

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UTRECHT NETWORK

ANTWERPEN, 26 AND 27 MARCH, 1993

Participants:

Poul Bonde (Aarhus), Dorte Nielsen (Aarhus), Patricia de Clopper (Antwerpen), Suzanne Wouters (Antwerpen), Lisbeth Hoefkens (Antwerpen), Bjorn Einar Aas (Bergen), Manfred Netekoven (Bochum), Gerd Stratmann (Bochum), Felicia La Pietra (Bologna), Gianni Galloni (Bologna), Maria Filomena Marques de Carvalho (Coimbra), Piaras Mac Einri (Cork), Richard Craven-Green (Hull), Philip Morgan (Hull), Svend Poller (Leipzig), Béatrice Delpouve (Lille), Kersti Schmölder (Lund), Paula Karlström (Lund), Carlos Seoane (Madrid), Ingeborg Kunath (Madrid), Gérard Clady (Strasbourg I), Christian Civardi (Strasbourg II), Marc Arnold (Strasbourg III), Costas Kastritsis (Thessaloniki), Jeroen Torenbeek (Utrecht, chairman), Hetty Winkel (Utrecht), Bettina Nelemans (Utrecht, minutes), Julia Miles (Utrecht), Wessel Meyer (Utrecht H.K.U.).

Apologies for absence were received from: George Veiga (Coimbra)

Agenda

Friday, 26 March

1. Welcome and practical matters
2. State of the art
3. Budgetary matters
4. Utrecht Network statement
5. Working groups;
 - a. Structure of the Network
 - b. TEMPUS
 - c. Co-operation with Third World countries
 - d. Practical issues

Saturday, 27 March

6. Group sessions discussion
7. Expansion of the Network
8. Future plans/Human Capital and Mobility/U.S.A.
9. Reports and Queries/Election New Member of Steering Committee

FRIDAY, 26 MARCH

1. WELCOME AND PRACTICAL MATTERS

Jeroen Torenbeek welcomes everybody at the annual meeting of the Utrecht Network 1993, this year held in Antwerpen. Apologies were received from Jorge Veiga from Coimbra, but he is

represented by his successor Maria Filomena Marques de Carvalho. The newcomers are warmly welcomed. An introduction to all participants follows.

Patricia de Clopper and her two colleagues are thanked for the excellent organisation and their hospitality.

The agenda is set for the meeting.

2.STATE OF THE ART

EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION/ERASMUS/THE UTRECHT NETWORK

*Bettina Nelemans gives an introductory presentation on the present state of European Higher Education. The effects of the EC-Memorandum on Higher Education are discussed, the main theme being 'An Open Space for Higher Education'. So far the Memorandum has already resulted in a gradual merging of EC-programmes. Evidence can be found in the fact that there is now one EC-commissioner for education and research: Mr Ruberti.

*Although it is certain that the ERASMUS programme will be continued after 1994 (there is still a steady increase in the number of applications that are submitted every year), its form is less certain. It is heard that all ICPs (including our own) enter the last year of this cycle in 1993/1994. Although a number will be renewed for one more year, multi-annual renewal is unlikely since priority will be given to new applications. As this may have serious implications for the Utrecht Network, a different perspective must be drawn up for the submission of a new application (e.g.: USA, research).

*An overview is given of the development of the Utrecht Network since its establishment in 1987. In addition to quantity (i.e.: the constant increase of institutions and students) the importance of quality is underlined. The success of last year's TEMPUS-application is mentioned. At last year's meeting in Aarhus plans for the future included the extension of the Network to the U.S.A.; greater participation in Human Capital and Mobility; and the drawing up of a Utrecht Network Statement. This year a new point on the agenda is co-operation with Third World countries.

Finally an outline of the ECTS scheme is given since academic recognition is crucial when it comes to improving the quality of exchange programmes. An evaluation enquiry carried out by Coopers and Lybrand has shown that the EC-pilot project is successful and that more institutions need to be encouraged to use ECTS. A number of law faculties at Dutch universities have recently started their own ECTS-pilot-programme. Perhaps the time has come to gradually incorporate the principles of ECTS into the Utrecht Network.

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The discussion on possibilities concerning a new angle for the Network is opened to the participants.

