

**Fifty years of university co-operation in Europe  
From Rectors' Conferences to University Associations**

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September 2015

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### **About the author**

Per Nyborg graduated from the University of Oslo in 1962 and was awarded his Dr. Philos. degree in 1970. Until 1977 he taught at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Norges landbrukshøgskole), also serving as Head of Department and Member of the University Board. Per has been President of the Norwegian Association of Scientists and he is now an Honorary Member.

In 1977 Per started an administrative career, working with the Norwegian Research Councils and the Ministry of Education. In 1991, he was appointed Secretary General for the Norwegian Council of Universities, (from 2001 the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions). Per has also served as Secretary General for the Nordic University Association.

From 1991 until 2003 Per Nyborg was the academic Norwegian delegate to the Council of Europe's Committee for Higher Education and Research, serving terms as Vice-Chair and Chair. He also participated as a Council of Europe expert in countries in East and Southeast Europe. Per has been a member of the Bologna Follow-up Group and he was Head of the Bologna Secretariat from Berlin to Bergen (2003-2005).

Per retired in 2005 but has occasionally served as a senior expert to international organisations.

## Preface

In Norway, as in other countries in Western Europe, university rectors' conferences were organised from the 1950s on. Over the years, such conferences developed into regular bi-annual meetings and later into university associations. On the European level, the rectors' conferences in Cambridge (1955), Dijon (1959) and Göttingen (1964) led to *CRE - Standing Conference of Rectors of European Universities* and to the *Liaison Committee for European Union Rectors' Conferences*. The Liaison Committee transformed into a Confederation and in 2001 CRE and the Confederation merged, establishing *EUA - European University Association*.

The governance of the European university organisations was in the hands of the rectors chairing the individual national rectors' conferences, and some of the same rectors also met as academic representatives in the *Council of Europe Committee for Higher Education and Research*. There was a European network of university rectors and of the organisations they represented.

As rectors' conferences developed into associations on national and European levels, each organisation established a secretariat headed by a secretary general, responsible for the administration of the organisation. The national secretaries general attended the meetings of CRE and the Confederation, often also the meetings in the Council of Europe, partaking in the rectors' network.

As Secretary General of the *Norwegian Council of Universities* – a former university rectors' conference that during my time developed into the *Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions* – I was taking active part in this co-operation in the period 1991-2005. I regularly attended meetings in CRE and the Liaison Committee and I also met as the academic representative for Norway in the Council of Europe Committee from 1991, acting as the committee's Vice-Chair and Chair 1999-2003. I was also involved in establishing the *Nordic University Association* in 1995, acting as this association's first secretary general up to 2001.

Much happened in this period, culminating with the 1999 Bologna Ministerial Conference and the development of the Bologna Process. Here, the university associations joined forces with national government representatives and the EU Commission in the development of the *European Higher Education Area*. As a Council of Europe representative, I participated in the *Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)* until 2003, thereafter being Head of the BFUG Secretariat up to the 2005 Bergen Ministerial Conference.

Ten years later and ten years retired, I am now looking back to this hectic and very interesting period. Much has been written about the Bologna Process, but little has been written about the university co-operation that preceded it. This presentation covers the fifty years from the 1955 Cambridge conference up to the 2005 Bologna Ministerial Conference in Bergen – coinciding with my own retirement.

My intention has been to describe the development of the rectors' conferences into national and international associations and give an overview of the themes discussed over time by the rectors' conferences at national and European levels. To what extent did this co-operation and its growing relations to national and European authorities influence developments? It must certainly have helped to pave the way for the broad agreement that made the Bologna Process possible.

The first three chapters build on a previous account of the activities of CRE and the Confederation<sup>1</sup>, up to the start of the Bologna Process and the merger of the two organisations into the European University Association. That account was based on old reports kept at the EUA Secretariat, and on a short history of CRE available on Internet.<sup>2</sup> Not much was found from the first years of the Liaison Committee. For the period after 1990, I still have many documents related to CRE and the Confederation stored in my own computer.

The fourth chapter gives an account of the activities of the Higher Education and Research Committee of the Council of Europe where representatives of the rector conferences participated. The Council of Europe Archives is at the present time not open for external visitors. However, a limited number of relevant documents are available on the Internet. I have also used documents from my own time with the Committee. This, of course, does not give a full picture of the activities of the Council of Europe Committee.

The fifth chapter describes the activities of the Norwegian University Rectors' Conference and the development into the Norwegian Council of Universities and later into the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions – one of the many national rectors' conferences feeding into CRE, the Confederation and the Council of Europe Committee. This chapter builds on a previous publication in the Norwegian language,<sup>3</sup> based on material that was available at the Secretariat of the Norwegian Council of Universities. For context, the development of higher education in Norway is described in an annex.

The Nordic co-operation will be commented briefly in a sixth chapter, building on a previous version in the Norwegian language,<sup>4</sup> based on my own documentation. This is included as an example of a regional co-operation, interacting with the national and the international organisations.

The outcome is not a complete history of the different organisations, only a broad outline of developments during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, supplemented by more specific descriptions of events, actions and projects – based on information available to me. There are many holes in the material, but it gives a picture of the development and the achievements of the university associations and their influence on higher education and research policies, nationally and on European level, culminating with their partnership in the Bologna Process, briefly commented in the final chapter.

Per Nyborg, September 2015

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<sup>1</sup> P. Nyborg, *The Roots of the European University Association* (2014) <http://www.eua.be/about/at-a-glance.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> A. Barblan, *Academic cooperation and mobility in Europe: how it was, how it should be*, CEPES 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/CEPES\\_30thAn.1069322899147.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/CEPES_30thAn.1069322899147.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> P. Nyborg, *Fifty years of university co-operation in Norway* (in Norwegian, 2007) Unipub

<sup>4</sup> P. Nyborg, *The Nordic University Association – The first years* (In Norwegian, 2014) unpublished

# 1 European Conferences of University Rectors

## 1.1 Cambridge 1955

At the initiative of the Western European Union, nearly one hundred university representatives, most of them rectors or vice-chancellors, met in Cambridge in July 1955, to discuss common problems and challenges to their institutions.<sup>5</sup> They came from fifteen different countries in Western Europe.

They discussed the need for university autonomy, the balance between specialization and general culture, the selection, training and welfare of the student body and the university's role in society. The Conference adopted recommendations in each of these fields; some of them were still relevant fifty years later:

In all countries universities should have a greater degree of autonomy.

Grants made by public authorities should be made as block grants.

Universities should be free to organise their own courses, whilst bearing in mind that for certain professions, university degrees are the only qualifications required.

In connection with sponsored research, the university authorities have a responsibility

- for safeguarding the university autonomy;
- for ensuring free choice and independent direction of research by its staff;
- for ensuring that university facilities are used only for their proper purpose.

Contracts should not forbid the publication in due course of the results of research carried out in universities.

In all circumstances the freedom of thought of university staffs must be safeguarded and that no governmental supervision should be exercised in this sphere.

Any system for selection of students must always avoid discrimination on grounds of race, religion or political creed.

In all countries financial assistance should be made available to students whose capacities are sufficient to pursue their studies with diligence and success.

Universities, conscious of their responsibility for the preparation of leaders of society, should adapt their teaching to comply with the increasing needs of the community.

Students should be encouraged to pursue part of their studies at universities abroad.

International exchanges between staffs of universities should be encouraged and Governments should be requested to ensure that the necessary funds are available.

The Conference recommended that similar conferences be convened periodically, also to ensure a permanence of relations between the universities. The European Universities Committee was formed in Brussels in November 1955, under the auspices of the Western European Union, to fulfil the tasks recommended by the Cambridge Conference.

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<sup>5</sup> *Report of Proceedings, Cambridge Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors*, Western European Union, 1956

## 1.2 Dijon 1959

The next European conference of rectors and vice-chancellors was held in Dijon in 1959. The heads of universities in twenty-two European countries were invited, together with high government officials, experts, and representatives of international organisations.<sup>6</sup>

Three working parties were set up to prepare reports on the topics chosen for the conference;

- the universities and the shortage of scientists and technologists;
- studies relating to Europe, with reference to the humanities;
- studies relating to Europe, with reference to the social and economic sciences.

In Dijon, each of the reports from the working parties was discussed by a commission. The proceedings focused on the recommendations from the three commissions, reflecting the discussions in these fora.

The shortage of scientists and technologists implied that universities must expand and multiply. How to keep the cultural standards of the universities intact while they were expanding rapidly and constantly increasing in numbers? It was pointed out that the size of the faculties was more important than the size of the university, as the universities might consist of many colleges or campuses. Within faculties, departments must be strong enough to make useful contributions to scientific development, this suggested that there should be a minimum number of teachers for a department and consequently for the faculty. It was seen as essential that the proportion of students to staff should be limited to a reasonable figure (10 to 1?). The commission felt unable to advise on the question of founding technological universities rather than full universities. For the achievement of European unity, the commission attached capital importance to exchanges of students at all levels.

This Second Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors decided to set up a *Standing Conference of Rectors ad Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities* which should meet at least once every five years and a *Permanent Committee* for the Standing Conference. Rector Bouchard from Dijon was elected as the first president.

The intention of the rectors was that the new Permanent Committee should take over the functions of the WEU European Universities Committee:

- to advise governments and inter-governmental organisations on university matters;
- to facilitate consultation and collaboration among the universities of Europe;
- to collect information and publish documents bearing on university problems.

As the Council of Europe was considering setting up an advisory body on university matters, it was proposed that the Permanent Committee for the Standing Conference should fill this role. This was realised in 1960, as the Council of Europe took over responsibility for the work of the former Universities Committee of the Western European Union (see section 4.1).

## 1.3 Göttingen 1964

At the next Conference in Göttingen in 1964, nearly two hundred Rectors and Vice-Chancellors from all over Europe participated. Invitations had been sent also to universities in Eastern Europe and representatives from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia attended.

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<sup>6</sup> *Report of Proceedings, Second Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors, Western European Union, 1959*

The Conference wanted to be open to universities from the whole of Europe; that had been one reason for breaking the relations to the Western European Union. As a representative for universities in the dialogue with political decision-makers, the Conference wanted a full independence. The new ties to the Council of Europe were therefore not unproblematic, as also the membership of the Council of Europe was restricted to countries in Western Europe.

In Göttingen, a great part of the working sessions were devoted to the discussion of a draft constitution for the Standing Conference. The constitution was formally adopted, setting the rules for the organisation.

In addition to the organisational matters that had to be treated at this conference, academic subjects were of course also discussed: The optimum and the maximum size of a university was at the centre of the debate; a size relative to society's expectations, to students' growing presence in higher education, and to the quality of research and service to industry.<sup>7</sup>

#### 1.4 CRE – Standing Conference of University Rectors

The constitution of the *Conférence Permanente des Recteurs, Présidents et Vice-Chanceliers (Rectors) des Universités europeennes* came into effect in September 1964. The objective of the *Standing Conference* was co-operation between the rectors, between the universities, between their teachers, research workers and students. It should also present its views and make recommendations on problems which concern the universities to governments, and to national, international and supra-national organisations.

Members of the Standing Conference were the rectors. There was to be a General Assembly meeting every five years, a Permanent Committee with representatives of the national rectors' conferences, a President and a Bureau. Later on the organisation was referred to as *CRE*. In 1994 the constitution was amended so that *the universities* were the members, not the rectors.

#### 1.5 Relations to the Council of Europe

In 1960, the Council of Europe had taken over responsibility for the work of the former Universities Committee of the WEU and set up in its place a Committee for Higher Education and Research, composed of university rectors and vice-chancellors on one hand (the CRE Permanent Committee) and senior civil servants on the other, to advice governments on policies in this field.

The CRE Permanent Committee was used to prepare university positions before discussing higher education policy with ministerial delegates in the Council of Europe. Each session of the Council of Europe committee was preceded by a one day encounter of the university delegates in the CRE Permanent Committee. The work programme for the Council of Europe committee had been allocated to the problem of adjusting universities to the new requirements of modern society and work had begun on the following subjects:<sup>8</sup>

- examination systems;
- courses of study;
- university staff structure;
- role of universities in drawing up courses of study;
- diversification of post-school education.

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<sup>7</sup> *Protokoll*, Standing Conference of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities, Göttingen 1964

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum 27 May 1968, Secretary General, Council of Europe

This fitted well with the CRE Permanent Committee and the national rectors' conferences. The ministerial delegates in Council of Europe committee were often the same people whom the representatives of the national rectors' conferences would meet at national level. In this way, discussions on university problems and higher education policy at national level could benefit from discussions both in CRE and in the Council of Europe.

The year 1968 became one of much unrest and demonstrations in Europe – both East and West. The Council of Europe at that time represented only the Western part of the continent. To underline the pan-European ambitions of CRE, it was decided by the 1969 CRE General Assembly to formally distance CRE from the Council of Europe. However, after the 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, East-West relations froze and universities in Eastern Europe did not come back to the CRE for a long time. It should take another twenty years to bring East and West together in CRE.

Presidents of national rectors' conferences in Western Europe continued to co-operate in the CRE Permanent Committee and they also continued as national academic representatives in the Council of Europe committee (see chapter 4). After 1989, both CRE and the Council of Europe developed into pan-European organisations, working to bridge former gaps between higher education systems of East and West, co-operating in many projects and programmes.

## 1.6 CRE activities (1969 - 1983)

Up to 1969, the activities of the Standing Conference (CRE) had been limited to meetings of the five-yearly General Assembly and to the preparatory work for these meetings. Then the Permanent Committee started to organise semi-annual CRE conferences. The conferences were held in different countries, at the invitation of a member university. Among themes discussed during the period up to the next General Assembly in 1974, were the following:<sup>9</sup>

- The Role of the University within the Structure of Higher Education;
- Mobility of Students and Collaboration between Institutions;
- The Teaching Role of the University;
- University Staff;
- Research and Higher Education;
- The Expansion of Higher Education;
- Access to Universities;
- University Government.

*The Teaching Role of the University* was the central theme of the CRE semi-annual conference in November 1971. The report from the meeting pointed out that teaching ability should be taken seriously by the universities, and the recognition of that ability should play a significant part in the appointment and promotion of their staff. Universities should allow no discrimination in respect of staff on the grounds of race or religion or sex or politics. Universities should adopt a variety of teaching methods and should ensure that members of staff were accessible to the individual student and that the student was making satisfactory progress. Schemes of study should be carefully thought out from the student's point of view.

For the next conference in April 1972, the theme chosen was *University Research*. Much attention was given to the conflicting problem of more students on the one hand and less money for research on the other. The relation between teaching and research was discussed,

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<sup>9</sup> CRE from 1969 to 1974, Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee to the 1974 General Assembly

and also the question of the stage at which a student might most effectively begin research. The need to preserve the individual freedom of the research worker was underlined, also when participating in overall frameworks of research, for instance within a national or international plan of economic development. The right of publication had to be defended at all costs.

The following conference in November 1972 was devoted to *Access to Universities*, with the two central themes *Expansion of Higher Education* and *Selection or Open Access*. The discussion showed that a rapid increase in enrolments was still the general situation, being particularly marked in humanities and the social sciences. The indications were that this trend would continue. Another typical feature was seen as the increasing length of general education. In many countries, the social profile of university students had hardly changed. Economic pressure was leading to closer scrutiny of the costs of higher education.

*University Government* was discussed at the semi-annual conference in May 1973. Although universities had changed much through the centuries, the degree of change of the previous decade was unprecedented. Existing universities had expanded so much that change in administrative structures had become necessary, new universities had been able to experiment with new structures. Claims for participation in governance had been made not only by students, but also by junior members of the academic staff, non-academic staff and by groups outside the university. There seemed to be a strong case for a three-level administrative pattern, with the intermediate level being represented by the faculty. There was considerable support for large departments which would include several full professors. The greater involvement of students in university government, observed in recent years, was welcomed, but it was recognized that this involvement might not be the same in all areas. Views were exchanged concerning the method of appointment, term of office and extent of responsibility of rectors, deans, and head of departments.

These semi-annual conferences were in a way “continuing education” for academic leaders who, after the reforms resulting from the 1968 student troubles, were asked by new regulations to get more and more involved in the management of their enlarged institutions. Those that did not participate at a conference would be informed through the bulletin *CRE Information*. This bulletin started to appear four times a year, including as regular features the papers prepared for the half-yearly meetings and the report of the rapporteur.

What happened in Norway (see chapter 5), and probably also in other European countries, was that these topics over time were discussed at the National Rectors’ Conference, often leading to a consensus regarding practical solutions. However, changing the system might take considerable time, as the academic community generally would be against any changes. Furthermore, as institutional autonomy still was something for the future, Central Government might not be willing to sanction the proposed changes in university administration.

In addition to organisational matters, also the CRE General Assemblies discussed academic affairs. Thus, the 1974 Assembly treated the following topics:<sup>10</sup>

- The university and the changing needs of society;
- University teaching;
- University research;
- University government;
- The financing of universities.

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<sup>10</sup> Quiquennial Report of the Permanent Committee to the 1979 General Assembly

General assemblies were only held every fifth year, so for the rectors, the bi-annual conferences were the most useful meeting-place. Over the next ten years, these conferences continued regularly, each conference dealing with a topic of common interest. Some of the topics mentioned above would come back after a few years and new topics were taken up.

The theme of the 12<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual CRE Conference in April 1976 was *Foreign students and their access to universities*. Among the problems in this field discussed, were these:<sup>11</sup> Restrictive exchange policies, the problem of *numerus clausus*, the situation of equivalence regulations, non-convertibility of national scholarships. It was pointed out that recognition of diplomas and periods of study and convertibility of scholarships were necessary for the mobility of students. This highly complex and difficult matter could only be dealt with by experts on the European university systems.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual CRE Conference in April 1977 focused on *The Social Relevance of the University*. The main points of discussion were<sup>12</sup>

- The concept of relevance with respect to undergraduate and postgraduate courses;
- The role of manpower planning in relation to university admissions and curricula;
- The responsibility of universities for training the professions, for the needs of industry and public service.

It was pointed out by one of the speakers that the main problems facing most European universities currently were

- great pressure of secondary school leavers to enter university;
- discrepancy between the distribution of students among different fields of study and the needs for qualified manpower, as well as difficulties in the employment of graduates in certain subjects;
- rather slow adaptation of university curricula to the technical and technological changes in economic and social development.

Also the CRE General Assembly in August 1979 discussed *the role of the university in society*. A second topic was *the present conditions of university life*.<sup>13</sup> What dominated the discussion on this second theme was the staggering growth in the number of students and increase in the number of establishments. But the rectors also noted that the differences existing at tertiary level between universities and other institutions of higher education had largely been ironed out in the course of the years. It was pointed out that academic-type studies had undergone reforms in most of the European countries. University courses had developed towards a better preparation of the student to face working life. Specialised schools had widened their concept of professional training to avoid that candidates would leave with narrow qualifications.

The bi-annual conferences continued and they were attended by an increasing number of rectors. The maximum number of participants was augmented from 70 to 100.

Among new topics discussed in the following years were these:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Higher Education in Europe, Vol.1:3 (1976), pp.18-20

<sup>12</sup> Higher Education in Europe, Vol.2:3 (1977), pp.5-8

<sup>13</sup> A. Barblan, Higher Education in Europe, Vol.4:4, pp.29-32

<sup>14</sup> Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee 1979-1984

- The relationship between the university and its social partners;
- Rationalization of university activities;
- Planning of resources.

### 1.7 A 1983 picture of CRE – an association of university leaders

A leaflet distributed before the 1984 General Assembly described CRE as an international organisation and an association of executive heads of universities in Europe. The aims and functions of CRE were described in this way:

The CRE's objective is to promote co-operation among European universities, its vocation is genuinely academic, strictly non-governmental, without any political or economic restriction or affinity. It is in no way associated with any of the regional groupings to which some European States belong. Its concept of Europe is geographic.

Its functions include the following:

- o to provide a forum for inter-European discussions and informal meetings;
- o to inform members and other interested parties about developments in university policy throughout the continent;
- o to reflect on the role of the university in European society now and in the past;
- o to represent the university's point of view to bodies concerned with higher education in Europe.

