



The access of minorities to higher education

(Rapporteur: Mrs Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, Finland, Liberal, Democratic and Reformers' Group)

Doc. 7888

18 July 1997

Summary

Members of national minorities are often under-represented in higher education. Their socio-economic situation, the cost of provision, the lack of suitable primary and secondary education and in some cases, political opposition, contribute to this situation.

Governments should review their national education policies in order to facilitate the access of persons belonging to minority groups to higher education. Several concrete measures are proposed such as bonuses in entrance examinations for those whose mother tongue is different from that used in the examination.

I. Draft recommendation

1. The Assembly believes that minorities should be able to express their identity and to develop their education, culture, language and traditions and that states should take all necessary measures to this end. Moreover, this is the only way by which Europe will be able to preserve its rich cultural diversity.
2. Education is a fundamental human right and therefore access to all levels, including higher education, should be equally available to all citizens of the states signatories to the European Cultural Convention.
3. This is not the case at present as members of national minorities are often under-represented in higher education. The cost of provision, problems of recognition of qualifications, the lack of suitable primary and secondary education and, in some cases, political opposition contribute to this situation.

4. According to several studies - and in particular the results of the three year project on access to higher education in Europe conducted by the Higher Education and Research Committee of the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CC-HER) - the socio-economic situation of minorities is very often also an obstacle to their access to higher education. This is particularly true in the case of Roma/Gypsies.

5. Statistical data on the participation of minorities in higher education is, in many European countries and for different reasons, very incomplete.

6. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers ask the governments of states signatories to the European Cultural Convention to take account of the following principles when reviewing their national education policies:

i. governments should avoid prescribing the exclusive use of the official language and abstain from pursuing policies aimed at the assimilation of national minorities into the majority culture;

ii. persons belonging to a linguistic minority should have access to suitable types and levels of public education in their mother tongue in order to prepare for higher education;

iii. all citizens should have the possibility to study their own language and culture in general and also at university level; persons belonging to minority groups should be encouraged to take part in higher education in their own country as well as abroad;

iv. governments should recognise the fundamental liberty to engage in higher education activities and to establish institutions for that purpose; such institutions should be officially supported once their satisfactory quality has been established - on a non-discriminatory and fair basis - and a genuine demand has been demonstrated; language should not be a criteria for recognising institutions or qualifications;

v. higher education institutions should develop out-reach programmes designed to facilitate the access of minorities, for example by collaborating more closely with secondary education institutions;

vi. students from minority groups should have the possibility to sit entrance examinations to higher education in their mother tongue;

vii. a system of bonuses, given in the entrance examination on the basis of language, could be envisaged as a means of encouraging persons belonging to linguistic minorities;

viii. young persons from minority groups should have equal opportunities to receive vocational training after general basic education and to attend education at all levels, whether or not in their mother tongue, without any additional financial constraints;

ix. special courses in minority languages and cultures should be included in the curricula of teacher training institutions;

x. new information and communications technologies should be introduced as these are well suited for the education of minority groups and of students in geographically remote areas;

xi. the access of minorities to higher education, as well as their subsequent participation, should be monitored on the basis of data voluntarily given by the students and in conformity with data protection principles.

7. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. provide expert assistance, for instance through the CC-HER and the implementation of pilot projects, to universities and governments in countries where minorities experience difficulties in accessing to higher education;

ii. support institutional case studies that focus on the topic of minorities in higher education in Europe;

iii. consider the adoption of the draft recommendation on access to higher education approved by the CC-HER on 21 March 1997.

II. Explanatory Memorandum by Mrs Isohookana-Asunmaa

Introduction

Minorities and minority issues are increasingly important topics in European discussion on the access and participation of students to higher education. Because of the lack of ethnic monitoring, there are however serious gaps in our knowledge concerning minorities in higher education in Europe. In addition, it seems that there is a lack of discussion on the alternative structures and strategies for organising higher education for minorities. Therefore, the first aim of this report is to discuss the nature of the minority problem in higher education in Europe. Secondly, I will describe and discuss European solutions related to minorities in higher education. Thirdly, I will discuss possible policy recommendations.

