

**REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UTRECHT NETWORK
STRASBOURG
26 AND 27 APRIL 1996**

Participants:

Utrecht Network

Poul Bonde (Aarhus), Patricia de Clopper (Antwerpen), Piet van Hove (Antwerpen), Gerald Zimmermann (Basel), Björn Einar Aas (Bergen), Ingrid Bernt (Bergen), Uli Haake (Bochum), Manfred Nettekoven (Bochum), Monica Sprung (Bochum), Maria Bentini (Bologna), Gianni Galloni (Bologna), Lucilia Fereirra (Coimbra), Isabel Texeira (Coimbra), Louise Tobin (Cork), Ulrike Pölzl (Graz), Kaija Pajala (Helsinki), Päivi Tauriainen (Helsinki), Michael Wintle (Hull), Vincent Cordonnier (Lille), Beatrice Delpouve (Lille), Katja Cerjak (Ljubljana), Ingeborg Kunath (Madrid), Carlos Seoane (Madrid), Svend Poller (Leipzig), Kersti Schmölder (Lund), Renee Valeri (Lund), Ragnar Kristjansson Thóra Magnúsdóttir (Reykjavik), Gérard Clady (Strasbourg I), Monique Flasaquier (Strasbourg I), Christian Civardi (Strasbourg II), Danielle Alexandre (Strasbourg I), Marc Arnold (Strasbourg III), Marjanne Paardekooper (Utrecht H.K.U.), Despina Vokou (Thessaloniki), Jeroen Torenbeek (Utrecht, chairman) Bettina Nelemans (Utrecht, minutes).

Observers

David Colburn (University of Florida), Richard Downie (University of Florida), Joel Glassman (University of Missouri at St Louis), Richard Kuehl (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale), Barry Michie (Kansas State), Boyan Lomev (Sofia), Algimantas Lipinaitis (Vilnius), Laima Bakiene (Vilnius)

1. Welcome and practical matters

Jeroen Torenbeek welcomes everybody to the annual meeting of the Utrecht Network 1996, this year held in Lund. The newcomer, the university of Ljubljana, is warmly welcomed. David Colburn, Richard Downie, Joel Glassman, Richard Kuehl and Barry Michie, will attend the ERASMUS part of the meeting as observers.

Jeroen Torenbeek expresses his gratitude to Gerard Clady, Christian Civardi, Marc Arnold, the Presidents of their universities, and their colleagues for the excellent organisation and their generous hospitality.

The agenda is set for the meeting.

2. State of the Art

Utrecht Network

Bettina Nelemans gives a presentation on what the Utrecht Network has achieved in the past few years and what it is hoping to accomplish in the future. The complete text is included in these minutes as an Appendix (Appendix I).

* statistics: In 1994/1995 as many as 466 students were exchanged within 20 institutions, an increase of 15% in comparison with the previous year. Both Basel and Graz joined the ICP last academic year, and Helsinki and Reykjavik have officially joined the Erasmus part of the Utrecht Network in 1995/1996.

* involvement: The Utrecht Network is, as usual, involved in numerous activities: the exchange with MAUI, Tempus, Sigma. A co-operation programme between EU and Chinese higher education is in the pipeline. All activities are briefly discussed.

* public relations: Bochum, the Utrecht Arts School and Utrecht developed a World Wide Web site this year, showing information on the Network on Internet.

* expansion: a proposal for limited expansion, laying down guidelines for the expansion of the Utrecht Network, has been written, and is waiting to be approved by the general meeting.

* membership fee: at the Utrecht Network rectors' meeting, held in Utrecht on 26 March 1996, all university leaders agreed to introduce a 2000 Ecu membership for the Utrecht Network.

Socrates

Not much is to be said on Socrates, since currently all members are preparing their institutional applications which need to be submitted by 1 July 1996. The idea is put forward to compose a paragraph on the Utrecht Network, to be included by all in the institutional policy statements. Instead of drawing up numerous bilateral agreements, group contracts could be made, saving a lot of time and underlining the group character of the Utrecht Network.

After the presentation of the state of the art, a discussion on the future of the education programmes and the Utrecht Network follows. Some of the most noteworthy comments are mentioned below.

A short debate arises on Sigma. Everyone agrees that it is better to be in than to be out. A distinction clearly has to be made between the group and the project proposals of the group. Lille offers to be the contact centre for Sigma matters.

3. Budgetary matters

The budget is settled. Of the 18,600 Ecus which have been assigned to us by the Commission, about 10,000 Ecus will be needed to cover the annual meeting in Strasbourg (2,500 travel expenses, 7,500 living expenses). Remaining funds will go towards Teaching Staff Mobility.

