



European Migration Network Conference 2012

Paralimni, Cyprus, 29th and 30th October 2012

The Immigration of International Students to the EU

Summary and Final Conclusions

Prepared by the Cyprus National Contact Point to the European Migration Network with the support of the European Commission and the EMN Service Provider (ICF GHK-COWI)

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Conclusions of the EMN Conference 2012

This Conference was a timely opportunity to consider the policies and practices currently in place in the EU Member States to facilitate the entry of international students and to prevent misuse of the "student route." It aimed to inform the development of a proposal amending the Directive on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service (Directive 2004/114/EC) and the Directive on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research (Directive 2005/71/EC). The main conclusions to emerge from the Conference are:

International students make many positive contributions by choosing to study in the EU, both for their countries of origin and for EU Member States

The benefits to both sending and receiving countries of third-country nationals undertaking education and training opportunities in Europe are well documented, and include, for example, promoting Europe as a world centre of excellence for studies and vocational training, allowing migrants and host Member States to benefit from mutual enrichment through intercultural exchange, improving the quality of curricula; helping to address skills shortages in light of decreasing EU population levels; economic advantages through income generated by fees; and as an instrument of soft diplomacy, creating a wealth of people-to-people contacts.

Quality and relevance of education remains a critically important factor in attracting international students

In relation to attracting international students, the importance of the provision of high-quality educational opportunities emerged as a key issue. International students tend to migrate in order to access improved educational opportunities, often informed by international lists of ranked institutions. Better information about the different tiers of education provided by EU Member States, including further, vocational, as well as higher education, would help to inform international students about the EU's broad educational capacity. An EU ranking system, in relation to quality of research and teaching, could also be effective in driving up standards, as well as raising awareness, and could form the basis of a common approach to marketing EU educational opportunities as a whole.

Overall, the provision of information to international students can be improved, both prior to entry and upon arrival in the Member State

Throughout the Conference, the provision of information to international students was identified as an element which required improvement, both prior to migration and upon arrival to the EU. Though some Member States have specific provisions in place, such as the use of Information Agencies and Websites as "one-stop shops" for information on a wide range of issues, an emerging issue was the need for improvements to be made. Insufficient or out-of-date information created obstacles to the migration of international students from third countries meaning that they are not suitably informed of the procedures in place; the conditions to be fulfilled for the issuance of visas, residence and/or work permits, as well as access to scholarships/grants and the labour market; and other relevant support.

Availability of high quality, up-to-date, and readily accessible information emerged as a critical factor of consideration for international students when choosing the Member State in which they wish to study. This issue could be addressed through the better provision of information to support international students, including via the EU Immigration Portal, to make well informed decisions about their choice of study and the opportunities that are available.

Measures introduced to attract international students have been successful in shaping flows of international students to meet specific policy priorities, but obstacles still remain in some Member States

Effective national policies and practices do exist to facilitate the migration of international students to the EU and strategies have enabled Member States to focus on particular categories of students, such as those wishing to attend Master and Doctoral programmes, and/or from particular (third) countries.

To facilitate the admission of international students, some Member States have introduced flexible admission procedures, with different visas issued depending on the purpose and length of study. Moreover, fast tracking of applications can occur with mechanisms in place to facilitate formalities for international students. However, the timely issuance of appropriate visas, or other permissions to enter/reside, remains a major obstacle in some cases and in some Member States. Access to the labour market, both during and after study, may also be limited in practice where difficulties exist for international students to obtain a work permit due to the conditions applied.

A careful balance needs to be applied between attracting international students to the EU and preventing the misuse of the student route

The main forms of misuse identified relate to the use of forged qualifications/documentation as part of the application process, as well as working outside the terms of approved residence permission. In order to combat such misuse, Member States have put practical measures in place to detect and/or prevent misuse including the imposition of controls at the admission phase, the introduction of tests to check language skills and qualifications, and inspection regimes for institutions admitting international students.

The Conference highlighted the need for an appropriate balance between, on the one hand, facilitating access for international students and, on the other, ensuring that misuse does not occur. A thorough understanding of why and where misuse takes place can help to ensure a tailored response that targets only those sectors or institutions where misuse is greatest.

Access to the labour market for international students during study is important both for obtaining financial support as well as for gaining vital work experience

Article 17 of the Students Directive provides that students shall be granted access to employment and self-employment, with Member States establishing the maximum hours that can be worked (not less than the equivalent of 10 hours), taking into account the situation in the labour market. Member States can also have the choice to allow international students, upon completion of their studies, to carry out an economic activity.

