Governing Board

26th meeting of the PISA Governing Board

Summary Record

The Hague, 3-5 November 2008

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OECD PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (PISA)  
26th MEETING OF THE PISA GOVERNING BOARD (PGB)  

3-5 November 2008, The Hague, Netherlands

SUMMARY RECORD

Introduction

1. The 26th meeting of the Board governing the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was held on 3-5 November 2008 in The Hague, Netherlands. The main objectives of the meeting were to:

   • Review progress with the development and implementation of PISA, and of the PISA analysis, reporting and dissemination plans.

   • Review applications of non-OECD countries to become full members of the PISA Governing Board, under the provisions of the Governing Board’s Global Relations Strategy.

   • Establish the terms of reference for the PISA 2012 assessment, within the longer-term strategy for PISA that member countries had established in October 2005.

   • Review and finalise the development of the assessment instruments and questionnaires for the PISA 2009 assessment.

   • Review the outcomes of the external review of the test design of PISA as well as the external evaluation of the policy impact of PISA.

   • Review and adopt the PISA budget for 2009.

2. Following the opening of the meeting by the chair, Mr. Watanabe, an opening presentation by Ms. Lazeroms, Director-General for Primary and Secretary Education in the Netherlands, and the adoption of the agenda [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB/A(2008)2REV1] Ms. Ischinger reported on co-operation between the Education Directorate, the European Commission and UNESCO, the OECD action plan to fight the financial and economic crisis, recent OECD publications, ongoing work on the political economy of reform, the OECD innovation strategy and the assessment of higher education learning outcomes (AHELO).
3. Mr. Schleicher then reported on progress with PISA, including the implementation of the decisions made by the PISA Governing Board at its 25th meeting, Mr. Bjornsson reported on the outcomes of the PISA 2006 computer-based assessment of science (CBAS), Ms. Bertrand reviewed the outcomes of a schools workshop, and Ms. Pisani reported on progress with the multi-national assessment of foreign languages that Luxembourg had initiated.

4. The PISA Governing Board:

- **WELCOMED** the ways in which the decisions which the PISA Governing Board had made at its last meeting had been implemented.

- **WELCOMED** the report on lessons learned from the PISA 2006 computer-based assessment of science competencies (CBAS) as a useful contribution to inform PISA’s longer-term approach towards computer-delivered assessments and **ASKED** the Secretariat to explore options for publishing this report.

- **UNDERLINED** the importance of advancing the further development of the infrastructure for computer-delivered assessments, **NOTED** the significant challenges this would imply both in methodological terms and for generating the required resources, and therefore **AGREED** to pursue the assessment of computer delivery progressively in small steps through successive PISA cycles, guided by the PISA R&D track.

- **CONGRATULATED** the United Kingdom on the success which the mix of incentives and feedback has had in securing improved participation and engagement in PISA and **NOTED** the suggestions which schools had made to further improve their experience in PISA, including:
  - better explanation of the context and usefulness of PISA at the start of the process to help engage teachers and schools;
  - preparing a briefing pack to prepare teachers, schools, pupils and parents to overcome initial anxieties of pupils and stimulate better communication within schools;
  - setting up an international buddies scheme with schools doing PISA in other countries, in particular for sharing ideas for using the results to improve;
  - administering the student questionnaire separately at an earlier time to improve the quality of responses;
  - giving out student certificates on the day, perhaps as part of a small awards ceremony;
  - encouraging PISA to be seen as a whole-school issue and to ensure corresponding dissemination;
  - preparing electronic versions of feedback – perhaps in PowerPoint format to allow easier dissemination among staff;
  - sharing good practice on what schools did with the feedback on the PISA website; and
  - making the student questionnaire accessible so that schools can use it for benchmarking whenever they want and with a wider range of students.
• ASKED the Secretariat to compile reports on feedback provided to schools and administrations in different countries and to share this information among countries through the secure PISA website.

• WELCOMED the report on progress with the development of a multi-national test of second language competencies and NOTED that countries would need to express their intention to participate in this before 20 November 2008.

Global relations strategy

5. At its 25th meeting, the PISA Governing Board had finalised its Global Relations Strategy [doc.ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)2REV1] which foresees the possibility for non-OECD countries to apply for full membership if they meet the criteria specified by the PISA Governing Board. Mr. Schleicher reported on applications for full membership with the Secretariat has received so far.