4. Future plans

programmes

Japan

Jeroen Torenbeek has recently attended a meeting in Cracow of the Sylff foundation (formerly known as Sasakawa foundation). This Japanese institute is interested in stimulating exchange of students in higher education between regions all over the world. The exact outline of the programme which they want to set up is still vague but may be quite interesting, especially since the foundation is planning to make use of existing networks. Danielle Alexandre expresses her concern about the reputation of the foundation. Jeroen adds that before any decisions are taken, everybody involved will be consulted.

Medcampus

Manfred Nettekoven reports on the latest Medcampus developments. Medcampus is the European co-operation programme with Mediterranean Non Member Countries. DG I is the coordinating office in Brussels.

Manfred tells us that the programme has been remodelled. Communication technology is now the leading topic. Because of this we no longer fit into the format of the project. This automatically implies that there is uncertainty about future funds for the Utrecht Network project. If funds are made available, only a few months are left to spend the money. Since DG I is more directed towards the business community, and we have no real market-oriented background, we may no longer be an interesting partner within the Medcampus scheme. Also new is that the Rome Technical Assistance Office has closed down. Bochum will, for the time being, remain the Utrecht Network coordinator.

Unitwin

The Unitwin network for South-North co-operation, launched in 1992, has continued its activities this year. The projects organised by Unitwin focus on four clusters: health, environment, basic science education and university infrastructure. Bengt Nilsson (Lund) and Henk van Rinsum (Utrecht), who are not in Strasbourg today, can be approached if people have questions.

Alfa

Carlos Seoane gives a brief presentation of the Alfa programme for co-operation with

universities in Latin America. At present there is not much news. The programme is running. People are now preparing for the phase during which students and staff are exchanged. It is disappointing that so little money has been made available by Brussels. 10,000 Ecus for a network of 8 universities does not seem realistic at all. Some Utrecht Network partners are participating in Alfa, but not under the umbrella of the Network. Madrid will remain the university to be contacted by partners who have queries about Alfa.

Peace

Bjorn Einar Aas gives an account of the PEACE programme. PEACE is the acronym for Palestinian European Academic Co-operation in Education. The University of Bergen is the Utrecht Network link institution to PEACE. Since the PEACE conference in Louvain-La Neuve in November 1994, the programme has both developed plans and put some of them into operation. A draft plan for 1996/97 concerns "Rationalisation of further Development of Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza." Under this heading one of the projects envisaged is "Training of Higher Education Administrators in planning, Management and Financing." This project carries special relevance to the Utrecht Network, as the University of Bochum's INTERTRAIN MEDCAMPUS project may be the hub for such a project (provided that funds are made available for other European participants). PEACE is co-ordinated by the UNESCO central office in Paris.

Canada

Patricia de Clopper informs the Network about the European programme for co-operation with Canadian higher education. There was a first call in January, which, unfortunately, was too early for the Network to be able to put a proposal together. There is a second deadline on 4 October. The programme provides money for setting up an infrastructure to be used for Student and Staff Mobility. If enough people are interested, it would certainly be possible to submit an application. The Network, after all, is well spread over Europe and it represents many different European cultures and languages. Pats will find out if there are consortia in Canada which may be interested in co-operating with the Utrecht Network. A special Utrecht Network working group will draw up a proposal.

Membership fee

Poul Bonde goes into the ins and outs of the Utrecht Network membership fee. Last year in Lund it was agreed that, to replace Brussels ICP funding, the Network should introduce a membership fee. The rectors, presidents and vice-chancellors present at the Utrecht Network meeting in March 1996 also supported the idea of asking each member for an annual financial contribution. Many other institutional networks have had fees for some time. Poul states that in a sense, the fee is some kind of political statement, proving that one is a committed member. Introducing a fee means strengthening the profile of the Network. Last year it was already agreed that there should only be a flat fee, the idea being that it is virtually impossible to indicate how rich or poor a university is.

The fee will be used for travel and living expenses for Network meetings, for summer courses (like the one held for American students in Antwerp in 1995), for training courses for Utrecht Network staff, for the integration of new members from the Central and East European countries, etc.

Poul has calculated that a 2000 Ecus fee would be reasonable, taking into account that in 93/94, 94/95, 95/96 we received 34,000, 15,800 and 18,600 Ecus respectively. Brussels funds were spent mainly on meetings, information brochures, preparatory visits, language courses for students and administrative costs. Since the grant was eventually brought down to half the amount which was awarded during the earlier ICP years, an annual income of 34,000 Ecu seems a more realistic target for a network of 18 institutions (which is how big the Utrecht Network was in 1993) than 20,000 Ecus. The Network now comprises 25 members, so an annual revenue of 50,000 Ecus appears to be reasonable.

Of course it will be possible for 'pools' of universities to act as one member. Consequently,

they will have to have one contact person only. It is up to each individual university how to organise these things internally (Strasbourg & Lille I, II, III, Bergen and Trondheim, Antwerp and the RUCA and UFSIA, Utrecht and the Arts School).