Preliminary analysis of the EMN's study, as presented at the Conference, confirmed that students are granted access to the labour market during study, with the number of permissible hours often more favourable than those provided for in the Students Directive. Some Member States offer international students unlimited access to the labour market; others opt to limit this to certain sectors of the economy, according to the needs of the labour market. International students may also be offered a period of stay (up to 18 months) following the completion of study in order to find work in the Member State.

Access to the labour market during study helps to provide international students with financial support and is a factor for consideration when “competing” with other Member States to attract international students. However, one issue to emerge was that international students seek access to the labour market not only to supplement their income during study, but also to access work experience in their chosen field to support their academic and professional development. This is of particular relevance to international students attending high level academic courses, such as Master, Doctoral and MBA programmes. Member States that choose to limit international student access to

specific sectors, may find this acts as a deterrent to high quality students seeking to undertake advanced study in their Member State.

Both countries of origin and of destination for international students need to minimise the negative effects of 'brain drain'

Of the many impacts discussed, particular consideration was given to the issue of 'brain drain' as a potential risk factor, and a negative impact of international student migration, particularly where migration takes place from developing to developed countries. Increasingly, however, the notion of 'brain-circulation' was becoming better understood; whilst student migration may result in stay and work outside the country of origin, people tended to return to their countries of origin in the long term, bringing back the benefits of their international education and experience.

To facilitate brain circulation, countries of origin could undertake measures to facilitate return, for example, by opening up opportunities for mid-career / experienced professionals in their countries, and by controlling practices to restrict the recognition of the skills and experience of returnees in domestic labour markets.

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Summary of the EMN Conference 2012 held in Paralimni, Cyprus on 29th – 30th October 2012



Introduction

The European Migration Network Conference 2012 on *Immigration of International Students to the EU* – Agenda in Annex - was organised by the National Contact Point for Cyprus, within the framework of the Cyprus Presidency of the EU Council. It consolidates work undertaken on this theme by the EMN throughout 2012, which will culminate in an EMN Study on *Immigration of International Students to the EU*, due to be completed in January 2013 with the publication of the EMN Synthesis Report. National Reports are already available from the EMN website at <http://www.emn.europa.eu>.

The aim of the Conference, and the related Study, was to directly inform the development of proposals amending the Students and Researchers Directives, and to support the policymaking process in the field of international students and immigration. By disseminating early results from the EMN Study, the Conference aimed also to raise awareness about the work of the EMN and engage with a wider audience of policymakers and practitioners at EU and national levels, to increase also synergies with the work of relevant EU and National institutions and agencies.

Some 130 participants attended the Conference, including European Commissioner **Mrs Androulla Vassiliou** (DG Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Youth), **Mrs Eleni Mavrou**, Cyprus Minister of Interior, **Dr George Demosthenous**, Cyprus Minister of Education and Culture and **Ms Diane Schmitt**, Head of Unit, DG Home Affairs), as well as other representatives from the European Commission, 26 EMN National Contact Points, international and regional organisations (e.g. the Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Students Union, the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), CEDEFOP, EURO CITIES, National and International Academics and researchers, and international students and their representatives.

Following the official opening of the Conference, the early results from the EMN Study were presented, followed by a High Level Round Table Plenary Discussion. Workshops then followed, organised into three main themes: Measures to attract International Students; the Rights and responsibilities of International Students in the EU; and Maximising positive impacts of International

Students in the EU. The concluding session reflected on the main outcomes from the Conference, and set out the next steps for the EMN Study.

Opening remarks

The Conference was officially opened by **Mrs Eleni Mavrou**, Minister of Interior, **Dr George Demosthenous**, Minister of Education and Culture and **Ms Diane Schmitt**, Head of Unit, DG Home Affairs), who opened their presentations by congratulating the CY EMN NCP on organising and hosting the EMN Conference 2012.



