UNICA IRO MEETING 2012
UNIVERSITÉ DE LAUSANNE
MAY 2-4, 2012

Venue: Université de Lausanne, Amphimax Building, Room 414

Chair: Trine SAND, IRO Observer, University of Copenhagen
Minutes: Marta WASOWSKA, UNICA Secretariat

MINUTES

List of participants available here.

Thursday, 3 May 2012

- **Welcome** by Trine SAND, IRO Observer, University of Copenhagen

  Trine SAND welcomes the participants. She reminds that it is the first UNICA IRO meeting "without papers": each participant can find all the meeting's documents and UNICA announcements on a USB stick attached to his/her conference badge.

- **Welcome** by Prof. Stavros A. ZENIOS, UNICA President
  (presentation available here)

  UNICA President states that the present year has been a great one for UNICA but not for many of our countries. We face not only financial, but also intellectual crisis. European universities have a vital role to play in reframing the values and discovering the new "rules of the game".

  The President emphasises the need for a sustainability of initiatives and articulation of our objectives: in this regard, a UNICA policy on internationalisation is being prepared. Internationalisation strategy of the Network should be based on 3 pillars: quality; visibility & reputation; and funding opportunities.

  The President highlights UNICA Green Academic Footprint initiative as a dialogue of values such as justice, equity, and democracy, and the UNICA Master in European History. He stresses that European history can be better understood if studied in a comparative framework.

  The President thanks Université de Lausanne, Trine SAND (University of Copenhagen) for the preparation of the IRO meeting and all the IROS for "making UNICA a success story".

- **Welcome** by Prof. Philippe MOREILLON, UNIL Vice-Rector for Research and International Relations
  (presentation available here)

  Prof. MOREILLON gives an overview of the Swiss higher education landscape. He describes the process of reorganisation of the University and the cooperation between UNIL and EPFL. He presents the key facts and figures related to the University's budgeting, internationalisation, and research policy, and the University's efforts related to environmental sustainability. In reference to rankings, he demonstrates how certain university data is used wrongly for

different types of classifications. Quoting Jordi CURRELL (Director of Lifelong Learning), he concludes that "rankings do not reflect reality but they shape it".

SESSION 1: UNIVERSITY RANKINGS: A TRANSPARENCY TOOL OR "SMOKE AND MIRRORS"?

- ***Rankings criteria and their impact on universities* by Prof. Andrejs RAUHVARGERS, Secretary General of Latvian Rector's Council, EUA Senior Adviser** (presentation available [here](#)).
  Prof. RAUHVARGERS presents the modus operandi and typology of the ranking surveys. He demonstrates what is actually measured by global rankings: they cover only 3-5 % of world's universities and only some part of the university's mission, mainly research (as a consequence, professional/teaching-focused schools will never get into ranking) and often use indicators covering elite research universities only (e.g. "highly cited" category corresponds only to 21 areas and 4,200 researchers altogether). He shows significant biases and flaws of indicators used in rankings, such as dropout rate (highly depending on the fact if a given university grants admission upon pre-selection/entrance exams or not), time to graduate (does not take into account the fact that students often reconcile work and studies), citations (different publication and citation cultures according to disciplines), peer reviews (secondary effect: influenced by the previous reputation of the institution).

  Prof. RAUHVARGERS expresses his concern that in pursuit of improving their rankings' performance Universities may neglect such important aspects not awarded in ranking scores as the quality of teaching, widening access, and lifelong learning. He stresses a need for rankings covering more universities, measuring teaching and especially learning outcomes, and eradicating flaws of bibliometric indicators. He names new developments and visualisations in the field of rankings, such as Multirank (allowing to create one's own set of indicators) and OECD's AHELO project.

- ***How to work with rankings? Experience from Copenhagen Business School* by Ole Stenvinkel NILSSON, Director of Accreditation & Quality Assurance, Copenhagen Business School** (presentation available [here](#))

  Ole NILSSON gives a short overview of Copenhagen Business School: at present the Schhol participates in rankings by study programmes, e.g. Financial Times Masters in Management, CEMS Master in International Management, The Economics – *Which MBA*. In January 2012, CBS was ranked 1st in the world in the Webometrics ranking and 8th in Europe in the Aspen Institute – *Beyond Grey Pinstripes* (focus on environmental and social responsibility). The CBS presence in the latter significantly contributes to attracting students.