It is agreed that the Network must not remain to function purely on a student mobility level but must combine research and education and broaden its horizon into more diversified directions. In order to ensure continuation of the Network the working groups need to focus on setting up new strategies and think of ways to implement those. On the other hand though, our policy should not be entirely Brussels-dictated. A common feeling of unease is aroused by the fact that first the EFTA-countries are invited to join our Network and next we may have to tell them that

due to a lack of support from Brussels our collaboration has to come to an end.

The importance of the mutual recognition of grades and credit points is acknowledged. It was suggested that if individual exchange students do not get paid their grants until they have acquired 'prerecognition of credits' according to the ECTS-principles, it would be easier to enforce academic recognition within ICPs.

It is agreed that changes to the perspective on the Network's aims must be made step by step with continual discussion at all levels with partners.

\*Jeroen Torenbeek explains the recent plans of the EC for an ERASMUS-type programme with the U.S.A. The deadline for applications will be the end of May. It is heard that the EC has already decided to give the programme one million ECU. In order to be able to participate in this programme the Network may have to present itself initially in one field, i.e. American and European Studies.

\*Hetty Winkel gives a brief report on the present state of the Utrecht Network TEMPUS JEP. Recently all local co-ordinators have received a copy of the interim report and renewal application. The number of students exchanged up until now is not very different from the original number that was mentioned in the contract. However, due to the late start of the project (which had to do with the late announcement of approval by Brussels), not all the grant-months will be spent. A shift from student grants to staff grants is possible if concrete proposals are made (who goes where for how long and why etc.). Another point of discussion is the future of the JEP after the three-year period. A mere exchange of students, however well organised, might in itself not be important enough in view of the overall objectives of TEMPUS (supporting the development and improvement of higher education in the EC/Europe, priority areas, participation of industry etc.). We will also have to consider a possible participation in the TACIS programme (TEMPUS for the former Soviet republics), using the existing links between Network universities and Russian universities as a basis.

The next TEMPUS meeting will be held in Budapest, from 3 June until 6 June. As for the TEMPUS meeting next year: it seems advisable - in view of the costs - to try and combine the ERASMUS and TEMPUS meeting of the Utrecht Network in Madrid in 1994.

### **3.BUDGETARY MATTERS/Action I**

It seems that there will be no Action I money left at the end of this academic year. Even if a little remains it is probably counterproductive to divide this between five or more partners who are in need of higher funding. Instead, the money will be used for the development of new working groups and the production of material for the presentation of the Network (the infopackage). It is suggested that as of the beginning of the next academic year, part of the flexibility-fund will be used for universities on the periphery of Europe (like Ireland) since they have long distances to travel (study visits/staff mobility).

From the beginning of the next financial year there will be a limit on the number of staff-mobility weeks for which funding can be requested. So far, institutions have always been able to apply for as many weeks as they wanted to (exact figures will be set at the next steering committee meeting in September).

Since people have had difficulties in identifying funds they received, it is agreed that Utrecht will send an accompanying fax informing the partner that Utrecht Network money has been transferred.

Bettina Nelemans urges everybody to keep invoices for at least five years, as Brussels is getting more severe and regularly demands proof of payments that have been carried out.

#### **4.UTRECHT NETWORK STATEMENT**

The Utrecht Network Statement, prepared by Manfred Nettekoven and Gerd Stratmann from Bochum, is discussed. The wording is amended to achieve a realistic illustration of the Network's activities and aims. All agree on the final draft of the statement. The idea was put forward to have the statement translated into other languages.

So far we have always been a reasonably informal network (which is part of our strength). This charter, however, is a formal document that will give us a more distinct profile. At the same time it should not give too detailed a description of what the Utrecht Network entails, because after all we want to stay dynamic and be in a position in which we can be flexible and adapt to changing conditions.

The statement will be printed attractively and consecutively presented to the Rectors of the partner universities at the CRE to sign. An alternative would be to ask the institutional coordinators to sign first and then take it to their respective rectors for a signature. A copy of the Utrecht Network award will be enclosed.

