

WELCOME ADDRESS



by Stefan Bienefeld, Chairperson of ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe

Dear NUS representatives, dear guests,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you on behalf of ESIB – the National Unions of Students in Europe to the seminar “Smashing the Ivory Tower - Equal Access to Higher Education” and to present to you this reader for the seminar.

ESIB has done considerable work on equality issues during its 20 year history, particularly surrounding gender and race issues, running projects on issues such as “No means No” and surrounding the European Year against Racism in 1997. Over the past two years ESIB has also started to do more work on sexuality and disability discrimination producing statements on these topics during our Board Meeting in Poland May 2002. ESIB has a permanent working group tackling equality issues and it was following a meeting of the Equality Working Group in Helsinki in February 2002 that we came up with the idea for a more extensive seminar on equality issues and running training for our members. The project will also produce an Equality Charter and Handbook that will be distributed to all our members and through them to the local students unions across Europe. The Equality Charter will help provide a campaign tool for local and national students unions in their work on ensuring equal access to higher education.

Students and student movements across the globe have traditionally been at the forefront of the fighting for equality and human rights and with the uniquely progressive nature within higher education this is an excellent opportunity to lead by example and show the rest of society what can be achieved. Throughout history there has been oppression of minority groups within society and higher education has often been seen as a liberal environment where discrimination has been lessened, although it should be pointed out that in reality higher education is not always the bastion of equality that it is portrayed as. Higher education and society more generally has come up with various tools in the past few decades of trying to overcome discrimination and ensure these oppressed groups can take their rightful place in society such as positive discrimination, affirmative action and safe space.

It is important for student organisations to strive for equal access to higher education for all groups within society and they should address these problems and come up with proposals on how to effectively fight discrimination and ensure that equality of access becomes reality rather than a utopia. There might be disagreement on the measures to take and there might be controversy about the way forward. I do however believe that

controversial discussions and initial disagreement in groups gives a bigger impetus for moving forward than a group where differences of opinions hardly exist.

I do also believe that all of us are prejudiced to a certain extent. We might consider ourselves tolerant, but we should also never forget that to tolerate someone from a semiotic perspective means to endure someone, so tolerance can only be a step in a process leading to acceptance. Our individual construction of reality leaves us with a certain perception of things which is our personal truth about for example, gay people, transsexuals, disabled people, people with a lower social standing and I think that realising how much our daily life and society as such is built upon collective social constructs of categories of people is maybe the first step to find our own place in this discourse and start to analyse, theoretically deconstruct the categories and practically fight against their consequences, with whatever means each and everyone deems fit for this purpose from their own perspective.

I'd also like to stress that this seminar does not aim at making everyone of us the same- just imagine how boring life would be if we were....my idea of a good situation would be one in which all students would be equal in chances and opportunities, but definitely not the same. The whole idea of acceptance rather than tolerance involves a concept of embracing differences and diversity rather than trying to make everything the same.

I would like to thank those people who helped with this seminar, especially Bettina Schwarzmayr and Johan Almqvist from the EC who was mainly responsible for fixing this conference, ESIB Secretary General Alex Bols and Executive Officer Vladimir Erceg for administrative support, John C. Friend Pereira and Chris O'Sullivan from the EC 2002 who assisted in drawing up the concept and will chair workshops during the seminar, the other workshop chairs for their willingness to work with ESIB on these issues, the NUSes who are partners in the project, namely UBS, SAMOK, NUS-UK, VSS-UNES, SFS and OH and everyone who made this conference possible.

In this sense I wish all of you and us a fruitful seminar and good and helpful results both for the practical work at national and local level as well as policy results.

Stefan Bienefeld
ESIB chair 2003

WELCOME ADDRESS

by Ivan Modev, president of UBS



Dear Mr President,
Dear Ministers,
Dear NUS Representatives,
Dear Guests,

One and a half year ago ESIB decided at its BM in Coventry that UBS will be hosting the 44th ESIB Board Meeting and Seminar. For the first time after the democratic changes in Bulgaria such a high profile event will be held and it is a real challenge for the Union of the Bulgarian Students to organize it. We are especially glad that representatives of 51 NUSes from 40 countries in Europe get together and I would like to welcome all of them with the Bulgarian "Добре дошли!" (Dobre doshli!).

During the last 14 years Europe has gone through dramatic changes with the countries from East Europe undergoing a process of integration in the European Union. That process inevitably leads to integration of the educational systems of the European countries. It becomes a prerequisite to explore and analyze the problems of access to education. I am glad that by discussing and identifying the different obstacles to equal access to education we will be able to contribute to resolving this important issue during the year pronounced by the Council of Europe as year of equal opportunities. I am convinced that the different problems of discrimination based on disability, sexual orientation, sexism and racism related to access to education and education itself are important issues which are worth investigating in order to find a solution for their overcoming. The issues related to student mobility of minority groups, violence in student campuses, lack of equal opportunities for students with different social background will be in the focus during the discussion in the next days. By identifying common measures to facilitate the access to higher education in the European countries we will be able to show

our strong desire for and contribute to the creation of a wider common European Higher Education Area.

The realization of that Seminar would not have been possible without the support from the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Council of Europe, VSS – UNES and OH.

I would like to thank as well John Pereira and Chris O'Sullivan from EC 2002, Stefan Bienefeld, Bettina Schwarzmayr and Johan Almqvist from EC 2003, Alex Bols Secretary General of ESIB for their input and support for the realization of that event.

Dear friends,

I would like to wish you a very fruitful seminar and Board Meeting. I hope that you will spend a wonderful time in Bulgaria.

Student greetings,

On behalf of UBS,
Ivan Modev
President

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WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1: Is There a Hierarchy of Discrimination in Higher Education Arenas?

Chaired by Christine Scholz

Introduction

There is an amount of anecdotal evidence to suggest that attitudes towards discrimination vary according to the group being discriminated against. This workshop will examine this hypothesis. Does for example, society and the Higher Education sector react differently to racism compared for example to disability discrimination? Should they? We try to look here to a cluster of discrimination, which will not be addressed as a moral question but rather raise awareness, that people who are considered to have links to more than one marginalised group are even more effected by discrimination. What shifts did the Higher Education Area go through during the recent years?

What is meant by discrimination? How is it characterized?

Discrimination of individuals and groups is accompanied by the recognition of distinguishing characteristics, followed by the exclusion of individuals or groups with these characteristics from a larger group of individuals or society. In consequence of this exclusion individuals usually face economic deprivation and various forms of social and cultural disadvantages.

