

The roots of the European University Association

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Introduction

After the Second World War, higher education and research became important elements in national political systems. Increased demands for places at universities were not only a response to growing employment options; it was also a result of higher social and cultural expectations. Higher education institutions were facing new challenges; universities now had to see themselves as partners in society, with an active role in societal development.

It was necessary for university leaders to meet to discuss the challenges of an oncoming mass education. A first conference for Western European rectors and vice-chancellors was held in 1955, the next in 1959. The 1959 conference was the seed for *CRE - Conférence permanente des Recteurs, Présidents et Vice-Chanceliers des Universités européennes*. This *Standing Conference* was open for members from the whole of Europe; however, it should take thirty years to bring East and West together in CRE. By then, CRE had been reorganized from a meeting of rectors to an *Association of European Universities*.

The steering of CRE was from the start based on a *Permanent Committee* of national representatives. Thus, the foundation of CRE also stimulated the formalization of national rectors' conferences. Some examples: In Norway, semiannual rectors' meetings had started in 1958, to be formalized as *Det norske universitetsråd (Norwegian Council of Universities)* in 1963. Also in Sweden, the need for a CRE representative led to a national organization, as *Svenska Akademiska Rektorskonferensen (Swedish Academic Rectors' Conference)* was established in 1966, also here as a continuation of regular, but informal meetings. CRE activities were on the agenda of the national meetings from the start¹². In Italy, *Conferenza Permanente dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (CRUI)* was formalized in 1963, building on informal meetings of university rectors since 1947/48. In some countries such organizations had longer histories: *Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses (CRUS)* dates from 1904, *Österreichische Rektorenkonferenz (ÖRK)* from 1911 and *Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom (CVCP)* from 1911.

Thus, with the development of CRE, a European agenda for the universities was being discussed within a joint framework. At first, the agenda consisted mainly of academic and institutional matters, culminating with the 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum.

Over time, the rectors' conferences developed into organizations representing universities in a political dialogue with national authorities, discussing management, budgets, higher education and research policies. Many were reorganized; the Norwegian Council of Universities became the *Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions*, the Swedish Academic Rectors' Conference became *The Association of Swedish Higher Education*, the CVCP became *Universities UK*. As a group, they are still called *national rectors' conferences*. Many now include all higher education institutions in the country, not only the traditional universities.

When the European Community took up research and later on also higher education, EC policies came more and more into focus when university rectors met. This prompted the creation in 1973 of the *Comité de Liaison des Recteurs des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne*, reorganized as the *Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences* in 1996. From 1993, also rectors' conferences in EFTA-countries participated here, first as observers, later on as associated members.

¹ P. Nyborg, *Fifty years of university cooperation* (in Norwegian), 2007

² S. Strömholm et al. *The Swedish Academic Rectors' Conference 1966-1996* (in Swedish), 2003

The Liaison Committee, later on the Confederation, acted as a spokesman for the European universities vis-à-vis the EC/EU Commission and the Commissioner for research and education. The cooperation in the Confederation also made it possible for the national rectors' conferences to influence EC/EU decision-making bodies through concerted actions on national level.

As the EU programs for mobility of students and staff and for institutional cooperation led to increased contact and cooperation also between CRE and the Commission, the need for coordination of CRE and Confederation activities became apparent. There was a need for European universities to speak with *one* voice vis-à-vis European Union authorities. A merger of CRE and the Confederation was on the agenda of the two organizations from 1997. With the Bologna Process being born in 1999, the need for a strong spokesman for the European universities became even more apparent. This led to the merger of CRE and the Confederation in 2001 into the *European University Association, EUA*.

The EUA has been a success, leaving CRE and Confederation behind as part of the history. Although numerous documents were produced by the two parent organizations, this documentation is not easily available today.

What follows will be an account of the activities of CRE and the Confederation up to and including the merger, as seen by a representative of one of the national rectors' conferences participating in the work of the two organizations during the last ten years of their activities. It is not a complete history, but a broad outline of developments during the latter half of the 20th century, supplemented by more specific descriptions of events, actions and projects to give a picture of the two organizations and their achievements. Mission statements and structures of the two parent organizations provide a background for a better understanding of EUA as an organization.

This account is based on material available in the EUA Secretariat and on contacts with Andris Barblan, former Secretary General of CRE, Inge Knudsen, former Director of the Confederation and Lesley Wilson, Secretary General of EUA. It would not have been possible to write this account without their positive assistance.

1 CRE – Association of European Universities

A large number of publications and reports were produced by CRE during its more than forty years of existence and sent to universities and national rectors' conferences all over Europe. Most of this material has probably been cleaned out when former rectors left their offices. However, one description of the development of CRE is available on the Internet, written by Andris Barblan, Secretary General of CRE for more than 25 years³.

Forty years of CRE activity was marked by a supplement to the 1999 issue of *CRE-action*⁴. In this special issue, Ladislav Cerych, Raymond Georis, Guy Neave, Bernard Laurin and Walter Rüegg have dwelt on aspects of CRE's past.

³ A. Barblan, *Academic cooperation and mobility in Europe: how it was, how it should be*, CEPES 30th anniversary http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/CEPES_30thAn.1069322899147.pdf

⁴ CRE-action No 115 – Supplement, 1999

1.1 The historical context⁵

The creation of CRE was closely related to a series of events reflecting the climate and dynamics of the post-war period. On the political scene, these were, in particular:

- Churchill's Zurich speak on the United States of Europe in 1946;
- The 1948 Hague Congress on European cooperation;
- The signature in 1948 of the Brussels Treaty (predecessor of the Western European Union) supporting cultural exchanges next to security collaboration (5 countries);
- The creation of the Council of Europe by 10 founding members in 1949 (15 members by 1956, all in Western Europe);
- In 1954, the creation of the Western European Union (7 member countries);
- In 1957, the signature of the Treaty of Rome (6 member countries).

Following the 1948 Haag Congress and its recommendation on culture, new institutions were founded in the early fifties, such as the College of Europe in Bruges, The European Cultural Centre in Geneva and the European Cultural Foundation.

In 1950, the International Association of Universities was founded under UNESCO aegis. A large number of IAU founding members were European universities which could also see the need for closer cooperation within Europe. In 1954, twelve European countries joined forces and established CERN – Centre européenne pour la Recherche nucléaire.

Then, in 1955, a first Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors met in Cambridge within the framework of the Western European Union and led to the first session of a European Universities Committee. From 1955 to 1959, several meetings of that committee helped prepare a second Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors in Dijon. That was where CRE was born.

CRE severed the ties with the Western European Union and developed strong links with the Council of Europe. However, as CRE insisted on its independence, as a representative of academic interests in the dialogue with political decision-makers, the ties to the Council of Europe were broken in 1969, to open up for the participation of universities in Eastern Europe. It should take another twenty years to realize this idea of bringing together university leaders from the whole of Europe in one organization.

1.2 Cambridge 1955

At the initiative of the Western European Union, nearly one hundred university representatives, most of them rectors or vice-chancellors, met in Cambridge in July 1955, to discuss common problems and challenges to their institutions. They came from fifteen different countries in Western Europe.

They discussed the need for university autonomy, the balance between specialization and general culture, the selection, training and welfare of the student body and the university's role in society. The Conference adopted recommendations in each of these fields⁶; some of them were still relevant fifty years later:

⁵ L. Cerych, *The CRE, NGOs and European integration* in CRE-action No 115 – Supplement, 1999

⁶ *Das Europa der Universitäten 1948-1962*, pp172-178, Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz, 1964

Report of Proceedings of the Cambridge Conference was published by the Western European Union in 1956

In all countries universities should have a greater degree of autonomy.

Grants made by public authorities should be made as block grants.

Universities should be free to organize their own courses, whilst bearing in mind that for certain professions, university degrees are the only qualifications required.

In connection with sponsored research, the university authorities have a responsibility

- for safeguarding the university autonomy;
- for ensuring free choice and independent direction of research by its staff;
- for ensuring that university facilities are used only for their proper purpose.

Contracts should not forbid the publication in due course of the results of research carried out in universities.

In all circumstances the freedom of thought of university staffs must be safeguarded and that no governmental supervision should be exercised in this sphere.

Any system for selection of students must always avoid discrimination on grounds of race, religion or political creed.

In all countries financial assistance should be made available to students whose capacities are sufficient to pursue their studies with diligence and success.

Universities, conscious of their responsibility for the preparation of leaders of society, should adapt their teaching to comply with the increasing needs of the community.

Students should be encouraged to pursue part of their studies at universities abroad.

International exchanges between staffs of universities should be encouraged and Governments should be requested to ensure that the necessary funds are available.

The Conference recommended that similar conferences be convened periodically, also to ensure a permanence of relations between the universities. The European Universities Committee was formed in Brussels in November 1955, under the auspices of the Western European Union, to fulfill the tasks recommended by the Cambridge Conference⁷.

1.3 Dijon 1959

At the invitation of the Rector of the University of Dijon, it was decided that the Second Conference of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors should be held in Dijon in September 1959.

With the support by the Western European Union, three working parties were set up to prepare reports on the topics chosen for the Dijon conference;

- the universities and the shortage of scientists and technologists;
- studies relating to Europe, with reference to the humanities;
- studies relating to Europe, with reference to the social and economic sciences.

The heads of universities in twenty-two European countries were invited to attend the conference, together with high government officials, experts in various fields of the arts and the sciences, and representatives of international organizations.

⁷ *Report of Proceedings, Second Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors, Western European Union 1959*

In Dijon, each of the reports from the working parties was discussed by a commission. The proceedings focused on the recommendations from the three commissions, reflecting the discussions in these fora⁸.

The shortage of scientists and technologists implied that universities must expand and multiply. How to keep the cultural standards of the universities intact while they were expanding rapidly and constantly increasing in numbers? It was pointed out that the size of the faculties was more important than the size of the university, as the universities might consist of many colleges or campuses. Within faculties, departments must be strong enough to make useful contributions to scientific development, this suggested that there should be a minimum number of teachers for a department and consequently for the faculty. It was seen as essential that the proportion of students to staff should be limited to a reasonable figure (10 to 1?). The commission felt unable to advise on the question of founding technological universities rather than full universities. For the achievement of European unity, the commission attached capital importance to exchanges of students at all levels.

The commission on the humanities recommended that the study of the humanities should emphasize their Greek, Latin and Judeo-Christian origins, the common heritage of European culture. The knowledge of classical languages (Greek and Latin) should continue to be regarded as the best approach to the understanding of the values handed down from antiquity. Teaching of such languages should be continued, if they already were a part of the curriculum, or introduced if such was not the case.

The commission on social and economic sciences was, not surprisingly, focusing on newer challenges: The commission recommended that universities more actively should direct the attention of their students to the study of the economic interdependence and to the social, legal and cultural inter-relations of the countries of Europe. The commission advised that the universities of Europe should develop contacts between the members of their staff, by exchange visits and international colloquia, and between their students by travel abroad and by international fieldwork teams.