Some people feel that the introduction of the membership fee has to be accompanied by the launching of a policy document, stating who we are and what we do.

One of the members says that it is essential that within due time, all presidents receive a formal letter from the Network, asking whether the institution is prepared to pay the annual fee. The letter could refer to the Rectors' meeting of 26 March 1996.

5. Working groups

In the afternoon three working groups gather to discuss the following topics:

1. the future of the Utrecht Network

On the basis of Manfred Nettekoven's handout the future profile of the Utrecht Network is discussed. Although the European identity of the Utrecht Network should be kept in mind all the time, activities on a global scale must not be disregarded. New projects could be started, like introducing a Utrecht Network Chair or organising an intensive programme on University Engineering. As much use as possible will have to be made of such innovative techniques as Open and Distance Learning and World Wide Web.

2. the Utrecht Network under Socrates

Thanks to the preparatory work of some of the working group members, a paragraph on the Utrecht Network is put together, which can be included into the European Policy Statements of the Socrates applications. Elements which should definitely be mentioned in the paragraph are: active participation in a wide variety of European programmes, ability to run a large student mobility programme, multi-purpose nature of the Utrecht Network, co-operation with Central and Eastern Europe. The group thinks of ways to organise group contracts (as opposed to the much lamented bilateral agreements).

3. the WWW Utrecht Network site

Since the newly developed WWW site is still in its early stages, this group concentrates on how the Utrecht Network pages can become more mature and usable. It is suggested to keep updating procedures as decentralized as possible. The easier people can change information which directly involves them, the better. The Utrecht Network site can be used for ECTS information packages, or in fact any kind of course descriptions. There could be a category 'latest news', containing information on for example the Canada programme, Peace, etc. The student mobility people might put their forms on WWW. Constant involvement of all universities is required if the WWW site is to be a success. Also crucial is that somebody has editorial responsibility, to guarantee a coherent presentation of the Utrecht Network to the outside world.

6. EU - US Programme

MAUI (Mid American Universities International), formerly known as ABEU, is now coordinated by the University of Missouri at St Louis. Joel Glassman, head of the Center for International Studies of that university, is in Strasbourg to discuss the co-operation between the two consortia. He says that the fact that SIUC is no longer coordinating the programme is by no means a sign of disinterest on their part. A number of schools may join MAUI in the next cycle: University of Texas, Austin; Texas Tech; University of Missouri Columbia. Joel wonders if it is a good idea to hold a joint MAUI - Utrecht Network meeting once every two years. Site visits can then be carried out to each other's campuses to increase familiarity with the partner universities.

Joel thanks all partners for being active in the project. He reports that the general trend of fewer Americans wanting to go abroad has now reversed. For the first time since the start of the programme, there is a surplus of Americans planning to go to Europe. The surplus is mainly due to Oklahoma State University, which is preparing to send as many as 20

students to Utrecht Network universities.

Joel emphasises that it is important that initial placement of students is arranged by the co-ordinating offices in St Louis and Utrecht. Only when students have been provisionally placed, universities can send the students' files to the host school. He mentions the overwhelming demand for places at Cork and Hull, the two universities which have English as their native language. The University of Hull is withdrawing from the programme, unfortunately. However, more and more institutions are now offering courses in English, so that they become more accessible to a wider public. Louise Tobin of Cork says that she is delighted that so many students are interested in studying there, but that it is hard for them to accept many more.

Carlos Seoane adds that we should try and keep in mind how important it is to focus on a general balance within the entire programme, rather than on a one to one balance. The benefit of two consortia working together is that students should not be restricted to those institutions that the home school has direct links with. It is the flexibility aspect which makes working with consortia so interesting. And, after all, the one to one balance is virtually impossible to reach anyway.

Joel Glassman states that the co-ordinating campuses are fully aware of this. However, some kind of long term balance must be aimed at at all times. Also, sometimes regulations of individual universities hamper full flexibility.

Renée Valeri (Lund) is slightly dismayed that at first Florida could not accept any students but is now willing to take a few. Florida says that unfortunately this could not be foreseen.

It is generally agreed that universities which are less popular with students should make an effort to 'sell themselves' and make themselves known to the universities which they work with (brochures, videos, World Wide Web). Staff visits may well help to support the student mobility programme.

7. Tempus

Job Mulder reports on the Tempus developments of the past year. In the final Jep-4547 year, 258 students and 94 staff members were exchanged.

Of the five CME-proposals which were submitted, it is known that Lithuania and Lodz have been accepted. An infopackage and a policy document will be produced. Job then leaves the floor to the mobility project co-ordinators.

