



**UNICA IRO Meeting 2011**  
**University of Oslo**  
**May 4-6, 2011**

**Venue:** University of Oslo, Blindern Campus, Georg Sverdrup's House

**Chair:** Ursula HANS, IRO Observer, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

**MINUTES**

List of participants enclosed.

- **Welcome** by Ursula HANS, IRO Observer (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

Ursula Hans welcomes the participants. She states that in view of the economic downturn and the precarious finances of universities, international relations' offices are facing an increasingly difficult situation: as internationalisation at universities is often considered "something extra", it is frequently subject to serious budget cuts. The topics of the IRO meeting were carefully prepared in relation to what is happening, based on the concerns of and shaped by the IROs.

- **Introduction** by Prof. Stavros A. ZENIOS, UNICA President, and Kris DEJONCKHEERE, UNICA Secretary General

UNICA President highlights that the IRO meeting is of key importance for UNICA. It gathers a group of committed individuals who express their concerns, synthesise them and work together towards solutions. He also welcomes the representatives of new member universities, Ms. Anna DEBSKA (King's College London) and Mr. Volkan TOKGOZ (Ankara University).

UNICA President presents recent UNICA initiatives as well as recent and upcoming events: UNICA Student Conference 2010 and its outcome, "Rome Declaration"; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of UNICA Entrepreneurship Competition, the works on establishing the UNICA Master in European History, the 1<sup>st</sup> UNICA PR and Communication Workshop, and the Rectors' Seminar 2011, devoted to the topic of quality. He also highlights the promising activities of the Core Group on Evaluation in Research and Higher Education (development of a vade-mecum for Rectors) and the good deliberations and work plan of the 1<sup>st</sup> UNICA Green Academic Footprint meeting.

The President thanks Guri VESTAD (University of Oslo) and Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) for the preparation of the IRO meeting.

UNICA Secretary General presents the UNICA-EC projects: Information Project on Higher Education Reform III, ExchangeAbility and European Campus. She points out that the seminars organised in the framework of HER III project are hosted in principle by UNICA member universities. The service contract not only increases the visibility of the Network, but also involves the UNICA member universities: so far, 12 UNICA universities hosted the HER meetings and almost 70 experts from the UNICA universities provided their expertise. Furthermore, over 600 HER experts specialising in specific fields registered in the Virtual Community. The contract also allows UNICA to hire 2 staff members. More hosting universities will be needed if the project contract is renewed, as site-visits for “in-vivo” experience at universities are also being envisaged.

**Comments:**

Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) asked if the universities could be informed earlier about the opened calls for experts. UNICA Secretary General answers that it depends on when the information is sent out by the Commission, however, the fields of expertise and topics sought in the calls are easy to anticipate.

**SESSION 1: CHALLENGING COOPERATIONS AND MOBILITY: EXAMPLES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- **“Cultures of learning in Asia in a changing global landscape: a research initiative for the future”** by Prof. Mette Halskov HANSEN (University of Oslo; presentation available online on the UNICA website)

Prof. HANSEN presents the state of university education in China in the changing global landscape. China is witnessing a massive expansion of higher education: 20% of Chinese high school students go to universities, which corresponds to millions of new students each year. More and more of them are going abroad, and offering children university education overseas has become increasingly popular in wealthy families. “Foreign degree”, regardless of the university’s recognition, is a prerequisite for top, highly-paid jobs. Asian students top the list of foreign students in the U.S. (1. India 2. China), while China makes massive investment in R&D (1. U.S. 2. China).

Prof. HANSEN also dispelled certain myths about Chinese students: they are often reproached about their lack of creativity, and tendencies to copy works of others. She stressed that repetition and imitation are embedded in their culture; one has to learn to imitate the master to achieve his level of perfection, then he/she can shape their own style. Prof. HANSEN presented also the questions that the research group of University of Oslo’s Centre for Studying Cultures of Learning in Asia examines: are there any specific “cultures of learning” in Asia? If the case, what can we learn from them? Why do Asians manage so well in the knowledge-based economy? The study focuses on 4 Asian countries: North Korea, Japan, China and India.