The Dijon Conference recommended the appointment of a new working party to prepare, *for the next Conference*, a survey of the structure of university studies in the European countries and of the regulations in force. The Conference also urged that effective links should be established between the universities and non-university research centers and recommended the appointment of a working party to prepare, for the next conference, a document giving details of any such links already achieved in Europe and the rest of the world.

Clearly, the rectors and vice-chancellors of European universities wanted to further develop their cooperation.

1.4 Recommending a Standing Conference

In Dijon, two plenary sessions were devoted to the organization of future conferences and of the European Universities Committee. The first session discussed a draft by a working party, this first draft was then revised and the final document submitted to the Conference⁹.

⁸ *Das Europa der Universitäten 1948-1962*, pp210-219, Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz, 1964

⁹ *Das Europa der Universitäten 1948-1962*, pp297-299, Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz, 1964

The working party saw it as essential that in any future organization, the universities and their representatives should have full freedom to initiate and conduct discussion of any matter of concern to the universities, to publish information or express conclusions, and to consult directly with other bodies without political control. It therefore recommended that the Second Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors should set up a *Standing Conference of Rectors ad Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities* which should meet at least once every five years in a university city in one of the member countries

It was recommended that the Standing Conference should

- advise European universities on questions of common interest;
- be available for consultation by governments on university matters;
- make recommendations to national, international and supranational organizations and institutions on university matters.

The working party also recommended that responsibility for the Conference taken by the European Universities Committee (under the aegis of the Western European Union) should be continued by an Advisory Committee for the Standing Conference. The new Committee should

- advise governments and inter-governmental organizations on university matters;
- facilitate consultation and collaboration among the universities of Europe;
- collect information and publish documents bearing on university problems.

As the Council of Europe was considering setting up an advisory body on university matters, it was proposed that the Advisory Committee for the Standing Conference should fill this role.

The Standing Conference and its Permanent Committee was established soon afterwards, with Rector Bouchard from Dijon as the first President.

1.5 Göttingen 1964

At the opening of the next Conference in Göttingen in 1964, the President of the Standing Conference reported on the activities of the Permanent Committee since Dijon¹⁰. He reminded the participants that for the previous conference in Dijon, invitations were sent out jointly by the Rector of the University acting as a host, and the Secretary General of the Western European Union, as patron and arbitrator.

“The Western European Union provided and paid the translators and the female secretaries and not only bore all the expenses of the secretariat, but likewise the travelling expenses of the members of the study commission and the cost of printing their memoranda and reports. When you, at the end of the Dijon Conference, decided to terminate this state of dependence and at the same time to renounce the financial means bought by the same dependence, your Committee found itself faced with financial difficulties on all sides. --- a Committee which consisted of the separate meetings of the academic members of the Committee for Higher Education and Research within the Council of Europe. Under such conditions the Committee has worked, considered, adopted resolutions and endeavored to fulfil its task honestly, truly and conscientiously, always taking care not to diverge from the instructions given and to keep to the precedents established by Cambridge and Dijon.”

¹⁰ Protokoll, Standing Conference of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities, Göttingen 1964

The President of the Standing Conference told the rectors and vice-chancellors assembled in Göttingen that “independence unfortunately costs money.” It was a tough start.

A great part of the working sessions in Göttingen were devoted to the discussion of a draft constitution for the organization. The constitution was formally adopted, setting the rules for the organization, introducing membership fees and a budget. An office was to be established in Switzerland and a secretary was appointed. The Rector of the University of Geneva, Professor Jaques Courvoisier, was elected President for the next five years.

Nearly two hundred Rectors and Vice-Chancellors from all over Europe participated in the Göttingen Conference. Invitations had been sent also to universities in Eastern Europe and representatives from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia attended. The Conference wanted to be open to universities from the whole of Europe; that was one reason for breaking the relations to the Western European Union. As a representative for universities in the dialogue with political decision-makers, the Conference wanted a full independence. The new ties to the Council of Europe were therefore not unproblematic.

In addition to the organizational matters that had to be treated in Göttingen, academic subjects were of course discussed also at this Conference. The optimum and the maximum size of a university was at the center of the debate; a size relative to society’s expectations, to students’ growing presence in higher education, and to the quality of research and service to industry.

1.6 The CRE Constitution

The Constitution of the *Conférence Permanente des Recteurs, Présidents et Vice-Chanceliers (Rectors) des Universités europeennes* came into effect in September 1964.

The objective of this *Standing Conference* was cooperation between the Rectors, between the universities, between their teachers, research workers and students. It should also present its views and make recommendations on problems which concern the universities to governments, and to national, international and supra-national organizations.

Members of the Standing Conference were the Rectors. Organs of the Standing Conference were the General Assembly (meeting every five years), the President (elected for five years), the Permanent Committee (national representatives plus seven members elected by the General Assembly), and the Bureau (President, Vice-President plus three elected members).

Minor amendments to the Constitution were made by later General Assemblies. From 1969 the organization was referred to as CRE (not the Standing Conference), and in 1989 the Constitution was amended so that from then on, *the universities*, were the members, not the rectors. CRE changed from a rector’s club to an association of universities. In 1994 the name was changed accordingly, to CRE – Association of European Universities.

1.7 Changing times¹¹, 1964-1969

After 1964, the Permanent Committee was used to prepare university positions before discussing higher education policy with ministerial delegates in the Committee of Higher

¹¹ A. Barblan, Reference 1

Education and Research (CHER) of the Council of Europe, often the same people whom the representatives of the national rectors' conferences would meet at national level. In fact, each session of the CHER was preceded by a one day encounter of the university delegates – the CRE Permanent Committee - in order to develop converging views when meeting the governmental representatives.

The Council of Europe at that time represented only the Western part of the continent. It was decided by the 1969 Assembly to distance CRE from the Council and to underline the pan-European ambitions of the association. However, after September 1969, when Soviet tanks rolled in Czechoslovakia and East-West relations froze, universities in Eastern Europe did not come back to the CRE for a long time.

At the 1969 CRE General Assembly to be held in Bologna, a re-definition of autonomy in modern societies was to determine the influence of academia and students on science policy and career training. Because of the 1968 student upheavals, particularly intense in Bologna, it was decided that CRE should meet in Geneva instead. By this time, CRE had become institutionalized, but its ability to weigh on political decision-making was being questioned by the wave of student unrest that destabilized many of its member institutions. Demands were more or less similar everywhere: By the mid-sixties', academic institution had to care for new, large groups of students, for new career paths, and for new relations with industry and the community.

Following the 1968 upheavals, new groups were requesting a say in the decision-making process in universities. Attempts were made to look at higher education as a whole, the universities being only one sector of a more global system of learning. The limits between academic and professional teaching were being blurred – for example in the German *Gesamthochschulen*. Many of the classical references of academia disappeared at the time.

In many universities, this led to a change in the academic leadership. Prestigious scientists of older days were reluctant to commit four to eight years of their life to university administration – at the risk of jeopardizing their scientific career. Hence, in the 70's, strategic management became the interest of a new breed of academic leaders, usually younger staff members interested in the university as an enterprise. For them, often with less global research links than their predecessors, policy-making at international level often had second priority. They were more interested in the practicalities of access, recognition, educational efficiency and the integration of minority students – all questions met first and foremost at institutional level and in a national context.

1.8 The Standing Conference becomes an organization, 1969-1974

At the Fourth General Assembly in Geneva in 1969 (counting Cambridge as the first!), Albert Sloman from the University of Essex had been elected President of CRE. In his report for the five-year period 1969-1974 he described the development of CRE in this way¹²:

“Building on the foundations of Cambridge, Dijon, Göttingen and Geneva, the CRE has since 1969 broadened and intensified its activities. Its numbers have increased to more than 300. They are drawn from 25 European Countries. Some 70 of them come together every six months for a two-day meeting. They receive a quarterly bulletin.

¹² Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee to the 1974 General Assembly

This increased activity reflects the new pace of change in universities and in higher education. But it reflects also a new interest and a new urgency in promoting, in universities throughout the whole of Europe, better understanding and greater cooperation. The record of the CRE for this quinquennial period is one of substantial progress.”

Up to 1969, the activities of the association had been limited to meetings of the five-yearly General Assembly and to the preparatory work for these meetings. In 1969, the Permanent Committee started to organize regular half-yearly conferences. One important reason for this was that the Committee felt that, with changes taking place in universities at an accelerating pace, it was essential that members should be brought together far more often for an exchange of views on a major topic. Reports from these conferences were published in the new *CRE Information*. The conferences were held in different countries, at the invitation of a member university. Among the themes that were discussed, were the following:

- University Government and its Relation to the State;
- The Distinctive Role of the University within the Structure of Higher Education;
- Mobility of Students and Collaboration between Institutions;
- University Staff;
- Teaching Objectives and Teaching Methods;
- Research and Higher Education;
- Expansion of Higher Education;
- Selection or open Access;
- Management and Organization of a Department in a Democratizing University;
- Courses for mature students without previous university education.

These semi-annual conferences were in a way “continuing education” for academic leaders who, after the reforms resulting from the 1968 student troubles, were asked by new regulations to get more and more involved in the detailed management of their enlarged institutions. The conferences were usually coupled with the sessions of the Permanent Committee, not any longer coupled to meetings in the Council of Europe. In the period 1969-1974, Committee meetings were held in Geneva, London, Istanbul, Vienna, Dublin, Copenhagen, Nice, Belgrade Helsinki, Lisbon, Amsterdam and Bologna. Also the Bureau was active, reporting 20 meetings in the five-year period. Of these, nine were held in Geneva where the Secretariat was located.

Reading the 1969-1974 Report, the general impression is that CRE had now found its *modus operandi*.

1.9 East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, 1974-1984

The next five-year period 1974-1979, under President Ludwig Raiser from the University of Tübingen, started as a continuation of the previous period. However, soon CRE had to face new problems. Nations and governments no longer considered higher education to be the driving force behind economic progress and universities in several countries were seriously hit by financial restraints. Some of them also left CRE.

But the big problem for CRE should be the attempt to bridge the gap between universities in Western Europe with those in socialist countries in the East.¹³ CRE wanted to be a meeting-

¹³ Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee to the 1979 General Assembly

place transcending political and ideological frontiers, and in Dijon and Göttingen rectors from socialist countries had attended and some, from Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia, also became full members of CRE. However, members from Hungary and Poland did not come back after 1969.

Then, in 1973, the Conference of Education Ministers of the European Region of UNESCO met in Bucharest. That Conference made a clear appeal to the universities to improve their institutional collaboration across Europe. The appeal did not make specific mention of CRE, but CRE was the only European organization working in this field, and since the appeal recommended that use should be made of “existing structures”, the Fifth CRE General Assembly in Bologna in 1974 authorized the Permanent Committee to negotiate a more complete institutionalization of European university relations. The General Assembly was even prepared to revise the CRE Constitution.