The report is based on a study by Mr Jussi Välimaa from the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. The term "higher education" refers to tertiary level education that is given in universities or in higher education vocational institutions.

In higher education research and policy-making, "minority group" normally refers to various groups such as women, people with disabilities, people from low income groups, members of particular ethnic minorities or mature adult students, that are under-represented in higher education institutions. There are, however, many academic and non-academic definitions of minorities. Therefore, in this report I concentrate on cultural minorities. These minorities, or minority groups, may be defined with the help of three criteria. First, a minority group differs from the dominant population as to its ethnic origin, language, and/or its religion. Secondly, a minority group is in a non-dominant position, and thirdly, it should be willing to maintain its special characteristics.

Minorities in Western and in Eastern Europe

The nature of the European minority issue in higher education may be divided into two broad categories: the Western pattern (including West and North European societies), and the Eastern pattern (consisting of Central and East European societies).

In most Western and Northern Europe societies minority groups such as Catalans, Frisians, Sami, Scots, Welsh, and various other ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities are no longer in strong political conflict with the dominant groups. This is not however the case of the Basques, Corsicans, the Republicans in Northern Ireland and others. When languages are in contact, it is normal to have conflicts. What is not normal nor acceptable is not trying to reduce these conflicts to the minimum. Some countries, Spain for instance, have done an important effort during the last twenty years, changing their law in that sense. As a result Catalan is an official language in Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca, and Basque is official in the Basque country. Conflicts have not been eliminated, but they are considerably reduced. The protection of minorities is granted and the coexistence of people speaking different languages in Spain is quite satisfactorily.

The Swedish-speakers in Finland provide a revealing example of the process of integration.

In the Netherlands educational structures have been developed for religious groups (catholic and protestant communities), whereas in Switzerland the cantonal system provides a model that has integrated different linguistic and religious groups into a federal state. In West European countries, however, the access and participation of immigrant groups (and their children) in education (including higher education) is a hot topic. In Germany (the Turkish community) and in Switzerland the situation is especially complicated by the non-recognition of locally-born ethnic minority persons as nationals.

In Central and Eastern Europe, however, the minority problems are normally caused by national minorities that have lived in their areas for centuries. Together with democratic developments in the former Communist countries the rights of national minorities are more or less officially recognised. Democratic developments have also given legal status and political "voice" to representatives of minority communities.

The division of the European minority issue along the former "iron curtain" as well as the definition of the two different patterns are not categorical. The Aromanians, for instance, their rights have been recognised in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia but not in Greece. Approaches to the issue within any of the two areas (West and East) vary from one country to the other and in the same country they may vary according to the specific minority concerned.

This report focuses on cultural minorities in higher education in Europe. To reveal the different historical-cultural situations of minorities and the different ways higher education of and for minorities has been organised I will describe with some detail the approach of Finland, which provides an example of a country where a once dominant minority group (Swedish-speakers) has lost its dominant social position and reached a legally guaranteed position in Finnish society. Secondly, I will briefly consider the approaches to this issue in Hungary and Romania. The difficult situation in the Balkans also needs to be discussed and I will present the example of the Albanian university in Tetovo. It would be very interesting to compare the situation of former Yugoslavia with the present situation in the republics of former Yugoslavia. However, the problems of ethnic monitoring as explained by Woodrow and Crosier are particularly difficult in this case. Even though there are statistics available to describe the number of students in higher education institutions, these figures either do not use ethnic status as a background variable or they are highly unreliable. Before 1990 the nationality of a student was treated as a irrelevant and the missions of the universities were to foster tolerance and cooperation between nations. The analysis of the actual situation, in turn, would require institutional case studies which are, however, beyond the possibilities of this report.