6. The PISA Governing Board:

• NOTED the interest of Brazil, Chile and Israel to become full members of the PISA Governing Board and that these countries met the PISA Governing Board’s criteria for full membership.

• ASKED the Secretariat to carry out the required technical assessment and to prepare the recommendation for membership in written consultation with the PISA Governing Board for submission to the OECD External Relations Committee.

• WELCOMED the proposed pilot PISA assessments in China and India that would be carried out in selected provinces/states through the PISA Consortium.

• NOTED that Georgia, Costa Rica, Malta, United Arab Emirates, Bosnia Herzegovina, Malaysia, Ecuador and Puerto Rico had submitted their request for participation in PISA 2009 too late to be accommodated and AGREED with the proposal to carry out an additional assessment round for these countries in 2010, subject to the condition that this would not have financial implications for OECD countries and would not detract project resources from the PISA Consortium.

Terms of reference of the PISA 2012 assessment

7. Ms. Bertrand reported on the consultation process which the PISA Strategic Development Group had used to establish the terms of reference for PISA 2012, including the outcomes of the meetings of the PISA Strategic Development Group on 26-27 May 2008 and 15 September 2008 [doc. refs. EDU/PISA/GB/SDG/M(2008)1 and EDU/PISA/GB/SDG/M(2008)2], the two written consultations with countries, and the country webinar on 14 October 2008 [doc.ref.EDU/PISA/GB(2008)41]. Mr. Schleicher then presented the timeline for the proposed tendering process as well as the criteria and procedures for the evaluation of proposals.

8. The PISA Governing Board:

• THANKED the Strategic Development Group for the extensive work it had undertaken to establish the terms of reference for PISA 2012 and to build agreement among countries on these through successive rounds of country consultations.
ASKED the Secretariat to clarify in the terms of reference that the PISA Governing Board would be willing to discuss a one-time series break if that proved inevitable to advance the intended methodological innovations in test design and test delivery.

ADOPTED the terms of reference as an adequate basis to advance the development of PISA and to seek substantive and methodological improvements, in particular with regard to the:

- approach to assessing problem-solving competencies;
- reliability of trend estimates;
- resolution of the PISA scales, particularly at the lower end of the performance spectrum;
- external and cross-national validity of the questionnaire scales as well as the identification and application of best practices in questionnaire development;
- use of system-level data at lower and upper secondary levels in the analyses;
- development of instruments for the electronic delivery of the assessment.

ASKED the Secretariat to specify in the terms of reference that PISA operates under a zero-volume growth budget and will continue to do so in the future; bids for PISA 2012 are therefore expected to remain as close as possible within this budget envelope.

UNDERLINED the importance of engaging the widest possible range of qualified bidders in the tendering process and AGREED to inform the Secretariat of relevant survey companies or research institutions before 20 November 2008.

ASKED the Secretariat to issue the call for tender for PISA 2012 as soon as possible, with a deadline for the submission of bids before the end of February, so that the PISA Governing Board could decide on the award of a contract at its next meeting on 6 April 2009.

ADOPTED the proposed technical and substantive criteria for the evaluation of proposals and ASKED the Secretariat to establish a proposal for the composition of a technical review panel that would assess proposals against these criteria, for review by the PISA Governing Board through written consultation.

### PISA research and development

9. Ms. Bertrand presented a proposal for an initial work programme of the new R&D track.

10. The PISA Governing Board:

- WELCOMED and ADOPTED the proposed work programme which the Strategic Development Group had established for undertaking future R&D activities as an appropriate basis for addressing immediate needs for PISA as well as longer longer-term issues, subject to:

  - Further clarification of the merits of establishing psychometric relationships between the electronic reading assessment (ERA) and the PISA 2009 paper and pencil reading scales, given that the two assessments had been designed to be complementary in terms of the nature of the assessment tasks.
Lowering the priority of improving the quality of system-level explanatory data as well as work on the assessment of a younger cohort.

Including a research strand that would look beyond the 2015 assessment and examine efficiency gains from extending the survey cycle to four years, including trade-offs with increasing complexity of PISA in terms of its design and implementation, increasing sophistication in analytical tools, and compliance burden on schools.

- **ASKED** the Strategic Development Group to establish the resource implications of the proposed work programme, including any implications which such work would have at national levels.