Therefore, social exclusion can be seen to be present in almost any of the domains of modern living, including education, employment, community life and citizenship to which individuals or groups fail to gain access or exclude themselves from. This idea implies standards of access and participation, which the modern state should uphold; it also implies dynamic processes through life of interaction between individuals and the state, whereby marginalisation occurs and access is effectively denied. Therefore discrimination and exclusion is understood to be a product rather than a cause of inability to access or participate in these different domains mentioned above.

Discrimination and exclusion can be observed in individuals or groups with structural characteristics such as:

- disabilities and disorders (physical and mental)
- gender
- sexual orientation
- religion
- migration
- citizenship, nationality
- unemployment
- underemployment
- homelessness
- poverty

- value systems
- life-cycle
- household structures
- education and training
- urban/rural etc.

(compare to European Commission, *Targeted Socio-Economic Research*, Workprogramme, Edition, 1995.)

As already mentioned above individuals that are disadvantaged usually have links to more than one of these structural characteristics, as one disadvantage reinforces another producing a downward spiral of disadvantage to the periphery of the modern state.

How do exclusion mechanisms and discrimination affect the Higher Education sector?

Influences of discrimination in Higher Education are obvious for a number of structural characteristics, for example disabilities and disorders, gender, poverty, social status, migration, nationality, prior education and training, etc. They either cause exclusion from or discrimination in Higher Education. Effects of this discrimination can be witnessed by a number of indicators such as:

- enrolment rates
- subject structures
- duration of studies
- drop out rate
- participation in mobility programmes
- obtained degrees
- employment rate in Higher Education Institutions
- the rate of leadership in Higher Education Institutions
- number of programs to redress discrimination

For example in the case of the discrimination of women in Higher Education it is to be observed that enrolment rates of women and men are almost balanced. The graduation rates already show a slight imbalance –in Germany in the year 2000 95.711 men graduated, while only 82.907 women did so. The number of female compared to male classroom teachers and academic staff in tertiary education in Germany in the year 2000 shows even more disparity between women and men in the Higher Education sector. While 93.850 men were employed as classroom teachers or academic staff in tertiary education only 24.150 women were. The number of female rectors or chancellors is infinitesimal small. Only 10,8 percent of the German university chancellors and only 11 of the 222 rectors (about 5 percent) in Germany are women. The median of women leadership in universities in Europe is between 5 and 7 percent (compare numbers with UNESCO - “Higher Education and Women: Issues and Perspectives“). Besides that the academic subject selection of women shows a clear dominance in languages and social sciences, while male students dominate engineering, mathematics as well as studies in law, economics and administrative sciences.

Not all of the mentioned structural characteristics are observed to the same extend concerning the mode of discrimination of these characteristics in Higher Education. The

awareness of discrimination in Higher Education seems to be linked to the size of the group that is being discriminated against as well as the importance of the group politically and the awareness of the discrimination in society. The demand for equalization of women and men in society settled thereby also in the Higher Education sector in a set of promotion measures of women such as the institution of an ombudsperson for women at German universities. The different ways to redress discrimination of individuals and groups might be a way of tackling the question whether there is a hierarchy in discrimination in Higher Education.

What are we going to do in the workshop?

In this workshop we will discuss differences and similarities in discrimination schemes in society and the Higher Education sector, possible reasons for these, about reasons, why these marginalized groups are being discriminated against at all and how discrimination can be redressed. In order to compare discrimination schemes in society and the Higher Education sector we will need to look at the relevant data in each country concerning the indicators listed above. As you can see we will take a more statistical approach to the topic rather than talking about a stereotype perspective of the normal student. On the basis of this information, which will need to be gathered in cooperation with the participants of the workshop, we will discuss:

- Whether or not there is a hierarchy of discrimination in Higher Education? Should there be such a hierarchy?
- How are individuals affected, who belong to more than one marginalized group?
- How do institutions deal with the problem of discrimination?
- What kinds of programs do exist to redress discrimination, which groups are they targeted at and do they work effectively?
- What needs to be done to effectively redress discrimination in Higher Education?

On the basis of this discussion we will then confront the schemes of discrimination against certain groups of society within Higher Education with existing political positions of ESIB. We will review whether the existing positions of ESIB require a concreting or an extension, in view of a possible hierarchy in the discrimination of individual groups within Higher Education.

What will you need to prepare?

In order to compare discrimination schemes both in society and in the Higher Education sector of each county, you will be asked to answer the following question:

- What mechanisms of discrimination and social exclusion can be observed in your country?
- Are these mechanisms the same in the Higher Education sector (you can take into consideration the indicators listed above, such as enrolment rates, etc.)?
- What kind of programs and for which target groups do exist to redress discrimination in Higher Education in your country?

Further reading:

Positions of ESIB:

„Statements Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students in Education and on accessing education as disabled students“ - <http://www.esib.org/policies/StatementsLesbianGay.pdf>

„The Fight Against Racism“ - adopted at BM 35, October 1998 in Vienna / Admont:
<http://www.esib.org/policies/racism.htm>

„NO means NO“ – statement on sexual harassment:
<http://www.esib.org/policies/nomeansno.htm>

More useful links are on the homepage of the equality working group of ESIB:
<http://www.esib.org/wg/equality.html>

Eurostudent 2000 Report

<http://www.his.de/News/Abt2/Auslandsstudium/Eurostudent/download/eurostudent2000s.pdf>

German Ministry of Education and Research - “Economic and Social Conditions of Student Life” – 16th Social Survey Summary

http://www.studentenwerke.de/se/2001/zusammenfassung_en.pdf

Unesco

“Higher Education and Women: Issues and Perspectives“:
<http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/principal/women.html>

Women in higher education management:
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000962/096239e.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=3EA93D12_3_135&hits_rec=46&hits_lng=eng

World Education Report 2000:
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001197/119720e.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=3EA93D12_3_135&hits_rec=10&hits_lng=eng

World statistical outlook on higher education: 1980-1995; working document:
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001136/113601eo.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=3EA93D12_3_135&hits_rec=31&hits_lng=eng

Provision for students with disabilities in higher education: a survey

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001287/128761eo.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=3EA93D12_3_135&hits_rec=12&hits_lng=eng

Fifth Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education:

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0008/000893/089325eo.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=3EA93D12_3_135&hits_rec=49&hits_lng=eng

Education International

„Working for lesbian and gay members“ Information booklet on discrimination against lesbians and gays: http://www.ei-ie.org/pub/english/Others/1999_gaylesbian_e.pdf

OECD

„Education at a Glance 2002“: http://www.oecd.org/EN/links_abstract/0,,EN-links_abstract-604-20-no-no-1239-604,00.html

OECD Education Database:

http://www1.oecd.org/scripts/cde/viewdb.asp?DBNAME=EDU_UOE&DBICON=%2Ficons%2Foecd%2Egif

„CERI - Objective 6 (2002) Promoting partnerships for inclusion“:

<http://www.oecd.org/EN/document/0,,EN-document-614-20-no-27-20392-0,00.html>

European Commission

Fourth Framework Programme (1994-1998) – „Targeted Socio-Economic Research“:

<http://improving-ser.sti.jrc.it/default/>

Workshop 2: How Can the Promise of Mobility be Prevented from Discriminating against Students Who Cannot Be Mobile?

