

# **EDUCATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**in the Context of Development Co-operation**

**Executive Summary of  
Bildungszusammenarbeit – BZA  
Im Kontext der Österreichischen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit**

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Vienna, June 2008



KKS – Kontaktkomitee Studienförderung Dritte Welt  
(Contact Committee for the Support of Students from Third World Countries)



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## Preface

At the end of 2004 the Contact Committee for the Support of Students from Third World Countries (Kontaktkomitee Studienförderung Dritte Welt – KKS) and the Austrian Exchange Service (ÖAD) hosted a conference on the topic of "Internationalisation Processes at Austrian Institutions of Higher Education – Responsibility for International Students and Chances for International Development Goals". In the course of this conference it emerged that it is particularly students and scientists from developing countries who constitute an indispensable potential for a balanced internationalisation of the Austrian higher education institutions. It, however, also became clear how much the situation of these international students who mostly finance their studies themselves has deteriorated in the last few years – by bureaucratic and financial obstacles (entry and residence, admission, tuition fees, lack of funds for scholarships, work permit, ...). This led to the wish for a cross-department and continuous co-operation of all institutions concerned in order to be able to resolve these questions in the context of development and educational policy. The Round Table Educational Co-operation was founded.

The position paper is a result of this cooperative, superregional, cross-department and interdisciplinary co-operation of experts in the Round Table Educational Co-operation, in which 15 private and public institutions (see list on page 10) took part.

The text was adopted by the Round Table on September 25th, 2006.

For this executive summary in English the chapters one to four have been adopted in an unabridged way. They describe the basic development policy and educational policy-related positions, which in our opinion might also be interesting for other countries as regards approach and message.

In chapter 5 Austria-specific issues have been omitted and the text has been edited in such a way that the general relevance of the recommendations becomes clear.

We hope that this executive summary will draw more attention to development policy-related concerns in the context of the internationalisation of higher education.

The editorial team:  
Gerhard Bittner  
Margarete Kernegger  
Erich Thöni  
Vienna, June 2008

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The relevance of education as an essential instrument of combating poverty as well as for sustainable development has been set down in a whole series of international framework agreements and documents. Amongst these are first and foremost the Millennium Declaration – the Millennium Development Goals – of the United Nations and the international education initiative Education for All, the aim of which, amongst others, is to guarantee access to quality education for all people.<sup>1</sup> Education is seen as a cornerstone for the combat against poverty by the EU, too.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover the idea that it is only possible to preventively face the “new challenges” in the fields of peacebuilding, environment and migration by means of a common development policy is taking hold.

Higher education, science and research play a key role in education, development and strengthening of capacities in areas that are decisive for the economic and social development process of the countries of the south.<sup>3</sup> This is of all-embracing relevance particularly against the background of the globalised world society, in which knowledge is regarded as central capital.<sup>4</sup>

The tertiary education and research institutions of the industrial countries are challenged to make a contribution that is relevant in terms of social policy as well as development policy. Educational co-operation is an integral part of tertiary education and research.<sup>5</sup>

- 1.2. Measures of international educational co-operation have always played and still play an important role in Austrian development policy<sup>6</sup>.

After gaining full sovereignty and as a neutral country the then still young Second Republic opened its tertiary education institutions to students from disadvantaged regions, thus taking responsibility for a peaceful development of the peoples in developing countries and rich countries. At present some 6,800 students from non-European developing countries and 6,300 students from European developing countries study in Austria (degree programme students (ordentliche Studierende) and non-degree programme students (außerordentliche Studierende) at Austrian universities – that is 3.2 % and 3.0 %, respectively, of the total number of students) – some 750 of them are in receipt of an Austrian grant.

International exchange in science and research is another characteristic of this educational and development co-operation.

- 1.3. The support of students from Africa, Asia and Latin America at Austrian universities involves cultural, scientific and development policy-related exchange but also an economic<sup>7</sup> exchange.

This successful tradition in Austrian academic life as well as the practice of a foreign policy that combats poverty is to be continued. In the process all stakeholders concerned are to adjust their measures to these goals and thus to enable a coherent comprehensive approach. It should particularly be avoided that the access of young students as well as researchers be limited or unduly complicated by laws or administrative regulations. Otherwise fewer and fewer people from Africa, Asia and Latin America will get the chance to share their knowledge with students from Austria (and the other EU countries) as well as take part in joint research projects and scientific projects. A concerted and coherent approach is thus urgently needed. Such an approach should be pursued and supported by all stakeholders concerned and at all political levels.