During a conference of European universities following the Bologna General Assembly, a working party was set up to explore the possibilities of wider institutional collaboration. Chaired by the Rector from Bologna, the working party had three members from the CRE Bureau and three members from Eastern European universities, not members of CRE. At the same time, the Permanent Committee set up a special committee to draft an amendment to the CRE Constitution to be discussed by the working party. Negotiations within the working party, in which UNESCO and IAU also took part, were difficult. The representatives from the Eastern universities had taken the appeal from the Education Ministers to be an authorization to create a *new* organization. The CRE representatives argued for an amendment of the Constitution that opened up CRE for membership for universities in the socialist countries. The working party proposed a compromise and on this basis an Extraordinary CRE General Assembly met in Vienna in June 1975. The compromise proposed by the working group was that that new member joining the Association in Moscow could consider the organization as new from their point of view, whereas the old CRE members could consider the Association of European Universities, of which they would automatic become members, to be a continuation of CRE. The resulting draft amendments to the CRE Constitution reflected this ambiguity.

The idea was that after the IAU General Assembly in Moscow in August, the *Association of European Universities* would be set up as a contribution to the Helsinki agreement of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)*. That agreement, signed on August 1, 1975, had a whole section dealing with intellectual cooperation and mobility – an opening for renewed university cooperation.

However, the ambiguous draft amendments to the CRE Constitution put before the Extraordinary General Assembly were rejected. The Association of European Universities did not materialize. The Hungarian universities withdrew from CRE, the Polish stopped coming. The attempt to bring universities from East and West together in one organization, had failed.

This was a great setback for CRE, and it also left the association in difficult financial circumstances due to the expenses of the activities leading to the Extraordinary Assembly. However, reduced activity and a strictly controlled budget made it possible to start the next five-year period in 1979 on a debt-free basis. This must have been a tough start for the new Secretary General. Andris Barblan, appointed in 1976, was to be the head administrator of CRE up to the merger with the Confederation and the creation of the EUA in 2001.

It was not possible in 1975 to bring together universities from East and West in one organization. However, the CSCE 1975 Helsinki Agreement had opened new possibilities for East-West academic cooperation linking institution to institution.¹⁴ Already in May 1976, the Rector of the Trieste University and the Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities had invited – with CRE's blessing – universities from both sides of the East-West divide to discuss the impact of the Helsinki agreement on development studies, certainly an area of interest for possible cooperation. In 1978, the Rector of Warsaw University repeated the invitation made at Trieste and offered a platform for the discussion of the impact of the Helsinki agreement on environmental problems and higher education. To reaffirm the convergence of the spirit of the 1975 agreement with the open door policy of the CRE, the association also accepted the invitation to organize its 1979 General Assembly in Helsinki.

The 7th General Assembly elected Rector Gerrit Vossers from the University of Eindhoven as President for the five-year period 1979-1984. The Helsinki Assembly recommended the reinforcement of the main functions of CRE; to reflect on the identity, role and function of the universities in Europe, to provide information about ongoing developments in university policy, and to take a public stand on the desirable evolution of inter-university cooperation between European countries. The means suggested for attaining these objectives were more meetings, better publications and an increased presence of CRE in Europe.¹⁵

In spite of strained finances, new activities were organized. In addition to the semi-annual conferences, smaller seminars were set up. Five management seminars for newly appointed executive heads were offered during the five-year period in conjunction with the IMHE program of the OECD. Another four meetings were organized in conjunction with national rectors' conferences wishing to give an international perspective to their national discussions. In this setting, themes like university autonomy, academic decision-making and new legislation were being discussed. In these sessions, the underlying motive was the new identity of the university in a mass higher education system.

The presence of CRE on the international scene turned out to be no easy matter. A new UNESCO Conference for Ministers of Education in the European Region was to be held in Sofia in June 1980 and the CRE Permanent Committee prepared a brief memorandum relating the history of intra-European university relations. The memorandum pointed out that this history was not destined to give rise to two European organizations, since the CRE was open to any university wishing to join. At the June Conference, several delegations agreed with the CRE viewpoint, others felt that a new organization should be established. The final report from Sofia maintained the status quo from Bucharest.

On this basis, CRE invited rectors from the East European countries to a meeting in Geneva in June 1981 to discuss the means for improving practical cooperation between institutions. However, the non-member universities in the East experienced difficulties with accepting the invitation and the meeting was postponed indefinitely.

1.10 A 1983 picture of CRE

Before the 1984 Athens Assembly, an information hand-out was printed, a copy is reproduced in the next two pages. It gives a picture of the organization after its first 25 years.

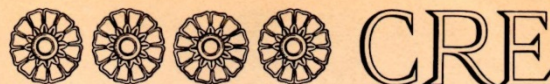
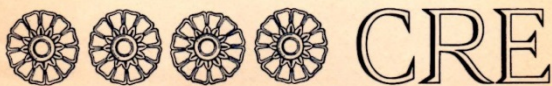
¹⁴ A. Barblan, Reference 1

¹⁵ Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee 1979-1984



What is CRE?

CRE is the association of executive heads of universities in Europe. In the Autumn of 1983, its membership originated from some 360 universities and institutes of higher education in 23 European countries. Since 1964, its headquarters have been situated at the University of Geneva.



General Assemblies

Cambridge, 1955
Dijon, 1959
Göttingen, 1964
Geneva, 1969
Bologna, 1974
Vienna (extraordinary), 1975
Helsinki, 1979
Athens, 1984

Presidents

Marcel Bouchard, Dijon
Jaques Courvoisier, Geneva
Albert Sloman, Essex
Ludwig Raiser, Tübingen
Gerrit Vossers, Eindhoven

Publications

Conference of European University Rectors and Vice-Chancellors - Cambridge 1955, London, 1955

Second Conference of European University Rectors and Vice-Chancellors - Dijon 1959, London, 1960

The Universities' Europe, Bad Godesberg, 1964

The Optimum and Maximum Size of the University (2 vols), Göttingen, 1964 and 1966

The Autonomy of the University, Bologna, 1971

The 5th General Assembly - Bologna 1974, Bologna, 1977

The European Universities 1975-1985, Oxford, 1975

The 7th General Assembly - Helsinki 1979, Geneva, 1980

The Specific Role of Universities in a Complex System of Higher Education, Geneva, 1980

CRE-Information, 1965-1971, nos. 1 - 13
New quarterly series: 1971 -

Half-yearly meetings

1970: Istanbul, Vienna
1972: Nice, Belgrade
1974: Amsterdam
1976: Munich, Athens
1978: Salamanca, Lund
1980: Ohrid, Genoa
1982: Oporto, Hamburg
1984: Amsterdam

1971: Dublin, Copenhagen
1973: Helsinki, Lisbon
1975: Brussels
1977: Edinburgh, Zurich
1979: Ankara
1981: Galway, Grenoble
1983: Bergen, Lausanne

Funding

Annual dues from members since 1974: SFR 1'200
Average annual budget: US\$ 200'000



Aims and functions

The CRE's objective is to promote cooperation among European universities. Its vocation is genuinely academic, strictly non-governmental, without any political or economic restriction or affinity. It is in no way associated with any of the regional groupings to which some European States belong. Its concept of Europe is geographic.

Its functions include the following:

- to *provide a forum* for inter-European discussions and informal meetings;
- to *inform* members and other interested parties about developments in university policy throughout the continent;
- to *reflect* on the role of the university in European society both now and in the past;
- to *represent* the university's point of view to bodies concerned with higher education in Europe.

Its various programmes therefore attempt to identify common interests and problems so that the member rectors, presidents and vice-chancellors can become aware of the existing possibilities for mutual cooperation between their institutions.

Activities

The following ways and means are used to fulfil the four major functions of the CRE:

MEETINGS:

— the *General Assembly*, open to all members and observers from national and international bodies of inter-university cooperation, is convened once every five years in order to determine the general policy of the organization and to elect its President and other administrative organs. It can also draw up recommendations on the basis of its deliberations concerning general university policy.

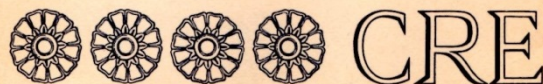
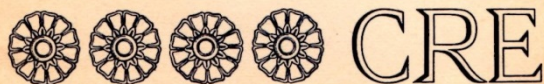
— other *statutory meetings* include sessions of the Permanent Committee twice a year and of the Bureau every three months.

— the *bi-annual conferences*, limited to some eighty members, were introduced in order to promote regular contacts between university executive heads, whose role as such is discussed at each of these conferences in relation to a specific theme of topical interest, e.g. "Rationalization of the university", "Staff mobility", etc.

— residential *training seminars*, run annually in conjunction with the OECD programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE), are specially designed for small groups of newly appointed executive heads of universities in Europe.

— *occasional seminars*, organized by CRE on a consultancy basis at the request of national rectors' conferences, examine from an international, comparative point of view those university problems of particular concern to the host-country.

— *academic seminars* supported by outside funding, are linked to joint university research projects sponsored by CRE. They aim to evaluate the state of research on university developments in a particular field of European interest.



1.11 The Association at work, 1984-1989

The Association at work was the heading of the Quinquennial Report 1984-1989¹⁶. At the end of the 8th General Assembly in Athens in 1984, the newly elected Permanent Committee and its President, Rector Carmine Romanzi from the University of Genoa, had declared an intention to reinforce activities such as meetings and publications, and to develop projects that could confirm members in the feeling that they belonged to one and the same cultural community. It was to be an intense five-year period:¹⁷

In 1985, a series of seminars were organized on the *survival conditions of newly created universities*: six institutions acted as a core group and invited another twenty to discuss specific aspects of their development, the basis for a 1986 report to all members entitled *From infancy to maturity: creating a university*.

In 1986, a conference in Madrid had discussed the universities' links to society, in particular to industry, with the help of the former Research Minister in France, Hubert Curien and top managers from industry. In 1987, the CRE Committee, taking account of the new links set-up with leading manufacturers in communication technologies, decided that CRE would become one of the founding members of the *Euro-PACE program*, supporting advanced continuing education for industry. Together with the *European Roundtable of Industrialists* (ERT), a *University/Industry Forum* was launched in 1988.

Also in 1986, at the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Fulbright Program, CRE co-sponsored a conference where representatives of US and Canadian university associations joined delegates from European universities to discuss how to develop a *transatlantic dialogue* at a time when American interest were moving away from Europe to other world partners. In the following year, the *American Council of Education* (ACE) picked up the project so that, in 1989, a new session of the transatlantic dialogue under CRE /ACE sponsorship was organized, the first of a series of meetings every second years in alternation with Europe and America.

In 1987, European and Latin American rectors met in Buenos Aires to define the an area of cooperation, that was to be university management and institutional development – burning issues for several countries in Latin America that had recently returned to democratic structures of government. The debate had been facilitated by a former Minister of Education of Spain, then professor in Madrid, Federico Mayor Zaragoza – who was to become the next Director General of UNESCO where he proved supportive of the new *Columbus Program*.

In 1987 contacts were established with the People's Republic of China through their delegate at UNESCO in Paris. However, following the Tien-Anmen repression of student unrest in 1989, CRE suspended this developing linkage and expressed its strong disapproval of the government's crackdown on leaders of higher education in China.

These were all new areas of concern for CRE. The association tried to act as a stimulus for international cooperation and academic exchange in fields of growing interest for member universities: ICT, university-industry relations, the presence of Europe in the world at large.

