

Dear Minister Péresse,

Dear Commissioner Figel,

Dear Assistant Director General Burnett,

Dear Minister Lammy,

Dear participants,

First, I would like to thank Minister Péresse and her colleagues in the Ministry of Higher Education and Research for organising this international conference with us: this has been a fruitful and appreciated collaboration.

It is with great pleasure that I address you at this conference which is special for us as it is the last one of a year of celebrations of the 40th anniversary of our Centre for Educational Research and Innovation - CERI. New analyses and understandings, as well as social and political change, were being sought in the heady days of 1968 with education in the forefront. The OECD was caught up in this fever too, out of which CERI was born.

We at OECD aim to become the “hub” of a dialogue on global issues. Higher education is increasingly becoming a global issue, and I am very pleased that this dialogue is materialised today by the presence of several international organisations and of participants from 53 delegations, including members of our Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education.

(Futures thinking for consensus building)

We have developed a very strong capacity for collecting and producing comparative educational statistics and indicators on tertiary education indicators. We are continuing our efforts and are currently developing a feasibility study for producing data that could help institutions better understand which learning strategies and environments work best in their specific context. This project on the assessment of higher education learning outcomes, AHELO, will be presented to you tomorrow.

We have also strengthened our capacity for policy analysis and advice and have recently released a major report on tertiary education, titled *Tertiary education for the knowledge society*. It provides a large menu of options for policymakers to consider in their national context.

But today it is our capacity to look to and clarify the longer-term issues that I would like to emphasise. In a fast-changing knowledge society, we must develop our capacity to understand the bigger picture, to analyse past and emerging trends, to anticipate future changes and to innovate – this is CERI's particular contribution. It has been doing this for 40 years and this conference is a good example of the importance of providing ideas and tools for long-term thinking.

It is essential for countries and institutions to understand how their environment is changing. It is also important to understand how well equipped tertiary education systems are if they were to face a discontinuation of recent trends – just think of the financial crisis. This is why we engage in international futures thinking. The scenarios developed within the CERI project on the future of higher education already triggered a good discussion at the forum of our latest Ministerial meeting in Athens in 2006 and I am confident this will also be the case at this conference.

Engaging all major stakeholders in a discussion about the future is essential to prepare the consensus basis that is necessary to make reforms happen. Building a common view and understanding about likely and desirable changes, about promises and risks of recent evolutions is a long-term endeavour. In the United States, the recent *Commission on the Future of US Higher Education* is a good example of how influential such a forum can be.

(The new book)

We cannot make wise reforms if we do not learn from the past and if we do not try to identify glimmering but significant signals off the radar screen to shed light and bring them into focus. The book series *Higher Education to 2030* is precisely about that. It will address the opportunities and challenges of demography, technology and globalisation, and help you understand how big trends play out in tertiary education.

The first volume, on Demography, is released today. You can find it on the memory stick in your folder.

When we started this project, many countries feared that demographic changes would lead to a substantial contraction of their higher education systems, with possible negative implications for their human resources and international competitiveness.

Our analysis suggests that the expansion of higher education will most likely be sustained in the years ahead, and that most tertiary education systems in the OECD area will continue to grow or remain stable. Tertiary education systems in OECD countries are now providing for around 8 million more students than back in 1995. Should past trends continue, tertiary education enrolments would increase on average by 16% in an OECD country by 2025 (with a significant

decrease in only 2 countries (Poland and Korea)). The average tertiary educational attainment of the working age population would increase from 26 in 2005 to 36% by 2025.

A new question, for the immediate future but hopefully not for the next 20 years to come, lies in the impact of the economic crisis: on the one hand, students may study longer, which will raise the level of enrolments; on the other, ongoing changes in the financing of tertiary education may make tertiary education less affordable to some and an effort will have to be made to secure quality access to students from all socio-economic backgrounds. These are important questions which, I understand, you will address this afternoon.

The main issues related to demography in tertiary education, that is to the student population, the academic staff population, and their links with the population at large, will be more of a qualitative than quantitative nature.

On the academic staff front, ageing and recruitment may for example not be the main concern: the ongoing reshaping of the academic profession in terms of diversification of roles and missions is probably the major challenge, one that could have deeper repercussions and needs serious attention in many countries.

On the student front, the continued expansion will often have to rely on new groups and new access policies or philosophies that will lead to a cultural change. Issues relating to social inequity will also take a new face, with possibly less inequity in terms of overall access, but new challenges related to the stratification of the systems, to gender balance, or to the access of new groups such as migrants or students with special needs.

All these issues will be discussed in the next two days and I believe they are crucial for the future of tertiary education.

(Quality access)

So, what futures for quality access in the era of globalisation? One of the conclusions of our latest educational ministerial meeting in Athens was that our member countries have done a good job at expanding their tertiary education systems, but that expanding is of no value if it is at the expense of lower quality or increased inequity.

There are many pathways to quality access, and all countries have to explore those which are most suitable to them. They will probably rely on several instruments such as:

- technology, which can enhance pedagogy in tertiary education and offer more flexible access to all thanks to e-learning or open educational resources;
- diversification, to make sure all needs of students and missions of higher education are appropriately met;
- new ways to secure appropriate funding for higher education and to improve productivity;
- cross-border mobility and internationalisation, to have quality benchmarks, and facilitate innovation and circulation of knowledge.

I am pleased that you will discuss all these issues in the next two days. I am sure the connections between the different and novel perspectives that will be addressed will help to make positive change happen.

Thank you.