- 1.4. In a similar way a concerted and coherent approach is necessary for the Austrian co-operation with Eastern Europe, too. The following text thus basically also relates to educational co-operation and educational support, respectively, for students and researchers from East and Southeast Europe.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Sustainability and long-term perspectives of educational co-operation

Persons in charge and decision-makers in politics, in tertiary education institutions, in public as well as private development co-operation organisations as well as in economy and business are called upon to provide for the following fundamental values of educational co-operation in the context of global development:

### 2.1. Contribution to peace and development

Connected with the effort for a substantial reduction of poverty worldwide is the goal to enable young people to live a life in peace and justice. Thus investments into tertiary education can contribute to peacebuilding.

### 2.2. A "New World Domestic Policy"

Internationality has spread to all areas of life. In a globally perceived world communication and understanding between peoples is needed more than ever. In this respect universities provide an important field for learning.

### 2.3. Necessity of a worldwide exchange of knowledge and experience

"Learning from each other" is necessary in "developed" societies, too. In addition to a cosmopolitical dimension the encounter of students and researchers at Austrian tertiary education and research institutions also enhances the critical perception of one's own society. In terms of "internationalisation at home" the Austrian higher education institutions also benefit greatly from the presence of international students and researchers.

### 2.4. Contribution to further development

The superior objective of all education and development efforts is the guarantee of basic democratic rights. Cultural, religious and ethnic diversity can be experienced positively and imparted via the catalyst of common scientific interest within the scientific community, thus creating a sociopolitical impetus. The knowledge about differences particularly helps to reduce prejudices and misjudgements.

### 2.5. Mediator function between the worlds

Graduates of tertiary education institutions as well as lecturers and researchers from developing countries constitute a sustainable potential for co-operations in science and intellectual life. Moreover many of these young students may act as "intermediaries" during their stay in Austria, thus also providing a positive impact on the migration discourse.

### 3. Status quo of educational co-operation

- 3.1. Without any doubt the general conditions have changed in the past decades:
- The changes in Europe and the growing together in a European Union bring about new responsibilities and chances in educational policy and development policy<sup>9</sup>.
  - The mobility of people and the resulting migration problems pose new challenges for the European countries and Austria, too.
  - The resources of the universities in many home countries of our students are now far better than formerly but in some partner countries they even have deteriorated.
  - Particularly due to the Millennium Development Goals the development policy is increasingly geared towards the combat of poverty and basic financial security.
  - In the last few years a discourse has taken place in the relevant Austrian and European environment, which has led to a reorientation of the development co-operation instruments.
- 3.2. The development co-operation, too, has to face the changed situation. This does not only require a continuous reflexion of experiences in the support of students, lecturers and researchers from developing countries, monitoring and a continuous evaluation as well as an adaptation of support measures but also a fundamental repositioning on a broad level.<sup>10</sup>

In this respect the indirect support measures that Austria provides for the “free movers” also have to be taken into consideration. These people have chosen Austria as their country of study, they finance their stay themselves and benefit from the infrastructure of the study place. They do not get direct support such as grants. This group of free movers comprises more than 95 percent of all students from developing countries in Austria.

### 4. Perspectives

- 4.1. Changed conditions must not diminish the appreciation of international educational collaboration, especially the support of students and researchers. On the contrary: Investments into higher education and research are important tools for a sustainable economic development of a country and important measures for the combat against poverty. In fact, investments into higher education are preconditions for many structural reforms in various countries.

Investments in direct and indirect support of students and researchers will thus remain an indispensable part of the Austrian educational co-operation in the future. Emphasis will increasingly have to be put on a synergetic collaboration with the Austrian development co-operation and the development policy-related goals of the partner countries; in particular the development policy guidelines and the programmes relevant for educational collaboration of the European Union have to be considered.

- 4.2. **Micro level**

Both active mobility and the “international lecture room” / the “internationalisation at home” convey new experiences and impressions, which bring forward people on a personal as well as an interpersonal level. They convey intercultural competence, a key competence out of which ethic norms, priorities and attitudes as well as cultural traditions can be decoded and understood in the international context as well as in everyday situations.

On an institutional level a whole number of incentives and measures are necessary in order to establish the “international lecture room” and to implement the notion of development co-operation into the content of courses / curricula (e.g. by means of further capacity-building, awareness raising, providing development policy-related knowledge and know-how).

In accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (goal 3<sup>11</sup>) the empowerment of women is to be given priority. This has to be put into practice in grant policy but also on a thematic and structural level in teaching and research.

#### **4.3. Meso level**

In the framework of the present reforms in the Austrian tertiary education system questions of internationality, especially those connected with the co-operation with universities in developing countries are very often not considered at all or only considered marginally and if so, only implemented as individual measures.

Moreover the internationalisation discussion<sup>12</sup> – as far as it takes place – is often characterised by being very one-sided and based on purely Austrian perspectives.

But reciprocity<sup>13</sup> will be the decisive trend in international university relations in the future. Outgoing always requires incoming. In order to enable Austrian students to spend a semester abroad – which is required more and more often – Austria has to offer study programmes but also the conditions that will be attractive for students from abroad. These are for example adequate selection mechanisms, a welcoming and supportive environment and legislation for researchers and students<sup>14</sup>, professional academic support and mentoring, fair chances to support themselves (grants or limited access to the labour market so that they can earn an auxiliary income), adequate housing and suitable migration and reintegration concepts („brain gain“, “ indirect return“<sup>15</sup>).

#### **4.4. Macro level**

Internationality in tertiary education and research serves the end of a global “sharing of knowledge”.<sup>16</sup>

In this respect it is on one hand necessary to implement the supranational UN and EU policies and on the other hand to coordinate the national educational policy strategies and to establish coherence at all implementation levels. Educational co-operation in a broader sense is a political cross-section/transversal task. This means, amongst other things, that measures of individual institutions/ministries always have to be planned and implemented in connexion with other relevant institutions/ministries.

If this is not the case, self-dynamics – as can be observed now – that run massively contrary to the aims of development policy and educational co-operation will develop.



## **5. Recommendations**

### **5.1. General recommendations**

- It is imperative to establish a coherent, comprehensive and proactive educational co-operation in which the objectives of development co-operation, EU guidelines and programmes, ideas of the political and academic stakeholders are adjusted to each other perpetually and implemented in a conceptual way, taking into consideration the needs of the students and the expertise of the NGOs working in this field.
- It is recommended to work out coherent guidelines in educational policy for university and scientific co-operations that are relevant for development co-operation.
- An overall concept for sustainable and systematic integration of economy and business and non-governmental institutions into educational co-operation is to be worked out and implemented.

### **5.2. Recommendation concerning the legal requirements**

- Various legal provisions influence the target group of the students and scientists from developing countries (third countries) directly or indirectly and thus also educational co-operation.
- Apart from general regulations regarding study programmes, admission and financial support provisions of the law relating to non-EU students such as requirements for entry and residence titles, fees and access to the labour market can also play a decisive role.
- Legal provisions and their changes, respectively, should be assessed and coordinated with regard to a coherent educational co-operation and to potential effects on the target group(s) so that they meet the overall concerns of educational co-operation.

### **5.3. Recommendations to all stakeholders of development co-operation**

- In the overall conception of public and private development co-operation all aspects of educational co-operation are to be integrated. This also means coherence within the educational co-operation. Financial support programmes in the tertiary sector are to be coordinated both in the provider countries and in the partner countries.
- Adequate financial means, both public and private ones, have to be provided for this purpose.
- In terms of a professionalization and increased efficiency the establishment of a central information platform for educational co-operation is recommended. The purpose of this information platform is to provide all people concerned (students and lecturers at home and abroad), authorities and administrative agencies, respectively, as well as educational institutions with all relevant regulations and up-to-date information and documents that apply to the individual higher education institutions in a comprehensible form.

#### 5.4. Recommendations to higher education institutions

- The higher education institutions are required to include development policy-related goals into their teaching and research profiles. This should for example be manifested in the assignment of more guest professorships to academics from developing countries.
- In the field of higher education marketing the higher education institutions are called upon, in addition to the presentation of their own profile, to reach agreements in areas dealing with essential basic conditions and transparency for students from developing countries (access and admission, fees, support mechanisms, etc.)
- For the development of capacities and the strengthening of the intercultural competence of those groups of people who deal with students and academics from developing countries in their administrative and academic jobs adequate further education and training possibilities should be offered on a regular basis.

### Conclusion

All decision-makers at the political, administrative and tertiary education and research level, in civil society structures as well as in economy and business are called upon to contribute to the imperative collective debate about the issues mentioned and a quick implementation of appropriate solutions to the end of a coherent educational and development policy.

