EDUCATION INDICATORS

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EIGHTH INES STEERING GROUP MEETING

Makuhari Messe, Tokyo, 10 September 2000
CONCLUSIONS OF THE EIGHTH INES STEERING GROUP MEETING

Makuhari Messe, Tokyo, 10 September, 2000

Participants

Steering Group members present:

John Martin (Chair)
Walo Hutmacher
Arvo Jäppinen
Masayuki Inoue
Franz Niehl
Graham Reid
Jean-Pierre Voyer
Eugene Owen (as an observer)

Apologies were received from:

Gaby Hostens
Gary Phillips
Ulf Lundgren
Alejandro Tiana Ferrer

OECD Secretariat:
Barry McGaw
Abrar Hasan
Georges Lemaitre
Andreas Schleicher
Tom Healy

Purpose of the meeting

1. The meeting covered three main topics:

   - a general review of the programme for the General Assembly, session by session;
   - potential outcomes from each of the Sessions;
   - possible new structures for INES, in the light of the reports from countries.
**Review of the programme**

2. The need for strict discipline in time allocation for speakers throughout the General Assembly was emphasised in order to maximise the time available for discussion. Since Steering Group members were chairing many of the sessions, it was incumbent on them to ensure that the speakers respected this discipline. Observations by email were invited from those who felt they had insufficient time to speak during the discussions.

3. Concerns were expressed about the absence of a presence from the European Commission or EUROSTAT. The Secretariat was urged to maintain dialogue with the Commission and ensure the possible maximum co-operation.

**Potential outcomes**

4. Under session 2 (quality of outcomes), support was voiced for continuing work in the area of adult skills and the development over time of a coherent strategy in relation to the measurement of skills. Some members emphasised the importance of reaching across to other policy interests from the labour market and social affairs side.

5. For session 3 (economic and social returns to learning), there was support for striking a balance between identifying immediate and realisable targets and seeking more ambitious goals in the longer-term. There was a question as to how far analysis in this area could go in an internationally comparable setting. Social capital was viewed as being an interesting and worthwhile area to examine but one in which measurement is very difficult.

6. Session 4 (determinants of learning outcomes) would provide some important challenges for INES. It was clear that some areas of policy reform were being addressed more than other areas. Realism was needed about what could be achieved in the short to medium term.

7. A number of important organisational and strategic issues would arise in session 5, not least the discussion about the balance between consolidation and analysis and the need for greater co-ordination between international organisations. Co-operation and co-ordination with IEA on the planning of surveys was urged where, frequently, countries experience resource constraints and difficult choices.

8. Some views expressed stress the importance of a more solid theoretical underpinning for indicators as well as the development of an over-arching framework to link different indicator domains and tracks of work. Other points of view questioned the feasibility of developing such an over-arching framework and stressed the importance of identifying short-term, realisable goals and prioritising areas that could potentially yield useful results within a given time period.

9. Session 6 (cross cutting issues relating to lifelong learning and equity) would be likely to raise questions about how far INES can proceed in relation to new and potentially costly areas of work and where international comparability was not easily achieved. Nevertheless, these areas touched on important areas of policy concern and the contribution of INES was only one part of the work of OECD.

**Discussion of possible new structures of INES**

10. Options for possible changes in the management of the project were discussed. There was general agreement that the current management arrangement was not seen to be sufficiently transparent or clearly defined. Some saw merit in the creation of a new management board comprising representatives of
all countries. However, others felt this was likely to lead to confusion of decision-making roles with respect to the Education Committee and CERI Governing Board. Some agreed that room on any new management body should be found for ELSAC representation.

11. There was agreement that the Network model had worked reasonably well but that the project needed to keep abreast of new developments and flexibility is needed in meeting various demands that cut across the domains of the existing networks. Cost remained an issue in so far as a few countries bore a heavy burden and this situation may not be sustainable in the longer-term. Questions were also raised about the roles of the Technical Group and the National Co-ordinators in any new structures.

12. The need for policy and scientific input to quality assurance in INES was discussed. There was considerable scepticism about the idea of constituting a single all-purpose special scientific advisory panel. But it was agreed that the future management body should be able to mobilise expert scientific advice on an ad hoc basis when this was needed.