

**CONCLUSIONS
OF THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF THE
PRESIDENTS OF THE NATIONAL RECTORS' CONFERENCES
OF AUSTRIA, CROATIA, HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA
IN MARIBOR
ON 18.9.2001**

Present: President Prof. Dr. Ludvik Toplak (Slovenia), President Prof. Dr. Georg Winckler (Austria), President Prof. Dr. Milan Dado (Slovakia), Prof. Dr. Daniel Rukavina (Croatia), President Prof. Dr. Zoltan Gaal (Hungary), Secretary-General Dr. Istvan Bilik (Hungary), Vice-Rectors Prof. Dr. Franci Cus and Prof. Dr. Zeljko Knez (both University of Maribor), Mladen Kraljic (University of Maribor)

Start: 10.15

End: 13.15

Agenda:

1. National Reports and Proposals on Cross-Border Co-operation Programmes, Including Non-university Co-operation
2. National Reports and Proposals in the Field of Co-operation in the Fifth and Sixth Framework Programme of the EU
3. National Reports and Proposals on Student and Staff Mobility
4. Lump-sum financing

The Presidents of the National Rectors' Conferences of Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia met at the University of Maribor, on 18. September 2001. Regarding the actual international situation, the presidents of the national rectors' conferences condemn any political and terrorist actions, which threaten international academic and scientific exchange and co-operation.

Pursuant to the first conference that took place in Vienna on 23. February 2001, the presidents agreed on the following conclusions and statements:

1. regarding cross-border co-operation:

- a) The presidents will try to enhance ECTS as a mechanism for promoting common norms in credit accumulation and credit transfer in a significant step towards establishing the European Higher Education area.
- b) The presidents will strengthen the development of joint degree programmes.
- c) The presidents will ask CEEPUS whether it can support cross-border co-operation programmes and help universities to develop National Credit Systems and joint degree programmes.
- d) The presidents stress the importance of cross-border co-operation on a vertical level, trying to involve regional governments, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and businesses, in order to support activities such as summer programmes, continuous education programmes and distance education as well as universities' business relationships. It is important to expand the outreach of universities in the regions.
- e) The presidents will do their best to promote joint research and development projects especially to strengthen involvement in the creation of a European research area.

2. In connection with the mobility of students and teaching staff, with special reference to the Socrates-Erasmus and CEEPUS programmes, the presidents agreed on the following points:

- a) The presidents of the national rectors' conferences stress that the Socrates-Erasmus programme helps the universities to establish and finance exchange activities. However, the presidents suggest that problems in connection with this programme have to be resolved. Co-funding by national governments is necessary, since funding by the EU is too low to motivate students and teaching staff to participate actively in this programme. In addition, they ask the EU Commission to avoid any delays in distributing the financial means for the activities.
- b) The presidents urge governments to include Croatia in the Socrates programme.
- c) With respect to CEEPUS, the presidents advise an increased focus on high-performing projects.

3. The presidents of the national rectors' conferences, discussing the fundamental rights and values of universities, jointly state the following points:

- a) The presidents of the national rectors' conferences are concerned by the potential for internal and external interference with the institutional autonomy of universities.
- b) The basic principle of university autonomy applies not only in the case of external political and financial powers, but also with regard to threats from internal fragmentation.