- **Working Groups: identifying positive pathways and collecting negative examples**  
Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) introduced the topics of working groups, focused on specific case studies and good practices:
  - 1) Working Group 1 chaired by Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome) and Marina TESAURO (University of Rome Tor Vergata) “Good Practices and Challenges of Mobility Programmes”

- 2) Working Group 2 chaired by Marvi PULVER (Tallinn University) “Cooperation with China”
- 3) Working Group 3 chaired by Antoinette CHARON (University of Lausanne) “Concepts of Dealing With Scholars At Risk”

The participants split in 3 groups.

- **Pooling knowledge**

The representatives of 3 working groups present the summaries of discussions.

Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome) and Marina TESAURO (University of Rome Tor Vergata, both Working Group 1) point out the need of establishing quality partnerships for Erasmus Placements and assure an efficient company-student’s profile match. The following examples of best practices are highlighted: Including in-company training (and Erasmus Placements) in the curricula and “UPMC Pro”, a website of UPMC listing offers from companies as well as allowing students to upload their CVs, multilingual websites and the organisation of “promoting mobility” events (Exchange Days, Mobility Evenings).

Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki, Working Group 2) stresses the fact that universities still lack policies that would aim at supporting universities and scholars under certain political regimes. The recent events (earthquake in Japan, escalations in North Africa and the Middle East) have also shown that universities do not have explicit policies related to crisis management, the development of which should be obligatory as part of our society engagement. He also points out that cultural differences often create barriers for teachers, such as difficulties in getting course feedback from Chinese students and plagiarism. He concludes that it is crucial for universities from the capitals of Europe to establish strong relationship and cooperation with embassies.

Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Working Group 3) presents the “Scholars At Risk” Network as an organisation that offers help and support to threatened scholars. The organisation offers different possibilities of involvement (membership, associate membership, partnership). Six UNICA member universities are already SAR members: University of Zagreb, University College Dublin, University of Amsterdam, University of Oslo, Université de Lausanne, King’s College London. The Group suggests that UNICA becomes an associate member of Scholars At Risk. **TO DO:** It is proposed that Antoinette CHARON (Université de Lausanne) prepares a presentation on the “Scholars At Risk” Network for the General Assembly 2011, 13-15 October. UNICA will investigate the opportunities of becoming an associate SAR member.

**Comments:**

Sabine LOPEZ (UPMC) points out that a definition of a “scholar at risk” should be established. Adina POP (Roma Tre University) and Raimonda MARKEVICIENE (University of Vilnius) also indicate the political consequences of universities’ support for scholars suffering threats in their countries (tensions between the embassies and universities).

**SESSION 2: “PUTTING THE SQUEEZE” ON INTERNATIONAL OFFICES: OPTIONS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH TOO MUCH TO DO AND TOO FEW PEOPLE TO DO IT WITH**

The session is dedicated to the challenges related to the limited work capacities and growing number of responsibilities of international relations’ offices. The presentations are based on experiences of IROs from two UNICA universities: Freie Universität zu Berlin (31,000 students, 380 academic staff) and University of Cyprus (6,000 students, 300 academic staff)

- **Case of Freie Universität Berlin by Elke LÖSCHHORN**

Elke LÖSCHHORN presents 2 models of International Relations' Offices: the "one for all" model of an office, covering all tasks and services related to international relations, and "many for many" model, demand-oriented and with different target groups. FU adopted a "one for all" model. The FU international relations' office receives internal and external evaluation; among the successful solutions aimed at reducing the workload, Elke LÖSCHHORN mentions the use of moveon application for data management and outsourcing the welcome services (accommodation, organisation of excursions, etc.) to a company that belongs to the university.

**Comments:** 3 other UNICA universities are using the moveon application (UPMC, Paris-Dauphine, Tor Vergata University)

- **Case of the University of Cyprus by Gregory MAKRIDES (presentation available online on the UNICA website)**

The number of staff of UCY international relations' office has remained the same since 1998, while the number of incoming students has doubled. The successful solutions applied to deal with the heavy workload are: hiring personnel with specific skills (outgoing personality, fair knowledge of languages, good managerial skills), offering incentives (training in crisis management, project management, career path schemes), using students' help for student-relates services, identifying at revising priorities in short and long term.

