

Minutes: Board Meeting Marseille

Place: Marseille, France

Date: 30 January – 1 February 2015

Chair: Brendan

Minute-taker: Oona

Present: Oona Heiska, Luke Shore, Giuseppina Tucci and Brendan Power (OBESSU Board), Rasmus Åberg (OBESSU Secretary General)

----- The Chair opened the meeting -----

Point of the Agenda 1: Welcome and personal and MO updates

This is the first meeting of the year. The Board went through personal updates of the Board members as well updates from MOs. Board members had a Christmas holiday and returned to action again in January. Most of the members have been very busy with personal and/or OBESSU events but are excited to get planning the year 2015.

Point of the Agenda 2: Study Session update

The prep-team meeting has been organised in Budapest. Claudia from UDS, Hrefna from SIF, Jasmina from SAKKI as MOs representatives; and Giuseppina, Estel and the Council of Europe Educational Adviser. Giuseppina will be the course director for every other part except for logistics, which Estel will take care of.

The event will be 6 days long, 3 days of theory (background, definitions) and 3 days of action (long term action planning). We are planning to invite 3 different guests to speak and Giuseppina is in contact with them. These speakers bring new aspects and also bring the topic to the European context as well.

So far there are 38 confirmed participants. The content of the event seems to be doable. The agenda seems very well thought through and logistically it is very easy working with the Council of Europe.

Point of the Agenda 3: Updates from past external representations

ACVT meeting in December– Oona

Oona participated in the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) in December where OBESSU is an observing member. The meeting was very technical and mostly went through documents from former meetings but some participants were very interested in the learners' perspective. Also there was a discussion on VET moving under employment unit of the Commission, which was interesting to hear.

ESU Board meeting in Baku December – Luke

ESU faced problems with the officials of the country (Azerbaijan). This was a very tactical meeting and many conflicts. Nothing very ground-breaking from the OBESSU's point of view, but good partner networking.

LLL week December – Giuseppina

Giuseppina had a chat with Julie Ward during the opening. Giorgio, Dani and Giuseppina were all there. Giuseppina presented the campaign "Education we have a problem!" at a fair. Giuseppina also participated in two workshops and the closing of the week.

Education in the digital era – Giuseppina

This was a very high-level event, but was done through digital fair to test devices which was not very relevant. There were some inspirational people with speeches. Not very relevant, but Giuseppina made a point from the learners' perspective.

EUCIS-LLL Extraordinary General Assembly January – Brendan

There was a Steering Committee election and a person from AEGEE replacing a former member from the same organisation. There were also a discussion on the membership fee and the changes in the fees. The organisations will define themselves the category they belong to in the new system. The fees were raised because of financial problems. The exact procedure on how to determine which category an organisation belongs to was postponed to the next GA.

Education in Crisis in the EP January – Brendan

A session in the European Parliament about the financial crisis going on in European countries such as Greece and Spain. There was no space for contributions from OBESSU but there was a student contribution from a Spanish student organisation. In general it was good for OBESSU to be there but not ground-breaking.

Point of the Agenda 4: Secretariat update

OBESSU needs to pay back money for the Summer School 2013. This is a bad situation but not as bad as it could have been at a first look. The Board went through the financial situation both for 2014 and for 2015, during which we will try to save some money to make up for the loss. For 2015 we have already confirmed funding for all the events so the situation is ok at the moment.

The Board decided to let Rasmus investigate the possibility to have new OBESSU gadgets made. For example, we can produce fabric bags, possibly with a "40 years anniversary" theme.

Rasmus has had staff reviews with the staff and all was in order. The staff is very busy doing their things.

Point of the Agenda 5: CNE

CNE applied for full membership at the last Council of Members, but the application was denied. The situation is that the Board now really need to investigate the situation with CNE as it has been somewhat ignored in the past.

One option discussed would be to talk with people we can find on Facebook and contacting school student activists in Romania. We need to make a list of questions we want answers to and a list of people we need to contact on this issue. We will first contact individuals, school student activist, former CNE members, current CNE members, the Ministry, the student union in Romania and youth activists. We will try to avoid going to Romania but if it becomes necessary we will see it through.