¹⁶ Quinquennial Report of the Permanent Committee 1984-1989

¹⁷ A. Barblan, Reference 1

In 1988, the University of Bologna celebrated its 900th anniversary. It was a great celebration. University of Bologna organized scientific meetings and granted honorary doctorates not only to famous scientists but also to political figureheads of the continent - from the Pope to Mikhail Gorbachev. The idea was to re-affirm the political function of the university in the intellectual development of society. CRE with President Romanzi was an active partner. Hence, the proposal to draft a document of reference on the universities' European identity, the *Magna Charta Universitatum* written under the aegis of the CRE. The CRE President was the first signatory of the document. Some 430 university rectors from all over Europe, West and East, Russia included, and from other parts of the world too, signed the Charter.

1.11.1 Magna Charta Universitatum¹⁸

Fundamental Principles

1. The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching.

To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.

2. Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.

3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement.

4. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

The Means

To attain these goals by following such principles calls for effective means, suitable to present conditions.

1. To preserve freedom in research and teaching, the instruments appropriate to realize that freedom must be made available to all members of the university community.

2. Recruitment of teachers, and regulation of their status, must obey the principle that research is inseparable from teaching.

3. Each university must - with due allowance for particular circumstances - ensure that its students' freedoms are safeguarded and that they enjoy conditions in which they can acquire the culture and training which it is their purpose to possess.

4. Universities - particularly in Europe - regard the mutual exchange of information and documentation, and frequent joint projects for the advancement of learning, as essential to the steady progress of knowledge. Therefore, as in the earliest years of their history, they encourage mobility among teachers and students; furthermore, they consider a general policy of equivalent status, titles, examinations and award of scholarships essential to the fulfilment of their mission.

¹⁸ <http://www.magna-charta.org/cms/cmspage.aspx?pageUid={d4bd2cba-e26b-499e-80d5-b7a2973d5d97}>

1.11.2 East/West linkages

All through the 1984-1989 period the concern for East/West linkages remained a high priority. In cooperation with CEPES it was possible to organize in 1985 a meeting in Budapest involving universities from Eastern Europe. Participants reiterated the importance for their institutions to increase contacts between the two sides of Europe. There were clear signs that the modalities of cooperation in higher education were changing in the Soviet Union, as the presence of Russian universities in Bologna in 1988 was to indicate.

In 1987, a conference of COMECON universities in Moscow had decided to extend the possibilities for institutional cooperation with Western universities, as part of the *perestroika* policy defended by Mikhail Gorbachev. On that basis, the rectors of the universities in capital cities of socialist Europe had asked their Polish colleagues – still members of CRE – to organize in Warsaw a meeting on the model of the CRE semi-annual conferences. The 1988 Warsaw meeting discussed *The university as a crucible of European culture*. The more than 90 participants representing universities from non-member countries insisted on their belonging to a common European culture that subsumed ideological differences and made academic cooperation a necessity. The idea was to launch a program for East/west cooperation in environmental sciences, which became the *Copernicus Program*, a tribute to the Polish hosts of the meeting.

In September 1989, the 9th CRE General Assembly in Durham welcomed some 25 new members from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Soviet Union, thus bringing to a close the saga that had begun in the early seventies. The CRE now had more than 400 members in 27 countries.

In Durham the Constitution was amended, changing CRE from a rectors' club to an association of universities. The idea from 1975, to develop CRE into an association of European universities had finally come true. At the next General Assembly, the name was changed accordingly: CRE – Association of European Universities.

1.12 New times, 1989-1998

The Durham Assembly marked the end of an era. Immediately afterwards the Berlin Wall fell.

CRE, under the Presidency of Hinrich Seidel from the University of Hannover, centered much of its development over the next five years on integrating the universities of Central and Eastern Europe into the association.¹⁹ The May 1991 semi-annual conference took place in Leningrad and provided an opportunity to affirm the greater Europe for the academic community. Thanks to the financial support of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, it was possible to facilitate the participation of member institutions from the former communist countries in the management training seminars co-organized with the IMHE Program of the OECD. By 1994, the CRE membership included 80 universities from former communist countries.

CRE did much to promote the creation of inter-institutional networks, inviting universities to set up and strengthen joint programs, both within the whole of Europe and with the trans-Atlantic partners. However, practical difficulties prevented many Eastern European universities from taking active part: language problems, IT-problems and financial problems.

¹⁹ Quinquennial Report on activities 1989-1994. See also A. Barblan, Reference 1

This linking activity brought the CRE in closer contact with the European Commission, which now was very active in the higher education area, through programs such as ERASMUS, LINGUA, COMETT and TEMPUS. This also led to closer contact and a concerted policy approach with the *Liaison Committee* (see next chapter), representing universities in EC member states through the national rectors' conferences. As these rectors' conferences were also represented in CRE's Permanent Committee, the need for coordination was apparent.

Following the publication in the autumn of 1991 of the Commission's *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community*, the two organizations joined forces to sound out the opinion of their members and give an input to the Commission. Following this, a number of opinions concerning specific aspects of university life in Europe were formulated in conjunction with the Liaison Committee for the Commission: Europeanization of research, development of institutional networks, support policies for Central and Eastern European universities and management training for university executive heads with respect to internationalization of teaching and research.

For the period 1989-1994, the general theme for CRE's semi-annual conferences was *The restructuring of the university*. In 1990, in Istanbul and London, the various ways of preparing for employment were discussed; the next year, in Leningrad and Utrecht, the institutionalizing of quality was reviewed. In 1992, the extension of academic cooperation networks was discussed in Strasbourg and Bonn; in the following year the theme for human resources management was discussed in Dublin and Barcelona. For the last year in this five-year period, the Thessaloniki conference considered how to meet the challenges of restructuring through improved management of the available resources. On this background, the theme for the coming 1994 General Assembly was decided: *A university policy for Europe*.

The decision was made to open up the semi-annual conferences to all universities wanting to attend. This sparked a change in their character; instead of think-tanks limited to a small group of rectors, they became fora bringing together 140-180 participants. This type of conferences probably was what the CRE meant to university leaders in general at the time. Around 500 universities were now members of CRE.

At the 10th General Assembly in Budapest in 1994, Rector Josep Bricall from the University of Barcelona was elected CRE President for the next four years. The change from five- to four-years periods required an amendment of the Constitution. At the same time, the name of the organization was formally changed to *CRE - Association of European Universities*.

The new Board proposed to focus the activities for this period on *quality* and *cohesion*. The Permanent Committee endorsed this idea, stating that the CRE should help universities "strive for excellence in teaching, research and management while they are learning from each other through working together."²⁰ As an association of universities, CRE would develop with member institutions management tools and policies to meet the fast growing knowledge needs of European society. Out of this came five *priority action areas*: Quality management, Financing, Institutional restructuring, European cohesion and Linking with society.

In terms of *quality management*, CRE developed a program for *Institutional Evaluation*. With the support of the European Commission, and using material collected in the evaluation

²⁰ 1994-1998 Quadriennial Report of the Permanent Committee

process, a guide to strategic management issues was drafted to take stock of and explain quality approaches specific to universities.

Financing had been a recurrent preoccupation of all institutions of higher education at the semi-annual conferences in Aarhus and Aberdeen in 1995, generation of new income and efficient use of resources were discussed.

To support members in their *institutional restructuring*, CRE organized with IMHE / OECD six management seminars, involving during the four-year period 133 university leaders.

In the field of *European cohesion*, the Academic Task Force had been created in 1990 to support links between Central and Eastern European universities and Western European institutions. From 1994, it focused its actions on the European re-integration of war-damaged universities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. A yearly conference brought those universities together in Dubrovnik or Sarajevo to meet other European universities ready to help in the reconstruction of academic life in the region. This led to interuniversity consortia based on TEMPUS Joint European Projects initiated by CRE to help design new curricula.

CREs interest in institutional change qualified the association to assess the impact of TEMPUS on university management and reform in Central and Eastern European countries. In 1996, CRE was commissioned to analyze the requests and reports from some 300 Joint European Projects supported by TEMPUS, in order to prepare recommendations for the next TEMPUS phase, and in 1997 this led to a *Handbook on University Management*.

Also the introduction of *the institutional contract* in Socrates contributed to bring the CRE closer to Brussels. CRE was asked to monitor the European strategies of institutions in the ERASMUS part of SOCRATES and statements from 1800 institutions asking for support were analyzed and led to recommendations for improving the program.

It can be inferred from these examples that CRE and the Liaison Committee (from 1996: *Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences*) more and more overlapped in the representation of universities versus the European Commission – not always speaking with the same voice.

For the 11th General Assembly, scheduled to be held in Berlin in 1998, the main theme was to be *Linking with society - the public role of the university*. To prepare for this, an enquiry was made in 1996, asking member institutions what they would expect their function to be in 2010. The process was called *Vision 20-10*. However, before the Berlin Assembly in August 1998, new processes started that would dramatically change expectations for European higher education by 2010.

1.13 Sorbonne and Bologna

In May 1998, a conference was organized at the Sorbonne to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the University of Paris. The French Minister of Education, Claude Allègre, had invited his British, German and Italian colleagues to attend.

At the end of the conference, the four ministers signed a Declaration inviting institutions and governments to “harmonize” academic services and university provision (see section 2.6). But why only four ministers? When the Italian Minister of Education, Luigi Berlinguer, invited to a follow-up meeting in Bologna in June 1999, 29 countries decided to join.

CRE and the Confederation were asked to represent higher education in the finalization of the meeting and of the draft of the Bologna Declaration. The follow-up of this meeting, the *Bologna Process*, opened up for universities to be *partners* in the political deliberations concerning the future of higher education in Europe (see section 3.3).

1.14 Final messages from CRE

Already before the 1998 CRE Assembly in Berlin, planning for a merger between CRE and the Confederation had started. For the Permanent Committee and the new Board elected in Berlin, with Ken Edwards from University of Leicester as President, the realization of the merger was of course high on the agenda. So was the Bologna Process. In parallel with these high priority activities, there was “business as usual”: meetings, seminars, conferences, programs, service to member institutions. In 2000, CRE had 524 member institutions in 41 countries. It must have been a busy time for Board and Secretariat. Formally, the Board had been elected for the four-year term 1998-2002. The Board’s Mid-Term Report²¹ - it as to be the last report – gave useful input to the merger process:

1.14.1 The evolution of CRE’s mission

A first description of CRE’s mission was given by the 1964 Constitution (see section 1.6). It was further developed over the years to come, as can be seen from the aims and functions in the 1983 description (subsection 1.9.1). A last update was done in 2000:

CRE is committed to:

- facilitating institutional adaption and change by suggesting possible approaches to improve service to members;
- testing the validity of innovative proposals with member institutions interested in learning from each other and disseminating good practice;
- providing advice on how to use the resources for modernization available to the academic world;
- exploring, with and on behalf of its members, conditions conducive to the emergence of teaching and learning activities across Europe which will fuel the contribution of higher education to social and political change;
- mobilizing solidarity among the European academic community towards institutions which have suffered from political, social or economic upheaval;
- acting as a valuable contact point between academic leaders and economic and political decision-makers;
- representing the point of view of members to governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with higher education.