The basic difficulty with the study of minorities is their context. Academically as well as politically, the problem of minorities is the problem of the immense variety of their situations. In Europe we find unique, specific situations that can be understood on the basis of history and geography. Therefore, the solutions for the problems should be sought in each specific case.

The problems of minority access to and participation in higher education are closely related to the social structures and cultural traditions of societies. Study of access to higher education must also look at its relationship to the structures and functions of the national educational systems, because normally access to higher education is possible only for those students who have their school-leaving certificates. Participation as a theme focuses attention in turn on the number and present situation of minority students in higher education institutions. Simultaneously, however, it involves consideration of the traditions of societies and minority cultures that remain invisible if we look only at the issue of student access.

The case of Finland

Historical outline

The geographical position of Finland between the East (Russia) and the West (Sweden) has led to political dependency on the stronger neighbouring nations. Finland was ruled by the King of Sweden from the 12th to 19th century. In 1809, during the Napoleonic wars, the country was invaded by the Russian Empire. At that time Finland was more a geographical, than a political, concept. For the development of Finland as a political unit, it was important that the invaded area was granted the political status of an Imperial Grand Duchy with an independent internal administration in governmental, financial, and religious matters. Autonomy lasted about 100 years during which Finland matured into a nation state that reached political independence after the First World War in 1917.

At the beginning of the 19th century Finnish was a language mainly used by peasants and lower classes, whereas the upper classes of society (clergy, nobility and bourgeoisie) were dominantly Swedish-speakers. At that time, the language of instruction was Swedish, both in the elementary schools and at university. A conscious nationalistic movement led by Finnish-speakers, the Fennomans, changed the situation radically. Fennoman ideology was based on the conviction that without a language there could be no nation. This ideology was both culturally radical and politically important, because practically all educated people had Swedish as their mother tongue. Culturally, the Fennomans had two goals: first, they promoted the education of the nation, second, they aimed at the nationalisation of the educated. In practice, the Fennomans started to develop Finnish into a civilised language making it possible to use it at all levels of society, including the arts and science. The first dissertation in Finnish was published in 1858. It was politically important that Finnish was given the status of an official language in addition to Swedish in the 1860s. Simultaneously, the training of Finnish-speaking teachers was started. The education of teachers prepared the way for Finnish-speaking students entering university. The pressure caused by the Finnish-speaking students created, in turn, a real need for university instruction to be given in Finnish.

This process was one of the major causes for political debate and struggle in Finland from the 1880s to the 1930s. In essence, the Swedish-speaking minority was not willing to give up its dominant position in society, whereas the Fennomans, representing the dominant population (over 80% in 1880), argued that the Finnish language must be equal to Swedish. The problems were solved during the early years of the Finnish Republic in the 1920s and the 1930s. Swedish

was given the status of an official language together with Finnish. Consequently, Swedish and Finnish are taught to all pupils in compulsory education. Furthermore, the Swedish-speaking minority was guaranteed equal rights in the Finnish Constitution: education and other social services are provided in Swedish in communities where at least 50 per cent of the population are Swedish-speakers. In higher education as well, the situation of the Swedish-speakers reached a balanced position during the first decades of the Republic. A Swedish-speaking university, the Åbo Akademi in Turku, was established in 1917, and supported by Swedish-speaking businessmen. The Swedish School of Economics was founded in the 1910s. During the 1920s and the 1930s the bilingual position of the University of Helsinki was confirmed in legislation. Since the 1940s the language issue has not given rise to serious political debate.

At present, part of university teaching in the bilingual University of Helsinki is given by Swedish-speaking professors (at least 27 chairs at present). There are also quotas for Swedish-speaking students in six out of the eight faculties of the university. The faculties with the study places in brackets are as follows: law (30), medicine (25), humanities (5), mathematics and sciences (19), education (16), forestry and agriculture (31). In addition to this, there is a Swedish-speaking institution of social studies that functions in the faculty of political science. Even though the Swedish-speaking students have quotas, this does not mean that the quota is filled every year, because the students must pass the normal entrance examinations. However, the Swedish-speaking students will get extra points because of their language. Teacher training of the Swedish-speaking Finns is organised by the Åbo Akademi. According to the new law on Finnish Universities, seven universities are responsible for the training of a sufficient number of Swedish-speaking professionals in their respective fields.