Giuseppina will be in charge of the research of the situation, she will create a Google doc also on the answers and can ask for help any time. Monday 2nd of March is the day we decide if we have enough information or if we need to go to Romania.

Giorgio will remind them on reapplying a couple days before the deadline.

Point of the Agenda 6: UNESCO application update

OBESSU will apply for a partnership with UNESCO. It does not cost anything, and we can get more news and information about education, so it is not that OBESSU could lose something. This is mostly about making the relation official between OBESSU and UNESCO. The application is almost done, and the Board went through some questions left on the application. Rasmus will send in the finalised version as soon it is finished.

Point of the Agenda 7: Development Strategy follow-up

It is important to report about the current situation of the strategy as now we are at the starting point of the strategy (2015-2019). The Board decided to draft a questionnaire for MOs on the current situation so we can easily map what is the situation in the start of the year. The Board reminded itself on the yearly reviews of the strategy. These reviews will have a certain style and certain indicators for measuring the strategy also in the future. This work will continue during the year by making indicators for measurement, also consulting the Monitoring Committee and the MOs on this.

In Bratislava it was decided to think of qualitative and quantative methods to measure OBESSU's impact on policy making. The Board thought of the following:

Quantitative

- Number of meeting with MEPs (CULT and Employment and Youth Intergroup) and how many do we keep contact actively;
- Number of external representations of which how many were "high-level" and of which we had a strong contribution as speakers etc;

- Number of policy articles and policy papers published on our website and how many hits we have on them;
- How many meetings we attend of official structures such as the ACVT and Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE);
- Number of educational policy consultations answered;
- Number of policy-makers present at external representations.

Qualitative

- Quality of advocacy on national level of Mos;
- Contributions during external representations (linked to number of policy-makers, also a bit quantitative);
- Quality of OBESSU's contribution to partners/umbrella organisations (internal and external);
- Political contribution in the Council of Europe.

The Board decided that in the future for each under point of the development strategy we will create a Google doc for brainstorming ideas for indicators, also for other underheadings in the Development Strategy. Oona will create the document and also contact the MC about it. Rasmus will communicate clicks count to Giorgio. Oona will remind the Board about writing indicators.

Point of the Agenda 8: Staff interviews follow-up

Brendan did a Skype interview with Estel after Rasmus and Giorgio were already done. The Board was reminded on the summary of staff interviews. The general mood seemed very good, the Secretariat works very well together. There can still be improvement as Giorgio is still settling to the role of MO officer. The Board needs to make sure we use the Secretariat time efficiently.

The Board had a discussion on Rasmus continuing as Secretary General. There are some concerns on growing influence of the Secretary General and the Board was slightly worried about how the new Board would perceive the role of the Secretary General. However as Rasmus seems enthusiastic and ready for the job the Board decided to renew his contract for another two years. This will save OBESSU from a lot of work and thus the Board decided to continue Rasmus' contract by two more years. However, Rasmus still needs to get the "vote of trust" from the General Assembly.

Point of the Agenda 9: Cost-saving session

Since we have to pay back some money for a 2013 project grant, the Board had a session on where the organisation can save money during the upcoming years. This session was a brainstorm where ideas were marked on a horizontal axis going from "saving a lot of money" to "saving very little money"; and on a vertical axis going from "very easy to save" to "very difficult to save". The broad result of this is the following.

Saving a lot of money and very easy:

- Not messing up project managing;
- Crowd-funding for the 40th anniversary;

- Cut down unnessecary external representations without funding;
- Higher participation fees for events;
- Less reimbursements for events;
- Staying in apartments for Board meetings instead of hostels;
- Having Board meetings and events in cheap places (i.e. with a low-cost airport).

Save some money very easily:

- Explore sponsorship for food and transport;
- Be very strict about reimbursements and refrence prices;
- Cheaper office supplies also maybe together with the office neighbours in Mundo J;
- Voluntary membership fees/voluntary higher fees for events;
- Hostel discounts.

Fairly hard but saves a lot:

- Rethink the AFCs again;
- Check with the EP about having a GA in Brussels covered by a Parliament visitors' group;
- Explore getting donations;
- Explore new project funding;
- Actions during and for the birthday party.

