

## **ASEM & EHEA Education process**

### **Policy Seminar on the impact of changes and challenges on Academic Work**

Summary: Higher education has undergone and still undergoes a number of major structural changes and reforms that affect the academic profession and the academic work. The emergence of the knowledge society projects academics into the front line of socio-economic development and innovation as being a 'key profession'. For a long period, both in the EHEA context and the ASEM context, we have addressed many issues of higher education but with little attention paid to the academic profession and to the human side of higher education and research. The past 7 to 8 years a substantial number of studies on the changing face of academic work and the academic profession in a comparative perspective have been conducted. Now it is time to bring some of those studies to the attention of the broader academic community and policy makers.

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Higher education and research play a pivotal role in the creation and transfer of knowledge central to the construction of the knowledge society and to innovation. Higher education is a dynamic system. The emergence of the knowledge society projects academics into the front line of social and economic development and innovation as being a 'key profession'.

Higher education has undergone and still undergoes a number of major structural changes and reforms that affect the academic profession and the academic work. Those changes may have some impact on the morale of the academics but they create also new opportunities for the academic profession. The academic profession is embedded in a changing institutional context.

In many countries we are witnessing the following structural changes and reforms:

- The massification of higher education and the changing composition of the student population;
- The structural reforms (in Europe linked to the Bologna Process): new degree structure, qualification frameworks, quality assurance, the introduction of the learning outcomes approach and student-centered learning;
- The continuous shift of the balance between teaching and research;
- The focus on the quality of teaching and the demand for new teaching and learning modes;
- The use of new information and communication technologies in teaching, research and learning;
- Increased accountability and quality assessments and reviews;
- Rankings;
- Financial pressure: shifts in the overall funding of teaching and research, changes in resource allocation methods, performance based funding;
- The development of new governance models in order to cope with new developments and demands;

- The internationalization and globalization of all aspects of higher education and research;
- New societal expectations: employability, sustainable development, inclusive HE, flexible learning paths, LLL;
- Integrating the third mission activities in teaching and research;
- Shift from academic autonomy towards institutional autonomy;
- The emergence of new university-industry-government relationships and a new set of political priorities in higher education and research with an emphasis on the societal relevance of knowledge and knowledge valorization and innovation; the emergence of a group higher education professionals occupying a space between the core business of teaching and research and the central-level management;
- International and sectorial mobility;
- The heterogeneity of academic labor markets and the increased competition.

All those changes and reforms demand for a further professionalization of the academic profession.

There are interesting times for the academic profession.

For a long period both in the EHEA context and the ASEM context we have addressed many issues of higher education but with little attention paid to the academic profession and to the human side of higher education and research. The academics are the persons who are in charge of the daily life of teaching, research and other activities that belong to the core functions of higher education.

The past 7 to 8 years a substantial number of studies on the changing face of academic work and the academic profession in a comparative perspective have been conducted. In 2012 in Berlin an international conference has been held on 'changing conditions and changing approaches of academic work'. That conference brought together some 200 experts. Also in the framework of the ESF programme titled 'European Higher Education and Social Change' some research work has been done on the academic profession.

- Kehm & Teichler (eds) *The academic profession in Europe: new tasks and new challenges*, Springer (2013) 978 94 007 4613 8
- Teichler & Höhle (eds) *The work situation of the academic profession in Europe: findings of a survey in 12 countries* Springer (2013) 978 94 007 5976 3
- Fumasoli, Goastellec & Kehm (eds) *Academic work and careers in Europe: trends, challenges, Perspectives* Springer (2015) 978 3 319 10719 6
- Enders & de Weerd *The changing face of academic life* Palgrave (2009) 978 0 230 52103 2
- Cummings & Teichler (eds) *The relevance of academic work in comparative (global) perspective* Springer (2015) 978 3 319 11766 9
- Leisyte & Wilkesman *Organizing academic work*, Routledge (2016) 978 1 138 90990 8

Now it is time to bring all those studies to the attention of the broader academic community and policy makers.

1. AIMS OF THE POLICY SEMINAR:

- To bring together higher education researchers and policy makers at national and at institutional level;
- To discuss the key findings of the research that has been carried out during the last 6 to 7 years with regard to the changes of academic work and the changes of the academic profession and professional life within the Higher Education Institutions;
- To discuss how policy makers evaluate those research outcomes and may make use of those research outcomes;
- To learn from each other how policy makers address those changes and challenges.

2. TARGET GROUPS/

- a. Public authorities responsible for tertiary and higher education;
- b. Higher education institutions: senior academic management;
- c. Higher education researchers.

3. DESIRED OUTCOMES OF THE POLICY SEMINAR:

- a. A better understanding of the key research findings and of the way policy makers could make use of the them in their policy design;
- b. To have identified whether there are cross regional (institutional, social or cultural) differences or distinctive approaches in the way policy makers evaluate the impact of changes and challenges on academic work.

4. TIMING:

26-27 October 2017, Ghent, Belgium