Over the last 110 years the proportion of the Swedish-speaking population has decreased from 14 per cent (in 1880) to 5,8 per cent (in 1995), even though in absolute figures their number is practically the same as 110 years ago: about 300 000. The present population of Finland is over 5 million people. In 1995 the total number of students in Finnish universities studying for an academic degree was 133 359 (Statistics in Finland 1995). The number of Swedish-speaking students was 9 564 representing 7,2 per cent of all the students in Finnish universities. The number of Swedish-speaking university students is therefore a little greater than the proportion of Swedish-speakers in Finland.

&n

Access to higher education

Admission into Finnish universities is based on various combinations of maturity exams and entrance examinations. In the Finnish-speaking universities the entrance examination is in Finnish, whereas in the Swedish-speaking institutions (the Åbo Akademi, the Swedish School of Economics and the Swedish School of Social and Local Government Studies) it is in Swedish. The Finnish-speakers must pass a Swedish language test before they are allowed to participate in the entrance examination. However, both language groups may apply to all institutions, because language is the only differentiating factor. In principle, access to the bilingual university is easier for the Swedish-speaking students, because they are admitted with lower points than Finnish-speaking applicants.

The Swedish-speaking higher education institutions are not as monolingual as it would seem, because there are also Finnish-speaking students in them. For example in the Åbo Akademi, in 1995, 16,4 per cent of students were Finnish-speakers, 82 per cent were Swedish-speakers and

1,6 per cent others (including foreign students). In the bilingual University of Helsinki the corresponding figures were: Finnish-speakers (90,4%), Swedish-speakers (7,6%) and others (2%). The category 'others' consists mainly of foreign students.

Sami and Roma/Gypsies in higher education

The status of the Sami people as an ethnic minority began to improve in the 1970s, when a decree was passed on the democratic Sami delegation. In 1992 the Sami language (involving three languages) reached official status. According to the latest population count, the number of people speaking Sami as their mother tongue is 1726 (0,03% of the population), even though the number of ethnic Sami is about 6 500 persons. In higher education, Sami students have entrance quota in two universities that are located closest to their communities: the University of Lapland and the University of Oulu. At the University of Lapland they have a quota for every study programme (13 starting places). At the University of Oulu quotas exist in the teacher training college (5) and in the programme of information studies (1). In the teacher training college instruction is given in Finnish, but it is possible to take a course in Sami language and culture. In addition to these quotas, there is a department of Sami language and culture with 6 starting places at the University of Oulu. In all, 26 study places are available for students that are able to speak Sami. This does not, however, mean that all the places will be filled every year, because the students must pass the university entrance examinations. Therefore, there is no automatic entrance to the university for the Sami students, even though they will get certain extra points because of their language. It should also be noted that the basis of this category is ability to speak Sami and not ethnic origin.

Due to the Finnish legislation (Personal Data File Act 1987/417 §6), ethnic or racial origin cannot be used as a background variable in the national statistics. Therefore, the actual number of Roma/Gypsies cannot be calculated, but only estimated. It has been estimated that there are 9 000 - 10 000 Roma (0,2% of the population) in Finland in the 1990s. This also causes problems for the ethnic monitoring of Finnish minority students, because the only background variable related to the minority status is language: students are asked to indicate their mother tongue. The alternatives are the following: Finnish, Swedish, or other. According to a recent survey based on a questionnaire only 2% of Roma/Gypsies have finished secondary education and only 4% per cent of these have an academic degree (less than 10 persons).