1.14.2 The History of CRE Programs

The mid-term report also gave an overview of CRE activities (program objectives and partners). It was a quite formidable listing.

The History of CRE programs is shown in the following pages (Table 1).

²¹ CRE Mid-Term Report (1998-2000)

Table 1: The History of CRE programs

The History of CRE Programmes

Begin/End	Programme	Objectives	Partners	Products
1969 -	Conferences & General Assemblies	To provide a forum for all members to discuss university governance issues	Host member universities and governments, sometimes other organisations	Keynote speeches, background papers, occasionally surveys, feeding into publications (notably <i>CREaction</i>)
1979 -	Management Seminar	To familiarize university leaders with topical higher education issues and to develop their strategic management capacities	OECD Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE), host member universities	Case studies, documents on strategic management of universities
1983 -	A History of the University in Europe	To show the cultural and social contributions of universities to Europe	60 historians or related specialists, 6 European foundations, publishing companies	To date, 2 of the 4 (500-page) volumes in the study, as well as translations into 4 languages
1987 - (outsourced in 1996)	Columbus	To promote cooperation in university management between universities in Europe and in Latin America	60 Latin American universities, 25 European university members, UNESCO, the European Union (EU), governments, foundations	Conferences, training seminars, networks, projects, guidelines for action, publications, website
1987 -	Transatlantic Dialogue	To bring together leaders of European universities and their counterparts in North America to exchange views and experience on topical issues	ACE (American Council of Education), AUCC (Canada), host universities	Case studies, reports, ideas for new projects
1988 - (outsourced in 1999)	Copernicus	To promote university efforts focused on the environment and the promotion of sustainable development	UNESCO, student bodies, member universities	A charter; teaching manuals and case materials for sustainable law, economics and health; other publications; seminars

Begin/End	Programme	Objectives	Partners	Products
		evaluating strategy		
1995 -	Financing	To help universities to identify funding sources, as well as strategies for gaining access to these, and to monitor spending strategies	EU, Swiss government, OECD/IMHE, HUMANE (network of university administrators), 50 member universities	<i>CREdoc</i> , <i>CreGuide</i> , working group sessions, validation seminars
1996 -	European Strategies	To monitor universities' European strategies for SOCRATES	Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung Kassel, EU, Swiss government, ESMU, Confederation, ACA (Academic Cooperation Association), 120 universities	Analysis of some 2200 European Policy Statements, site visits, 5 conferences, publications; report to EU Education Committee
1994 - (outsourced in 1997)	Learning Validation in Statistics	To develop and test a self-evaluation software in Statistics for engineers	EU, SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education), CRE technical universities	Evaluation tool for grading knowledge in statistics on a self-evaluation basis
1997/1998	Dialogue with Stakeholders	To analyse universities' links with stakeholders at regional level	EU, ERT, 20 European regions led by their universities	20 case studies, analysis documents for General Assembly
1998	Magna Charta Observatory	To monitor implementation of the principles of the <i>Magna Charta</i> (signed in 1988)	University of Bologna, with the support of Italian savings banks	None yet - incorporation in Italian law of the Observatory in April 2000
Permanent	Service to Members (Information, Publications, Website)	To disseminate information – general (<i>CREinfo</i>), focused (<i>CREdossiers</i>), specific (<i>CREdocs</i> and <i>CREguides</i>)	University of Geneva (<i>website server</i>)	Publications and website

Begin/End	Programme	Objectives	Partners	Products
1988/1995	University/Industry Forum	To explore the common agenda in learning of universities and business	European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT) Education Working Group	Three reports on Training and Learning
1993 -	Academic Taskforce (ATF)	To mobilize the varied support needed by universities in parts of Europe at different times	UNESCO/CEPES, World Bank, EU, governments, foundations, member universities	Networking of universities (particularly in former Yugoslavia), projects, training, policy inputs
1993/1994	Joint Project with (former) Liaison Committee (now the Confederation)	To test European policy development in universities following an EU Memorandum	Liaison Committee, EU	Reports, case studies, seminars
1994 -	Institutional Evaluation	To help member universities to analyse their objectives, adapt to opportunities and to constraints, and enhance their capacity for change	Universities reviewed, experts, EU quality agency network, other organisations	Reviews of 65 European universities (& 4 in Latin America). Some follow-up visits. Consultancy advice. Issue reports. Guidelines. Handbooks. Training and dissemination seminars. Internationalisation quality review (IQR) service.
1994/1995	European Cohesion	Comparing Northern & Southern European practices of strategic university management	ESMU - European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities, EU, La Caixa Foundation, 50 member universities	9 seminars on quality management, autonomy and evaluation, financing
1995 -	New Technologies	To monitor the use of ICT for teaching and learning in European universities and to provide member universities with approaches to developing and	EU, Coimbra Group, Europace, Columbus, Scienet, ACE, Politecnico di Torino, 60 member universities	2 issues of <i>CREdoc</i> , 1 <i>Creguide</i> , based on seminars, surveys and visits; self-evaluation questionnaire

2 The Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences

The Confederation started its life in 1973 as the *Comité de Liaison des Recteurs des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne*. The Liaison Committee had its roots in the European Universities Committee set up in Brussels in 1955 under the auspices of the Western European Union, and the CRE Permanent Committee of 1959. Whereas the CRE Committee focused its work on the challenges facing all universities in Europe, the Chairmen of national rectors' conferences in EC countries set up their Liaison Committee for a stronger collaboration between universities within the European Community, to respond to Community initiatives affecting research and higher education and to be heard by the European Commission.

2.1 The first years as the Liaison Committee

The inclusion of research and higher education in Community policies developed slowly at first. However, from the academic year 1976-77, the *Joint Study programs* and the *Short Study Visits* scheme were in operation. The Liaison Committee followed the development and actively disseminated information. In the field of *Mobility and Cooperation within the Community*, the LC considered questions such as academic recognition, admission procedures for students from other member countries, mobility of research students and staff members in order to promote scientific cooperation.

In 1986-87 the Liaison Committee and representatives for the rector conferences participated in an "Information Strategy Project" for the European Commission. The study provided important input to information policies and the LC received excellent feedback from almost all target groups – except from the Commission. Still, it was useful for the higher education sector as new EC programs for research and higher education were launched.

With the introduction of the Framework Program for Research and Technology Development in 1984 and the ERASMUS mobility program for higher education in 1987, universities in Community countries were meeting new challenges. The coordination of university interests through the Liaison Committee became increasingly important.

2.1.1 European Doctorate

In 1991, a Liaison Committee meeting in Salamanca adopted four criteria to underpin a European Doctorate based on agreement between the institutions involved, on their own terms. These criteria are still in active use:

1. The PhD thesis defence will be accorded if at least two professors from two higher education institutions of two European countries, other than the one where the thesis is defended, have given their review of the manuscript;
2. At least one member of the jury should come from a higher education institution in another European country, other than the one, where the thesis is defended;
3. A part of the defence must take place in one of the official languages, other than the one(s) of the country, where the thesis is defended;
4. The thesis must partly have been prepared as a result of a research period of at least one trimester spent in another European Country.

Up to 1993, the Flemish Rectors' Conference, VLIR, acted as the Secretariat for the Liaison Committee. Not much material is available with EAU from this first period.

2.2 The Liaison Committee 1993

The single market was launched in January 1993 and in November the treaty of Maastricht came into force. The new treaty was generally welcomed by the Liaison Committee, as it provided, for the first time, a legal framework for EC initiatives in the field of higher education. In December 1993, a White Paper presented by the President of the Commission, Jaques Delors, incorporated education among the areas to secure growth, competitiveness and employment in the years to come.



**LIAISON COMMITTEE
COMITE DE LIAISON**

ANNUAL REPORT 1993

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It should be no surprise that Liaison Committee activities reached a new level. The Chairman, Rector Sven Caspersen from the University of Aalborg, described it like this²²:

“The strong development of the Liaison Committee in the past two years was clearly noticed, not only by the Liaison Committee Member Conferences themselves, but also by the other partners on the European higher education and research scene. The LC touched upon an increasing number of issues pertaining to higher education and research, and had regular and structured contacts with representatives of the EC authorities.”

²² Liaison Committee Annual Report 1993

The year 1993 marked the change from a loose discussion club of rectors into a professionally managed, efficient and effective body representing the interests of the European universities.

The Annual Report expressed that the LC could be proud of its achievements in 1993:

- the inclusion of the EFTA Rectors Conferences in the LC as *associate members*;
- greater involvement of the Member Conferences in the general work of the LC;
- increased cooperation among the Member Conferences and between Member Conferences and the LC Secretariat;
- starting separate meetings for the Secretaries General of the Member Conferences;
- presence and participation of LC representatives in conferences and seminars;
- a better functioning of the LC Secretariat and its stronger presence in Brussels;
- increased dialogue and consultations with the EC institutions;
- in cooperation with CRE, the Liaison Committee was now the leading voice of the universities in the European Union.

In 1994, LC established its own secretariat in Brussels with Inge Knudsen as Director. She was to be the Director of the Liaison Committee and its 1996 successor *The Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences* up to the merger with CRE that established the European University Association (EUA) in 2001.

2.3 From Liaison Committee to Confederation

At the 57th meeting of the Liaison Committee in November 1995, it was decided that the LC should be redefined as *The Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences*, with new statutes and mission statement.²³ The new organization was launched on 1 January 1996.

According to the statutes, the aims of the Confederation were

- to formulate and represent the common views of its Members in order to influence the policies of the European Union on higher education and research;
- to provide information for its Members on key issues and developments in higher education and research, and related matters;
- to undertake studies and projects mandated by the Assembly.

The Assembly, consisting of representatives of the national rectors' conferences, was to be the forum for consideration and determination of the policies of the Confederation.

2.3.1 Mission Statement of the Confederation

The range and the scope of the Confederation's activities were motivated by these principles:

- A basic university education, which represents a cultural value in its own right, is more valid than ever in today's complex world.
- The autonomy of universities must be safeguarded, while at the same time promoting and enhancing quality in higher education and research. "The university is an autonomous institution, which produces and transmits culture in a critical way, through research and education," and "the freedom of research, of teaching and education is the fundamental principle of university life" (*Magna Charta Universitatum Europaeorum, Bologna 1988*).

²³ Liaison Committee Annual Report 1996

- Universities and other institutions of higher education and research have a major role to play in the development of Europe and should be full partners in the process of European integration. In accordance with their international traditions of scientific developments and learning, they train and educate the citizens of the continent for rational behavior, intellectual tolerance and democratic participation. As autonomous institutions, they are prepared to take full responsibility for their contribution to the future of Europe, where knowledge represents one fundamental element linking together not only Community countries, but also the other nations of Europe.
- Important objectives for the Confederation in the development of policies at local, regional, national and European levels are cooperation with other bodies involved in higher education and research, such as CRE, EURASHE, IAU, IAUP, as well as with industry, public authorities, cultural institutions and agencies in the education sector.

With autonomy and academic freedom, the universities of Europe were prepared to take responsibility for their contribution to the further development of society.