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- 7 This is not only a “service for the developing countries” but if Austria neglects these it will lose “ambassador services and lobbies” in foreign countries and markets. See also Thöni, Erich (2003): Bildungsmobilität und Wirtschaftsstandort Österreich – einige grundsätzliche Anmerkungen, in: Drittstaaten-Magazin 4 – ÖAD Vienna, 14 – 16, confer also the initiatives of the Scandinavian countries for and in developing countries, whose “aid” is definitely also motivated by economic interests.
- 8 The DAC of the OECD revised the DAC recipient countries list in 2005 <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/51/35832713.pdf>). As of 2005 only support measures to “developing countries” are included whereas former recipient countries of development cooperation with Eastern Europe (Official Aid) have either been incorporated in the list of developing countries (Belarus, Ukraine) or (as in the case of the new EU member countries) are no longer eligible. This simplification is to enable a better concentration on the goals of development co-operation.  
The document follows this adaptation of the definitions and terminology, thus the term development co-operation is used according to the current DAC list of recipient countries for Austrian measures and projects, even if these are carried out in Eastern Europe (Balkans) or in the succession countries of the Soviet Union.
- 9 See programmes of the European Commission, e.g. EDULINK – EU co-operation programme for university co-operation with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the European Commission, GD EuropeAid.
- 10 On this note a comprehensive development of the programmes and projects of the Austrian Development Co-operation in the area of higher education was carried out by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2003, the main objective of which was the further development and quality assurance of these programmes. The results of this research were summed up in: Saadat, Lydia; Zauner, Atiye (2003): Zur Weiterentwicklung von Programmen der österreichischen Bildungszusammenarbeit – ÖBZA. In: Drittstaaten-Magazin Nr. 4/03, published by the ÖAD Office for EU Third Countries Educational Collaboration.
- 11 Millennium Development Goals – Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.  
Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015 at the latest.
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- 13 Even though strictly speaking reciprocity means the “reciprocity ... (of conditions)” it does not always mean a 1:1 situation. Well-known models of reciprocity are: country-related reciprocity (cross-university reciprocity, e.g. Innsbruck sends 3 students to a university abroad, 3 students of different universities of that country come to Innsbruck); university-related reciprocity (reciprocity across several fields of study), e.g. Innsbruck sends 3 students to a university and a field of study abroad; 3 students of different fields of study of a university abroad come to Innsbruck); .field of study-related reciprocity (strict 1:1 reciprocity – 3 students of a field of study in Innsbruck go abroad to study at a university in that field of study; 3 students of the same field of study of the foreign university come to Innsbruck). Moreover the exchange very often does not take place during the same time period and different time periods and different exchange programmes are co-ordinated. An example for relatively strict programmes are the new ASEM-DUO-Fellowship Programmes (<http://www.asemduo.org>), which even require “contemporaneity” and “studying at the same partner institutions”. Practical training courses, e.g. those organised by IAESTE (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience) or AIESEC (<http://www.aiesec.org>) also demand a 1:1 exchange.
- 14 Here the importance of family members is to be pointed out, too.
- 15 Stay in the host country with intensive contact with the home country at the same time.
- 16 Though 78% of the world population live in developing countries at present only 28% of the researchers and scientists live there (UNESCO, 2001 – The State of Science and Technology in the World 1996-1997. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Paris). 85% of the research spending takes place in industrial countries, 10% in India, China and East Asia and only 4-5% in other countries (KFPE, 2001 – Enhancing Research Capacity in Developing and Transition Countries: Experiences, discussions, strategies and tools for building research capacity and strengthening institutions in view of promoting research for sustainable development, Berne, Switzerland). With the exception of a few East Asian countries most of the developing countries have only attached little importance to education and training measures in science and technology (Calestous, J. and Yee-Cheong, L. (2005): Innovation: applying knowledge in development. UN Millenium Project. Task Force on Science, Technology, and Innovation. <http://www.un.org/millennium>). Personal, institutional and structural capacity building in science and research, however, is an essential precondition for the participation in a sustainable development process of the south and north (Weltwissenschaftskonferenz, 1999, siehe Quelle 3 sowie: [http://www.unesco.ch/biblio-d/wwwk\\_agenda\\_frame.htm](http://www.unesco.ch/biblio-d/wwwk_agenda_frame.htm)).

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