Higher Education – there should always be open, critical reflection on what knowledge is. Or to put it another way, I believe that issues such as what different forms of scientific material be used for, how research can be applied and exploited, where the boundaries of knowledge lie, and how the norms of objectivity should be manifest, should occupy a central position. Encouraging questions like "what do you mean by that?" – "why and what are you telling me? Could it be the opposite?"

Indeed, I would even go so far as to say that the growing materialism we see in Norway today harbours a distrust of general, all-round education; and this combined with an increasingly one-sided view of knowledge as a value-neutral vehicle to meet a social need (such as the development of new vaccines, analysis of carbon capture techniques, etc.), provides a very poor seedbed for general education or Bildung. The idea that we shall prepare the next generation for self-determination, autonomy and critical reflection. How can we go about guiding, inspiring and handing over these kinds of skills? In this context, we must first distinguish between the goal and the means. The goal is to initiate qualified consideration and reflection on fundamental questions in science, morality and society; the means to this end can be various forms of underlying values, academic traditions, cultural heritage, knowledge traditions and canons – launching arguments and counterarguments! Being generally "educated" is a way of taking control of society and not become a "brick in the wall" or a person who merely observes the processes that are going on, but a skilled, knowledgeable person.

At the same time it is equally naive to believe that general education is free, that it sprouts and grows in every individual as long as we ensure that reflection is open and inquisitive. The social reproduction of education, not to mention the power relations that exist in all forms of learning, requires an understanding of existence and use of the cultural capital in society for instrumental perspectives on learning pressure and learning outcomes.

As the chair of the government-appointed Bostad Committee, I spent a year working on the formulation of a new objectives for schools, i.e. education from the first class in primary school through to completion of upper secondary school, including apprenticeships.

In this context, we asked the following questions:
What should the purpose of education be? What values should be upheld and promoted in modern schools, and what kind of views of learning, maturation and general education should teaching be based on? Are there any common values that the whole of society agrees on?

For me, it became increasingly clear that cultural heritage must be regarded as dynamic – that it shapes us and we shape it. The next generation’s cultural heritage will consist of the things we have been involved in giving content to and conveying – elements we have picked out and valued. Last, but not least, it was my opinion that cultural heritage is, if not cacophonic, then at the very least extremely polyphonic.

It was against this backdrop that we finally started working on the formulation of new core values. Once the committee put the existing text aside and began to formulate some concrete core values that were to provide a direction for schools and express common consensus, the process seemed to start moving forward of its own accord. Using this kind of starting point, we could allow the individual members of society to justify the values in their own way – on the basis of their own religion and beliefs. It was essential that schools should be based on respect for human dignity, intellectual freedom, charity, equality and solidarity.

At the same time, we wanted to emphasize that the principles of religious freedom and non-discrimination laid down in human rights conventions are absolutely fundamental to the objectives of education. Religious and philosophical freedom are protected by several human rights conventions that also ensure the right to teaching and education without preaching and indoctrination.

And it is important to regard values as processes, rather than static. Values for the future are primarily expressed in our actions and expressions, in experiences – not in empty slogans and worn-out clichés.

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4 The mandate also included kindergartens and the wish to ensure a coherent approach to underlying values and education from an early age and through to the end of upper secondary education. Here, however, I am concentrating on schools, i.e. the 13-year schooling from primary school, through lower secondary school and to completion of upper secondary school.
1. Introduction

Internationalisation is a largely recognised and known process. However, despite everyone using the term and drawing conclusions on its consequences and meaning for European higher education, there is no clear consensus on its definition, understanding, and benefits. Many scholars, such as Knight or Yang\(^1\), offer their own definitions and interpretations, which leads to the situation where the explanation of the whole process gets even more complicated.

Internationalisation was chosen as one of the discussion topics for the UNICA student conference in Rome (September 2010) in order to allow students - among the most important beneficiaries of internationalisation - to discuss the process as such, including its problems and threats. Therefore, the participating students decided not to go into the academic discussions on what internationalisation is and how it could be defined. Instead, they focused on the practical impacts, on the pros and cons of internationalisation, and on possible solutions to the most problematic aspects of this phenomenon.

This paper aims to cover and explain in depths the outcomes of the students’ discussions and bring more reasoning for the opinions voiced. The introduction will present shortly the current state of the art of the discussions concerning internationalisation, together with a literature review to help the reader find their way through the article. The outcomes themselves will depict the four most important sub-topics discussed during the conference: 1) languages and culture, 2) information and communication, 3) student mobility, and 4) financing (together with specialisation).

1.1 The context of internationalisation

The term internationalisation made its wide appearance in the discussion on education at the beginning of the 90s. However, it could be claimed that internationalisation is and has always been an inherent feature of any university which wishes to create and spread knowledge. Consequently, higher education has since its roots been internationally oriented and cooperative (Yang, 2002). Of course, with the strengthening globalisation and interdependence since the beginning of the 1990s, also the process of internationalisation became more visible and more of an interest for many higher education institutions around the globe. New possibilities for cooperation among higher education institutions opened and what had started as simple student and staff mobility developed progressively into a more significant and thorough collaboration.

\(^1\) Yang: “the awareness and operation of interactions within and between cultures through its teaching, research and service functions, with the ultimate aim of achieving mutual understanding across cultural borders” (Yang, 2002) Knight: “integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003)
Despite its wide use and agreement on its importance, there is a lack of a simple and all-encompassing definition of internationalisation. The term often refers to many different matters, dimensions and levels of the higher education (Yang, 2002), including development of curricula, student and staff mobility, research and teaching cooperation, programmes taught in foreign languages, and so on. Internationalisation is also strongly linked with the process of regionalisation and the increasing number of regional networks; as the cross-border cooperation is being strengthened, it fosters the international orientation of a university.

The non-existence of a single definition, however, does not prevent the universities and academia from recognising the importance of internationalisation. No university can nowadays exist without external cooperation and relations. Otherwise it would lag behind the overall evolution and trends. Indeed, according to the surveys of the International Association of Universities (IAU), universities from all regions of the world clearly see the benefits and importance of internationalisation. On the other hand, risks and challenges are naturally the other side of the coin. In the IAU survey of 2003, 96% of the respondents agree that internationalisation brings benefits, while 70% acknowledge also the related risks. More internationally oriented staff and students, together with improved academic quality were quoted among the most important benefits, while commercialisation of education programmes, increasing number of low-quality providers and brain drain were mentioned among the biggest risks of internationalisation (Knight, 2007).

One of the most cited obstacles to the internationalisation is the lack of finances, commitment and attention from national governments (Knight, 2007). Yang argues that this is due to the wrong understanding of the process of internationalisation (Yang, 2002). In many cases, it is interchanged with globalisation, which relies on the market competition. Thus, the governments leave quite some autonomy to the universities, limiting the funding necessary for international research, mobility and development projects. Missing national policies for internationalisation indicate additionally the lack of comprehension of the benefits that internationalisation brings not only to the institution itself, but to the whole society.

Higher education is increasingly international and it has been a topic of the utmost interest and debate since the beginning of the 21st century. Naturally, it is not developing in inertia but responds to the new realities of the globalised world and thus brings new challenges (Knight, 2007). A relevant example could be shown in the field of mobility. While mobility continues to be the key aspect of internationalisation, new forms of “mobility” are emerging ranging from distance education and e-learning to twinning programmes, and programme and institution mobility, i.e. direct investment of universities to build campuses and learning centres abroad (OECD, 2004).

It is also important to note that the developments of internationalisation in Europe are tightly linked to the Bologna process, which both triggered and defined the process of internationalisation among European higher education institutions. Although the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is an example to many regions of the world, it would be wrong to assume that all problems and issues have been successfully solved here. On the contrary, there are still challenges and obstacles, and the national governments, as well as all the stakeholders in the EHEA, will have to make a lot of efforts to overcome them.

2. Main issues in internationalisation

2.1 Culture and language

Culture

Working with other nationalities requires knowledge of their cultural backgrounds. And it is a truism: there is no better way of getting to know a culture than by actually studying and living in a specific country.
One learns a new language, comes up with new ideas and enriches themselves and their home country. Because of the huge cultural benefits, studying across Europe should be promoted. The increasing mobility of people within Europe in the past few decades has made cross-cultural communication even more important, and the integration of Europe has increased the internationalisation of education. This has created new educational demands for European societies, such as cultural training at an early stage for teaching staff. It also requires local students to be culture-sensitive, open-minded and aware of cultural diversity. While students who go to study abroad are usually open-minded and ready to learn about other cultures in advance, and they can mingle quite easily with other students, often the problem is rather that the local students are those who are less tolerant and sometimes reluctant to accept different nationalities “intruding” into their home country. The solution is to change the attitude of the local society towards foreigners and help them value the positive sides of cultural diversities. Education and greater cross-cultural knowledge is really needed to overcome the problems and challenges regarding cultural differences and possible cultural threats caused by the processes of internationalisation and europeanisation. Continued recognition of the importance of providing students and teachers with international and intercultural skills, while maintaining cultural diversity and uniqueness, can successfully bring higher education to internationalisation. This will subsequently also increase the trust and understanding among students and teaching staff all over Europe even in this current competitive context. Universities have the power to influence the whole process of studying in unity and accepting different cultures around us.

Languages

English language is the most “internationally” used and common language around the world. Respecting this world wide dominance of English language, giving importance to English as a lingua franca is a path to enhancing internationalisation of European universities. Students who want to go and study abroad can face big difficulties with learning the local language (especially at a sufficient level so that they can listen, write and, most importantly, understand the content of the courses taken at foreign universities). Discussing all the aspects of the language issue in order to find the most feasible solutions, the Forum has come up with several recommendations.

First of all, a universal possibility to attend content classes in English should be granted so that students can freely choose and take subjects they want at any European university. To accomplish that, students and teaching staff have to attain a high level of English in order for teachers to teach their subjects in English (as well as in the local language(s), and for students to understand the content of the courses taken at foreign universities). Discussing all the aspects of the language issue in order to find the most feasible solutions, the Forum has come up with several recommendations.

English language should be learned already in early age so that young people, potential future students and teachers, have the opportunity to gain an excellent knowledge of this language from early on. All films and TV shows should be shown in the original language with English subtitles. TV is nowadays still the most powerful media with the biggest possible audience. Spending even only a few hours per week watching TV, people can improve their knowledge of English by reading the subtitles. Learning English should be made easy (and rewarded) with free or affordable English courses. Many students do not work while attending high school or studying at university, and those who do, earn just enough to cover their living expenses. Therefore, English courses should be accessible to all students, and as a reward, free to the best ones.

At high schools, English language should be obligatory. This is the best way of teaching potential future students how to listen, think, understand and study in English. Standard English exams should be taken in the last year of high school. Implementing this measure in educational systems in all European countries will make studying abroad and applying for it much easier.

Educational materials in English should be made accessible and provided to students by universities. Those materials are essential if studying at European universities is to be made possible in both the local and English language. Due to the importance of English language, studying English within any degree programme should be made possible to any student who so wishes.
Accepting these recommendations and turning them into reality will make attending classes abroad easier for students. Or will it not?

The fact that it is relatively hard to learn a foreign language and that the knowledge of a foreign language is rarely as good as the knowledge of the native language has to be also taken into consideration. It is relatively more difficult for non-native speakers to think in English and thus, it is not easy to study all subjects in English. Hence, while maintaining measures for language issues with the purpose of making progress in the process of internationalisation at European universities, there should be awareness of possible loss of quality. Because of that, the measures should be chosen very carefully.

2.2 Information and communication

One of the primary challenges of the internationalisation process at European universities is the issue of establishing, maintaining and improving relationships between the different schools and between their student populations. Communication and information-sharing is primarily executed on a one-to-one basis, which is highly time-consuming and inefficient. This results in neglect and deterioration of relationships between the academic institutions as well as missed opportunities of collaboration. Moreover, students have difficulties navigating through all the information about universities and can find it inconvenient, or almost impossible to get in touch with other students around Europe.

During the discussions, the students expressed the need for a common “meeting place” for European universities and their students. There is a felt void in terms of means of communication and the conference strongly encourages a simplification of this process through the use of internet, which today is generally the most important communication tool in Europe. The Forum feels that this barrier is important to overcome in order to promote the process of internationalisation, and proposes thus the following:

Information platform for higher education institutions in Europe

Firstly, the Forum suggests creating a standardised communication and information platform common to all European universities. The purpose of this is to facilitate communication and information-sharing at different levels between academic institutions and also to provide practical information about universities to simplify the process for (future) mobility of students. The layout of the platform should be something in the spirit of Facebook, where universities can create their own “profiles” within a standardised framework. There should be specific categories (e.g. Programmes offered, Pictures, Rankings, Forum, Advice for exchange students etc.) which are not possible for the institutions to change in order to make the information easily recognisable and facilitate informal communication.

The Forum suggests that the platform can be accessed at 3 levels:
- Students (lowest degree of access)
- Researchers (medium degree of access)
- University staff and management (highest degree of access)

The purpose of this division is to provide relevant information to the actual user with a focus on this person’s area of interest. The platform could include (at all levels) also a feedback/rating system where students and staff on exchange can write comments (positive and/or negative) about the university. This is to achieve a higher degree of transparency and motivate the institutions to improve their practices. The basic and general information should also be accessible without the creation of a user profile to external users who might be searching for study or job opportunities. One of the primary functions of the platform should be to facilitate informal communication at all three levels and in a more inclusive fashion than is the case today by creating well structured forums where all can participate.
Due to the size and complexity of the platform, in order for the project to be successful it should be initiated by a central and high-powered body like the European Commission. Promotion, as well as integrative and educational measures, are crucial in the implementation of the project. The success of the initiative strongly depends on the full participation of most/all European universities. The goal is to make it the standard information platform for higher education institutions in Europe.

Training for International Relation Offices (IRO) staff

As more and more students are going on exchange, the role of the IRO staff is becoming increasingly important. This should be reflected in the recruitment process of new employees and their continuous professional training. Initiatives like international seminars and meetings as well as exchange opportunities between IROs would benefit all institutions and also the students who can enjoy high quality information and the international connections of the staff.

2.3 Student mobility

Student mobility can be understood as “a study period taken abroad, including all academic and social aspects involved” (European Students’ Union, 2007). Over the last decades, the international mobility of students has become a major policy in Europe (Kelo, Teichler & Wächter, 2006). However, with the increase of this process, it is possible to identify that there are still some problems and challenges to overcome. The current challenges in mobility relate, mainly, to the provision of information about visas, accommodation and courses; recognition of credits, degrees and qualifications; work placements and traineeships; and support to access and study for all students and in particularly, those with disabilities.

Firstly, regarding the availability of information, European students agree that there is a problem of attracting students and teachers to an exchange caused by insufficient information and motivation. Given this, there is a need for better trained staff in the IROs and for the creation of an online information platform that could facilitate information exchange, communication and cooperation between students, researchers and staff (see above). This would also lead to a better provision of information about accommodation and university courses.

Besides the problems of information, many students who intend to participate in a programme of student mobility face great difficulties in obtaining student visas. Smith (2006) called for a simplification and acceleration of the legal and administrative procedures for entry of non-EU students and researchers. The impact of national visa policies on mobility can be experienced by students from countries like Croatia, Russian Federation, Turkey, Albania and many others. Therefore, it is necessary that adequate information and support on visa issues is provided to facilitate access to the EU countries.

Another mobility hindrance concerns the students’ return to their countries: many students still face difficulties having their credits, degrees and qualifications recognised. Trends 2010 report (Sursock, Smidt, 2010) indicates that the recognition of credits remains problematic at 54% of institutions. It is hence not difficult to identify the need to improve smooth and flexible arrangements for academic and professional recognition.

Beyond those already listed, it is very important to consider the additional challenges and problems faced by students with disabilities. Within the emergent policies of inclusion, the number of students with disabilities pursuing tertiary education is growing, further challenging current thinking about how to support them and the capacity of schools to effectively meet their educational needs. According to De Anna, Arslan & Cupidi (2001), European mobility programmes have a low participation of students with disabilities and the majority of the universities do not encourage their international mobility. Universities need to promote initiatives to ensure the full participation of foreign and non-foreign students with disabilities in academic activities and mobility.

It is clear, therefore, that in the context of student mobility many challenges still need to be overcome and
The document discusses strategies to improve the mobility of students and the process of internationalisation. The Forum recommends initiatives such as improving visa systems, maintaining existing international relations, designing an international curriculum, and articulating efficient infrastructures for students with disabilities.

2.4 Financing and Specialisation

Two major topics are closely related to student mobility and internationalisation: financing and specialisation. These topics are crucial for achieving the 20% student mobility goal by 2020 of the Bologna Process.

**Financing**

It is essential to examine the financial support at universities. This includes funding for scholarships, teaching programmes, and research. The main issue is ensuring that financial support is sufficient for students to meet their needs, such as tuition fees and accommodation. However, current funding is insufficient, particularly for students from lower-income families. To address this, universities need more money earmarked for internationalisation. Examples of how to use this money include scholarships and support for research done in cooperation with other universities.

During the formulation of the Forum’s ideas, some problems emerged, such as the economic crisis and political legislation within national contexts. Universities have a dual role and rely on national budgets, which makes funding equal for all students challenging. A European centralised organisation is suggested to address this issue.

**Specialisation**

While discussing finance, the importance of specialisation at universities was highlighted. The main idea is to create specialised centres for certain degrees at select universities, while keeping Bachelor degrees more general. This approach could save money and provide an incentive for attracting international students.

The major idea is to establish specialisation at universities, focusing on Masters and doctoral studies, while keeping Bachelor degrees more general and delivered at many universities.
The main reasoning is that not every university necessarily needs to offer all programmes and study fields (especially if the number of applicants is relatively low).

The Forum suggests that those programmes would be grouped and concentrated to one higher education institution per region. This would allow savings at universities from where these minor programmes were moved. Additionally, one could expect increased mobility as interested students would have to go to study in another country or city in order to enrol in the programme they wish to attend. By localising specific programmes together at just few universities in the EHEA, the variety of courses and scholars within one programme could be improved and in turn, so could the quality of education.

Of course, the Forum realises all possible inconveniences connected to the specialisation. Therefore, there would be need for a survey which maps the current situation and localises specialised and minor programmes with relatively low number of participating students, and evaluates the possibilities of merging them into one programme at a limited number of universities. Additionally, it is also questionable how many universities should offer the specialised/minor programmes and which locations should be chosen to host them. Furthermore, there is a risk that the outcomes could be the opposite of those intended - that programmes with already small numbers of students would lose even more students due to the need to move elsewhere to study to subject in question.

On the other hand, if the specialisation and consolidations of degrees proves successful, it could bring considerable savings. This money could be used for improving other programmes remaining at the universities, or could be given as financial support to students who want to (and are “forced to”) pursue the specific degree abroad.

It is clear from the examples above that finances and specialisation could be highly related. Making one a solution for the other could be a positive driving force for mobility - another challenge of internationalisation. Once students have become more mobile, universities will be able to specialise more.

3. Conclusions

The recommendations of the Forum are directed by students to the governments, rectors, administrators, staff, teachers and students to build an inclusive higher education area where the participation of all is secured. The main topics of the Forum - languages, information and communication, student mobility and financing and specialization - are all very important for achieving the process of internationalisation between universities. English as a common language used in EHEA, as well as universities offering courses in English is a necessary prerequisite to facilitate communication and exchange between universities. Knowing the culture and different educational systems of universities of Europe through the language is the main aim.

However, to improve the information transfer and communication between universities, the Forum calls for an online communication and information platform. This platform would provide the universities with a highly professional and efficient tool for exchange of information and peer learning. It would also improve the student mobility as students could easily find out about programmes of universities and choose more easily the correct educational path. Additionally, students who are better prepared and knowledgeable about their study abroad period could benefit more and learn more not only at the university, but especially about the country and its culture.

To make sure that mobility is accessible to more students, it is necessary to improve and secure stable financing. Suggestions are there. However, what is more important is the commitment of universities and governments through which they would show their clear understanding and support to student and staff mobility - as they are among the most important indirect beneficiaries of the mobility and internationalisation.
References

European Students' Union, Bologna at the finish line: an account of ten years of European Higher Education Reform. Laserline, 2010
Introduction

The European Union gives a lot of emphasis on education. In particular, with involvement in the intergovernmental Bologna process, the EU has taken many steps in supporting the integration of the educational systems of its member states. The key means of the EU to support this educational integration are the wide-range of mobility programmes like Erasmus, Erasmus placements, Erasmus Mundus, Leonardo da Vinci, Marie Curie, etc. that enable students at higher education institutions to spend a period of study or placement abroad.

Rather than being an exception, as is currently the case, learning mobility should become a natural feature of being European and an opportunity open to all young people in Europe (Promoting the learning... 3: 2009). Especially, because thanks to learning mobility young people from all over Europe can exchange ideas, cooperate, learn from each others, gain new knowledge, and achieve mutual understanding. International mobility experience is of immeasurable value for the academic and personal development of young Europeans.

However, even though the Bologna Process, together with the mobility programmes, has certainly pushed positively student mobility, much remains to be done to increase the percentage of mobile students. Not only that the benefits of learning mobility have to be promoted among the students, but the problems, which have remained in the European education area ever since the launch of the first mobility programmes, have to be finally solved.

1. Status quo of European student mobility

In 2009 the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education stated that in 2020 at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) should have spent a study or training period abroad. Learning mobility as such was seen as a way to strengthen the academic and cultural internationalisation of European higher education. Moreover, mobility was recognised as an important opportunity for individuals' self-development and employability. (The Bologna Process... 4: 2009)

The European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) enables people at all stage of their lives to take part in stimulating learning experiences through its sub-programmes which fund projects at different levels of education and training in Europe. The most known of these are Comenius for schools, Erasmus for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training, and Grundtvig for adult learning. For the timeframe 2007 to 2013 the LLP has a budget of nearly €7 billion. (The Lifelong Learning ... 2010)

In 2010, the European Commission launched a new flagship initiative “Youth on the Move”. The initiative aims at helping young people to gain knowledge, skills and experience they need to enter the labour market successfully. Part of the EU's new Europe 2020 strategy, “Youth on the Move” proposes concrete actions aimed at making education and training more relevant to young people's needs and encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country. (Youth on the Move - promoting... 1: 2010) This initiative can be seen as a strong step towards reaching the 20% of mobility by the year 2020.

However, there appears to be still a lack of progress in mobility, despite the fact that concrete goals are set for the learning mobility and the needed conditions are created with different mobility programmes. The EHEA
member countries are not jointly working towards the set overall target and therefore cohesion may seem to be missing in tackling the present barriers in mobility. (Bologna with student... 8: 2009)

Learning mobility is nevertheless highly beneficial, as it leads to self-development through development of new linguistic and intercultural competencies (Youth on the Move 2010). Mobility brings citizens closer to one another and improves mutual understanding. It promotes solidarity, the exchange of ideas and a better knowledge of different cultures, which helps to combat the risks of isolationism, protectionism and xenophobia that arise in times of economic crisis, and thus leading to a deepened sense of European identity and citizenship among young people. Mobility can also strengthen Europe's competitiveness by helping to build a knowledge-intensive society, as it boosts the circulation of knowledge. (European Quality Charter 1: 2006; Promoting the learning 2-3: 2009)

A number of barriers persist, however, that keep many young people from even considering a stay abroad: time pressure to finish their studies or training, jobs, lack of funding, lack of language skills and intercultural knowledge, as well as a general reluctance to leave their home environment. (Promoting the learning 7: 2009)

It is doubtful, whether the 20% mobility target can be reached by 2020, if these barriers are not tackled in an appropriate way.