2.4 The Confederation 1996

In his introduction to the Annual Report, the next President, Prof. Hans-Uwe Erichsen, former Rector of the University of Münster, stated that in 1996, the areas of importance had been research policies, quality assurance, higher education policies, and reactions to a number of EU policy documents. Research policies, a permanent element on the agenda ever since 1973, concentrated in 1996 on the debates leading up to the future Fifth Framework Program, specifically the need to strengthen the social sciences and the humanities in Community research and to ensure training of young researchers to the highest level. *Ten Statements on Evaluation* were adopted by the Confederation as a general framework for future policies. *Diversification of higher education* was discussed by the Confederation during 1996 and a paper was presented to the annual conference of Directors General of higher education and Presidents of national rectors' conferences.

2.4.1 Training of young researchers

A statement by the 58th Confederation Assembly in March 1996 pointed out that because of the international character of knowledge and science, young academics should be mobile, not only between universities and research institutes within their national higher education and research system. Moving between national systems would open the possibility of establishing personal networks across national and cultural borders. The statement continued:

The forthcoming differentiation and specialization in knowledge and research and the costs of research will lead to a situation in the future, where no university will be able to provide and finance research within all differentiated fields of academic disciplines. To ensure their competitiveness, universities will have to develop specific profiles. As a consequence, young academics will have to move between institutions to become acquainted with different specialties, methodologies and equipment.

Organizational and structural measures to improve education and training of young academics have to respect the different scientific and academic cultures of different disciplines. Nevertheless, young academics are expected to spend at least half a year during their postgraduate training period in another country. The exchange of young academics should be encouraged and intensified within networks of universities and research institutes.

The period spent in a foreign institution is recommended to be an integral part of the training of PhD students and should also provide input to the preparation of the PhD thesis. This can lead to closer cooperation between institutions in different countries. Researchers who have participated in the postgraduate training should act as peers in the assessment of the PhD thesis.

Universities are encouraged to accept the PhD thesis in languages different from the national language, when academics from the country in question are willing to act as peers.

2.5 Twenty-five years of cooperation

The membership of the Liaison Committee and later the Confederation grew with the expansion of the European Community and the European Union. From 1993, rectors' conferences in EFTA countries participated as associate members. In 1998, when the Confederation marked its 25th anniversary, there were 15 members and 7 associate members, now also from EU candidate countries.

Confederation members 1998

Austria:	Österreichische Rektorenkonferenz
Belgium:	Vlamse Interuniversitaire Raad
	Conceil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté Française
Denmark:	Rektorkollegiet
Finland:	Suomen Yliopistojen Rehtorien Neuvosto
France:	Conférence des Présidents d'Université
Germany:	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz
Greece:	Synodos Prytaneon Elinikon
Ireland:	Conference of Heads of Irish Universities
Italy:	Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane
Luxembourg:	Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg
The Netherlands:	Vereiniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten
Portugal:	Conseho de Reitores das Universidades Portuguesas
Spain:	Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas
Sweden:	Sveriges universitets- och högskoleförbund
United Kingdom:	Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom

Associate Confederation members 1998

Czech Republic:	Ceska conference rektoru
Hungary:	Magyar Rektori Konferencia
Iceland:	Samstarsnefnd háskolástigsins
Norway:	Det norske universitetsråd
Slovak Republic	Slovenská rektorská konferencia
Poland:	Konferencja Rektórow Szkół Polskich
Switzerland:	Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses

The Confederation could look back on twenty-five years of fruitful cooperation with the national rectors' conferences, but also with authorities of the EU and national governments.



**Confédération
des Conférences
des Recteurs de
l'Union Européenne**

**Confederation
of European Union
Rectors'
Conferences**

**25th Anniversary
of the Confederation
1973 - 1998**

MISSION STATEMENT

(extract)

(...)

3. The aims of the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences are
 - (i) to formulate and represent the common views of its Members and its Associate Members in order to influence the policies of the European Union on higher education and research;
 - (ii) to provide information for its members on key issues and developments in higher education and research, and related matters;
 - (iii) to undertake studies and projects mandated by its Assembly.
4. The Confederation's status and authority in relation to EU policies on university and higher education and research issues are derived from the expertise of the Member Conferences it represents.
5. The range and the scope of the Confederation's activities are motivated by the following principles:
 - * A basic university education, which represents a cultural value in its own right, is more valid than ever in today's complex world.
 - * The autonomy of universities must be safeguarded, while at the same time promoting and enhancing quality in higher education and research. (...)
 - * Universities and other institutions of higher education and research have a major role to play in the development of Europe and should be full partners in the process of European integration. (...) As autonomous institutions, they are prepared to take full responsibility for their contribution to the future of Europe, where knowledge represents one fundamental element linking together not only community countries, but also the other nations of Europe.
 - * Important objectives for the Confederation in the development of policies at local, regional, national and European levels are linkages and co-operation with other bodies involved in higher education and research, such as CRE, EURASHE, IAU, as well as with industry, public authorities, cultural institutions and other agencies in the education sector.

25 Years of Co-Operation in Research and Higher Education Policies

In 1998 the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences celebrates its 25th anniversary. A group of Chairmen of Rectors' Conferences decided, in March 1973, to create the *Liaison Committee of Rectors' Conferences of the Member States of the European Community*. They foresaw that the development of the European Communities in 1972 would bring about co-operation activities at Community level which would go beyond economic co-operation to include research and higher education policies.

The changes in Community policies foreseen by the founding fathers of the Liaison Committee did take place, first of all in the area of research co-operation with the launching of the RTD Framework Programmes. Education policies followed with the successful implementation of the ERASMUS Programme, and the experiences of this and other European programmes in education and training eventually led to new articles in the Treaty of the European Union.

Over the years, the Liaison Committee has welcomed new Member Conferences and has extended its areas of activity, in 1996 leading

to a Mission Statement and new Statutes and the adoption of the name: ***Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences***. It made the mathematical sign of congruency its logo to underline the unity in diversity. The Member Conferences of the Confederation represent institutions of higher education with about 85% of higher education students and more than half of basic research carried out in the European Union. The Confederation has presented recommendations on and, thus, contributed to the development of EU research policies, higher education and training policies, quality assurance in higher education, and international university co-operation over the past years and can look back on twenty-five years of fruitful co-operation with national Rectors' Conferences, authorities of the EU, and national governments. The Confederation is ready to contribute in the fields of higher education, research, life-long learning, etc., to make the *Union of Knowledge*, mentioned in the preamble of the Treaty of Amsterdam, a reality.

Prof. Dr. Hans-Uwe ERICHSEN
President

2.6 Harmonizing higher education systems in Europe?

At the Sorbonne in May 1988, the Ministers of Education from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed a joint declaration on harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system²⁴:

We owe our students, and our society at large, a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence. An open European area for higher learning carries a wealth of positive perspectives. A system, in which two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge.

At both undergraduate and graduate level, students would be encouraged to spend at least one semester in universities outside their own country. More teaching and research staff should be working in European countries other than their own. A convention, recognizing higher education qualifications within Europe, was agreed on last year in Lisbon²⁵. Standing by these conclusions, one can build on them and go further.

Progressive harmonization of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles can be achieved through strengthening of already existing experience, joint diplomas, pilot initiatives, and dialogue with all concerned.

This started a process involving Ministries and organizations, leading to the follow-up conference in Bologna the following year and the Bologna Process. The Confederation President made a statement relating to the Sorbonne Declaration at the meeting of Directors General and Heads of Rectors' Conferences in October 1998²⁶:

“The Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System has found our highest attention and we welcome that ministers have taken the initiative to draw public attention not only to the existing obstacles of mobility but also to present ideas and make proposals to cope with these problems.”

“However, the aim and purpose of all efforts and concepts should not be and cannot be harmonization or even uniformity; the key word cannot be equal but must be equivalent. This means that we should concentrate in a concerted action of national governments and Rectors' Conferences – representing the whole range of the universities in the member states of the European Union – on creating a framework for convertibility of credits, intermediate and final exams in undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate and continuing education.”

At the end of his statement, the Confederation President proposed

- to establish a working group to deal with an agreement on accreditation results open for joining to all universities;
- to establish a working group developing a framework for mutual recognition of credits;
- to define a European structure of higher education in a concerted action.

Most of this was later realized through the Bologna Process.

²⁴ See <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=80> (in French)

http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/980525SORBONNE_DECLARATION.PDF

²⁵ The Lisbon Recognition Convention, see www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/default_en.asp

²⁶ Statement presented by Hans-Uwe Erichsen, Vienna 28/29 October 1998

Together with CRE, the Confederation was invited to take part in the preparations for the 1999 Bologna Conference. This joint action of the two organizations representing the universities in Europe and the merger that followed in 2001 will be described later.

2.7 The Confederation 2000

In his President's Report for 2000²⁷, Erichsen's successor, Rector Sérgio Machado dos Santos from the University of Minho, pointed out that the Confederation and CRE, working closely together, were key partners in the follow-up of the Bologna Declaration. By coordinating projects in progress under the agenda of the follow-up to Bologna and by participating actively in the Follow-up Group, the two organizations were very much committed to the Bologna Process and the role to be played by higher education institutions and national rectors' conferences in the construction of the European Area of Higher Education.

Key topics of Confederation Assembly meetings in 2000 relating to EU policy matters were:

- The European Research Area;
- Research evaluation;
- Cooperation with non-EU countries;
- Meeting of Directors General for education and Presidents of Rectors' Conferences;
- Follow-up of the Bologna Declaration;
- The Diploma supplement;
- Accreditation;
- Transnational education.

In relation to EU research policy, the Confederation took a pro-active stand by adopting a statement on the future European Union policy on research and development prior to the release of the Commission's communication on *The European Research Area*, later to react to this communication with a detailed and constructive statement. A summary of the Confederation's statement is given below.

However, the most striking event for the Confederation in 2000 was the unanimous decision of the 72nd Assembly to merge with the CRE (see chapter 3).

2.7.1 Towards a European Research Area

The Confederation's statement from May 2000 on this EU communication on research policy has the following summary:

The development of a European research area calls upon all parts of the research community – at EU, national, regional and local levels, in public and private research, by individuals and research organizations. A European research area can only live up to its aims by involving all actors, and can only contribute to the development of economic growth, social cohesion and a knowledge society by incorporating all research disciplines.

A European research area needs the full scope of research activities at its foundation. The Confederation would like to underline that all research disciplines must form an integral part of any policies towards a European research area. By limiting the scope to a restricted number of disciplines, limitations are created to future possibilities for innovation and economic development.

²⁷ Annual Report 2000 of the Confederation of European Rectors' Conferences

The universities of Europe have much to contribute to a vision of a European research area. They are places where knowledge is produced, acquired and disseminated within all research disciplines and new disciplines developed. The cross-disciplinary enrichment, the diversity of learning, the training of young researchers, and the regional and local role in the transfer of knowledge – all make universities unique and indispensable centers of knowledge. University researchers have long-standing traditions of international cooperation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, networking and quality care.

A European research area needs to build on experience gained in universities and in particular those of networking, entrepreneurship, regional and local knowledge transfer and cooperation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, internal quality care and quality assurance at institutional level, training of researchers.