  CBS started to work with rankings in 2000 (with FT Masters in Management). Initially, the organisation of rankings communication was anchored at a local level, without any common policy. Now ranking activities are centrally located (with Director's Office of Accreditation & Quality Assurance), and data is delivered centrally based on decentralised reports. The Office is in charge of selecting important rankings and background analysis of the results. The established common principles of communication between the Office, programmes, international relations office and communications department are ensured. Currently, a rankings communication strategy is being implemented, involving the following approaches: considering 3-year averages of ranks, being specific on

what ranking actually tells and what not (explaining methodology), maintaining website with current results instead of sending press releases.

Ole NILSSON mentions the challenges related to rankings: delivering information on alumni and employers, coordinating communication to external stakeholders (how to explain drops in rankings to external stakeholders?), and placing ranking results in the right perspective both internally and externally.

In conclusion, Ole NILSSON stresses that rankings do not have a dominant role in CBS, however CBS ranks are listed in the development contract the School has with the Ministry of Science. He underlines that a university international office can play an important role in supporting a university's ranking position by expanding the number and quality of international exchange partners (thus increasing the University's visibility) contributing to the internationalisation of students, staff/faculty, and supporting international joint research projects.

- ***How do UNICA Universities work with rankings?* Panel debate chaired by O. St. NILSSON. Panelists: Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki), Marc PILLOUD (Université de Lausanne), Dimitrios REKKAS (National & Kapodistrian University of Athens), Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome)**

Marc PILLOUD (Université de Lausanne): Rector of Université de Lausanne presents the University's current ranking positions in discussions with the politicians, but no press releases are sent informing bout the current ranks of the University. International Relations Office is in charge of international promotion and enhancing the visibility of the University. In the future, the University aims to monitor ranking development and improving communication about ranking activities.

Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki): Four different approaches to rankings can be observed at the University of Helsinki: indifference, familiarity, compliance, and finally optimising (adapting target activities to enter rankings). Rankings somewhat shape the agenda of the University (before certain indicators such as student/staff ratio was not measured). Markus LAITINEN states that the present strategy of the University involves its entrance among top 50 universities in the world.

Dimitrios REKKAS (National & Kapodistrian University of Athens) stresses that quality is a dependent variable, determined by multiple factors. Should University focus on measuring or building quality? Dimitrios REKKAS states it should be the latter. He also adds that "innovation comes from freedom", and a University that seeks to be an innovation leader should not confine to pursuing ranking activities.

Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome) talks about reputation as vital element of rankings and the role of International Relations' Officers in fostering the international outlook of a University. He emphasises that International Relations at a University "is not a dessert, but a main course" – investment in it is reflected in an increased visibility and enhanced international reputation of a University.

Questions and answers:

Guri VESTAD (University of Oslo) is surprised that University of Helsinki had not measured student/staff ratio before. Antoinette CHARON (Université de Lausanne) says that also Université de Lausanne needed to start measuring certain ratios and get figures in order to receive more funding (e.g. student/staff ratio to receive funding for hiring more academic staff).

Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) points out that we compare things that are not comparable – we should focus on optimising conditions for students and researchers.

Trine SAND (IRO Observer, University of Copenhagen) stresses that in the discussion on rankings we should be critical but enlightened-critical. We are in this reality and we need to be informed.

Andrejs RAUHVARGERS (University of Latvia) asks the panellists if their Universities have institutional persons dealing with rankings.

Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki) says that he himself, by curiosity, deals with ranking activities; Dimitrios REKKAS (National & Kapodistrian University of Athens) says there is no such a person at his University; Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome) replies it is Statistical Office that is in charge.

SESSION 2   QUALITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION

- **"World Café" on Welcoming Skills – chaired by Antoinette CHARON WAUTERS (Université de Lausanne)**

The participants in small groups discuss 4 topics*: How do we host?*
- foreign degree seeking students (Ba, Ma, PhD),
- academic mobility and placement students,
- hired foreign academic staff,
- visiting professors and researchers.

The conclusions of the world café (prepared by Antoinette CHARON, Université de Lausanne) are enclosed.

- ***Reputation and Recognition: How Can Internationalisation Processes Enhance Quality? by Prof. Jacques LANARES, Vice-Rector for Quality and Human Resources, Université de Lausanne*** (presentation available here)

Different factors influence the development of internationalisation processes, may there be economical (global market), political (Bologna process), and academic ("attracting brains"); some of them are very much related to quality. Quality and internationalisation are undoubtedly linked, share common goals, but internationalisation in itself does not necessarily enhance the quality. Quality processes are based on 3 elements: resources, objectives, and strategy; pitfalls resulting from the inadequate proportions of those elements can be observed in case of internationalisation, e.g. small objective – a lot of resources (e.g.: goal: have international activities; resources: 5 staff members, strategy: attending international meetings). Jacques LANARES stresses that in internationalisation of students, experience as such is not enough to bring an added value to their

education on a personal and academic level, and learning processes, such as reflexive observation, play a crucial role. Reflexivity of students can be stimulated by e-portfolios, feedback reports, and different role for teachers.