Before the launch of Youth on the Move, a wide-scale consultation of the public and stakeholders active in the Higher Education Area was conducted by the European Commission with the Green Paper on Mobility in 2009. From the collected recommendations, relevant ideas for overcoming the existing obstacles in learning mobility and help to improve the overall mobility conditions for students could be drawn.

It is recognised that the quality of information and guidance on national and regional mobility opportunities and grant availability should be improved, both within and outside the EU. Member states should make use of new, creative and interactive ways to disseminate information and communicate with young people, including using ICTs and social networks, which are regularly used by youth. (Youth on the Move 10: 2010) Moreover language barriers were acknowledged. Linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility should become a core part of curricula by using also more creative methods for the delivery of language learning. One more barrier highlighted during the consultation are the financial constraints in mobility. Portability of grants and loans should be ensured. Furthermore, it was realised that the obligations of the sending institution are not finished with the end of the study period abroad, but the guidance to mobile learners should continue after their return with support for reintegration. (Youth on the Move 11-12: 2010)

Evaluations show also that despite longstanding arrangements, too often students who have undertaken learning mobility periods have difficulties in getting the recognition they had expected. According to the PRIME study of the Erasmus Student Network, only 2/3 of the Erasmus students – with a valid Learning Agreement signed prior to their stay abroad – had their courses fully recognised afterwards. Almost 30% received partial recognition leaving a minority of about 4% with no recognition at all. However, according to PRIME higher education institutions, an average of 3/4 of their outgoing students is expected to get full recognition. (PRIME 2009 8: 2009) This damages those who are directly concerned and will clearly reduce enthusiasm for learning mobility more broadly. Young people need to be confident of a positive outcome of their period of mobility, otherwise they will be discouraged from participating in the learning mobility. (Promoting the learning 7: 2009)

In conclusion, the European Commission has taken the right direction with involving the wider audience and relevant stakeholders in the consultation on development of the EHEA and improvement of existing mobility programmes. Even though the target to reach 20% of mobility by 2020 has been widely recognised, there are still several barriers to overcome, which are blocking the development process.
2. Reaching the 20% by 2020

At the UNICA Student Conference 2010 in Rome, the students discussed the target to reach the 20% mobility by the year 2020 with the aim of working out a suitable strategic framework from the perspective of the mobile youth. It was debated if the goal is not too ambitious in the current economic circumstances.

Main components in the framework of increasing the mobility should be the benefits that mobile students gain from the study or training period abroad on the one hand and the challenges that students have to face with learning mobility on the other hand. Moreover, from the students’ perspective the actual goal should not lie in the quantity of mobility, but rather in the increase of the quality and stability of mobility. If a high quality of mobility experience is secured, more students will want to go abroad. Thus, the quantity will also increase and reaching the 20% goal becomes more realistic. And on the other hand, higher quality brings more benefits. Therefore, to tackle the 20% target, first the benefits from learning mobility have to be defined for the youth and solutions for the challenges found.

2.1 Benefits of mobility through the eyes of students

The most important thing for mobile students is that the benefits from the study or training period abroad are attainable. However, too often the benefits of learning mobility may not be sufficiently understood among young people themselves (Promoting the learning 7: 2009). From the students’ perspective, the main benefits are connected with self-development. Thus, benefits like strengthening the European economical area or improving the mutual understanding are left in the background. Therefore, in the promotion of the different mobility programmes, the personal benefits should be highlighted. From the academic perspective, the value of mobility lies in the academic diversity and eventual higher quality of courses. Moreover, students acknowledge that thanks to studying in a foreign university, they experienced new and often more efficient ways of studying. A further benefit is of course the improved language skills.

In spite of the fact that the academic side of the mobility is in the center of all mobility programmes, for students the main benefits of mobility are connected to the development of soft-skills. It was stressed that thanks to a period abroad cultural diversity and awareness can be fostered. The experience helps to get a wider perspective of Europe, break stereotypes on different nationalities, and create a more objective image of your own country. Students who have participated in mobility claimed to have achieved as a result of their experience a higher self-esteem and more self-confidence. They learned to act independently and be more flexible when it comes to managing new situations, as well as being more social and creating new contacts.

Therefore, the benefits can be categorised as academic and personal. These should be seen as core of the mobility experience, which motivates students to spend a period of study abroad. These concrete benefits have to be enhanced and elaborated, as this will increase the quality of the experience and can lead to increased participation in mobility.

2.2 Challenges to overcome

In order to create value from the learning mobility to the students, the benefits have to be more substantial than the input. The input of students can be quantified as the challenges and problems which they have to face and overcome in order to take part in learning mobility. These barriers should be decreased in order to be able to reach the 20% by 2020 goal.

By analysing the current situation in the EHEA and the conditions of mobility, the following problematic areas can be defined:
By analysing the problems in the concrete areas, strategic recommendations for improvement of the mobility programmes can be made.

**Provision of information**

Lack of provision of sufficient and useful information about the European mobility programmes has hindered the participation of many students. Three main sources of information were defined by the forum: universities (staff and students), the Internet, and the government.

First, universities should actively participate in advertising mobility programmes among students, and in encouraging them to spend a year or semester abroad. In addition, students who have already participated in mobility programmes should promote the benefits of the experience within the student body. Universities are the central entities where ideas are spread and therefore more efforts should be focused on educating the staff on how and what kind of information should be provided to students concerning learning mobility. For this purpose, a relevant department or office (depending on the size of the university) should be assigned with the sole task of promoting European mobility programmes, providing students with information about how to apply for them and how much funding is available, and providing students with general support prior to their departure for the host universities.

Not only universities but also national governments should actively promote and encourage participation in European mobility programmes. In order to stimulate an increase of student mobility at the national level, the government of every European country should take the initiative to promote mobility. Even old-fashioned methods of propaganda are not excluded. For instance, wide media campaigns on the television and radio, or bill-boards with posters on the highways, are only some examples of how the government can facilitate the recruitment of students for mobility programmes. It is important to stress the opportunities which learning mobility offers to young people. The previously defined benefits should be advertised on popular channels and communication networks such as Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and so on because their audience is mainly composed of young people.

The Internet is a vital source of information for the young generation. This is why a general website with all the information about mobility programmes should be created. It is important that participants and prospective participants in mobility programmes have a handy source of information, which includes information on all issues ranging from how to apply to where to turn for help in the city of the host institution. Therefore, it is essential to compile a website with all the information needed to respond to all questions and concerns that prospective mobile students might experience.

**Organisational arrangements**

Careful preparation is the key to successful learning mobility and has to be at the heart of any project or programme. When young people are exploring mobility opportunities, they need access to information on options and funding, and guidance regarding their choice and on practical issues. (Promoting the learning 6: 2009) The main problems concentrate on the practical arrangements before and at the start of the mobility period. This is often caused by bureaucratic procedures at sending universities or lack of competent staff at the faculties.
Before the mobility period, when a student gets interested in European mobility programmes, they may not get the qualified and needed support and advice by the faculty coordinators. This can lead to the loss of interest for the student. Another recurrent problem is the lack of staff: in some cases one coordinator is responsible for an entire faculty, which is however not enough to provide the needed support and administrative help for all outgoing and incoming students. Thus, the universities should balance the relation between the number of mobile students and employed coordinators per faculty. Moreover, it is highly beneficial if the coordinators have had themselves an international study experience, as in this case they will understand the needs and problems of the students better. As was mentioned above, the support should not be targeted only to outgoing students, but also to incoming to help them integrate in the host country and to the returning students to help them reintegrate after their study or training period abroad.

A good way to enhance the satisfaction of foreign students is by offering them activities and support through the whole semester. Mostly, universities do not have the needed human or time resources for that and thus, following the example of many European universities, volunteer student organisations (like ESN or AEGEE) can be created, to offer services to international students. Even Students’ Unions can be involved in the work with international students to help them integrate to the host community by getting to know also local students. Moreover, the contact with international students can lead to increased motivation to study abroad among the local students.

As the last organisational constriction, accommodation is still a major problem for exchange students. If there is uncertainty about accommodation at the host university, the students may turn down the mobility opportunity. It is clear that universities have problems with providing dormitory places for all incoming exchange students due to limited number of places, but in an ideal situation, each incoming student should receive a place in a dormitory. Nevertheless, even if this may not be possible, universities should be obliged to help the incoming students to find accommodation at an affordable price.

Language barriers

Even though the foreign language skills of young Europeans are constantly improving, language barriers persist as a topic in the mobility discussions. The problem does not only lie in the low number of courses thought in English and the unequal level of language skills of exchange students, but also the unpopularity of the not so wide-spread European languages.

On the one hand, English could be promoted as the common European language of higher education. Universities could be stimulated to provide all their courses or at least as many as possible in English to guarantee that every European student is able to spend a semester abroad without having to learn another language in addition to English. On the other hand, students should be motivated and encouraged to learn the language of their host-country so that they are able to follow the courses in the national language. This would mean that language preparations should already start at least one semester before the stay abroad by taking intensive language courses at the home university so that students leaving their home country are able to communicate in the national language of the host country.

There are a lot of pros and cons for both solutions. As an example, there is no doubt that English is the dominating world language, at an economic, political, as well as at an academic level. Furthermore, almost every European student learns English already in elementary school which makes English usually the first foreign language of young Europeans. Moreover there are some serious concerns of countries where a rather small language is used even though at the same time Europe’s linguistic diversity is a key part of its richness and it is important to ensure that countries with less spoken languages are also promoted as mobility destinations (Promoting the learning 8: 2009).
Therefore, the choice is between unification and diversification. Unification would be without a doubt easier to implement, as nearly every European student speaks English at a relatively high level, and English has already become the world-wide spoken academic language. Even though it is more complicated to achieve diversification in the European university system, it should be supported. As a result, there are two recommendations which should be implemented. On the one hand, universities should be obliged to provide a certain percentage of their courses in English as well as offer basic language courses in every European language used in the countries where its students can go on an exchange programme. On the other hand, students should be obliged to learn the national language of the country they are going to before and during their stay abroad and attend at least one language course, and even better, a lecture in the national language. From this it follows that several points concerning student mobility have to be changed and improved. As such, students should have already at their home university a greater variety of languages to learn. The basic language courses should be free or at least easily affordable for all students. The host-university should be obligated to provide accompanying language courses and it should also set up a tandem system. This is already done in several European countries.

It seems quite clear that these measures would shortly result in a perceptible increase of student mobility because the language barrier which often leads students to set aside the possibility of doing a semester abroad would be eliminated.

Financing

Regardless of the statement of the European Commission that in the context of current international economic crisis the investment in education and training is crucial, financing of learning mobility remains still a problem (Promoting the learning 2: 2009). The optimal solution would be to provide education that is free of fees and charges and therefore accessible to all socio-economic groups (Bologna with Student Eyes 12: 2009).

The limited financial support through the scholarships of the European mobility programmes is the main limitation for many students to go abroad, as they often cannot work in the host country to finance the study abroad, the parents cannot support them, and they do not want to take a loan for a short-term exchange experience. This is especially the problem for students from lower-income families or countries. On the other hand, should a student work in the host country during the exchange period, the academic achievements might be damaged due to this. A solution to this could be rewarding students for academic achievements before and during their exchange period. This would motivate them to study more at the host university and would reduce the financial problems.

Therefore, a fair financing system, which considers the income level of the home country together with the student’s academic achievements, is required to improve the existing scholarship system. This requires two changes. First, a fund should be added to the existing financing structure of the exchange programmes in order to provide extra support to students from low-income European countries. Second, this fund should be distributed according to two criteria: academic performance and family income.

Quality in mobility

As already mentioned before, doubts regarding the quality of the exchange experiences through the European mobility programmes is discouraging some student. With an increase of the quality, the number of students participating in mobility programmes could be increased and the 20% by 2020 objective could be reached. Although all the defined benefits and already described barriers (e.g. organisational arrangements, provision of information) are influencing the quality of mobility, there are two relevant factors that have not been mentioned, yet. These are the recognition of courses and unbalanced mobility.
The Erasmus Student Charter (2010) states that Erasmus students are entitled to expect full academic recognition from their home university for credits achieved during the Erasmus study period, in accordance with the Learning Agreement. However, as the PRIME 2009 survey findings show, this is too often not the case.

Before undertaking mobility for education or training purposes, a learning plan, taking account of linguistic preparation, should be drawn up and agreed by the sending and hosting organisations and the participants. However, the persons signing the Learning Agreements are usually not the same who will have to recognise the courses and credits after the study period abroad. Therefore, the overall coordination at the universities should be improved and the professors should be involved from the initial state of the learning mobility preparations of a student. Another problem can be that the students just do not posses the needed information about their rights or the regulations. The coordinators at the university should provide special guidance on this matter. However, the main point is that the Learning Agreement should be also seen by the students as a binding contract the content of which has to be respect and students have to fulfil their obligations that arise with signing of the agreement.

Secondly, a drastic increase in mobility could be achieved, if the issue of unbalanced mobility could be solved. Currently there are some more popular countries that have more incoming students than outgoing students, and others where the situation is the opposite. In order to prevent such imbalances, European governments should work in close cooperation with each other in order to achieve a coordinated Europe-wide strategy. This means that national campaigns advertising European mobility programmes should be coordinated at the EU-level. Governments should focus their efforts on promoting specific countries which are not so popular among students for various reasons, e.g. uncommon national language, not very good reputation of the universities, not very high standard of living, and so on. This problem should be addressed in the government campaigns which should convince students about why and how they can benefit from spending a year or a semester abroad in a country which does not receive many international students. The campaigns should be clear-cut in order to communicate to students that mobility is a key to their success in the future.

Furthermore, to achieve improved quality assurance, better involvement of students in the process is required (Bologna with Student Eyes 2006). They can give the most accurate feedback and input on the improvements needed and therefore should be seen as important partners in quality assurance.

3. Conclusion

Increasing the number of mobile students is essential for the development of European youth since it creates personal and academic benefits. The 20% by 2020 goal is a visionary target to aim at. However, the quality and stability of the mobility programmes are more vital in contemporary society. There are still several challenges to be overcome in order to secure the increase in mobility.

Not only universities but also national governments should actively promote and encourage participation in European mobility programmes, while working in close cooperation with other European countries in order to achieve a coordinated Europe-wide strategy.

A fair financing system is required to improve the existing scholarship system, and this requires two changes. First, a fund should be added to the existing financing structure of exchange programmes in order to provide extra support to students from the poorest European countries. Second, this fund should be distributed according to two criteria: academic performance and family income.

Increasing the number of participants in mobility programmes is a worthy goal but we should make sure that
quantity does not reduce the quality of the education or the mobility experience. Quality starts with good selection. Future participants in mobility programmes should be proficient in the appropriate language for their studies. Furthermore, Erasmus students should not be positively discriminated academically but treated as equals with local students.

In order to solve the problem concerning the recognition of courses attended abroad, professors must commit to the learning agreement, and they should be required to sign it before the student’s departure. The learning agreement must be a binding contract for both parties.

The students should be able to benefit from language preparation both before their stay abroad and at the host universities. In addition, the European Commission should promote language programmes, such as the tandem programme. The universities should also be stimulated to offer more courses taught in English as well as encourage students to participate in mobility programmes in countries speaking uncommon languages. The students should be able to benefit from language preparation both before their stay abroad and at the host universities. In addition, the European Commission should promote language programmes, such as the tandem programme. The universities should also be stimulated to offer more courses taught in English as well as encourage students to participate in mobility programmes in countries speaking uncommon languages.

The European Higher Education Area has made through an enormous development in the last years and even bigger changes are ahead. However, the students’ point of view should be taken more into account. Some of these recommendations worked out by them are currently existing policies but they must be brought into practice in order to increase student mobility and the quality of education.

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1. Introduction

In the following chapters the authors examine the various roles of today’s universities. Four different aspects are discussed: the mission of education, the autonomy of universities, the responsibilities of universities, and the relationship between universities and academic excellence. The universities are seen as essential fragments of contemporary thinking and societies – both these days and in the future.

2. The mission of education

In a few words, the XIX century theologian, John Henry Newman managed to underline the mission that higher education must accomplish in order to play an active role in shaping the contemporary and future society: “University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind.” Nowadays there are some very important challenges that threaten the future of education in contemporary society. They can be contextualised in three directions. Firstly, ivory towers exist between universities and the society as well as between professors and students. Furthermore, the lack of practical application of knowledge leaves students unprepared for facing the labour market. Lastly, the education systems’ void in transmitting moral values slows the pace of the development of society.

Within the framework of the increasing pace and speed of today’s social changes, the mission of education and of the university in particular, is to achieve a two-fold objective. First of all, it must transmit culture by spreading the knowledge created thanks to research in both scientific and humanistic fields. Secondly, university should enable students to develop critical thinking to understand society in depth and to be used as a compass in order to orient towards a positive evolution.

In order to achieve these two goals academic institutions must free themselves from an “ivory tower” attitude which generates a dichotomy, on the one hand between professors and students and, on the other hand, between university itself and the society. The first one could be eliminated by a deeper involvement of students in the research process in order to take advantage of the energy and the innovative mental approach typical of the young generation. The second could be overcome by emphasising, both in the press and the media in general, the significant contribution that academics can provide to the society by means of their proposals and scientific achievements.

Practical education should be implemented in the curricula of universities to reduce the number of graduates who plunge into careers without the abilities necessary for the labour market. As a result, universities should offer their graduates a day or at least an hour in a working environment. This can be achieved by conducting an agreement between the university and a company or an organisation. The exposure of students to a working environment can be done in a time-sparing and cost-minimising way. Graduates can be allowed to observe the daily work of employees without disturbing their daily routine and at the same time without causing any

1 John Henry Newman, Idea of a University, Dublin, 1852, p. 178
thus able to choose their career path more easily, but it will also help employers in the selection of their personnel. Thus the implementation of practical education in the curricula is important for redefining and strengthening the role of universities in contemporary society.

To fill the void of education of moral values universities should incorporate an ethical approach in the education process of every single student. It is crucial that universities still preserve their fundamental functions in teaching social justice and nurturing values. These values cultivate a more just and righteous society. Universities can incorporate the education of values by exposing graduates to the study of psychology and philosophy. Thus even engineers and medics would be taught to think not only rationally but also honorably.

University is a fundamental pillar of society, but it is able to play such a role only if involved in an osmotic process within the society itself. If the important challenges that threaten the future of education are resolved in the proposed way, then the labour market and society as a whole would benefit more from the new graduates who would not only be very well trained professionals but also fully conscientious members of society.

3. Who should define the role of contemporary universities?

Universities must be allowed and enabled to define their roles autonomously. Nevertheless the expectations of several stakeholders and the increasingly important civic role of higher education institutions must be taken into account. In order to achieve both, we propose increased student participation in the governing bodies. Furthermore civil society representatives should also be involved in those bodies in order to better involve universities in the society and prevent the development of the oft-quoted “ivory towers”.

In this context, elimination of financial constraints is important for universities to independently define and pursue their roles. Diversification of financial sources, not going together with decrease in public funding, is essential to reduce the dependence of the university from each financing agent. The overall funding should allow strategic financial planning by employing either multi-annual budgets or project finance. In general, if a national government puts forward the goal of having independent, high-level academic institutions, the necessary public funding together with a minimum of political interference will be inevitable in most cases. These efforts however are likely to attract top-level scholars to the universities and therefore will massively benefit the country’s society and economy in the long run.

One big problem that arises automatically when it comes to privately funded education is the exploitation of universities by the funding source, in most cases the industry. For example, curiosity-driven basic research could be redirected to meet the immediate goals of private companies and laboratories. Here, a close monitoring of the sponsor’s interests and influence by the aforementioned academic governing bodies is essential, to keep the responsibility of defining the role of a university within the institution itself. Academic, student, and civil society representatives in the governing structures should be enabled to exert this role.

Taken together, we think that it is a necessity to equip universities with appropriate governing bodies, funding, and political freedom to independently define their roles. If these measures are carried out in an effective way, the country will benefit sustainably from such institutions not only in an economic but also intellectual way.
4. Responsibilities of universities

Universities can be seen as problem solvers. They are bound to constant academic research, with the objects of the research varying from theoretical to practical phenomena. Therefore the universities can be seen as potential expert bodies, when forming relevant scientific information about both local challenges (e.g. local education system and taxation) and global crises of our time and future (e.g. climate change, financial crisis, global inequality and limitedness of natural resources) – as well as creating conceivable proposals for action. On the other hand, a democratic will-formation requires that the universities are also able to provide scientific information about both local and global issues to the public - via the contemporary media. The holistic problem solving processes of various phenomena pose a demand for involvement of scientific expertise for the political will-formation. Academic researchers are needed as scientific experts – informational sources – in the decision-making organs; where necessary, they would also able to challenge backward-looking, questionable habits that might endanger the sustainable development of our societies. As an example of the problem solving processes of global crises, transnational commissions of experts and policy-makers can be seen as pertinent organs for active discussion and political decision-making.

Furthermore, universities can be seen as pedagogical institutions. Among the regional education systems universities take part in the fundamental task of raising responsible citizens of the World – new cosmopolitans, who would be able to build responsible co-operation and ethically high quality communities, and what is more, to answer to already existing regional and worldwide challenges. The educational mission of universities gives birth to the need of lifelong learning possibilities for everyone – arranged by way of free opportunities for all individuals to attend university courses and its holistic activity – and in the end to attend in the formation of the university of the future.

5. University and excellence

We believe one role of universities in modern society is equal opportunity, i.e. to give the possibility to all students who have the intellectual ability to enter a higher education school to do so. This role acknowledges that no physical, environmental or financial constraints should be a hindrance to go to university.

First of all, laws should be created or enforced to ensure that all physically disabled students can move freely across campus, attend classes and social gatherings organised by students, or go to the cafeteria and the library. Moreover, in many European countries people sometimes need good connections to access the job they are seeking and in these cases students from lower background are often disadvantaged. It is the duty of the university to weaken those social differences by giving the opportunity to students to create they own networks, to give them the possibility to interact with professionals in their field of study, but also to push student associations to organise gatherings where students, teachers, deans, and others meet and share ideas and experiences.

Equal entrance to university does not start with the admission papers. We believe that even in high school there is work to be done. Some students, especially from low social backgrounds, believe that they will never be able to success at a higher level education school or in certain faculties because of running myths saying that success in these is reserved to an exclusive elite. To face this problem, France had the idea of sending university students to high schools to give the message that, yes, university is sometimes hard and some faculties more than others, but that whoever is able to get a high school diploma and put his heart in his studies has a shot at it and may succeed. The professional world is way too far from adolescents to actually have a real impact. Such messages may be better understood when they are sent from students to students. University could arrange credits for this activity to motivate university students or simply make such “ambassador work” mandatory.
Another big debate nowadays is the question of excellence. Should we rank universities? Our opinion is that all European universities should have good teaching standards. They should all offer qualified teachers and sufficient materials and classrooms to enable students to prepare for their future. We believe that it is important to engage the challenge of setting basic standards for European universities, therefore increasing the level of competence of some universities without decreasing the opportunity of entrance to students. Nevertheless, there will always be a financial and educational gap between some schools. As students, we do not think that a ranking is the best way to settle those differences. We would rather see a classification like the stars system that is in use for hotels, where each star would refer to a certain quality aspect of the university. This is to push the higher education institutions to a lesser degree into a competitive system where they want to be the best, and rather focuses on creating a system in which they want and can be better.