Summary

In Finland, the rights of minorities are guaranteed in the legislation. As to the largest minority group, the Swedish-speakers, the solution was reached after about 50 years of political debate. They are the only minority whose rights are guaranteed in the Finnish constitution, whereas the rights of other minorities are secured in special laws (cultural autonomy act). In higher education, the solution is structural: Swedish-speakers are guaranteed the right to higher education in their mother tongue in Swedish-speaking institutions (the Åbo Akademi, the Swedish School of Economics) and in the bilingual University of Helsinki. In these institutions it is possible to study all academic disciplines in Swedish. The University of Helsinki is the only bilingual university with entrance quotas for Swedish-speakers, whereas the rest of the 20 Finnish higher education institutions are monolingual (17 Finnish-speaking and 2 Swedish-speaking). In the 1990s the Swedish-speakers are over-represented in Finnish higher education. This situation is the result of cultural, economic, and social factors. Swedish speakers have had a strong position in Finnish cultural and academic life. It can be said that they have "cultural capital" that helps the students in their academic careers. Economically, Swedish-speakers have

been able to finance their institutions through private sources, even though nowadays they are mainly funded from the state budget.

As to the Sami people, a similar higher education policy has been implemented: Sami students have an entrance quota for every study programme (including teacher training) at the University of Lapland and university level teaching in the Sami language and culture at the University of Oulu. Roma/Gypsies do not have quotas or special higher education institutions.

In addition to training in Finnish and Swedish, training in Sami, Roma and the sign language is stipulated as a basic right, at the primary and secondary levels as well as in vocational institutions.

In line with the enhancement of teacher training and as the New School Law includes specific language provisions, the Sami High School (Sami Allaskuvla) has launched the planning of a Sami-language secondary teacher training programme. The planning of basic and secondary teacher training programmes in Roma and in the sign language are also under way.

Minorities in central and eastern Europe

The main problems of studying the access of minorities to higher education in Central and Eastern Europe are caused by the lack of reliable data. The lack of data is the result of two main factors. First, ethnic status is normally not used as a background variable in official statistics. Secondly, even when nationality, or ethnic origin, or language is indicated in national statistics, it is difficult to check the reliability of these figures. For these reasons institutional case studies would be the most rational way to study the actual situation of minority students in higher education institutions of central and eastern Europe.

I will now consider the approaches of Hungary and Romania, two Council of Europe member states in which minority groups represent about 10% of the total population. These two countries have recently signed a "Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Good Neighbourliness Between Romania and the Republic of Hungary", which states, *inter alia*, that the countries "shall take the necessary measures so that persons may study their mother tongue and have adequate possibilities to be educated in this language within the state education system, at all levels and in all forms, according to their needs".

&n

Hungary

In Hungary, there are 13 nationalities and ethnic minorities that constitute 6-8% of the total population. The largest minority groups are the Roma/Gypsies (about 450 000), Germans (175 000), Slovaks (110 000, of which only 10 000 speak Slovak), and Croatians (80 000). A new law on the rights of minorities (1993) recognises the political and human rights of minorities. Concerning education, minority groups are encouraged to establish their own institutions and provide for teaching in the minority language. The Hungarian government also subsidises minority schools in Hungary on the basis of the number of minority students.

Hungarian higher education consists of universities and of colleges which are similar to higher vocational education institutions (Fachhochschule in Germany).

In Hungary, there are no special higher education curricula for minorities. Consequently, the language of instruction is normally Hungarian with the exception of Roma/Gypsies who have their Romany-language teacher training institution. Furthermore, in certain teacher training colleges minority students may take courses on minority languages and cultures, and all nationalities and ethnic groups are included in the selection of courses, even though all the courses are not provided by the same institutions.

According to a Hungarian study on the participation of minorities in education in Budapest it seems that some of the minority groups are over-represented in higher education (Croatian, Slovak, Serb, German) compared to Hungarians, whereas others, especially Roma/Gypsies, are strongly under-represented. The reasons are various. The economic conditions may prevent the education of minority groups. In the case of Hungarian Roma, poverty is one of the main reasons for their under-representation. A second reason could be the fact that the culture of educational institutions conflicts with that of the Roma/Gypsies, causing student drop-outs.