Questions and Answers:
Eleni MANTZOURANI (National & Kapodistrian University of Athens) refers to the small sample of students that participated in the survey which Jacques LANARES used in his presentation. Jacques LANARES explains that the survey served as illustration, and other surveys of this type reflect the same trend: the goal of students participating in an international student exchange is to develop, enhance their skills. He adds that we should encourage students to reflect on their exchange programmes; the question that remains is how to enhance their learning processes.

SESSION 3   IRO OPEN SPACE

- *Evaluation in Higher Education and Research: Vade-mecum*, **by Jacques LANARES**
  Jacques LANARES (Université de Lausanne) presents the draft "Vade-mecum for Evaluation in Higher Education & Research", prepared by the UNICA Group on Evaluation in HE & Research. He explains that the objective of the publication is to provide a toolbox of research evaluation methodologies for the Rectors, and leave the "one size fits all" approach behind. He adds that a particular element of the exercise was the "ERC test", demonstrating which indicators are easy to obtain, reliable, and comparable. The final version of the Vade-mecum will be presented at the UNICA General Assembly, University of Cyprus, 25-27 October.

- *Cooperation between UNICA Summer and Winter Schools*, **by Marvi PULVER, Tallinn University** (presentation available here)
  Marvi PULVER (Tallinn University) puts forward the initiative of the cooperation between summer and winter schools organisers from UNICA member universities. She presents different cooperation possibilities: joint courses and tailor-made courses for partner universities, mobile summer school, and exchanging professors & lecturers. She announces the UNICA Summer School Staff meeting, to be organised in Tallinn in late 2012.

- *Student Mobility & Intercultural Issues: Case Study of Indian Students*, **by Elke LÖSCHHORN, Freie Universität zu Berlin** (presentation available here)
  Elke LÖSCHHORN (Freie Universität zu Berlin) talks about positive experiences and challenges related to FU's cooperation with Indian universities in the framework of the EU-India Consortium. She presents a case study of 2 Indian exchange students that studied at FU. She states that Indian students can be integrated relatively easily into Science & Social Science programmes; pre-departure courses help students of Humanities get better prepared for the new academic culture. She stresses that dormitories with Internet (communication with families in India) and cooking facilities are important to make Indian students feel welcome.

- *UGAF and World Student Environmental Summit Update* **by Antoinette CHARON and Wladyslaw SENN, Student-Organiser of WSES 2012, Université de Lausanne** (presentation available here)
  Antoinette CHARON (Université de Lausanne) gives a brief overview of the 2nd UGAF Workshop, Université de Lausanne, 16-17 February 2012. She lists the ideas of new initiatives that emerged at the Workshop: green-oriented exchanges

of academic staff, joint summer school, UGAF Competitions, promotion of green meetings, and common UGAF – City event (modelled, for instance, after 'Night of the Museums').

Wladyslaw SENN (Université de Lausanne) presents the World Student Environmental Summit 2013. He explains that the goal of the Summit will be to equip students with knowledge and skills necessary in sustainable societies. All the UGAF member universities have committed to send student delegations to the summit.

- *State of the art of the UNICA Student Conference 2012*, **by Guri VESTAD, University of Oslo** (presentation available [here](#))

  Guri VESTAD (University of Oslo) announces that 30 UNICA universities applied for participation in the UNICA Student Conference 2012: *The Ideal European University*, hosted by the University of Oslo, 10-13 October 2012. The Conference has been granted an Eco-Lighthouse label for "green conferences": the students will be staying in a "green" hotel meeting all the environmental requirements. The students will be commuting by public transport only. The organisers commit to use as little paper documentation as possible: the communication will be done mostly via email, the interactive Conference website and social media (Facebook page). The participants will be asked to prepare short movies instead of abstracts. The post-conference publication will aim to be more of a toolbox than a declaration.

- *UNICA-MED*, **by Antonella CAMMISA, Sapienza University of Rome** (presentation available [here](#))

  Antonella CAMMISA (Sapienza University of Rome) presents the Sapienza's initiative on cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean Universities; she reports on the informal "brainstorming" meeting that took place in Rome, 19 March.