Its various programmes therefore attempt to identify common interests and problems so that the member rectors, presidents and vice-chancellors can become aware of the existing possibilities for mutual co-operation between their institutions.

By 1984, the aims were more ambitious than they had been in 1964. To represent European universities vis-à-vis international organisations concerned with higher education, additional activities would be needed. This would be an important follow-up of the 1984 Assembly.

### 1.8 The association at work (1984-1989)

*The Association at work* was the heading of the CRE Report for the five-year period 1984-1989.<sup>15</sup> Much was done. New programs were started, most of them with external partners.

However, the semi-annual conferences continued as a core CRE activity. New topics were taken up for discussion:

- The impact of new information technologies on the structure of the university;
- Vocational training or general education?
- The pursuit of excellence;
- The university between tradition and progress;
- University contracts with outside partners: a tool for autonomy?
- Academic mobility: present realities and new opportunities;
- University graduates: the quality/quantity dilemma;
- The European university confronted by change (Contributing to a changing Europe);
- Universities and professional training.

In 1985, a series of seminars were organised on the *survival conditions of newly created universities*: six institutions acted as a core group and invited another twenty to discuss

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<sup>15</sup> Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee 1984-1989

specific aspects of their development, the basis for a 1986 report to all members entitled *From infancy to maturity: creating a university*.

In 1986, a conference discussed the universities' links to society, in particular to industry. The following year, the CRE Permanent Committee, taking account of the new links set-up with leading manufacturers in communication technologies, decided that CRE would become one of the founding members of the *Euro-PACE program*, supporting advanced continuing education for industry. Together with the *European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT)*, a *University / Industry Forum* was launched in 1988.

Also in 1986, at the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Fulbright Program, CRE co-sponsored a conference where university representatives discussed how to develop a *Transatlantic dialogue* at a time when American interest were moving away from Europe to other world partners. In the following year, the *American Council of Education (ACE)* picked up the project so that, in 1989, a new session of the transatlantic dialogue under CRE /ACE sponsorship was organised, the first of a series of meetings every second years in alternation with Europe and America.

In 1987, European and Latin American rectors met in Buenos Aires to define the an area of co-operation, that was to be university management and institutional development – burning issues for several countries in Latin America that had recently returned to democratic structures of government. This led to the *Columbus Program*.

These were all new areas of concern for CRE. The programs were a new form for activity. The association tried to act as a stimulus for international co-operation and academic exchange in fields of growing interest for member universities.

As a consequence of the increased activity, the bulletin CRE Information was developing into a magazine. Two issues (nos. 75 and 77) were devoted to a comparative study of *European systems of higher education*. Other issues also dealt with general questions, such as the demand for *Tomorrow's graduates* (no. 81), *Universities as places of European Culture* (No. 82), and *University-industry dialogue in Europe* (no. 83). CRE activities were now recorded in the form of an annual report in the last issue of the year. In 1988, the CRE Information was re-baptized as *CRE-action* and given a new format and a new layout. New issues appeared in the following years, among them *Quality Assessment* (no. 96) in 1991, *Lifelong learning* (no. 98) and *Future missions of the university* (no. 100) in 1992.

### **1.8.1 Magna Charta Universitatum (1988)**

In 1988, the University of Bologna celebrated its 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was a great celebration. The idea was to re-affirm the political function of the university in the intellectual development of society. CRE was an active partner. Hence, the proposal to draft a document on the universities' European identity: the *Magna Charta Universitatum*.

The Magna Charta declared that universities are autonomous institutions, that teaching and research in universities must be inseparable, and that freedom in research and training is a fundamental principle of university life:

### *Fundamental Principles* <sup>16</sup>

The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organised because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching.

To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economically independent of all political authority and economic power.

Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.

Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement.

A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

The principles of the Magna Charta Universitatum later found their way into the Bologna Declaration of European Ministers of Education in 1999, leading to a university- government partnership in the Bologna Process.

### **1.9 New times. An association of universities (1989-2001)**

In 1989, the Berlin Wall was falling down. CRE centred much of its development over the next five years on integrating the universities of Central and Eastern Europe into the association.<sup>17</sup> The May 1991 semi-annual conference took place in Leningrad and provided an opportunity to affirm the greater Europe for the academic community. Thanks to the financial support of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, it was possible to facilitate the participation of member institutions from the former communist countries in the management training seminars co-organised with the IMHE Program of the OECD. By 1994, the CRE membership included 80 universities from former communist countries.

The high level of activity continued in the 1990s, with conferences and additional new programmes. Some of the topics discussed at the semi-annual conferences are listed below:

- Preparing for employment;
- Institutionalization of quality;
- Human resource management;
- Future missions of the university;
- Academic co-operation networks,
- Improved management of available resources.

The decision was made to open up the semi-annual conferences to all universities wanting to attend. This sparked a change in their character; instead of think-tanks limited to a small group of rectors, they became fora bringing together 140-180 participants. This type of conferences probably was what the CRE meant to university leaders in general at the time. Around 500 universities were now members of CRE.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/the-magna-charta-1/the-magna-charta>

<sup>17</sup> Quinquennial Report on activities 1989-1994. See also A. Barblan, Reference 1

The theme for the 1994 General Assembly in Budapest was *A university policy for Europe*. This meant the whole of Europe – East and West. The name of the organisation was formally changed to *CRE - Association of European Universities*.

CRE did much to promote the creation of inter-institutional networks, inviting universities to set up and strengthen joint programs. However, practical difficulties prevented many Eastern universities from taking active part: language problems, IT-problems and financial problems.

This linking activity brought the CRE in closer contact with the European Commission, which now was very active in the higher education area, through programs such as ERASMUS, LINGUA, COMETT and TEMPUS. This also led to closer contact and a concerted policy approach with the *Liaison Committee* (see chapter 2), representing universities in EC member states through the national rectors' conferences. As these rectors' conferences were also represented in CRE's Permanent Committee, the need for coordination was apparent.

Following the publication in the autumn of 1991 of the Commission's *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community*, the two organisations joined forces to sound out the opinion of their members and give an input to the Commission. Following this, a number of opinions concerning specific aspects of university life in Europe were formulated in conjunction with the Liaison Committee for the Commission: Europeanisation of research, development of institutional networks, support policies for Central and Eastern European universities and management training for university executive heads with respect to internationalisation of teaching and research.

CRE would develop, together with its member institutions, management tools and policies to meet the fast growing knowledge needs of European society. Out of this came five priority action areas for the 1994-98 period: Quality management, Financing, Institutional restructuring, European cohesion, Linking with society.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of *quality management*, CRE developed a program for *Institutional Evaluation*. With the support of the European Commission, and using material collected in the evaluation process, a guide to strategic management issues was drafted to take stock of and explain quality approaches specific to universities.

*Financing* had been a recurrent preoccupation of all institutions of higher education at the two semi-annual conferences in 1995, generation of new income and efficient use of resources were discussed.

To support members in their *institutional restructuring*, CRE organised with IMHE / OECD six management seminars, involving during the four-year period 133 university leaders.

In the field of *European cohesion*, the Academic Task Force had been created in 1990 to support links between Central and Eastern European universities and Western European institutions. From 1994, it focused its actions on the European re-integration of war-damaged universities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. A yearly conference brought those universities together in Dubrovnik or Sarajevo to meet other European universities ready to help in the reconstruction of academic life in the region. This led to interuniversity consortia based on TEMPUS Joint European Projects initiated by CRE to help design new curricula.

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<sup>18</sup> 1994-1998 Quadriennial Report of the Permanent Committee

CREs interest in institutional change qualified the association to assess the impact of TEMPUS on university management and reform in Central and Eastern European countries. In 1996, CRE was commissioned to analyse the requests and reports from some 300 Joint European Projects supported by TEMPUS, in order to prepare recommendations for the next TEMPUS phase, and in 1997 this led to a *Handbook on University Management*.

Also the introduction of *the institutional contract* in Socrates contributed to bring the CRE closer to Brussels. CRE was asked to monitor the European strategies of institutions in the ERASMUS part of SOCRATES and statements from 1800 institutions asking for support were analysed and led to recommendations for improving the program.

It can be inferred from these examples that CRE and the *Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences* (next chapter) more and more overlapped in the representation of universities versus the European Commission – not always speaking with the same voice. However, their joint participation in the preparations for the upcoming 1999 ministerial conference in Bologna brought the two organisations together – finally merging in 2001 (chapter 3).

**Table 1: The history of CRE programmes<sup>19</sup>**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
1969-	Conferences, General Assemblies	To provide a forum for members to discuss university governance
1979-	Management Seminar	To familiarize university leaders with HE issues and to develop strategic management capacities
1983-	University History in Europe	To show the cultural and social contributions of universities
1987- (outsourced 1996)	Columbus	To promote co-operation in university management between Europe and Latin America
1987-	Transatlantic Dialogue	To exchange views and experiences between university leaders in Europe and North America
1988- (outsourced 1999)	Copernicus	To promote university efforts focused on the environment and sustainable development
1988-1995	University/Industry Forum	To explore the common agenda in learning of universities and business
1993-	Academic Task Force (ATP)	To mobilize the support needed by universities in parts of Europe
1993-1994	Joint Projects with Liaison Committee	To test university policy development following an EU Memorandum
1994-	Institutional Evaluation	To help member universities analyse their objectives and enhance their capacity for change
1994-1995	European Cohesion	Comparing strategic university management in Europe North/South
1995-	New Technologies	To monitor the use of ICT for teaching and learning and to help member universities develop ICT strategy
1995-	Financing	To help universities identify funding sources and develop strategies for gaining access to new sources
1996-	European Strategies	To monitor universities' strategies for SOCRATES
1997-1998	Dialogue with Stakeholders	To analyse universities' links with stakeholders
1998	Magna Charta Observatory	To monitor the implementation of the 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum
Permanent	Service to Members	Information, publications, web-site

<sup>19</sup> CRE Mid-Term Report (1998-2000)

## 2 Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences

The Confederation started its life in 1973 as the *Comité de Liaison des Recteurs des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne*. The *Liaison Committee* had its roots in the European Universities Committee set up in Brussels in 1955 under the auspices of the Western European Union, and the CRE Permanent Committee of 1959. Whereas the CRE Committee focused its work on the challenges facing all universities in Europe, the Chairmen of national rectors' conferences in EC countries set up their Liaison Committee for a stronger collaboration between universities within the European Community, to respond to Community initiatives affecting research and higher education and to be heard by the European Commission.

### 2.1 The first years as the Liaison Committee (1973-1992)

The inclusion of research and higher education in Community policies developed slowly at first. However, from the academic year 1976-77, the *Joint Study programs* and the *Short Study Visits* scheme were in operation. The Liaison Committee followed the development and actively disseminated information. In the field of *Mobility and Co-operation within the Community*, the LC considered questions such as academic recognition, admission procedures for students from other member countries, mobility of research students and staff members in order to promote scientific co-operation.

With the introduction of the Framework Program for Research and Technology Development in 1984 and the ERASMUS mobility program for higher education in 1987, universities in Community countries were meeting new challenges. The coordination of university interests through the Liaison Committee became increasingly important.

As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, the Liaison Committee and CRE formulated a joint statement to the European Commission on the Commission's 1991 *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community*. Following this, a number of opinions concerning specific aspects of university life in Europe were formulated in conjunction with CRE for the Commission: Europeanisation of research, development of institutional networks, support policies for Central and Eastern European universities and management training for university executive heads with respect to internationalisation of teaching and research.

#### 2.1.1 European Doctorate (1991)

In 1991, a Liaison Committee meeting adopted four criteria to underpin a European Doctorate based on agreement between the institutions involved, on their own terms. These criteria are still in active use:

The PhD thesis defence will be accorded if at least two professors from two higher education institutions of two European countries, other than the one where the thesis is defended, have given their review of the manuscript;

At least one member of the jury should come from a higher education institution in another European country, other than the one, where the thesis is defended;

A part of the defence must take place in one of the official languages, other than the one(s) of the country, where the thesis is defended;

The thesis must partly have been prepared as a result of a research period of at least one trimester spent in another European Country.

## 2.2 The Liaison Committee 1993

The single market was launched in January 1993 and in November the treaty of Maastricht came into force. The new treaty was generally welcomed by the Liaison Committee, as it provided, for the first time, a legal framework for EC initiatives in the field of higher education. In December 1993, a White Paper presented by the President of the Commission, Jaques Delors, incorporated education among the areas to secure growth, competitiveness and employment in the years to come.

For the Liaison Committee, the year 1993 marked the change from a loose discussion club of rectors into a professionally managed, efficient and effective body representing the interests of the European universities.

The 1993 Action Programme covered a wide range of activities:

- Organisation of the Academic Year;
- EC Research Policy;
- Memorandum on Higher Education;
- EC Mobility Programmes;
- Quality Assessment;
- Open and Distance Learning;
- Co-operation between University and Industry;
- ECTS.

The Annual Report <sup>20</sup> expressed that the LC could be proud of its achievements in 1993:

- the inclusion of the EFTA Rectors Conferences in the LC as *associate members*;
- greater involvement of the Member Conferences in the general work of the LC;
- increased co-operation among the Member Conferences and between Member Conferences and the LC Secretariat;
- starting separate meetings for the Secretaries General of the Member Conferences;
- presence and participation of LC representatives in conferences and seminars;
- a better functioning of the LC Secretariat and its stronger presence in Brussels;
- increased dialogue and consultations with the EC institutions;
- in co-operation with CRE, the Liaison Committee was now the leading voice of the universities in the European Union.

With the increased activities, the need for administrative support also increased. From 1994, the LC operated its own secretariat in Brussels

## 2.3 From Liaison Committee to Confederation (1995)

At the 57<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Liaison Committee in November 1995, it was decided that the LC should be redefined as *The Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences*, with new statutes and mission statement.<sup>21</sup> The new organisation was launched on 1 January 1996.

According to the statutes, the aims of the Confederation were

- to formulate and represent the common views of its Members in order to influence the policies of the European Union on higher education and research;

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<sup>20</sup> Liaison Committee Annual Report 1993

<sup>21</sup> Liaison Committee Annual Report 1996

- to provide information for its Members on key issues and developments in higher education and research, and related matters;
- to undertake studies and projects mandated by the Assembly.

The Assembly, consisting of representatives of the national rectors' conferences, was to be the forum for consideration and determination of the policies of the Confederation.

## 2.4 The Confederation 1996

The 1996 Annual Report pointed out that areas of importance had been research policies, quality assurance, higher education policies, and reactions to a number of EU policy documents. Research policies, a permanent element on the agenda ever since 1973, concentrated in 1996 on the debates leading up to the future Fifth Framework Program, specifically the need to strengthen the social sciences and the humanities in Community research and to ensure training of young researchers to the highest level. *Ten Statements on Evaluation* were adopted by the Confederation as a general framework for future policies. *Diversification of higher education* was discussed by the Confederation during 1996 and a paper was presented to the annual conference of Directors General of higher education and Presidents of national rectors' conferences.

### 2.4.1 Training of young researchers

A statement by the 58<sup>th</sup> Confederation Assembly in March 1996 pointed out that because of the international character of knowledge and science, young academics should be mobile, not only between universities and research institutes within their national higher education and research system. Moving between national systems would open the possibility of establishing personal networks across national and cultural borders. The statement continued:

The forthcoming differentiation and specialization in knowledge and research and the costs of research will lead to a situation in the future, where no university will be able to provide and finance research within all differentiated fields of academic disciplines. To ensure their competitiveness, universities will have to develop specific profiles. As a consequence, young academics will have to move between institutions to become acquainted with different specialties, methodologies and equipment.

Organisational and structural measures to improve education and training of young academics have to respect the different scientific and academic cultures of different disciplines. Nevertheless, young academics are expected to spend at least half a year during their postgraduate training period in another country. The exchange of young academics should be encouraged and intensified within networks of universities and research institutes.

The period spent in a foreign institution is recommended to be an integral part of the training of PhD students and should also provide input to the preparation of the PhD thesis. This can lead to closer co-operation between institutions in different countries. Researchers who have participated in the postgraduate training should act as peers in the assessment of the PhD thesis.

Universities are encouraged to accept the PhD thesis in languages different from the national language, when academics from the country in question are willing to act as peers.

In its statement relating to the Fifth RTD Framework Programme, the 69<sup>th</sup> Confederation Assembly in October 1999 once more underlined the importance of this topic:

Training of young researchers at European level remains a Confederation top priority. Measures have been taken within the current Framework Programme and this is a welcome change. Mobility and networking are ways to enhance science not solely at an abstract level by giving access to facilities and infrastructures, but also at a personal level for individual researchers, thus provided with an added value which improves their research potential.

## 2.5 Harmonizing higher education systems in Europe? (1998)

At the Sorbonne in May 1998, the Ministers of Education from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed a joint declaration on harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system, *the Sorbonne Declaration*:<sup>22</sup>

We owe our students, and our society at large, a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence. An open European area for higher learning carries a wealth of positive perspectives. A system, in which two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge.

At both undergraduate and graduate level, students would be encouraged to spend at least one semester in universities outside their own country. More teaching and research staff should be working in European countries other than their own. A convention, recognizing higher education qualifications within Europe, was agreed on last year in Lisbon<sup>23</sup>. Standing by these conclusions, one can build on them and go further.

Progressive harmonization of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles can be achieved through strengthening of already existing experience, joint diplomas, pilot initiatives, and dialogue with all concerned.

This started a process involving Ministries and organisations, leading to the follow-up conference in Bologna the following year and the Bologna Process. The Confederation President made a statement relating to the Sorbonne Declaration at the meeting of Directors General and Heads of Rectors' Conferences in October 1998:<sup>24</sup>

“The Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System has found our highest attention and we welcome that ministers have taken the initiative to draw public attention not only to the existing obstacles of mobility but also to present ideas and make proposals to cope with these problems.”

“However, the aim and purpose of all efforts and concepts should not be and cannot be harmonization or even uniformity; the key word cannot be equal but must be equivalent. This means that we should concentrate in a concerted action of national governments and Rectors' Conferences – representing the whole range of the universities in the member states of the European Union – on creating a framework for convertibility of credits, intermediate and final exams in undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate and continuing education.”

At the end of his statement, the Confederation President proposed

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<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=80>

<sup>23</sup> The Lisbon Recognition Convention, see [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/default_en.asp)

<sup>24</sup> Statement presented by Hans-Uwe Erichse+n, Vienna 28/29 October 1998

- to establish a working group to deal with an agreement on accreditation results open for joining to all universities;
- to establish a working group developing a framework for mutual recognition of credits;
- to define a European structure of higher education in a concerted action.

Most of this was later realised through the Bologna Process.

Together with CRE, the Confederation was invited to take part in the preparations for the 1999 Bologna Conference. This joint action of the two organisations representing the universities in Europe and the merger that followed in 2001 will be described later (Section 3.1).

## 2.6 The Confederation 2000

Now working closely together, the Confederation and CRE were partners in the follow-up of the Bologna Declaration. By coordinating projects in progress under the agenda of the follow-up to Bologna and by participating actively in the Follow-up Group, the two organisations were very much committed to the Bologna Process and the role to be played by higher education institutions and national rectors' conferences in the construction of the European Area of Higher Education

Key topics of Confederation Assembly meetings in 2000 relating to EU policy matters were:<sup>25</sup>

- The European Research Area;
- Research evaluation;
- Co-operation with non-EU countries;
- Meeting of Directors General for education and Presidents of Rectors' Conferences;
- Follow-up of the Bologna Declaration;
- The Diploma supplement;
- Accreditation;
- Transnational education.

In relation to EU research policy, the Confederation took a pro-active stand by adopting a statement on the future European Union policy on research and development prior to the release of the Commission's communication on *The European Research Area*, later to react to this communication with a detailed and constructive statement. A summary of the Confederation's statement is given below.

### 2.6.1 Towards a European Research Area

The Confederation's statement from May 2000 on this EU communication on research policy has the following summary:

The development of a European research area calls upon all parts of the research community – at EU, national, regional and local levels, in public and private research, by individuals and research organisations. A European research area can only live up to its aims by involving all actors, and can only contribute to the development of economic growth, social cohesion and a knowledge society by incorporating all research disciplines.

