A STRATEGY FOR BOLOGNA 2020

NON-PAPER
prepared by the Benelux
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the European Higher Education Area Beyond 2010
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0. Introduction

At its inception the Bologna Process was meant both to strengthen European integration and competitiveness of European higher education through the introduction of a system based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies and to foster student mobility through easily readable programs and degrees. Quality assurance has played an important role from the outset, too. The various ministerial meetings since 1999 have broadened this agenda and have given greater precision to the tools that have been developed. The undergraduate/postgraduate degree structure has been modified into a three-cycle system, which now includes the concept of qualifications frameworks with an emphasis on learning outcomes – what people know, understand and can do – as well as how different qualifications articulate. The concept of the social dimension of higher education has been introduced and the recognition of qualifications is now clearly perceived as central to European higher education policies.

The Bologna Process has been successful in so far that it has created a number of instruments that have given European higher education greater coherence and have placed it on the worldwide map. At the same time though, progress has been uneven, as can be seen from the various stocktaking exercises. We should be prepared for the eventuality that not all participating countries will have implemented all policies and reached all stated goals by 2010. Perceptions differ between countries, between institutions as well as between disciplines. An independent assessment has been asked for to clarify what has been really achieved and to what extent this has been done. This report is to be ready for 2010.
However, prior to that publication the ministerial meeting of 2009 is to give political orientations for the future of the Bologna process. The present document proposes the structure of the report and the possible, main foci these orientations could take.

1. Finalising the initial agenda

As has been stated above, not all the objectives will have been reached by all the participating countries by 2010; it is, therefore, necessary that the Bologna Process should continue after 2010 so that its implementation can be finalized. However, greater differentiation is needed between action lines with clearly defined operational outcomes and underlying policy areas.

1.1. Action lines

This category comprises the degree structure, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance.

As far as the degree structure is concerned it is assumed that a full implementation of this action line will result in higher education being organized in three cycles, with a

possibility of intermediate qualifications, and with proper progression from one cycle to the next; each cycle is defined in terms of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload.

As far as recognition is concerned, recognition practices will be coherent across the European Higher Education Area. These will ensure that all learners are given fair recognition of their qualifications, as underlined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Qualifications frameworks certified against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the EHEA and designed to encourage mobility as well as employability will be fully implemented, self certification procedures will be completed and the self certification reports made accessible to partners.

In the area of quality assurance, the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR) will be fully operational and national quality assurance agencies will implement the European Standards and Guidelines (which will be a requirement for agencies to be included in the register).

1.2.   Policy areas

The social dimension, employability and the Bologna Process in its global dimension are policy areas that have not been defined in terms of operational targets to be achieved and have thus not been the subject of benchmarking.

The definition given to the social dimension is one that includes all provisions needed for having equitable access, progress and completion of higher education. By emphasizing the social characteristics of higher education, the political objective aims at reducing social gaps, at providing equal opportunities to quality education and at strengthening social cohesion. The social dimension with its agenda of equitable participation in higher education will need to be further developed on the basis of the data that will become increasingly available from 2009 onwards.

Employability, especially the issue of the relevance of bachelor degrees for the labour market is one that may well last into the next decade.

The Bologna Process clearly impacts on how higher education in Europe relates to higher education in other parts of the world, and there is great interest in the Bologna Process in other regions. At the same time, it is clear that the global dimension of the Bologna process, seen from a European perspective, is a mix of what we have in common – the European Higher Education Area – and elements that are specific for each participating country, including strategies for marketing one's own national higher education. This also points to the fact that the global dimension of the Bologna Process balances – or needs to balance - cooperation and competition.

So, undoubtedly these policy areas will be carried over into the next phase of the Bologna Process; however, their importance may be even more highlighted on account of new challenges to be identified.

Mobility is one of the fundamentals of European cooperation. Yet, progress in this area does not seem to match the initial expectations, and therefore will remain at the core of future policies. Indeed, apart from the economic value of creating a mobile labour force, student and staff mobility also has a cultural value enhancing mutual understanding between countries and regions as well as personal fulfilment.

