



Meeting of NGOs for the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education Paris, 4 July 2009

About 100 representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with UNESCO met one day prior to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) to strategize for an efficient involvement of civil society in the meeting.

Interactive panels addressed issues of key importance for civil society's involvement, such as:

- **Public good:** higher education with its three missions of teaching, research and service to the community, should be considered the responsibility of each State as a public good and not as a commodity;
- **The role of NGOs in promoting higher education and education for all:** higher education should be fully associated with the implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action for EFA and the Millennium Development Goals;
- **New prospects for higher education and sustainable development in the 21st century:** the role of higher education and research for sustainable development should be reinforced on the basis of the Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Bonn (2009)
- **Mainstreaming gender equality in higher education in the next decade:** States and higher education institutions should implement policies and structures that ensure women's access and success in higher education at all levels and in all aspects.

Françoise Sauvage, IFUW Representative to UNESCO, chaired the session on gender. Visions for the future called for decision makers to recognize the cultural change taking place in the 21st century regarding women accessing all levels of higher education. What used to be traditionally a male dominated club is now mixed, with men and women bringing their gender specificities. This change needs to be taken into account in defining what is meant by « quality » in evaluating career paths.

Some of the proposals for concrete action coming out of the discussion were:

- To support women at doctoral level
- To encourage student associations as the best mean to change attitudes with new generations
- To motivate girls migrants to fulfil their full potential, especially in higher education.
- To ensure that financing for higher education and research with a gender balance becomes a priority for all governments.

*Report submitted by
Murielle Joye, IFUW Representative to UNESCO*