#### **5.WORKING GROUPS**

The participants are divided into four working groups and spend two hours discussing the following topics of importance:

##### **a) Structure of the Network**

1. Gerd Stratmann; 2. Jeroen Torenbeek; 3. Beatrice Delpouve; 4. Patricia de Clopper; 5. Gianni Galloni; 6. Piaras Mac Einri; 7. Philip Morgan; 8. Svend Poller; 9. Manfred Nettekoven.

##### **b) TEMPUS**

1. Hetty Winkel; 2. Maria Filomena Marques de Carvalho; 3. Ingeborg Kunath; 4. Julia Miles.

##### **c) Cooperation with third world countries**

1. Henk van Rinsum (Utrecht University); 2. Marc Arnold; 3. Bjorn Einar Aas; 4. Carlos Seoane; 5. Costas Kastritsis; 6. Paul Bonde; 7. Suzanne Wouters; 8. Wessel Meijer; 9. Gérard Clady; 10. Christian Civardi.

##### **d) Practical issues**

1. Kersti Schmölder; 2. Paula Karlström; 3. Richard Craven-Green; 4. Dorte Nielsen; 5. Felicia La Pietra; 6. Lisbeth Hoefkens; 7. Bettina Nelemans.

#### **SATURDAY, 27 MARCH**

Jeroen Torenbeek welcomes everyone at the second day of the meeting after a cultural evening in Antwerpen. Apologies for absence were received from Wessel Meyer and Suzanne Wouters. The discussion groups will report on what was discussed/concluded on Friday. It is announced that Carlos Seoane has put himself forward for election for the steering committee.

## 6.DISCUSSION OF GROUP SESSIONS

### a) Structure of the Network

Gerd Stratmann reports on the discussion on the structure of the Network.

\*It is of the utmost importance that a distinction is made between the Utrecht Network-partners on the one hand and the TEMPUS-partners on the other hand. Even though the two groups co-operate and are interlinked to some extent, they do have a different status. The TEMPUS-institutions have not gone through the normal selection procedure of receiving two steering committee-members who then consider the possibility of inviting the institution to join the Network. Another aspect is that the TEMPUS-institutions and the ERASMUS-institutions have a separately organised financial structure. The internal management of the two networks is also different, the Utrecht Network for example, has a steering committee, whereas the TEMPUS-Network, to date, has not (although this will be set up at the meeting in Budapest).

\*In the recent light of uncertainty with regard to its future, the Network must use her creativity to survive. Somehow it must be demonstrated that problems are recognised and tackled and that what is needed to be done is being done.

Incorporating ECTS within the Network would be good, but hard to materialise. For the whole plan to succeed, time, funding, and, last but not least, commitment, are vital components. Only a limited number of subject areas should be involved, since it would not be feasible at this stage to introduce the ECTS-principles and procedures on too large a scale. Primary action that needs to be undertaken is for all partners already participating in ECTS, to send their catalogues to the Utrecht Network colleagues. Another important step that could be taken is to approach and try and stimulate deans and directors of departments and faculties to use ECTS. Madrid and Utrecht will co-ordinate the first steps towards a gradual integration of ECTS within the Utrecht Network.

### b. TEMPUS

Hetty Winkel reports on the TEMPUS working group. The discussion was chiefly focussed on the experiences with JEP 4547 during the past half year and it revolved around four areas: selection of students, information on study possibilities, staff mobility and practical issues.

#### i. Selection

It is generally felt that there is a lack of transparency in the way Eastern universities select their students for the TEMPUS JEP. This point will be raised at the Budapest meeting.

#### ii. Information

A crucial factor in a multi-disciplinary framework exchange programme like ours is adequate information on the study possibilities and requirements at the host universities. In order to smoothen the selection and acceptance process and to avoid disappointment for students who cannot be placed after all, the criteria for acceptance and limits of the host universities need to be considered carefully and these have to be included in the update of the Utrecht Network-infopackage.

#### iii. Staff mobility

As a result of the discussions of the October meeting last year, the number of staff exchanges have been increased in the application for 1993/94. As for the remaining staff exchanges this year, it could be advisable to organise study visits for institutional co-ordinators or

international relations officers to discuss bilaterally the student exchanges in general or in specific study areas in order to improve the exchange procedures.