The Confederation strongly supports the general idea of establishing a European research area and sees it as a good and relevant policy initiative. The Confederation shall be happy to contribute to this process.

3 Coming together

3.1 A need for coordination

The Confederation had since its early beginnings (as the Liaison Committee) acted as a political lobby for the universities vis-à-vis the authorities of the European Community and later the Union. As the EU programs in research and higher education not only continued to grow during the 1990s, but also were widening out to include cooperation with non-EU countries in Eastern Europe, not only the Confederation, but also CRE got more and more involved in EU policy and in the programs for institutional collaboration and for mobility of students and staff. Both organizations were representing the same European universities. There was an increasing need for coordination.

In both organizations this was commented on, and also formally discussed. Minutes from CRE Board meetings²⁸ in March and June 1997 refer to several contacts between Presidents Bricall (CRE) and Erichsen (Confederation), and to consultations on the best way to organize relations between CRE and the Confederation. There was clearly a need for rationalization of the activities of the two organizations. When the subject later was taken up in the CRE Committee, it turned out that some of the same people had attended the recent Confederation Assembly where the same topic had also been discussed. It appeared that most of the national rectors' conferences welcomed the attempt to rationalize the activities and the meetings of CRE and the Confederation. There was a definite possibility of joint working groups and a common meeting once a year between the CRE Committee and the Confederation Assembly.

Further meetings of the two Presidents led to the proposal to create a task group that would discuss the rationalization of both organizations' activities so that a common front of European universities would be clearly apparent to outsiders. The hope was that steps toward an institutionalized collaboration could be ratified by the 1998 CRE General Assembly in Berlin.²⁹ This, however, was too optimistic. More time was needed.

²⁸ Minutes, 129 & 130th session of the CRE Board, March and June 1997

²⁹ Minutes, 131th session of the CRE Board, September 1997

3.2 Towards a merger

The joint Task Group started its work in January 1998, to analyze potential synergies between the two organizations. The mandate was to propose measures that could strengthen cooperation – from coordination development to merging – in order to prevent confusion concerning university representation in Europe. Blurred identities had arisen from the growing coverage of European countries by the Confederation and by the growing number of CRE projects sponsored by the European Union. Taking into account the function of the Confederation as a political lobby of the universities in Brussels – as represented by national systems of higher education – and CRE's role in developing the European dimension of member universities – as institutions – , the Task Group presented a report in three parts, proposing incremental steps for the two associations to merge.

The first measure would be the creation of a *Joint Management Board*, to coordinate present activities and divide labour between the two bodies. The second was a call for a *decision of principle* about a process leading to a merger of the two organizations. The third sketched a *possible structure* that could make the merger effective – i.e., a basis for detailed negotiations, given that CRE and the Confederation decided to create a single body to represent the European universities. This was the tricky part, as a both individual universities and their national organizations (EU and non-EU) should be members in the new organization.

3.2.1 A possible structure

The scenario the Task Group wanted to pursue, was a single organization capable of addressing all issues on an integrated basis. This might be achieved by the following³⁰:

Member organizations

The new single organization should have individual members (universities, as in CRE) and national members (Rectors' Conferences, as in the Confederation). The national members should represent a significant number of the universities in the country. All present CRE members and all present Confederation members and associate members should be accepted as individual/ national members of the new organization. Additional members might be accepted according to rules.

Joint meetings of universities (Academic Meetings)

Academic Meetings should be organized biannually for individual members of the organization, continuing the tradition of CRE meetings in the new organization under the leadership of the President. Academic Meetings might advice the Executive Board on general academic matters. Every second year a General Session should be included in the Academic Meeting for discussion of the general policy of the organization and for election of the President, the Vice President and three university representatives to the Executive Board. The President and/or the Vice President should be citizen(s) of the European Union.

Joint meetings of Rectors' Conferences

Such meetings should be held biannually, normally the day before Academic Meetings. These meetings should have political discussions, give advice to the Executive Board and finalize reactions and recommendations on behalf of the organization, they should also function as the organization's General Assembly.

³⁰ Confederation/CRE – Creation of a new single organization, August 1998 ,
Archives, Norwegian Council of Universities

Discussions related to EU policy and EU programs should be delegated to the Group of EU Rectors' Conferences, a subgroup of the Joint Meeting (the continuation of the Confederation Assembly) under the leadership of the organization's President (if he was a EU citizen) or the Vice President (if the President was not a EU citizen). Every second year the Group of EU Rectors' Conferences should elect four representatives to the Executive Board. In addition, the Group's representative from the country having the EU Presidency might take part in meetings of the Executive Board as an Observer.

Executive Board

This was to be the executive body of the organization. The Executive Board should have the following members: President, Vice President and three members elected by the Joint Meeting of Universities plus four members elected by the Group of EU Rectors' Conferences. These four members together with the President/Vice President should be the organization's representatives in dealings with EU representatives.

3.2.2 The follow-up

In both associations newly elected presidents would be in charge of the follow-up: Ken Edwards for CRE and Sérgio Machado dos Santos for the Confederation.

At the November 1998 CRE Board meeting³¹, the new CRE Vice President, Lucy Smith, reported that she the day before had attended the Confederation Assembly when it discussed the report from the Task Group. Her impression was that the representatives of the national rectors' conferences welcomed the suggestions of the Task Group. The Confederation had appointed members to the Joint Management Board, agreed to the need for a timetable for the merging procedures and proposed to entrust the existing Task Group with the further development.

The CRE Board welcomed the support of the recommendations of the Task Group by the Confederation and took a similar constructive view of the process. Thus, it would recommend to the CRE Committee to accept the three proposals so that the Joint Management Board could start working from the start of 1999. The Board would thus ask for an expression of *political will* concerning the future of university representation in Europe.

The Confederation asked its member conferences to formally confirm their decision concerning the principle of one single organization representing university interests at European level. Among the answers was this one, dated 12 December 1998³²:

“The Norwegian Council of Universities confirms its support of the principle to create a new single organization for higher education in Europe to take the place of the CRE and the Confederation and their respective functions, based on the model recommended by the joint task group.”

The political will was present in both organizations. However, it took time to sort out the formalities. Both internally and externally there was an increasing pressure for merger. At the May 1999 CRE conference in Bordeaux, the French Minister of Education, Claude Allègre, called on universities to take the initiative in organizing the European academic area³³:

³¹ Minutes, 136th session of the CRE Board, November 1998

³² Archives, Norwegian Council of Universities

³³ CRE Mid-Term Report (1998-2000)

“While impetus and regulations are the problems of governments, the key players will be the university presidents and rectors... This means that you require a European organization of rectors and presidents, which becomes a strong, permanent and unified structure... a solid organization so that you can move forward, grow closer, discuss the problems encountered, and thus become a spur to governments by condemning absurd restrictive regulations and calling for increased resources to support exchanges. And you will also make progress on an important issue for scientific and cultural Europe when you originate European projects in the area of research.”

At this time, CRE and the Confederation were already working with governments to prepare the Ministerial Conference that one month later started the Bologna Conference.

3.3 From Sorbonne to Bologna

3.3.1 The Trends Project

On the basis of the 1998 Sorbonne declaration and the proposed follow-up conference to be held in Bologna, the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities (CRE) proposed a project to outline and overview the learning structures in higher education in EU Member States and associate countries. The project included a comparative analysis of the different systems embodying these structures, reflected in recognition measures and accreditation procedures.³⁴ The project had a budget totaling 100 000 ECU, the EU Commission was asked to cover 70 000 ECU.

The two organizations claimed to be centrally placed to undertake the work envisaged: The Confederation had as its members the rectors' conferences of the EU Member States and a number of associate members from EEA and CEE states; the rectors' conferences representing national systems in higher education. Via the Secretaries General of the Member Conferences, the Confederation had direct access to considerable amounts of information on higher education structures in the member countries which could be made immediately available to the project. The CRE members were individual universities spread through Europe, including EEA and CEE countries. CRE had also undertaken several studies among member universities on themes relevant to the project.

It was argued that the involvement of the rectors' conferences and the universities in the preparation of the Bologna Conference – and their participation in the Conference – would contribute to mobilize agents of change in the higher education community and give visibility to the policy of convergence proposed in the European Union.

The project was supported by the EU Commission, the data collection and the comparative analysis processes were started in late 1998 with Jette Kirstein and Guy Haug as the experts responsible for this work. A Steering Committee was responsible for validation of results and for the final report. The Trends report³⁵ was presented at the Bologna Conference in June 1999 by Guy Haug. It was to be the first of such reports prepared by EUA for Ministerial Conferences in the Bologna process.³⁶

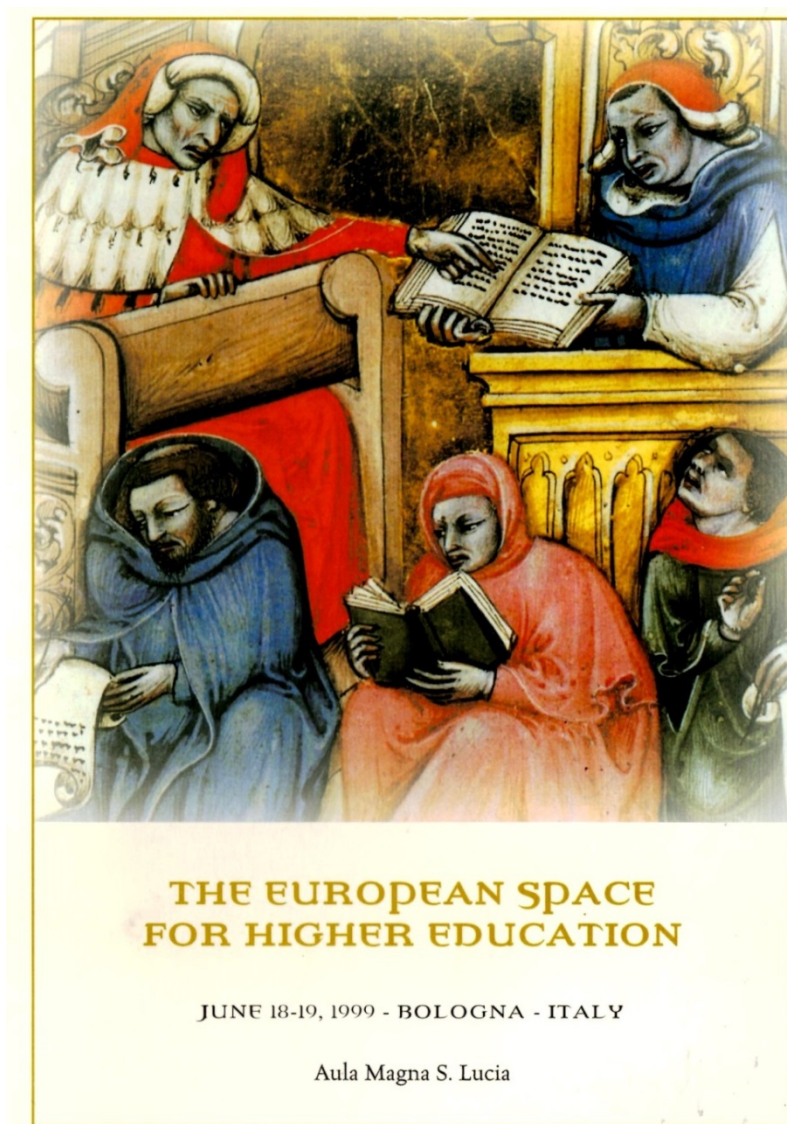
³⁴ Project plan proposed by the Confederation and CRE, October 1998

³⁵ Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein, *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education*, June 1999

³⁶ <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=87>

3.3.2 The Bologna Conference

Representatives of CRE and the Confederation had been invited by the Italian Minister of Education Ortensio Zecchio to participate in the steering group for the Ministerial Conference to be held in Bologna on 18-19 June 1999. The idea was that the first day should be an “academic day”; the second day would have a separate session for the Ministers to finalize the Declaration from the conference and a plenary session to conclude. Representatives for the university system were invited according to nominations by CRE and the Confederation. Representatives from all national rectors’ conferences were invited. Thus the university sector was broadly represented in Bologna: of a total of 250 participants, some 150 came from the higher education sector, the ministerial delegations totaled 50.