Saves a little less and fairly hard:

- Cut down on food costs at COMEMs and GAs
- Distant working especially for the one Working Group of the year

These cost saving ways were discussed and will be kept in mind for future events and actions of OBESSU.

Point of the Agenda 10: Right to Representation report

Overall the event itself was ok; however, this was a very hard event with a lot of tensions. The prep-team was too overworked, and this is the issue to adress in the future. The culture differences also in prep-team was visible and in the future it is important to take this into account.

There is a deeper question on the different expectations that different organisations have on OBESSU, and this is also something which must be handled somehow in the future. The activities planned for 2015 and 2016, notably the Training Course for International Officers (TCIO) and the 40th anniversary, can probably be good occations to "get all organisations together", since the topics are less controversial.

Point of the Agenda 11: OBESSU 2015

The Board looked at the activities planned for 2015 and decided preliminary dates for them.

Working Group on the Manual for School Students

- Preliminary dates (can be subject to change depending on the availability of prep-team members) for meeting: 11-12th April (Vienna);
- Call out for prep-teams out next week (4th February, closing 28th);
- Second meeting in October;
- Guseppina in charge.

MC meeting

- To be held in Brussels, so that they can also go through books of OBESSU and report to the GA;
- Preliminary dates 13-14 March, but this is of course dependent on their availability.

Board meeting 2

- 27th- 30th March including travel days;
- In Rome;
- Luke will be Chair and Brendan will be minute-taker.

Board meeting 2

- 8-11 May including travel days (preliminary, can still change);
- In Dublin;
- Brendan will look into having something nice in Dublin for the birthday of OBESSU as ISSU has been very excited about this.

General Assembly (GA) and birthday

- First two weekends of June are possible;
- Two days GA (Saturday-Sunday) and birthday on a Friday;
- In Brussels;
- Planning will be stepped up from now on;
- Giuseppina will help with crowdfunding and Rasmus and Oona think of locations.

Training Course for International Officers (TCIO)

- Some of the Board will be in the prep-team, but not all (as was the case at the 2013 TCIO);
- 6 – 13 September, including travel days ;
- Prep-team start of August;
- In Brussels;
- Giuseppina is in charge (with Oona).

Council of Members

- Preliminary in the first weekend of December;
- Possible locations are Copenhagen, Prague and Dublin;
- Rasmus and Brendan will explore options.

Convention

- 2 to 8 November, including travel days;
- In Cluj-Napoca;
- Prep-team end of September;
- Brendan in charge (with Oona).

Working Group on Welfare

- Meeting 1: in April, maybe the 3rd weekend, in Madrid;

- Second meeting: December, in Helsinki;
- Oona in charge;
- Study visits (Rasmus will look up the amount of money we have for this).

The first Board meeting with the new Board will be in July.

Point of the Agenda 12: Post 2015 update and UNESCO Consultation

The post-2015 Agenda targets for education are taking shape at the moment. The debate will go on until September. The targets are good for OBESSU at the moment, but these can be changed. The discussion has moved towards indicators how to measure the targets. The debate here is very technical and the UNESCO consultation is a part of this and we missed the deadline since it was very close to the Board meeting. It is difficult to tell where it is going at the moment but it will probably become fairly clear soon. It is up to member states at the moment to decide. What we can do is to advocate at national level or get into big international structures to lobby there.

If OBESSU wants to do something it will be either pretty demanding; either advocate towards out member organisations or to contact UN representatives of their countries and advocate actively towards them. The useful thing to do would be to follow the debate, and publish reactions when the targets are adopted in September (maybe together with Education International). We need to get civil society organisations involved in this. There is no accountability in the debate, so this is something that we could emphasise. The Board decided it would be a good idea to follow the debate and react if necessary. OBESSU will not go to the meetings in Japan or South Korea, but we can get in contact with people going.

Point of the Agenda 13: Possible EUCIS-LLL collaboration in “forward-looking proposal”

Rasmus has been to a meeting about a new call for proposals from the Commission, called “forward-looking projects”. OBESSU does not have capacity to apply for a project, but could possibly be a partner in one of them. EUCIS-LLL has been contacted by the university VUB in Brussels, about a project involving developing an app for students in primary schools, and since OBESSU works with secondary school this is not a good idea.