Chaired by Chris O'Sullivan

Introduction

The Bologna Process promises much in the creation of a European Higher Education Area, founded on the basis of free mobility of students within the area. Not all students are able to mobilize though. How for example, can disabled students, or students with dependents, access the benefits of mobility? This workshop will look for potential solutions for this, to facilitate mobility for the greatest possible number of students.

The Brief

Mobility is often held up as the holy grail of higher education in today's climate. Mobility is often credited with being the ultimate opportunity for students, and with the EHEA, this is likely to be emphasized, as moving around to the best opportunity will become more usual.

As with all great innovations though, there are questions left unanswered, and people marginalized by the rate of progress. Much has been made of the exclusionary forces of economic factors in different countries for preventing inflow and outflow of mobile students. It is important that these factors are adequately taken into account.

Whenever an initiative about mobility comes up, or a workshop is done, there is always a very quick reference to preventing discrimination in mobility. This workshop will explore in greater depth these issues.

Key Questions

What are the benefits to mobility?

We can all produce two sheets of A4 of standard replies...but taking away the jargon, the schemes, initiatives and policy papers...just what is it that mobility provides?

Is there a "spirit" of mobility that can be transplanted?

Is there something about the experience of mobility that can be "bottled" and used to bring the experience without the physical distance?

How can we bring any portable benefits of mobility back to student in situ?

Should we set up systems for doing that? Is there a danger that they might themselves become the norm?

Is it acceptable to settle for the fact that some people cannot be mobile?

Is admitting that some people can't be mobile promoting a culture of institutional discrimination? Isn't that like saying disabled people shouldn't have jobs, or women shouldn't be Professors...

Should we bring "eau de mobility" to the student, or facilitate the student's mobility?

Or is there a third way? Or a fourth and fifth?

Method

Perhaps the most common example on non-mobile students facing barriers to mobility are students with disabilities. It is also the area of expertise of the workshop facilitator. Therefore there will be detailed examination of the issues in that context, giving participants a good grounding in the barriers faced by disabled people accessing Higher Education.

There will be a good deal of time to explore other issues as well though. It is intended that this workshop be primarily about removing discrimination that might surround access to mobility, rather than a workshop about the mechanics of mobility programmes themselves.

It is therefore probably better to read the reader and communiqués from the Athens Convention (<http://www.esib.org/5convention/communique.html>) to familiarize yourself with the key issues in mobility, before coming to the workshop to focus on equality and discrimination issues that arise from that.

The workshop aims to be an open, productive experience. There will be opportunities to work in several styles, including presentations, formal debate and seminar style discussion. It would be useful if participants could prepare a short presentation on the "situation in their country". It would be quite useful if specific information on disability discrimination and provision was available.

Contact

This workshop is very much open to participant direction. If you have something you would like to see included, information on specific areas you would like beforehand, or discussion, please get in touch (chrisosullivan@btinternet.com)

Workshop 3: Does Equality Legislation Relieve the Problem of Discrimination?

Chaired by John C. Friend Pereira

What:

This workshop will set out to deal with a number of key issues related to the use of equality legislation by governments and the enactment of equality guidelines by NGO's and specifically universities and higher education institutions in countering discrimination.

Who:

The workshop will be of particular interest for those interested in examining the origins and propose of equality legalisation and involved in the execution of actions arising from equality measures.

How:

The methodology used will be based on case studies taken from equality legislation and initiatives taken in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. The key issues which the workshop will seek tackle are:

Is there a need of any equality legislation or should society dictate the pace at which equality is achieved?

Can legislation alone create a culture of equality and tackle the various forms of discrimination in society? What other methods can be used to tackle inequality, is it a case of continuous joint/accompanying actions?

What is the nature of equality legislation-who does or should advise and create does it/should it affect everyone it? How do different groups influence legislative reforms and does the level of equality activity depend on influence of the group involved. How do we deal with regressive legislation? Is affirmative action retrogressive or progressive on its own?

Can the implementation of equality legislation truly tackle ingrained institutional discrimination or does it merely create a culture of political correctness that drives discrimination to a subversive level? If so how should we use equality legislation and policies and what actions can we take in implementing equality policy in higher education?

This serves as outline of the core questions that will be addressed in the workshop. However the case study segment of the workshop and the knowledge of the participants of their own national equality legislation and their direct experiences of it will be invaluable to the outcomes. The participants are asked to prepare for the workshop by checking out information that is available on various websites listed below and elsewhere. Contributions are welcomed from participants who know of interesting equality example of law or policy in higher education that may be related to the above questions.

Web links to documents:

www.equality.ie/stored-files/PDF/Equality%20&%20Education.pdf

www.justice.ie/80256976002CB7A4/vWeb/fsWMAK4Q7JKY

www.ucc.ie/heeu/Recommendations/Doing_it_Differently.htm#TOPDoingitD

www.ucc.ie/heeu/pubs/Millennium/index.htm#top

Websites:

www.ucd.ie/~esc/

www.ucc.ie/equality/

www.irlgov.ie for information on the Equal Status Act 2000 and Equality Employment Act 1998 and the Universities Act 1997

www.nccri.com

www.iccl.ie

www.equality.ie

www.nuigalway.ie/wsc/leonardo.htm

www.justice.ie

http://www.tcd.ie/Education/EU_Project/Pages/ire1prog.html

www.odei.ie

www.equalityni.org

Workshop 4: WHAM (White Heterosexual Able-Bodied Male) Versus the Real World

Chaired by Jorn Peeters and Nele Spaas

Through the centuries the European education is made to the measure of the archetypal student. That student was considered to be young, white, male, heterosexual, have no physical handicaps and a member of the higher socio-economic classes. In recent years some new groups seem to have found their way to higher education. In that way, that some even claim that the archetypal student is threatened these days. But it also seems that although other groups gained access to the higher education, the stereotype still forms the basis of the assessments of student needs, interests, and representation. By this the profit of the obtained diploma or degree is not the same for everybody. Because of for instance the different opportunities to build out a network of relations for members of different groups. And for some groups the thresholds to the higher education are still obstacles impossible to overcome. As will be described below, things as the profession or occupation and educational level of the parents are almost determinant for the chances of gaining access to the higher education. For much non-white youngsters these factors are even more restricting than their cultural background. And it is the combination of these barriers that create a roadblock.