Mrs Mavrou began by outlining the growing evidence for positive links between migration and socio-economic growth and development in both host and sending countries, and the critical role of education. Europe, with its long-standing tradition as a centre of excellence in education, supported by relevant EU Directives and national policy, are helping to promote and facilitate international student access to the EU, bringing benefits such as improvements in international relations between the EU and third countries, intercultural interactions and harnessing the talents and potential of students for their countries of origin and also for the EU. Mrs Mavrou welcomed the EMN's role in providing objective, credible and comparable information to support common efforts for a comprehensive policy, and in its initiative to focus on the subject of international students. The Conference would enable an exchange of views on the main issues; to assess the measures taken by Member States so far; to evaluate the benefits that international students bring to the EU; and to assess measures in place to combat

misuse of the 'student route' to migration for other purposes. Mrs Mavrou ended by stressing the importance of strengthening innovation, investing in knowledge, and ensuring an effective match between supply and demand in relation to migration, to secure a prosperous future.

Dr Demosthenous also highlighted the importance of attracting international students to the EU and outlined the policies and implementation structures that had been put in place in Cyprus to achieve this end. It was stressed that efforts to attract international students and meet their needs, as well as to address the risk of misuse, were issues for all Member States to address. Dr. Demosthenous welcomed the topic of the EMN Conference and EMN Study, and stressed that the immigration aspect of international education was an important point of focus. A better understanding of the phenomenon, based on objective research and practices, would improve the capability of policymakers to address its challenges, for example, how best to select the most appropriate international students, how to accommodate people from different cultural backgrounds, how to deliver support, healthcare etc. and how to attract such students. The overall aim was to try to create a better environment for international students, including access to work during study for those who needed to supplement their incomes, but recognising the impacts of economic downturn, with high rates of unemployment in the EU.

Finally, **Ms Schmitt** set out the specific role of the EMN Conference and Study in the political context of providing conclusions that would directly feed into the new proposal on students and researchers at the EU level. Mrs Schmitt acknowledged the sensitivity of migration to the EU during the economic downturn, but reminded delegates of the economic benefits that international students were bringing to the EU: new ideas, enterprise and job creation, as well as contributing to the diversity of society, raising awareness about different attitudes and values, promoting intercultural competences and

fighting prejudice. In recent years, competition for international students and staff had increased, with a wide range of options available on where and what to study, and with the quality of education often being a decisive factor. However, immigration rules and policies also play an important role in how students are attracted to the EU and can access educational opportunities; it is thus beneficial if general rules apply across the Member States. The Students' Directive 2004, followed by Directives on researchers, family reunification and long-term residence had all helped to build common rules and to avoid misuse. The new proposals would consider rules common to both Students and Researchers, and Mrs Schmitt welcomed the conclusions generated by the EMN Conference and Study to help to inform this process.

Theme I: Initial findings from the EMN Study: Immigration of International Students to the EU

The aim of this session was to provide an overview of early findings from the National Reports submitted by Member States as contributions to the EMN Study. The session was opened and moderated by **Mr Stephen Davies** (European Commission, DG HOME) with an overview presentation given by the EMN Service Provider (ICF GHK-COWI, **Ms Emilie Balbirnie**), followed by short presentations from EMN NCPs in Cyprus (**Dr Elmos Konis**), France (**Ms Ophelie Tardieu**), Italy (**Dr Antonio Ricci**), Poland (**Ms Karolina Łukaszczyk**), and from Norway (**Mr Eivind Hoffmann**, representing the Nordic perspective of Finland, Norway and Sweden), on their national situations and key issues.



Preliminary analysis found that many Member States have put in place an array of national policies and strategies for international students, often combining several aims: developing their national education and training 'markets', improving international relations with third countries, benefiting from revenue at local level and satisfying labour market needs particularly for high skills and business creators / entrepreneurs. In a number of Member States, such policies focus strategically on specific countries, such as Brazil, Russian Federation, India and China, in some cases, aligned with other objectives, such as trade.

A range of measures have been introduced to attract international students to EU Member States. These include measures to inform international students about application, entry and residence procedures and to facilitate entry and residence, for example, through issuing specific visa and

residence permits, and fast-tracking or streamlining application procedures, often in collaboration with countries of origin. Other measures include provisions for family members to accompany international students (subject to limitations, such as proof of sufficient means of subsistence and appropriate housing); access to the labour market, in some cases, both during and after study, subject to the national situation; and in some countries, the provision of scholarships and bursaries to certain groups of international students.

Misuse of the ‘student route’ to migration, was identified by several Member States; including over-staying, working outside the terms of their permission, use of forged qualifications/documentation and limited or no progression in their studies. Member States undertake practical measures to detect and/or prevent misuse which include checking qualifications and documents, obliging third-country nationals to take language and qualification tests, setting in place inspection regimes for educational institutions, and undertaking research to understand the issues of misuse in order to tackle them more effectively.