11. Ms. Zimmer presented the outcomes of the external review of the test design of PISA that had been prepared by Mr. Mazzeo [doc.ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)28].

12. The PISA Governing Board:

- **WELCOMED** the external review of the stability of the PISA trend data and the comments of the PISA Technical Advisory Group on this as a useful basis to inform decisions on the assessment design for PISA 2009, the establishment of priorities for the terms of reference for PISA 2012, as well as longer-term research and development.

- **NOTED** with satisfaction that the stability of the PISA mathematics trend data was comparable to that achieved in the US National Assessment of Educational Progress, that had served as the benchmark of best practice in the external review by Mr. Mazzeo, but that further improvements were needed in the area of reading.

- **NOTED** the efforts of the Consortium to determine the number and nature of the link items for PISA 2009 in each of the assessment areas such that they would guarantee reliable trend data, and reiterated that the stability of trend estimates would need to be considerably improved in relation to the now reworked frameworks for the three domains (specially reading and science) in order for the Consortium’s deliverables for PISA 2009 to be accepted.

- **NOTED** the importance of maintaining item clusters in terms of timing, mode of presentation, position and composition and **ASKED** the Consortium to determine the test design of the PISA 2009 reading assessment, including the size and nature of the reading clusters, such that they would ensure an effective transition to a minor domain in 2012.

- **ASKED** the Secretariat to further explore the benefits and costs of moving from mixed assessment booklets to focussed booklets, together with any necessary transition arrangements, such as bridging studies.

- **ASKED** the Secretariat to explore trade-offs between the current major/minor domain assessment design and a design where different assessment areas would receive equal weight, together with any necessary transition arrangements.

- **ASKED** the Secretariat to further explore potential gains from applying more general item response models for the estimation of student performance measures.
Analysis, reporting and dissemination

13. Mr. Schleicher reported on progress with the implementation of the PISA analysis and reporting plans [doc.ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)29], Mr. Drzazdzewski provided an overview of the Editorial Group’s work on the thematic reports nearing completion, and Mr. Zoido and Mr. Cresswell presented results from the up-coming reports on top-performing students, resilient students and gender differences.

14. The PISA Governing Board:

- **WELCOMED** progress with the analytical work and the thematic studies and **THANKED** the Editorial Group for guiding this work.

- **UNDERLINED** the importance of gauging the external validity of the competencies assessed by PISA, **WELCOMED** the proposed thematic report that will study the subsequent labour-market and social returns to the competencies and dispositions of 15-year-olds, as measured through the Canadian longitudinal youth in transition survey, and **CONSIDERED** it important to establish a framework for future work in this area at national and international levels.

- **WELCOMED** the proposal to study the competencies, attitudes and engagement of 15-year-olds with environmental issues and **ASKED** the Secretariat to explore publishing the outcomes in time for the UNESCO conference in the mid-term of the UN decade on sustainable development in March 2009, **NOTING** that this would be subject to reaching agreement within the PISA Governing Board on the report through written consultation

- **WELCOMED** the report on excellence in education but **ASKED** the Secretariat to further explore the relative merits of defining top performers through international versus national benchmarks (and to explore both), and **NOTED** that countries would have an opportunity to provide further comments before 20 November 2008.

- **WELCOMED** the report on gender difference and **NOTED** that countries would have an opportunity to provide further comments before 20 November 2008.

- **WELCOMED** the report on student resilience towards social disadvantage; **ASKED** the Secretariat to further explore the definition of social disadvantage as well as assumed linearity in the relationship between social disadvantage and learning outcomes; **UNDERLINED** the importance for the report to speak to issues of social mobility; **ASKED** the authors to better capitalise on information from the parent questionnaire; and **NOTED** that countries would have an opportunity to provide further comments before 20 November 2008.

- **ASKED** the Secretariat to explore advancing the publication of the PISA 2009 assessment framework so that it could be used as a tool to promote the implementation of the assessment in participating countries.

- **ASKED** the Secretariat to explore the implications of performing analyses for the thematic studies also for the subnational entities participating in PISA.

15. Ms. Zimmer then reported on progress in the preparations for a possible PISA research conference.

16. The PISA Governing Board:


- **WELCOMED** progress with the planning for the PISA research conference as well as the proposed thematic framework and was **SATISFIED** with the organisational and financial framework, including the size and composition of the conference, the proposals to actively engage as many participants as possible, as well as consideration given to training opportunities on PISA-related data analysis.