#### iv. Practical issues

In a number of cases there were problems with transferring the grants. The main difficulty is the timing. It was agreed that the grants would be transferred to the host university once the confirmation of the students' stay was received. This means that quite often the student has already arrived at the host university before the grant has reached the account of the university. It also means many administrative and financial actions that are time-consuming and involve extra costs. A different procedure ought to be considered by which the major part of the grants for the students that are expected (according to the contract) are transferred to the receiving universities at the beginning of the year. Before the end of the year the actual grants used can be drawn up and either reimbursed to Utrecht or a claim for more money can be made by the host university. This would limit the financial transactions between Utrecht and the JEP partners to two. This will also be an item on the agenda of the TEMPUS meeting.

As far as the application form is concerned: some network universities have their own application form for TEMPUS-students. This is no problem, as long as the first page of the JEP form will also be filled out for the administrative and financial processing.

#### c. Third World Issues

Bjorn Einar Aas reports on Henk van Rinsum's (Utrecht) statement on the Development Co-operation programme of Utrecht in general and more in particular on the UNITWIN-network for Southern Africa.

It is important to expand the information available on the existing relations between institutions and to discover which themes of education are involved. The exploration of new universities was not discussed. However, constructive ideas were contributed concerning existing relations with Third World universities amongst the partners. Aarhus has connections with Nepal which should be built upon. Madrid has a bilateral agreement with Cairo University which is proving to be difficult to maintain due to differences in administration and co-operation. More information with regard to bilateral co-operation of each Utrecht Network partner with Third World partners is deemed necessary to assess the possibility of networking amongst the Utrecht Network partners.

The UNITWIN-network could function as a model to encourage more co-operation. Bochum and Utrecht have already worked together to form a link with Namibia.

Bochum, Bergen, Utrecht and Lund have formed a group for Third World universities.

It is heard that more partners are welcome to join, although it must be remembered that each country functions differently.

#### d. Practical Issues

Richard Craven-Green reports back on what was discussed in the working party on Practical Issues.

##### i. Application Forms

It has somehow turned out to be impossible to draw up one common application form for the whole of the Network. The majority of the institutions need to stick to their own forms, for one reason or another. Therefore it is thought that perhaps it is easier to list a number of data which should be included in all application forms anyway. It is then up to the individual university whether it wants to add any further questions.

The following information then, needs to be in all application forms:

- name
- address
- date of birth
- home university
- name of tutor responsible (home university)
- academic background (courses taken at home university)
- courses for which student wants to enrol
- special examinations
- does student want to take language courses
- if student requires accommodation to be found

#### ii. Application Procedures

Students should apply through the International Office at their own university instead of the department. The number of students which can be accepted in a specific department must be communicated beforehand. A list of departments that will not accept exchange students or which will ask students to fulfil certain requirements, is needed from all partner universities.

#### iii. Language Courses

Introductory language courses are usually free of charge at the host university, advanced courses are not. Hull does it the opposite way. Denmark has the course funded in another way.

#### iv. Information

It is emphasised again that all partners should send each other information and detailed study guides as this will considerably decrease the number of students writing letters to future host universities inquiring about certain courses. The Utrecht Network infopackage should be available at every International Office. The use of E-Mail between partners will be increased.

#### v. Accommodation

Students should be told whether accommodation is arranged by the host university or not. It is stressed by a number of people that institutions have to make every effort they can to find accommodation for their exchange students.

#### vi. Visas

For most countries there have been no problems with visas. For Sweden the student must show his letter of acceptance at the university and in Denmark the student may have to wait for a while after applying.

#### vii. Health

Although the E-III covers basic health insurance costs, there are possibilities for personal insurance. The student must also be insured for personal liability.

#### viii. Credits

Everyone felt that a standardised credit system would greatly facilitate the acknowledgement of students' grades after having returned from the host university.

## **7. EXPANSION OF THE NETWORK**

Last year in Aarhus the expansion of the Network was discussed and it was decided that one Austrian, one Swiss, and possibly one Finnish university should be chosen to join the Network. This year visits were made to two universities in Austria and to two in Switzerland. Poul Bonde and Jeroen Torenbeek visited the Swiss universities of Geneva (Université de Genève) and Basel (Universität Basel) and Gerd Stratmann and Jeroen Torenbeek visited the Austrian Universities

of Graz (Karl-Franzens Universität Graz) and Vienna (Universität Wien).