Presentation of the Trends Report was a central element in the program for the first day, together with a presentation by the Confederation President Hans-Uwe Erichsen on *The Challenges of a European Higher Education Space*.³⁷ He pointed out that higher education is a responsibility not only governments, but also of universities. Many universities had signed the Magna Charta Universitatum on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of

³⁷ Statement presented by Hans-Uwe Erichsen, Bologna Forum, 18 June 1999 1998

Bologna. That Magna Charta confirmed the autonomy and freedom of the university. The recent Confederation Assembly had underlined that the shaping and structuring of the future European Higher Education Space also was a responsibility of the higher education institutions. Thus, higher education institutions had to play a role in developing a concept for the European Space of Higher Education and implementing it.

Also the CRE President, Ken Edwards, had a central role in the program, reporting on the first day's discussions to the Ministers, before they sat down to finalize the declaration that started the Bologna Process³⁸.

3.3.3 The Bologna Declaration

The footprints of university representatives in the Bologna Declaration can easily be seen:

European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education, also in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that Universities' independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge.

There was full agreement between ministerial and university representatives concerning the objectives of the follow-up:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees.
- Adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate.
- Establishment of a system of credits as a proper means of promoting student mobility.
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the exercise of free movement.
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance.
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education

However, there was also an obligation for the universities: Ministers expected universities *to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of the endeavour*.

When a Follow-Up Group was established for the Bologna Process, the Confederation and CRE were invited to participate. The need to speak with one voice on behalf of the European universities was now absolute, but some time was still needed to straighten out the formalities of a merger.

4 Founding the European University Association

Then, on the basis of a Merger Agreement signed by the two Presidents, the Constitutive Assembly of the European University Association was set in Salamanca, 31 March 2001.³⁹

The first part of the meeting was chaired by Professor Sven Caspersen as “the founding full member having the longest service in either the CRE or the Confederation”. Sven Caspersen had served 23 years with CRE and 15 years with the Liaison Committee / Confederation. The credentials committee consisting of Hélène Lamiq, Per Nyborg and David Swinfen reported

³⁸ See <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=80>

³⁹ Minutes, Constitutive General Assembly of the EUA, Salamanca, 31 March 2001

that 254 persons had presented credentials to join the Assembly, 229 representing individual members (universities), 25 representing collective members (rectors' conferences).

The two founding organizations, the CRE and the Confederation, had adopted the merger agreement on 14 November and 17 November 2000 respectively. The merger would be based on the proposed *Articles of Association*.

The central item on the agenda for the Constitutive Assembly was therefore the formal adoption of the Articles of Association. The Articles were adopted and the European University Association was established. Eric Froment, former President of the University of Lyon 2, was elected the first President of EUA.

4.1 Articles of Association

To combine the *aims* of the two former organizations in the articles of the new Association had not been problematic. It was also evident that both rectors' conferences and individual universities should be *members*. The challenge had been to find a way the two different types of member organizations could share the responsibility for policy and management in the *structure* of the new organization. The end result of a long process concerning the structure was that all members had one vote in the General Assembly – a clear majority of individual members. In the Council the collective members dominated, in the Board the individual members. Central elements in the Articles are shown below:

Aims

The aims of the Association⁴⁰ are:

- To promote and safeguard university values and the case for university autonomy.
- To promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.
- To give active support and guidance to members of the Association in their development in higher education and research.
- To give active support and guidance to members of the Association in enhancing their contributions to society.
- To provide information and other services to members of the Association.
- To represent higher education and research and to influence policy making at national and European level, particularly in relation to the European Union.
- To encourage cooperation between members of the Association and the development of effective networks.
- To develop partnership in higher education and research between Europe and the rest of the World.

Membership

A University with full power to award doctoral degrees shall be eligible to apply for *Individual Membership*.

A National Rectors' Conference representing the universities of that country shall be eligible to apply for *Collective Membership*.

Structure

The General Assembly shall comprise all Individual and Collective Members. The General Assembly is the supreme Governing Body of the Association.

⁴⁰ EUA merger statutes 18.07.00

The Council shall comprise the President, the members of the Board and the nominated representatives of the Collective Members of the Association. Secretaries-General shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Council. The Council shall be the principal forum for discussion of the Association's policy positions on higher education and research.

The Board shall comprise the President and eight members. The Board shall be responsible for the implementation of the policy of the Association, for the planning of its activities, and for the management of the affairs of the Association.

The Presidency shall comprise the President and the two Vice-Presidents. The President shall lead and represent the Association.

On any matter directly related to EU policy or programs the Council shall set up a group of Council members, containing the representatives of the collective members of the EU member states. The group shall formulate policy and make recommendations to the Council.

The basic ideas from the Joint Task Group in August 1998 (subsection 3.2.1) were clearly reflected in the new Articles. However, much fine-tuning had been done.

4.2 The Salamanca Message: Shaping the European Higher Education Area⁴¹

At the Salamanca Convention the European higher education institutions confirmed their support to the principles of the Bologna Declaration and their commitment to the creation of the European Higher Education Area. The Salamanca Message describes the principles and key issues as seen from the university system. The principles are referred below in a slightly shortened form:

Autonomy with accountability

Progress requires that European universities be empowered to act in line with the guiding principle of autonomy with accountability. As autonomous and responsible legal, educational and social entities, they confirm their adhesion to the principles of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 and, in particular, academic freedom. Thus, universities have to be able to shape their strategy, choose their priorities in teaching and research, allocate their resources, profile their curricula and set their criteria for the acceptance of professors and students. European higher education institutions accept the challenges of operating in a competitive environment at home, in Europe and in the world, but to do so they need the necessary managerial freedom, less rigid regulatory frameworks and fair financing.

Education as a public responsibility

The European Higher Education Area must be built on the European traditions of education as a public responsibility; of broad and open access to undergraduate as well as graduate studies; of education for personal development; and of citizenship as well as social relevance.

Research-based higher education

As research is a driving force of higher education, the creation of the European Higher Education Area must go hand in hand with that of the European Research Area.

Organising diversity

European higher education is characterised by its diversity in terms of languages, national systems, institutional types and profiles and curricular orientation. At the same time its future depends on its ability to organize this valuable diversity to effectively produce positive

⁴¹ http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salamanca_declaration_en.1066755820788.pdf

outcomes. Higher education institutions wish to build on convergence and to deal with diversity as assets, rather than as reasons for non-recognition or exclusion.

4.3 EUA strategy and guidelines for action

Founding an organization is one thing, starting operations, developing policy and gaining influence is the important follow-up. Of course there were many challenges, one being a Secretariat split between Geneva and Brussels during the first years, but seen from the outside, the new organization was working according to expectations from the start.

In September 2001, the EUA Council, at its meeting in Dubrovnik, approved the EUA strategy and guidelines for action⁴²:

Mission and policy statement

EUA, as the representative organization of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe.

EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research, through active support and guidance to its members in their development of the quality of teaching, learning and research and in enhancing their contributions to society.

With reference to its aims, as contained in the Articles of Association, and to its Salamanca Message of March 2001, EUA will focus its policies and service to members on the creation of a European area for higher education and research.

Strategy and objectives

In order to support this mission, EUA's strategy and objectives are to develop consensus on:

- a European higher education and research identity based on the shared values of institutional autonomy, education as a social good and research as the foundation for learning;
- the compatibility of European higher education structures through commonly accepted norms in order to consolidate the role of higher education in the knowledge society, be it in terms of innovation or dissemination;
- convergence of a European higher education area and the cohesion of research networks to strengthen the sector's attractiveness to stakeholders in Europe and beyond.

Methods

The range of EUA activities and services to members, both individual and collective, can be grouped into two categories:

Working together:

EUA draws its expertise from its members and from key partner organizations. EUA is uniquely placed to facilitate mutual learning and support among its members through:

- meetings to inform members of European trends in higher education and research;
- studies and publications to analyze trends in European convergence and to highlight shared practices;
- consultancy to support institutions in developing and optimizing their European profile.

⁴² EUA strategy and guidelines for action, Document accepted by the Council, Dubrovnik, 29 September 2001

Advocacy on behalf of members:

- at European level to promote common policies;
- at international level to increase the visibility of European higher education and to prepare its members for future global trends.

4.4 The heritage

On this background, EUA has taken up the heritage from CRE and the Confederation. The aims of the Confederation (subsection 2.3.1) to represent the common view of its members and influence European policies on higher education and research, is well taken care of by the aims of EUA (section 4.1), its mission statement, strategy and methods (4.3). The CRE tradition of service to members (1.13.1-2) is likewise incorporated. Institutional autonomy and academic freedom, so important to both CRE and the Confederation, are reflected in the aims of EUA (4.1): To promote and safeguard university values and the case for university autonomy. CREs Transatlantic Dialogue and the Columbus Program for cooperation with Latin America (1.13.2) are also reflected in the EUA aims: To develop partnership in higher education and research between Europe and the rest of the World.

One element from CRE's mission (1.13.1) has been lost: "Mobilizing solidarity among the European academic community towards institutions which have suffered from political, social or economic upheaval." At the time of the merger, the Academic Task Force was still at work.

But something new was coming in with EUA - the Bologna Process: "EUA's mission (4.3) is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research, through active support and guidance to its members in their development of the quality of teaching, learning and research and in enhancing their contributions to society." --- "EUA will focus its policies and service to members on the creation of a European area for higher education and research."

This is also reflected in the strategy and objectives (4.3): To develop consensus on a European higher education and research identity, compatibility of European higher education structures and the convergence of a European higher education area.

In the Bologna Process EUA has from Day 1 – with the Salamanca Message – spoken with one voice on behalf of European universities and greatly increased the influence of higher education in the development of higher education policies in Europe. Services to member institutions have been further developed and the links to national rectors' conferences have been strengthened.

EUA has indeed taken over the responsibility from CRE and the Confederation for safeguarding university values and promoting university interests. The interaction between individual higher education institutions and national rector conferences is essential for a strong higher education sector both nationally and in the European Higher Education Area.