Therefore we will consider people whose social environment is low educated also as “non-wham”. As we will sometimes do with students who suffer from several uncertainties because of deprivation, older students, white migrants and so on. Actually everybody who faces the risk of social exclusion.

The same effect that the stereotypical modulating of our education has on the profit of a diploma or degree seem to play their part in the compilation of the student unions. This makes us a very subjective observer. Not only have we already survived all the thresholds set out by the wham-system. We are also members of organisations where some effects seem to be multiplied. On the other hand our attitude of being a critical participant of the higher education should overcome these problems, but still we have to reflect on this dubious position.

In the first part of this outline, we will give some statistics, figures and facts collected from several relevant studies. But every work-shop-member is invited to bring additional information that seems relevant to her/him. The second part gives some ideas for the ideological discussion and the stand we want to take towards the described problems. The third part is a list of practical proposals, some possibilities to concretise our stand. Something that is often missing in the discussions about this challenge for the higher education. In the first part social exclusion is often detected by socio-economic criteria. This is due the fact that most studies use these criteria because of the visibility and traceability. But the same studies demonstrate that the results and the conclusions of this research is useable for all the social excluded groups, so from the second part we can talk about all the groups again.

Therefore the questions this workshop will consider are:

Till what level is our education still archetypal-student-based and what barriers does this create for the participation in higher education. And which groups encounter these barriers?

What is the general position of ESIB towards this phenomena and what is our ideological stand in it? Or, more specific, what is our frame for solving this problem?

How do we give concrete form to this stand? Or what steps can be taken by the institutions of higher education and the European, national and regional authorities?

We also have to warn you that a great part of this outline is written out of Flemish perspective. The figures, statements and conclusions are confronted and tested with results from other studies (mainly from the Netherlands, Scotland, Ireland, Catalonia and Portugal¹) and with some comparative European studies, but still the thread is our knowledge of the Flemish research and our experience with the Flemish educational system. But we preferred to take the risk that some aspects would provoke a general reaction of disagreement because of thought to much out of a regional context to the option of ignoring those aspects. Moreover, the conflict of ideas and the confrontation of different realities seems to us one of the most important surplus values of an ESIB-workshop.

Workshop 5: Are Positive Discrimination and Safe Space Tools for Liberation or Temptations for Accepting the Status Quo?

Chaired by Carli Harper-Penman

Autonomy

What is Autonomy?

Autonomy is word often heard associated with the Liberation campaigns, yet is often misunderstood or simply not understood at all. Autonomy in Liberation campaigns is centred on the idea of oppressed or disempowered groups of people organising for themselves. For example, a students' union Students With Disabilities Group would be better suited to making decisions about their budget and their campaigns than the students' union executive would be. When talking about autonomy, those people who can get involved in autonomous decision-making for a particular Liberation campaign are those who 'self-define' as part of it - ie, they consider themselves to be an LGB student, therefore they are). In practice, autonomous Liberation campaigns mean the following:

Autonomous Conferences

All of the NUS Liberation campaigns are accountable to their own autonomous conferences, which are only open to those students who self-define as part of that Liberation campaign (except in the case of the Women's campaign, which is only open to women). These autonomous conferences elect their own officer/s onto the NEC, elect their own committees, decide their own policies and set their own budgets. Liberation officers on the NUS NEC are only accountable to their own Liberation conference.

Closed Elections

In the spirit of autonomy, some students' unions choose to have closed elections for Liberation officers – i.e., only those who self-define as part of the campaign may vote in elections for the officer. They choose to do this because they believe that Liberation

¹ Research from the Centre d'initiatives i recerques Europees a la mediterania, Barcelona; Economic and social research institute, Dublin; Instituut voor toegepaste sociale wetenschappen, Nijmegen; Instituto de estudos economicas e sociais, Lisbon; the Strathclyde centre for disability research, Glasgow and the hoger instituut voor de arbeid.

campaigns should have control over who is their officer. For example, they believe that white students, who are often in the majority on campus, should not be able to elect the Black Students' officer. Other students' unions do hold open elections, in which everyone can vote. Others hold open elections, but encourage all those who do not self-define as part of a Liberation campaign to spoil their ballot paper or to abstain.

Some Closed Events

Some Liberation events (both nationally and in students' unions) are what are known as 'closed events'. This means that only those who self-define as part of the campaign can attend. These closed events are not designed to forbid men from getting involved in the women's campaign or to exclude straight students from campaigning against homophobia, but instead exist to ensure that at least some events are held in 'safe space' - ie, in an environment that is welcoming and in which all participants can fully take part.

It is important to remember that the Liberation campaigns are made up of students who are consistently oppressed within society, and closed events are a way of ensuring that they can participate in their own Liberation campaign without fear of oppression. In general, not all Liberation events are closed, some are open to all students to enable those who do not self-define as part of the campaign to get involved.

Separate Liberation Officers

Many students' unions (and indeed NUS) feel that it is important for autonomous Liberation campaigns to be led by their own individual officers. For example, a white Equal Opportunities officer would not be representative of a Black student, would not be able to fully empathise with Black students and would disempower Black students, by undermining their right to organise their own campaigns. This is not to say that Equal Opportunities officers do not have a role to play in students' unions, but that individual Liberation officers are important in allowing oppressed students to organise their own campaigns and represent themselves.

Special Regions

The NUS Special Regions - NUS Scotland, NUS Wales (UCMC) and NUS-USI are all autonomous from NUS UK. Within the Special Regions, there are also separate autonomous Liberation campaigns that provide a voice for oppressed students within those regions. The Liberation Officers from the Special Regions are also able to feed into the NUS UK Liberation campaigns through the committees.

Why is Autonomy Important?

Autonomy in the Liberation campaigns is very important. If we accept that only a person who is part of an oppressed group can fully understand what it is like to be part of that oppressed group, then we surely accept that that group should be able to make its own decisions and organise itself. The principle of autonomy would be undermined, for example, if an open election were held for a Women's officer, and men's votes decided the outcome of that election.

RELEVANT STATEMENTS AND POLICIES

Statements on Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Students In Education and on Accessing Education as Disabled Students

Introduction

The Statutes of ESIB state that all “members of ESIB must be open to all students from...higher education institutions in the country concerned, regardless of... colour, ethnic or cultural origin, gender, sexual orientation,...or any disability they may have.” It is important to ensure that this principle is enshrined in higher education as a whole to ensure that all students have equal access and opportunities within higher education.