Algimantas Lipinaitis (Vilnius) begins by saying that the old mobility-JEP has been of great help to the university. A shortcoming of the new programme is that both the contract and the funds arrived very late. Luckily, Lund, Madrid and Utrecht secured internal funding. Algimantas Lipinaitis believes that the future of Tempus is rather limited. It is hoped that the countries which are presently participating in Tempus will soon be able to join Socrates.

Boyan Lomev (Sofia) thanks all partners for being so co-operative in the student mobility programme.

8. China

Jenny Hallen (Lund University) gives an account of a new European programme: a programme for co-operation between Chinese and European higher education. On behalf of the Utrecht Network, Lund has applied for the position of Technical Assistance Office. Since there was very little time to organise this, there was, unfortunately, no opportunity to inform everybody. It is known that the Santander Group and the Coimbra Group have applied, too. Out of 100 applications, 10 candidates have been put on a short-list, one of them being the Utrecht Network. Tender forms for the next round should be sent very soon now. Jenny is interested to know who would like to participate in the project. She adds that there is a small possibility that the scheme will later expand to other countries in South East Asia. There will be two offices, one in Europe, one in China. The total budget of the programme is 9.7 MECU. The university, or group of universities, which is selected by the Commission, will have to administer the money and will be responsible for the contents of the project. Since the focus will be on European Studies, Jenny will need information on which universities specialise in this.

The first reactions to Lund's initiative are very positive. Aarhus is very happy with the proposal, and Bochum expresses its amazement at the height of the budget which we may soon be responsible for. It seems like the Utrecht Network is now getting into the business of becoming a Technical Assistance Office, something which we have never done before. Another interesting aspect is that China is such a remote place, which so far we have not really co-operated with as a network. Jenny explains that, if the Network is deemed suitable for the job, it will have to operate some kind of management and professional consultancy office, something which may have an immediate spin-off for the Utrecht Network institutions. It is agreed that this strategic decision to move into this type of business is good for the dynamics of the Network. Aarhus states that it will now become even more important to formalise the Utrecht Network and to turn it into a legal body. The universities which express the wish to become actively involved are Madrid, Lille, Antwerp, Aarhus, Leipzig, the Utrecht Arts School, Strasbourg I, Strasbourg II, Bologna, Helsinki and Hull. The others will be kept informed at all times of what is going on.

9. Expansion of the Network, Malta and Brno

The expansion of the Utrecht Network has been on the agenda many times. For the first time, a number of principles and strategic guidelines have been laid down in a policy document. *The proposal for limited expansion* is approved by the meeting.

In the past year, the Utrecht Network received five applications for membership: Padova (Italy); Monash (Australia); Brno (Czech Republic); Cracow (Poland); Malta. According to the *Proposal for limited expansion*, two of these are not eligible for membership: **Padova** (there is already an Italian member in the Utrecht Network) and **Monash** (this is not a European university). As for the other three, **Cracow** is problematic in the sense that there could be other suitable Polish candidates. In the course of the year, an inventory will be made of which Polish universities the Utrecht Network members prefer to work with.

The Czech partner, **Brno**, was not the only Czech member in the Tempus JEP. Bratislava was a partner, too. However, it is agreed that Brno is an experienced university when it comes to internationalisation, and they are a good partner to work with. As for **Malta**, since there are no other universities on Malta, it is obvious that there cannot be a better partner. The interesting thing about Malta is that it is an English-speaking university. Malta is active in Medcampus, so it could definitely be a good associate.

The meeting unanimously decides that Malta will become a new partner. An election is organised for Brno: 16 vote in favour, 2 against, 3 abstain. Brno and Malta are admitted as new members to the Utrecht Network.

10. Election steering committee

Carlos Seoane is re-elected as a member of the Steering Committee. Since he was away from Madrid's central level for some time, he has not served the full three years. During his absence Carlos was replaced by Guillermo Calleja Pardo. Carlos is known to be an accurate and active member and his re-election is welcomed by the Utrecht Network with positive feelings.

A discussion then evolves on the structure and organisation of the Steering Committee. It is thought by some that a period of three years can be too long for people to serve on the committee. Would it not be better to have a two year period instead? Others say that they have no strong feelings about the geographical spread (north centre south). The steering committee was set up five years ago, at the Aarhus meeting. Perhaps the time has come to review the internal regulations. It is argued by some that the steering committee needs to get bigger now that the Utrecht Network is growing. It is also said by some people that they do believe the geographical distribution is important to keep everybody involved. The discussion will be continued at the next annual meeting.

11. Set place and date for meeting next year

Lille, Ljubljana and Graz offer to host the next meeting. Unfortunately, we will not be allowed to use Brussels money for a meeting in Slovenia, so Ljubljana is out. The meeting

will be held in April 1997.

12. Any other business

No other business. The meeting ends at 13:03 o'clock.