After long and careful consideration it is decided that both the universities of Basel and Graz will be invited to join the Network as of the beginning of the academic year 1994/1995.

One of the reasons why the decision was made in favour of Basel is that this university already has considerable experience with ERASMUS and ECTS. As far as Graz is concerned, this university applied to become a member of the Network about a year ago. In Austria, Graz is known to be the most successful ERASMUS institution, participating in 29 ICP's. The international relations office seems to be very well organised. The infrastructure at central level at both Basel and Graz is set up in such a way that operating a multi-discipline network, like the Utrecht Network, will most probably be relatively easy. The two universities will be invited to come to both the TEMPUS-meeting in Budapest in June and the next Utrecht Network-meeting in Madrid next year.

The meeting regrets that Genève and Vienna cannot be welcomed to the Network, but a number of individual institutions express their wish to continue working with those universities in the future.

#### Future expansion

A high number of Utrecht Network partners have already established links with Finnish institutions (most students are exchanged on a 'free-mover' base). Two delegates of the steering committee (Poul Bonde and Jeroen Torenbeek) will visit the universities of Helsinki and Turku Abo in the coming year.

### **8.FUTURE PLANS/HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY/U.S.A.**

#### I. U.S.A.

On the whole the Network institutions seem to be interested in the idea of setting up a programme with the U.S.A. A number of ideas are brought up such as establishing a joint Masters degree or a certificate in joint European Studies (the key concepts of which being: harmonization of grading systems and the integration of courses at different universities). Even though this can be done within bilateral agreements, it is probably much more interesting to have more universities involved and it goes without saying that advantage should be taken of already existing contacts. For the time being the emphasis shall have to be on a limited number of disciplines, of which American and European Studies seem the most obvious since the subject area will appeal to a wide range of students, not only to the American but also to our own Network students. Two prerequisites for the whole project to be able to succeed are: 1. institutions have to be prepared to set up courses in English; 2. tuition fees have to be waived. The willingness to teach courses in English is quite big. Most universities expect to be able to offer courses in English within the near future (if they are not doing so already).

It is agreed to form a working party that will look into the possibilities of setting up a programme primarily aimed at students from the U.S.A. offering three to four units of study at various universities in Europe using already existing English courses. The people who will participate in this working party are: Christian Civardi, Patricia de Clopper, Richard Craven-Green, Jeroen Torenbeek and Gerd Stratmann.

#### II. Human Capital and Mobility

Although Human Capital and Mobility is not always administered by the International Office



itself, it plays a large role in internationalisation. This EC-research programme in a way fills the gap between Student Mobility and Teaching Staff Mobility. It is expected that within ten years time there will be a rating and ranking list of higher education institutions. It is needless to say that good academic work will remain to play an important role, but participation in networks is also getting more and more important and the same goes for the recognition of research institutes.

The programme consists of:

1. Individual grants for postdocs;
2. Networks for scientific research;
3. Contribution to expensive equipment;
4. High quality institutions.

Following the increasing international trend, it will be necessary to focus on the single researcher's participation in the Network in the future.

### **9.REPORTS & QUERIES/ELECTION NEW MEMBER OF STEERING COMMITTEE**

Gerd Stratmann gives his warmest thanks to Jorge Veiga (Coimbra) for his unique enthusiasm and hard work within the Network over the last few years. He also thanks Kathelijne van Kammen (Utrecht) and welcomes Bettina Nelemans.

Carlos Seoane is elected as member of the Steering Committee. He will replace Jorge Veiga.

#### **Next Utrecht Network Meeting**

As the tradition of the Network is to hold the meeting alternatively in the North, Middle and South, the next meeting is to be in the South. Ingeborg Kunath and Carlos Seoane offer to organise it in Madrid. The meeting will encompass both the Utrecht Network and TEMPUS with the TEMPUS-partners arriving one day later. The expected dates for the meeting are 24, 25, 26, 27 March 1994.

Bettina Nelemans reminds all participants that the reimbursement forms with a photocopy of the ticket must be sent to Utrecht as soon as possible. The deadline for the student flows (1992/1993) is 15 May 1993.