ESIB has started to address the many issues that arise from the equality debate, and will discuss the general concepts of equality and equality campaigning as part of the BM44 Seminar in Bulgaria. In the lead in to this event it is important to keep the topic of equality on the agenda of ESIB.

At the current board meeting, the EqWG is ready to propose two statements in the equality field, on Disability and on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equality in higher education. These statements have been informed by the recent meetings of the working group and discussed at the EqWG meeting in Debe.

The group was due to present a policy paper to the Warsaw BM, but we feel now that the issues require further discussion before the “closure” that a policy paper provides is reached. We therefore ask that the board consider the “draft policy paper” as a working document, providing what input they feel appropriate in the run up to Bulgaria.

STATEMENT ONE

Accessing Education as Disabled Students

Next year is the EU’s European Year of Disability. Events throughout the year will inform debate and encourage awareness of disability issues in all areas of society, including in the field of education. Currently ESIB has no position on disability save that reference in the statutes. The EqWG feel that ESIB should take a positive stance on disability equality in time for this year of activity, so that we may lead student involvement in these events.

In addressing the issue of disability equality in higher education, it is important to appreciate the varied opinions and perspectives on disability that exist within society. Attitudes are everything in addressing disability discrimination, and forming constructive attitudes relies on starting from an even playing field. Disability equality is not just about providing ramps and an accessible toilet. It is a mindset to which adaptation is required.

Student unions have an important role to play here in promoting constructive attitude in the student population, a population likely to be influential upon many aspects of society during the course of many varied career paths.

Perspectives on disability vary within three standard sociological models:

The medical model is characterised by “labelling” via diagnosis, focussing on the misfortune of the disabled person, and seeking to “cure” the disability. The individual is the focus of the disability, and the doctor the means of removing or reducing the thing that is “wrong” with the disabled person.

The charity model is based on sympathy for the disabled person from the “normal” society, which provides services and support because they feel pity. A classic example of this would be the word handicap, whose origin lies in people going “cap in hand” to beg. Again the disability is the domain of the individual, associating disability with shame and low self-esteem, and non-disabled people as the generous reliver of “suffering”.

The social model is founded on the central belief that an individual with an impairment is disabled by society, which creates and fosters attitudes that prevent people with different abilities from functioning equally within it. This model removes the emphasis from the disabled person and places the responsibility on society to adapt for integration, rather than accommodate discrimination. It also removes the onus from the impairment, as a wheelchair user and a mental health service user could both be equally discriminated against by discriminatory employment practices in a given company,

Disability discrimination takes many forms, both overt, in the deliberate denial of access or services because of disability, and covert, for example in speaking over the head of a wheelchair user. In the context of higher education, disability discrimination can arise at all levels, including the admissions process, assessment, didactic, and, in a wider sense, mobility (or lack of mobility).

Solutions are complex and may rely on a combination of legislation, quality assurance audit with incentives, and most importantly, the involvement of disabled people.

Adaptations should be proactive rather than reactive, and should seek to raise awareness, promote responsibility, and not provide an extra cost to the student. ESIB believes in a higher education environment where disabled people can access and progress through learning opportunities based on their ability to meet these goals. It seeks to address areas in which barriers prevent disabled people progressing, by seeking reasonable adjustments that remove those barriers and enable success.

STATEMENT TWO

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) Students in Higher Education

For generations, LGB people have been denied the opportunity to self define because of a socially acceptable and legally reinforced barrier of discrimination. As a result, LGB people have been forced into conforming to a heterocentric model, an experience that has had far reaching effect on the well-being of LGB people. An example of this are the increased levels of suicide and depression due to low selfesteem and poor body image in LGB young people.

It is only in the last generation that the “Gay Rights Movement” has been created and has started campaigning for liberation. The diversity of the LGB community has become an asset in some European countries. As those societies adjust to perceiving LGB

relationships as “normal”, valid and loving, the fight for rights moves from legal equality to realistic equality.

Archaic attitudes are still enshrined in law in many areas of the world, where homosexuality is still treated as a capital crime or a psychiatric illness, with associated stereotypes of gay people as “dangerous” or “promiscuous”. Even in more accepting societies, there is still discrimination against gay men in this area, where gay teachers and carers have been unfairly associated with being poor role models or even sexually motivated towards the impressionable people in their charge.

Even within Europe there have been examples of discriminatory laws, for example in preventing schools from discussing the “homosexual lifestyle” This had the effect of reducing information for young people in schools. This in turn reduces the concept of LGB relationships to the sex acts perceived by “society” to be the basis of LGB relationships, and denying gay youth the opportunities to discuss and explore loving relationships. In this context, students leaving school for University are unlikely to have had the opportunity to express their sexuality in a positive and safe environment.

The role of the student movement in supporting that diversity and providing that safe environment is enormous.

When students move away from their parents for first time and experience the liberal atmosphere associated with higher education it can result in more students “coming out” and coming to terms with their sexuality for the first time. Likewise, the implications of a student finance system that assesses parental income and assumes parental contribution to tuition and living cost are especially severe when LGB students are frequently rejected by their parents when they do come out. This results in withdrawal of parental support and frequently the withdrawal of the student from their course. This is a unique argument that can be made against parental dependent means testing of student finance resources.

Students’ unions can play a key role in supporting these students by creating an environment where students can talk to other gay people to help them come to terms with their sexuality. Students’ unions can also provide Equality Training for students’ union officers to help them better represent their students.

ESIB believes that students have a right to education according to their ability to learn and ambition to succeed. From an ideological perspective, ESIB promotes equality of opportunity both within its structures and within the membership. This clearly extends to including LGB people and promoting awareness and tolerance. We also recognise that there are areas of education policy, such as the education funding issue, that have distinctly LGB related aspects which should be debated and considered in ESIB forums.

The Fight Against Racism

ESIB is well aware of the fact that also Higher Education institutions are grounds where cultural and ethnic discrimination and harassment exist.

ESIB is an umbrella organisation for National Unions of Students in Europe. It exists to promote educational, social, economical and cultural interests of students at a European

level. ESIB brings together democratic, representative and independent National Unions of Students in 29 countries throughout the whole Europe and works to promote the student view on the educational systems as a whole and on those economic, social and youth issues which affect our representative system of education as well as our status and welfare within society.

ESIB-The National Unions of Students in Europe believes that each person has to be respected and treated as a human being regardless of her/his cultural and ethnic origin. Therefore we reject any kind of cultural and ethnic discrimination and harassment in general and are concerned with the visible increase of racism, xenophobia and extreme nationalism throughout the continent.