- **EXPRESSED** the hope that the research conference would also shed light on those areas which the PISA Governing Board had prioritised for future research and development.

- **WELCOMED** the generous financial support from Germany and Norway to support the conference.

**Development of instruments for the PISA 2009 assessment**

17. Mr. Adams reported on results from the PISA 2009 field trial test and their implications for the PISA 2009 assessment instruments, including the technical quality of the assessment, the match of the test to the assessment frameworks and the outcomes of country consultations on the suitability of the assessment items [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)31], and possible themes for the PISA 2009 thematic reports [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)32]. Mr. Noijons then presented results from the PISA 2009 field trial of student and school questionnaires and their implications for the main study questionnaires [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)33]. Finally, Mr. Moelands and Mr. Scheerens proposed possible themes for the PISA 2009 thematic reports [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)34].

18. The PISA Governing Board:

- **CONGRATULATED** the Consortium on the quality of the field trial analysis and the detailed reports that countries had received.

- **UNDERLINED** the policy relevance of the ‘reading for school’ component of PISA 2009; **NOTED** the explanation of the Consortium that this had been included in the testing session rather than the questionnaire because of the need to closely associate these questions with the reading test but **AGREED** that a stronger rationale would be needed to justify including this section in the assessment rather than the questionnaire; and **ASKED** the Consortium to review the response format of the ‘reading for school’ component, particularly with a view to concerns regarding potential response desirability bias.

- **NOTED** that results from the electronic reading assessment would be reported in a separate scale but **ASKED** the Secretariat to further study the implications of the low correlation between the electronic reading assessment and traditional reading skills for policy and analytical work in PISA.

19. Furthermore, the PISA Governing Board:

- **WELCOMED** the report on the field trial analyses and the proposed main study questionnaires but **ASKED** the Consortium to consider the concerns expressed and to seek further expert judgement on:
  - Reducing the proposed meta-cognition scale to those elements that are generally supported by countries and renaming them in more appropriate ways;
− Extending the response option in question ST20 on reading materials and SC12 on extrascal school activities;
− Including the gender of the school principal in the school questionnaire;
− Including questions on access to public/school libraries;
− Including the scale on teacher support from PISA 2000 which had also been endorsed by the Questionnaire Expert Group, Reading Expert Group and Technical Advisory Group;
− Extending questions on instruction time to all subjects; and
− Exploring the disaggregation of higher education in questions on parental attainment (ISCED 5A/6).

• UNDERLINED the importance of adequately covering reporting from the electronic reading assessment in the PISA 2009 analysis plan and ASKED the Secretariat to prepare options for including this in the PISA 2009 initial report, for decision by the PISA Governing Board at its next meeting.

• WELCOMED the interactive nature of the proposed report on the use of PISA by practitioners, but ASKED the Consortium to establish a more flexible format for this report that would accommodate national variations in which PISA outcomes would be most useful for teachers, as well as the translation of the report into different languages.

• NOTED the proposal of the Consortium to reorganise the other themes under the headings of: i) system-level indicators, ii) learning environment, school effectiveness and educational leadership, iii) equity and iv) cost-effectiveness.

• UNDERLINED the policy-relevance of system-level analyses but asked the Consortium to establish the adequacy of using of aggregate school-level variables for the purpose of system-level analyses; develop alternative options for dealing with federal structures, including using a judgement sample of sub-national entities; and identify additional resource implications for non-OECD countries in collecting the required system-level data.

• AGREED to establish the choice of themes through written consultation, during which countries would indicate three preferred choices among the combined set of themes proposed as well as whether they would be willing to finance additional collective country choices through voluntary contributions.

Evaluation of the policy impact of PISA

20. Mr. Hopkins reported on the outcomes of the external evaluation of the policy impact of PISA which the PISA Governing Board had commissioned to Mr. Hopkins, Ms. Pennock and Mr. Ritzen [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)35].

21. The PISA Governing Board:

• WELCOMED the evaluation report and noted that, as a next step, this would be submitted to OECD Ambassadors.
ASKED the Secretariat to maintain the confidentiality of respondents when making the outcomes from the survey publicly available, by anonymising the references to national findings in the published report and accommodating any data requests on aggregate levels through the Secretariat, rather than releasing the data from the survey component of the external evaluation publicly.