2. Bologna 2020

It is worth recalling one of the broad issues of the Bologna declaration: *"Meanwhile, we are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the need to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe, in*

particular building upon and strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions." This initial strategic goal still holds true as an overarching principle for 2020. Yet, the world has changed since the last decade of the previous millennium and the goal as set forth in the Bologna declaration needs to be related against a background of new challenges in order for relevant operational objectives to be defined. The following paragraphs propose a structure within which these challenges can be identified and give a number of examples. It should be noticed that these are merely examples. Challenges and political orientations will be identified in a process as described in the Bologna work programme 2007-2009 on the Beyond 2010 action line, comprising the Ghent conference on Bologna Beyond 2010, 19-20 May 2008, the publications by researchers and stakeholders in the wake of that conference and by the extraordinary BFUG meeting to be held in Sarajevo (date tbc). The Council of Europe flagship project "The University between Humanism and Market : Redefining its Values and Function for the 21st Century" and the consultations organised by EUA, ESU and other consultative members to the Bologna Process will also contribute to the definition of challenges and the ensuing political orientations.

2.1.   Challenges at macro level

Globalisation: One of the most visible manifestations of globalisation is the emerging 'borderless' higher education market, which is the most evident trend in what is likely to be a continuing move toward a diversification of higher education provision. Traditional forms of provision, through organised programmes delivered by public and private higher education institutions belonging to a national education system and providing face to face interaction between learners and faculty is likely to remain the most important form of provision, but it is at the same time likely to meet competition and challenges from a range of other forms of provision, not all of which may even exist today. The huge increase in the world-wide demand in higher education, the budgetary and capacity problems of many countries to meet this demand, and on the other hand the opportunities created by new communication technologies and the Internet, shape an environment in which new, mostly for profit providers can successfully expand the supply of educational services. Universities from North America, Europe and Australia take initiatives to reach out their educational provision to this international higher education market, by active recruitment of international, fee-paying students to the home institution, by establishing branch campuses or franchising and twinning agreements with local institutions. The international demand for higher education has also invited new providers from outside the higher education sector to enter the scene. The political issue arising is that of access and equity on the one hand and quality on the other. Moreover, many still identify the 'public good' approach to higher education with an exclusively national policy framework. What is the proper role of public authorities if public responsibility for higher education is to remain a prominent feature of the European Higher Education Area? Is an international regulatory framework needed to transcend the eroded national policy contexts and to some extent steer the global integration of the higher education systems?

Cultural developments: Aspects of homogenisation due to an increasing cultural exchange as well as the world-wide use of the English language and the spread of commercial culture are set against elements of cultural differentiation as witnessed by increasing consciousness of the use of national, regional and minority languages as well as national and local traditions. The economic effect of globalisation leading to the creation of wealth is thus increasingly linked up with a capacity to handle differences and diversity. At the same time these trends are scarred by conflict, intolerance and fear. So what kind of intercultural dialogue is needed?

2.2.   Challenges at European level

Demography: The demographics are such that the average age of the European population is somewhere in the mid-forties. In ten years' time it will be in the fifties. Against this background, the central questions are how we secure enough professionals to operate Europe as well as how we develop a civic culture that will include and preserve a measure of solidarity between generations. How do we manage to maintain an

innovation capacity in an ageing and increasingly diverse population? European Higher Education has experienced massification during the last quarter of the previous century, without, however, giving access to children from culturally less privileged backgrounds. On the other hand, our capacity to address the societal issues of the 21st century, be they related to energy, climate change or social cohesion, will only be met if we manage to tap into intellectual resources that have hitherto been neglected. Lifelong learning is another way of addressing the same issue. In an ageing population, advanced education for professionals aged after the age of 40 is of paramount importance if they want to want to remain creative and innovative within their field. We know that innovation and risk taking tend to decrease with the age. Lifelong learning is necessary to increase these skills and attitudes until a much later age.

The *research* agenda: at EU level, cooperation in research has favoured applied research and networking. However in a context in which the sources of technological progress are multiple and in which the new models of open innovation and technology management are non linear and user-driven, the policy tools need to be adapted to match the requirements of that new environment. The latter also calls for larger critical mass with a concentration of research facilities. The policy question is how to invest in brains and to support excellence and also to define excellence in research in a broad area of fields, in other words not to narrow the view of "worthwhile fields" to technology and economics while neglecting humanities, social sciences, non-technological natural sciences and fundamental research in general. At the same time the tendency of research facilities to aggregate calls for a greater differentiation among institutions, e.g. in articulation of the relation between learning and teaching on the one hand and research at the other.