ESIB is well aware of the fact that also Higher Education (HE) institutions are grounds where cultural and ethnic discrimination and harassment exist. Foreign and minority students are often subjects to forms of discrimination in Higher Education such as access, marking and social welfare.

Therefore, the members of ESIB commit themselves

- to raise awareness on racism, xenophobia and extreme nationalism in general and particularly on campuses
- to oppose all kind of discrimination on HE level and work to ensure that all students have the rights they need to achieve equal opportunities, regardless of their ethnic or cultural origin
- to work for the integration of intercultural learning into HE and encourage multicultural activities on campus, in order to achieve a university, that, as an integral part of the culture of a country and region, is also open to the world
- to support exchange programs and actively help foreign students
- to support development of local anti-racism projects in line with ESIB's policies

adopted at BM 35, October 1998 in Vienna / Admont

NO means NO

ESIB's statement on the Effects of Sexual Harassment and Violence at institutions of higher education. Students experience sexual harassment and sexual violence as a threat to their physical and psychological development. ESIB believes this issue deserves more attention. Therefore ESIB is taking up this challenge and unites forces to fight sexual violence and sexual harassment at institutions of higher education.

Introduction

ESIB wants to take this opportunity to make a statement on the effects of sexual harassment and sexual violence at institutions of higher education. Students experience sexual harassment and sexual violence as a threat to their physical and psychological development. ESIB believes this issue deserves more attention. Therefore ESIB is taking up this challenge and unites forces to fight sexual violence and sexual harassment at institutions of higher education.

ESIB understands sexual harassment as unwanted sexual attention. We define it as any unwelcome pressure for sexual favours, or any offensive emphasis on the sex or sexual orientation of another person; it is behaviour which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working- or learning-environment. Students, lecturers, university and college staff can be both the victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment. Both genders may experience sexual harassment and sexual violence from both their own and the opposite sex. In the majority of cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence though, women are the ones who suffer.

Sexual Harassment in Society

Sexual harassment is a world wide phenomenon. Surveys undertaken in various countries show that sexual harassment can be experienced as a barrier to most aspects of life. At institutions of higher education, sexual violence and sexual harassment are limiting the personal and educational development and free movement. This can lead to drop-outs from the educational system, heavy psychological damage and social exclusion. Equal opportunities for both genders can not be reached under such circumstances and this is, therefore, an obstacle to democracy.

The Protagonists

Students may experience sexual harassment and sexual violence on different levels. The victims are facing serious problems on the individual level.

As students attacked are often in vulnerable or difficult situations (i.e. exams, dependent on perpetrator, lack of support or networks), the set of alternative strategies becomes limited.

Research has shown that the closer the relationship between student and professor the higher the risk becomes to be sexually abused. Sexual harassment and sexual violence are also carried out by fellow students (very often of higher age and at higher levels of studies), by so-called friends or colleagues, as well as by strangers.

The Current Structure

Institutions of higher education are mainly male dominated entities with a hierarchical structure. The more hierarchical the structure is, the more it seems to facilitate domination; meaning that the individuals on the lower levels of the structure will have a high degree of dependency towards the persons at the higher levels. In this way it reflects how society in itself is built. This creates a democracy problem.

A number of students are not aware of their rights, and/or are put in a weak position due to both limited assertiveness and self confidence. Room for discussion is very limited or does not exist at all. Society must be made aware of the situation in order to increase social responsibility. Space for reflection must be created where alternative strategies can be developed and put into action.

Instruments of Suppression

Persons in power are given a position to misuse the dependency of the suppressed by making the dependent invisible, withholding information, ridiculing, double punishing and

creating a blame shame situation which creates uncertainty and weakness within the person experiencing them.

Often the borders of intimacy are not accepted. This includes unwanted sexual behaviour from harassment to violence, pressure, abuse of power, disrespect and making the victim dependent.

Thereby patronising behaviours are used to fortifying people in positions of power.

POLICY PAPERS UNDER DISCUSSION

We will try to have discussions about the Policy Papers (PP) at the Committee and Working group sessions at Tuesday the 13th and Wednesday the 14th of May. EC has distributed the PP's like this:

Discussed in Education Working group sessions (2 sessions: 1 Tuesday (3PP's), 1 Wednesday (2 PP's):

PP degree structures

PP Challenges for QA

PP on LLL

Lisbon objectives Statement

PP ECTS

Discussed in Mobility working group (also 2 sessions: Tuesday and Wednesday):
PP on mobility and social implication on mobility

Discussed in Social Affairs working group (Wednesday):
PP on Student well-being

Discussed in International Working group (Wednesday):
PP on Overview Bologna/GATS

Discussed in CoCo session (Wednesday):
PP e-learning

Discussed in BPC session (Wednesday):
PP on Weaknesses of recognition systems and recognition of competencies

The Sessions will work like this:

Amendments which are consensual will be included in the draft and suggested by the whole group to the BM. Therefore your suggestions for changes will have to be quite concrete.

Amendments which are not consensual in the group will have to be handed in as amendments to the PP and we will vote upon them during the BM.

For all of you can not take part in the Committee and Working group sessions, you of course have the possibility to hand in amendments to the PP's to be voted at the BM.

PROGRAMME

Seminar and BM Programme

Smashing the Ivory Tower - Equality of Access and Completion of Higher Education

Please note: the programme is subject to changes.

Sunday 11.05.

Arrival of participants

18.00 BOYANA Residence - A Welcome Event and Dinner

Monday 12.05.

09.45 Official opening of the Seminar by Ivan Modev (UBS) and ESIB chair.

Address speeches from the Bulgarian President and other officials.

11.00 Panel 1

General Introduction to equality concepts - Equality across Europe Equality in Higher

Education across Europe:

Speakers:

- Bulgarian Report: "The University Education in Bulgaria and the Access Concepts - Nominal v. Effective Access" by the European Law Society & PhD.net (European Law Society is a non-governmental research, educational and consulting organization constituted on 27 January 1998 in Sofia by professionals working in the field of legal European integration, www.eurolawsociety.org, PhD.net is a network of Ph.D students in Bulgarian Universities, www.phd.net)

- Stefan Bienefeld, Chair of ESIB

- European Access Network (EAN): Vice-President for Research and Publication, Dr Liz Thomas, (Dr Thomas has undertaken extensive research on student completion and retention in the UK and is currently co-ordinating an international study on the same topic.)

- Council of Europe: Vera Stastna of the Czech Republic, Vice Chair of the CD-ESR (the Council's Higher Education and Research Committee)

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Interactive training session

16.30 Coffee break

17.00 Interactive training session

20.00 Dinner and evening programme

Tuesday 13.05.