Financing of PISA

22. Mr. Schleicher presented the PISA budget for 2009 [doc.ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)25REV1] that had been established by the PISA Governing Board through two subsequent written consultations in June and August 2008.

23. The PISA Governing Board:
   • NOTED that the introduction of new EDU management overheads for PISA had been compensated by the suppression of the PISA Communications post in 2009.
   • NOTED a proposed additional increase of 64% in the general OECD overheads charged to PISA during 2009-2010 that was due to the allocation of additional non-PISA staff in of the Education Directorate to PISA during 2007; the hiring of two PISA staff members in 2007; as well as changes in charges for short-term staff in 2007 paid by voluntary contributions.
   • EXPRESSED CONCERNS that the increase in overheads had been established only after the negotiation of the 2009 budget by the PISA Governing Board and OBJECTED to the retroactive application of new assumptions for the calculation of general overheads for PISA.
   • NOTED the explanation of the Director for Education that the Directorate had only recently become aware of the allocation of non-PISA staff to the PISA budget in 2007 and that every effort would be made to correct for the impact of this on the 2009-2010 PISA budget.
   • NOTED that final decisions on changes to the general overheads were still pending, CONSIDERED that general overheads should be calculated on the basis of the existing four-year Council plan on overheads, and ASKED the Secretariat to accommodate possible changes in overheads within existing Secretariat budget lines.
   • ADOPTED the proposed PISA 2009 budget subject to the provision that the financing of the R&D track should be included in the assessed contributions of countries (through a real increase of 3% of country contributions) rather than be financed through voluntary contributions.
   • ASKED the Secretariat to ensure that R&D expenditure would remain within 3% of the total budget also in future years and NOTED that unused expenditure for the R&D track would remain available for subsequent years.

24. Mr. Schleicher then presented an alternative cost-sharing mechanism designed to provide a sustainable basis for the financing of PISA in the longer term [doc. ref. EDU/PISA/GB(2008)4REV1].

25. The PISA Governing Board:
   • ADOPTED the proposed new scale of country contributions for use from the PISA 2010 budget onwards that would consist of: i) a floor contribution representing the marginal international cost for country participation in PISA (currently estimated at 50,000 Euro per year in 2008 price
levels), and ii) a flexible component that would represent country capacity to pay, as estimated by participating countries’ shares of „taxable income calculated on an 875USD basis” – the base data used to allocate the Part 1 budget the OECD – subject to transition arrangements that would limit the annual impact on country contributions to a maximum of plus/minus 5% (in real terms).

International options


27. The PISA Governing Board:

- WELCOMED the report on the field trial analyses and the proposed main study instrument for the international option of reading of electronic texts (ERA) by the Consortium for Core A;
- DECIDED to take the option forward to the main study with Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Hong Kong-China, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Macao-China, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain and Sweden; and NOTED that other countries with an interest in this option will indicate their participation in the option by 20 November 2008.

- REQUESTED the Consortium to provide a test administration script for the main study data collection and to DOCUMENT the rationale for the use of plausible values in this option.

- WELCOMED the report on the field trial analyses and the proposed main study questionnaires for the international options of ICT questionnaire, Educational Career questionnaire and Parent questionnaire but ASKED the Consortium to consider the concerns expressed and to seek further expert judgement on retaining question PA07 in the main study parent questionnaire and including a further response option in the questions addressing parental decision-making and private tutoring.

Conclusions and other business

28. The PISA Governing Board deferred decisions regarding the continuation of sanctions upon the break of the embargo for the PISA 2006 report in December 2007 to a written consultation.

29. The PISA Governing Board expressed its disappointment that simultaneous translation had not been available for the optional part of the meeting and requested that this be addressed in future meetings of the Governing board.

30. The PISA Governing Board elected Ms. Bertrand (United Kingdom), Mr. Bjornsson (Iceland), Ms. Brink (Canada), Mr. Cipollone (Italy), Mr. Roca Cobo (Spain), Ms. Kavli (Norway), Ms. Ohrnberger (Germany) and Ms. Whitney (New Zealand) to the PISA Strategic Development Group.

31. Mr. Watanabe presented the conclusions from the meeting and thanked the Dutch hosts for the excellent arrangements and support of the meeting.

26. The next meeting of the PISA Governing Board will be held on 5 – 8 April, 2009, in the Slovak Republic.