**Comments:** Helena DERSEK (University of Ljubljana) points out that the fact that departmental coordinators do not receive any extra pay for their work is often the reason why they do not take up some of the activities of IRO. Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) indicates that a complete decentralisation (no international office, as in the case of University of Helsinki) and spreading tasks to faculties and administrative units may pose risks (losing control over the performed activities).

## **UNICA IRO OBSERVER ELECTIONS**

Trine SAND, University of Copenhagen, and Tiina MAE, Tallinn University, were the only candidates nominated for functions of (respectively) the IRO Observer and the Deputy IRO Observer. Both are elected by majority voting (For Trine SAND: 30 Universities present: 29 votes in favour, 1 abstention; for Tiina MAE: 30 Universities present: 22 votes in favour, 8 abstentions). Ursula HANS, the outgoing IRO Observer, congratulates them both.

## **SESSION III: YOUR TIME SLOT (CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS)**

- **Erasmus Staff Mobility Weeks, by Luciano SASO, Sapienza University of Rome (presentation available online on the UNICA website)**

Luciano SASO reports on the Erasmus Staff Mobility Week 2011 organised by Sapienza University of Rome. He stresses that all administration offices participate in the event (IRO, Erasmus Office, Finance Office, Press/Communication Office, librarians, etc.), which offers them an opportunity to "internationalise at home". The workshops did not focus solely on internationalisation; other topics tackled were financial management, institutional websites, EU Research programmes and visiting professors. For the edition of 2012, the participants will be in contact and cooperate 3 months before the actual event. Luciano SASO points out

that Erasmus Staff Mobility Weeks are a great opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between the UNICA IROs.

- **Cooperation with developing countries**, by Gaëlle DUCARME, Université Libre de Bruxelles (**presentation available online on the UNICA website**)

Gaëlle DUCARME presents the new UNICA initiative related to development aid cooperation. She reports on the 1<sup>st</sup> UNICA meeting on development aid cooperation, where the participants identified 23 issues related to universities' cooperation with developing countries (among them: how to make development aid cooperation a win-win cooperation? How to recognize the work of academic involved in development aid cooperation and encourage others?) and formulated 5 proposals (establishing a UNICA WG, organising information days for academics, organising seminar on EU funding programmes, creating a page dedicated to development aid cooperation on the UNICA website, pursuing a project together). Gaëlle DUCARME also announces the 2<sup>nd</sup> UNICA meeting on development aid cooperation, which will focus on EU funding programmes (Brussels, 17 June).

- **Presentation on the survey results for international PhDs**, by Alison O'REILLI, University of Vienna (**presentation available online on the UNICA website**)

Alison O'REILLI presents the results of the survey carried out among international doctoral students of the University of Vienna in June 2010. The survey took account of respondents who have not lived/studied in Austria before. It revealed that students are often confused with the university services and do not know whom to address in each situation. Among the biggest difficulties encountered, the students listed the access to information, funding their studies and the missing social network. Seen the results, the University of Vienna has undertaken several initiatives: organisation of „Welcome Days“, publishing a Handbook for International Students, lawyer's consulting hours (visa permits), International Café once a month, establishing a Service for visiting PhD students and co-tutelle services.

**TO DO:** Alison O'REILLI will send the complete results of the survey to the UNICA Secretariat.

- **The Quality of Hosting – first report and continuing group**, by Antoinette CHARON, Université de Lausanne.

During the GA in Vienna, a pilot group composed of representatives of 6 UNICA universities was established, with an aim to work together on how to improve welcoming services for international students and professors. The universities were divided into 3 sub-groups to work on welcoming skills of different target groups (1. Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus students 2. Doctoral students 3. Visiting scholars and new professors). The group will also aim at preparing a UNICA project on „Quality of Hosting“. Antoinette CHARON mentions that in January 2010 Université de Lausanne created a part-time position for welcoming students and professors (assistance with visa and other administration procedures, housing, providing information on language courses, preparing checklists for incoming students and professors).

- **INENTER: Improving Internships and Placements from Academia to Enterprises**, by Gregory MAKRIDES, University of Cyprus

Gregory MAKRIDES presents the INENTER project (Improving the Placements and Internships from Academia to Enterprises). The project's outcomes are expected to create the basis for the best organization of placements and internships. The project is coordinated by the University of Cyprus and 8 UNICA member universities are consortium members. UNICA is responsible for Package 2 (dissemination).