In practice, universities face one major problem: financing. It is asked to pose no constraints, to create opportunities for students, to enrich them with the teaching of good lecturers and prepare them well for the upcoming working world and all this at an affordable price. No tuition fees is not even enough sometimes, as some students do not have time to work for money. This is subject of disagreement for us. One the one hand, some students argue that there should be no tuition fees. On the other hand, some individuals point out that tuition fees are sometimes motivational. They argue the no tuition fees may be understood as free university, which is not the case. University costs a lot and cannot afford having every student repeating their year. From this point of view, fees are conceivable but they should be low. There should also be a possibility to be exempted of the fee if money is not available and there should be scholarships given to cover other necessary expenses. A scholarship system has to be based on a serious study on different living aspects of individual students such as life costs, personal income, particular abilities and employment possibilities. It must not depend on each country’s policies. Europe has to uniform scholarship policies and to fix common criterion to give equal chances to each European student.
1. Introduction

This article aims at presenting the main results of the work of the debates of one of the student forums of the UNICA Student conference in September 2010 in Rome. During the debates we developed a vision of a multicultural society, characterised by tolerance and respect to all human beings, to equally guarantee rights to all citizens. This bears a potential which may lead to development of both national and other cultures and that allows individuals to profit from its diversity. In this article, we will first reflect on the concept of multiculturalism as such, and will then reconsider the situation of a multicultural Europe. The main part of our article will focus on the three ways in which we can realise our vision of a multicultural society characterised by respect, potential, and equality of rights.

Together with the globalisation process which opened the borders between the European states and which allowed an easier mobility of workers and students from among the member states of the EU, the word multiculturalism is becoming more and more common in our vocabulary. This word in fact has been used in the context of a duty (something that the one should work on, or achieve) or as a not yet consolidated issue, but if we pay more attention to the current European social-institutional situation, we may notice that multiculturalism is already a part of our lives, whether we want it or not. Many of us work and study with foreign colleagues every day, tackling with the problems rising from our different cultural backgrounds and habits. We are not able - nor required - to say whether multiculturalism is something good or bad, right or wrong, answering the old debate that is going on since centuries, but rather it is simply a reality with which we have to try to cohabit in the best way possible. That is why we stress the benefits of a multicultural society and the importance of reinforcing it: because we see Europe through students’ eyes, multiculturalism means opportunities, experiences, future.

We can define multiculturalism, using the terminology of the World Health Organisation, as “a coexistence of several cultures living in the same area without any assimilation of the minor culture to the dominant one”. This definition implies that both minority and majority cultural identities are equally important. Both should respect each other and try to learn more about the other culture, trying to overcome prejudice and fear that their own culture could lose its uniqueness. An example of a problem can be the fact that a multicultural coexistence can lead to such degree of fusion to overshadow the peculiarity of the culture of the hosting country.

Still, there are problems and challenges that multiculturalism poses on us - integration, intolerance, racism, indifference, immigration. This is seen for example in the discussions concerning immigration laws. We are, in fact, in front of a huge topic, as the enforcement of the rules regulating the entrance of immigrants are becoming more restrictive, so most of the times immigrants coming from poorer countries are forced to accept backdoor activities instead of being able to look for a regular job.

2. Europe’s multiculturalism

Each and every one of us recognises the fact that Europe today is undoubtedly a multicultural society. We are
already living in this multicultural environment, it has become our reality. This new reality has been formed during the last decades when each European country, according to EU treaties and agreements, opened their borders to foreign citizens, accepted and embraced diversity, and substantially reduced limitations to travelling, working and studying across the European continent.

However, this ideal description of our society does not reveal the real situation in Europe concerning multiculturalism. It is assumed that we share a common heritage by focusing on our geographical background as well as our common historical and cultural elements.

Nevertheless, a greater emphasis is still given to the national culture of each country, which dominates people’s thoughts and ideologies. Education could be the answer to this problem and the fundamental aspect for changing this fact. Yet, it can be clearly seen that education is mainly formed on national elements and it excludes from educational curricula general characteristics of other nations. Therefore, a nation-centred education does not teach us to approach humanity as a whole, but instead it gives emphasis on specific characteristics of the dominant nationality and ethnic background. Each individual is introduced mainly by his or her national origin and not as a human being with much other distinctive information.

Another significant aspect of the situation in Europe concerning multiculturalism is the way each nation understands its own culture. More specifically, the trend to keep our culture in its current form does not allow a critical view of the existing concepts. As a result the majority of European citizens tend to consider their dominant culture stable by preventing the interaction and assimilation with new cultural elements. Adding to this, not only do they not permit the communication of diverse cultures but they also perceive them as a threat rather than a chance of development and enrichment of their history. This is due to the fact that each nation has different ideals and cultural values which may be misinterpreted and treated with fear or curiosity.

Regarding foreigners, there is a lot of prejudice and anxiety towards them. On the one hand, Europeans claim to be in favour of a multicultural society, but on the other hand many complain about the high immigration rate. Immigrants are considered to be a burden placed on locals and a threat to national economy. Being driven by stereotypes, Europeans usually accuse non-European immigrants of high unemployment, for the decreasing levels of knowledge acquired in education, as well as the increase of criminality. Apart from that, Europeans also tend to divide immigrants based on their attitude towards the dominant culture. In particular, they show their preference to those immigrants that adapt to the culture of the host country without trying to dispute it and on the other hand they are biased against those who question it.

The legal system, according to its principles, should treat all people equally and is assumed to protect human rights of foreigners and local people alike. Even if such legislation already exists in all European countries it is unfortunately often not observed. This is owing to the lack of consistency, considering the implementation of several laws, which finally leads to legalisation of several discriminations against “new” or other Europeans. There should be no doubt on how to treat people from different ethnic backgrounds as “all people are equal before the law”; however, social intolerance and fear against diversity are also reflected in the enforcement of legislation.

The labour market is another field in which multiculturalism is treated as a negative social aspect. This can be clearly seen during the employment process. The preference for home-based workers is obvious and it is even legally regulated. Therefore, this approach reveals the fact that employers usually do not take into consideration the essential skills, which are required on the labour market. Instead, they give greater emphasis on the national origin of the employee. This is undoubtedly a distinct example of discrimination and inequality against immigrants who are treated according to their nationality and not as equal human beings.

The fact that European society is indeed multicultural does not imply a positive attitude towards
multiculturalism. Conversely, the situation today concerning multiculturalism is far from ideal and rather negative in aspects of education, labour market, ideology, and legislation. European countries usually aim at presenting the current coexistence of diverse cultures, religions, beliefs and skin colours as harmonious. However we, young citizens of Europe, know that this is not the reality and therefore facing, instead of prettifying, this significant problem will be the only solution. This is why we discussed and proposed solutions in three aspects of the society that can help to achieve multicultural society of our dreams.

3. Responses to multiculturalism

3.1 1st way: Multicultural education

The first means of dealing with multiculturalism in a positive way is through education. For the past decades, the research and evaluation in education have focused on the phenomenon of Multicultural Education. As is often stated in studies on this topic, the goal of multicultural education is to guide students to reach “intercultural competency”. This is achieved through the knowledge and understanding they have of ethnic, religious and racial identities and histories, as well as their tolerance towards these cultural differences and their attitudes towards multiculturalism. In the two days of discussions in the Forum we were trying to answer questions of how, what, to whom and by whom to educate towards a better functioning of multicultural Europe.

How do we educate?

“Multicultural teaching” means different things according to one’s course goals and one’s discipline. The purpose is not to achieve a recommendation regarding various teaching methods and strategies, but instead to put forth the idea that the most important factor is the positive and tolerant environment we are taught in, as well as the questions related to who educates and with whom we are educated. Learning towards multiculturalism is not considered a regular school subject such as Mathematics or Literature. Moreover, concerning school education, it should be included in all the subjects, through teaching towards positive attitudes of respect rather than specific knowledge and skills.

Who educates?

This idea emphasises the role of a teacher, tutor or instructor (all the professions in education are summarised with the term “educator”) as one of the most important elements in the learning process, as well as all the other participants in our educational processes. We recommend the educators be well trained to efficiently work and educate in a multicultural environment, be a role model and successfully guide their students towards tolerance and respect for others. They should know how to appreciate and utilise the different ways of thinking and learning which they may come across in their work.

This shall be provided by efficient and targeted training to educators during and after their years of university studies. Educators must have practical experience with other cultures. The best way to gain that is through exchanges and intercultural course activities. We suggest, for example, a mandatory training with minority groups for students of education to gain the real hands-on experience to fight prejudice. Another useful tool is the educators’ mobility through which members of different nationalities can learn from and interact with each other. For all the reasons above a sufficient funding is to be provided to let every educator have the possibilities for continuous development of their multicultural understanding.

What do we teach?

The main topic to be taught and practiced is to foster the similarities and differences there are amongst each other in order to establish an international understanding and community responsibility, especially between young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Non-formal education, as the learning and training which takes place outside recognised educational institutions, is also one of the major tools in multicultural education and it is highly recommended to recognise and acknowledge the importance of this form of education as another means of achieving a multicultural society. The various programmes of non-formal education promote the unity and cooperation of people regardless of the culture and background of the participants. This is especially vital in an early age through playing and learning in a diverse environment. As already stated earlier, teaching towards multiculturalism is mostly about teaching towards the positive attitudes and fighting out prejudice. This can be done through an exposure to other cultures, especially those of the minorities in our local environment. Students of different backgrounds should be integrated to learn from and get to know each other to be able to live in the same community.

Who do we educate?

Education towards international and multicultural understanding needs to be a part of all the levels of education and should be included in all the subjects. Intercultural learning should have a life-long learning focus, starting in the earliest ages of learning and should be available to everyone. Also the families of the pupils and students should be included in this process.

3.2 2nd way: Open Communication

An efficient communication is a key issue in the modern multicultural societies. Therefore, it is important that all the means of transferring information are well prepared to do it at different levels and in proper ways according to the diversified society. It is highly important that the information we dedicate to others is well formulated and clear to them and possibly in their own language. No other language than a mother language will be more specific and best able to express the information, emotions and opinions. It is natural that what we hear in our own language seems more truthful and clearer. That is also why we are able to express ourselves and explain our thoughts in our own languages better. There are a lot of problems in our contemporary societies concerning immigrants, who have difficulties because of their ignorance of the culture or the language. Therefore we highly recommend that the campaigns, which take place in order to encourage foreigners to learn the language of the country they live in, should be in the language of the minority. The campaigns should help to show that the effort of attending the free courses is worth it. The free courses also prevent us from risking an increase of ghettos and a growing group of uneducated young people, who cannot follow the school programme not knowing the language.

People should know that the governments are not against immigrants and the politicians should work on relations on the line: government-people-immigrants and government-immigrants. Usually, the lack of communication leads to misunderstanding and fear of what is hard to explain, of what is different from everything that we know. How we communicate is very important. Sometimes it is a question of a first impression and so on the one hand the government should avoid using stereotypes, and on the other hand it should show that there may be several ways of doing the same thing and that they are all equal, that there are all good (such as greeting by shaking hands, by giving a kiss or by making a bow). We should succeed in a more culturally sensitive society. Another good way of improving communication is helping the citizens to get to know the differences between them, so they would not feel fear against each other. What is also important is that media should collaborate in increasing the social awareness of the fact that we have minorities, and that they participate in the life of our society.
3.3 3rd way: New and innovative public policies

As it has already been stated, Europe is already multicultural and we can only live with this fact. The challenge of multiculturalism today is to assure equal rights and opportunities to every European citizen, whatever his cultural, religious or ethnic background may be, and to improve the way we fight against discrimination.

In fact, succeeding in this challenge will by itself bring unity among the Europeans, “old” ones as well as “new” ones. Of course, mentalities are a key matter in this topic. But both national and European public authorities must take initiatives as well to strengthen their legal system in order to implement new and innovative policies. During our collective reflection, we have listed three kinds of legal tools which could enormously contribute to reduce a form of discrimination which currently affects people with foreign origins or with different beliefs in particular.

Firstly, “positive discrimination” -measures (or to be more precise ways to assure equal opportunities) must be taken. By that, we mean that pilot programmes should be built in order to guarantee a wider participation of people with foreign origins in fields such as the media and the educational system. This category of persons is more vulnerable than the average when it comes to discrimination. Consequently, public authorities must take action to protect migrants from unequal treatments. Pilot programmes implementing quotas must be conceived, which means that a certain percentage of people with foreign origins should have professional access to the media and to the educational systems. In the field of the media, we should strengthen the participation of people with foreign origins or ethnic backgrounds both as professionals and as amateurs. Professional media and public TV channels in particular should recruit a certain percentage of people with foreign origins in order to normalise their visibility as successful examples of info-making individuals. In amateur media, for instance, there is a pilot project which has been implemented by the Brussels French-speaking TV channel Télé Bruxelles in 2009. The concept was to let each day the presentation of the news to an average non-professional citizen on the street. At this occasion, we saw an extraordinarily various list of different profiles presenting the news. All colours, all ethnic backgrounds, all beliefs found a place in this project. At first, many complaints from citizens were addressed to the public authorities to denounce this as “inappropriate”. But finally, people got used to it and this is precisely what we call “normalisation”.

In the field of educational system, equalisation of opportunities would also consist in strengthening the presence of people with foreign origins or ethnic backgrounds as teachers in public schools. This will have two positive effects. First of all, it will contribute to reducing the inequalities that many people with foreign origins or ethnic backgrounds are suffering from. Let us not forget that, as it was stated in a research made by the International Labor Office in 1997, in case of equivalent diploma, a citizen with foreign origins will have much less chances to get a job than another citizen. In addition, it will motivate pupils and students with foreign origins to see that people coming from the same background as them can actually be recognised and succeed in society.

Secondly, we highly recommend the creation (in countries where that does not exist) or the improvement (in countries where that does exist, such as Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Portugal) of public institutions that can take legal action in order to protect individuals affected by discrimination. This recommendation seems to us as an essential measure to be taken in order to fight efficiently against discrimination. Indeed, discriminated victims, who are often issued from precarious backgrounds, often end up suffering from discrimination with some kind of resignation. The costs induced by legal actions are a major obstacle for these people, and this may lead to their giving up. This contributes to the creation of a status quo, and of a situation where discrimination can be perpetuated because it is not fought effectively. It is possible to break this vicious circle. Considering that these institutions are or would be public, they must work objectively and transparently. It means that criteria must be determined. If a case meets the legally established criteria, those institutions should automatically go to court. Being public, they are financed by the tax-payer, and therefore it is only normal that
implementation of all anti-discrimination public policies and to present annual reports based on which concrete recommendations should be addressed to the public authorities as well.

Thirdly, beyond the particular case of teachers, relevant measures to integrate people with foreign origins to the labour market should be taken. One concrete way to do that is to normalise the use of anonymous CVs by job applicants. This recommendation may seem difficult to implement in practice in the private sector, because relations between employers and employees are mostly interpersonal (or *intuitu personae*) relations, which means that the employer selects and has the right to select the job applicant he “likes” the most.

On the contrary, in the public sector, which is once again financed by the tax-payer (i.e. by all citizens), the employer does not have the right to choose the job applicant he “likes” the most. There is no margin of appreciation based on opportunity. The employer (in other words the State) must select the most competent job applicant. The idea of using anonymous CVs is therefore highly relevant here. Nevertheless, the use of anonymous CVs is not sufficient. Indeed, an employer will be obliged to receive the job applicant for an interview, but afterwards he can still reject the application based on prejudice. Consequently, measures to control the reasons why there has been a rejection must be taken into consideration as well. The employer, the State in particular, will have to expose the legal reasons of the rejection and to prove that the rejection is motivated by competence criteria and nothing else.

4. Conclusion

Many books, theses and studies have been written and many projects have been implemented to make multicultural Europe a desired reality by all and a good place to live in. At the same time, multiculturalism has been used as a scapegoat being blamed for unemployment or violence and crime. We believe that multiculturalism is a potential that we need to appreciate and respect, and that it should be seen as a great chance for development. It is a potential for science and education, as the critical potential coming from meeting other cultural perspectives can allow us to go beyond existing knowledge and can bear innovation. Also, it is a potential for development lays in the personal enrichment coming from the fact of meeting people of different background. And it is through education, communication and policy that we believe to create better Europe for all.
1. Introduction

It is anything but easy to find answers to the question of how universities can nurture the creativity of students. A complex reply does not only include various actors, scales, theories, motivations, interests as well as social, economic and political factors, but it is bound to challenge the university as a whole. The university as an institution of formal education is in crisis. Various institutional reforms, particularly the Bologna reforms and the so-called “initiatives of excellence”, have been coined and created in recent years, but they also demonstrate that universities have not yet been relieved from their lack of spirit. So the question of how universities can nurture creativity is above all concerned with the matter of how university as institution can itself be transformed and modified.

Creativity (and also innovation) has not only in this context become a significant and modern buzzword. The term “creativity”, however, has lost much of its clarity and brightness due to its arbitrary application to any possible context. Creativity, in fact, appears to be a supernatural, affirmative and favourable signifier that nonetheless remains somewhat ambiguous and debatable. This article intends to breathe new life into the debate and primarily define how creativity and university interact. The definition of what creativity accounts for will be discussed at length in chapter two.

There have been many contradictions between the liberal politics of deregulation and international efforts to reorganise and restructure educational frameworks. Particularly the Bologna process has been a highly controversial subject in this conflict. In the light of a blatant tilt of the educational system a critical discourse that revolves around the economisation of education has come into being. The Hungarian intellectual Polanyi provides a fruitful understanding of economisation. We can talk about it when economy is not embedded into social relations anymore, but these social relations in economy (Polanyi, 1978: p.88). The Austrian academic Faschingeder puts forward that in the context of education economisation means the elimination of the political option (Faschingeder, 2005: p.13). In this sense, many regard education to be threatened with extinction because the expanding capitalist paradigm enters its interior logic. Education itself has historically always been a terrain of contention and social struggles. What is defined as education at a time needs to be seen in reference to the hegemonic social relations. The ideal of education that has been expressed by thinkers of Idealism, such as Hölderlin or Humboldt, puts a self-critical, responsible and politically mature subject to its core. The French philosopher Foucault furthermore regards the aesthetics of existence as permanent processes of self-creation through self-reflection and a sophisticated art of being active (Faschingeder, 2005: p.17ff). The critical educational discourse accuses economy to lose sight of this human aspect in education. Students’ maturity has been pushed aside in favour of their employability. Economic principles of usability, efficiency and profitability are criticised for their dominance in universities’ curricula as well as their implication on social and ethical pretensions that are argued to have fallen victim to alleged market criteria. The educational system has been altered in order to respond to converted labour market requirements. In a pursuit of academic excellence universities form professionals, experts and technicians, but not necessarily creative, critical and self-aware human beings. Nevertheless, we do not insinuate that education in general is reduced to the standards of market economy. All historical communities did have to organise education in accordance with the capability to secure their survival. Thus, economic education and formation for relevant social fields of work are and will indisputably be necessary (Faschingeder, 2005: p.19f).
The urge to protect universities against this economisation is growing steadily. Many students, professors and activists share the conviction that universities should not only prepare for future jobs or communicate knowledge, but also capacitate and empower creative and self-contained thinking. In consequence, there is a strong demand for universities to be creative, inventive, resourceful and visionary places. In this context, the market-driven paradigm persistently interferes with attempts to convert universities. Also in terms of creativity, there is the desire to measure, to assign credits to anything done in universities and to create indices and rankings that truthfully provide information on how creative a person or an educational system, such as university, is. Creativity is the talk of the town and it does not seem to bother that there are certain paradoxes and inconsistencies in this discussion.” (Report on the EUA Creativity Project, p.6).

Creativity has also become a key term in the so-called “creative economies” that are regarded as fundamental for economic progress. The report “Creativity in Higher Education” of the European University Association states that “Progress towards a knowledge-based society and economy will require that European universities, as centres of knowledge creation, and their partners in society and government give creativity their full attention” (Report on the EUA Creativity Project, p.6). These call upon the exigency that not only expertise and specialised knowledge are important, but rather the capability to work independently and to score with creative ideas. In other words, mainstream knowledge is boring. The great challenge and the commonly contentious issue here is exactly the question of how universities can nurture creative processes, which are most difficult to incorporate into a synchronised and crammed schedule. Mankind does not lack standardised or occidental, science-based knowledge, but wits and creative ideas. Students do not develop those by successfully completing a normalised canon of formation in the fastest pace possible and to an even lesser extent will they develop in this manner a personal profile that does not represent a passepartout, but rather a person in contour (Werle 2010). The current educational system conflicts with social innovation and the actual requirements of creative economies.

What makes universities a creative milieu? What factors are important? What kinds of values are at work here? What other actors, e.g. companies, participate in the call for creativity? We do not aim to answer these questions once and for all, but rather to access them critically and give practical recommendations on what can be implemented to nurture the creativity of students. This debate needs to be creative itself. While it is certain and beyond doubt that universities and education need a lot more money, they also need creative ideas. Therefore creativity will never be an output of whatever form (standing at the end of a university career), unless creative thinking does not flow back to the institution itself to unsettle, change and modify it. We have to think of universities as platforms, where creative ideas circulate continuously and are dealt with in an experimental manner. Universities do have the unique possibility to encourage dialogues and exchange between many different people, who come to teach and study at this institution. This would fundamentally enable creativity to blossom. It is rather simple: a university needs to be a copy of the multi-faceted swarm of people working and studying in it. Even profit-oriented enterprises have discovered the value of managing diversity, because it simply leads to better and more effective results. Universities do not have to manage this knowledge, but allow themselves to assign everyone their substantial personal potential and open up rooms for the development of these potentials (Kaul, 2010).

Creativity is interlinked and intertwined with many different actors, levels and spheres of life. In terms of education, the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education have to be deconstructed, because creativity fundamentally needs all spheres. In a problem-oriented undertaking we have to dare to ask ourselves where all those people we commonly acknowledge to be creative, such as artists, musicians, actors, poets or journalists, get their creativity from. Is it at all the university? Is it within the formal structures of education? It is not necessary to come to a conclusive point yet, but a somewhat common denominator is already articulative: in order to nurture creativity universities have to contribute to experimental, innovative forms of learning and knowledge creation. From enrolment to graduation, students need to be trained to assess the importance of academic problems and relevant theories and methods.
It is a crucial question to ask how universities should be designed in the future. This is an issue not to be left to politicians, commissioners or rectors, but it is first and foremost a query that students and society in general have to deal with. The various student protests throughout Europe have demonstrated that there is a will to do so. If we want to change universities, we need to reinvent them.

The subsequent chapter will provide detailed information on our key terms, such as creativity, formal, non-formal and informal education. Section three will deal with the hindrances of creative processes or the striking question: “what kills creativity?”. The discussion of ways to foster creativity is deployed in chapter four. The conclusive part specifies a number of recommendations and lists what can be implemented in practice.

