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Background paper for the Bologna Follow-up Group
prepared by the Benelux Bologna Secretariat

Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Conference
28-29 April 2009

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BOLOGNA beyond 2010

The contribution of European higher education to the global public good

Introduction

In many respects, the Bologna Process has been revolutionary for cooperation in European higher education. Four education ministers participating in the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the University of Paris (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998) shared the view that the segmentation of the European higher education sector in Europe was outdated and harmful and thus signed the Sorbonne Joint Declaration. The decision to engage in a voluntary process to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was formalized a year later in Bologna by 30 countries (The Bologna Declaration, 1999). It is now apparent that this was a unique undertaking as the process today includes no fewer than 46 participating countries, out of the 49 countries that have ratified the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe (1954). This means that, eventually, the joint declaration signed by four ministers in Paris mobilized numerous (higher) education ministers and high-ranking civil servants, as well as many thousands of rectors, deans, professors and students who contributed to the conception of the project and, in particular, to its implementation. No other European initiative has mobilized so many people, apart from the creation and development of the European Union. Moreover, the process has aroused growing curiosity and interest, but also some uneasiness in other parts of the world.

The process has been successful, because it has given an important role to higher education institutions[1] and their representative associations as well as to the European Students' Union. It involves employers' representatives and trade unions in its decision making bodies as well as international organizations like the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES and the European network of quality assurance agencies. The process also encouraged many countries to ratify the Council of Europe-UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), which is the only legally binding text of the EHEA.

At its inception, the Bologna Process was meant to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education and to foster student mobility and employability through the introduction of a system based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies with easily readable programmes 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 recognition of qualifications is now clearly perceived as central to European higher education policies.

The Bologna Process has used and developed a number of instruments that have given European higher education greater coherence and have placed it on the worldwide map. Besides, the instruments put in place are multipurpose instruments serving various objectives. At the same time, some overall goals can also be looked at in terms of instruments. Mobility, for instance, is both a means and an end.

[1] In this report the terms "higher education institutions" and "universities" will both be used as generic terms to cover the diverse establishments providing higher education.

The European dimension is very much the raison d'être of the Bologna Process, it is its defining characteristic. The European dimension finds its expression in the fact that European higher education systems are based on diversity and cooperation, on the participation of all stakeholders and on academic freedom. Multilingualism is another distinguishing feature. European higher education is seen as a public good in which the social dimension is firmly embedded and it is this unique combination of values and principles that shape the European dimension of European higher education.

As far as implementation is concerned, progress over the years has been uneven, as can be seen from the various stocktaking exercises. Differences exist between countries, between institutions as well as between disciplines. The Bologna Process is a complex one involving many stakeholders and therefore not all participating countries will have implemented all policies and reached all stated goals by 2010. 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.

Prior to the publication of the independent assessment the ministerial meeting of 2009 is to give policy orientations for the future of the Bologna Process. The present report proposes the possible main foci these orientations could take.

Chapter 1
Finalising the initial agenda

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. First priority for the future should be given to completing the existing action lines.

In the following chapters and for purposes of clarity, a distinction has been made between action lines with clearly defined operational outcomes and underlying policy areas.

1.1. Action lines

This category comprises the degree structure, qualifications frameworks, quality assurance and recognition. A proper understanding of as well as a full implementation of the following three action lines remains of paramount importance in the years to come.

1.1.1. The degree structure and qualifications frameworks

The European Higher Education Area is structured around three cycles with a possibility for national education systems to establish intermediate qualifications within the first cycle, and with proper progression from one cycle to the next; each cycle is defined in terms of generic descriptors based on learning outcomes. The first two cycles are also defined by ECTS credit ranges based on student workload and learning outcomes. The first cycle typically contains between 180 and 240 ECTS, while the second cycle typically carries 90-120 ECTS, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle.

Moreover, national qualifications frameworks which must be certified against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the EHEA and designed to encourage mobility as well as employability are currently being developed and implemented. These qualifications frameworks carry a strong emphasis on learning outcomes and allow for a variety of learning paths to a given qualification. In most countries self-certification procedures will be completed after 2010 and the self-certification reports will only then be made accessible to all. The timetable for implementing national qualifications frameworks by 2010 should be slightly modified to these being self-certified against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area by 2012.The implementation of national qualifications frameworks is critical to guaranteeing transparency and remains an urgent matter. This requires continued coordination at the level of the European Higher Education Area and with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. The national qualifications frameworks correspondents have provided valuable information and have also expressed the need for a regular, organized exchange of information among these key actors in the development of national qualifications frameworks.