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<sup>25</sup> Annual Report 2000 of the Confederation of European Rectors' Conferences

A European research area needs the full scope of research activities at its foundation. The Confederation would like to underline that all research disciplines must form an integral part of any policies towards a European research area. By limiting the scope to a restricted number of disciplines, limitations are created to future possibilities for innovation and economic development.

The universities of Europe have much to contribute to a vision of a European research area. They are places where knowledge is produced, acquired and disseminated within all research disciplines and new disciplines developed. The cross-disciplinary enrichment, the diversity of learning, the training of young researchers, and the regional and local role in the transfer of knowledge – all make universities unique and indispensable centres of knowledge. University researchers have long-standing traditions of international co-operation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, networking and quality care.

A European research area needs to build on experience gained in universities and in particular those of networking, entrepreneurship, regional and local knowledge transfer and co-operation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, internal quality care and quality assurance at institutional level, training of researchers.

The Confederation strongly supports the general idea of establishing a European research area and sees it as a good and relevant policy initiative. The Confederation shall be happy to contribute to this process.

### **2.6.2 The Confederation membership**

The membership of the Liaison Committee and later the Confederation had grown with the expansion of the European Community and the European Union. From 1993, rectors' conferences in EFTA countries participated as associate members. In 2000, there were 15 members and 9 associate members, now also from EU candidate countries.<sup>26</sup> The national rectors' conferences could look back on a useful co-operation through the Confederation.

For 28 years the rectors' conferences met regularly to discuss policy matters relating to higher education and research. With the launching of the RTD Framework Programmes and the successful implementation of the ERASMUS Programme in higher education, the possibility for the rectors' conferences to coordinate their policies through the Confederation was essential. At home, the rectors' conferences discussed the new programmes in their own assemblies and with representatives for Government and Parliament. Sometimes, but certainly not always, it would be possible to win an argument, not only in one country, but perhaps in several. This could in the next phase influence discussions when national bureaucrats and politicians met in Brussels for the final decisions. This was an important supplement to the regular meetings that was established between the Confederation and the Director Generals responsible for higher education in the EU/EFTA countries and the direct approach of the Confederation towards the European Commission.

It was also gradually building an understanding and trust between the different parties that in the next phase should be important for the development of the Bologna Process.

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<sup>26</sup> Annual Report 2000 of the Confederation of European Rectors' Conferences

### 3 Joining forces: European Association of Universities

The Confederation had since its early beginnings as the Liaison Committee acted as a political lobby for the universities vis-à-vis the authorities of the European Community and later the Union. As the EU programs in research and higher education not only continued to grow during the 1990s, but also were widening out to include co-operation with non-EU countries in Eastern Europe, not only the Confederation, but also CRE got more and more involved in EU policy and in the programs for institutional collaboration and for mobility of students and staff. Both organisations were representing the same European universities. There was an increasing need for coordination of CRE and Confederation activities.

The political will was present in both organisations. However, it took time to sort out the formalities. Both internally and externally there was an increasing pressure for merger. At the May 1999 CRE conference in Bordeaux, the French Minister of Education, Claude Allègre, called on universities to take the initiative in organising the European academic area:<sup>27</sup>

“While impetus and regulations are the problems of governments, the key players will be the university presidents and rectors... This means that you require a European organisation of rectors and presidents, which becomes a strong, permanent and unified structure... a solid organisation so that you can move forward, grow closer, discuss the problems encountered, and thus become a spur to governments by condemning absurd restrictive regulations and calling for increased resources to support exchanges. And you will also make progress on an important issue for scientific and cultural Europe when you originate European projects in the area of research.”

At this time, CRE and the Confederation were already working with governments to prepare the Ministerial Conference that one month later started the Bologna Process.

#### 3.1 Bologna 1999

##### 3.1.1 The Trends Project

On the basis of the 1998 Sorbonne declaration and the proposed follow-up conference to be held in Bologna, the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities (CRE) proposed a project to outline and overview the learning structures in higher education in EU Member States and associate countries. The project included a comparative analysis of the different systems embodying these structures, reflected in recognition measures and accreditation procedures.<sup>28</sup> The project had a budget totalling 100 000 ECU, the EU Commission was asked to cover 70 000 ECU.

The two organisations claimed to be centrally placed to undertake the work envisaged: The Confederation had as its members the rectors' conferences of the EU Member States and a number of associate members from EEA and CEE states; the rectors' conferences representing national systems in higher education. Via the secretaries general of the member conferences, the Confederation had direct access to considerable amounts of information on higher education structures in the member countries which could be made immediately available to the project. The CRE members were individual universities spread through Europe, including EEA and CEE countries. CRE had also undertaken several studies among member universities on themes relevant to the project.

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<sup>27</sup> CRE Mid-Term Report (1998-2000)

<sup>28</sup> Project plan proposed by the Confederation and CRE, October 1998

It was argued that the involvement of the rectors' conferences and the universities in the preparation of the Bologna Conference – and their participation in the Conference – would contribute to mobilize agents of change in the higher education community and give visibility to the policy of convergence proposed in the European Union.

The project was supported by the EU Commission, the data collection and the comparative analysis processes were started in late 1998. The Trends Report <sup>29</sup> was presented at the Bologna Conference in June 1999.

The survey of existing structures showed an extreme complexity and diversity of curricular and degree structures in European countries. The Sorbonne Declaration had recommended that studies should be organised in an undergraduate and a graduate cycle, but did not provide an indication of their duration. The debate that followed focussed on a possible European model with 3 main levels of qualifications requiring 3, 5 or 8 years of study. This model became one of the building stones in the Bologna Process.

Another important contribution by the Trends Report was the recommendation of an enhanced European dimension in quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation.

The 1999 Trends Report was to be the first of such reports prepared by EUA for Ministerial Conferences in the Bologna process.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.1.2 The Bologna Conference

Representatives of CRE and the Confederation had been asked to participate in the steering group for the Ministerial Conference to be held in Bologna on 18-19 June 1999. The idea was that the first day should be an “academic day”; the second day would have a separate session for the Ministers to finalize the Declaration from the conference and a plenary session to conclude. Representatives for the university system were invited according to nominations by CRE and the Confederation. Representatives from all national rectors' conferences were invited. Thus the university sector was broadly represented in Bologna: of a total of 250 participants, some 150 came from the higher education sector, the ministerial delegations totalled 50.

Presentation of the Trends Report was a central element in the program for the first day, together with a presentation by the Confederation President on *The Challenges of a European Higher Education Space*.<sup>31</sup> He pointed out that higher education is a responsibility not only governments, but also of universities. Many universities had signed the Magna Charta Universitatum on the occasion of the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Bologna. That Magna Charta confirmed the autonomy and freedom of the university. The recent Confederation Assembly had underlined that the shaping and structuring of the future European Higher Education Space also was a responsibility of the higher education institutions. Thus, higher education institutions had to play a role in developing a concept for the European Space of Higher Education and implementing it.

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<sup>29</sup> Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein, *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education*, June 1999

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=87>

<sup>31</sup> Statement presented by Hans-Uwe Erichsen, Bologna Forum, 18 June 1999 1998

Also the CRE President had a central role in the program, reporting on the first day's discussions to the Ministers, before they sat down to finalize the declaration that started the Bologna Process.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.1.3 The Bologna Declaration

The footprints of university representatives in the Bologna Declaration can easily be seen:

European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education, also in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that Universities' independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge.

There was full agreement between ministerial and university representatives concerning the objectives of the follow-up:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees.
- Adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate.
- Establishment of a system of credits as a proper means of promoting student mobility.
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the exercise of free movement.
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance.
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education

However, there was also an obligation for the universities: Ministers expected universities *to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of the endeavour.*

When a Follow-Up Group was established for the Bologna Process, the Confederation and CRE were invited to participate. The need to speak with one voice on behalf of the European universities was now absolute, but some time was still needed to straighten out the formalities of a merger.

## 3.2 Founding the European University Association (2001)

The merger was finally realised when the Constitutive Assembly of the European University Association met in Salamanca, 31 March 2001.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2.1 Mission and policy statement of EUA

EUA, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe.

EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research, through active support and guidance to its members in their development of the quality of teaching, learning and research and in enhancing their contributions to society.

With reference to its aims, as contained in the Articles of Association, and to its Salamanca Message of March 2001, EUA will focus its policies and service to members on the creation of a European area for higher education and research.

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<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=80>

<sup>33</sup> Minutes, Constitutive General Assembly of the EUA, Salamanca, 31 March 2001

### 3.2.2 The Salamanca Message: Shaping the European Higher Education Area

At the Salamanca Convention the European higher education institutions confirmed their support to the principles of the Bologna Declaration and their commitment to the creation of the European Higher Education Area.<sup>34</sup> The Salamanca Message describes the principles and key issues as seen from the university system. The principles are referred below in a slightly shortened form:

#### *Autonomy with accountability*

Progress requires that European universities be empowered to act in line with the guiding principle of autonomy with accountability. As autonomous and responsible legal, educational and social entities, they confirm their adhesion to the principles of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 and, in particular, academic freedom. Thus, universities have to be able to shape their strategy, choose their priorities in teaching and research, allocate their resources, profile their curricula and set their criteria for the acceptance of professors and students. European higher education institutions accept the challenges of operating in a competitive environment at home, in Europe and in the world, but to do so they need the necessary managerial freedom, less rigid regulatory frameworks and fair financing.

#### *Education as a public responsibility*

The European Higher Education Area must be built on the European traditions of education as a public responsibility; of broad and open access to undergraduate as well as graduate studies; of education for personal development; and of citizenship as well as social relevance.

#### *Research-based higher education*

As research is a driving force of higher education, the creation of the European Higher Education Area must go hand in hand with that of the European Research Area.

#### *Organising diversity*

European higher education is characterised by its diversity in terms of languages, national systems, institutional types and profiles and curricular orientation. At the same time its future depends on its ability to organise this valuable diversity to effectively produce positive outcomes. Higher education institutions wish to build on convergence and to deal with diversity as assets, rather than as reasons for non-recognition or exclusion.

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salamanca\\_declaration\\_en.1066755820788.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salamanca_declaration_en.1066755820788.pdf)

## 4 Working together under the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949. Culture was a part of its activities from the start, and education as a central part of culture. In 1954, the *European Cultural Convention*<sup>35</sup> came into force as a basis for co-operation in the cultural field, including education.

In the field of higher education, several conventions were developed in the early years: On the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953), On the Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1956), On the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications (1959).<sup>36</sup>

This work was of course very relevant, not only for university rectors looking for a partner for their Standing Conference (CRE), as mentioned previously, but also for Ministers of Education.

### 4.1 From the Western European Union to the Council of Europe

A first European Conference of Ministers of Education had been organised in 1959 under the auspices of the Western European Union with seven Ministers attending, but as the rectors, the ministers saw the possibility for a broader collaboration under the European Cultural Convention.

However, the Ministers of Education did not wish to be formally linked with an intergovernmental organisation steered by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Still, they were supported by the Council's secretariat, they could influence on the Council's priorities. Projects might be financed by means of the Council of Europe's Cultural Fund. This was a pragmatic and – at least at first glance – also an efficient solution.

The ministers, having heard from the university rectors meeting in Dijon, had a clear message to the Council of Europe *On the future of the Committee of European Universities*:<sup>37</sup>

The Conference of Ministers, after having examined the conclusions of the Conference of Rectors of the European Universities and of the government officials held in Dijon, recommends the setting up, within the Council of Europe, of a consultative council for university problems.

The European council should be composed of two representatives from each country, to be designated by governments, one of them on the recommendation of the national universities.

The European council should be the sole consultative body in the field of university education and university research, available to governments and international organisations. This body should facilitate co-operation between European nations in this field.

In 1960, the Council of Europe took over responsibility for the work of the former Universities Committee of the WEU and set up in its place a Committee for Higher Education and Research, composed of university rectors and vice-chancellors on one hand (the CRE Permanent Committee) and senior civil servants on the other, to advice governments on policies in this field.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/018.htm>

<sup>36</sup> <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeTraites.asp?CM=8&CL=ENG>

<sup>37</sup> 1959 Conference of European Ministers of Education

## 4.2 Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education

When European Ministers of Education met for a third time in 1963, now they were sixteen, they decided to meet regularly.

In their sessions, ministers discussed many topics related to universities and to university problems, such as

- the equivalence of degrees;
- teaching of modern languages;
- the role of the humanities;
- European science policy;
- planning and investment in education;
- problems of student admission to universities.

Each conference resulted in a number of resolutions.<sup>38</sup>

In their 1964 resolution on *Problems of student admission to universities*, the ministers considered that all young people the necessary abilities and school-leaving qualifications should have the possibility of receiving higher education, and that systems of higher education should be progressively expanded to meet the ever-increasing need. Where private means were insufficient, the state should make financial help available, so that those with the necessary ability should not be deprived of the chance of receiving higher education through lack of funds. Access to higher education should be made more readily available to those who had not followed the traditional paths of secondary education. Moreover, in the interests of encouraging exchanges of students between European countries, financial assistance should be made applicable equally in respect pursued in other countries in Europe.

Forty years later, we would call this *the social dimension of higher education*.

At the 6<sup>th</sup> conference in 1969, participation had increased to 21 ministers. The Chairman, the French Minister Edgar Faure; in his opening speech introduced the idea of a European educational community. He wanted more than a committee of ministers.<sup>39</sup> The idea was shot down by the next conference in 1971:

*- while agreeing on the one hand that the autonomy of the Conference should be maintained and on the other hand that its structure and status should not be institutionalised, to emphasise its permanent character by designating it the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education.*

The Ministers of Education continued to meet under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the 22<sup>nd</sup> session was held in 2007. But the Standing Conference of European Ministers has disappeared in the shades of the Bologna Process. Why did not the Standing Conference succeed? One thing was that 1969 was too early for a European educational community. But even for a coordinating committee, a formal structure and status would be needed.

The Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education did not have its own apparatus for support. A sub-committee within the Council of Europe would never have the necessary resources to follow up the ambitions of the Ministers of Education.

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<sup>38</sup> [https://wayback.archive-it.org/1365/20110530013116/http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Cooperation/education/Standing\\_Conferences/](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1365/20110530013116/http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/education/Standing_Conferences/)

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Haigh, *A Ministry of Education for Europe*, G.G.Harrap & Co. 1970

### 4.3 Committee for Higher Education and Research (1960)

As mentioned previously (section 4.1), the Council of Europe took over the responsibility for the work of the former Universities Committee of the WEU in 1960 and set up in its place a Committee for Higher Education and Research, composed of university rectors and vice-chancellors on one hand, and senior civil servants on the other, to advise governments on policies in this field.

Then, in 1962, the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of culture and education were reorganised. At the head of the new structure was a *Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC)*. Under the CCC three permanent committees were established. One was the continuation of the Committee for Higher Education and Research. Committees were also set up for technical and general education and for out-of-school education. Cultural affairs were taken care of by the CCC.

By this reorganisation, the Committee for Higher Education and Research became a sub-committee reporting to the Council of Cultural Co-operation. The CCC reported to the Committee of Ministers (Ministers of Foreign Affairs). There was no formal link to the Ministers of Education. Possibly, the rectors' enthusiasm for the co-operation between the CRE Permanent Committee and the new Council of Europe Committee waned quite soon.

In 1969, CRE decided to continue its work independent of the Council of Europe. However, the Committee of Higher Education and Research continued as a bipartite committee with university representatives and ministerial representatives. University representatives in the Council of Europe Committee were nominated by the national rectors' conferences; many of them would also be active in CRE. The informal links continued to function.

#### 4.3.1 Meeting in a new setting (1962)

After the reorganisation of the Committee for Higher Education and Research as a sub-committee under the CCC, the committee had its first meeting in April 1962. The Chairman, Professor Leussink, reported to the next meeting in the CCC<sup>40</sup>. Professor Leussink was Rector at the University of Karlsruhe and Chairman of the *Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz*. The link to the CRE Permanent Committee was clear.

The CCC took the opportunity of welcoming the co-operation which had been established with university circles through its Committee for Higher Education and Research.

The CCC then considered the draft rules of procedure drawn up by the Committee on the basis of *Rules of Procedure for Committees of Governmental Experts*. After discussion and a slight amendment of these draft rules, the Council decided to transmit them with approval to the Committee of Ministers. The special terms of reference of the Committee would then be:

- to ensure or encourage co-operation between European nations in the field of higher education and research;
- to address opinions and recommendations on problems in this field to European governments and intergovernmental organisations;
- to promote closer relations between universities and European institutions of higher education and research;

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<sup>40</sup> Report, CCC Second Session, May 1962

- to prepare any documentation, carry out any studies and publish any material deemed useful;
- to maintain liaison with international organisations concerned with higher education and research.

The CCC examined the programme proposed by the Committee comprising 13 projects originated by the former Committee for Higher Education and Research (the committee established in 1960), most of which should be completed in the course of 1962, and proposals for new activities to be undertaken in 1963:

*Provisional programme for 1963, Higher education and research*

New activities, including

- conference on problems arising from the founding of new universities;
- conference on the exchange of students for postgraduate study and research.

The continuation or completion of certain current projects

Studies by groups of specialists and by consultant experts on:

- The legal position of higher education in member countries;
- Methods of modern language teaching;
- Model curricula and equivalence of university qualifications;

Publication of reports on:

- Non-university research centres and their links with universities;
- Structure of university staffs;
- Methods of modern language teaching;
- Chemistry curricula in the universities;
- Engineering education.

The comparability of curricula in terms of structures, programmes and actual teaching was taken up again in by the EU Tuning project in 2000.

In view of the amount of time the Committee for Higher Education and Research had necessarily devoted to procedural and administrative matters at its first meeting, the CCC decided to transmit to the Committee of Ministers, the recommendation that the Committee for Higher Education and Research should hold a further session in November 1962 in Karlsruhe, to be devoted to discussion of a limited number of basic questions of university policy and structure. It was understood that the practice of holding two meetings per annum would not become automatic. The request for authorization to hold a meeting in Karlsruhe was taken to the Council of Ministers (Ministers of Foreign Affairs) by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.<sup>41</sup> The bureaucracy of the Council of Europe was doing its work.

The rectors, members of the Committee of Higher Education and Research, may have felt that the distance to the Ministers of Education was long.

#### **4.3.2 Need for a special meeting (1968)**

In May 1968, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe presented another memorandum<sup>42</sup> to the Committee of Ministers, asking for approval for a special meeting of the Committee for Higher Education and Research. The background for this was the student unrest at that time, particularly strong in Paris:

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<sup>41</sup> CoE Memorandum CM (62) 114, 5 June 1962

<sup>42</sup> CoE Memorandum CM (68) 96, 27 May 1968

Since the reorganisation of the cultural sector in 1962 a considerable place in the Work Programme has been allocated to the problem of adjusting universities to the new requirements of modern society and work has begun on the following subjects:

Examinations systems, courses of study, university staff structure, role of universities in drawing up courses of study, diversification of post-school education, etc.

What has been happening in many universities in CCC member countries demonstrates the urgent need for the subject to be reviewed by a competent European body in order to decide whether the CCC programme ought not to be revised in the light of the new situation and whether a higher priority and additional funds should not be allocated to this work.

The CCC Committee on Higher Education and Research, consisting of university rectors and senior government officials in charge of higher education, is the only European body with any competence in the matter. It might be thought that to wait until the autumn meeting (October 1968) to discuss the situation and to revise the programme if need be would not be in line with the functions of the CCC, which itself will be meeting in September.

Accordingly, I think it would be advisable to convene a special meeting the Committee for two days early in July. The Chairman of the Permanent Conference of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities, with which the DECS co-operates and who attends meetings of the Committee for Higher Education and Research as a member of the Swiss delegation, has expressed his keen interest in holding a special meeting.

True, the CCC programme embraces only some of the problems that are facing the world as youth seeks to adapt itself to an industrialised society. But the meeting it is proposed to hold would at least give members of the Committee an opportunity to express an opinion on the immediate problem.