2. Definitions

a) Formal education

The definition of formal education is widely accepted as the process of training and developing people in knowledge, skills, mind and character in a highly institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured “education system”, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university (Coombs, 1974).

What students from all over Europe asked themselves during the UNICA Conference was: “what can universities do to nurture our creativity?” This question included both the formal and the informal education. So how can these different forms of education work together to reach the same aim? In the first place formal education provides students with the knowledge and the so-called “hard skills” that enable them to set the foundation for their future careers and prospects. Furthermore, it has a great impact on actions and the conduct of world’s populations. Melvin Tumin, Paul Barton and Bernie Burrus give us a few examples of the impact of formal education on behaviour in various contexts:

“Nationalism tends to shift to internationalism in a political point of view (...), common sense to science, as acceptable evidence (...) and anaesthesia to creativity, in patterns of recreation. A common feature of these changes is that they imply the development of an awareness by the individual that there are other places than his own locality, other times than the immediate present, person other than himself and his immediate primary group (...).” (Tumin, 1958).

Surely there are different points of view about the topic, and even though in this section we are focusing on formal education, there is a need to give space also to those who think the issue with a different cut. For example, Robinson says:

"historically education has been preoccupied with a narrow and increasingly outmoded view of intelligence. Academic work is obviously very important. But it’s not the whole of education, and academic ability is not the whole of intelligence. Academic work is really about certain types of deductive reasoning, and especially some forms of verbal and mathematical reasoning. Developing these abilities is an essential part of education. But if intelligence were limited to academic ability, most of human culture would never have happened. There’d be no practical technology, business, music, art, literature, architecture, love, friendships or anything else. These are big areas to leave out of our common-sense view of intelligence and educational achievement.” (Robinson, 2005).

Of course, formal education helps to achieve these changes on human behaviour, but it is not the only factor that interacts with peoples’ mentalities. As we stated before, formal education has to be melted with informal and non-formal education to produce changes. That is precisely why during UNICA Conference, students’ proposals tried to combine these two fundamental factors within universities’ programmes.

b) Informal education

Informal education is internationally considered as the lifelong process whereby every person acquires and
accumulates attitudes, values, knowledge and skills from exposure to the environment they live in and their daily experience.

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) define informal education as “all that learning that goes on outside of any planned learning situation, and because of this is usually unorganized and unsystematic”. To be more specific, informal education can include non-course-based learning activities, such as discussions, talks, presentations, or advice made available in order to respond to expressed interests and needs by people from different sectors, but even reading newspapers or books, sharing opinions with friends, family or colleagues, or watching television and listening to the radio.

Margaret Dale and John Bell define informal learning as a “learning which takes place in the work context, relates to an individual’s performance of their job and/or their employability, and which is not formally organized into a programme or curriculum by the employer”. (Smith, 2008) The concept of informal education is often related to the one of non-formal education, generally located between the formal and informal education, and including all those organised educational activities outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives. As we see here, the difference between informal and non-formal education is minimum and most of the time it is hard to distinguish one from the other. Alan Rogers, professor at the School of Education and Professional Studies of the University of East Anglia, states that “Every country interpreted non-formal education in their own way. For some, it meant every educational programme provided by the Ministry of Education apart from the schools and colleges (e.g. adult literacy classes). For others, it meant educational programmes like schooling provided by non-governmental agencies (NGOs)”. (Rogers, 2004)

c) Creativity

“Creativity is the ability to generate innovative ideas and translate them from thought into reality. The process involves original thinking and the implementation of the creative idea”, “the capacity to produce something which is both unique and useful” (ITS, 2009): these are two definitions of creativity we can read in the dictionaries, and it was our starting point during the forum’s discussion, but as soon as the debate began, the students set apart these descriptions of the term “creativity” to find their own definition. The study of the term was based on accounts stated by different authors: Ken Robinson defined creativity as “the process of generating original ideas that have value”, that can be considered as those kind of ideas which have an effective impact on reality. Moreover, Robinson explains that creativity is a process and not an event, therefore it is something that people can learn through education, and “it should be seen as a core element of educational strategies in schools” (Roland, 2008). According to Norman Jackson, professor of higher education and director of the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE) at the University of Surrey, creativity is a moral purpose to make a difference to students but also for the world, and to be creative is to imagine, explore, synthesise, connect, discover, invent and adapt. The concept that recurs in most definitions is the concept of “something new”, but this is not a sufficient condition to define a creative idea, therefore some authors specify that the idea has to be unique and useful.

Arne Dietrich, professor of Psychology at the American University of Beirut, provides us with a scientific perspective on our topic, assuming that “creativity requires cognitive abilities, such as working memory, sustained attention, cognitive flexibility, and judgment of propriety that are ascribed to the prefrontal cortex. (...) Circuits in the prefrontal cortex perform the computation that transforms the novelty into creative behaviour. To that end, prefrontal circuits are involved in making novelty fully conscious, evaluating its appropriateness, and ultimately implementing its creative expression” (Dietrich, 2004). Moreover, Dietrich analyses the concept of creativity from a another point of view: during his article, he differentiates “creative insights, which are conscious realizations that occur in working memory, and creative expression, which is the implementation of that insight” and examines the connection between creativity and knowledge. First of all, Dietrich stresses that
“it is imperative to recognize that knowledge and creativity recruit different brain circuits. While knowledge is primarily stored in TOP (temporal, occipital and parietal cortices) areas, creativity is enabled by the cognitive capabilities provided primarily by the DLPFC (dorso-lateral part of the prefrontal cortex)”. He then explains that there could be different answers to this question, because in some context, as a scientific context, a base of knowledge is necessary both for creative insights and creative expressions, but if we look to other fields, as the artistic field, “it is argued that creative insights do not require specialized knowledge; however, their expression does require exceptional skill”.

Neuroscience shows that when we are calm, relaxed, random, and without specific aim then the associative areas of the brain work best. Creativity means combinative and associative thinking that needs an open space or a scope for development in order to blossom. In 1960s, Rhodes analysed the concept of creativity in four different areas: creative person, creative process, creative product and creative press. The main concept was that the creative act can be understood only under the consideration of these four areas: for instance, “the creativity of the product is understood as a result of the creativity of the people that develop it, of the working atmosphere and of the process” (López-Mesa, 2003).

The concept of creativity, as expressed by Anna Craft in the British Journal of Educational Studies, “has become a growing area of interest once more within education and wider society (...). Since the end of the 1990s, there are numerous government and other initiatives to foster individual and collective creativity, some of this through partnership activity bringing together the arts, technology, science and the social issues” (Craft, 2003). Craft states that creativity has widened its interest so fast in these last decades because of its significance at the social, political and economic levels.

Following up the opinions of these authors, students could identify the concept of creativity as: “to think out of the box”! A definition of what creativity is can be interpreted but not defined in a simplistic way.

3. What kills Creativity?

In a publication of the Schader foundation, which intends to bring forward a meticulous dialogue between the social sciences and everyday practices, various theses are presented in order to point out how urban creativity can be nurtured (Liebmann; Robischon, 2003). These assumptions are explained in detail, but thus far they follow certain key terms. Among a call for cooperation, networking, openness, diversity management and contraction the authors list particular practices or rather attitudes that they consider crucial for a nascent environment of creativity, such as the courage to take risks, responsibility, the integration of cultural resources and the straightforward focus on the processes and momentum of projects. In brief, creativity is regarded as a working principle sui generis that can be conferred to other fields. So is the reverse already a printout of the factors that dispatch creativity in universities? No! The uncomplicated inversion is always a reduction of complexity and neglects the contextuality and singularity of factual (institutional) problems. It is important to keep in mind the defining correlation of university and creativity, which establishes a number of intramural circumstances that dispose of creative conditions. In the following we will give several negative constituents and influences.

In the critical educational discourse the Bologna reforms in particular have become the symbol for everything in contrast of favourable and creative learning environments. The packed structure of the new degree programs is disapproved all the way by its critics (Prausmüller, 2005: p.73). It has specifically become a problem for those students that are competent enough to study in a self-directed manner. Study programs have been positioned in crammed and overfull schedules where almost every step is awarded or revoked with credit points. This leads to a certain force for students to continuously tag themselves with degrees and grades (Pelizzari 2005, p. 87ff). In this regard, it is crucial to distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.
The latter is the interest in a matter itself, while the first is merely interested in how engagement is rewarded, e.g. by credit points. In addition a backward pedagogy still prevails. There is little room for perennial discussion, much time is wasted to learn by rote and pass a multitude of exams, in almost the same manner ex-cathedra teaching while the perpetual and hierarchal dichotomy of teacher and learner are maintained. The pressure to perform in little time, wafting expectations and requirements, competition among learners, but also the conventionalism in what is defined as knowledge are all paralyzing the development of creativity – simply due to the fact that the mentioned elements constrict the necessary creative space. Many bachelor and master studies do not allow the combination within and across disciplines and main subject areas. Chemistry still seems to be absolutely incompatible with the social sciences. While inter- and even transdisciplinarity have in some areas become keywords, disciplinary thinking up to this time appears to be the latent hegemonic constellation. Besides this manifestation of academic boundaries, there is also the adverse characteristic of studying alone and unaccompanied. Universities have insufficient resources of mentors, tutors, external incentives, and group and project work. The concept of Student Centered Learning (SCL) as an idea of strengthening student commitment and responsibility is widely disregarded in the contemporary university system. Where is there room for creativity as an associative practice and thinking here?

It is important to notice that – in terms of creativity – the monotonous recitation of facts will lead you nowhere. Also the obliged and bound course programme is counterproductive. In order to encourage academic creativity it is indispensable to cut down on these courses and organise student life more flexibly, research-drivenly, and less bureaucratically. Nowadays, universities do not so much give the impression of places where fantasy and inspiration are drawn from, but rather of places of bound realities. Oftentimes students are confronted with distrust in these places as though they were completely unable to find their own ways of studying, learning and solving problems. The new study programs dictate and regulate what is necessary to know in order to perform well. It is interesting to observe that this deeply contradicts the actual demands of the creative economies. However, it is a contradiction that seems to disappear in the liberal politics of deregulation. The contemporary form of education is not participant-directed. It does not build on the importance of student commitment and own and joint responsibility. It is neither creative nor nurtures creativity.

Only when students are responsible for and control their education themselves, then something we have agreed to call creativity may develop. Based on their own critical senses and active participation, students need to be guided through their study programmes, which offer an international, interdisciplinary and educationally challenging atmosphere. The criticism as expressed so far is an objectionable generalisation. Various universities, study programmes and national profiles have implemented strategies that oppose what has above been described as rather static obstructions to creativity. But for all that, there are still many circumstances that kill creativity.

In order to bring together what has been stated above we can keep hold of pressure, diversion and interferences as taking out creativity. If someone constantly worries about how to pay study fees, about how to get internships or improve job prospective, creativity is not nurtured, but doomed to reproduce what is already there. In other words, the neoliberal economisation of education is a strong setback for the development of creativity. It is a somewhat fateful misbelieve that the best ideas are obtained when working under stress. Strain and pressure apply the brakes to associative thinking by deferring the brain in a state of anguish. In his “encyclopaedia of laziness” (Schneider, 2003) the cultural scientist Wolfgang Schneider has assembled a number of big names, such as Einstein, Brecht, Dostowjewski and Charlie Chaplin, who all utilised faineance, otiosity and idleness as pre-conditions for their creativity. Already in antiquity back-pedalling, so to speak, has been understood as an inexhaustible source of inspiration – as long as it is not misconceived as lethargic inaction. However, it is important not to generalise this predication. Everyone has to discover his or her own source of inspiration, because not everyone studies and learns the same way. Creativity is a matter that acts on one’s own behalf. It just happens, mostly undesigned, unscheduled and more accidental that we would commonly expect.
Many universities cannot offer this fundamentally open space of creativity, as they are principally heteronomous and other-directed. Governmental and market parameters issue directives and programmes that these institutions of formal education need to comply with. Nevertheless, universities are social spaces that are constructed and sealed by a number of different actors. Tragically, financial and degree restrictions exclude many social groups from studying at universities and thus from participating in the creative construction of these institutions. The infamous ivory tower presents itself as disconnected from society and social realities. Ones to ask. Universities are only a place to nurture creativity, if they are willing to be confounded by different modes of thinking.

The question “who studies?” entails a dramatically selective response. It’s a closed and exclusive field – to tie in with Bourdieu. This establishes a social structure of exclusion and reproduction, which has difficulties to produce somewhat new things. When theory and practice continue to be viewed in a dichotomic manner then the latter does not nurture the former and contrariwise. In fact, there could be a very productive and creative friction when our canonical educational system would be exposed to other social realities and cultural resources. Creativity is produced in those spaces, where things are thought differently and in new ways. It is those people, who are currently excluded from universities that are most competent to scrutinize university as an institution. They can truly think differently, because they are capable of asking inopportunete questions, which just might be the right ones to ask. Universities are only a place to nurture creativity, if they are willing to be confounded by different modes of thinking.

4. How to foster Creativity?

Stated how difficult it could be to defy creativity, it is equally challenging to find ways to foster it. Considering the neuroscientific approach, we have to keep in mind that our brain is divided into two halves. The left-hand side is dominant for numbers and language. It is likely to process information logically. The right-hand side of the brain takes a more holistic view of information and enjoys patterns and images. The brain tends to organise things into common patterns and our mind drives to make connections to things it already knows, and then stores the experiences consequently. This kind of brain activity and mechanism can be unhelpful when you are trying to be creative. The school system could be considered quite “conservative-oriented”, and it does not help giving the chance to approach issues laterally or in different ways. That is the main reason why some important changes have to be made in the education system, in the students’ way of living universities and in their study programmes.

To try and give an answer to the question: How universities can nurture students’ creativity? it is relevant to underline some important suggestions and possibilities universities should start to consider in order to help students to “be themselves” and to stimulate their creative side. It might be helpful to refer to some hypothetical “creative-profile” even if the definition sounds quite ambitious. There is no formula for identifying a creative person, but some characteristics are clear: independent - needing to think things through for themselves; inquisitive - having a seemingly unquenchable thirst to understand; iconoclastic - nonconforming, not wed to authority or the status quo; confident - feeling they can face difficult issues and succeed, to believe in themselves determined, convinced they will find a better way if they persist; learners - always keen to acquire new knowledge; intuitive - making leaps of imagination, not needing to stick to the facts; open-minded - no rush to decide, digging deeper, studying new angles. Are universities able to model their structure in order to give space to personal traits? They can actually focus on different features to foster students’ creative side.

In this respect, informal education should cover a significant role in the educational development. “Informal learning is usually intentional but not highly structured. Examples include self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, and performance planning that includes opportunities to review learning needs. When
people learn incidentally, their learning may be taken for granted” (Marsick; Watkins, 2001). “The point of education should not be to inculcate a body of knowledge, but to develop capabilities: the basic ones of literacy and numeracy as well as the capability to act responsibly towards others, to take initiative and to work creatively and collaboratively. The most important capability, and the one which traditional education is worst at creating, is the ability and yearning to carry on learning. Too much schooling kills off a desire to learn... Schools and universities should become more like hubs of learning, within the community, capable of extending into the community... More learning needs to be done at home, in offices and kitchens, in the contexts where knowledge is deployed to solve problems and add value to people's lives” (Leadbeater, 2000: p.: 226-227).

Shaping the workload and the study goals accordingly to the mentioned form of education will give the mind the chance to develop and nurture emotional intelligence (“EQ”). Emotional Intelligence is increasingly relevant to organisational development and developing people, because the EQ principles provide a new way to understand and assess people's behaviours, management styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and potential. IQ, or conventional intelligence, is too narrow. We have all met people who are academically brilliant and yet are socially and inter-personally inept. And we know that despite possessing a high IQ rating, success does not automatically follow (Goleman, 1995).

It is easy to understand how constraining the modern adopted system is: it is often brought down to a series of exams to be taken with a few extracurricular activities that might be useful to mental health and to the stimulation of creative personalities. One of the highly underestimated factors is cooperation. We are not just referring to cooperation between universities (as significant as it is), but most of all to the kind of cooperation which should be encouraged among students. Cooperating does not bring just better results, but help bring out original ideas through competition, collaboration, common tasks, brainstorming and negotiation. Components that appear to be “selfish” and independent, work together to create a highly complex, greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts system.

Two key terms are important in this context: learning organisation and knowledge management system. Both are usually referred to when talking about new management styles in companies and enterprises (i.e. looking at employees as persons and not merely as workforce and focusing on their inner qualities and personal characteristics), even if the most logical institution a learning and knowledge process should take place is still in universities. At the origin of the idea of a “learning organisation” we find two basic concepts: tacit and explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is the knowledge that can be written down and relatively easily transferred from one person to the next. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is more difficult to articulate because it often arises out of experience. The ontological dimension ranges from the individual at one end of the range and moves from there to team, group, organisation and beyond. “A spiral emerges when the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge is elevated dynamically from a lower ontological level to higher levels” (Nonaka; Takeuchi, 1995). This spiral is created by the four modes of knowledge conversion through which knowledge is converted from one knowledge type to another. The modes of knowledge conversion include socialisation (from tacit to tacit knowledge), externalisation (from tacit to explicit knowledge), combination (from explicit to explicit knowledge), and internalisation (from explicit to tacit knowledge).

We can consequently understand the way creativity may arise within teams and groups of individuals. What universities are asked to do is to make this process easy for students in order not only in order to share knowledge, but first of all because this is the most natural way for creativity to spread out. Coherently to that, solutions to foster creativity are also found in sharing experiences out of the normal schooling context, so to speak the sphere of nonformal education. An option can be to create different kinds of student associations involved in different activities which could aggregate individuals by personal interests, like the music. “Making music engages, and is increasingly seen to strengthen a vast array of brainpower” (Weinberger, 1998).
addition to that it strengthens student problem-solving and critical thinking skills, adding to overall academic achievement and school success. It also helps students develop a sense of craftsmanship, quality task performance, and goal-setting – skills needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

Another way to foster creativity is to study one or more foreign languages. Faithfully to the spirit of this article, we will not deeply discuss about competitive advantages given by the learning of a new language, but we will focus on the way it can help foster creative skills. Anyhow, it is very important to underline the importance of a second language as a vital part of the basic preparation for an increasing number of careers. Even in those cases where the knowledge of a second language does not help graduates obtain a first job, many report that their foreign language skills often enhance their mobility and improve their chances for promotion. In addition to any technical skills that foreign language students choose to develop, they also have further tangible advantages in the job market. Foreign language students, whose courses focus heavily on this aspect of learning, often possess outstanding written and oral communication skills. A number of studies in bilingual education also seem to lead to the conclusion that foreign language study can aid and even accelerate the cognitive development of the brain. Along with the certainty that people who know more than one language and culture can communicate more effectively with people of other countries and cultures, it is indeed possible that through learning another language and culture, people become more effective problem-solvers, closer to achieving solutions to pressing social problems because of an increased awareness of a wider set of options (Weatherford, H. Jarold 1986). Foreign language learning is much more a cognitive problem solving activity than other kinds of linguistic activity. Studies have shown frequently that foreign language learning increases critical thinking skills, creativity, and flexibility of mind.

The given examples show that the core of every activity that could give rise to creativity is a form of openness that covers not only academic needs but above all stimulates the mental processes of neuronal activation. To “put together” does not mean just creating shared experiences, but establishing links and connections that may bring to comparisons. For this reason it is important to conclude with something that at first glance may seem a paradox in respect to collaboration, but that turns out to be a powerful engine for the stimulation of ideas and creative solutions: competitiveness.

Competition kills creativity if it is a destructive, winner-takes-all form of competition; if ideas are hoarded so that their owner gets sole credit; if communication stops because others are viewed as “enemies”. But, as the most innovative companies already do, there is a way to foster original ideas by making different teams (within the same organisation) compete with each other. The mechanism is simple: a common (higher) goal, participants grouped by choice with those they work in a better way, and commitment to reach the best effective solution which will be awarded. Multiple parallel projects, in competition with each other, can drive innovation forward because they generate more potential solutions. Groups that have no friction in them (groups where everyone gets along and shares the same beliefs) too frequently fall into group thinking, a downward spiral where bad ideas are never criticised and doomed projects are never terminated, because to do so would damage the group’s wonderful feeling of togetherness. “Group researchers refer to this as cohesiveness, and too much of it blocks creativity. Like so much else with innovation, the right solution seems to be the Goldilocks solution: not too much cohesion, not too much competitiveness, but somewhere in the middle will be “just right”.’’ (Sawyer, 2007).

We have seen through examples how the brain responds to different stimuli and how these stimuli could be applied to the academic reality so that the creativity could be developed and trained. We have been talking about music as an example to understand how arts in general are capable of giving attention to those features too often overlooked in the field of higher education, as well as the study of one or more foreign languages that will not only lead to the possibility to have more chances in the job market but also to an intense cortical activity. All we can say is that certain activities, incentives, stimuli and so on open up a room for being creative, but these do not function as imperatives.
We have discussed also about the way in which the mentioned factors of knowledge and creativity are in close connection, such as companies already operate toward the market: they make greater efforts in the creative field since it is seen as a key to success. We found then that collaboration and competitiveness are far more similar than expected under the neurological point of view and that they can both contribute to creativity. The following conclusions will provide suggestions to the way in which universities can implement their programmes and facilities, based on the arguments of this article, and develop solutions to nurture creativity in students.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Asking ourselves the question whether universities can nurture the student’s creativity is challenging the university as a whole. Universities are currently alienated from their original role, namely communities of students and teachers, because they have evolved into institutions with stakeholders far more diverse than only student and teachers. The economisation of education – the capitalistic logic entering education and moreover threatening it with extinction – illustrates this. Students’ chances on the labour market has taken precedence over the students’ development of self-identity and maturity as the proper outcome of higher education. Although harmonising education and societal fields (e.g. labour market) is necessary for societies maintenance one must realise that creativity is an important element in that same struggle for survival. Norman Jackson states that “Creativity is important to our inventiveness, adaptability and productivity as an individual, and to the prosperity and functioning of our organizations and more generally to the health and prosperity of our society and economy.” (Jackson, 2003, p.2) Nurturing rational and science-based knowledge is the paradigm in higher education and the freedom that is needed to blossom creativity is lacking. That is why the purpose of this article was to investigate how creativity and the university can interact. How can this institution be transformed to establish a creative platform for students?

Creativity intertwines three levels of education: formal, informal and non-formal education. Formal education is the canon formation from primary school to higher education; it aims to develop people’s analytical abilities. Following Coombs, formal education is an educational system that is highly institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured. Informal education, on the other hand, is embedded in what one acquires from being embedded in culture: norms, values, logical frame, etc. Between formal and informal education, non-formal education is located. This is namely educational activities not organised by formal educational systems. At the UNICA Conference we agreed to characterise –not define- creativity as thinking out of the box.

We want to give practical recommendations to higher education’s policy makers on what we, as students, think must be implemented if creativity is to be nurtured. In defining those recommendations we have to know first which negative constituents are killing students’ creativity. Firstly, the practice of labelling students with degrees and grades, which stimulates extrinsic motivation, instead of intrinsic motivation, i.e. interest one has in a matter itself. Consequently this diminishes the creative space for which we advocate here, due to for example time pressure and unhelpful competition. Secondly, the memorising and repeating which is considered as intellectual improvement, even though it does not leave any space for critical analysis, personal explorations, and imagination. Thirdly, the fact that students are bound to fixed, pre-designed study programmes annihilates students’ responsibility for their education. One has to acknowledge that not everyone learns and studies the same way. That is why study programmes have to adapt to individual educational needs. Organising student life more flexibly, encouraging students to do more research, and making universities’ structure less bureaucratic students can be offered the space needed to develop creative thinking.