  IROs express their concern about the prospective aims of the initiative (Rectors from Southern Mediterranean universities might think their institutions are going to be affiliated with UNICA) and its target participants (concern about the the initiative being exclusive and aimed for only the UNICA member Universities from the Mediterranean region).

  UNICA President explains that the UNICA-MED initiative by no means aims at expanding the UNICA Network and it does not pose any threat to the coherence of the Network. He stresses that the initiative, initiated by Sapienza University, is addressed to all the UNICA members.

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  The meeting is followed by an optional guided tour of Lausanne and a dinner topped off by a splendid view of the Alps at Hôtel de la Paix.

End of Day 1

Friday 4 May 2012

SESSION 4: SCHOLARS AT RISK: UNIVERSITIES ENGAGING IN PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

UNICA Secretary General introduces the session. She explains that the following the encouragement of IROs at the UNICA IRO meeting 2011 in Oslo, UNICA became an affiliate member of the Scholars At Risk Network. Seven UNICA member Universities are SAR individual members: University of Oslo, Université de Lausanne, King's College London, University of Zagreb, Freie Universität zu Berlin, University College Dublin, Universiteit van Amsterdam.

- ***Presentation of potential activities for the UNICA Network*, Sinead O'GORMAN, SAR Deputy Executive Director** (presentation available)
  The presentation is preceded by the screening of a movie "The Courage To Think" outlining the activities of SAR (movie available [here](#)).

  Sinead O'GORMAN (SAR Deputy Executive Director) explains the two-part mission of SAR: protecting threatened scholars and working for academic freedom and academic values. At present, SAR brings together 270 member institutions from 34 countries, and 8 partner networks. SAR focuses its activities around monitoring & advocacy, promotion (series of lectures, workshops), lobbying (Scholars At Prison – emergency interventions, both responsive and preventive actions against content-based and status-based attacks on scholars).

  Possible activities that UNICA and individual UNICA member Universities can carry out are presented: organising talks by scholars, hosting workshops and trainings, participating in the letter-writing campaign of Scholars At Prison and the creation of national networks, hosting scholars (minimum placements: 3 months) or continue PhD candidates to pursue their doctorate.

- **Presentation of University of Oslo and Université de Lausanne SAR experiences**
  Interviewed by Sinead O'GORMAN (SAR), Guilain MATHÉ (scholar from the Democratic Republic of Congo hosted by Université de Lausanne) gives his testimonial about his participation in the SAR programme, his stay at Université de Lausanne, and what academic freedom means to him.

  Guri VESTAD (University of Oslo; presentation [here](#)) presents the experience of her University: University of Oslo is a SAR member since 2001 and has received 4 scholars. SAR programme at UiO enjoys the support of the academic leadership and financial assistance of the University (budget for receiving one scholar per year: €100,000). The University has an internal SAR Committee composed of 5 members (including 1 student representative).

- **Discussion**
  Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki) asks how the scholars are matched with the hosting institutions. Sinead O'GORMAN (SAR) explains that scholars are assigned to particular faculties looking for teaching/research staff; faculties select scholars from a list that SAR circulates. Language and urgency of the situation are important criteria.

Sinead O'GORMAN states that one of the priorities of SAR is to become a global network: at present, the members are concentrated in North America and Western Europe.

Elke LöSCHHORN (Freie Universität Berlin) stresses it is important not to be a silent member of SAR. She proposes to organise a workshop related to SAR activities. **TO DO:** UNICA will work together with Elke LöSCHHORN and Freie Universität Berlin on the organisation of the Workshop; SAR activities carried out by the UNICA member Universities shall be announced on the UNICA website.

SESSION 5: ERASMUS – THE FUTURE

- ***Big Lines of "Erasmus for All"* by Raimonda MARKEVICIENE, Vilnius University** (presentation available here)
  Raimonda MARKEVICIENE (Vilnius University) presents the future "Erasmus For All" programme that would begin in 2014. The new programme promises to deliver an increase of budget, management simplification & easy reporting, and a strengthened university-business cooperation. She states that abandoning the programme's brand names & sector specificity and introducing horizontal action lines might not be a good solution, especially given the brand names' good reputation and success. The "Erasmus For All" proposal provides a lot of recommendations, however gives little information on how the new programme will be implemented. The simplification at the EU level may in fact mean more stringent rules at the university level. International Relations Officers might need more administrative support, and new policies and frameworks, such as: framework/policy for transnational cooperation, on information provision and quality issues, on fair accessibility to the Master level (grade conversion).