There is no record of a meeting of the Committee of Higher Education and Research between its 17<sup>th</sup> meeting in March 1968 and the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in October 1968.

#### **4.3.3 Relations to the Consultative Assembly (1964, 1969, 1970)**

Within the Council of Europe, also the Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians, later known as the Parliamentary Assembly, would be discussing matters related to higher education and research in its Committee on Culture and Education. There was no direct relation to the Committee for Higher Education and Research, but a reporting of activities between the committees. As a number of documents related to the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly can be found in the digital collections of the Council of Europe's Central Archives,<sup>43</sup> this also sheds some light on the early activities of the Committee for Higher Education and Research.

At the July 1964 meeting of the Scientific Sub-committee of the Cultural and Scientific Committee, the Head of the Division for Higher Education and Research was invited to give the Sub-Committee a general picture of "his" Committee's activities, describing the progress made with the projects in hand and prospects for the future.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> <http://coe.archivalware.co.uk/awweb/main.jsp?itype=adv&menu=on>

<sup>44</sup> Minutes, Scientific Sub-Committee, August 1964

He reported that the programme of the Committee for Higher Education and Research was based on the idea that the development of a community of European universities and the raising of the standard of research through European inter-university cooperation represented an essential contribution to a European science policy. The accent was placed on the need for an ever-increasing mobility of persons and ideas. The programme was composed mainly of three broad fields of actions: Curricula and equivalence, Co-operation between universities, and Comparative studies on subjects relating to structures and higher education policy.

The comparative studies included major problems of common concern:

- Expansion of higher education;
- Criteria and types of higher education;
- Admission, selection and supervision of students;
- Place of research in the university and links with extra-university research;
- University staffing structure;
- Responsibility of universities as regards curricula, examinations and equivalence;
- Academic freedoms.

At the meeting of the Committee for Higher Education and Research in October 1969, the rapporteur from the Committee on Culture and Education<sup>45</sup> drew the attention to two closely linked problems: the Europeanisation of national universities, and the possible creation of a European university. He recalled the initiatives of the Committee on Culture and Education and those of the European Parliament in this direction, but he also quoted a recent declaration by the French Minister of Education on the creation of a European centre for the development of education within the framework of the Six. He appealed to member states of the Council for Cultural Co-operation to collaborate in constituting a European university community, on as wide a geographical basis as possible and incorporating the European University. (The final outcome was the European University Institute, founded by the Six in 1972.)

At the September 1970 meeting of the Consultative Assembly Committee on Culture and Education it was reported on the work by the Committee for Higher Education and Research related to university exchanges.<sup>46</sup> It had adopted:

- (i) a recommendation in favour of the free movement of university staff (1965),
- (ii) a recommendation on the mobility of students (1965) in which it requested:
  - (a) that member countries should consider to what extent and on what practical basis students without degrees could be encouraged to study abroad;
  - (b) that in such cases, national scholarships should continue to be paid and should be adjusted to the actual cost of living in the foreign country;
- (iii) an agreement on the payment of national, scholarships to students continuing their studies abroad (1969).

Although the three international conventions mentioned above had been ratified by the great majority of member states, it was nevertheless plain that official comparability and legal equivalence of qualifications depended on effective equivalence of studies. It was this fact which had prompted the Committee on Higher Education and Research to undertake a series of studies of the curricula in the various subjects taught at European universities,

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<sup>45</sup> Minutes, Committee on Culture and Education, Dec.1969

<sup>46</sup> Minutes, Committee on Culture and Education, September 1970

see subsection 4.3.1. The lack of common university curricula was seen to be directly relevant to the problems related to the recognition of degrees and certificates.

#### 4.3.4 The 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee (1973)

The main items on the agenda of the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee for Higher Education and Research in April 1973 were referred in an information memorandum to the Consultative Assembly Committee on Culture and Education.<sup>47</sup>

##### *Establishment of a system of equivalences*

The Committee had noted that bilateral agreements existed in this matter, but, in common with the experts who had examined the subject, came to the conclusion that it would be very difficult to achieve multilateral agreements. Equivalence of diplomas was an academic concept which necessitated comparisons involving both objective data and subjective factors. In short, to establish a system of this kind would inevitably be a slow and laborious task. The real need, however, was not to work out mathematical equivalences but to facilitate the mobility of students and teachers.

What was required was to eradicate obstacles due to nationality and promote the following two objectives among the European, countries:

1. authorisation to carry on an occupation;
2. recognition of studies for the purpose of a university interchange.

The former objective would be furthered by the realisation of the latter, but that was a political matter. The latter objective did, however, directly concern the Committee, as recognition must cover not only diplomas awarded but also courses followed.

##### *Numerus clausus and admission to higher education*

The memorandum indicated that admission to higher education was a subject that aroused considerable interest in many circles. Misunderstandings, illusions and even demagogic statements had been plentiful in this matter, as most people knew little about its implications, such as a sound assessment of the qualities required for successfully completing a given course, or the opportunities for reaching a desired position, or the strength of a university degree. Higher education should not be depicted as making university culture available to everyone, as students might regard it as the means of reaching the most esteemed and highly paid positions in society. A conflict might arise between the "university for the masses" and the "university for the intellectual elite". It would be dishonest to tell young people: "We have urged you on to higher education for the sole purpose of improving your general culture; but as there are not enough jobs to enable you to use this education, go and learn a trade as best you can". (It is not clear if this was the opinion of the committee or the opinion of the rapporteur.)

##### *Foreign students*

The memorandum reported that the Committee for Higher Education and Research agreed that foreigners should be treated in the same way as national students, the only special requirement being a familiarity with the language. It was felt; however, that allowance should be made for the specific situation in students' home countries: if those countries did not have equivalent institutions, their students should be admitted on a priority basis. Moreover, they should not be encouraged to undertake studies leading to overcrowded professions that were subject to a numerus clausus in their home countries. Lastly, these countries should not be

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<sup>47</sup> Information memorandum by Mr. J. Chapelle, May 1973

required to pay any special contributions towards the cost of their nationals' studies, since the host country frequently derived publicity beneficial to its trade and economy from the situation. In the case of a "brain drain", it was rather the recipient country that should compensate the country of origin.

#### 4.3.5 The 34<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee (1976)

The 34th meeting of the Council of Europe Committee for Higher Education and Research was held in November 1976. A review, based on the CoE meeting report, was printed in the journal *Higher Education in Europe*.<sup>48</sup> The main themes discussed were:

- the current situation and trends in tertiary education;
- the recognition of degrees and diplomas;
- the future existence of the Committee for Higher Education and Research;
- the current situation and trends in university research;
- the teaching of human rights;
- mobility of higher education staff and students;
- the future programme of the Committee.

The French Secretary of State for the Universities, reporting on higher education and research in France, underlined the importance of the diversification of higher education, permanent education, and a liberal policy of admissions to higher education institutions. She also drew attention to the following questions concerning the French higher education system:

- the enormous student enrolment;
- the need for the French universities to learn to use their new autonomy, granted in 1968;
- the rather high dropout rates (two thirds in the first cycle of higher education);
- the unbalanced distribution of students (one third in arts subjects);
- the need for improving guidance and counselling;
- too few students and many dropouts in University Institutes of Technology (IUTs);
- many IUT graduates to go on to university courses instead of entering the labour market;
- the rigid elitism practised by the Grandes Ecoles;
- the need for curriculum reform and adapting curricula to the needs of the labour market;
- the importance of fundamental research in the universities;
- the development of international university relations, in particular by way of university partnership agreements and greater mobility of students and staff.

With regard to the problem of international recognition of degrees, the importance of the ongoing work of the Committee on this subject was underlined. At the same time, concern was expressed that although the problem of recognition was an important one, it should not be allowed to conceal the more fundamental uncertainty that existed over the role of degrees and diplomas in education and in working life as a whole.

In the discussion on the present situation of and trends in university research, the following comments were made:

- the university as an institution, and research as an activity are inseparable, no matter how individual countries see the combination of teaching and research in practical detail;

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<sup>48</sup> Higher Education in Europe, 1:2, 6-8 (1976)

- the present shortage of public funds creates problems for research;
- it is essential that a considerable part of university research be fundamental research, and not dedicated to immediately profitable applications or social or political relevance;
- national policies on the financing of research should be determined by a plurality of bodies;
- academic staff should have a predominant influence in the allocation of research funds.

With regard to the mobility of staff and students, the Committee expressed the opinion that attempts should be made at the highest level in order to co-ordinate the various activities of international organisations in favour of greater mobility, and suggested that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe might take steps in this direction.

In the discussion on the future programme of the Committee it was pointed out that there was a wide range of newly emerging problems, such as the consequences for higher education of present financial constraints, or the role of universities with regard to new groups of students.

#### 4.3.6 Focusing on university research (1977)

The 35th meeting of the Committee for Higher Education and Research was held in May 1977. The main theme for the meeting was *University research*. A review, based on the formal report of the meeting, was printed in the journal *Higher Education in Europe*.<sup>49</sup> At this meeting, the Committee discussed the situation of and trends in university research based on a number of country reports, drawing attention to the following developments and making the following recommendations:

- the organisation of university research was changing in that the research worker increasingly had to programme his activities as part of a team and according to the needs of modern research management. Management should be such as to encourage an atmosphere which stimulated and challenged the scientific capabilities of the individual research worker;
- in most CCC countries, the financial situation of university research had deteriorated in the last five years. This meant that universities had to establish closer links with outside organisations, soliciting additional funds and accepting more commissioned research;
- the quality of university research was endangered by the growing administrative and teaching burden placed on staff by the growth of mass higher education;
- research planning at university level should not be left to individual units but should be coordinated by a policy developed within the university with established priorities and medium-term aims;
- research workers of the higher education institutions should be involved in research planning as much as possible;
- a balance must be kept between autonomous university research and research which is geared to social and economic needs within national research planning;
- the question of dialogue and co-operation between universities and other parts of society must be examined in order to convince other sectors of the need for greater support for basic university research in the national interest.

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<sup>49</sup> Higher Education in Europe, 2:6, 3-4, (1977)

#### 4.4 Standing Conference on University Problems (1978)

The Council of Cultural Co-operation (CCC) had been in operation since 1962 with the purpose of elaborating and executing the cultural programme (including education) of the Council of Europe. From 1978 it was reorganised as a steering committee (CDCC) and the Committee on Higher Education and Research came out of this reorganisation as an ad hoc committee of experts entitled the *Standing Conference on University Problems (CC-PU)*, working under the authority of the CDCC.<sup>50</sup> The mandate was

- to ensure and encourage co-operation among European nations in the areas of higher education and university research;
- to promote relations among universities and institutions of higher education and research.

The work of the committee (conference) did not change much as a consequence of the new formal setting.

The first meeting of CC-PU was held in December 1978.<sup>51</sup> The rector of the University of Lausanne was elected as its Chairman. Issues discussed were the promotion of student mobility and the interrelations between employment and training.

Based on the conclusions of the Expert Group on Academic Mobility and Equivalence of Diplomas, publication of a *Handbook for Foreign Students* was proposed. The meeting saw co-operation between the national information centres as important and expressed hope for a European network of information centres. The follow-up of this work was reflected in a recommendation concerning the situation of foreign students from the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (the Ministers of Foreign Affairs). The main points of this recommendation are referred below.

In the context of employment and training, problems of unemployment prospects for graduates and proposals for a better adaptation of the tertiary education system to the needs of society were discussed. Analysis of the different national reports showed that the problem of unemployment varied from non-existent to considerable. Measures taken to improve relations between education and the labour market varied as well. In any case, statistics had to be improved in order to better define “graduate unemployment”. The study of graduate unemployment should in any case be combined with studies on the causes of unsatisfactory adaptation of educational measures to real life demands.

##### 4.4.1 Recommendation concerning the situation of foreign students (1984)

In general, students should be encouraged to spend periods of study abroad, depending upon the course of study. Special encouragement should be given to any study abroad being planned and agreed by the institutions concerned as part of an integrated course or joint study programme. As far as possible, where fees are payable, foreign students should not be required to pay higher fees than those applied to national students.<sup>52</sup>

Where appropriate, every effort should be made to establish or increase financial support for students wishing to study abroad in order to promote mobility. To overcome the obstacles and the problems facing foreign students in their daily life,

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<sup>50</sup> Conclusions of the 280th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, Dec. 1977

<sup>51</sup> Higher Education in Europe, 4:2, 32-33 (1979)

<sup>52</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation R (84) 13 concerning the situation of foreign students

reception services should be set up, for effective reception, assistance, accommodation and guidance.

Updated information on studies abroad should be furnished by competent authorities of each state; it should be distributed and supplemented by specialised departments in each university. The Council of Europe network of national mobility information centres should be put in a position to play an important role.

A special admission policy for students from developing countries favouring the needs of those countries should be encouraged. Such students should in general first complete university studies in their own country before embarking on professional specialisation in foreign countries. Where students from developing countries have reasons for pursuing full degree courses abroad, these courses should, if possible, take account of the problems and needs of the developing countries.

Foreign nationals, who have been granted the status of refugees under the 1951 Geneva Convention in a state, should be treated as a national of that state as far as access to universities is concerned, and, where necessary, special help should be given to acquire an adequate command of the language and to reach the required academic level.

In the field of student mobility, much has been realised over the thirty years following this recommendation. The EU mobility programmes have been instrumental in increasing the number of exchange students; the national ENIC/NARIC centres play an important role in the exchange of information. The Bologna Process has followed up on the principles, but in most countries, non-EU students are required to pay higher fees than national students. Many countries have followed up the recommendation concerning students from developing countries. However, coping with the large increase in refugees and refugee students is no easy task.

#### **4.4.2 Recommendation on mobility of academic staff (1985)**

In 1985, the Committee of Ministers recommended governments of member states to take account, in their policies affecting universities, of the principles set out below:<sup>53</sup>

Throughout Europe it should be possible in principle to fill the posts occupied by professors and other academic staff members at universities with foreigners, without requiring the latter to give up their nationality. In such cases formal controls and measures under the laws governing aliens should be eased. Furthermore, access to a university position should not be hindered by pension scheme problems.

To encourage teaching and research the universities should have the right to recruit foreign academics as visiting professors or visiting lecturers for fixed periods in the appropriate disciplines and subjects. Moreover, it should be possible to recruit foreign academics for from one week to several months to hold paid lectures and series of lectures and for research. Such staff may also, if it is appropriate for the local audience and if the respective departments agree, use their mother tongue for teaching purposes.

Universities should be in a position to make sure that resources are available to support visiting professors or visiting lecturers and for other research, teaching and lecturing activities carried out by foreign academics. It should be ensured that the necessity for expenditure on guest academics is recognised in principle and that the supervising authorities make serious efforts to make available the necessary funds.

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<sup>53</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation R (85) 21 on mobility of academic staff

In each country academic staff should be entitled to paid study leave or research leave abroad after a specific number of years of teaching.

Where practicable, professors and other academics should be able to take leave for limited periods of time without pay or with part-pay for teaching and research activities at universities. Regarding salary levels, seniority and pension rights, it should be possible to retain membership in the national pension scheme during the periods of leave for activities abroad.

To the extent that unpaid leave is not possible for legal reasons, in specific cases it should be possible to give younger academics an assurance that they will be allowed to return to their former or to a comparable position in their home country on the conclusion of a fixed period of academic activity abroad.

To the extent that specific additional costs occurring during the stay of professors and academics at foreign universities cannot be met from normal university funds or other funds, the provision of the necessary resources for instance from central national funds would be helpful and effective.

It should be examined whether essentially uniform principles can be applied in each country concerning the tax treatment of fellowships and other payments rendering periods of work abroad possible.

Thirty years later, formal barriers for hiring foreign academics have more or less disappeared. Within the European Economic Area, immigration no longer poses a problem and tax treatment has been simplified by bilateral agreements. However, the possibility for retaining membership in a national social security and pension scheme while working at a foreign university; is as difficult today as it was thirty years ago.

#### **4.4.3 Financing of Universities (1989)**

In September 1989, the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Culture and Education through its Sub-Committee on University Questions held a colloquy on the financing of universities. The Standing Conference on University Problems (CC-PU) had joined the Sub-committee in organising the colloquy, hosted by the University of Barcelona and presided over by its Rector, Professor Bricall, a later CRE President. Dr Fischer-Appelt, President of the University of Hamburg and Chairman of CC-PU, was General Rapporteur.<sup>54</sup>

The colloquy was opened by Professor Bricall, who welcomed the participants. He thanked the Council of Europe for its initiative in organising the colloquy. He recalled his involvement with Mr Nunez, Chairman of the Assembly Sub-Committee on University Questions, in drafting the Magna Carta of European Universities which was proclaimed in spring 1987 at the University of Bologna. That was the origin of the present colloquy.

(These lines from the minutes of the meeting illustrate the close contacts between university leaders central in CRE and the Council of Europe. Some of them represented different organisations at different times.)

At the end of the colloquy, the General Rapporteur presented his conclusions:

Discussion on the missions and means of the university had shown that "university" meant different things for different people.

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<sup>54</sup> Minutes, Colloquy on the financing of universities, September 1989

The tasks of vice-chancellors, rectors, and university directors were a good point of entry into the question of the university's self-understanding. These included management and administration, planning, integration (between different departments), public relations and representation and conceptual aspects. Whereas management and planning were directly related with financing, all other tasks had also some degree of financial implications.

A distinction should be made between the different functions of the university. Its basic objective was education, but vocational training, research and provision of services were also important. The university was undergoing a transition to adapt to a new society and should remain autonomous and independent from the state and from religious or political authorities, a difficult task to achieve. University organs should have the power to decide and be responsible for their decisions. The university should not be run as an industry but as a parliament.

For the last 130 years the number of students in the universities of Western Europe had doubled every 22 years. This trend was now at an end but attendance figures would not fall as the demographic decrease would be compensated by the widening of the age bracket of those attending university.

The various missions of the university could be seen as somewhat contradictory but education should remain its basic function and should determine the size and scope of its financing. For the last 15 years priority had been given to financing research in selected fields and this situation had created some tension inside the institutions. Research should not be financed at the expense of the educational aspect.

The ultimate responsibility in university financing should continue to lie upon the public authorities whether central or regional (as was the case in Spain and Germany) and in some countries a global review might be necessary of the allocation of money from public taxes. Private financing of university activities had emerged as an alternative in the last few years. Higher education in the United States was however organised differently, reflecting its origins in the community, and therefore was not a good example for Europe, where the internal structures of institutions did not make private funding easy (one of the participants had recalled the old antagonism between science and industry). The promotion of international exchanges and co-operation was much more developed in the industry sector than in the university; private foundations were particularly important in helping the university develop its international dimension. State regulations and internal constraints of management time and resources often inhibited universities from developing private-sector links or reallocating resources.

The personal view of the rapporteur was that universities in Europe faced a financial crisis. The need to democratise higher education probably implied recourse to new sources of financing, but this was highly controversial. In any case, the mission of the university was of a public nature and therefore should be financed by the entire society.

Mr Nunez MP, Spain, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on University Questions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, recalled the two reasons that had led the Sub-Committee to put the theme of the present colloquy in its agenda already two years ago. First there was a concern at the clear drop in the public financing of universities and second the world was at a turning point, becoming more scientific and technological, and parliamentarians felt it was the right moment to reassess the role of the university.

The Council of Europe's Standing Conference on University Problems (CC-PU) had joined the Sub-Committee in organising the present colloquy and as OECD was already doing work in the same field it was only normal to associate it with the activity.

The conclusions of the colloquy would be helpful to parliamentarians in making proposals for European policies for higher education. Throughout its three days the debate had corresponded to the title of the colloquy insofar as not only finance matters but also the importance of the university's missions had been stressed, in line with the Magna Charta of European Universities. The close relation between missions and means had been highlighted. The common good and welfare should be always in mind when discussing missions and means of the university. Several challenges had been identified and at different levels. It was clear that public authorities had the responsibility to ensure that the right to higher education was universal. European Members of Parliament present should see that the conclusions of the colloquy were effectively passed on to all levels. The debate had shown the urgent need for an increase of State commitment in the financing of higher education as otherwise restrictive measures (such as *numerus clausus*) would be necessary.