2.3. Challenges at meso level

Public responsibility and the role of the nation state: It is worth recalling that the modern university was put at the disposal of nation-state by its German philosophical founders. The Bologna Process, however, has led to structural reforms that were not part of the agenda at the outset. University autonomy is one of them. Usually it is defined as less regulation, keeping government intervention at arms' length. If we turn to American higher education, we realize that these institutions, both public and private, enjoy great autonomy and that especially the private ones can rely on their endowments. We know that Europe does not have these great fortunes ready to endow foundations. Yet, the government must behave as if it dealt with institutions that are as autonomous as the American ones and face the question of how to finance them. In what sense is higher education expenditure and in how far is it an investment? Furthermore, the state is increasingly seen as a regulator, a catalyst rather than a direct provider; this raises the question of the regulatory framework. Again, what is the proper role of public authorities, and how do we define autonomy in an age of greater interaction of – and hence less distinction between – public and private actors?

Social dimension: The vision of higher education as contributing to social cohesion is part of the welfare state model of social cohesion. Education and higher education institutions by extension act as public instruments for the re-distribution of wealth through investing in social mobility and above all through public investment in the younger generation. This welfare state model defines and measures how far the university has met its obligations of social cohesion in terms of groups defined by social background or relative disadvantage. The policy issue is to what extent institutions of higher education will be asked to continue this tradition in the face of growing internationalization.

The social dimension may be broadened in its scope. Our societies are faced with a number of challenges requiring that their members have the intellectual ability to analyze challenges, see connections between different areas, devise solutions and act on the basis of incomplete information, but also that they have attitudes of citizenship: a will to solve conflicts through negation and majority decisions (with due regard to minority views) rather than violence, a recognition of the importance of human dignity and of

minority rights, and also an ability and willingness to engage in the public sphere and to weigh the benefits to the community in relation to individual benefits.

2.4.   challenges at micro level

the *faculty* structure: The institutions must realise that they have to be responsive to the needs of society. The global problems are such that they cannot be solved by the methodology or the knowledge gained in one science alone. The most interesting debates take place at the edge of scientific fields or at the crossroads of sciences. However, the universities and policy-makers have not yet overcome past experience. The faculty structure reflects the classification of science rooted in the 19th century; the traditional organisation into faculty is not innovative enough and also not always rational in terms of the sue of resources (cf. splitting the teaching of the same fundamental disciplines in the earliest stages of various health related study programs). Organizational reform at institutional level must reflect a new epistemology, Curricula should build bridges between humanities and natural sciences. Content reform is needed if institutions are to be responsive to the needs of society.

3. Bologna 2020 and its follow-up structure

The question of the follow-up structure will also have to be addressed. This chapter will briefly outline the advantages as well as the drawbacks of the current informal arrangements.

Also the criteria for membership to the process and the question whether other forms of "privileged" partnership with countries outside Europa should be explored.

The chapter will ponder the frequency of the meetings and raise the question if there is a need for more formal arrangements enabling to bring the policy discussions from a national level to a European level (e.g. "Bologna observatory", "European Higher Education Academy"…)

4. Timing for discussions

- 20-21 November 2007 : launching CoE project "University between Humanism and Market"
- 16 January 2008 and 13-14 March 2008 : initial discussion of draft strategy paper
- Rest of 2008 : consultations, publications at national level and by consultative members of the Bologna Process
- 4-5 March 2008 : CoE conference "University between Humanism and Market : Intercultural dialogue in higher education"
- 19-20 May 2008 : Seminar "Bologna Beyond 2010", Ghent
- 9 June 2008 : Board meeting, preparation of extraordinary BFUG meeting and BFUG meeting, Paris, 14-15 October 2008
- Date to be confirmed, extraordinary BFUG meeting, Sarajevo : first discussion on more elaborated strategy document based on inputs mentioned above
- Further discussions at :
    - 14-15 October 2009 : BFUG meeting, Paris
    - 13 January 2009 : Board meeting, Prague
    - 12-13 February 2009, BFUG meeting, Prague
    - 26-27 March 2009, BFUG meeting, Prague
    - 27 April 2009, BFUG meeting, Leuven
- 28-29 April 2009 : adoption of strategy paper by Ministers