09.30 Workshop introduction

10.00 First workshop session

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Continue the workshop session

16.30 Coffee break

17.00 Continue the workshop session

19.00 Dinner

20.30 Policy paper Discussions

Party

Wednesday 14.05.

09.00 Panel 2

Social exclusion and its effects on diversity within the EHEA.

Speakers:

- International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation (IGLYO): Miha Lobnik, Slovenia
- Chris O'Sullivan, former ESIB EC member and former Students with Disabilities Officer NUS UK
- UNESCO-CEPES: Laura Grünberg, (works as a national programme officer at the UNESCO European Center for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) coordinating regional and international projects focussed on education and gender; biligualism in education and recognition of Diplomas.)

11.00 Presentation of the workshops results

12.00 Lunch

13.00 Departure to National Students House (Sofia City Centre)

13.15 Visit to student conference in National Students House

14.15 Sightseeing tour in Sofia

Visit to Bulgarian Presidency

Visit and meeting in Sofia Municipality

Dinner with Bulgarian traditional dancers and unique atmosphere.

17.00 Equality working group, education working group and mobility working group meeting

18.30 International working group and social affaires working group meeting

20.00 Dinner with Bulgarian traditional dancers and unique atmosphere.

21.00 Committee Sessions, a possibility to learn more from the committees

Thursday 15.05.

10.00 Start 44th Board Meeting of ESIB

12.00 Lunch

13.30 BM

20.00 Dinner

Friday 16.05.

09.30 Board Meeting

12.00 Lunch

13.30 Board Meeting

19.00 Dinner

Saturday 17.05.

10.00 Board Meeting

12.00 Lunch

13.30 Board Meeting

19.00 Dinner

Sunday 18.05.

Departure day

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Dates

The Seminar and ESIB Board Meeting will take place from the 12th of May until the 17th of May 2003. If participating to the Seminar you are expected to arrive to Sofia on the 11th of May and depart on the 15th. If participating to the Board Meeting you are expected to arrive on the 14th (or early morning of the 15th) of May and depart on the 18th.

Venue

The venue of the 44th ESIB Seminar and Board Meeting will be BOYANA Residence in Sofia, Bulgaria. The residence is used for accommodation of official delegations coming to Bulgaria in relation to visits on governmental and state level.

All meals, plenaries, workshops, interactive sessions, Board Meeting will be in BOYANA Residence. The only exception will be only on Wednesday afternoon when we are planning:

- 13.15 h Visit to student conference in National Students House
- Sightseeing tour in Sofia
- Visit to Bulgarian Presidency
- Visit and meeting in Sofia Municipality
- Dinner with Bulgarian traditional dancers and unique atmosphere.

Accommodation

All participants will be accommodated in BOYANA Residence in Sofia (k. Pavlovo, 16 Vitoshko lale Str.) from May 11th till 18th. Please note that we will not be allowed to use BOYANA Residence before 11th of May and after 11.00 h on 18th of May. The participants will be expected to check out not later than 11.00 h on 18th of May. So, please, book your tickets accordingly otherwise you will have to cover yourself the extra nights in other accommodation facilities.

Internet Access

There will be two rooms with Internet access free of charge – one for ESIB executive staff and one for other participants.

Ordering things to rooms

Any additional services (telephone, mini-bar, room service and other services provided by BOYANA Residence) you will have to cover yourself according to the price list. Any charge must be settled before you check out.

Reimbursement

1. We will be reimbursing ONE (1) participant per NUS - NUS which is full member of ESIB (this does not apply if you had other arrangements with the EC)

2. By Financial Standing Orders we are reimbursing up to 300 EUR for travel. (This does not apply if you had other arrangements with the EC)

3. You should submit the reimbursement form (the form will be on the BM) and all of the copies of all travel documents that you are claiming for (even if you are getting up to 300 euro reimbursement)(the travel documents are - tickets, invoices, visas-visa invoices etc. and they have to contain the price clearly stated somewhere)!!!. You should submit this on spot on the BM in Sofia, otherwise you should send the originals to the ESIB office not later than 30 days after the BM otherwise you will not be reimbursed. The reimbursement form has to be filled out correctly and has to contain a signature - if the reimbursement form is not signed it will not be a valid claim thus it will not be subject to reimbursement. All NUS'es that have not signed reimbursement forms will be informed in due time.

4. You are suppose to pay participation fee to the organizers in cash in Sofia (this does not apply if you had other arrangements with the organizers - UBS)

5. For safety reasons we will not be paying cash reimbursement on spot but we will pay the reimbursement by bank transfer immediately after the BM if all information is sent in due time (this means filled out and signed reimbursement form, copies/originals of the travel documents, bank contact info in the form presented on the reimbursement form-this bank info should be in electronic version or printed on the printer-handwritten bank info will not be accepted)

6. Again due to safety reasons Membership fees will not be accepted in cash in Sofia as you were informed earlier-so please pay your MF by bank transfer before the BM

Bank info we need is in this form (so you can bring it printed out to the BM):

Name of the account holder
Address of the account holder
Country
City Post code
City

Bank name
Address of the bank
Country
City Post code
City
SWIFT / Sort code

Account Number

For more information on reimbursements please contact Vlada,vlada@esib.org.

Language

English will be the working language of the Seminar and Board Meeting.

Bulgarian - English translation will be available only for the official opening on 12th of May.

Insurance

Please be aware that organisers do not provide any insurance for the event and that you should take care for your own insurance accordingly.

Meals

All meals will be provided from dinner on May 11th till dinner on May 17th.

Currency Exchange

The Bulgarian currency is BGN (lev). You can exchange your currency in leva in most of the exchange bureaus and banks in Sofia. Please note that there are commissions sometimes. The approximate exchange rate is: 1 EUR = 1.94 Leva. We strongly recommend that you exchange money inside bureaus or banks, not outside them! UBS organizing team are ready to help you arrange money exchange upon request.

Information about Bulgaria

Bulgaria is situated in Southeastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula. For centuries, the roads passing through the territory of the country have been connecting Europe with Asia and Africa.



Apart from its being situated on crossroads, Bulgaria is also known for its picturesque nature. In spite of its relatively small territory (110 912 km²), the country has various landscape. The scenery changes subsequently from vast plains, to hilly areas and high mountains. Large beaches and beautiful rocky shores stretch out along the Black sea coast.