Mr. Nunez observed that the objective of 10% student mobility had not been attained and he urged that European co-operation should increase. A European university space extending to Eastern Europe should be created and a legal framework, including recognition of diplomas and study periods abroad should be set up in order that universities might become the true multinationals of Europe.

#### **4.4.4 Bridging East and West. The LRP programme (1991-2000)**

As the Berlin Wall fell in late 1989, new possibilities opened up also for broader academic co-operation. Although the 1975 attempt by CRE<sup>55</sup> to bridge East and West had failed, contacts between universities had steadily developed ever since. At the 9th CRE General Assembly in September 1989 Eastern European universities were admitted as members or resumed active membership.

The first new democratic states in Eastern Europe – Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland – signed the European Cultural Convention and joined the Council of Europe and the Standing Conference on University Problems in March 1990. The first ideas for consultative assistance in higher education reform and development in Eastern European universities were discussed at a European Conference on *Our Common Cultural Heritage: A Challenge for East-West University Co-operation*. The Conference was sponsored by the CC-PU and held in October 1990 with representatives from all parts of Europe participating.

The first consultative meeting with countries of Eastern Europe took place in September 1991. Within the financial limitations of the Council of Europe, activities regarding policy were given preference over operational programmes. The best option for the Council of Europe was to concentrate on the legislative framework. Doing so would allow the Council to draw on its legal skills and on the expertise of many academic and administrative representatives with experience in higher education legislation, management, and reform, including evaluation, while at the same time avoiding any duplication of other programmes.

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<sup>55</sup> See A.Barblan, reference 1 or P.Nyborg, reference 2

Following the proposals of the consultative meeting, the Secretariat presented an outline, only a week later, for a new regional and multilateral project to be called *Legislative Reform for Higher Education in Eastern and Central Europe*, later called the *Legislative Reform Programme (LRP)*.<sup>56</sup> Between 1991 and 2000, the Council of Europe realised this programme to assist the reform of higher education, particularly through advice on draft legislation, in its new member states in Central and Eastern Europe.

The primary aim of the LRP was to provide support to the processes of legislative reform in higher education and research, as part of the consolidation of democratic regimes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It was also an element in the overall process of transition from centrally planned to social market economies in these countries. It drew on the experience of a network of bilateral East-West university co-operation developed since the 1970s including efforts by CRE and governmental agencies.

The LRP carried out over 70 advisory missions to countries in eastern and south-eastern Europe. During the life-time of the LRP, the changing needs of member states led to significant changes in its profile a gradual shift in geographical focus, and therefore thematic priorities, from Central to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

Advice on higher education legislation contributed to eight first generation laws: higher education acts in Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, and Albania, and laws on education in Romania, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia. Advice on second generation legislation supported sixteen law projects including higher education acts in Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Russia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic, Albania, Lithuania, Belarus, Macedonia, Ukraine, and laws on education in Ukraine and Russia.

The workshops, study visits and publications contributed to the diffusion of good practice in the same way as classic multilateral co-operation. In particular, they helped in the practical establishment of national systems of quality assessment in a number of countries and in the establishment of a new college sector of professional higher education in the central European region. The LRP highlighted the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as a gateway to European co-operation, and made a substantial input to the implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation on Access to higher education.

After 2000, when the LRP programme formally ended, The Higher Education and Research Committee of the Council of Europe continued the activities relating to legislative reforms, recognition and access as a major contribution to the Bologna Process, assisting countries in South-Eastern Europe that wanted to join Bologna.

#### **4.5 The Committee for Higher Education and Research coming back (1994)**

In 1994, the Standing Conference on University Problems regained its status a specialised committee under the CDCC, once more bearing the name *Committee for Higher Education and Research*, now labelled (*CC-HER*). The new mandate asked the Committee to focus on:

- the development of European higher education and research on the basis of common democratic principles and of the values of the European university heritage, including the freedoms of learning, teaching and research, and the self-government of academic institutions within a democratic society;

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<sup>56</sup> *Legislative Reform Programme in Higher Education and Research 1991 – 2000, Final Report* (Doc. CC-HER (2000) 40)

- building a democratic, cohesive and pluralist society and in developing a mutual understanding between peoples.

After 1989, university leaders in East and West could easily agree to these principles. However, the economic resources for making the necessary changes were not available in many of the new democracies.

The widely different conditions for students and for academic staff in the different parts of Europe were a challenge to the traditional ideas of academic mobility; was it now a one-way flow, leaving the poorer countries, especially those in the South-East, without the intellectual resources they needed for their own economic and cultural development? It must be a shared responsibility for the sending and receiving countries to make it possible to create some balance in the mobility. This was reflected in the Council of Europe Recommendations R (95) 7 on the brain drain in the sectors of higher education and research, R (95) 8 on academic mobility, and R (97) 1 on recognition and quality assessment of private institutions of higher education. But in addition to the LRP programme, resources for the support of higher education in the new democracies had to come from other sources; from individual countries, through EU programmes and from universities in the West, either directly or through EUA.

#### 4.5.1 The Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)

*The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted by national representatives meeting in Lisbon in April 1997. This Council of Europe/ UNESCO Convention – usually referred to as the Lisbon Convention – has since been ratified by most European countries.<sup>57</sup> As a convention, this document is an agreement in international law, binding for the signatory states.

Among the main points of the Lisbon Convention are the following:

- Holders of qualifications issued in one country shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another country.
- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or both of the following consequences:

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<sup>57</sup> . <http://conventions.coe.int>; ETS165

- a. access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
- b. the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought.

In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market.

- All countries shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence.
- All countries shall provide information on the institutions and programmes they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.
- All countries shall appoint a national information centre, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons.
- All countries shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system where it was issued.

The Lisbon Convention was taken up in the 1998 Sorbonne Declaration of Ministers:

A convention, recognising higher education qualifications in the academic field within Europe, was agreed on last year in Lisbon. The convention set a number of basic requirements and acknowledged that individual countries could engage in an even more constructive scheme. Standing by these conclusions, one can build on them and go further.

It became the only formally binding document in the Bologna Process:

*We note that 36 of the 45 participating countries have now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. We urge those that have not already done so to ratify the Convention without delay.*<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.5.2 Access to higher education (1998)

One of the central projects for the CC-HER in the years 1996-1998 was *Access to higher education*. This resulted in a 1998 recommendation to member states.<sup>59</sup>

*Aims and objectives:*

All who are able and willing to participate successfully in higher education should have fair and equal opportunities to do so.

The higher education population as a whole should increasingly reflect the diversity of a changing society in each member state, building on progress in this respect in school and pre-school education, while continuing to welcome students from other parts of Europe and the world.

<sup>58</sup> Communiqué of the 2005 Ministerial Conference in Bergen,

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen_Communique1.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation R (98) 3 on access to higher education

Admissions systems and the learning environment in higher education institutions should give equal opportunities to all individuals and groups in society.

Efforts to maintain and raise the quality of higher education systems should include the criterion of effective access offered to all groups in society.

*Action against discrimination:*

Member states are recommended to consider the need for legislation to outlaw discrimination in higher education on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, religion, political or other opinion and disability

*Funding*

Public funding for higher education should support the aims and objectives of access policy, with the ultimate goal that all citizens should have fair and equal opportunities for higher education.

Later on, the concept of *access* should become central in relation to the *social dimension* of the Bologna Process.

#### **4.5.3 The research mission of the university (2000)**

One of the topics discussed during 1998-1999 by the Committee for Higher Education and Research, was university research. This led to a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the research mission of universities.<sup>60</sup>

The recommendation presented some general policy considerations:

Universities provide a research base vital for the solution of problems of public concern, even where markets for the solutions do not yet exist. Governments should offer incentives to conduct free and fundamental research.

As a rule, universities should conduct research in a broad range of disciplines and ensure well-organised contacts with active research in disciplines in which they offer study programmes without a strong research base. Governments should encourage each institution to develop a specific research profile while respecting the diversity of higher education institutions and their different missions, in full respect of the national systems of education and research and of the division of competence between the government and the universities.

Governments should seek to develop and maintain trust between the state and society on the one hand and the universities on the other and, notwithstanding the fundamental principle of university autonomy, to leave the universities with the responsibility for their choice of research priorities.

The recommendation followed up by considering

- Links between university and non-university research;
- Structure and organisation of research within higher education;
- The link between teaching and research;
- Training and recruitment of university researchers;
- Working conditions in university research;
- Ethical issues in research;
- Transparency of research results and issues of trust;
- Funding.

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<sup>60</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation R (2000) 8 on the research mission of universities

## 4.6 Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (2001)

In November 2001, the 773rd meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to transform the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) into four steering committees. One of the four committees was the former CC-ESR, now the CD-ESR: *Comité Directeur de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research)*, responsible for the implementation of higher education and research activities included in the programme adopted by the Committee of Ministers. For the first time since 1962, the Committee for Higher Education and Research reported directly to the Committee of Ministers.

The CC-ESR was established as an equal forum of European institutions of higher education and of the competent national administrations. Its scope should cover the teaching and research missions of all higher education institutions; their contribution to the economy, to culture, and to society; and the relationships to their members, to the public authorities and to society.

According to the terms of reference, the Committee should in particular:

- exchange ideas and experience on issues of policy and practice concerning those institutions and public authorities, and where appropriate identify and disseminate good practice;
- organise advice to national governmental and academic bodies on the renewal of higher education;
- secure the widest possible movement within Europe of individual members of the higher education community, especially through the support and development of the Council of Europe's legal instruments on the recognition of qualifications and on academic mobility;
- to the above ends, promote and facilitate international co-operation between institutions of higher education.

In its activities, it should develop appropriate co-operation with the governmental bodies, other international organisations and institutions and the associations of universities and other higher education institutions, active on the European plane.

However, the budget only allowed one meeting per year. Of course, there was a Bureau and a competent Secretariat, but the wording of the terms of reference reflected diplomacy more than realities.

At the first meeting of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research in October 2002, the Chair of the CD-ESR, Dr. Per Nyborg, reported on this transition of the Committee to a Steering Committee and reminded the delegates of the mandate to develop higher education in Europe and to contribute to the building of democratic societies. The challenges that the Committee faced, were that even as a steering committee it had very limited steering power and that there was no direct communication with the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers.

Still, a lot was done in the years of the Committee's existence. It came to an end in 2011.

### 4.6.1 The Bologna Process: Early achievements and challenges (2002)

The Council of Europe was not involved in the Bologna Process from the start, but from early 2000, the Chair and the Secretary of the Committee for Higher Education and Research participated in the meetings of the follow-up activities. The Committee had given important

contributions to the European co-operation regarding *access* and *recognition*, central elements in the Bologna Declaration; this was followed up by the CD-ESR also for other topics equally central both to Council of Europe and to the Bologna Process.

A central point on the agenda for the first plenary session of the CD-ESR in October 2002 was a round table debate on the Bologna Process. In his introduction, the Chair, Dr. Per Nyborg, recalled the contributions that the Council of Europe had made so far and could make to the further process.<sup>61</sup> He said that the Council of Europe now was firmly established as a contributor to the process and that main contributions were that

- the Council was a bridge between the Bologna countries and the “non-Bologna” countries in East and South-East Europe and had promoted further accession of countries to the process;
- the Council provided a platform for interaction between government representatives and academics through the CD-ESR;
- the Lisbon Recognition Convention was a very important tool in the process as well as documents supplementing the Convention, such as the Code of Good Practice in the provision of Transnational Education.

He said that the Council of Europe had a long tradition of working with democratic values, which were also underlined in the Bologna Process. Student participation was also an area in which the Council could contribute, as well as within lifelong learning.

The Chair also highlighted some important issues that were considered at the international seminar on recognitions issues in the Bologna Process held in Lisbon in April 2002: the need for targeted and transparent information on higher education systems and qualifications, the importance of recognition of qualifications for the labour-market and of learning outcomes and non-traditional qualifications. The Chair also emphasised the importance of a closer link between recognition and quality assurance. The Committee should discuss a possible supplement to the Lisbon Recognition Convention on this issue. The Chair also underlined the importance of the ENIC Network as an advisory body to the CD-ESR.

Mr. Jindra Divis, President of the ENIC Network, provided an update on the recognition activities of the Council and the Network, which is a joint body with UNESCO, which have taken on a new importance with the Bologna Process. Mr. Divis described the close co-operation with the NARIC network of the European Commission. He also explained that the recognition issues have shifted focus because of:

- new degree structures, which make information by ENIC even more crucial.
- new transparency documents such as the Diploma Supplement.
- the concept of lifelong learning and the need to assess learning outcomes.
- developments within quality assurance.

Mr. Divis also described the recently established co-operation between the ENIC and NARIC Networks and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The co-operation has started relating to issues about information on quality assurance, a common definition of quality assurance and quality indicators for new degrees as well as joint degrees and transnational education.

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<sup>61</sup> CD-ESR Meeting Report, 1<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 3-4 October 2002

Dr. Pavel Zgaga, General Rapporteur for the Ministerial Conference in Berlin and former Minister of Education in Slovenia, presented his views of university autonomy in relation to the Bologna Process. The Bologna Declaration, as well as the Magna Charta signed in Bologna in 1988, stressed the importance of institutional independence and autonomy. However, Dr. Zgaga pointed out that autonomy issue had two dimensions; the autonomy of universities in relation to national authorities and autonomy within universities. He illustrated this with the example of the countries of former Yugoslavia, where the universities were divided into autonomous faculties which led to weak universities and strong, independent faculties. In Slovenia this situation changed through new legislation in 1993 as universities became legal, autonomous bodies. In some other South Eastern European countries faculty autonomy still existed and the issue should be approached by both the Council of Europe and the Bologna Process in order to promote university self-governance.

On the basis of the outcome of the round-table discussion, the CD-ESR asked for further Council of Europe contributions to the Bologna Process, including a further reflection on:

- higher education as a public good and a public responsibility;
- aspects of university autonomy;
- the role of legislation in the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

In the follow-up, these topics were given high priority, together with access, recognition, student participation and the social dimension.

The role of legislation in the creation of the European Higher Education Area was a central element in the Council of Europe's assistance to countries in East and South-East Europe in their preparation for joining the Bologna Process. The pan-European character of the Council of Europe was reflected in missions to Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine, countries joining the process in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005).

## 5. From a university rectors' conference to an association of higher education institutions. The Norwegian example

In 1958, the rectors of the seven university-level institutions in Norway<sup>62</sup> decided to meet once or twice a year to discuss common problems and challenges. In 1963, these meetings were formalized by written statutes. According to the statutes, the mission of the Norwegian University Rectors' Conference should be

- to discuss and comment on problems and challenges common to the institutions;
- to appoint representatives to Nordic, European and other organisations where Norwegian higher education institutions should have a national representation.

Some of the founding fathers had attended the first European Rectors' Conference in Cambridge (1955) and they were preparing for the next one in Dijon (1964).

The big challenge that brought the rectors together in the first place, was the sudden growth in student numbers: from 5 600 in 1955 (same as in 1938) to 9 600 in 1960. This was only the beginning. The further development of higher education in Norway is described in an annex to this presentation.

### 5.1 A first phase (1958-1977): The university rectors' conference

As a basis for discussions in their semi-annual meetings, the Norwegian university rectors organised groups of university professors to discuss and prepare written reports to the rectors. Among the themes discussed during the first years (and also later), were the following:<sup>63</sup>

- The expansion of higher education;
- The role of universities in a new structure of higher education;
- Open access;
- Access of students not having a diploma from secondary school;
- Recognition of exams from other institutions;
- University staff;
- Training of young researchers;
- Research and education;
- University budgets;
- Developments in university administration.

Most of these topics, if not all, were in the same period of time discussed with European colleagues at European Rectors' Conferences and later on in CRE meetings. The first item on the agenda for the Norwegian Rectors' Conference was always *Reports from international meetings*. Discussions regarding the 1968 student unrest were reported back to the Norwegian Rectors both from the CRE Permanent Committee and from Council of Europe's Committee on Higher Education and Research. Another example: In 1972, it was reported that the CRE Permanent Committee had discussed *Research in European universities*, and that the Council of Europe Committee had studied *Access to higher education* and *Mobility of post-graduate students and staff*. These themes were also high on the agenda for the Norwegian Rectors, and clearly the considerations in the European fora influenced the discussions at home.

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<sup>62</sup> University of Oslo and University of Bergen, plus specialized universities for technology, business administration, agriculture, veterinary medicine, and teacher training.

<sup>63</sup> P. Nyborg, *Fifty years of university co-operation in Norway* (in Norwegian, 2007) Unipub (covers the whole of chapter 5)

### 5.1.1 Access of students not having a diploma from secondary school

Equal access to higher education had been a mantra in the social-democratic Norway as an element in the rebuilding and modernising the country after the Second World War. From 1947 student support was available through the Norwegian State Loan Fund for Education and from the mid-1950s, student numbers increased rapidly. During the 1960s, new campuses were built and new higher education institutions were founded, supplementing the traditional universities. As in other countries and at the European Rectors' Conferences, rectors discussed how to meet the challenges of mass education. In 1969 the Norwegian Rectors' Conference took steps to open up for access for students not having the required diploma from secondary school that had traditionally been required.

A group of experts was charged with the task to develop a procedure for admitting non-traditional students to university studies. The group reported back to the Rectors' Conference in 1971, proposing a procedure that the rectors accepted and that later on was decided by the individual institutions. The Ministry of Education and also Parliament ("Stortinget") applauded the decision.

In addition to the traditional *Examen Artium*, other school leaving certificates were now accepted, additional courses in English and mathematics might be required. But the radically new possibility was to be evaluated for admission on the basis of one's own achieved competence. The evaluation was done by a national committee appointed by the Rectors' Conference, admissions were granted by the individual institution. The committee considered motivation, general orientation, previous achievements together with students' knowledge of English and mathematics. Formal exams were not required.

After a change of government in 1973, it was proposed by the new social democratic minister of education to change to a much more radical procedure: that everybody over 25 years of age with five years of working experience should have access to higher education. However, the procedure established by the Rectors' Conference was functioning well and Parliament did not accept the proposed change. The national admissions committee continued its work. Then, in 1992, under a later social democratic government, a majority in Parliament watered down requirements for access so much that the procedure established by the Rectors' Conference was no longer relevant.

### 5.1.2 Recognition of exams from other institutions

Realising that the universities soon would be integrated in a larger and broader national higher education system, with new possibilities for transfers between institutions, the Norwegian Rectors' Conference in 1969 also saw the need for a procedure for recognition of exams from other institutions in the system.

A group of experts was charged with the task to develop a procedure for recognition. The group reported back to the Rectors' Conference in 1971, proposing a procedure that the rectors accepted and that later on was decided by the individual institutions. The next year, a national recognition committee began operations. This decision by the universities was reported to the Ministry of Education; Parliament was informed and took note. The formal responsibility for such matters was delegated by law to the individual university. Pretty soon, studies at regional colleges were accepted as equivalent to lower level university studies. During the 1970s, education of teachers, engineers and nurses was included in the system of higher education. In 1982, the University Rectors' Conference decided that all relevant

studies in the college sector would be accepted as elements in the lower level university degree. Higher level studies were at that time only available in the university sector.

During the 1980s, private higher education was growing in Norway, not only as a supplement in special fields to the dominating state system, but also as an alternative for general higher education. This meant that the national recognition committee also had to consider exams and degrees from the private sector for recognition at universities. Private institutions started to use «university recognition» as an element in their marketing.

A 1985 law on private higher education opened up for loans and grants from the State Fund for Education *provided the studies were recognized by the universities*. Suddenly, the University Rectors' recognition committee found itself in the position as the quality assurance agency for Norwegian private higher education. The work load increased. And the work was no longer directly relevant for the universities.

After the Rectors' Conference was reorganised as the Norwegian Council of Universities, and finally also established a permanent secretariat in 1991, the newly appointed Secretary General took this matter up with the Ministry of Education. He proposed a further development of the recognition committee into an *independent* institution for quality assurance and accreditation. Several meetings with the ministry led nowhere. However, a new law on higher education was being drafted, for the first time bringing universities and state colleges under common legislation. With the new law the ministry transferred the responsibility for recognition from the universities to the ministry itself and the recognition committee was dissolved. There was no independent quality assurance and accreditation agency until the Bologna Process asked for it. That was a result of co-operation between university representatives and government representatives at European level.