In most Hungarian higher education institutions an entrance examination is not the general norm. Sixty per cent of the institutions do not use entrance examinations at all, but admit students on the basis of their maturity exam certificates or secondary school leaving certificates. Minority students do not have entrance quotas. It should be noted also that access to higher education institutions is encouraged for students from Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries. Therefore, special funds are reserved for such students to take at least part of their course in Hungarian higher education institutions.

&n

Romania

The Romanian higher education system consists of universities offering long courses (4-7 years) and of colleges offering vocationally oriented courses (2-3 years). A very important phenomenon in the Romanian higher education system is the rapid expansion after 1990/91 of private higher education institutions. The number of private higher education institutions has already outnumbered the public, even though there are more students in the public higher education institutions (235 000) than in the private institutions (86 000).

In Romania, 23 distinct minority groups representing 10,6% of the total population were recorded in the 1992 population census. The biggest minority is the Hungarian community numbering 1 600 000 persons (7,1% of the population). Forming an intellectual and trading class, the Hungarians were subject to restrictions of their rights in Communist Romania. The Bolyai Magyar University in Cluj provides a revealing example of the process. Originally this University was established by Hungarians in Cluj (then Kolozsvár) in 1872. It became a Romanian University in 1918 and then it reverted to Hungarian status in 1940. In 1959 it was merged with the Babès Romanian University in Cluj. The number of Hungarian university teachers steadily decreased during Ceausescu's regime from 24% (1970/71) to 18% in 1980/81.

After the political changes in 1990 the situation has improved. The new Romanian legislation recognises the rights of minorities. Improvements have continued after the signing of the above mentioned Treaty and again after the change in Government which took place in 1996. However, it seems that the number of ethnic Hungarian students in Romanian higher education is still smaller than their proportion of the total population. The approval of an education law in 1994 that made Romanian a mandatory language for all levels of education, for all citizens irrespective

of their ethnic origin, was criticised as a threat to the situation of minority groups, language being one of the most central instruments in the preservation and development of cultural identities.

The case of Tetovo

The problems met by minorities in acceding to higher education in the Balkans may be highlighted by the incidents surrounding the attempt to set up an Albanian language University in Tetovo in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

The Committee on Culture and Education was informed of these problems by Mr Ibraimi, member of the Special Guest Delegation of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia on 25 April 1995. It then asked the Chairman to write to the Macedonian authorities in order to help prevent further clashes and decided to mention the problem in the framework of the report on access of minorities in higher education.

In former Yugoslavia the Albanians had been recognised as having the right to be educated in their own language. In 1980 there were 38 Albanian secondary schools (of which only 5 still exist) and an Albanian university in Prishtina (Kosovo). When this university was closed, a group of Albanians decided to open a new university in Tetovo in October 1994.

The Albanians claimed the right to set up such a university on the basis of the Macedonian constitution which says that "citizens have a right to establish private schools at all levels of education, with the exception of primary education, under conditions determined by law". The Macedonian Government however made it known that "the application for founding an Albanian university in the Republic of Macedonia (...) has neither constitutional nor legal basis" and that they would "suspend the illegal activities of the initiators who wish to form this university".

The university was nevertheless opened on 15 February 1995 and closed by the police two days later. Violent clashes occurred leaving one dead and twenty injured. Charges were brought against the promoters of the university and its self-proclaimed Rector and several professors were tried and given prison sentences. These were suspended later.

Although still considered illegal the "University of Tetovo" is in operation and claims to cater for 2000 students. On the other hand the authorities in Skopje have taken measures to facilitate access of members of minorities to the country's two public universities. A pedagogical faculty for primary and secondary teacher training where instruction is carried out in the Albanian language was also established in Skopje further to a recommendation of the Council of Europe. These measures attracted strong criticism from the opposition.