EUCIS-LLL also has its own proposal, in which OBESSU could be a partner. OBESSU would then organise consultations and dialogues at national level. However, as OBESSU does not really have resources to do this, and since it is not part of OBESSU’s Work Plan, we will decline.

Rasmus will answer and say thank you but we are not interested.

Point of the Agenda 14: Monitoring Committee (MC)

We will send the indicators of the Development Strategy to the MC and also communicate with them about the MC meeting in Brussels. Oona and Rasmus will do this.

Point of the Agenda 15: EAFA Pledge (European Alliance For Apprenticeship)

This is a Commission initiative they have approached OBESSU asking if we also want to make a "pledge". If we pledge something small (for example "We pledge for quality VET") we get to the platform but it can also look like an unconditional approval of the Commission point of view on VET. We can also pledge with our own values so there should not be anything controversial.

We will contact former Board member Dani and former Policy Officer on VET Tiia, to get the background of the previous Board's decision to not pledge anything. Luke will be in charge of this getting done and communicating back to the Board.

Point of the Agenda 16: Study Session 2016

The theme of next year's Study Session will be human rights at school. The application deadline is April 1st. Brendan will be in charge of looking at the application. The time will be around the start of March in Budapest or Strasbourg. Rasmus and Estel will work on the application together.

Point of the Agenda 17: OBESSU in the next few months

European Youth Forum COMEM, 16 – 19 April, Brussels. Brendan will go.

YO! Fest, 5th of May. Rasmus will go to an information meeting to hear more about it, notably regarding possibilities of travel reimbursement.

"Structured Dialogue on the Move", 18 – 21 in Cyprus. Brendan will go.

Point of the Agenda 18: Structured Dialogue Consultation

We will send MOs a consultation on the Structured Dialogue to get their input on this. This will be done as soon as possible, since the deadline is approaching quickly.

Point of the Agenda 19: AFC consultations

The question on OBESSU's AFCs for 2016 and beyond will be decided at OBESSU's General Assembly. Some member organisations have raised the question of rethinking the current AFC structure, for example by excluding project-based funding from the annual turnover.

Rasmus will send a consultation to the MOs asking them what they think about this. The Board brainstormed on possible questions, and came up with the following.

- How do you find current AFC categories? Good to bad (please explain);
- How would you change the AFC categories if you see a problem with them?;
- A text included to explain that some organisations have requested project money to be excluded from the AFC and a question on how much you agree with this statement;
- How would leaving out projects change your turnover? Please indicate amount;

- Have you had troubles paying your AFC? If yes how is this (or has) affected your organisation?;
- Any other comments.

Point of the Agenda 20: School student structure development (“SSSD”)

Agenda point 20 – SSSD

UNEL and CSU will probably apply soon for full membership as it has been almost a year now, and if they do send their applications the Board will decide on recommendation.

Bulgaria

The Board discussed the situation with Bulgarian organisation BSSU. The Board already discussed this in the previous meeting and decided there is nothing wrong with the application. The Board decided to accept the candidacy application. The summary about them will be sent out to member organisations with the Board report. We will also note down that if they want all the documents they can request but they will also be sent out with GA mailing. Giorgio can contact them about the decision and prepare a certificate for them for the GA.

Kosovo

The Board discussed with them in Vilnius and said they will apply for affiliate membership and maybe also develop into an organisation over time to reach the membership criteria. Giorgio will contact the organisation to remind them of the application process.

NSOA Britain

This is a VET organisation representing secondary school apprentices. They are maybe interested in applying for candidacy. Giorgio will contact them in a couple of months.

Student Voice

The situation is that they are a very promising organisation and we should contact them about this. Giuseppina will contact them soon about how they are.

Riga School Council

Estel and Giuseppina have contacted them but so far have not received an answer. They are in the middle of creating a nation-wide student union. If they manage this they can apply to become a Candidate. We can maybe invite them either to TCIO or Convention to meet them again.

SSUN

The International Committee is positive about the possibilities that OBESSU offers. We are looking at chances to have them at the GA as guests. Luke will be in contact with them about this meeting in order to keep in contact.