Perspectives from individual Member States then brought out the contrasting situations across the EU and Norway, as well as recent changes in policy and practice. Key issues included: finding the most appropriate balance between access and misuse, improving available information and facilitating visa issuance (Cyprus); enhancing access to masters and doctoral study, ensuring geographical diversity from countries of origin, and supporting programme-based mobility (France); and attracting well-qualified international students, supporting international development / contributing to brain gain, and recruiting and retaining specialists for the national economies (Nordic Countries). Italy aims to increase its attractiveness to International Students by enhancing its offer for courses taught in English; in Poland, pro-active measures are being undertaken to consolidate into a national strategy the approaches that are currently delivered at the level of individual academic institutions.

Discussions following the presentations centred particularly around the issue of maintaining an effective balance between attracting international students to Member States in certain sectors and academic courses, on the one hand, and preventing the misuse of the student route on the other. Emphasis in this regard was placed on the need to ensure that international students were able in practice to access the labour market in a legitimate manner. The impact of specific policies on international student numbers was also debated, including the introduction of academic fees, such as in Sweden, and the decision to teach in a language, most often English, other than the national language(s), considering the need also for integration into the local, as well as the academic community.

Theme II: High Level Round Table Plenary Discussion

The aim of the Round Table Plenary Discussion was to discuss the strategic role of international students in the EU, as well as wider issues in relation to the globalisation of education. The high level panellists were: Mrs **Androulla Vassiliou**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth; Professor **Konstantinos Christofides**, Rector of the University of Cyprus/ Member of UNIMED (Mediterranean Universities Union); Mr. **Bernd Waechter**, Director of ACA (Academic Cooperation Association); Mr. **Yassine Mohammed En Naem**, Representative of the International Students’ Community in Cyprus and Professor **Michalis Attalides**, Rector of the University of Nicosia. The Panel was moderated by Mr. **Kyriakos Pierides**, a Journalist at the CyBC (Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation)

Commissioner Vassiliou set out the EU’s considerable experience in educational cooperation with third countries. Actions had evolved from those undertaken by individual institutions, to structured forms of cooperation at national and EU level, and this had helped to make the EU the preferred destination for international students, accounting for some 38% of all international students, compared with 23% studying in the USA. The Bologna Process had facilitated this development, as well as programmes such as Erasmus Mundus. However, competition continued to grow from non-traditional study destination countries, such as Japan and the Russian Federation, which had resulted

in many positive innovations, such as branch campuses in third countries. Mrs Vassiliou stressed that the internationalisation of education was inevitable in a global world; reiterated the many benefits brought by international students; and the importance for EU to rise to the challenge of harnessing this opportunity for growth and development.



Professor **Michalis Attalides** welcomed the Conference topic with its focus on the migration aspects of international students, rather than on mobility per se. A number of issues were introduced, including that of 'brain-drain', and the need to maintain a balance between the economic development goals of both countries of origin and of destination, given that international students to the EU were coming predominantly from south to north. The employment of a high quality student in the country of destination might be balanced in the country of origin with the benefits of remittances, investment of earnings, the

benefits of circular migration patterns, and the transfer of skills on return. Ultimately, however, it remained the basic right of a young person to choose where to study, live and work, and the speaker identified risks in 'economising' an issue that was primarily about the education of young people.

Mr. Bernd Waechter, developed several of the points of the previous speakers, stressing the importance of policy priorities to support the role of (higher) education in building both an integrated Europe, and in making the EU the most favoured destination for international students (with the EU and EFTA now attracting the majority of mobile students from across the world). However, competition had also grown, and whilst the EU as an average was performing well, some Member States were succeeding more than others. In Cyprus, for example, there had been high outflow of national students, but, at the same time, high inflows of international students, though this had been mainly into the private college sector. Forces such as 'vertical mobility' were shaping the process, with individuals choosing to study in countries where they perceived opportunities to be greater. It was noted that students do not travel 'for fun' – they want a good education that will enhance their opportunities, therefore the quality of the educational offer is critical in the process. Other factors, such as how such offers were presented and marketed to international students and the ease with which a visa might be obtained, were important, but quality was a key factor. The EU would need overall to continue to improve the quality of its educational offer.