The case of Tetovo cannot be viewed only as a matter of access of the Albanian minority to higher education in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. Political considerations were at stake and public declarations by certain foreign politicians (for example the Albanian President Sali Berisha) were far from appropriate in the circumstances. The Macedonians accused the Albanians of aiming at a "Great Albania" and feared that the university was a cover-up for illegal activities such as the spreading of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Balkans.

The end result is however that today the members of the Albanian minority in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, which, according to official statistics Albanians account for 22% of the Macedonian population, have few possibilities of following higher education in their

own language. The continuing uncertainty over the legality of the Tetovo University venture will provide grounds for more escalations, which go hand in hand with a politicisation and progressive degradation of the self-proclaimed academic mission of that institution.

Conclusion

Politically, the problem of minorities appears to have a different dimension in Europe compared to American and Australia. On the new continents, academic research has focused attention on various problems and challenges caused by the increasing diversification of higher education students and teaching staff. In the context of diversified higher education institutions the topics of access, participation and higher education pedagogics have been defined in terms of new ways to meet the fast-changing needs of modern societies. On the new continents studies have aimed at finding instruments that help minority-sensitive policy-making. Policy-makers in the United States have developed political agendas to promote minority participation in higher education (e.g. the New Jersey Plan 1988). In Europe, however, the situation of minorities has its own dynamics because many minority groups (and nationalities) have lived together with other nationalities for centuries.

The topic of access national minorities to higher education has not been seriously addressed by European scholars. The most evident reason for this seems to be, especially in Western Europe, that minority participation in higher education has not been seen as a problem, because they normally can speak the language of the state: Catalans and Basques speak Spanish, the Welsh speak English; the Sami and Swedish-speaking Finns speak Finnish, etc. As the applicants can speak the official languages and participate in academic teaching, access to higher education institutions makes no difference between students. In the case of the Catalans, for example higher education in Catalan or Spanish is available in all universities of Catalonia.

The nature of the problem changes, however, if minority groups, such as Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia or Albanians in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, defend their minority rights, which in most cases are officially recognised, and start to demand instruction in their own language. In this case the question of minority rights easily develops into political problems between the states. The problem then, is not the access of minorities to higher education but the question of what the status of minorities is in society and in its cultural institutions. Universities are among the most important social institutions, because they train academics and professionals (intellectuals) that have a great impact on the cultural identity of minorities. I would suggest that this kind of politically controversial context easily increases academic silence related to minority issues.

Academically, however, there also seem to be practical reasons for academic silence as to the issue of minorities in higher education. There is a lack of institutional, national, and international education statistics concerning the minority status. Therefore, even the first levels of ethnic monitoring - data gathering and analysis - are not possible not to speak of international comparative studies. The only countries that have ethnically related data gathering are the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Russia. The data is not, however, comparable because of different criteria in data gathering. Therefore, I suggest that the international community of scholars should discuss the benefits and problems of using background factors indicating minority status and reach a consensus on the ethical principles of including this in data gathering.

The statistical data, despite all its inaccuracies, would give a basis for more comprehensive studies of minorities in higher education. It would also serve the needs of the international

community, helping it to understand the problems related to over- or under-representation of the various ethnic groups. When suggesting this I would like to point out that statistics give only a very limited picture of the world, creating a need for more comprehensive studies based on qualitative methods.

This leads to my second point. The cultural traditions of various minority groups (e.g. Roma/Gypsies) have not been widely studied from the perspective of higher education access and participation. It could be asked what the cultural traditions of minority groups are that support or hamper studies in higher education. Furthermore, a whole series of questions emerge if we wish to examine the culturally determined "hidden curricula" of higher education institutions concerning minorities. These studies will have to take into account the forms of discrimination, the impact of socio-economic status and various culturally determined social dimensions (absence of academic role-models, language barriers, etc.) that influence seeking one's way to higher education and completing one's studies. Therefore, the main academic conclusion is that there is a real need for empirical studies of minorities in higher education in Europe .