The outcomes of the discussion that we had at the UNICA Conference can be summed up in eight statements:
1. Implementing firstly more courses taught in another language than the country language, because learning another language has a decisive impact on the quality of the learning process. We are thinking especially of English, as the new lingua franca and consequently the gateway to communication with the world. Secondly, the possibility to learn foreign languages in the regular curriculum. Being able to talk a foreign language or foreign languages increases the sensibility towards the Other because contact with other cultures becomes easier. Moreover talking a foreign language (English or another language) stimulates the cognitive development of the brains, it is more a cognitive problem solving activity than an overall linguistic activity. Furthermore, studies have shown that foreign language learning increases critical thinking skills, creativity and flexibility of the mind.

2. Universities should support Student Centered Learning (SCL). Gibbs states that SCL “gives students greater autonomy and control over choice of subject matter, learning methods and pace of study” (Gibbs, 1992, p. 23) In other words, students must have a say in what is learned, how it is learned and when it is learned. Furthermore we also agreed that teachers must follow didactic courses to improve the quality of their teaching skills in order to keep students interested.

3. Universities should focus more on informal education by for example using their resources in a more efficient way so that extracurricular activities can take place. Very concretely, by keeping lecture halls accessible to give students a place where they can share experiences next to the everyday school occupations. We were thinking about organizing a Cinema Political event, giving all kind of student associations the opportunity to gather for discussions, or giving a place for people to play music.

4. Somehow it is desirable to see a system designed that acknowledge the students’ involvement in extracurricular activities, by for example mentioning them on the diploma.

5. Cooperation within the universities and between all actors must be improved to favour the students’ position. Cooperation does not bring just better results, but makes original ideas become effective through collaboration, common tasks, brainstorming and negotiation. Moreover, the cooperation between the university and the local community must also be improved in a reciprocal manner. The university cannot stay an island, but rather their relationship to the local community must be interdependent. For example, the university can do research on a certain specific problem the local community is facing.

6. Universities should help students to connect with future employees (companies, NGO's, etc.) to show the opportunities they have. By this external incentive they have the chance to gain experience about their prospects and job fields in which they are interested. Nowadays, students cannot complain about the lack of possibilities, for example to go abroad or the wide range of internships, but the communication about those opportunities must be organised in a more efficient way.

7. Universities must organise competitions between (at the international level) and within universities, and within every field (!), to improve creative thought and to give students the opportunity to meet other students in their field of study.

8. We recommend a more innovative way of examination, e.g. to give more case studies in order to improve active learning and to prevent the counterproductive monotonous recitation.

Recommendations are made to be taken into consideration and -hopefully- to be implemented. Policy makers must realise that creativity is important for each individual but also for the world’s future. Universities as the key role players of this future have therefore an important task to create a flexible environment where creativity can blossom!
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Introduction

The UNICA Student conference in Rome in September 2010 gathered students from all over Europe to discuss about some controversial issues related to the Bologna Process and the development of the European Higher Education Area, focusing on issues such as quality, employability and the social dimension. The participants’ purpose was to examine all the main topics of the Bologna Process without any bias since most times the opinions on the different issues are in some ways quite rhetorical or repetitive. The overall aim of the UNICA Student Conference was to give the students the opportunity to interact with each other discussing on major issues that concern Europe’s future and the aim of the students who participated in the Bologna Process Forum was to seize this opportunity hoping that their recommendations will find their way and position to the future directions of the EHEA.

1. The current status of the EHEA

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched along with the Bologna Process’ decade anniversary during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference in March 2010. The creation of the EHEA has been the main objective of the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999 and was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. Between 1999 – 2010, all efforts of the Bologna Process members aimed at creating the European Higher Education Area were implemented and the EHEA became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration. However, at this same event, the ministers of education established targets for the next decade to consolidate the EHEA in the light of the fact that many goals are still to be reached (EHEA, 2010). In addition, after the launch of the Bologna Forum, EHEA is no longer merely a regional phenomenon since it is starting to enlarge its influence well beyond European borders.

Needless to say, if Europe is not to come out harmed from the global competition in both the education and research/innovation fields, this crucial sector of the economy and society needs in-depth restructuring and modernisation. In parallel to the Bologna Process, the ‘EU2020’ Strategy, the successor to the Lisbon Strategy, guides the modernization of Europe’s universities. The EU2020 Strategy highlights education as a key policy area where collaboration between the EU and the member states can deliver positive results for jobs and growth. In this framework, higher education has an important role to play. At the same time, the strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training (‘ET 2020’), adopted by the European Council in May 2009, focuses on the need to promote the modernisation agenda for higher education and to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training. Certainly, this is built on earlier work. More specifically, in 2006, the European Commission identified nine key challenges for modernisation of higher education in its “Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation” Communication.

The main areas for reform identified in the agenda are:

a) **Curricula**: the three-cycle system (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate), competence-based learning, flexible learning paths, recognition, mobility;

b) **Governance**: University autonomy, strategic partnerships, including enterprises, quality assurance;

c) **Funding**: diversified sources of University income better linked to performance, promoting equity, access and efficiency, including the possible role of tuition fees, grants and loans. (ec.europa, 2010)
2. The successes and shortcomings of the Bologna process

2.1. Positive and Negative Aspects of the Bologna Process

The student discussion led to a clear identification of some positive and some negative perspectives of the Bologna Process. The Process was literally put on trial with one side the prosecutor and on the other side the defendant: this setting helped the students to better express their positions and thoughts.

Regarding the positive aspects of the Bologna Process, the first that can be mentioned is the fact that it created a unified system for mobility. Secondly, it helped universities to enhance the quality of education, with the means of good practices and evaluation. It also encouraged the fusion of soft skills in the programmes. What is more, the Bologna system contributed to multiculturalism and exchange of ideas in the academic field. Additionally, it made the universities engage in a proactive competition and increased the freedom of students, while introducing the concept of the social dimension in higher education. Generally, the Bologna Process promotes the modernisation of national education systems giving at the same time the opportunity to the nation-states to have common goals.

On the other hand, the Bologna Process has some negative aspects that have to be considered. To begin with, some governments abuse of the Bologna system for other national level reforms instead of implementing it in the right way. Moreover, the promise to undergraduates for employability after obtaining a Bachelor degree has not been materialised yet: in practice today many employers refuse to value the Bachelor degree as adequate certificate of employable graduates. Another problem which is being faced is that everything has already been decided by the nation-states that have originally signed the Process, therefore the new members have to accept the already settled agenda. Furthermore, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ECTS may be seen as challenging the autonomy of universities, while contradictions are observed among the policies applied by different countries. The procedure is heavily bureaucratic with quality assurance contributing to this direction. The top-down implementation is another important issue and the system in general can be characterised as complicated. The transition between the old and the new system is problematic, as the comparison between the old and new degrees has not been fully accomplished, yet. The generated competition is destructive rather than productive, and there is a significant mismatch between the Bologna Process politics and the politics of immigration.

2.2. Implementation of the Bologna Process: problems and solutions

As far as the implementation of the Bologna Process is concerned, firstly the need for practices different from the already existing, regarding the regulation and control of the progress of implementing the Process in each nation-state, was remarked. It was stated that the implementation of the Bologna system in many countries is slow or sometimes static. Thus, stricter control should be applied in cases of apparent lack of governmental will, but not in cases of financial barriers. The Bologna stocktaking system was regarded as one of the most powerful means to ensure the full commitment of national authorities and it was suggested to make it binding for them. The fact that the European states do not keep pace with each other towards that direction generates serious complications to the lives of both students’ and graduates’ as well as the European labour market and economy, which is also affected by the “brain drain” problem that still exists, threatening the density of Europe in highly qualified graduates.

Moreover, special rules about the students that graduated during the years of implementing the new system should be formed, since they are affected adversely in terms of employability prospects. Those students entered tertiary education with different expectations about the opportunities they were going to have after graduation and ended up with significantly divergent conditions. Many of those students inevitably prolong their study
period if they are willing to continue with their studies at a higher level (Master, PhD). As a case in point can be referred the example of some engineering first degrees that were obtained after five years of full-time studies, in contrast with the degrees that required only four years of study. The graduates of the former degree with the old system were able to directly move on to PhD level studies, whereas with the new system they are required to first enter the Master level program, for which only one or two courses of their undergraduate studies are recognised. In connection with this particular theme the state of art of European qualification framework (EQF, 2008) was investigated. Seen that the EQF is due to become a comprehensive framework including the different levels of education, the participants stressed the opportunity to include also the qualification issued before the starting of Bologna Process. In this way the ones bearing former qualification should be better protected from discrimination.

The last topic that was discussed as regards the implementation of the Bologna Process was the requisite of broader information to students, academics and employers about the results of the implementation of the Process and about the new system itself. Many problems have been encountered due to the lack of adequate information for the changes that the Bologna Process introduced to higher education, including feelings of fear and hostile mood in many cases. Thus, higher education seminars, supported by the teams of Bologna Experts of each nation-state, should be organised more frequently and with more targeted audience, coming from the academic field and the industry sector. Many and many students miss a lot of opportunities just for the simple fact that they are not even aware that they are enrolled in a programme inside the EHEA.

3. Access to Education and the Social Dimension

The second topic that was discussed related to accessibility to education issues, giving emphasis to the social dimension of this aspect. The first idea related to the social dimension of education pertains to the accessibility of education to people of any social status. It was stressed that people from all social classes should have access to university-level studies and the Bologna Process should contribute to this direction by undertaking leading initiatives. Further, it was stated that, although student fees are not directly related to the Bologna Process, the Process is still used by some parties to justify the rise of student fees, something which according to the students’ opinion should not happen. Besides, it was remarked that student fees are an obstacle towards providing accessibility to all social groups. On the other hand, many academic institutions are facing serious budget problems as a consequence of the global economic crisis and these aspects were taken into due account. Public expenditure in higher education field should be assigned to the institutions by financing directly students with scholarships or analogous measures.

The discussions acknowledged that often students from other parts of the world may face difficulties in accessing the European Higher Education Area. Students suggest that the Bologna system should take the initiative on this matter and promote non-EU students access to mobility programmes by simplifying the student visa procedures. Another aspect which needs reconsideration is the establishment of quota for non-EU students’ enrolment in the universities in EU countries, to give them more opportunities to access European higher education.

Thirdly, there is strong agreement on the need for easier access to higher education for disabled people. Universities all over Europe should promote access to disabled people. Moreover, disabled people should become involved in discussions on issues that concern them, something which could be achieved by constituting organisations and arranging forums for this purpose. In addition to all the foregoing, people with all kinds of disabilities, such as wheelchair bound persons, those with visual or hearing impairments and people with mental disabilities, should be taken into account.

As regards social benefits of higher education – such as discounts on transportation, accommodation, cultural events and health care – they are developed by the countries in order to support financially and enrich the cultural background of today’s youth, that is, the society of tomorrow. However, in many cases those benefits
are also promoted by the countries in order to decrease the effect of opportunity costs of working and earning a 
regular income, that come together with the students moving to a place for study purposes. The potential 
problem with these encouragement policies, though, is that they make higher education attractive even to those 
who are less interested in obtaining knowledge and skills, but would like to benefit from the various 
complementary advantages of being a student, i.e. social benefits attract also those who are not interested in 
studying, but in ‘being a student’. One possible solution is to introduce age-related benefits, so that the youth 
would still grow interest in cultural activities, but at the same time higher education would not be translated 
into ways of getting a cheap health insurance or travel cards.

4. Degree structure and employability

Regarding employability in Europe, students consented to the fact that this matter should be stimulated by the 
Bologna Process in the coming years, as currently the employability aspect is degrading compared with the 
development and implementation of other aspects within the Bologna system. What is more, the necessity of 
more practical skills to be included into university studies was brought into prominence.

To a large extent, different states have different demands on the labour market. As a consequence, in order to 
increase employability, the Bologna Process reform can facilitate equalisation of subject-related degrees in 
different states – taking into account, of course, detailed quality criteria, so that holders of all those degrees will 
have equal job opportunities throughout Europe. Labour markets in different states can not be adjusted, and 
hence types of degrees for common majors have to become conformable to each other from the beginning. 
After the student centered learning approach was officially launched in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve final 
communiqué in 2009, the Bologna Process offers space for further improvements with regard to the building of 
higher education programmes. This task may be considered a Copernican revolution for universities because it 
implies to strike a balance between transmission of knowledge and skills, when previously in most cases little 
or even no attention was paid to practical education.

The problem of employability needs to be tackled at three separate levels in order to assure adequate 
improvements in this direction; those levels would be the institutional, the national and the European level.

At the institutional level, to begin with, curricula can be adjusted according to labour market needs or according 
to the current needs of research and innovation. Employability is not the only goal of higher education. 
Students should think of studying both as a means to contribute to the society and to have a stable job, and as a 
means of simply becoming educated. Furthermore, nowadays, there is a significant disproportion between the 
number of job positions offered in the labour market and the number of qualified persons seeking those jobs.

Curricular development should be promoted, with full stakeholder involvement, according to current needs of 
both labour market and society in general, providing at the same time the necessary quality assurance for the 
university level studies. Modern world is evolving and at the same time labour market demands are changing 
fast as well. Thus, the EHEA should focus on improving personal skills and providing intercultural education to 
students, so that they can adapt easily in the changing environment and be able to succeed in whichever EU-
country they chose to work in during their life. In the light of lifelong learning it is more important to offer the 
students strategies and ways to update their own education, rather than spend all efforts in simple knowledge 
transfer.

According to the framework that the Bologna Process has established, Bachelor degree holders should have 
knowledge of the basics of their field of study and some more specialised knowledge. Those who further 
continue to a master level programme should be specialised in depth in a certain major. But when it comes to 
how the employers perceive this status regarding graduates who had never been involved in the labour market 
before, it makes no significant difference for them if the graduates are bachelor or master degree holders.
In fact, the practical skills are gained when the graduate is getting trained while they practice their profession. As degrees are structured at the moment, after graduation students can not function in the labour market immediately, because they lack hard skills and practice. As a result, practical skills should be incorporated in the 2-cycle system including mandatory internships for one semester. Further, universities in general should start seeking a match between curricula and employers’ needs, whilst both sides should try to cooperate more efficiently.

At the national / institutional level, in order for employability to be increased, quota of students being accepted in higher education institutions should be dependent on a constant monitoring of the labour market, either at the national or institutional level, under the supervision of the governments. Furthermore, at the national level, quality assurance should be guaranteed in order to obtain a degree. For example, many students who obtain a degree in Eastern Europe cannot work utilising their degrees / diplomas in other states, because their degrees are not recognised by all the states.

National governments should provide an adequate quality assurance system to increase the transparency in systems in different countries, and therefore to encourage mobility between states. At the European level, a common base and definition of concepts throughout Europe about the ECTS system, the duration of studies, and the curriculum of the degrees are required. First of all, the ECTS system and the 3-cycle system should be implemented in every Bologna Process signatory country. Besides, the amount of credits should reflect the amount of study load. Also, many countries still use a combined system which decreases the possibility of mobility during the studies, and after graduation it decreases the employability as well.

Moreover, for the purpose of promoting employability at a European level, diplomas should state if the study is country specific or not. In the future, both the widespread differences in work load and time devoted for lectures that are observed today among several European universities and cases of disparate correspondence between work load and ECTS credits for similar courses among different universities should be eliminated. The creation of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education should be seen as an important opportunity to set down consistent evaluation methods and standards commonly welcomed by universities in order to measure students’ workload. In addition, a credit system common between the nations-states for the evaluation of the importance of each course should be created in time to come. Apart from the above, a significantly crucial issue is that the duration of studies for each cycle should be suitable for each subject of studies and not necessarily e.g. three years for all Bachelor degrees.

5. Conclusions and Concrete Recommendations

The establishment of modernised higher educational systems, which guarantee a reliable, meritocratic, flexible and transparent manner the different functions of a university, while promoting academic freedom, autonomy, quality and excellence is essential. Students who participated in the UNICA 2010 Student Conference recommend to the Rectors and the European Commission the following actions:

1. More information should be communicated to students and institutional staff about the results of the implementation of the Bologna Process and the system itself.
2. Institutions should find ways to take into account the students’ opinion via feedbacks from students that assess the correspondence between the ECTS credits and the workload / learning outcomes of the courses.
3. States should further take into account the assessment given by stock-takings on the levels of implementation of the different aspects of the Bologna Process.
4. Encourage the European Commission to provide access to mobility Programmes (such as the LLP Programme Erasmus), to students from non-EU countries which are parties of the Bologna Process, and to ask European countries to facilitate the visa procedures of non-EU students coming from these countries.
5. Institutions should promote the access of minorities to university-level studies, including them in the decision-making processes.
6. Institutions should be urged to clearly define the learning outcomes of the study programmes.
7. The 3-cycle system should be subject-related and not country-related, with equal standards for each subject (e.g. engineering, medicine), instead of length varying from country to country.
8. The diploma-supplement should be standardised for all states and be free of charge, whilst being transparent to the labour market.
9. More practical skills should be included as a part of the university studies, such as optional internships.

References

1. Introduction

The latest enlargement of the European Union has resulted in a Union that is more diverse than ever before. The Rome Declaration prepared by the participants of the UNICA Student conference in September 2010 states that “Only by acknowledging the existing differences in member states can the consolidation process of the Union be realised”. It is worth having a closer look at the important role that student mobility can have in the enlargement and consolidation process of the European Union. Student mobility is nowadays a European institution and can be a powerful tool in the formation of a European identity.

Within the scope of this paper we will answer the following questions:

How does student mobility foster enlargement and consolidation of the European Union? How can student mobility be improved to function better?

The main input for this paper is the outcome of the UNICA student conference in Rome (September 2010). On the basis of those outcomes we will argue that there is a social value of student mobility that is higher than the individuals’ gain. We will focus on different stakeholders such as students, universities, EU member states and the European Union. Pointing out the social value of student mobility provides a link to the question of how student mobility positively affects the enlargement and consolidation of the EU. Therefore we will focus on the economic and cultural aspects and argue that they are positive externalities of student mobility, which should consequently be funded to a certain extent.

We will argue further that given their current status, universities are responsible for making mobility function. We will argue in detail how universities should take responsibility given their incentives and interests. We conclude that there are several specific inefficiencies in the way universities implement policy enforced student mobility. We point out specific recommendations to universities and argue that there is a high potential to make student mobility more efficient.

2. Cost-benefit analysis of student mobility in the enlarged European Union

The enlargement of the European Union with 12 new member countries in the 21st century has created a more diversified Union. This diversification has taken place at several levels, two of which are especially crucial for student mobility: the economic diversification and the cultural diversification. This chapter will discuss the challenges that the economic diversification of the enlarged European Union poses for student mobility.

Before entering the economic aspects though, a distinction will be made between different kinds of student mobility. This article relies on the division of student mobility into two: horizontal and vertical mobility. The first one refers to short-term mobility, such an exchange period abroad while the second one refers to long-term mobility, such as doing an entire degree abroad (ESIB 2007, 5–6). This chapter will concentrate mostly on the economic dilemmas related to vertical mobility since they have often been overlooked, even though with the creation of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees through the Bologna Process, the majority of European countries have advocated especially increased vertical mobility. Another reason for the urgency of problems related to vertical mobility is the enlargement of the European Union and the diversification of its member states. Horizontal mobility will be discussed later on in the article.
A traditional way of exploring the economic aspects of a certain phenomenon is the cost-benefit analysis of the issue in question. This chapter will follow the cost-benefit analysis of student mobility made by de Villé, Martou and Vandenberghe (1996). Education at all levels can be seen as providing both individual gains and collective gains and can hence be defined as a semi-public good. In the European Union the collective gains have been emphasised and education has been mostly funded by public investments. (de Villé et al. 1996, 205-206.) The growing student mobility and the internationalisation of higher education has, however, raised questions concerning funding that ties education to a certain country. The following cost-benefit analysis will show that student mobility can have positive gains for all the actors involved: the mobile students, sending countries, host countries and the European Union as a whole.

The gains of student mobility for the mobile individuals include acquiring new competences and qualifications, increasing their employability, and enriching their ways of thinking through the exposure to a different culture. Mobile students bring prestige to the higher education institutions in the host countries, contribute to the development of their respective study programmes, add to the circulation of information, and help the economy by spending money on living costs. The sending countries get in return more qualified and internationally trained individuals with particular skills and knowledge capital relevant for trade relations. As for the European Union as a whole, mobile students contribute to the human capital of the Union and to its competitive advantage. (de Villé et al., 1996, 209–212.)

Even though the overall costs of student mobility are lower than its benefits, they need to be taken into account. At the individual level, costs of mobility are related to moving, language training and so forth. Even if within the European Union students from other EU countries cannot be charged higher fees from those charged to the local students, there are still economic issues related to the subsidies of education and social security, to mention a few. The additional costs of hosting foreign students as compared to national students are very low unless the amount of foreign students combined with the amount of local students attains the capacity limits of a particular institution. The costs of mobility for the sending countries are related to brain drain. If the mobile students do not return to their country of origin, the sending country loses its investments made in the earlier stages of education. (de Villé et al., 1996, 210–211.)

The working group at UNICA conference underlined two of these costs: the costs of mobility for the individual and the costs of mobility for the sending countries. Both of these costs were brought up especially by the Eastern European delegates, who also saw brain drain as an urgent issue. Brain mobility is, in particular, a phenomenon of the knowledge-based societies. Human capital has become the greatest strength of a country, which has led to the competition on the “best brains”. Brain mobility is problematic because it is unequally divided between nations: the countries that already have an economic advantage attract the most highly skilled individuals, which deepens the economic differences between countries (Robertson 2006,1) Brain mobility and the creation of unequal areas of brain gain and brain drain within the European Union has become the biggest cost of student mobility since the enlargement of the Union. Brain mobility is seen as a key challenge in the economic analysis of student mobility within the enlarged European Union. In order to be able to address the issue of brain mobility, data is needed on the current flows of student population. At the moment there are however important limitations to the reliability of the available data on vertical mobility (see Kelo, Teichler & Wächter 2006).