Professor **Konstantinos Christofides**, as an academic physicist, aimed to bring a scientific perspective to the issues to complement the economic and social angle adopted by previous speakers. The critical importance of mobility in broadening human thought as a key to scientific achievement was highlighted. In Cyprus, many national students study abroad, and the Universities in Cyprus benefit from teachers and researchers who have studied and worked in many countries, creating a unique environment and underpinning their success. This was true of other Member States too. Mobility helped to create life-long interest in and contacts with other countries and cultures. International investments in Cyprus were often the result of contacts generated through international study. Mobility was thus an investment for the future.

Mr. Yassine Mohammed En Naem presented a perspective on behalf of international students. Students coming to the EU faced a number of challenges, such as rules and regulations around application and entry procedures; high monetary costs; and finding suitable work. These often acted as a deterrent. In Cyprus, for example, international students wishing to move to another EU Member State to study were required to return to their country of origin to arrange this. Including the practical perspective from international students would help to inform the EU's thinking to improve policy to

increase competitiveness and make study in the EU more attractive to international students. The speaker welcomed further work to standardise the admission procedure for all EU Member States; increase access to scholarships; and improve coordination across stakeholders to improve the quality of information and implementation of processes. International students, if satisfied with their experience, were more likely to pass on positive information to friends and family, and generate demand. If dissatisfied, the reverse situation would inevitably happen. By involvement in future decisions, international students themselves could become part of the solution.

The main issues raised by participants and discussed by the panel included the impact of the economic downturn on EU policy and importantly funding in relation to international students; the importance of mobility in developing national and international student and researcher networks; the debate between student migration and student mobility, representing different policy approaches in Member States; and the importance of including the perspective of international students in discussions on policy development.

Theme III: Measures to attract international students, effective student mobility to the EU and access to information/entry and residence

This Theme took as its focus the specific issue of measures undertaken by the Commission and the Member States for attracting international students and enhancing effective student mobility. The session was opened and moderated by **Dr Jasper Van Loo** (CEDEFOP) with presentations given by speakers from the European Commission (DG EAC, **Mrs Ragnhild Solvi Berg**); the UK EMN NCP (**Mr Jon Simmons**); the University of Ghent Belgium (**Prof. Frank Caestecker**); and the SE EMN NCP (**Dr Bernd Parusel**).

The Commission (DG EAC) set out the EU's main policies and instruments governing the migration of international students to the EU. The EU 2020 Strategy outlined the need for more high quality graduates with relevant skills and knowledge, to facilitate growth, increase quality of EU universities, facilitate international cooperation and act as external relations 'ambassadors.' These approaches have been facilitated by the Bologna Process and development of a European Higher Education Area, with comparable, compatible and coherent education systems. Internationalisation has been one priority with a focus on attracting the best students and academics from outside Europe through cooperation. Current EU funded programmes for international students include Erasmus Mundus; Tempus (for EU neighbourhood countries); and Alfa (supported cooperation between Europe and Latin America). In 2013, a new Communication will focus on how the EU can support and complement Member States and their Higher Education Institutes to further internationalise.

The University of Ghent and EMN NCPs in UK and Sweden delivered presentations on the specific measures undertaken in those Member States to attract international students. The presentation from the University of Ghent discussed mechanisms for marketing the various study offers for international students, and stressed that the international reputation of a country for the quality of teaching and research was an important factor. A number of courses make up the study offer to international students. These included doctoral level in science, with grants; regular Bachelors and Masters courses taught in French and Dutch (the latter had proved less attractive to international students when in Dutch); state-subsidised science courses in English, as well as non-state-subsidised advanced higher education offers in English. Marketing is mainly via individual Higher Education Institutes, in cooperation with institutions in third countries, websites, and agencies of the Flemish and French-speaking communities which act as portals. The offer was differentiated by region, with international students principally from Cameroon taking up Bachelor degree courses in French, and from China, taking up Masters level degree courses taught in English in Flanders.

In the UK, overall policy was to attract the brightest and best students, academics and researchers, whilst at the same time eliminating abuse of student visas. New measures introduced in 2012 included: (1) tightening sponsorship standards (e.g. institutions need to meet the highest standards of education quality); (2) tightening rules for students (e.g. better English language skills, restriction on

permission to work for some groups during study); and (3) encouraging students to leave at the end of the course (e.g. maximum time limits for study, requirements for academic progression). At the same time, the United Kingdom has introduced a special scheme for exceptionally talented scientists and academics to make it easier for them to enter. Overall, the number of applications has remained buoyant.