#### **SESSION IV: YOUTH ON THE MOVE: MOBILITY WITHOUT FUNDING?**

- **How will “Youth on the Move” affect mobility plans?** by Lene OFTEDAL, DG Education and Culture, European Commission

Lene OFTEDAL presents the biggest challenges represented by the labour market and the EU initiatives aimed at confronting these challenges. The impact of globalisation and technological change resulted in changing job profiles and more knowledge and skills-intensive positions. According to the recent assessments, in 2020, 35% of jobs will require higher education: that means not only we will need young people to study, but also adults to pursue lifelong learning. At the moment, the highest tertiary attainment is present in Cyprus (47.1%), Denmark (46.3%) and Norway (46.2%), while the EU average amounts to 31%. The target of EU2020 strategy is to raise the tertiary attainment among people of 30-34 years old to 40%.

The short-term goal of “Youth On the Move” flagship initiative is to fight the high youth unemployment (21% in July 2010) by providing young people with the right mix of skills and support for their transition to the labour market. In the long-term, the initiative will aim to improve the skills’ quality and relevance. Mobility is regarded as a way to enhance transversal competencies, directly relevant to the globalised labour market (shapes horizontal skills such as communication, openness and flexibility, teamwork). The EU benchmark for mobility is 20% (now the result is 10%). Some actions for enhancing mobility are envisioned, such as loan facilities with European Investment Bank. The challenges that remain are mobility recognition and mobility diversity (60% of European mobile students studied in 6 countries: US, Australia, Canada, UK, France and Germany).

#### Comments

Raimonda MARKEVICIENE (Vilnius University): What about increasing teachers’ mobility?

Lene OFTEDAL: A benchmark on teacher mobility was hard to establish, however the EC pays attention to the issue; a draft on teacher mobility will be available for public consultation this summer.

Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki) points out that mobility is often seen by the employees as restlessness and lack of true career focus; also, national companies require thorough knowledge of the regional market, and therefore are not seeking employees with an international perspective.

### **SESSION 5 LEARNING FROM NORWAY: OBLIGATORY STAYS ABROAD AND NATIONAL DATABASES**

- **Norway’s National Database for Student Administration: Explaining the Advantages of a National Solution, University of Oslo**, by Gøril MELLEM, University of Oslo

Gøril MELLEM presents the National Student Information System, a tool that was implemented in 1998 by the Technology Services of the University of Oslo and that became a national solution in 2003. The system constitutes a national database, supports the Norwegian HE system and allows for a huge data collection, data comparison and data transfer. Together with Klementyna KIELAK (University of Warsaw), Gøril MELLEM also presents the new RS3G Mobility initiative, aiming at interconnecting European universities in a digital communication network, digitalising mobility documents and producing comparable and accessible mobility statistics. Gøril MELLEM stresses that the new programme is about a common interface, not replacing the old systems.

**TO DO:** Gøril MELLEM will send the project’s concept note to UNICA; the initiative will be further discussed not only with the IROs, but also with university IT specialists.

- **Obligatory Stays Abroad**, by Trine MERETE KVERNMO, University of Oslo

Trine MERETE KVERNMO discusses the compulsory stays abroad, which are part of the curricula of University of Oslo’s Asian and African Studies. She points out the strong advantages of this solution (language and culture immersion, saving teaching hours), but also indicates the difficulties related to costs and quality assurance. To improve the latter,

University of Oslo sends official delegations (each composed of 1 teacher, 1 representative of department, 1 representative of faculty secretariat) to visit the institutions and interview the students during their exchange semester. The recent events in Syria, Egypt, Japan, have also showed that the organisation of compulsory stays abroad also requires effective crisis management.

- **Wrapping up and closing of the IRO meeting / Next UNICA IRO meeting.**

It is announced that the following IRO meeting will be hosted by Université de Lausanne and organised on 2-4 May 2012. The IRO meeting 2013 will be hosted jointly by Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Université libre de Bruxelles in Brussels.

Warm thanks to the University of Oslo for the perfect organisation of this meeting and to Ursula HANS for her role as Chair and IRO Observer.

The meeting was followed by a remarkable concert in the University Library foyer, performed by the musicians from Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra.

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