### 5.1.3 The role of universities in a new structure of higher education

In 1973 the Ministry of Education presented a White Paper to Parliament on the further expansion and organisation of higher education in Norway. The White Paper was discussed at the next semi-annual Rectors' Conference and based on comments from the individual member institutions, the Rectors' Conference also commented. The intention at that time was not to participate in the political process; it was to develop a common platform for the universities. So it did not matter so much for the rectors, that, by the time of their meeting, there had been a change of government and the White Paper was withdrawn. A revised 1975 White Paper from the new government did not fit in with a meeting of the rectors, so this policy document, which was to be the basis for developments during the next ten years, was not discussed by the Rectors' Conference. However, as the second White Paper considered the same topics as the first, most comments from the rectors were still relevant:

The Rectors' Conference pointed out that a priority for the universities would be to meet the demand for higher education from all qualified candidates. As the main costs for running the institutions and for student support was carried by the State, the universities had an obligation to use the resources to the best for the society as a whole. The main tasks for the universities should be

- to create new knowledge by research;
- to spread knowledge through education;
- to use knowledge to serve society.

The Rectors' Conference saw the new regional colleges as an important supplement to the universities, giving shorter, professionally oriented education. They pointed out that such education might be integrated in a university degree; they also indicated that first level university studies might be given by the new colleges. There should be a possibility for research in the regional colleges, preferably in co-operation with a university. It was an implicit understanding that higher level courses and research training was to be carried out in the universities.

The Rectors' Conference stated; that independent of the development of budgets, the requirement for quality in university education should be absolute. This would be of the utmost importance for the further development of high level courses and for the training of young researchers, which, if necessary, should have priority over further expansion of lower level courses.

Some years later, in 1982, the Norwegian Council of Universities took an initiative for a broader discussion on the co-operation and sharing of responsibilities between the university sector and the college sector. The basis for the 1982 discussion in the Council was a report from a group with representatives of universities, regional colleges, teacher education colleges and student organisations. It was agreed that education on the highest level and the training of young researchers, must be the duty and responsibility of the universities. The main responsibility for institutions in the college sector should be short, professionally oriented education and practically oriented research and development related to local industry and administration.

On the basis of this common understanding, the co-existence, but also co-operation, between the university sector and the college sector continued. However, over time, the institutions in the college sector obtained new favours from regionally oriented politicians in Government and Parliament; the appointment of professors, the introduction of master level courses, finally also doctoral education, the former English translation «state college» was substituted by «university college», and finally (2003), the possibility for a college to be upgraded to university status.

## 5.2 A second phase (1977-1990): The Council of Universities

When the first White Paper on Norwegian research policy was discussed in Parliament in 1976, there were no comments from the Rectors' Conference, as the rectors met two weeks *after* the discussion in Parliament. However, it finally became clear to the rectors, that they should have a possibility to influence on the political discussions relating to research and higher education. They also saw that this could not be achieved by semi-annual meetings. So in 1977 the Norwegian University Rectors' Conference copied the 1964 European Rectors' Conference in Göttingen: they transformed their Conference into an organisation, *The Norwegian Council of Universities*.

*The Norwegian Council of Universities shall contribute to a national coordination of higher education and research. The Council shall*

- *discuss and comment matters of common interest to the universities, including strategic plans and other policy documents relating to higher education and research;*
- *appoint representatives to Nordic, European and other organisations where Norwegian higher education institutions should have a national representation.*

In between Council meetings, a Steering Group would act on behalf of the Council. One of the university directors served as Secretary General.

With the expansion of higher education during the 1960s and 1970s, universities had been rapidly growing, with new infrastructure and more staff. Research was not any longer only a privilege for professors; it was seen as an important factor for societal development. University budgets had been growing with the ongoing expansion, but were now levelling off. However, money for research was coming in from new sources. How should universities meet the new challenges? University budgets were still decided in detail by the Ministry of Education with no flexibility for the institution to reallocate. The rectors and their Council of Universities started to ask for more autonomy. It would only come gradually.

### 5.2.1 Research assistants

Outside the university budget, research money was available from the Research Councils, from industry and from other ministries. Up to the late 1970s, there were no regulations for the handling of research funds in universities. What usually happened; was that individual professors obtained funds for research projects and hired assistants. As the assistants were not employed by the institution, they had no rights for sick leave or pensions. Today this would have come under the label of “social dumping”. For years, the Norwegian Association of Researchers had protested loudly, but for the university administration, this was not an easy thing to straighten out. The problem, as seen from the universities, was that, although there were detailed rules for the spending of government money, there were no rules for income from external sources.

In 1977, a new Working Environment Act came into force, to ensure sound conditions of employment and protect the rights of employees. The Council of Universities then proposed regulations according to the new legislation to ensure employment conditions for research assistants at universities being paid from external funds. This was not accepted by the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Education then considered establishing *foundations* for contracted research at universities, but this did not work out either. Finally, in 1980, the two ministries agreed on a way to solve the problem: An “income line” was introduced in the university budgets and each university would be allowed to hire a specified number of staff (specified by the Ministry of Finance!) out of the budgeted income. Regulations according to the Working Agreement Act were formulated by the new Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs in late 1981. As a consequence, several hundred «unofficial» research staff obtained permanent positions at the universities.

Still, the universities were stuck in the old budget procedures. Although both Government and Parliament asked for more contract research at universities, the Ministry of Finance refused to increase the number of contract employees with the increasing income to the institutions. It should be no surprise that rectors’ more and more strongly argued for institutional autonomy.

### 5.2.2 Academic staff

With the continuing expansion in teaching and research, an increasing number of young assistants and an emerging group of lecturers were carrying much of the burden of the growing activity at the universities. However, the prospects for a university career were bleak, as the old structure with only one professor (chair) in each department still existed. New chairs could only be set up by Parliament as an element of the yearly budget procedure; universities might get a handful in a good year. In the natural sciences, there were a few permanent teaching and research positions at a lower level (amanuensis), mainly for lab work.

Lecturers were permanently employed for teaching, with a possibility for research on the side. Assistants were temporary employed.

Traditionally, duties and privileges were determined by a person's position in the university hierarchy; the professor was in charge and he (men only!) would be doing his own research and lecturing students at the highest level, lecturers would have a double teaching load at first level, with little chance for advancement.

From the mid-1960s, the Association of Researchers had been arguing for better career possibilities. In the late 1970s, the Council of Universities also engaged itself actively in this field. An expert group was formed, it reported back in 1978, but its rather conservative report found little enthusiasm among the rectors and even less with the Association of Researchers. When the Council of Universities gave its recommendation to the Ministry in 1980, a radical change was proposed:

All teaching personnel in permanent positions should equally share responsibilities and privileges in teaching, research and administration. Department heads should be elected among the permanent academic staff. Teaching load and level should be decided on basis of competence and interests in the various specialised fields.

The Council pointed out that this should also imply greater flexibility in the traditional system; lecturers were redefined as assistant or associate professors. Highly qualified associate professors should have the possibility for advancement to full professor based on personal qualifications.

This was in full agreement with previous requests from the Association of Researchers. Most of the proposed changes were realised in a short time, by the university, by the ministry and by negotiations between the ministry and the Association. The privilege to appoint professors remained with the Parliament for a few more years. However, in 1991 the Association approached Parliament on this matter. The outcome was that the Council of Universities was mandated to establish a national procedure for advancement to full professor based on personal qualifications.

### **5.2.3 The training of young researchers**

Another topic of common interest to the Council of Universities and the Association of Researchers should be mentioned: The training of young researchers.

As early as 1970, the Rectors' Conference had taken an initiative for expert commissions for research training in medicine, humanities and the natural sciences. The response to the commissions' reports from the individual universities (1972) indicated that time was not yet ripe for the idea of organised programmes leading to a doctoral degree. However, the Association of Researchers took over the idea and raised it in negotiations with the Ministry of Education, relating structured doctoral education and doctoral programmes to the working conditions of research assistants. Little came out of this at that time.

Ten years later, in 1980, the Council of Universities was advised on research training and doctoral programmes by a new expert commission. The rectors then agreed that the working conditions for research assistants should be improved; research training towards a doctoral degree should be a possibility. New degrees in medicine, technology and the natural sciences would open up for doctoral programmes.

The follow-up by the Research Council and the Ministry took its time. Finally, in 1986, the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs sent out new regulations concerning doctoral research fellows and research assistants in universities. Doctoral studies were linked to the junior academic position of *Doctoral Research Fellow*. The young research fellow was a *doctoral candidate*, not a student. The objective of a research fellowship should be completion of research training to the level of a doctoral degree within 4 years of employment, with 3 of the 4 years for doctoral studies. Employment as a *Research Assistant* would be limited to 2 years, providing an opportunity for insight into academic work and methods through assistance in research. This would not be for doctoral studies.

In 1993, the Norwegian Council of Universities presented a set of common national regulations pertaining to organised doctoral studies. This marked the end of a reform process that had taken more than 20 years.

### 5.2.3 Research policy

It has been mentioned previously; that when the first White Paper on Norwegian research policy was discussed in Parliament in 1976, there were no comments from the Rectors' Conference, as the rectors met two weeks *after* the discussion in Parliament. The next White Paper on research policy was presented in 1981, but the University Rectors were still not quite ready to participate in the political debate.

However, in 1982, reports from two different government commissions on research were published, one on *Fundamental Research* by the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs, one on *Industrial Research*, by the Ministry of Industry.

The Norwegian Council of Universities responded to the ministries and expressed concern about the insufficient financing of fundamental research in Norway. The Council pointed out that fundamental research was a necessary basis for applied research and for, higher education and for societal and industrial development. Priority should be given to high quality university research; supporting highly ranked research projects, making advanced equipment available and opening up for permanent positions for promising young scientists.

The reports from the two commissions were followed up in the next White Paper on Research Policy. This time, the Council of Universities organised a full day seminar on research policy, as a basis for an opinion to the Parliamentary Committee for Education and Research. The Council strongly supported the Government's ambition to increase the national efforts in R&D to *at least* the OECD average and the increased priority promised for fundamental research. The Council asked for increased resources for the training of young researchers, for higher quality and increased capacity. It also expressed the need for better coordination between the research councils and the universities in fields such as the financing and use of advanced equipment and joint doctoral programmes.

### 5.2.4 The social dimension of higher education

As from 1974, the Council of Universities invited the national student organisation to participate in Council meetings. The student representatives were active participants and always well prepared. The first of them was later in life President of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions. The student representatives had a real influence in Council meetings.

One theme being frequently discussed was *student support*. In a 1985 statement, the Council of Universities pointed out that the student population was rapidly changing and that, for various reasons, an increasing number were part-time students. The Council underlined the importance of institutions to be flexible to the needs of part-time students, also underlining the importance of a student support system adequate for full-time studies. All students should have the possibility to study full time: In some fields, full-time study was a necessity, in most fields this also would be the most effective use of the institution's resources. It clearly was an argumentation for better student support.

### **5.2.5 The sharing of responsibilities between Government and universities**

In 1988 the Norwegian Council of Universities had a full day programme on the relations between Government and the universities, and on the sharing of responsibilities. Over the last few years, the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs had delegated administrative responsibility to the university in some fields, mainly concerning budget and personnel. An example: Ten years previously, Parliament decided a detailed university budget; the Ministry had authority to decide on minor changes. Now the university budget was less detailed and the institution had been delegated authority for adjustments. Still, the university had to leave many decisions to Government, not only decisions related to economy. For instance, professors were nominated by the university, the nomination was sent to the Ministry and the professor was appointed by the King. New study programs had to be cleared with the Ministry. The Law on Universities dictated the organisation and administration of the university down to details.

The statement that followed from the Council of Universities pointed out that many regulations were obsolete. Reforms were necessary, but they must be adapted to the particular sector of higher education. The Council wanted more autonomy for the universities. It also pointed out that more autonomy to the universities would make it possible for Central Government to focus on national plans and strategies, on coordination within the education system, contracted research in universities, and international co-operation.

This was only a beginning. The request for institutional autonomy should only grow in the years to come – in Norway and in Europe.

### **5.2.6 University budgets**

A combination of a stagnating budgets and a continuing increase in student numbers led the Norwegian Council of Universities to speak out loudly for political support. In a letter to the Parliamentary Committee for Education and Research in late 1990, in connection with Parliament's decisions on next year's budgets, the Council of Universities claimed that never before the universities had achieved so much under so difficult circumstances. However, continuing high quality teaching and research would not be possible without increase in resources. It would be necessary to cut back on places for new Master- and Doctoral students.

The Council pointed out (not for the first time), that compared to other OECD countries, Norwegian allocations for higher education and research were low. The universities had resources for 40 000 students, but real student numbers had now reached 60 000. According to the Council of Universities, budgets were clearly inadequate.

The Council of Universities also expressed concern for the student support not being adjusted for increasing living expenses, and for the tightening of the repayment scheme. This would force many students to use more of their time for earning money, instead of being full-time

students. Conditions for high-quality education would deteriorate. The Council saw the situations as serious, not only for the universities and the student, but for society as a whole.

More than before, the Council of Universities could be seen as a participant in the national policy debate regarding higher education and research.

### **5.3 A third phase (1991-2000): A professional secretariat**

In 1989 the statutes were revised, giving the Norwegian Council of Universities a much more active role as an association of institutions, to contribute to the further development of national policies for higher education and research and to national and international coordination.

Up to now, one of the university directors had been acting secretary general for NCU, now the association decided to establish its own secretariat and to appoint a full-time secretary general to realise the new mandate.

#### **5.3.1 A personal note**

This is where and when the present author came into the picture: I was appointed Secretary General of the Norwegian Council of Universities in 1990 and the new secretariat was operational in early 1991. Before this, I had been a university professor, a labour unionist, a director general in the ministry and a research council director. I thought I knew the universities from most angles, and I had been involved with the Council of Universities both as a union representative and as a ministry representative.

As President of the Norwegian Association of Researchers in the 1970s, I had been fighting for regulated employment conditions for the research assistants (subsection 5.2.1) and for organised research training towards a doctoral degree (subsection 5.2.3). From the same platform I had proposed a procedure for advancement to full professor based on personal qualifications (subsection 5.2.2). As Director General in the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs in the 1980s, I had signed the regulations for research assistants and other groups of contract personnel and for doctoral research fellows.

Later on, as Secretary General for the Norwegian Council of Universities during the 1990s, I should come to participate in the development of national guidelines for doctoral education and of national guidelines for advancement to full professor. It is an irony that it should take 30 years to realise such changes in the university system and that I was involved more or less permanently in one capacity or another. I prefer to see my different roles over time in these matters as a reflection of the tri-partite co-operation in Norway between the Government, the organisations for employers and the organisations for the employees. Over time, I have represented each of them.

As Director General with the Ministry I had been responsible for the administration of the Norwegian State Loan Fund for Education and for mobility programmes for Norwegian students abroad and for students from development countries – the social dimension of higher education. As Director with the Royal Norwegian Research Council for Science and Technology, I had negotiated the first Norwegian participation in EC research programmes. I did not know that these experiences should turn out to be very useful when I joined the Norwegian Council of Universities.

In 1991, the EFTA countries joined the EC Erasmus Programme. The Council of Universities was asked by the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs to be in charge of the Norwegian participation. To handle this, a section for international programmes was established at our new secretariat. We were also asked by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a programme for research co-operation with universities in developing countries. This turned out to be a successful operation and our *Centre for International University Co-operation* grew rapidly, soon having a staff much larger than the secretariat itself. In 2003 it was transformed into a government agency, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education.<sup>64</sup>

But I should also discover that there were more angles to universities and university co-operation than those I already knew. I did not know the international network of university rectors and their organisations. However, I got a quick start in this field, with a Nordic University Rectors' meeting in Copenhagen and CRE meetings in Leningrad and Utrecht within a few months.

### 5.3.2 A White Paper on higher education

From the start, our focus was on national development and strategies in higher education and research. A government commission, chaired by a university professor and later Minister of Cultural and Scientific Affairs, had given its recommendations to the Government in 1988. In 1990, as a minister, he wanted to discuss the realisation of his ideas with the Council of Universities. In the White Paper to Parliament that followed in 1991, there were many challenges to the universities and to their association. The policy drawn up in the White Paper was based on a binary system of interacting institutions, a "Network Norway" with a university sector and a college sector, each institution being under ministerial supervision for its educational programmes. As a national system of higher education, it was more centralised than what the university sector had previously experienced.

However, the follow-up brought many improvements to Norwegian higher education: With Network Norway, transfer of credits and recognition of previous learning became necessities, institutional co-operation was stimulated, and organised doctoral programmes were introduced for the third cycle. Quality of teaching and research came into focus. Internationalisation was to be an external dimension of Norwegian higher education. In all these fields, the Council of Universities was supposed to contribute. The follow-up of the White Paper became a Council priority for the coming years.

The Network Norway concept fitted well with the coordinating role of the Council of Universities. However, now it was more a coordination between the university sector and the college sector than coordination between independent university institutions: To what extent could colleges reasonably supplement the university sector with regard to academic disciplines? At that time the final decision was with the ministry, our Council had an advisory function. Advice given was based on experts' opinions.

As a follow-up of the 1991 White Paper, the Council of Universities took the responsibility of coordinating the organisation of research training at Norwegian universities (subsection 5.2.3). In 1993, we presented common national regulations pertaining to organised doctoral studies. Since then, such doctoral degree regulations, based on structured courses and certification, have been introduced at all university-level institutions.

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<sup>64</sup> <http://siu.no/eng/About-SIU>

In 1991, the Norwegian Association of Researchers convinced the Parliamentary committee for higher education and research that a procedure for advancement to full professor should be introduced in Norwegian universities (subsection 5.2.2). The outcome was that the Council of Universities was mandated by the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs to establish a national procedure for advancement to full professor based on personal qualifications. Here the final decision would be with the institution where the candidate for advancement was employed. We would advise based on the opinion of a group of experts, a procedure similar to the one institutions used for appointing professors. I was now administrating a scheme that I had myself proposed 30 years previously on behalf of the Association of Researchers.

In this way, the Norwegian Council of Universities added new functions to the traditional role of a rectors' conference and an association of institutions. The Council of Universities had no decision power over institutions; it was always an advisory function. On the other hand, the Ministry could not *instruct* the Council, it might ask for advice or assistance. The relation between the Ministry and the Council of Universities was based on trust, usually this worked to the satisfaction of both parties. It happened, however, that a minister of education took his own advice against the Council and its appointed experts. On one occasion, when the minister overruled our experts, the Council broke with the minister. The Government fell soon afterwards (for other reasons!) and relations were re-established with the incoming minister, who promised *not* to overrule expert advice in academic matters.

### 5.3.3 An opinion on research policies

In 1991, a governmental commission proposed to merge the five Norwegian research councils into one. A big debate followed, some defended sectorial interests, and some wanted one council for basic research and one for applied research. The Council of Universities supported the proposal from the commission and argued strongly for this solution in its opinion to the Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Affairs. To have *one* research council under *one* Ministry would create new possibilities for coordination. At the Council of Universities, we expected a significant increase in international research co-operation with a new need for a national strategy for Norwegian participation and a necessary concentration of resources for larger research programmes. We pointed out the need to tear down the barriers between basic science and applied research; this could best be done in a research council having responsibility for both. Here, we had the EC research programmes in mind. Norwegian research groups had participated on a project basis since 1986 (see subsection 5.3.1); the possibility for full participation in the framework programmes was now coming up.

The following year the Government proposed to Parliament to merge the five research councils into one. The Council of Universities gave a strong support in its opinion to the Parliamentary Committee. From 1993, the merged Norwegian Research Council was a reality.

### 5.3.4 More students!

In a comment to the Government's budget proposal for 1993, the Council of Universities pointed out that the number of students in the country had increased from 100 000 to 150 000 over only four years. In a few years this would mean highly qualified candidates to the Norwegian society and industry. However, quality education for all would strain the available resources. Still the universities would do everything possible to admit all qualified applicants.