The example from Sweden focused upon the introduction in 2011 of tuition fees for international students studying in Sweden. This resulted in a reduction in international student numbers from some 14 200 in 2010 to 6 800 in 2011. The rationale behind this measure was that universities should compete internationally for attracting students on the basis of high quality education and not on the basis of offering free education. This approach has resulted in a greater need to put in place specific measures to attract students. These include profiling and marketing via an online portal and hub which offers information, the Swedish Institute, missions abroad and higher education institutions individually, agents, education fairs and inter-university cooperation. International students have access to the labour market during their studies and can stay in Sweden after their period of study provided they have found a job or have been offered a job. They can also reunite with family members providing specific conditions are met. As incentives, housing may sometimes be offered and new scholarship schemes were introduced in 2011.

Overall, the session highlighted how different measures had been implemented in different Member States to attract particular types of international students, in the context of varying policy priorities.



Theme IV: Rights and Responsibilities of International Students in the EU with emphasis on access to the labour market during study

The aim of the fourth session was to examine the rights and responsibilities of international students, both at EU and national level. The current provisions of Directive 2004/114/EC on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service were discussed, as well as the variations existing in different Member States, in particular, the right to work during study. The session was opened and moderated by **Prof. Baitzar Gazerian** (Frederick University, Cyprus) with presentations given by speakers from the Labour Department of the Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (**Mr Demetris Michaelides**); the IE EMN NCP (**Prof. Philip O'Connell**); an international MBA student at the University of Cyprus (**Mr. Arjun Sirohi**); and the European Students' Union (**Ms Karina Ufert**).

Presentations made by the Labour Department in Cyprus and the IE EMN NCP demonstrated that access to the labour market during study is allowed by the Member States, in accordance with Article 17 of the Students Directive. Access is limited to 20 hours per week in Cyprus and Ireland during the course of studies, with this extended during the holiday breaks to 38 hours (Cyprus) and 40 hours (Ireland). In Cyprus, employment is limited to specific sectors of employment such as industry, health, social services, household activities, manufacturing and agriculture.

In Ireland, a new strategy “Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland’s Education Strategy 2010-2015” was launched, aiming to enhance quality and also to reduce misuse. Access to the labour market is an important factor in attracting international students and to compete with other English speaking countries. To combat misuse, an internationalisation register aligns immigration rules with specific courses according to risk. The impacts of the economic crisis were highlighted in the presentations. In Ireland, declining work opportunities caused by the economic crisis was identified as a possible challenge undermining the current strategy, with employment of non-EU nationals falling from 28% (2007) to 4% (2011).

A perspective was then presented by an international student from India pursuing an MBA degree at the University of Cyprus. A key point made was that top-class education needed to be accompanied by relevant work experience. International students were not only seeking opportunities to work to fund their studies, but also to gain work experience valuable in developing their skills and creating future work opportunities. These benefits were undermined when limitations were placed on labour market access, excluding international students from relevant opportunities.



Finally, an overview was provided of the support given to international students by the European Students Union (ESU). The ESU highlighted the challenges faced by students such as the lack of flexibility when combining study and work schedules and obstacles arising due to the economic situation in a number of Member States. A lack of career guidance and information provision was also highlighted as being an issue.

Following the presentations, discussion centred on the difficulties encountered by students when sectoral limitations are placed on access to the labour market during study. Moreover, the difficulties in relation to language were emphasised, notably how many jobs international students could be eligible for without speaking the language of the country. Finally, participants discussed equal

treatment of EU students (exercising mobility in another EU Member State) and international students, particularly in relation to the differences which currently apply between these two groups when accessing the labour market.

Theme V: Maximizing positive impacts of International Students in the EU, including employment following study and minimising negative impacts and risks

This session was opened and moderated by **Mr Stefanos Evripidou** (Cyprus Mail) with presentations given by speakers from the Ministry of Interior (**Mrs Anny Shakalli**, Civil Registry and Migration Department), Cyprus; the International Department of the German Rectors' Conference (**Mr Thomas Böhm**), Germany; the University of New York in Berlin (**Dr Gabriella Etmektsoglou**); and Dublin City Council, Ireland (**Mr Kieran Rose**, representing also Eurocities).

From the perspective of the Ministry of Interior, Cyprus, maximising the positive impacts of international students remained consistent with the strategic planning of the Member State in attracting highly-talented students. In relation to access to the host country labour market following study, in Cyprus, a high share of international students were interested in seeking work in their fields of study, but this was subject to it being feasible, given the domestic labour market situation and the economic downturn.