Recommendations

At the level of national higher education systems the language of instruction is one of the most essential questions. As a general principle I suggest that *the rights of minorities for education in their mother tongue should be guaranteed in national higher education systems.*

In more practical terms national governments should see that

- *Minorities should have either their own monolingual higher education institutions where teaching will be given in their mother tongue or bilingual institutions where a certain part of teaching is provided in the minority language.*
- *Curricula in higher education institutions with minority students should include minority culture and language courses.*

Access and participation of minorities in higher education may be seen as an area for policy-making. Based on the Finnish experience, provision for entrance examinations in minority languages helps to maintain minority institutions in operation. Therefore, I recommend that in the national system based on entrance examinations *students from minority groups should have the possibility to take entrance examinations in their mother tongue.*

Since the quality of higher education is to the advantage of both dominant and minority populations, careful consideration should be given to the criteria for quotas because a lower academic quality of minority students may be a burden for the institutions and may lead to drop-outs and frustration. Therefore, I suggest that in a national system based on entrance examinations *minorities should have entrance quotas. These quotas should be supplemented by extra points given in the entrance examinations on the basis of language.*

The socio-economic position of minority students in institutions of higher education is closely related to the above mentioned topics. Therefore, national governments should guarantee *sufficient economic support for students in general and for minority students in particular.*

Empirical data on the participation of minority students forms the basis for minority-sensitive policy-making. Therefore, there should be empirical data that enables ethnic monitoring of

higher education students. The issue of ethnic monitoring is, however, very delicate because this kind of data may be (and has been) misused. Therefore, I recommend that ethnic monitoring should be based only on students' voluntary responses.

Ethnic monitoring should be taken into use in higher education institutions in Europe. It should, however, be based on students' voluntary responses.

As a general recommendation I suggest that *the Council of Europe promotes institutional case studies that focus on the topic of minorities in higher education in Europe.*

Reporting committee: Committee on Culture and Education

Budgetary implications for the Assembly: None.

Reference to the committee: Doc. 6320 and Reference No. 1701 of 22 November 1990

Draft recommendation: adopted by the committee with 4 abstentions on 24 June 1997.

Members of the committee: Sir Russell Johnston, (Chairperson), MM. Berg, Probst, Mrs Verspaget (Alternate: M. Eversdijk) (Vice-Chairpersons), MM. Arnason, Bartumeu Cassany, Bauer, Baumel, Berti, Bratina, Mrs Camilleri, MM. Cem, Corrao, Decagny, De Decker (Alternate: Staes), Diaz de Mera, Domljan, Dumitrescu, Mrs Fehr, Mrs Fleetwood, Mrs Fyfe, Mrs Garajova, MM. Gellért Kis, Glotov, Mrs Groenver, Mr Hadjidemetriou, Baroness Hooper (Alternate: Mr McNamara), Mrs Isohookana-Asunmaa, MM. Ivanov, Jaki?, Jarab, Mrs Katseli, MM. Kouck? (Alternate: Mrs Plechatá), Kriedner (Alternate: Zierer), Mrs Kusnere, MM. Lazarescu, Legendre, Liiv, Ma?achowski (Alternate: Pi?tkowski), Mrs Maximus, MM. Melo, Pereira Marques, Polydoras, Mrs Poptodorova (Alternate: M. Yordanov), MM. de Puig, Ragno (Alternate: Rizzi), Regenwetter, Roseta, Mrs Schicker, MM. Siwiec, Sudarenkov, Symonenko, Szakàl, Tanik, Mrs Terborg, MM Vangelov, Verbeek, Mrs Vermot-Mangold, MM. Walsh (Alternate: Connolly), Ms Wärnersson, MM Yavorivsky, Zingeris, N... (Alternate: Cubreacov).

NB: The names of those who took part in the vote are in italics.

Secretaries to the committee: Mr Ary and Ms Kostenko