3. Student mobility as a tool for the consolidation of the European Union

The European Union is strongly considering mobility as an effective tool for people to get in contact with each other in order to build a common identity. In particular, lots of interest and funds are directed towards highly

1 During the last decade there is a tendency in literature to substitute this term with “Mobility”, referred to movement of people within EU or just around its borders. This tricky label says a lot about the change of representation which is aimed. The word “migrant”, indeed, especially the highly-skilled-type, evokes Industrial Revolution, poverty, lack of possibilities. Mobility recalls awareness. http://www.mobility-migration.net/index.aspx
skilled migrants and the construction of a tight connection with Eastern European Countries. The most important action taken so far is the well-known Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), whereas Erasmus Mundus and other programmes such as Tempus and Basileus focus on communication between old member states, new members and candidate or potential candidate countries, or further with all countries in the world. Hence, it can be observed that mobility programmes are created in order to provide the possibility to share knowledge, systems, methodologies and good practices among member states, but also to shorten distances between different cultures. Erasmus Programme, the most important of the mobility programmes, or at least the most famous one, involves currently 31 countries. For instance, Turkey participates for all intent and purposes, whereas the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Croatia participate under the preparatory measure phase.²

Problems and solutions walk hand in hand in this issue. European Union has to challenge so many different aspects of a complex society; a general recognisable EU approach is action lead by values, which are in this case sharing of knowledge, peace, opportunities, tolerance and identity. Nevertheless, on the same table there is the problem of recognition of credits and diplomas, unequal opportunities, access to fund for extended portions of population, and language barriers. On one hand, there is the ideal of sharing a common space, but, on the other hand, the threat (real or perceived) of losing a country’s tradition and culture, which is also one of the criticisms of the Bologna Process.³ This is one of the hypotheses Jiménez et al. (2004) presented in a remarkable work on European identity. Common cultural identity is very hard to build because of countries’ different backgrounds, the end of the so-called Nation State, and because of the fact, of course, that the urgency of the situation might not allow for this building of an identity to take the time it needs.

What does this cultural conflict mean? Every country has to compromise with the others if they want to take part in the privileges and open mobility. Again, culture configures itself as a barrier and as a solution, too. The analysis can be carried out in relation to horizontal or vertical mobility. In the first case, in order to get the credits recognised by the home university, an agreement between institutions is needed. Nevertheless, if a student has to attend classes and courses that must be recognised by the sending faculty or, as in most cases, choose exams which are supposed to be as similar as possible to home university’s curriculum, he or she will have to pick very similar exams to those back home. This is a paradox that can be avoided by enhancing flexibility in the curricula during the exchanges. In this way, the student will have more freedom of choice and more possibility to deepen his or her knowledge of the host country. It seems quite easy at an individual level. It is important, though, to bear in mind that institutions are those who give the most relevant contribution in order to build a representation or an attitude towards mobility, in a circular process with the person and the society. Every state in the European Union should be able to trust that other member countries can successfully train, test and teach exchange students, even if they do it differently from how things are done back in the sending country.

A debate on mobility leads necessarily to a debate on language issues. While one’s choice of a study destination is affected by several aspects, language barriers represent a limit which does not permit students to choose freely. Many universities have websites that are only partially or not at all translated into English, only few courses and classes are taught in English, and there is a lack of interest to foster language skills at the university level. A network is certainly fundamental in order to encourage the learning of other languages starting from the primary school level, non-formal education contexts, and leisure places such as cinemas and theatres. It would be fruitful to teach more than one language at school, besides English and native language (s). This would disclose a country’s attitude towards multi-linguism. A specific population or geographical area might be more willing to learn languages, while others might not see anything but negative aspects. We could expect that young people will be more open to a multicultural society, but this is not necessarily true.

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³ For further information see http://bolognaburns.org/en
According to several studies on student mobility and the eventual promotion of a European identity (e.g. Sigalas, 2009, King and Ruiz, 2003, Giannuzzi in press), openness and willingness to take part in a larger community make the individual an identity provider. This is, however, differently measured depending on the country of origin, the chosen destination, the language barriers, and the perceived similarity with the country of destination, and so on. We still do not have structured data in this field in order to answer to the question because the complexity of the phenomenon allows scholars to analyse different variables at a time.

The above mentioned analysis and measures are the basis for people to be prepared to communicate with the “Other”, which could be a former enemy from the last World War or a boundary neighbour. One of the most illuminating keywords is training: training to mobility, to flexibility, to new languages, to tolerance. This does not mean getting into the melting pot and forgetting about one”s origin and tradition in order to create only one nation. Quite the opposite, European Union’s slogan says “Unity in diversity”. This aim can be cultivated by teaching European history at the primary school level together with the aforesaid suggestions. It means awareness of who we are, what we do and what we aim for. If the European Union is able to tackle these difficulties, it will really attract and produce excellence in higher education, which means no more brain drain, but mobility in a broad sense.

4. The responsibilities of universities with regard to student mobility

In the previous sections it has been argued that student mobility affects the consolidation and integration of the European Union via economic and (inter-)cultural channels. Student mobility is a semi-public good with positive externalities and should thus be funded to a certain extent by the public. In a narrow sense, the European Union and the member states have to fund mobility as they represent the public that is affected.

Since the issue of higher education affects various policy levels (EU, national states and federal states), responsibilities are as well diffused among them. In general, nation-states, and not the EU, are concerned with higher education issues and the implementation of the Bologna Process. Student mobility is coordinated on an intra-community level of the European Union and the European Higher Education Area, in a first place with the Lifelong Learning Programme. Technically this institution is providing funding for student mobility and hence internalises the positive external effects of student mobility.

However, there are several non-financial aspects which can, if ignored, make existing mobility funding inefficient. Thus the focus of this section will be neither on the financial aspects of student mobility funding, nor on the lump-sum funding of mobility. It will focus on the existing non-financial barriers for student mobility. Implementing an efficient way or making mobility work is an equally important part for the internalisation of positive external effects. The main outcome of the UNICA student conference 2010 was that improving several non-financial issues is a powerful tool with large potential.

Why are universities responsible?

At the moment student mobility is characterised by several non-financial barriers at the university level. The institution of university is closely related to student mobility and its operative dimension. Due to their practical experience universities have accumulated a profound knowledge stock regarding the costs and benefits as well as the implementation of policy-forced mobility such as Erasmus. On the one hand universities are the institutions with the most detailed information about student mobility, but on the other hand it should be taken into account that they as well have specific interests which might differ from the public interests. However, universities have responsibilities in the consolidation and integration process of the European Union because of their role in the society in general. Universities are very much related to and dependent on nation-states but they are also very closely connected with each other. Universities have high incentives to cooperate at an
international level because of academic exchange and scientific development. This idea of integration is older than the integration of nation-states and has its roots in the Middle-Ages.

How can universities make mobility function?

There are major obstacles for student mobility at the university level. Universities have not yet taken full responsibility in the consolidation and integration process of the EU but should do so by making mobility function. Several non-financial barriers affect the individuals’ choice to travel abroad. The major issues are financial support at university level, lack of information and transparency, language barriers, and problems with recognition of studies undertaken abroad. The UNICA conference in Rome came up with some very practical suggestions which are linked to the responsibility of the universities. Some of them might also affect policy making, however, we see that the universities’ role in the society includes contribution to the policy making process.

Financial barriers such as different income levels between the hosting and sending countries or different social security systems are very common obstacles for student mobility. The responsibility of the university is to inform about funding and grant possibilities, and reallocate resources in order to provide the students with access to research funds and other grants. The research activities of students should be facilitated by providing funds and opportunities to carry out research abroad. This would provide an additional funding source. Next to this, international collaborations should be increased to enhance student input in research, and in academic and humanitarian projects.

Students considering a study period abroad are confronted with a lack of information and little transparency. This applies also to policy makers interested in analyzing the effectiveness of mobility programmes. The data collection on student mobility has to be improved since existing data does not represent accurately the general trends and gives a false picture of mobility flows. As we argued before, universities have accumulated a profound knowledge stock on student mobility. In order to share the knowledge that universities possess, an adequate framework should be created and could take the form of a European Mobility portal: a network of websites with information organised by countries, universities, faculties, grants, and programmes, which could be accessible for students from all European countries. Although an inter-community institution would be needed for its coordination, the main input has to come from the universities, namely providing adequate and updated data and information. In addition, all academic websites should be translated into English to add to transparency.

Another major obstacle are language barriers, especially the limited possibilities to select courses abroad because of the teaching language. Therefore, every faculty should offer a minimum amount of classes in English, as English has gained by now the status of a common language. In the long-term, universities should enforce the language skills of their students and work together on the improvement and implementation of a common European language curriculum. The introduction of a standardised European language test with the same grading system and requirements would be a necessary condition for this.

Recognition is another major impediment which could be made more efficient without any financial input. Problems with the recognition of studies taken abroad occur because of quality differences between universities and the diversity of study programmes. These obstacles can be overcome by informing students of what is expected when they return from the studies abroad. Universities can compose lists of subjects which will be recognised in each university. Another aspect of recognition is the problems with grading. Therefore, the creation and implementation of a common European mark scale is necessary. The quality difference in higher education can be overcome with the introduction of a qualification system for subjects to be comparable in order to achieve similar levels of skills and competence. Flexibility in the curricula should be enhanced in general. Mobility can be enforced by giving mobile students the possibility to take courses unrelated to their field of study and yet ensuring their recognition at the home university.
In general, the universities’ responsibility is to support the students. Therefore specific training should be provided in order to create a team of “Mobility tutors” in each faculty. Furthermore a position of “Mobility assistant” or a peer tutor, who provides help to foreign students at the host universities, should be created.

5. Conclusion

Enhancing student mobility within the European Union necessitates considering several aspects: allocation of resources; use of non-financial benefits, for instance in the case of “mobility tutors” or implementation of university websites; quality measures for the recognition of credits; and fostering of transparency with regard to the information on mobility programmes. It is possible and necessary to improve student mobility with the already existing resources, especially if we want mobility to become a powerful tool capable of promoting the consolidation of the enlarged European Union. Sharing of good practice, and more generally, sharing of the differences among the countries, together with a structured work on both vertical and horizontal mobility, represent the fundamental steps to be taken in order to improve awareness of the current situation. Only with a more versatile perspective on each country’s attitudes towards mobility and their way of interacting with the European Union, will we be able to consider more pragmatic solutions to brain mobility, and language and financial issues. Universities can have an essential role in this process, as stated previously. Universities can overcome the issues related to nation states, which would allow for increased freedom in a truly knowledge based society.

References


Giannuzzi V. European Identity among academic sojourners within EU. Submitted


1. Introduction and background

In 2006, the then-Commissioner for Education, Training, and Culture Ján Figel said, “Although they train and teach millions of people each year, Europe’s higher education systems remain hampered by a number of obstacles, many of which are decades old” (European Commission, 2006), and thus signed into effect the European Commission’s plan for the modernisation of European universities. Europe has long seen its public universities as near-sacred centers of knowledge formation and preservation, with faculty and students afforded special privileges by society both explicitly and implicitly. However, the landscape of higher education is changing: the ever-increasing importance of a higher education qualification in today’s global knowledge-based economy is bringing students to higher education like never before, into programmes ranging from classical subjects of university study to vocationally-oriented training. And, as a part of societies committed to ideals of equality and opportunity for all regardless of background, Europe’s public universities find themselves in a very difficult position, squeezed between the increasing demands placed on them and effectively stagnant public funding, and with the most fundamental values and traditions of European higher education threatened.

According to Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009), the new paradigm for higher education finance in a massified system consists of finding a sustainable balance of three basic elements: quality, access, and efficiency. As such, the common European model of a centralised, state-run system oftentimes with near-open access (at least at the beginning of studies) would make the quest for quality and accountability, so important in the modern knowledge-based economy, all the more difficult. Therefore, a dichotomy has emerged, pitting the system’s ability to provide “high quality” education against its accessibility to all those deemed qualified, of course further complicated by the bureaucratic layers of the national system approach itself. Moreover, the demands of a massified system have created a need for a greater number of institutions beyond the national and regional public universities, which have come to include smaller public institutions and private, sometimes for-profit institutions. As students are now faced with a dizzying array of options for university education both in their hometowns or further afield (and even abroad), universities must strive for fair and sensible policies concerning their approach to quality, access, and efficiency; otherwise, institutions that fail to modernise in this way risk irrelevance in students’ eyes.

The recent orientation toward modernisation raises many questions, namely what exactly is quality in higher education? Though higher education has traditionally abstained from engaging in business-like practices, the monitoring of quality is becoming increasingly common around the world as market forces in higher education cause universities to compete with one another for material and human resources. Therefore, departments, institutions, and entire systems have become deeply engaged in defining what quality means to them and in devising means of measurement, in part catalysed by the curricular reforms of the Bologna Process. One key participant in this developing quality evaluation process is the regional and national quality assurance (QA) agencies, which establish and even enforce standards of quality across their jurisdiction. In 2005, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), a central organisational body for QA agencies across Europe, first published their “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG), establishing a Europe wide approach to QA for the universities of the EHEA and for the QA agencies that evaluate them (ENQA, 2009). Unfortunately, though, the quality assurance process in Europe is underdeveloped and often rife with conflict of interest. In the most recent ENQA survey of its members, 46.6% of responding agencies admitted to influence from external stakeholders in their evaluations, and only 60% have any sort of student representation on their boards (ENQA, 2008).
Meanwhile, another means of evaluation and comparison of universities has emerged through the proliferation of “league tables”, or rankings. Private entities such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (AWRU) at Shanghai Jiao-Tong University, the Times Higher Education, and the QS have engaged in these exercises for several years, while newer efforts through the Center for Higher Education Development (CHE) and even the European Commission (U-Map and U-Multirank) are now gaining momentum. According to Institute for Higher Education Policy’s (IHEP) Berlin Principles on Ranking, these efforts “respond to demands from consumers for easily interpretable information on the standing of higher education institutions, stimulate competition among them, ...and help differentiate among different types of institutions and different programs and disciplines” (IHEP, 2006). Despite strong criticism to the rankings’ methodologies (and the practice of ranking in general), academics and administrators the world over pay close attention to these rankings for the inevitable effect they will have on their institution: they can see that in the United States, the long-standing US News & World Report college rankings has become an incredible power-player in American higher education for its singular ability to drive shifts in public opinion over institutions.

However, any discussion of quality, whether it is for the further opportunity of the best and brightest students or for the vocational and citizenship training of average students, inevitably comes back to one single question: how do we pay for it? For a very long time, the countries of Europe have held tightly to the social philosophy of public higher education for the public good, in other words that educating young people at the public’s expense is worthwhile because the knowledge gained by those individuals will ultimately benefit communities and the greater society. Therefore, many young people are able to undertake university-level study at little to no direct cost to themselves thanks to financial support for academic enrolment at a public institution as well as living costs. However, national governments have not substantially increased allotments to public higher education budgets to accommodate the growing number of students, and for that reason it is becoming increasingly easy to find in Europe’s public institutions overcrowding and outdated resources along with decreasing per-student spending. Back in 2004, the Lisbon Strategy stated that European countries should spend at minimum 2% of their GDP on higher education; as of 2008 only four countries—the Nordic countries—had reached that level (European Commission, 2008). And now, in the midst of worldwide economic recession, higher education budgets are even more at risk; in fact the European University Association (EUA) found in a recent study that of 25 surveyed countries, 13 planned to cut higher education funding at least mildly (EUA, 2010). To cope with these shifts in public funding, universities are increasingly evaluating alternative sources of income to fill in funding gaps, and the establishment of tuition fees is one such means. As of the 2007/08 academic year, 13 European countries have no fees to attend a public institution, 9 countries have fees of less than or equal to EUR 500 per year, and 8 countries have fees greater than EUR 500 per year (CESifo, 2007), but changes are underway in light of tough economic times and fundamental policy shifts.

How to create high quality university programmes while maintaining a democratic commitment to equal access and affordability has become one of the fundamental questions that European institutions must grapple with in their attempts to modernise and maintain relevance on a worldwide scale. Europe’s universities lag behind the other highly developed areas of the world in some key statistical indicators at least loosely correlated to quality: for example, according to this year’s OECD Education at a Glance, per-student spending in the US and Canada outpaces any European OECD country by a substantial margin (OECD, 2010). And, as much as rankings can be construed as an indicator of quality, the highest ranked European university in this year’s AWRU list, which weighs prominence of scientific publications, stands at 22 (AWRU, 2010). On the other hand, though, Europe is succeeding in attracting international students in part because of its unparalleled affordability, as it is in retaining its own students within the bounds of the EHEA as well. Also, European universities are not creating a student debt crisis as is developing in the US and, to a smaller extent, in Canada (Tompor, 2010). European ministries of higher education and the hundreds of institutions they oversee find themselves at a crossroads: on the one hand, it is becoming increasingly clear that for many institutions in many parts of Europe, the old ways of doing things are severely hindering their ability to provide an education relevant to the needs of twenty-first
century students. Yet, on the other hand, European public higher education is unique in the world for its commitment to democratic access and its genuine sense of greater purpose in society. Policymakers, university administration, and students alike must work together to find a way to grow a culture of quality among European universities while still maintaining a strong public commitment to the financial (and emotional) support of higher education, such that young people throughout Europe — regardless of their own ability to pay for it — can earn a higher degree and return benefit to their society later in life.

2. Outcomes of the students’ discussions

At the UNICA Student Conference 2010 in Rome, a total of 23 students representing the universities of the capitals of Europe gathered together in the group debating the student perspective on how to balance quality and access in European universities of the twenty-first century. Just as universities across Europe present a widely varied picture of this situation, the students participating in this particular forum similarly brought an array of experiences and opinions to the discussion. Over the course of the four forum discussion sessions, the students became acquainted with each other’s points of view and by the end of the conference the group had reached some common conclusions that make up the student perspective on fees, quality, access, and university choice.

During the first day of the conference, discussions were primarily focused on discovering the differences of experiences and opinions that the students brought with them to Rome. Following our first session’s introductory presentation by the Italian representative in our forum, the group set to work getting to know the current landscape of funding and quality assurance systems in their respective home countries. To do so, students were split into two groups so that they could be exposed to the widest variety of perspectives at one time but with time efficiency in mind. Students were asked to share with their group their country’s overall student fees structure (if applicable), the availability of grants or loans for shortcomings in individual funding, the current political climate toward public higher education support, and the effect of the worldwide economic recession on their country’s higher education support, and the effect of the worldwide economic recession on their country’s higher education finances. Right away it was clear that the students had very different points of view, mostly depending on their country origin.

In the afternoon of the first day, the students dug deeper into the issues at hand by way of rotating small group discussion. Students were divided into “teams” of three, and the teams rotated to form changing discussion groups of six. The questions progressed in complexity so that each further discussion among the groups built on the conclusions of the previous round; furthermore, because the students changed groups for each question they were able to have small-group discussions with every other person in the forum over the course of the afternoon. In each round, the students were given time to debate within their small group, and then they summarised their conclusions (or disagreements, in many cases) for everyone in the room. Oftentimes all the groups gave similar answers, yet in the instances of disagreement between groups further debate ensued. Also, the forum chair provided thought-provoking questions and contrary points of view at this time for the students to consider. Questions during these rounds of debate began with discussions of quality: what it means in higher education, how it could be defined and measured, and what elements of it are most important for students before and during their time in a university. Next, the issue of quality was balanced against that of fees and overall education finances: whom higher education benefits, who should pay and how to incentivise efficiency, how universities could gain greater financial resources, etc. And finally, students were asked to brainstorm ways in which they and other students can act to best advocate for their point of view.

The second day of the conference was spent taking the disagreements from the previous day and turning them into common conclusions and consensus. Prior to the morning session, the forum chair had compiled the main discussion points from the previous day and from the students’ pre-conference abstracts, and had divided the
points into the three categories first established during the presentation by the forum’s Italian representative: quality, rankings/evaluating universities, and fees. The students were split into three groups to review one of the lists of key points of previous analysis. Within these lists, there were redundancies, contradictions, and elements acceptable to some students but not others; each groups’ responsibility was to work through these difficulties to reach consensus. However, given the wide range of viewpoints within each group, the final consensuses that emerged were unfortunately quite general. Nevertheless, the secondary conclusions, though not agreed upon by all, were still useful for breadth of information.

By the last session, the forum’s conclusions were fairly clear, though they were boiled down to the most essential (and least controversial) elements. The students divided themselves into two groups to formulate the forum’s contribution to the Rome declaration and to design the final presentation. The students constructing the declaration contribution worked diligently to transform the forum’s complicated and controversial topic into a direct and clear statement of the students’ most important priorities for the issue, though debate continued until the last possible minute. Those working on the final presentation decided that the most accurate way to portray the work of the forum was to show the level of differences and disagreement among the students; they created a video in which impromptu interviews with other conference attendees highlighted the varying scenarios of funding and fees and the vague nature of assessing quality. Overall, the students arrived at a straightforward yet meaningful consensus that reflected all of their widely varying experiences and points of view, and that also represents a highly relevant and important viewpoint in the question of how to balance higher education quality and accessibility.

3. Key Points and Conclusions

The topic areas of this forum - quality, institutional assessment, and fees - are interwoven and interdependent. However, it is possible (and, in many ways, necessary) to separate the issues for closer analysis. To directly answer the forum’s topic question, the students unequivocally believe that it is possible to have high quality public universities with low fees, but as was revealed through the group’s debates the exact means to reach that end have to be determined country-by-country, even institution-by-institution. With transparency and efficiency as drivers, European institutions of the twenty-first century must strive for the highest possible quality according to their stated sense of institutional purpose and roles they fill in their societies, whether it is to compete for the best and brightest students in the world or to faithfully educate and train the youth of its local community. Yet this must also be done with constant attention paid to the ability to access such education for all those qualified. At their very core, European institutions of higher education are important foundational bodies for an open and democratic society; the governments that oversee them and the taxpayers that fund them must be continually reminded of this value so that public commitment, both financial and emotional, remains strong.

3.1 Defining and Building Quality

Higher education as a social institution long operated with a very simple internal assumption of quality: those responsible for imparting the education particular to a university — i.e. the academics — had been trained and credentialed by the university itself, and therefore universities were only bound to their own sense of quality, not any concrete measure or characteristic. However, with the proliferation of institutions and the introduction of market forces into higher education, outside perspectives on what constitutes “quality” in higher education have grown in importance. In most industries, the striving toward “quality” is comprised of first outlining the desired outcomes and then measuring the degree of achievement of those pre-stated outcomes. In higher education, though, the definition of desired outcomes (and even less, how to measure them) is a complex matter that has yet to be fully mastered. Many institutions and independent organisations, even employers, have come up with their own codes of what quality means for university education. The term “high quality” is a most certainly relative one, with the answer depending on the person to whom the question is posed.
For students, the vagueness of the term “high quality” remains. However, there are several clear and measurable factors that students deem as highly relevant to the discussion. Defining and building quality, as was agreed upon by the students, is an integral aspect to the modernisation of higher education throughout the EHEA. First, the students felt that even though there would certainly be variation from field to field and from institution to institution, some important factors that signified “quality” to them are their employability following graduation, their unencumbered mobility for study or training, their opportunities for self-development and personal growth, their ability to partake in practical studies alongside theoretical studies, their access to research-based teaching, and their university’s comprehensive adherence to international standards (such as the ECTS). Also, students felt that a spirit of innovation and effective use of technology was generally correlated to institutional quality, as was the degree to which faculty evaluation and use of financial resources was transparent and open information. And lastly, another factor that was important to some students in this discussion of quality is the institution’s worldwide prominence. However, not all students felt this was a useful indicator of quality.

Students see several trends afoot in various areas of the world that they feel would drive forward quality improvement efforts in European higher education institutions. The first and most important of all of these is that European institutions would benefit greatly from greater autonomy and less bureaucratic dependence on national or regional governments. Through the development of dynamic administrative structures within institutions, universities would be able to adapt to changing times and new generations of students more effectively.