How to tackle the strategic objectives about SSSD

Populous countries: Student Voice and NSOA will be contacted from Britain. In Germany there are some organisations that would be good affiliates but national organisations are either party-political or ineligible for other reasons. The organisation in Germany SVB would be a possible organisation to contact from there. Luke will contact SVB about reminding them about their possibilities.

Sveriges Elevkår

We will also see the chance on contacting Sveriges Elevkår, just to see if they want to participate in an event. Oona will check with Ida about this. JOB is also a possibility in the Neatherlands. Giuseppina will contact them.

Greece

There are many organisations but all very party-political. But maybe there is room to explore.

GSSUA – Georgia

This organisation applied for candidacy a year ago but there were some problematic issues in the Statutes. The organisation seemed however very promising. Maybe it could be worth contacting them again. This can be done by Giorgio.

Malta

Brendan will contact a person he knows from there, just to get updates of what is going on there.

“Friends of OBESSU”

After the 17th November we got many contact around the world. For example IGLYO has a thing on their page about these friends around the world who they keep in contact with but who do not come to events. This is nice for the future if we want to do something more global in the future. We can open a google doc with contacts of organisations. Giorgio will draft an email and be in charge of the contacting.

Point of the Agenda 21: Giorgio’s work

The line between what is political and operation is a bit in the case of SSSD. The Board agreed that the Board will contact a person for the first time but Giorgio will take over from there. But in a situation Giorgio gets an email about something technical he can answer it directly. Giorgio will be kept in the loop for all emails.

If Giorgio has the time he can contact the “not strategic” organisations on the list.

MO Forum: Giorgio can look at the online platform suggested at the COMEM in Bratislava. There has to be a place to register for it. The ideas at the COMEM were very concrete and we can use them as a base for testing. Testing would be done by Brendan, Oona and Giorgio in the following months. The Forum would include a discussion forum, archive for documents divided in topics, MOs data and a space for projects of MOs where they can seek input and share their organisation events happening. Two types of registration: one for modifying everything (one per organisation) and another one for discussion purpose. Giorgio can also ask from Dani about this if he can help with the creation of a platform. But the starting point would be to find an open place online on this.

Membership review: Giorgio has been drafting this already to send out this to MOs. Giorgio will work with Oona and Brendan on this and will contact them.

Point of the Agenda 22: YFJ implementation plan

The implementation plan of YFJ is the plan including actual activities done during the next two years. The Board discussed possible aspects to comment from an OBESSU perspective, many of them related to the objective about formal education. Some points were:

- OBESSU is ready to take an active part of the (formal) educational aspect of chapter 3;
- Combining the "Education Week" with the "Lifelong Learning Week" can be good if done correctly. It is important to keep focusing on the many different aspects of education. We encourage YFJ to keep promote MO-led workshops;
- The Education Network is something that OBESSU would be interested in to know more about;
- On the part about internship we should point out that YFJ should not only work on "higher education internships", but also keep a secondary school and VET focus;
- Next time it would be good to have more time for the consultation, a more user-friendly format and more details on the document;
- YFJ should keep a human rights perspective when dealing with the European Youth Capital in Ganja;
- We are happy that YFJ works on the Post-2015 Agenda, but should encourage YFJ to be careful with the spending, since long-distance flights to meetings of doubtful value can be very expensive;
- We like the idea of having another European Youth Event 2016. YFJ should make sure that grassroot-level activists are involved and that organisations have enough space to be there.

Rasmus will send these points to YFJ.

Point of the Agenda 23: Any other business

The International Day Against Homophobia has "Youth" as the theme of the year. The day is the 17th of May. We can share this and inform our MOs about the possibilities. Maybe OBESSU can publish the Guidelines during the day or do something similar for the day. Luke has been in contact with IGLYO and contact will be continued further with them as well. We can discuss this further later after IGLYO has been contacted.

We never published anything about the student protests in Hong Kong, despite the request from the Council of Members to do so. The timing was a bit bad, since other things came in between. This should be kept in mind for the future.

Point of the Agenda 24: Evaluation

The Board evaluated the meeting.

----- The Chair closed the meeting -----