  IROs express their concern about the new programme. Ursula HANS (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) remarks that the European Commission gains an increasing impact on what Higher Education institutions do at the international level, and frequent changes in the EU policy make it difficult to shape international policies at the University.

  Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome) points out that it is not too late to "save" flagship programmes such as Erasmus or Leonardo: governments still have a say and opportunities to advocate our views at the governmental level should be examined.

- ***Erasmus and Switzerland: Are the Swiss Really Back?* by Martina BUOL, Swiss National Agency** (presentation available here)
  Martina BUOL (Swiss National Agency) outlines the history of Swiss presence in the Erasmus programme, from full participation (1992-1996), non-contractual participation (1996-2000), bilateral agreement (2007), and start of the direct participation in 2011. As positive results, she mentions the good level of use of programme funds (coverage of 80%), good results of the EC supervisory visit, and the operational status of the Swiss National Agency. In order for Switzerland to participate in "Erasmus For All", new bilateral EU-Switzerland agreement need to be signed (in Switzerland, it might be voted in a referendum) and all the EU members states need to approves Switzerland's participation.

- ***How Do You Work With Learning Agreements?***
  - o Klementyna KIELAK, University of Warsaw: *E-learning Agreement at the University of Warsaw*
    Klementyna KIELAK (University of Warsaw) presents the USOS system, conceived by the University of Warsaw and other Polish universities, and created by a network of IT specialists working in the HE area. The system allows storage of all sorts of University data; USOS IRO module allows the management of incoming and outgoing mobilities (including the financial part). The e-LA module (containing full data of students) enables the preparation of learning agreements and facilitates the work of IROs and Erasmus Coordinators. Special interface offers students access to certain part of the data and allows them to introduce changes to the selected courses.
    Klementyna KIELAK outlines the objective of the RS3G project: it aims to facilitate and streamline the exchange of data between Universities. She stresses that the premise of the project is not to replace university systems but to create connections between them, allowing electronic exchange of data and establishing filters approving/rejecting the information. She stresses the need of support from other Universities to take the project under the umbrella of the European Commission.

  - o Trine SAND (University of Copenhagen) states that the University of Copenhagen uses internal agreements (for the Grant Office) and no learning agreements. If needed, the forms of foreign institutions are used.

- ***Erasmus Grade Conversion System and Dreaming of Erasmus without Papers* by Luciano SASO, Sapienza University of Rome** (presentation available here)
  Luciano SASO (Sapienza University of Rome) announces the UNICA-Santander Group-Compostela Workshop on cooperation with Chinese higher education institutions, taking place on 7 June 2012 in Brussels. He invites the IRO to take part in the event.

  Luciano SASO presents the Multilateral Erasmus project proposal on grade conversion. The new ECTS guide allows for a direct conversion of grades of a given student taking into account the tables of host and home institution. The above-mentioned project seeks to conceive a web-based software allowing the conversion in 3 steps. If the project is approved, the system will be open to everyone. The long-term academic goal of the project could be the creation of a grading culture.

  Luciano SASO also outlines an initiative related to reducing the number of paper documents in student mobility schemes, that is the creation of a European Platform for Exchange Students. The platform would bring together Erasmus Coordinators, IT experts, and software companies. He underlines that critical mass is crucial for creating a successful solution.

  Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki) expresses his concern about involving companies: they will not participate in such initiative for free and may raise the fees for their involvement in the future.

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

Trine SAND (University of Copenhagen, UNICA IRO Observer) thanks the IROs for their active participation in the meeting. She invites the participants to give their feedback and propose subjects for the next meeting.

It is announced that the following IRO meeting will be hosted jointly by Université libre de Bruxelles and Vrije Universiteit Brussel in May 2013. The IROs will be informed about the exact date in due course.

Guri VESTAD (University of Oslo) proposes to address the recruitment & marketing and the introduction of tuition fees for international students as topics of the next IRO meeting.

Markus LAITINEN (University of Helsinki) remarks that "sometimes less is more" and suggests that the next meeting leaves a bit more room for interaction and debate.

Antoinette CHARON suggests that the IRO 2013 programme features a short update on UGAF given by Université libre de Bruxelles and hands-on experiences on cooperation with different regions of the globe.

The participants give applause to Antoinette CHARON and her team for the excellent organisation and hosting of the meeting.

Warm thanks to Université de Lausanne for their efforts and to Trine SAND for her role as Chair and IRO Observer.

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