The following year, the pressure for higher education was even higher and the universities had to limit admittance. There were protests. Deans at the University of Oslo proposed to open the traditional academic studies in the social sciences, natural sciences and humanities for all

qualified applicants. They got a huge media coverage, and the next day the Council of Universities received a letter from the Minister of Cultural and Scientific Affairs, asking how the universities could realise the deans' proposal.

The answer was; it is too late this year (studies had already started), but it can be done next year (1995), provided universities and state colleges were given extra money for new study places. Extra money was provided for 3500 new study places. A national admittance centre was established, all qualified students were admitted, but not necessarily at the institution they had given first priority. By 1997 the number of students reached 173 000. (In 2013, the number of students in higher education institutions in Norway had increased to 269.000.)

### 5.3.5 Time for change

During the 1990s the binary system was gradually eroded by a sequence of decisions in Parliament, giving colleges the right to develop secondary, research-based degrees, to appoint professors and to take part in the training of researchers, to engage in fundamental as well as applied research, and placing universities and colleges under a common law in 1995. After a change of government in 1997, the new Minister of Scientific and Cultural Affairs gave additional concessions to the state colleges, including the right to some colleges to award doctoral degrees in special fields. As he also decided that state colleges might be called university colleges and that such institutions might be upgraded to universities, little was left of the binary system at the end of the 1990s. The Council of Universities had to decide how to meet the challenges from the (former) college sector.

This was not the only challenge. At the end of the 1990s, it was apparent to the Council of Universities that challenges from the private sector had rendered the legal and economic framework for state higher education institutions obsolete, hindering contract activities and co-operation with external institutions. Stronger university leadership was also needed.

The need for change was clearly seen by university leaders. An assessment of the traditional four-year cand.mag.-degree was made by the Council of Universities in 1997. A proposition to go for a three-year degree was turned down by the academic community, but in 1999, inspired by the Bologna Conference, the Council recommended a 3/5/8 year degree system and a national grading system based on ECTS. The previous year we had assessed the existing framework for contracted research and advised the Ministry to radically change the system.

In 1999, a new governmental commission was appointed to recommend on the further development on higher education in Norway. Most of our proposals mentioned above were followed up by the national commission when it presented its report in May 2000. The commission also proposed many other changes – some of them inspired by New Management theories. The follow-up by Government and Parliament is described in section 5.4.1 below.

## 5.4 A fourth phase (2000 –): An association of higher education institutions

The same day in May 2000, the Norwegian Council of Universities merged with the Norwegian Council of State Colleges to form the *Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions*.<sup>65</sup> Ever since the state colleges came under the same legislation as the universities in 1996, the institutions in the college sector had gained new privileges. The boundaries in the binary system became blurred, as the new law set no absolute limits between college functions and university functions. As a large majority of members of Parliament had a

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<sup>65</sup> [http://www.uhr.no/om\\_uhr/about\\_uhr\\_1](http://www.uhr.no/om_uhr/about_uhr_1)

regional background, the regional colleges had many friends among the political decision-makers. University rectors and university professors had fought against this “watering out” of academia, but to no good.

Finally the decision was made: It must be better to fight together on behalf of higher education and research, than continuing an inside fighting in the higher education sector. Bologna gave a helping hand:

We wanted a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, a system based on two main cycles and on top of that, a doctorate degree. We already had a common system of credits for student mobility between our institutions. We very much wanted autonomous institutions. We even managed to give a unison opinion on the report from the new national commission.

#### **5.4.1 Norwegian reactions to Bologna (2001-2003)**

Also the report from the national commission was in part inspired by Bologna, So was the 2001 White Paper that followed it. The objectives of the resulting Norwegian policy on higher education – the Quality Reform – as defined by this White Paper, stated that higher education is a public responsibility and an element in national politics, and that the higher education institutions are partners in the realisation of a national policy for higher education.

The White Paper indicated that the current form of organisation of higher education did not provide universities and colleges with sufficient freedom and responsibility to achieve the overall *national* objectives: Educational institutions were expected to deal with a number of tasks of importance for the country’s culture, welfare, environment, economy and democracy. At the same time they were required to contribute to education and research of immediate benefit to working life in both public and private sectors. These goals and requirements implied more autonomy that educational institutions had been previously allowed.

A revision of the Law on Universities and Colleges was proposed by Government and decided by Parliament in 2002, delegating more decision power to the institutions.

The ministry’s intention was that the Quality Reform should be financed by higher efficiency in institutions. However, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions pointed out to the Parliamentary Committee that the proposed improvements in teaching and learning would have a much higher cost. Parliament decided that extra resources should be given to the higher education institutions to make the Quality Reform operational. The State budget for 2003 included such resources and this was followed up in later budgets until the agreed level had been reached, but only to be cut back a few year later, after a change of government.

With increased autonomy, much of the follow-up was left to institutions, such as development of new study programmes and new teaching methods. The development work started immediately after the Parliamentary decision in 2001 and the reform was operational as from the academic year 2003-2004. More information on the Quality Reform is given in Annex 1.

In this way, national higher education policies and the Bologna Process came together in the Norwegian Quality Reform. Institutions and their umbrella organisation – the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions – have been, and still are, important partners in the continuing process. After a new Law on Higher Education (covering both state and private higher education) came into effect in 2005, also private institutions have joined the Association as full members.

## 6 The Nordic Dimension

The Nordic co-operation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden is based on close cultural, linguistic, economic and political ties. These ties have been reflected in a number of formal and informal co-operation schemes. On the formal side, parliamentarians have met in the *Nordic Council* since 1952; national governments have co-operated in the *Nordic Council of Ministers* since 1971. In many respects, the Nordic countries have acted as a single unit: *Norden*.

Social cohesion has been a leading principle in the Nordic co-operation. The social dimension of higher education was introduced in Norden 50 years before its appearance in the Bologna Process: All qualified applicants should have the possibility for higher education, irrespective of socio-economic conditions. There still are no tuition fees for Nordic students in the state-owned majority of higher education institutions, and each country has a well-functioning student support system, also supporting international mobility.

Free mobility of students between the Nordic countries has been in practice for decades.<sup>66</sup> In 1975, the *Sigtuna Agreement* guaranteed Nordic recognition of exams and degrees from Nordic institutions. In 1988, the *Nordplus* programme was introduced as a Nordic parallel to Erasmus. It introduced a new flow of exchange students between the Nordic countries, in addition to the traditional free movers who used to stay abroad until they had obtained their degree.

The Nordic co-operation in higher education culminated with the 1996 Agreement on Admission to Higher Education, between the five Nordic countries. The Nordic Council of Ministers then decided that there should be equal treatment in higher education for citizens of the various countries within Norden. It was made clear that as far as opportunities in higher education were concerned, the Nordic countries should operate as a single unit.

### 6.1 Nordic Association of Universities (1995)

In the university sector, informal networks had existed for a long time, with the exchange of students and scientists and joint publications as outcomes. Nordic university rectors' conferences had been organised regularly since 1948. Nordic university rectors were among those meeting in Cambridge, Dijon and Göttingen, establishing the Standing Conference of University Rectors (CRE).

In parallel with the development of the European co-operation, national rectors' conferences were established in each of the Nordic countries, developing over time into associations of higher education institutions:

Association of Swedish Higher Education,  
National Rectors' Conference in Iceland,  
Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions,  
Universities Denmark,  
Universities Finland.

As the 1994 Nordic Rectors' Conference was informed that a draft Agreement on Admission to Higher Education was being discussed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the rectors saw the need for a university involvement in the process. The *Association of Nordic University*

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<sup>66</sup> Per Nyborg, *European Journal of Education* Vol. 31, 1996

*Rectors' Conferences*, later called the *Nordic Association of Universities (NUS)*, was established in 1995, to link the national university networks and to establish a joint contact to the co-operation schemes set up by the Nordic Council of Ministers.<sup>67</sup>

The first challenge for NUS was to obtain access to documents prepared for the Nordic Council of Ministers by its secretariat. Traditionally, documents were for internal discussions, not for external information or external opinions. Minutes from meetings were only available half a year later – when ministers formally had approved them. After a few meetings with the secretariat it was much easier; informal orientation was simpler than formal. Building trust was essential. The secretariat could then discuss ideas with NUS representatives at an early stage – before drafting new documents for the ministers.

Meeting of ministers were the final stage in a discussion and decision process. Civil servants and experts from the five Nordic countries prepared the stage for the Council of Ministers. There were separate committees for research and for higher education: *The Steering Committee for Nordic Co-operation in Higher Education, HØGUT*, consisted of two members from each country, one from the ministry, one from one of the higher education institutions. *The Nordic Science Policy Council* also consisted of senior civil servants and experts.

Nordic research co-operation was to a large extent financing Nordic institutes established by the Council of Ministers. One of the challenges, as seen from the university side, was to convince the Science Policy Council and the ministers that co-operation between universities and research institutes in the Nordic countries could be an alternative to specialised Nordic institutes, most of them relatively small. University co-operation could for instance be very relevant for the training of young researchers in disciplines of special relevance to the Nordic countries, such as Nordic languages and literature.

The main theme for discussion with HØGUT, the committee for higher education, was the strategy for the committee's work, including the further development of the mobility programme Nordplus. Also here, a main point for NUS was to make the Nordic committee aware of the importance of co-operating institutions for student and staff mobility. Another important point was the interaction between education and research in the universities, easily missed by the two committees that each had a mandate for half of the total.

## 6.2 A strategy for Nordic co-operation in higher education and research (1999)

Then, in 1999, the Nordic Council of Ministers presented a strategy document on Nordic co-operation in research and higher education. Perhaps had the argumentation from NUS helped? The document entitled "The Nordic region as a pioneer for development of human resources"<sup>68</sup> saw – possibly for the first time – research and higher education in context.

The written comment from NUS to the Nordic Council of Ministers in December 1999 welcomed this common strategy for higher education and research. NUS had through informal contacts with the two advisory committees had the opportunity to follow the development of the document. NUS had previously expressed an opinion on the separate

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<sup>67</sup> P. Nyborg, *The Nordic University Association – The first years* (In Norwegian, 2014) unpublished (covers the whole of chapter 5)

<sup>68</sup> All documents were written in one of the Nordic languages.

strategies that now provided the basis for the common strategy. NUS saw the common strategy as a great improvement:

Our universities are dominant institutions in the Nordic countries in the field of higher education and research. They are, however, not mentioned in the new strategy document. We can understand that Ministers feels a particular responsibility for the research institutes operated by the Nordic Council of Ministers, but we will point out that collaborative projects between universities in the Nordic countries can create a Nordic synergy that may exceed the proceeds of a small Nordic institute.

In our statement to the Nordic Council of Ministers in April 1998 on “Nordic institutes in a new Nordic research policy”, we expressed concern over the shrinking appropriations to the Nordic research co-operation and warned that there would be a lower limit to the financial needs for a meaningful follow-up of the research strategy which had been adopted.

We agreed, however, that the Council of Ministers had managed to position the Nordic education and research collaboration in a European perspective through the co-operation with the Council of Europe's Committee for Higher Education and Research (Joint Conference on Regional co-operation in Higher Education, the Legislative Reform Programme in the Baltic). We also noted that priority had been given to the continuation of the institutes which also beyond our own circle were perceived as centres of excellence, i.e. Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (NORDITA) and Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law.

In a previous written comment of January 1998 to the Science Policy Council we agreed that the Nordic research co-operation in general should be realised through time-limited programs. We pointed out that time-limited programs preferably should be realised as collaboration between national institutions (universities, research institutes) with one of the institutions taking operational responsibilities.

Nordic research institutes must adapt to this master pattern. NUS has proposed; that in order to ensure a lasting continuation, individual Nordic institutes should be linked with a national host institution (e.g. a university) through a long-term agreement between the host institution and the Council of Ministers. In this way, the special competence of the Nordic institute may also actively be used for educational purposes.

In our March 1997 opinion on the document “HØGUT in a new era”, we pointed out that HØGUT with its dual composition of university representatives and senior officials has managed to find solutions that function well in the university system. Interaction between governmental strategies and institutional strategies may provide new synergies – even when funds are limited.

We have also had the opportunity to follow the development of HØGUT's strategic platform and the action plan for 1999-2000. We agree that this is a good basis for further work and for the interaction between HØGUT and the higher education system in the Nordic countries.

NUS has pointed out that the strength of future Nordic co-operation first of all will depend on our capacity for the coordination and division of labour, not only at Government level, but also between higher education institutions. With limited financial

means available through the Council of Ministers, Nordic support should be focused on activities with a clear Nordic relevance.

From the Nordic Association of Universities we will on this basis express satisfaction for the new strategy opening up for a better dialogue on higher education and research policies. We believe the Council of Ministers will see NUS as a key partner in this regard and that the Council of Ministers also will see institutional co-operation across borders as an element of the strategy for the Nordic educational and research co-operation.

For NUS, this was a basis for further communication with the Minister the Council's bodies in the subsequent period.

### **6.3 Nordic co-operation on centres of excellence and research training (2001)**

At a seminar organised by the Nordic Science Policy Council in September 2000, NUS representatives had expressed interest for doctoral education linked to the proposed Nordic centres of excellence. In December 2000, the Nordic Council of Ministers invited NUS to contribute to the Council's discussions concerning Nordic co-operation on centres of excellence and research training. The NUS Steering Committee replied in March 2001:

NUS has previously pointed out that the strength of the future Nordic co-operation first of all will be in our capacity for coordination and division of labour, not only at the Government level, but also between institutions of higher education. With limited financial means at their disposal through the Council of Ministers, Nordic centres of excellence would be relevant in fields such as Nordic languages, literature and history, Nordic social conditions and scientific research in the polar region. These are fields that are not central to the EU's research strategy and where a Nordic initiative will be both important and visible – both for its scientific value and in a political context.

NUS would strongly recommend that realisation of the centres is done on the basis of co-operation agreements between universities in the Nordic countries with highly qualified research groups in the selected fields.

The final version of the document from the Nordic Council of Ministers showed that ministers had taken note of the comments from the Nordic University Association.

### **6.4 European links**

#### **6.4.1 CRE and the Confederation**

The university rectors in the Nordic countries participated in the European Rectors' Conferences from the start and in the Standing Conference – CRE. The national rectors' conferences working together in NUS were also members of the Confederation. They saw the increasing need for a merger between CRE and the Confederation. In October 1997, the NUS steering group, with increasing impatience for a merger, sent a letter to the presidents of the two organisations:

Both in the CRE Board and Committee and in the Confederation Assembly, the possibility of a closer co-operation between CRE and the Confederation has been discussed. Our impression is that there is a positive attitude among delegates in these fora for a common initiative for the best of the universities in Europe.

The matter was also discussed recently at a meeting of the Association of Nordic University Rectors' Conferences, as all our member conferences are represented both in the CRE Committee and in the Confederation Assembly.

On behalf of the Rectors' Conferences in the Nordic countries, we would like to support a continued dialogue between our two organisations representing the European universities, hoping for an increased co-operation and possibly a merger. We will underline the need for one strong, common voice on behalf of the European universities, hoping that our two presidents will do their utmost to make this become a reality.

Organising joint working groups seems to us a sensible way to rationalise the efforts of the two organisations, giving at the same time the CRE Board and Committee and the Confederation Assembly a common platform for policy discussions and for further joint actions.

Nowadays, when previously competing airlines make alliances, may we hope that a European alliance in the university system may not be unrealistic.

It was not until March 2001 that CRE and the Confederation finally merged

#### 6.4.2 Meeting Hochschulrektorenkonferenz

For many years, the German *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK)* had been meeting its sister organisations in the Nordic countries. With NUS as a joint organisation for the five Nordic rectors' conferences, it was agreed that it would be more convenient to organise NUS-HRK meetings. The first joint meeting was held in Oslo in January 1999 with the following agenda:

##### 1 session: The national scene

National reports with special emphasis on:

- Trends in government policies for higher education and research
- New laws in the university sector
- Relations between the institutions and the ministry - Autonomy
- The leadership role of the Rector
- The economic situation of the universities
- Changes in student numbers and student interests

##### 2 session: The international scene

- The Sorbonne declaration. Consequences for national degree structures
- The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. - Possible impacts
- CRE/Confederation - possibilities for a «happy marriage»

##### 3 session: Nordic-German relations

- Student exchange. Status and possibilities
- Institutional co-operation. Status and possibilities

The next NUS-HRK meeting was held in Marburg in October 2000 with this agenda:

##### 1 session: The national scene

National reports with emphasis on:

- The role of national rectors' conferences: service organisations or political actors
- University autonomy vs. financial control by the ministry

##### 2 session: The international scene

- The Bologna process
- Higher education co-operation around the Baltic Sea

The joint memorandum pointed out that the meeting made visible the common challenges facing universities in all the countries: How to deliver more high quality teaching and research with limited budgets. It was agreed that greater freedom for the universities to organise their activities would be needed, but with full accountability and responsibility of the individual institution.

The meeting underlined the importance of the interaction of the universities and their national organisations with society, and the importance of forming alliances with other concerned parties – on local, regional and national levels - for the common voice of the universities to be heard.

The National Rectors' Conferences meeting in Marburg also agreed to co-operate on the European scene, both within the universities' own organisations and by influencing the further development of the Pan- European Bologna process.

The German and the Nordic Rectors' Conferences agreed that they would pay particular attention to an enhanced co-operation with the Baltic Rectors' Conferences, both by bilateral actions and by joint efforts.

### **6.4.3 Meeting with the Baltic Rectors' Conferences**

In October 2001 NUS met with the three Baltic Rectors' Conferences in Riga, to assist with the further development of these recently established national organisations. Also here a joint memorandum was agreed on:

National Rectors' Conferences are instrumental in the national and international co-operation of their member institutions. Co-operation between the Rector Conferences will facilitate co-operation between universities and colleges in the region. The Rector Conferences may also act as representatives for the higher education institutions in their home countries.

Strengthening regionalisation within European higher educational area is one of the tools for achieving common European system with real cultural variety represented by different autonomous higher educational institutions.

The meeting underlined the importance of the interaction of the universities and their national organisations with society, and the importance of forming alliances with other concerned parties – nationally and internationally - for the common voice of the universities to be heard.

### **6.4.4 The financing of higher education. A joint project with OECD**

In August 2001 a seminar on the financing of higher education was organised in Helsinki in co-operation with OECD:

In the context of changing relationships between national authorities and higher education institutions, this seminar will provide a forum for analysing and debating current issues in financing of higher education. The discussions will take place in the perspective of current pressures that take two main directions. On one hand ministries and other public funding agencies are required to cover more activities with unchanged or only slightly increasing financial resources. On the other hand higher education institutions, within this changing environment are expected to respond to new needs.

## 6.5 Nordic University Conferences

Nordic rectors' conferences had been organised since 1948, focussing mainly on academic matters. With NUS, the bi-annual conferences were redefined, focussing on university leadership. Attention shifted towards governance, higher education and research policies in a Nordic and a European setting and co-operation with government agencies and political decision-makers.

The 1996 conference in Jyväskylä focused on Nordic strategies in research and higher education. Representatives from HØGUT and the Nordic Science Policy Council participated.

The 1998 Stockholm conference had a European outlook, with invited speakers from non-Nordic countries:

- President Hans-Uwe Erichsen, Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences: Universities in Society – Mission, Effectiveness, Accountability
- Lord Ron Dearing: Shaping Our Future (Report of the Dearing Commission)

A joint meeting of NUS and the Nordic Science Policy Council followed the conference.

At the 2000 Århus conference, Ministers of Education from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden discussed institutional autonomy – “given that universities' independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge”. They had all participated in Bologna the previous year. In Århus, they demonstrated their willingness to pursue the co-operation with NUS and the national rectors' conferences.

## 6.6 A Nordic Space for Higher Education (2002)

The 2002 statement from the Tromsø conference underlined the importance of the Bologna process as one based on mutual understanding between governments and universities. On this basis the rectors confirmed their willingness to co-operate with national authorities to further the Bologna process in the Nordic countries.