General Information

Territory	110 993,6 km ²
Population	7 973 671
Capital	Sofia
Official language	Bulgarian
Political system	Parliamentary Republic
Head of State	Georgi Purvanov
Prime Minister	Simeon Saxe–Coburg Gotha
Official holidays	January 1st – New Years’s Holiday;
	March 3rd – National Holiday;
	Easter, and the first Monday after Easter;
	May 1st – Labour Day;
	May 6th – Gergyovden, and the Bulgarian Military Army’s Day;
	May 24th – Cyril and Methodius Day;
	September 6th – Unification Day;
	September 22^d – Independence Day;
November 1st - National Day of the Bulgarian Revival Leaders;	
December 24,25,26 – Christmas Days;	
National currency	BGN (Lev)
Time zone	GMT +2

State structure

Constitution

The acting Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria was adopted in July 1991. It was built on the basic principles of the contemporary constitutionalism. The Constitution provides a multi-party parliamentary system and free elections, in which all the citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria take part with the right to vote.

The President

The President is the Head of State and is elected with direct elections once in every five years, for not more than two mandates. The Vice President is elected at the same time, with the same voting paper, and under the same conditions and procedure, as of the President. The President is the supreme commander of the military forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. He assigns and discharges the supreme command staff of the military forces and promotes the supreme officers into higher ranks on proposals by the Council of Ministers. The President is the Chairperson of the Consultative Council for national security.

The Parliament

The Parliament (The National Assembly) exercises the legislative power, as well as the right to parliamentary control. The mandate of the National Assembly is a 4-year one. The National Assembly consists of 240 MPs. They are elected directly by the voters on the basis of the proportional system.

The Government

The government (The Council of Ministers) is the main body of the executive power, headed by the Prime Minister. The Council of Ministers rules and conducts the internal and foreign policy of the state, secures the public order and the national security, exercises control over the public administration and the military forces. The Prime Minister to be is nominated by the largest parliamentary group, after which the President hands in the mandate to him for forming the government. The proposed Council of Ministers is voted by the National Assembly, which controls directly the activity of the government.

Symbols of Sovereignty

State Coat of Arms



National Flag



Information about Sofia

Sofia is one of the oldest cities in Europe. Bits of ancient pottery have brought evidence that the earliest Neolithic settlement on Sofia land was founded in the 7th millenium BC. Upon the town founded by the Tracian tribe of Serdi the Roman Serdica had flourished, called by Constantine the Great "My Rome". The remains of that city have been uncovered and exhibited at several sites in the center of contemporary Sofia while St George Rotunda, dated 4th century AD, has been completely preserved. The St. Sofia early-Christian Basilica (5th-6th century AD) is a valuable monument of architecture from the period of transition to the Middle Ages.



Later at the end of 14th century AD the church has bestowed its name to the city.

In the beginning of the 9th century AD Khan Krum has conquered the city and has included it within the boundaries of the Bulgarian State christening it with the Slavic name of Sredets. The most precious monument of the Bulgarian Middle Ages is the BOYANA Church at the foot of Vitosha mountain. The church of St. Petka Samarjiyska (14th c. AD) is one of the few surviving medieval churches in Sofia from the time of Ottoman Rule.

After the liberation of Bulgaria (1879) Sofia was declared a capital city. The modernization of the city made it possible for Sofia to acquire the appearance of a modern European city. The city of over a million of residents is located in the southern outskirts of the fertile Sofia Plain, at 550 m asl, resting to the south against the Vitosha Mountain (2290 m asl).

Sofia is a cosmopolitan city. People of different color of their skin, professing different creeds and religions live here in harmony and on good neighbourly terms. In the city's very center, only scores of meters apart stand peacefully side by side the Christian Orthodox Church Sveta Nedelya, the Banyabashi Mosque, and the Jewish Synagogue.

Some useful Bulgarian words

Zdravei	Hello
Dobro utro	Good morning
Dobar den	Good afternoon
Dobar vecher	Good evening
Leka nosht	Good night
Dovijdane	Good Bye
Molia	Please
Blagodaria / Mersi	Thank you
Da	Yes
Ne	No
Sajaliavam	Sorry
Kak si?	How are you?
Blagodaria, dobre.	Fine, thanks
Govorite li angliiski?	Do you speak English?

Organiser of the seminar and BM - UBS



The Union of the Bulgarian Students (UBS) is a voluntary non-governmental and non-political national student organization. It represents and protects the interests of university and college students regardless of their social, religious and national background. The mission of UBS is to guarantee the democratic supervision of the Higher Education Institutions in Bulgaria and to contribute to the development of Higher Education.

UBS was founded on 1st December 1990 and unites students from all the universities and colleges in Bulgaria in order to defend the academic and social rights of students.

The main aims and objectives of UBS are as follows:

- to protect the students' interests (social, educational, etc.);
- to represent students in negotiations with the authorities and other organizations
- to develop both activities of mutual benefit and cooperation of professional nature with the university management;
- to establish and develop cooperation with both foreign and national Higher Education Institutions as well as youth international organizations.

Right away after its establishment UBS became main partner of the university managements, the Presidency, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the local authorities and other institutions in Bulgaria.

In 1993 UBS became an associate member and since 1995 it has been a full member of ESIB - the National Unions of Students in Europe. Since March 2000 UBS has been a full member of The International Union of Students and a representative of UBS is a member of its Executive Secretariat.

UBS is the only one student organisation - founder of the National Youth Council in Bulgaria.

UBS participates actively in the preparation and discussion of the Higher Education Law and its amendments, the Bill of Preferential Creditation of Students and Applicants for Doctor's Degrees.

UBS takes part in the discussion of the draft proposals of laws and regulations, like Governmental Decree for Students Scholarships, appointment of tuition fees, regulations for usage of student hostels and canteens, student camps for recreation, sports and tourism.

At present our representatives are members of the academic councils and the student commissions of social affairs in Bulgarian universities and colleges.

Since its establishment UBS has implemented a lot of projects and initiatives in the field of Higher education, thus contributing to the solution of many social and academic problems of students and to the implementation of sports and cultural activities and to their professional realization. Some examples of these are:

- cooperation for finding first job and edition of a handbook with the best students from technical and technological universities;
- permanent offices in the academic cities in the country dealing with consultation on social-academic students problems;
- establishment of a National Center for Social Projects in cooperation with Ministry of Education and Science;
- establishment of Center for Working with Disabled Students in cooperation with the permanent Commission of Youth, Sports and Children to Sofia City Council;
- national programme for promotion of Socrates Programme and the opportunities for academic exchange provided by it;
- organisation and support of many seminars, trainings, conferences, etc.



ESIB

ESIB is now made up of 50 National Unions of Students from 37 countries and through these members represents over 11 million students.

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