



TALLINN DECLARATION

On sustainable development and economics of knowledge

Mr Sarkozy, President of the G20,
Presidents of the G20 countries,

We, the National Unions of Students in 38 countries of Europe, members of the European Students' Union, as representatives of higher education students in Europe, our fundamental belief is that student participation is crucial for the development of the higher education sector as a whole and a key for fair higher education all over the world. As stated in the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century "*students should be considered as major partners and responsible stakeholders in the renewal of higher education*" (World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO 1998).

Students cannot be addressed only as a cluster of educational users, as they are the leading actors and a partner of the HE system. Their consensus cannot be lead or used only to legitimate policies, but has to be achieved and reached in a dialectic and democratic process of discussion of ideas and trends.

In that way, our participation to the debate responds to the framework proposed by the french presidency of the G20, of "*citizen ownership of the presidency of the G8 and G20*", and to the wish of Mr. Sarkozy who "*firmly hope that citizens can take full ownership of the approach of the G20 and G8, to reduce the gap between concrete reforms implemented and their perception by the people*".

Therefore, as citizens and student representatives, we made the choice to accept this debate and to address you our vision of education for the next decades.

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The G20 countries took the responsibility, in term of education, to focus on the very fundamental subjects which are sustainable development and economics of knowledge.

Today, economics of knowledge is becoming the main characteristics of a world in which our society is more and more based on flows of information and knowledge. Our countries and our economics everyday depend more on it and governments have to manage this evolutions, as entire parts of the transition to a sustainable development, specifically on economical and social aspects. In this process, education is the keystone through which countries should direct efforts and resources to enhance the social achievements in democratic process of development.

1. Higher education as a public good and a public responsibility

The student community holds that Higher Education is a public good and a public responsibility. By public responsibility the student community means that the financing aspect of Higher Education is the responsibility of governments and any private funding should not have an impact on academic autonomy neither on the missions of higher education. This is in accordance with the Preamble of the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education 2009 Communiqué. The notion of higher education as a public good is clearly stated in the Budapest Declaration on student (2011) as well as the Global Student Declaration (2010).

Higher education institutions should be run in an inclusive and democratic manner where all stakeholders are part of the decision making process. As strongly defended by the Budapest Declaration (2011), students are partners in education and not customers, and for higher education to be a main contributor to the development of societies is has to be regarded as a public responsibility and not a service to be traded with. This is a notion that the student community strongly opposes, both on European as well as a global level.

As expressed in the Students' Rights Charter (2008), an important part of higher education is to respect, protect and guarantee the student' rights. Governments and universities should promote it as fundamental element in higher education, in order to ensure the students' development and their participation in their societies being active citizens. This rights include the freedom of speech and freedom of association, which are being violated in many countries.

2. Higher Education as an investment

Today human capital is the most important factor in society and in order to further develop the full extent of human potential, the worlds leading economies need to recognize the principles of human capital theory, that each resource invested today in education will provide results in the long run, in terms of both human and economical development.

Therefore, education and specifically higher education need to be considered by governments as an investment that will sustainably boost both human and economical development in the long run. Taking into consideration education as a public good, governments need to undertake concrete steps in recognizing education as a top priority sector, notably in the dynamic reality of the world economies at the present day and age. Therefore, considering education as an investment priority sector, governments shouldn't take into account any deficit consideration in the definition of their educational policies. Moreover, governments should consider education as a way to invest during economic fluctuations with the final aim to sustain a global development in which we have to be undoubtedly involved.

With this new approach of the definition of the higher education priorities the G20 has to set a global example on the importance of investing in quality of public education. The decisions made at the G20 summit effect the future of this planet as a whole and

that is why we would like to hold the world leaders accountable and stress on to the utmost importance of ensuring a brighter future for the current and future generations to come.

3. Access to education

Education for all in general, and higher education in special, gives individuals the capabilities to change their own situation. Hence, it is crucial for a well functioning education sector to ensure equal access to all, on a non-discriminatory basis. The higher education community should reflect the diversity of the societies they are operating within, to be the progressive force in society. It is especially important for the higher education to be inclusive and to develop to measures to increase access for underrepresented groups to higher education. In the long term, the effect of these measures will result in a more democratic society in which critical thinking and active citizens contribute fully in the development of a society with a main focus on knowledge.

The Global Student Community has clearly stated in the Global Student Declaration that measures to decrease access are not acceptable, and these includes the introduction and/or increase in tuition fees. It is important to increase focus on widening access to education, and in the global perspective it is also important to have in mind access and success to primary and secondary education, as this is the basis which higher education is built upon.

The current global crisis is affecting also the Higher Education and its financing. It could be a risk for students coming from low economic backgrounds. Nowadays economic support for students is even more important than ever, not only for the access to Higher Education but also for the completion of studies and complementary aspects as students' mobility.

4. Education as a key to international sustainable development

Higher Education and the balancing of global cooperation along the lines of regional sustained development through education. Bridging the gap in inequalities of the development of different regions through out the world with a strong emphasis in regards to the North-South educational cooperation.

Inequality thwarts progress towards universal education, but, at the same time, education plays an effective role in balancing the gap of global inequalities. Therefore, it is vital to work on achieving the universal primary education (Millennium Development Goal N°2) but, in the same way, increasing the secondary education and higher education is very important for countries' development.

Education is more than ever globally oriented. In one hand, the whole world are increasingly collecting and sharing information (information society) and research worldwide (network society) without barriers. But, on the other hand, there is knowledge' competition: countries and universities are trying to attract the smartest students with good conditions (brain-gain); which is a double edged sword because

it is leading to brain-drain in the less developed countries. Cooperation between governments is necessary in this field to enhance the positive aspects (access education worldwide, recognition, mobility, intercultural understanding, etc.) and trying to avoid any leak of human-capital of the development countries. This cooperation should work to create a balance between both in order to promote an improvement globally while enhancing development countries.

Higher Education plays a key role in the development of every country, not only educating citizens and the leaders of tomorrow, but also creating knowledge. Moreover, it helps to increase the economic and human resources of countries, so governments should pay special attention to Higher Education issues, preserving it, helping Higher Education Institutions to achieve their social responsibility and improving their qualities.

We hope that our voice be heard and we expect both investments and political acts from governments in this way to achieve this four principles, which are the fundamentals for the world's higher education of the future.

As presidents of the G20, you have the responsibility to take the lead in realizing these principles. That's why the European students expect that this declaration will be considered at your next meeting.