Parallel to this, the students also felt that allowing for competition among institutions within a national system would boost the overall quality of all institutions in that system, regardless of institutional profile or purpose; if pushed into competition for resources, both material and human, institutions will generally do their best to secure them. Also, innovation and investment in new technologies is crucial for the modernisation of institutions and for their ability to compete in the global higher education market; such a change, while perhaps requiring greater resources now, could result in cost savings in the future. This effort would have a simultaneous benefit of improving the attractiveness of public institutions to highly-qualified potential faculty and staff. Overall, the students stressed time and again the importance of transparency and efficiency in university operations, which also serves to the building up of cultures of quality in higher education institutions.

One last but very important element of the quality discussion is the role of quality assurance (QA) agencies in the strengthening of European higher education. As previously mentioned, the degree to which quality assurance agencies are autonomous and independent in their evaluations varies throughout the EHEA. Therefore, the students unanimously believed that the only way for the quality assurance agency system to build any sort of credibility and utility is through complete independence from institutional or governmental affairs. Moreover, the results of such QA exercises are not widely available or even understandable; such results should be published in clear language and be available to all via the internet. Finally, permanent student representation within such QA agencies, as well as their active participation in the actual QA process, would give students meaningful enfranchisement in the quest for quality.

### 3.2 Judging Quality and University Choice

As higher education expands on a global scale and an ever-increasing number of students search beyond their local community for education, the ability to compare institutions has become indispensable. Currently, the most widely used means of this is through “league tables”, or rankings. However, these rankings have not yet solved the previous-raised question of how to measure (or even how to quantify) intangible things such as quality of instruction, faculty engagement, likelihood for success following graduation, etc. Instead, they turn to more easily quantifiable things such as research output and per-student spending.
Overall, the students were opposed to university rankings as they currently exist; instead of promoting genuine improvement, the rankings incentivise universities to make superficial changes that push them up a numbered list. Moreover, most of the components of such rankings are of little use to students in choosing a university, and on top of that the information about a school that goes into its ranking calculation is frequently unavailable.

The students were encouraged by the shifts in methodology made in the U-Map and U-Multirank efforts, yet in their opinion further evolution is necessary to create a tool for institutional comparison truly useful to students in their university choice. First, institutions should not be regarded as monolithic, homogenous entities with a single standard of quality throughout, as this is simply not the case. Instead, comparisons should be made by programme or department so that the student knows the relative value of the programme they are considering. Second, elements that students consider most useful should be incorporated into these comparisons: post-graduation employment statistics, student mobility (both in-coming and out-going), commitment to internationalisation (international collaborations and opportunities for faculty and students), teaching quality (gauged by frequent student opinion surveys), per-student spending, and availability of financial support.

The students had very clear objections to not only the methodology of current ranking schemes, but also to the very idea of a numbered ranking. Again, the worry is that universities will only make changes motivated by the desire to move up a number of positions in the ranking. Also, the singular rankings do not reflect relative strengths and, more importantly, weaknesses of any given institution. Further, the degree of difference between institution number 10 and institution number 30 may be minor in real life, but the repercussions of such a difference in ranking could be significant - it would affect prestige, ability to attract students and faculty, etc. Therefore, the students proposed a tool for university comparison that more closely resembled a “band-based” index, similar to a bond credit rating system. In this system, universities would fall into clearly delineated and hierarchical categories (such as AAA to C, as with bond ratings), but within a category universities would not be differentiated in a hierarchical fashion. Categories could be designed to reflect different institutional purposes so that similar institutions are only compared with one another. Something similar is already underway with the U-Map and U-Multirank actions; however, if these tools are to be useful to students they should include the factors listed previously that will truly help students with their own evaluations of institutions.

Finally, even though students are increasingly looking beyond their hometowns toward institutions better suited to their aspirations, traditional factors in university choice still very much apply. Students decide which university to attend by, as they called them, the “Four F” factors: family, friends, fame, and finance. Family input still figures largely into students’ university choice, and the vast majority of European students still stay fairly close to home for their university education. Friends also influence decision-making, as oftentimes students want to stay close to high school peers. The other two factors, fame and finance, are rapidly increasing in importance - for some students, these two factors far outweigh the other two. Now that once-equal public institutions are diverging in their reputations and their offers of support, students must weigh these factors in their decision-making. Students from financially stable families may be able to afford the university of their choice regardless of the cost; however, the real concern in this development is of course the students who cannot afford it yet are still deserving and qualified. Ultimately, these four factors will persist as drivers of student decision-making, but with the shifting landscape of institutional differentiation and public financing, student priorities in decision-making may change.

### 3.3 Student Fees and the Nexus of Quality and Cost

Aspirations of high quality (regardless of what exactly that means) among European public institutions reflect a key evolution in the modernisation of higher education. Clearly it is no longer sufficient for institutions to merely expect students to come to them; students now have choices in where to attend university, so institutions
must work to attract and retain students in order to guarantee a continued existence. However, rising financial needs of institutions due to expanding enrolments and increased expectations have so far been largely unmet by generally stagnant public financial support from national governments. As such, students strongly believe that the potential for high quality institutions in Europe does not rest upon a movement away from public financing, which would certainly include tuition fees; instead, students believe that high quality institutions, from the most highly-regarded national university to the community-based vocational training institute, are of such high value to society that sufficient public funding - the one just, equitable, and democratic means of funding - is absolutely necessary for their continued relevance. This will require an unwavering commitment on the part of governments and taxpayers to the democratic mission of public higher education, with access for all those qualified. Therefore, it is absolutely possible to have a high quality institution with low or even no fees - it simply contingent upon a conscious commitment to public support of higher education.

In the current worldwide economic crisis, the vulnerability of public higher education funding has become all too clear. For that reason, reform in how exactly funding is approved may provide more stability. Students agreed that multi-year funding contracts between national governments and institutions, or even funding offset by a few years, would allow institutions to better predict and plan for the amount of money they are due to receive. Even if there is sufficient funding on the part of government, however, institutions must act with keen efficiency and transparency so that they money they are given is fairly and logically spent. With the further development of independent quality assurance (QA) systems in Europe, the QA process could take on a key role in the evaluation of institutional expenditures and make recommendations for streamlining processes and cutting wasteful spending. The QA agencies are uniquely positioned to evaluate financial efficiency across departments and, more importantly, across an entire national system; also, QA agencies are (or will hopefully be) closely attuned to worldwide best practices in the unique challenges of public higher education funding. Most importantly, though, financial efficiency and transparency is just as important a part of the development of a “quality culture” in European public higher education as curricular reforms and other modernisation efforts.

Even though all students agreed on the importance of a philosophical commitment to public higher education funding, any step beyond that was highly controversial. Some students hold firmly to the concept of no-fee public higher education; however, other students have seen a very different reality of public higher education and as such are open to other possibilities for diversified funding. Other possible streams of funding include charitable donations from corporations or individuals, further support from the European Union, income from research and patents, and (as a last resort) student tuition fees. Charitable donations and income from research can be fraught with ethical challenges, namely over-influence of corporate interests, potential for corruption, and unequal distribution of funding heavily favouring fields with strong business ties. Nevertheless, these alternative forms of income are an un-tapped resource for European institutions; in particular, charitable donations on the part of alumni could be particularly successful if philanthropy is incentivised through means such as income tax deduction schemes.

As student tuition fees are seemingly inevitable in some parts of Europe, it is of utmost importance that care be taken in the development of policies and actual practices so that equal access to a university education remains the absolute highest priority. First, any instatement of tuition fees or fee increases should be set according to a clear economic index, whether it’s a nation’s purchasing power of individuals, GDP, or inflation. Second, any tuition fees and individually-bore living expenses should be backed up by ample and flexible financial support schemes, which primarily should be constituted by partial to full need- based grants. If student loans become part of such support schemes, it is absolutely necessary that national-and European-level safeguards be put in place to protect students from predatory lending; the European Union could even create a system of interest-free student lending so that any necessary loans will be portable and ethically supplied. And third, some national systems have instituted fees as punishment for poor academic performance (or grants as rewards for excellent performance); national governments, institutions, and quality assurance agencies must monitor faculty
the introduction of a slight, nominal tuition fee accompanied by partial to full grant funding for those who cannot pay accomplishes the goals of diversification of income streams and incentivisation of efficiency in student degree completion, yet it still provides a means for equal access to public higher education. Alternatively, students could be charged fees as the consequence of insufficient progress through their degree: normal semesters would be free while overage semesters would involve a tuition fee charge.

Overall, national government involvement in public higher education is changing as modern society continues to evolve. As universities demand more autonomy in order to better manage their operations and build cultures of quality and innovation, national governments should not respond by decreasing interest in the affairs of academia; instead governments should shift their attention to preserving the democratic nature of European public higher education. This could include active preservation of less profit-driven fields such as the humanities, unwavering support of individual students and their ability to afford a university education, and even investments in information technology and research facilities for future benefit. It is possible that universities may have to turn to alternative sources of funding to supplement public contributions; however, with a strong public commitment to the democratic philosophy behind public higher education and an institutional focus on efficiency and productivity, such a need could potentially be delayed or avoided altogether.

4. Recommendations

In the matter of balancing the high quality imperative with democratic access and affordability to all, the participants of the UNICA Student Conference 2010 recommend:

To university rectors:

• Advocate for the societal value of public higher education that is accessible to all
• Create dynamic administration structures and means for greater autonomy, and increase transparency in use of financial resources
• Commit to efficiency improvements and sustainable enrolment figures and invest in new technologies and innovation, especially as a cost-saver for the future
• Require “lifelong learning” or training for faculty and staff on current best practices
• Value and publish student surveys on teaching quality and advising resources
• Continue implementation of the ECTS and other international standards (e.g., ESG)
• Focus on employability for after graduation through advising, training programs, etc., and emphasize practical learning alongside studies of theory;
• Avoid over-linkage of student performance and fees to avoid faculty conflict of interest
• Investigate private investment in higher education but with utmost concern for ethics, and distribute funding equitably among departments.

To national policymakers:

• Make investment in higher education a political priority and prioritize public higher education spending for democratic access
• Allow autonomy of institutions
• Commit to efficiency improvements
• Allow independence of quality assurance agencies, promote enforcement of European Standards & Guidelines and require quality assurance agencies to collect student opinions - and to use them
• Balance fees, when necessary, with sufficient, low-risk support schemes and adjust fees, when necessary, to indices such as GDP, inflation, etc.
• Use fees, when necessary, to promote efficient degree completion (overage semesters)
Reform funding schemes to multi-year or future-distribution contracts and create tax incentives for individual philanthropy to higher education.

To European policymakers:

- Enforce European Standards & Guidelines, particularly independence of QA agencies, and facilitate and further incorporate student participation in QA process
- Consider factors important to student’s university choice in the design of a Europe-wide ranking
- Create consumer protections for students, especially in their use of loans and consider creation of Europe-wide zero-interest student loan system.

To fellow students:

- Motivate each other to action in questions of quality and fair funding
- Demand participation in QA process
- Take surveys seriously so that they are a useful tool.

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1. Introduction

In polls and surveys which regularly investigate the public opinion on the world's most serious problems, environmental issues are always present: people are concerned with climate change, pollution, waste disposal, biodiversity, and so on. And this is constantly increasing.

The aim of this paper is not to describe any environmental issues, but to give concrete answers to the lack of engagement for sustainable development. On the long run, the aim is to prevent our environmental system from collapsing by introducing new ways of thinking and behaving. Sustainable development shows us the way to achieve this goal.

In fact, the environmental resilience – the capacity of an ecosystem to go back to its original status after being inappropriately exploited – cannot be precisely measured, nor can we foresee how or whether new technologies will allow us to replace all the non-renewable resources. Therefore, the ecological component needs to become an essential part of our society's development, and not only an add-on. Sustainable development must stop being depicted as an annoying obstacle to economic growth or – on the other hand – as an easy way to improve a company's outer image. The current environmental crisis highlights many structural problems of our western societies, characterised by a cross-cultural and international dimension. In other words, the crisis cannot be solved within a single country, as it involves the humanity as a whole. Our environment and the use of its resources are deeply linked to the economical and political systems. Therefore it raises fundamental questions about what priorities should be taken in the next decade.

A rise of awareness about environmental issues cannot be accomplished without changing or modifying values and habits. Moreover, a serious analysis of the environmental issues must necessarily have an interdisciplinary character. In fact, other than a scientific approach to the problem, which is certainly essential to any concrete action plan, we cannot forget the cultural and social dimension that is part of any change. It therefore becomes evident how universities represent an ideal place to start the (r)evolution. Today's students are tomorrow's workers, and therefore future's parents, professors, doctors, governors, Europeans, and world citizens. Educating students and stimulating their active involvement equals promoting a “cheap” and successful 10 to 20 year programme: an opportunity we cannot afford to waste.

2. Historical development of sustainable development

The role of universities is to contribute to a global social progress and advancement of knowledge. Universities are therefore expected to impart the moral vision and technical skills needed to ensure a high quality of life for future generations. Sustainable development is the context in which higher education must focus its mission, and as soon as possible. In this chapter we give an overall picture of the development of sustainable development over the years. Moreover, this chapter aims at emphasising the way in which higher education has already tried to approach this issue.

2.1 From Stockholm to Johannesburg

In 1972, the United Nations Conference on Human Environment was held in Stockholm. At this conference the importance of environmental management and the use of environmental assessment as a management tool was
recognized (DuBose et al. 1995). In this event, indications about the need to change our economic development policies emerged strongly. A major attempt to integrate environmental issues and development into a unique term came from the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature* (IUCN). The IUCN formulated the *World Conservation Strategy* in 1980. Even though the term “sustainable development” did not appear in the text, the concept of sustainability was highlighted by the use of the phrase “sustainable development” for the first time in an international forum. A few years later, the report of the *World Commission on Environment and Development* (WCED) was issued. The report defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987).

This definition underlines the strong linkage between poverty alleviation, environmental improvement, and social equity through sustainable economic growth. According to Holmberg (1994), by 1994 there were more than 80 different definitions and interpretations sharing the core concept of this definition. In June 1992, The *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro (the “Earth Summit”). Governments from around the world agreed to an “Agenda 21”. This workplan identifies what needs to be done by all of us to achieve sustainable development in the 21st century. Chapter 36 of the *Agenda 21* deals specifically with education. It states that: “Education [should achieve] ethical awareness and [promote] behaviour consistent with the sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development. To be effective, it should deal with the dynamics of the physical/biological environment and human development, be integrated in all disciplines, and employ all formal and non-formal methods and adequate means of communication”.

One of the latest meetings that debated the issue of sustainable development was the *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, which took place in Johannesburg in September 2002.

### 2.2 The Evolution of Sustainability Declarations in Higher Education

The synopsis of meetings on sustainable development highlights how more and more importance is given to this issue worldwide. What follows briefly summarises the key themes that emerged from declarations on sustainability in Higher Education since the early 1990s.

**Talloires Declaration**

In October 1990 twenty university presidents, rectors and vice chancellors of universities from all regions of the world raised their concerns about environmental changes. “We believe that urgent actions are needed to address these fundamental problems and reverse the trends”. [D. Johnston]

**The Halifax Declaration**

In 1991, a meeting was held at Halifax (Canada) between senior representatives of the *International Association of Universities* (IAU), the *United Nations University* and the *Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada* (AUCC), joined by 20 university presidents from various parts of the world

**The Swansea Declaration**

August 1993 at the fifteenth conference of the *Association of Commonwealth Universities* (ACU) in Swansea, Wales, the discussion focused on the theme: “People and the environment – preserving the balance”.

**The Kyoto Declaration**

In November 1993, the IAU issued a clarion call to its 650 university members in the Kyoto Declaration in its 8th Round Table meeting, held in Japan.

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1 From the Report of the General Secretary of UNCED
The Copernicus Charter

The European Universities Association (EUA) established an inter-university cooperation programme on the environment called Copernicus, which presented in 1993 in Barcelona the University Charter for Sustainable Development. This instrument expresses a collective commitment on behalf of 231 universities in Europe. In 2000, four organisations joined together to form the Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP)

- The association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF).
- The COPERNICUS-Campus, responsible for the University Charter for Sustainable Development, signed by over 290 university heads in 36 European countries.
- The International Association of Universities (IAU), which developed and adopted the Kyoto Declaration (supported by 800 member universities and institutions of higher education.)
- UNESCO, responsible for the implementation of the Agenda 21 and the International Work Programme on Education of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

The eagerness of universities to participate in these debates and to identify environmental issues is a very positive starting point. But there is still a manifest lack in the establishment of concrete action plans for universities, even though higher education has a key role in the ongoing processes for change. At the 6th UNICA student conference in Rome (September 2010), we were able to set up an action plan, which can be carried out by all European universities according to their individual situation and needs.

3. What is happening globally in universities

If we take a look at what is happening now globally, many universities have started local actions to grow towards a more sustainable development. The examples below reflect the diversity of things that can be done by universities to become greener.

3.1 What some universities already accomplished

The ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) started to work on sustainable development by trying to make a shift towards a more sustainable food demand, supply and consumption on campus. The committee for sustainability at the University of Amsterdam came up with a project, which managed to eliminate all CO2 emissions of a big computer room by building the first climate-neutral computer room in The Netherlands. At Loughborough University, the university and the Students’ Union, capitalising on the students’ competitive spirit, established the Energy League – a competition between the halls of residence. The Energy League is set up to determine which student hall manages to reduce their energy consumption and carbon footprint the most. Finally, one of the most innovative examples is the University of Lausanne (Switzerland), which has its entire green areas mown by a herd of sheep. The sheep work for free, are very efficient and moreover fertilize the entire campus by their natural dejections.

This synopsis of examples shows how diverse and numerous universities’ actions for sustainability can be. It also shows that, although the problem of sustainability is very complex, there are many ingenious and creative ways to approach it.

3.2 For a “green ranking” of universities

All in all, competition in sustainability seems to be a good way to promote the universities’ status. In the United States, a “green university ranking” has been partly introduced in order to raise the visibility of what universities can do to improve their eco-sustainability. This ranking creates also a healthy kind of competition between campuses. The Princeton Review’s Guide rates up to 286 “green” colleges and universities. The ranking is on a scale from 60 to 99 and the colleges receiving a score above 80 are being profiled in the report. The rankings were based on the universities’ ability to excel in providing students a healthy and sustainable
quality of life, and in preparing students for green jobs and responsible green citizenship. It was also based on how well the universities used environmentally responsible policies.

A European green ranking could provide information on the types of actions that could be undertaken by European universities and give a great global visibility for the actions, which have already been set up within the EU. Moreover, a ranking makes it possible for future students to choose their future university, not only for the quality of education, but also on the basis of the universities’ commitment towards sustainability. In addition, by making such a ranking, universities will be urged to invest more time and financial resources into their sustainability strategies, which will only benefit them in the long run. We therefore highly recommend a Green University Ranking to be established among European countries, too.

4. Action plan for a Greener Europe

Having outlined corporate as well as individual initiatives taken by universities worldwide, this part aims to provide answers to the question: how can European universities become greener and incorporate sustainability in their development? The question has been approached with a European perspective, since the creation of this paper is a result of the discussions held at the UNICA student conference in Rome, in 2010. At this conference, our group led intense discussions on sustainable development for universities, and came up with a first draft of an action plan for Europe which will be outlined and explained in what follows.

We, students of Europe, believe that it is the duty of all universities to raise awareness and to make people more responsible and critical through higher education. Sustainable development must become a central part of the education system, as was also underlined by the UNESCO. All universities should have the objective to initiate and support green behaviour and to integrate a sustainable way of thinking into university life. In the next chapters, we put forward some answers and suggestions, separated into three different action levels: the European level, the university level and student level.

4.1 At the European level

Within the EU, education policies are part of the competence of each of the Member States. Therefore, the only possibility for the EU to contribute to the development of higher education is by encouraging a greater cooperation between states. The EU has the authority to support and encourage actions, while fully respecting the legitimacy of the Member States in matters of teaching and in the organisation of educational systems. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) details the possibilities for EU actions in the field of education, which are among others “to encourage mobility of students and to promote cooperation between educational establishments”. Moreover, an exchange of information and experience should be made possible. With no legally binding measures available it might seem impossible to stimulate sustainable development in universities from a European level. However, a number of European initiatives have already been adopted with the help of organisations and associations (not only universities from the EU but also from other European countries). This provides for an even broader scope of action. The best-known European document is the Copernicus Charter (The University Charter for Sustainable Development, 1997) as mentioned in chapter 2.2. In the framework of the Bologna process, the aspect of sustainable development has played and still plays an important role. Within the scope of the EU, the environmental management system, based on the Council Regulation on Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS - Regulation (EC) No 1221/2009), offers universities the possibility to evaluate, manage and continuously improve their environmental performance. One of the benefits for universities is that the EMAS-scheme promotes “transparency and an open dialogue with the public”. This European wide scheme should be further supported to attract more universities and be extended to countries outside the EU. Several initiatives are suggested that will stimulate further cooperation among universities to incorporate sustainable development.
First, an exchange of good practices should be possible through a common European network of universities. On the one hand, universities could easily gather possible actions and receive creative input. On the other hand, a European network would also have the advantage to enable the evaluation of progress after a certain period of time. Thus, networks like UNICA or websites like the Virtual Campus for a Sustainable Europe\(^2\) may be very useful for this project. Most importantly, this network should include a variety of different university users, not only professors, but also students and other representatives. Secondly, as exposed in chapter 3.2, the EU should establish a Green University Ranking, in order to foster more actions for sustainability among universities. Thirdly, it is essential that universities shall receive financial support for the accomplishment of green actions. This funding policy could be implemented by the EU, as well as by each of the European states.

In conclusion, we propose to create a “European Sustainability Vision for Universities”. We urge the EU to create official guidelines addressed to all European universities. Although the Talloires Declaration and the Copernicus Charter have very clear directives and objectives, they remain rather vague as to how they should be applied. We therefore ask for the creation of a document that would present officially detailed and practical guidelines on how to become more sustainable, based on studies and concrete examples of what has been done and can be done by our universities. These guidelines can be created based on models like the Green Building Programme GBP. The GBP provides guidelines (and “modules” for each energy service) such as “Financing”, “Energy Audit” and “Energy Management” (Improved Energy Efficiency for Non-Residential Buildings, 2010).

We recommend the future European guidelines for more sustainable and greener universities to extend the scope to a much wider range of sectors: e.g. waste disposal and recycling, water supplies, heating and cooling systems, green research, food supplies, eco-friendly means of transportation, etc. In fact not all universities within the EU do have the same priorities and needs regarding sustainability. Consequently, all universities should have a central role in the implementation of these guidelines. We propose the election of an official committee for sustainable development in every university. The role of this committee will be to adapt the European guidelines to the specific situation and needs of their university. The committees should be composed of at least one specialist in sustainable development and should be accessible to teachers, assistants, students and the staff responsible for building maintenance.

We strongly believe that the creation of such institutionalised committees and, further, the sharing of their knowledge through a European network of universities is at the core of the progress towards a more healthy and profitable development for all.

### 4.2 At the University’s level

**Becoming greener and more sustainable**

Creating greener universities requires that measures should be taken for energy efficiency, air-quality, water and resource management, toxic-free materials, waste recycling and many other areas. And there are many ingenious ways to find solutions in each of these areas. For instance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has listed very detailed suggestions on how to improve the performance of a building and daily actions (Green Building, 2010). In the US, green school designs are based on the Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), which is the national consensus green building standard (Kats, 2006). In Europe, design standards vary from country to country (Yudelson, 2008). Several EPA and European Commission (EC) programmes have introduced product labelling, such as “Energy star”.