In Germany, the positive impacts of international students were seen to be the contributions to their academic fields, enhancing the academic quality of universities and thereby their competitiveness, and developing international scientific networks through alumni. There were also positive contributions to the economy, due to demographic change and labour shortages. Proposed measures to increase the positive impacts of international students included improvements in information provision through university websites, allowing for more flexibility, greater consideration around individual competence in relation to access to higher education, better monitoring of international students during study in order to decrease the drop-out rate and facilitation of the transition from education to employment.

The University of New York (NYU) in Berlin presented their approach to educate its many and diverse students within an international perspective. The university has undertaken many efforts to accommodate international students and increase mobility among their student body by, for example, setting up portal campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai (in 2013), plus establishing global academic centres which offer specialised study programmes in 12 cities across the world. To facilitate the mobility of international students, NYU offers services to student for a number of areas including housing, health and wellness (e.g. counselling, health insurance coverage), and immigration services (e.g. practical advice and guidance).

The perspective from Dublin in Ireland was then presented, which set out the efforts made to maximise the positive impacts of students, by focusing on attracting high-quality students and integrating international students with their Irish peers. The speaker, representing Dublin City Council, emphasised the role that cities might play in attracting international students and minimising risks. The City of Dublin, for example, offers a welcome reception for international students hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, civic engagement prizes for students that engage best with the City and has researched the experiences of international students in the city.

Questions and discussion focussed on the practical implementation of the rights provided for under the Students Directive and national legislation and policy, in particular in relation to access to the labour market, levels of remuneration, ease of obtaining work permit and the degree to which limited knowledge of the national language presented a barrier to work, even if this was not an issue for access to study.

Concluding Remarks and Close

Concluding remarks were provided by **Mr Stephen Davies**, DG Home Affairs and **Mrs Anny Shakalli**, Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department, Cyprus.

Mr. Davies commended the speakers and delegates on the high quality of the discussion and presentations; and the organisational work of the National Contact Point in Cyprus. Some clear and important messages had emerged for the Commission to help inform its proposals for the Directives for Students and Researchers, adding to the stakeholder consultations already held, notably the on-line questionnaire in mid-2012. The proposal would aim to meet identified shortcomings in the Directives, particularly in relation to strengthening some of the optional conditions. Provisions would be added for non-remunerated trainees and au pairs; there would be greater clarity on the rules on entry visas and the groups they apply to, and there would be better alignment of the Directives with the EU funded Marie Curie and Erasmus Mundus programmes. It was likely that time limits would be proposed for decisions on access to the labour market following study, with time to look for a job built in (decisions on the issuance of work permits, however, would remain a national responsibility). Provisions would be included to enhance mobility for Erasmus Mundus students moving from one Member State to another. The timely inputs from the EMN Conference and Study would thus help to inform the development of the proposal.

Mrs Shakalli concluded the Conference by thanking the Commission, speakers and delegates for an informative and helpful conference. As well as looking into the legal aspects of the Students Directive and its implementation, the Conference had also served as a reminder that international students, whilst represented by stock and flow statistics, were first and foremost young people seeking an education. The Conference had also served to offer helpful insights into the issues of misuse of the student route to migration, and how this could be tackled by Member States.

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Agenda¹

EMN Annual Conference 2012: Immigration of International Students to the EU

Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th October 2012

Monday 29th October 2012

8.30 – 9.30 Registration

9.30 – 10.00 Conference Opening

- a. Mrs **Eleni Mavrou**, Minister of Interior, Cyprus
- b. Dr. **George Demosthenous**, Minister of Education and Culture, Cyprus
- c. Ms **Diane Schmitt**, European Commission (DG Home)

10:00 - 11:15 Theme I: Initial findings from the EMN Study: Immigration of International Students to the EU
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The early findings from the EMN's Study were presented, including a case study on the situation in Cyprus. These presentations provided a general overview of the similar, and contrasting, policies and practices currently existing in the Member States.

Speakers:

- a. Presentation by Ms **Emilie Balbirnie**, ICF GHK-COWI: EMN Study Overview;
- b. Presentation by Dr **Elmos Konis**, European University of Cyprus: Findings of the CY EMN Study on International Students in the EU;
- c. Presentation by Mrs **Ophelie Tardieu**, FR EMN NCP: Findings of the FR EMN Study on International Students in the EU;
- d. Presentation by Mr. **Eivind Hoffmann**, NO EMN NCP: Nordic Perspective on International Students (presentation of Nordic findings of EMN Study on International Students in the EU);
- e. Presentation by Dr **Antonio Ricci**, IT EMN NCP: Findings of the IT EMN Study on International Students in the EU;
- f. Presentation by Ms **Karolina Łukaszczyk**, PL EMN NCP, Findings of the PL EMN Study on International Students in the EU.