The Nordic Rectors' Conferences, working together through the Nordic University Association (NUS), will actively contribute to mutual recognition and convergence in the Nordic Area and willingly share their experiences with regional networks in other parts of Europe as well as with other regions of the world. A first example is the co-operation with the Baltic Rectors' Conferences.

The university leaders meeting in Tromsø will assist in making the Nordic Space for Higher Education *an area of easy transition*. A first level degree from any Nordic country should be accepted as a sufficient formal platform for a second level degree in any other Nordic country, not only formally but also in practice. Ph.D.-programmes should be accessible from different degree structures.

*Research training*, should be a priority field for Nordic university co-operation. It is important to strengthen contacts between institutions and between research groups in the Nordic countries and to increase the mobility of researchers and Ph.D.-students.

In this way, the Nordic co-operation was seen as a regional co-operation within the European Higher Education Area. This has made Nordic co-operation easier, but it has also opened up for a wider internationalisation of higher education in the Nordic countries.

## 7 Co-operating in the Bologna Process

To start the work to achieve the objectives set by the Bologna Declaration, the EU Education Ministers in September 1999 decided to establish a steering group and a larger follow-up group (although the Bologna Conference was not a meeting organised by the European Union). After some restructuring by the ministers in Prague (2001) and Berlin (2003), the steering of the Bologna Process was taken care of by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES as consultative members.

In this way, the European universities, through CRE and the Confederation, teamed up with national authorities and the EU Commission for the follow-up of the Bologna Ministerial Conference; the Bologna Process. Instead of lobbying from the outside as interest groups, they were inside and partners in the steering of the process.

There were probably several reasons why this co-operation worked well:

In many countries (e.g. Norway), national rectors' conferences had developed a dialogue with national authorities, including the Minister of Education, that over the years had developed mutual understanding and trust.

During the 1990s, there had been increasing contacts between the Confederation and CRE with the EU Commission, not always without friction, but at least leading to a mutual understanding.

The regular meetings between the Confederation and national directors general responsible for higher education certainly helped to pave the way, as the same directors general would later meet as national representatives in the BFUG.

Many of the national academic representatives in CD-ESR were also active in CRE and the Confederation; the lists of participants would indicate that this could be ten or twelve out of some forty academics meeting in the Council of Europe committee.

Some of the national representatives in the BFUG, possibly eight to ten out of fifty, would also represent their ministries in CD-ESR.

Another very important factor was that the academic community over time had discussed all the relevant topics in the Bologna Process. Although the previous chapters only give examples, not the full history of meetings, projects and programmes since the first European University Rectors' Conference in 1955, Table 2 (next page) indicates how these topics have been treated over time in national and European fora.

In addition to traditional academic debates on research and education in universities, rectors discussed the challenges of rapidly increasing student numbers, the role of the university within the structure of higher education, university governance and university financing. They discussed conditions for staff and students. There was a clear focus on academic freedom and institutional autonomy already in Cambridge in 1955, culminating in Bologna in 1988.

All listed topics had been on the agendas of CRE and/or the Confederation, all topics, apart from European cohesion, had also been discussed by the Norwegian Rectors' Conference. Also the Council of Europe's Committee on Higher Education discussed most of the topics listed.

**Table 2: Topics discussed by university rectors' conferences<sup>69</sup> 1955 - 2000**

Research in universities: Cambridge 1955 (1.1), CRE (1.6), CoE (4.3.3), (4.3.5), (4.3.6), (4.5.4), Norw (5.1)
Education in universities: Dijon 1959 (1.2), Göttingen 1964 (1.3), CRE (1.6), CoE (4.3.1), (4.3.3), (4.3.5), Norw (5.1), (5.3.2)
Increasing student enrolment: Dijon 1959 (1.2), Göttingen 1964 (1.3), CRE (1.6), CoE (4.3.3), Norw (5.1), (5.2), (5.3.4)
The role of universities within the structure of higher education: CRE (1.6), (1.9), Norw (5.1.3), (5.3.2)
University staff: CRE (1.6), (1.9), CoE (4.3.1), (4.3.3), (4.4.2), Norw (5.1), (5.2.1), (5.2.2), (5.3.2)
University governance: Dijon 1959 (1.2), CRE (1.6), (1.9), Norw (5.1), (5.2.5)
Financing of universities: CRE (1.6), (1.9), CoE (4.4.3), (4.5.4), Norw (5.1), (5.2.6), Nord (6.4.4)
Access: CRE (1.6), CoE (4.3.4), (4.5.2), (4.6.1), Norw (5.1.1), Nord (6)
Recognition: LC (2.1), CoE (4.3.5), (4.5), (4.5.1), (4.6.1), Norw (5.1.2), Nord (6)
The social dimension: Cambridge 1955 (1.1), CoE (4.2), Norw (5.2.4), (5.3.1), Nord (6)
Quality assurance: CRE (1.8), (1.9), LC (2.2), Confed. (2.4), CoE (4.5), Norw (5.1.2), (5.1.3)
Foreign students: CRE (1.6), LC (2.1), CoE (4.3.4), (4.4), (4.4.1), Norw (5.3.1),
Mobility: Cambridge 1955 (1.1), CRE (1.6), (1.8), LC (2.1), (2.2), Confed (2.4.1), CoE (4.3.1), (4.3.3), (4.3.5), (4.4.1), (4.4.2), (4.5), (4.5.1), Norw (5.3), (5.3.2), Nord (6)
Training of researchers: LC (2.1), Confed (2.4.1), CoE (4.5.4), Norw (5.1), (5.2.3), (5.3.2), Nord (6.3)
Academic freedom and institutional autonomy: Cambridge 1955 (1.1), Bologna 1988 (1.8.1), CoE (4.3.3), (4.5), Norw (5.2.5)
Higher education and research policies: CRE (1.9), LC (2.1), (2.2), Confed. (2.4), (2.5), (2.6), CoE (4.3.3), (4.5.4), Norw (5.2.3), (5.3.2), (5.3.3), Nord (6.2), (6.3)
The role of the university in society: Cambr. 1955 (1.1), Dijon 1959 (1.2), Göttingen 1964 (1.3), CRE (1.6), (1.8), (1.9), LC (2.2), Norw (5.1.3)
European cohesion: Dijon 1959 (1.2), Göttingen 1964 (1.3), CRE (1.6), (1.9), CoE (4.4.4), (4.5), (4.6.1)

<sup>69</sup> Conferences in Cambridge, Dijon, Göttingen, CRE, Liaison Committee (LC), Confederation (Conf), Co-operation in the Council of Europe (CoE), Norway (Norw), Nordic countries (Nord). Numbers in brackets refer to the appropriate section in chapters 1-6.

Both nationally and with their European partners, rectors' conferences, developing into association of universities, studied challenges related to access, recognition, the social dimension, quality assurance and mobility of students and staff, the training of young researchers. They were in deed very well prepared for Bologna.

Both nationally and on European level, the associations of universities were engaged in policy discussions relating to higher education and research.

On this basis, the Confederation and CRE influenced a lot already in Bologna. The input from the Trends Report regarding a common degree structure with three main levels of qualifications and a European dimension in quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation, certainly contributed to the outcome of the conference. The reference in the Ministers' Declaration to the 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum also tied the universities to the follow-up: Ministers expected universities *to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of the endeavour*.

Also the Council of Europe became an important partner in the Bologna Process. The 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention was the only formally binding obligation for the participating countries. Over the first five years of the Bologna Process the number of ratifications increased from 9 to 36. The CD-ESR followed up the concept of public responsibility for higher education, introduced by the 2001 Ministerial Conference in Prague, also stressing the responsibility for realising the social dimension. The Council of Europe served as a bridge between those countries party to the Process and the remaining European countries that might benefit from the Process but were not party to it. For these candidate countries, this was an inspiration and a recipe for highly needed reforms in their higher education systems.

At the 2003 Ministerial Conference in Berlin, the Confederation and CRE - now together in EUA - had obtained full support for the inclusion of *doctoral studies* as an added Bologna action line. Based on the *Salzburg Principles* - recommendations from a Bologna Seminar organised by EUA in February 2005<sup>70</sup> - doctoral studies was followed up in the Communiqué from the 2005 Bergen Ministerial Conference<sup>71</sup>:

The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. Considering the need for structured doctoral programmes and the need for transparent supervision and assessment, we note that the normal workload of the third cycle in most countries would correspond to 3-4 years full time. We urge universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market. We need to achieve an overall increase in the numbers of doctoral candidates taking up research careers within the EHEA. We consider participants in third cycle programmes both as students and as early stage researchers.

The concept of *doctoral candidate* was introduced in the Salzburg Principles, inspired by the Norwegian decision that doctoral studies should be seen as early stage researchers (see subsection 5.2.3). Ministers in Bergen decided to see them *both* as students and as early stage researchers.

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<sup>70</sup> [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg\\_Report\\_final.1129817011146.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg_Report_final.1129817011146.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen_Communique1.pdf)

Before the 2005 Ministerial Conference in Bergen, several states in South-East Europe wanted to join the Bologna Process. They were told that their applications should contain information on how they would implement the principles and objectives of the declaration. While the Bologna Action Lines were obvious objectives, it was not equally obvious what were the main principles; principles that should be incorporated within the higher education system of each country. On the basis of the communiqués, the BFUG <sup>72</sup> came up with this list:

- International mobility of students and staff;
- Autonomous universities;
- Student participation in the governance of higher education;
- Public responsibility for higher education;
- The social dimension of the Bologna Process.

Applicant states were requested to confirm their respect for these principles in their applications. These were all principles close to the heart of the academic representatives in the BFUG.

These examples illustrate how ideas, principles and objectives discussed by university leaders during fifty years came together with the responsibility of governments to further develop higher education in Europe and in each individual country. European universities gained influence through their national associations, through EUA – the European University Association, and through the concerted actions of the Bologna Process.

However, as of 2015, the Bologna Process has lost some of its momentum. The Council of Europe's Committee on Higher Education and Research is only history. The EU Commission is now the strongest driving force in European higher education. One reason for the loss of momentum may be that the European Ministers of Education once more took the easy way out: no direct commitment. Forty years previously, they counted on the assistance from the Council of Europe. In the Bologna Process, they count on the assistance from the next hosting country for their conference. Whereas university rectors over time learned that meetings are not enough to change a system – you need your own dedicated organisation – European Ministers of Education may perhaps never learn.

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<sup>72</sup> BFUG Board Meeting 14 July 2004

## Annex 1: The development of higher education in Norway

Norway's first university - the University of Oslo - was founded in 1811, three years before the country's independence from Denmark. By 1938 there were 4 200 students at the university, the total number of students in the country then being 5 600, as specialised institutions for agriculture, veterinary medicine, dentistry, theology, technology and business studies had been established. The University of Bergen was founded in 1948, but as late as in 1956, the total number of students at Norwegian higher education institutions was not higher than it had been in 1938, i.e. 5 600.

The expansion started in 1957, the year of *Sputnik*. In 1960 the number of students in Norway had reached 9 600, a 70 % increase over four years and no indication of a flattening out. The increased demand for places at universities could not be explained only by a higher number of candidates from the relevant age groups and a response to growing employment options. In Norway, as in many other countries, it was probably also a result of the population's higher social and cultural expectations.

There was now a need for planning higher education development, by the authorities and in the institutions. On the national scene, a commission was set up, chaired by State Secretary Per Kleppe from the Ministry of Finance. The 1961 report from this commission estimated a need for 30 000 study places by 1970, but deemed such an expansion unrealistic and advised Government to build a "normal capacity" of 18 000 by 1970. This was followed up by a White Paper in 1962 and approval by Parliament (Stortinget) the next year.

By 1970 there were more than 30 000 students in Norway and still no indication of flattening out. The next national commission, appointed already in 1965 with Kristan Ottosen, founding father of student services in Norway, as Chair, was given a much wider mandate than its predecessor,

- to propose ways and means for better use of study time and capacity;
- to consider alternatives to the university institutions for lower level education;
- to consider alternatives to the traditional long university studies;
- to estimate capacity needs in a long term perspective.

In the period 1966-70, the Ottosen Commission produced five reports, the first one estimating a need for 100 000 study places by 1985. The next one proposed a three-cycle main structure for university degrees, the first two cycles of 4 years and 2 years duration respectively. Life-long learning was also introduced in higher education. The third report advocating a system of regional state colleges for professional training and short cycle higher education courses was an immediate success and the first regional colleges began operations in 1969. New teaching methods were proposed, focusing on what we 40 years later would call learning outcomes and competences. Contents and quality of study programmes should be an institutional responsibility. A credit system should simplify transfer between institutions (including transfers from colleges to universities). The social dimension of higher education was introduced: All qualified applicants should have the possibility for higher education, irrespective of socio-economic conditions.

The follow-up of the total Ottosen package came in a White Paper to Parliament in 1973. However, a change of government resulted in a withdrawal of that document and the production of a new one and finally a full discussion in Parliament in 1975.

By then many proposals of the Ottosen Commission had already been realised by the Ministry of Education and by the higher education institutions themselves. The Commission's estimate of 100 000 study places was reduced to 80 000 by Government and Parliament. Traditional training of teachers, nurses and other groups was upgraded to higher education, but it took another twenty years to merge the small professional schools with the new regional colleges. Still, a binary higher education system was the outcome. Student numbers reached 100 000 in the mid-1980s, with approximately 50 000 study places in the university sector and another 50 000 in the college sector.

After that, it was time for a new national commission. This commission, chaired by Professor Gudmund Hernes, later Minister of Education and Research, gave its recommendations to the Government in 1988. It was followed up by a White Paper to Parliament in 1991. The policy drawn up by Hernes in the White Paper was based on a binary system of interacting institutions ("Network Norway") with a university sector and a college sector, each institution being under Ministerial supervision of its educational programmes. As a national system of higher education, it was more centralised than what the university sector had previously experienced.

The follow-up of the Hernes Commission brought many improvements to Norwegian higher education: With Network Norway, transfer of credits and recognition of previous learning became necessities, institutional co-operation was stimulated, and organised doctoral programmes were introduced for the third cycle. Quality of teaching and research came into focus. Internationalisation was to be an external dimension of Norwegian higher education. On one occasion Minister Hernes told students: Do your country a favour – leave!

A continued expansion of the higher education system was necessary to cope with the rapidly increasing number of young students queuing for admission. By 1997, the student count was over 170 000. Then, the number of new students started to decline. So did the budgets of higher education institutions. Later, student numbers increased again, but slower than previously. Higher education budgets grew even slower.

During the 1980s and 1990s the binary system was eroded by a sequence of decisions in Parliament, giving colleges the right to develop secondary, research-based degrees, to hire professors and to take part in the training of researchers, to engage in fundamental as well as applied research, and placing universities and colleges under a common law in 1995. After a change of government, the new Minister of Education gave additional concessions to the state colleges, including the right to some colleges to award doctoral degrees in special fields. As he also decided that state colleges might be called university colleges and that such institutions might be upgraded to universities, little was left of the binary system when the next commission submitted its report to the Minister of Education and Research in May 2000. This commission was chaired by Professor Ole Mjøs, former Rector of the University of Tromsø and former President of the Norwegian Council of Universities.

When the Mjøs Commission started its deliberations in 1998, it was apparent that challenges from the private sector had rendered the legal and economic framework for state higher education institutions obsolete, hindering contract activities and co-operation with external institutions. Stronger university leadership was also needed.

While the commission was still sitting, ministers responsible for higher education in 29 European countries met in Bologna in 1999. This certainly influenced the Norwegian process

and the report from the Mjøøs Commission was in many respects a fusion of national development, signals from Bologna and a dash of market liberalism. For the higher education institutions, the outcomes would clearly be of great importance.

The objectives of the resulting Norwegian policy on higher education – the Quality Reform – as defined in the 2001 White Paper, very strongly involved the HE institutions, making it clear that higher education is a public responsibility and an element in national politics, and that HE institutions are *partners* in the realisation of a national policy:

- to offer everybody the possibility for personal development,
- to take care of and further develop our common competence and culture,
- to strengthen democracy and contribute to a critical dialogue,
- to educate candidates for industry, the social sector, education and research,
- to contribute to the building of social structures and solidarity,
- to strengthen co-operation with the international community,
- to develop new knowledge and new answers in the various sectors of society,
- to develop equity between men and women,
- to contribute to regional development and regional policies.

In the White Paper it was stated that the current form of organisation of higher education did not provide universities and colleges with sufficient freedom and responsibility to achieve the overall *national* objectives: Educational institutions are expected to deal with a number of tasks of importance for the country's culture, welfare, environment, economy and democracy. At the same time they are required to contribute to education and research of immediate benefit to working life in both public and private sectors. These goals and requirements implied a clearer definition of the degree of autonomy that educational institutions were allowed.

A revision of the Law on Universities and Colleges was proposed by Government and decided by Parliament in 2002. It was a leaner law than its predecessor, delegating more decision power to the institutions. Three years later (2005) it was superseded by the Law on Higher Education (state and private) giving institutions even more autonomy, but at the same time also more responsibility and accountability. The outcome was that Norwegian HE institutions obtained the autonomy they had asked for: The institution appoints its professors, admits its students, decides its study programmes, is responsible for the quality of its programmes, and receives a lump sum budget from the state in addition to income from contracts with state agencies and private industry. State institutions are still administrative agencies, but with special and extended powers. In all institutions, an Executive Board (a majority of members being elected internally) is the highest authority. An elected Rector chairs the Executive Board, if not the Board by 2/3 majority decides to *appoint* a Rector. The Rector will then be *Secretary* to the Board and responsible to the Board for the management of the institution. Both models are in operation.

The assumption of the Ministry for Education and Research was that the Quality Reform should be financed by higher efficiency in universities and colleges. However, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions pointed out to the Parliamentary Committee that the proposed improvements in teaching and learning would have a much higher cost. Parliament decided that extra resources should be given to the higher education institutions to make the Quality Reform operational. The State budget for 2003 included such resources and this was followed up in later budgets until the agreed level had been reached, but only to be cut back in 2006 after a change of government.

With increased autonomy, much of the follow-up was left to institutions, for instance the development of new study programmes and new teaching methods. The development work started immediately after the Parliamentary decision in 2001 and the Reform was operational as from the academic year 2003-2004.

Bachelor and Master's degrees were introduced, not by law, but by Government decision. A national grading system with A, B, C, D, E for passed and F for failed and the use of a Diploma Supplement are prescribed by the law. A credit accumulation system is in operation. All students shall have a plan of study and better contact between the institution and the individual students is envisaged.

Higher education institutions now have their own systems for quality assurance. The development of a quality culture within institutions is considered to be of the highest importance. An independent national body for accreditation and evaluation (NOKUT) started operations in 2003 to oversee institutional quality and to accredit institutions and study programmes. For institutions that do not follow up on standards, NOKUT can withdraw accreditation.

On the outset, the four existing universities were considered to be accredited as institutions, with the right to establish new programmes in any field and at any level without the need for programme accreditation. State colleges in the same way have a right to establish new programmes in any field at Bachelor level. Institutions may seek programme accreditation on higher levels and they may also be upgraded to universities by a special accreditation procedure. Private institutions may operate on the basis of programme accreditation in special fields. They may also apply for institutional accreditation as college or university.

In this way, national higher education policies and the Bologna Process came together in the Norwegian Quality Reform. Institutions and their umbrella organisation have been and still are important partners in the process.

An independent evaluation of the Quality Reform has been carried out, the 2007 report and the following White Paper to Parliament concludes that great changes have taken place in Norwegian higher education since the new system became operational in 2003. A large number of new study programmes have been introduced at Bachelor and Master level, in universities as well as in university colleges. Learning outcomes are gradually having more attention than input; the average production of credits is increasing. Students are on the whole satisfied with the new system. Four institutions have been upgraded to universities by the new accreditation procedures. There has been an important expansion in research training at PhD level (third cycle) and research production has increased, even though university professors there is now less time available for research, as teaching is more time-consuming.

Student numbers have steadily increased, reaching 200 000 in 2001 and 250 000 in 2014.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> <http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/statistikk/>