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A common practice is technical solutions, such as brining in more light with windows, whilst the most effective prove to be zero-energy and passive housing methods, which include improving the insulation and renewable energy use. Water use reduction has reached 32% and very significant is greenhouse gas reduction in green schools. These are valuable lessons, as the building sector contributes 40% of world’s greenhouse gas emissions which source is mainly energy use (Kats, 2006).

From EC Directive 2002/91/EC and EC Green Building Programme (GBP) the main structure of an energy-efficient building commitment can be drawn. The programme aims to improve energy efficiency in non-residential buildings on a voluntary basis and realising cost-effective measures; participants join the GBP by submitting the application form. The GBP provides guidelines (and “modules” for each energy service) to achieve this goal, such as “Financing”, “Energy Audit” and “Energy Management” (Improved Energy Efficiency for Non-Residential Buildings, 2010). The assessment and improve of environmental performances must be carried out in audits by independent experts.

The importance of these audits is also stressed and explained in the Annex II of Regulation No. 1221/2009/EC. One of the key approaches for evaluating a project or an action is the Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), also applied in the study of Kats (2006). CBA, similar to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC), can be applied to environmental assessment procedures, to include Precautionary and Assessment principles.

Overall, an assessment of the eco-situation of each university needs to be done by specialists in order to find out what can be done for further improvement. This assessment should include the measurement of the carbon footprint of each university and direct solutions on how it could be significantly reduced (Schoenaker, 2010). Moreover, every university member should be familiar with the global environmental situation and the reason why some action needs to be taken soon. Therefore, one of the universities’ main achievements will be to manage to become greener and more sustainable on the one hand, and to make these actions visible to the university community on the other hand.

Education and visibility

As mentioned in several of the above chapters, university has a key role in the education of tomorrow’s citizens. This “education” process can take place on several levels.

On an institutional level, universities can set up classes, seminars and conferences on “how to be green” open to all the students, academic staff and employees. This would be the cornerstone for education and the providing of information to the university community. By providing this kind of education, the university will stay updated for every evolution in the field of sustainable development.

On an academic level, university should be innovative by taking some serious measures to allocate its funding in the support of scientists and the development of research. The latter comprises fields from green chemistry and technologies to any academic project related to sustainable development. That way, sustainability will be taught and practiced while pushing forward the process of change.

At a more global level, every action that is undertaken at the institutional or at the academic level can have an educational impact if it is made visible to the university community. For example, if a university puts up photovoltaic cells on the roof of a building, nobody may notice the change. Whereas posters could be displayed within that building with the message: “did you know that this entire building functions on renewable energy?” Thus, this kind of visibility gives out a positive and educational message to the university community and contributes to raising the awareness about the importance of sustainability.

The actions undertaken at these three levels could stimulate students and staff to a more active involvement and
urge them to participate in green actions like cleaning rivers, collecting the garbage, or planting trees on university grounds. Moreover, it could lead the academic community to using more eco-friendly means of transport like the bus or the bicycle, which would therefore participate in educating the overall society, beyond university grounds. Thus, by following simple action plans, universities can create a healthier and more sustainable quality of life for their community, while contributing to a long-lasting education of the population.

**The benefits of sustainability**

Many studies have shown that increase in energy-effectiveness can result in fair savings. The study from Kats (2006) approves that the financial savings show an average of $70 per square foot, 20 times as high as the cost of becoming green. According to Kats, financial savings to the wider community are even larger, and include the reduced cost of public infrastructures, lower air and water pollution, and a better educated and compensated workforce. For universities, a particular emphasis should be given to the indoor air quality, as students spend from 85% to 95% of their time indoors. Kats’s study documents an improvement of up to 87% in respiratory illnesses from improved air quality. Many simple “green practices” can be learned in order to increase the financial benefits and the performance while reducing the environmental impact. Examples can range from decreasing the number of paper copies to introducing environment-friendly solvents.

Nowadays, several companies choose to rent “green” office spaces because it results in several economic benefits. The company improves its reputation and visibility and attracts more clients. Moreover, other direct benefits can be noticed like the improvement of employees' productivity and health (Eicholtz et al., 2009). Loyal and qualified workforce, reputation and high standards are important also for providing a competitive education, as today consumers’ preferences can change drastically. A greener environment or architecture is proven to be more relaxing and refreshing; it therefore also motivates to study (Kats, 2006). Therefore sustainable universities should follow the development path of this type of companies. Through these actions, universities will motivate their students and staff with a sustainable and healthy study environment and a good reputation, while taking advantage of economic benefits involved.

Although the path that the university students of Europe have chosen to follow is not the most convenient, it is far from being impossible. It is widely known and accepted that not all universities are at the same “green level” so far and that means that not all the universities have to follow the same rules: some has to do more and some has to do less. But the most important thing is not the competition between the universities because the aim is common. The principal perception should be that each university, according to its standards and capabilities, and mostly based on its students, should make as many ecological steps as possible as we all know that greening a whole university cannot be achieved in a few days but instead it is a gradual procedure with constant efforts by all the people involved.

**4.3 At the Student level**

At the students’ level, we encourage the creation of student associations for sustainable development in all universities. These associations must find ways to familiarise the student community with environmental issues and more ecological ways of living and consuming.

In our perspective, students should be an integral part of the university’s sustainability efforts. Therefore, raising the awareness of the student community through well-focused information campaigns is a crucial part of this process. Changing the mentality of university members, will eventually lead to spreading these habits to the whole of society. Thus, the role of students is to be creative in developing local actions in order to promote a “greener” way of life. This promotion can be realised through various campaigns, demonstrations, and communication. One of students' main goals should be to separate the concept of “being green” from pejorative ideas, which it is often associated with. Rather, “being green” can also be fun!
In the process of change we cannot only focus on the academic education given, but we have to take into account the great influence of peer-to-peer education. There are many ingenious ways to renew the students’ interest for a field that is often seen as “not worthwhile”. Therefore, “Green education” needs to be constantly kept up to date. Students could give particular focus on the “three Rs”: Reduce, Re-use, and Recycle).

Student associations can also propose interdisciplinary research projects. For instance, a group made up of students in architecture, engineering, historic preservation, environmental sciences and economics could participate in the design, construction and evaluation of buildings on university campus and even in their cities.

In conclusion, these examples demonstrate how diverse and innovative local student actions can be. We are therefore looking forward for the European student community to surprise us with their creativity!

5. Conclusion and recommendations

What emerged during the research for this paper is, first of all, the great complexity of the issue of sustainable development. The latter involves political, financial, cultural, social and educational sectors. These multiple visions are part of our society and must try and get along, which is not always simple to accomplish. What is certain today is that all of these sectors agree on the fact that environmental problems must encounter feasible solutions in the next decade, in order to preserve the quality of life we have taken for granted until now. Yet, the sectors do not always agree on the type of solutions that need to be implemented.

This paper tried to depict the general situation of sustainable development and how it is deeply linked to our educational systems. Moreover, it offers solutions that may eventually enable all of the involved sectors to come to an agreement. The result of our discussions enabled us to avoid utopian and unreachable objectives. On the contrary, it leads us to propose a concrete European action plan, which can be carried out on several levels, and which should be adapted to the specific needs of each European university.

In conclusion, we quote our forum declaration, as extracted from the students’ discussions during the Unica Student Conference that took place in Rome in September 2010:

“We, the students of Europe, demand a common action plan for a sustainable and green development to be implemented in every European university as soon as possible. In order to achieve this goal, we urge for the creation of official European guidelines to support this process. The latter shall consist of several recommendations and concrete examples of how to move towards sustainability and greener universities. We also ask for the election of committees for sustainable development in all universities in order to adapt the guidelines to every individual situation. In a close future, these committees should create a European network and share their knowledge. Most of all, we strongly recommend governments and universities to invest more funds into the research for alternative technologies and better resource management. These short-term investments in sustainability will rapidly lead to financial benefits and to the improvement of general quality of life. We also believe that these investments are central to maintain the efficiency of our education systems. Moreover, universities should stand as examples in raising the student’s awareness – and therefore the population’s awareness – on environmental issues. We, the students of Europe, challenge the EU and our governments and our universities to transform these ideas into political practice within the next two years.”
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In the past decade, there has been much talk about change: change in the climate, change in global governance, and change in the future of employment. Universities have been undergoing some change, as well. With the Bologna Process, the education system of European universities has reached a revolutionary standpoint in making higher education not only compatible, but also comparable.

European students of the UNICA 2010 conference in Rome took the notion of comparing their universities quite literally and weighed out the essentials of today’s education. In forum 10, the students analyzed the hard and soft skills of education, bearing in mind that theory and practical experience must always go hand-in-hand. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: “Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”

1. **Extra-curricular activities to be seen as co-curricular activities: credits- validation for these activities**

   Soft skills should be integrated within the university curricula by different means. First of all, teaching methods should be improved. Teachers should include in their classes an inquiry-discovery learning process. By asking questions to the students and by giving them practical cases to solve, can make classes more dynamic and not just a static lecture by a teacher. Teachers are experts in their fields, but it is not enough: they must also develop skills to explain the concepts to the students by making classes alive. This should be an essential part of their job. To support this development, classes should be evaluated by the students but also by external experts at the end of the school year.

   Moreover, extra-curricular activities that are linked to the curricula should be taken into account for the final diploma. Student projects such as *National Model United Nations*, for example, should be credited. But also, internships should be included within the curricula and the final evaluation should take account of that. Furthermore, class-oriented student organisations on campus should also award credits. Thus, when getting the Bachelor’s degree, all these projects will have been taken into account by the teachers, and students are rewarded for their hard work not only within the class room, but also out of it. By graduating from universities, students would not only develop hard skills but also become problem solvers and leaders in their field thanks to the implementation of soft skills in the curriculum.

   In addition, in the selection for Erasmus exchanges, not only marks should be taken into account but also skills, such as communication skills, capacity to adapt and adjust, to work in groups, to make presentations, to study in a new language and to integrate into a new university environment. We would like these criteria to be added to the European universities selection process for students.

   The aim is that soft skills count in the credits that we get from class. This means a change of culture within the academic system. Teachers are not only passing knowledge but also creating leaders of tomorrow, by making classes interactive, encouraging student projects for which they get credits at the end of the year. Learning should evolve from something static to dynamic, and soft skills should not only be introduced in courses but also be evaluated in the curriculum. But this implies a change of mentalities in the academic community.
With the Bologna process a student-centred approach should have been introduced within the classes. Instead, in practice, in many cases the Bologna process has only reorganised classes without making a substantial change within European universities.

Therefore we want to encourage all academic staff to accept this change of culture by really making a substantial change within the curriculum and by really applying what universities have signed in the Bologna declaration.
Maria Kelo
Higher Education Expert, Proceedings’ reviewer

Maria Kelo is an independent Higher Education Expert and works on various projects in the field of international cooperation in education. Her reviews of the herein published proceedings was of primary importance: she judged their suitability for publication and she tried to render homogenous the organising style of all the articles; she also helped the authors suggesting them which parts of their work should had been be reformulated, when needed.

Previously, Maria has worked for a short period at the European University Association and for nearly seven years as the Senior Officer at the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA). In this role she was responsible for the acquisition, development and implementation of ACA projects, the organisation of ACA conferences and seminars, as well as ACA’s public relations activities. Some of her most important projects and areas of expertise include student services, transnational education, student mobility, and issues related to higher education reform and the Bologna Process. Before her appointment at ACA in 2003, Maria worked as a researcher for Eurydice. She has also worked as an intern at the DG for Education and Culture of the European Commission. Maria has an MSc in Philosophy, Policy, and Social Value from the London School of Economics and a BA in Modern European Studies from the University College London.

The declaration contained herein provides a written account of the key challenges, priorities and recommendations for higher education today, as seen through the eyes of the students from universities in capital cities across Europe.

This declaration is a result of the UNICA Student Conference, held from 22 to 25 September 2010 in Rome, Italy. Over 250 students from 30 countries participated in discussions, shaping the recommendations below.

Discussions were centered on 10 topics, chosen by participants via electronic vote prior to the conference. Two topic recommendations have been merged into one section for the purposes of this document, due to their similar nature.

We, the students of the UNICA Student Conference identified and discussed the most important challenges facing universities and wider society today from our point of view and reached the following conclusions:

1. Multiculturalism

We live in a multicultural society that should allow individuals to profit from its diversity and guarantee equal rights to all citizens. Simultaneously, multicultural society needs to be workable, efficient and welcoming to all. To achieve this aim, changes are needed in areas of education, communication and policy:

• **Investment in multicultural education at all life stages**, both within formal and informal education. Provision of targeted training to teachers and educators would allow development of curricula and inclusive teaching methods;

• **Opening of communication channels and creation of multicultural interaction platforms and meeting spaces** both physical as well as in the media and in virtual space. Immigrants need to receive support to participate more broadly in society, by being given opportunity to learn the host-country language and through fair inclusion in the labor market;

• **Development of innovative public policies that support equality of opportunity**. Wider participation must be guaranteed by pilot programs such as quotas (i.e., a certain percentage) of foreign citizens in the educational system and in the media. Fair job recruitment might be supported by the usage of anonymous CVs and the provision of justification for refusals. Public institutions that fight against discrimination must be created and strengthened, and they should evaluate the implementation of policies and laws by other public bodies.
2. The role of university in contemporary society

The role of universities in contemporary society requires a broad approach exploring the challenges, trends, and ideas that are defining expectations towards higher education both from within the university, and broader society. The role of the university is in continuous development, though four topics should be in special focus:

- **Advancement of the mission of educating** by becoming more involved with society, for example, media can ensure better communication and cooperation between university and society. In order to abolish the ‘Ivory Tower’ perception between students and professors, students must have better interaction with professors and be involved in research. The result of education should not only be well-trained professionals, but university graduates must be fully conscientious members of society; whilst the lack of practical education should be reduced by providing practical training to students according to their curricula;

- **Autonomy for universities in defining their roles**; however students and civil society representatives must be included in the governing bodies. To enhance autonomy of universities, it is necessary to eliminate financial constraints through diversification of financial sources without reducing public funding;

- **Universities are key players in problem solving of global crises** such as climate change, financial crises, inequalities and depletion of natural resources. Researchers must be involved and co-responsible for political decisions affecting problem-solution from local to global issues; at the same time a mutual relationship of universities and the public should be established in the way that graduates provide universities with new stimuli for their innovation, which can be enhanced through expanding possibilities for lifelong learning;

- **A European program of grants and scholarship based on personal incomes and life cost is recommended**. Access to higher education is not equal for all people in today’s society. Such inequalities are not only national challenges, as the percentage of students in the population is different from one country to another. Furthermore, to increase the attractiveness of higher education better information must be provided to secondary school students. However, it must be a balance between quality and quantity of access, though the idea of excellence in education must not be based on an elite’s formation, but in high teaching standards.

3. Hard and soft skills, nurturing creativity

Given soaring levels of graduate unemployment and increasing frequency of job turnover among young people, today’s graduates are faced with some of the worst employment prospects in history. The situation is exacerbated by graduates who are equipped with hard skills but usually lack the necessary soft skills. **Universities must nurture creativity by integrating informal education into formal education.** Therefore, universities should:

- **Emphasize soft skills education within curricula by integrating hard and soft skills within all academic fields by improving teaching methods** towards a student centered approach through the use of, for example, problem-based learning, essay writing, group work and discussions, role plays, presentations and diverse, innovative examination methods. Furthermore, flexible studying paths and environments should be provided;
• Empower students to further develop their soft skills and nurture creativity through informal education and by awarding degrees that include the regular credit requirement as well as recognition of co-curricular activities through requiring involvement in activities such as, for example, student politics, student interest groups, event organizing, hobby groups or University-based charities, that will be acknowledged by a document awarded by the group associated with the University. Moreover, universities’ non-monetary resources (facilities, equipment etc.) should be estimated and used for extracurricular activities, with information regarding such activities to be accessible to all;

• Expose students to employment situations through student-oriented projects and by creating and maintaining strong links with the public and private sectors while cooperating with representatives of employers through the continuous implementation of workshops, case studies, research data and the possibility of internships;

• Further nurture creativity amongst the wider academic community: institutionally, nationally and internationally by encouraging more cooperation within universities between all different actors and on different scales in order to favor the students’ position in a common decision making process. It needs to be interdisciplinary, international, time intensive and non-hierarchal among all participants of activities. Universities should also organize prize-based competitions between and within themselves in a bigger scale and in every field on an international level to foster creativity and give birth to new and original ideas.

4. Student mobility and consolidation and enlargement of the European Union

Only by acknowledging the existing differences in member states can the consolidation process of the EU be realized and a way towards enlargement opened. In this process we see that student mobility has an important role to play, next to enhancing quality of education and opening up advantage of the diversity of the Higher Education systems. However to make mobility “work” it is important to stress on open access and successful completion of the study period abroad. Therefore the following points must be considered:

• Stressing the financial and cultural benefits for both the home and hosting countries, therefore showing the added value for mobility not only as an individual one, but also as a driving force for creating a consolidated European knowledge-based society;

• Improvement of data collection on student mobility since existing data is limited to horizontal mobility, which does not represent the general trends and gives a false picture of mobility flows;

• Ensuring recognition of work periods abroad and thus funded as mobility in order to better prepare students for employability and investigate additional sources of funding by establishing links with the private sector;

• Providing clear and transparent information about mobility opportunities and benefits of study and placement periods abroad in order to instigate students’ motivation to experience it;

• Ensuring full recognition of earned credits is secured in order to make the study period abroad academically meaningful;

• Addressing language issues.
5. Internationalisation at universities: problems and challenges

Internationalization at universities is an important focus for European higher education; as it enriches the quality of education and provides students with richer course offer, language, social and cultural skills. We believe that an international university must value cultural diversity, inclusion, transparency and democratic participation.

To be effective, it should be a part of the university strategy at all levels. The strategies and action plans must address the challenges of internationalization in a constructive and pragmatic way.

It is important that the money for internationalization is earmarked during the budget process. In order to enhance the internationalization, we propose:

- Improving the knowledge of English by students and teacher to increase the number of courses in English (through early start, subtitled movies, language learning within any degree);
- Improving information provision (training for IRO staff, creation of an online European academic network for promoting cooperation and exchange among students, researchers and staff);
- Increasing specialization through combining specialized degree programs with fewer students at specific universities;
- Increasing participation of students with disabilities by improving needed infrastructure;
- Supporting the integration of international students (both academic and social, with study support of mentors and tutors and possibility of anonymous feedback).

6. Mobility programs

Increasing the number of mobile students is essential for the development of the European youth since it creates personal and academic benefits. The 20% to 2020 goal is a visionary target to aim at. However, the quality and stability of the mobility programs are more vital in contemporary society.

- Strong cooperation between ESN sections, student unions and international relations offices must be a priority for participating universities;
- Active promotion and encouraging participation in European mobility programs through cooperation with National governments. Students must be encouraged to participate in mobility programs in countries speaking uncommon languages;
- Fair financing system for mobility programs, which requires an additional fund providing extra support to students from European countries with a lower income and distribution of funds according to the academic performance and family income;
- Proficiency of participants in language of the host country, as high quality in the Erasmus program starts with a good preparation and selection process. For this, students should benefit from language preparation before their stay abroad both in their home and host universities. Furthermore, Erasmus students should receive equal treatment with local students in all academic processes;
- Commitment to the learning agreement, from professors who are obliged to sigh the agreement, must be demonstrated, in order to solve the problem concerning the recognition of courses attended abroad. The learning agreement must be a binding contract.
7. The Bologna Process

The development in quality of education driven by Bologna Process seems to have stopped after years of impressive innovation in the signatory countries. Consequently the states must take further into account the assessment given by stock-takings on the levels of implementation of the different aspects of the Bologna Process. Many European citizens, often including students at European universities, are unaware of the existence of the European Higher Education Area.

- More information must be communicated to students and staff about the results of the implementation of the Bologna process and the system itself;
- Student opinion must be taken into account by institutions through student assessments on the correspondence of ECTS with workload and learning outcomes;
- Bologna Process implementation must be improved at national levels. For instance, institutions need to clearly define the learning outcomes of the study programs and the 3-cycle system should be subject-related and not country-related, with equal standards for each subject (e.g. law, medicine) instead of length varying from country to country;
- Universities and national bodies must value Bologna Process instruments more. The diploma supplement requires standardization for all states and free of charge, whilst being clear on labor market. Furthermore, in the light of student-centered education, academic institution should include skills training as a part of the university studies, such as optional internships;
- Stronger and clearer commitment by states is required. National agency should provide equal financial support for LLP Program (Erasmus) students studying in the same location. Institutions should promote the access of minorities to university level studies and include them in the decision-making processes;
- Further improvements in the field of social dimension are necessary: states must provide easier access to mobility programs such as the LLP Program (Erasmus), to students from non-EU countries participating in the Bologna Process.

8. Tuition fees

High quality universities are possible with low or even without fees, but only with sufficient and responsible public funding and the recognition of the importance of high quality universities in society.

- Cooperation, innovation, effectiveness and motivation of the academic community is key, as the most important markers of quality in higher education are: self-development, employability, mobility, research-based teaching and adherence to international standards;
- Current trends of university rankings are damaging, as they are being developed to judge institutional quality - they are not sufficient to help students in choosing where to study. Quality assurance agencies, which should be entirely independent and include student representation, must publish reports on each university in a clear, readable way. Moreover, quality assurance processes should be fully transparent. Universities should implement change according to European and national standards as recommend through the quality assurance process;
- A strong commitment to public funding of higher education is urgently required in order to foster the aforementioned markers of quality, and more importantly to continue the democratic nature of higher education with equal access to all those qualified.
Sustainable development is the central theme in today’s society, and it is crucial that universities engage with such development while also reducing their impacts of the environment.

- **A common action plan for a sustainable and green development** must be implemented at every European university within the next two years. In order to achieve this goal, official European guidelines must be created to support this process. The latter shall consist of several recommendations and examples of how to move towards sustainability and greener universities;

- **Committees for sustainable development** must be created at all universities in order to adapt the guidelines to every individual situation. In the near future, these committees should create a European network and share their knowledge;

- **Greater investment in research for alternative technologies and better resource management** from both universities and governments is required. Such short-term investments in sustainability rapidly lead to financial benefits and the improvement of general quality of life. Furthermore, such investments are central to maintain the efficiency of our education systems;

- **Universities should be role models** in raising the student’s awareness, and therefore the population’s awareness, on environmental issues.

*We, the students of Europe, challenge our universities, governments and the European Union to transform these ideas into political practice as soon as possible.*
Campidoglio - Capitoline Hill:

Meeting of the UNICA President and Steering Committee with the Mayor of Rome

The 24th September UNICA President and the Steering Committee, together with all the students who were taking parts in the forum discussions, met the Mayor or Rome. He underlined the importance of cooperation and that students’ opinions need to be heard in order to improve education.
Awards

Best Poster Contest
Winner: Switzerland

Best forum presentation
Winner: Forum 6
The Bologna process and the development of the European higher education: quality, employability and social issues

Best forum presentation
Honorable mention: Forum 9
Sustainable development and greener universities
See you in 2012!