Moderator: Mr. **Stephen Davies**, Immigration and Integration Unit, DG Home Affairs

Discussion and questions (20 min)

11.15 *Family Photo and Coffee break*

11:45 – 13:15 Theme II: High Level Round Table Plenary Discussion
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The aim of this Round Table Plenary Discussion was to discuss the strategic role of international students in the EU, as well as to discuss the role of international cooperation to facilitate mobility with the EU and with third countries.

Panel Participants:

- a. Mrs. **Androulla Vassiliou**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth;
- b. Professor **Konstantinos Christofides**, Rector of the University of Cyprus/ Member of UNIMED (Mediterranean Universities Union);
- c. Mr. **Bernd Waechter**, Director of ACA (Academic Cooperation Association);
- d. Mr. **Yassine Mohammed En Naem**, Morocco, Representative of the International Students' Community in Cyprus;
- e. Professor **Michalis Attalides**, Rector of the University of Nicosia.

Moderator: Mr. **Kyriakos Pierides**, Journalist of CYBC.

Discussion and questions (1hr 15 min)

13:15 – 15:15 *Lunch Break*

¹ Interpretation: Participants were able to Speak and Listen in EN-GR-FR.

15:15 – 16:45 Theme III: Measures to attract international students, effective student mobility to the EU and access to information/entry and residence

A specific overview of policies and practices existing for attracting international students, as well as enhancing effective student mobility will be provided. Focus will be placed not only on EU policies in place to ensure effective student mobility, but also on certain national policies existing in Member States

Speakers:

- a. Mrs **Ragnhild Solvi Berg**, DG EAC;
- b. Mr **Jon Simmons**, Deputy Director for Migration and Border Analysis at the UK Home Office (UK EMN NCP);
- c. Professor **Frank Caestecker**, University of Ghent Belgium "What kind of international students does one want to attract? The Belgian experience"
- d. Dr Bernd Parusel, "Measures to attract international students – the case of Sweden" (SE EMN NCP).

Moderator: Dr **Jasper Van Loo**, Senior expert in Research and Policy Analysis at CEDEFOP

Discussion and questions (20 min)

End of First Day: 18:00 Excursion to the popular area of "Phoinikoudes" (Larnaka) / 20:30 Dinner at Tavern "Voreas" in Oroklini Village (Larnaka)

Tuesday 30th October 2012

09:30- 11:00 Theme IV: Rights and Responsibilities of International Students in the EU with emphasis on access to the labour market during study

Speakers:

- a. Mr **Demetris Michaelides**, Senior Employment Officer, Labour Department (Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance);
- b. Dr **Philip O' Connell**, Professor, Director of EMN Ireland "Quality as Control: Balancing Market Expansion and Regulation of International Student Migration in Ireland";
- c. Mr. **Arjun Sirohi** (IND), University of Cyprus, MBA Student;
- d. Ms **Karina Ufert**, Vice Chairperson, European Students' Union (ESU).

Moderator: Professor **Baitzar Gazerian**, Frederick University, Cyprus

Discussion (20 min)

11:30 - 13:00 Theme V: Maximizing positive impacts of International Students in the EU, including employment following study and minimising negative impacts and risks

Speakers:

- a. Mrs **Anny Shakalli**, Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department, CY Ministry of Interior;
- b. Mr **Thomas Böhm** Head of Section within the International Department of the German Rectors' Conference: "Summary of the current development in Germany" (DE NCP);
- c. Dr **Gabriella Etmektsoglou**, Director of the University of New York in Berlin: Strategies of the University of New York in Berlin with emphasis on the value of internships both for students and their host countries;
- d. Mr **Kieran Rose** (Representative from Eurocities) Senior Planner, Office of International Relations and Research, Economic Development Unit, Dublin City Council.

Moderator: Mr. Stefanos Evripidou, Journalist Cyprus Mail

Discussion (20 min)

13:00 - 13:30 Closing remarks and next steps (Mr **Stephen Davies**, Immigration and Integration Unit, DG Home Affairs and Mrs **Annie Shakalli**, Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department)

13:30- 14:30: *Lunch and close*