It is undeniable that the adoption of the degree structure and the focus on quality assurance are the most visible outcomes of the Bologna Process and for non-specialists these two outcomes are what the Bologna Process stands for. Both are meant to increase transparency and mutual confidence and thus also to encourage academic mobility. Generally speaking, the implementation of the structural reform amounts to more than a re-labelling of previously awarded diplomas and is accompanied by more substantial changes. Degree programmes are increasingly described in terms of learning outcomes and the introduction of credit points has led to a focus on student

centred learning. Yet, while much of the structural reform is already in place, the key challenge is to move from structure to content as well as to properly implement this change of paradigm from teacher centred learning to putting the students at the centre of interest. Further work and associated resources will be required to improve understanding of learning outcomes and their use for designing and delivering curricula in the various subject areas. As a result, the way in which teaching is conducted and learning takes place will change, which in turn will have organisational implications.

The relationship between qualifications frameworks and quality assurance is crucial. Work needs to be continued over the next few years, at national and institutional as well as at European and regional level, to improve the links and interaction between the work done on qualifications frameworks and on quality assurance, involving a broad range of relevant stakeholders.

1.1.2. Quality assurance

Maintaining the quality of European higher education at a high level and raising it even further has been one of the major goals of the Bologna Process.

The European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education (ESG) developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and its E4 partners (European Students' Union, European University Association and European Association of Institutions in Higher Education), are now being implemented in higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies. Their influence is spreading and they are gaining acceptance as a shared reference point for all actors in European higher education. They have also been adopted by the new European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) as appropriate criteria for the inclusion of quality assurance agencies.

The fundamental responsibility for quality rests within the higher education institutions. Internal quality assurance is a duty of the institution. The development of an effective "quality culture" is clearly linked with their degree of operational autonomy.

External quality assurance fulfils different needs: at its best it combines both accountability for the reassurance of the public by providing information about quality and standards as well as an objective and developmental commentary for institutions.

Because of their pervasiveness and importance, the effects of changes made due to the quality agenda within the Bologna Process need to be examined. Quality assurance and accreditation agencies have grown considerably in number and this trend may continue into the future if there are more subject-based accreditations. The current movement, however, appears to be towards quality audits and institutional level accreditations. Also the functions, objectives and priorities of agencies are diverse and changing. In this respect the principle of recognition of diversity in the approaches to quality assurance as the main principle of the European Standards and Guidelines has to be borne in mind.

There are new and developing areas affecting quality assurance in the EHEA. These include how to balance accountability and improvement within higher education institutions, on the one hand, and the shared responsibilities of higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies and policy-makers, on the other; how to make real the roles of different stakeholder groups (students, the business world, etc) and how to provide these groups with an adequate level of information; how to handle the increasing diversity across higher education (diversity of pedagogies, of institutions, of students, of expectations, of missions); how to react to the internationalisation of higher education, often in combination with growing commercialisation and competition; and how to prevent the bureaucracy and cost of quality assurance from growing.

What always needs to be borne in mind is that quality assurance mechanisms are not an end in themselves and that their ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of teaching and research. Quality assurance agencies act as a support for institutions in their continuing development and, equally, have a key role as protectors of the public interest.

The continuing construction of the European dimension of quality assurance still requires enhanced dialogue between higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies and governments, stakeholders and other users of the results of quality assurance, on their various expectations. To progress, it must also be recognised that different national requirements and objectives need different quality assurance tools and approaches. In order to give coordinated answers to collective European demands, quality assurance agencies should develop a capacity to understand the core of each others' missions and to jointly elaborate answers to the quality assurance challenges in the European Higher Education Area.

1.1.3. Recognition

Recognition of qualifications has been a cornerstone of the Bologna Process since its very beginning and the Lisbon Recognition Convention is the only legal document that the Bologna Process relies on at European level. It increasingly ensures that all learners are given fair academic recognition of their qualifications.

However, while clear progress has been made, there is a general perception that recognition practices are not yet coherent across the EHEA and that variations in programmes are too easily defined as substantial differences and thus as impediments to recognition.

Recognition in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention concerns academic recognition. But recognition is a wider topic. It is also used in relation to access to professions or in general for employment purposes. One cannot help but note that within the EU-27 context the internal market directives concerning the regulated professions base recognition of professional qualifications on factors, like programme duration. This input-oriented approach can hamper recognition of prior learning. Also the levels of qualifications differ from those of the EHEA, which, in contrast to the professional qualifications, are defined in terms of learning outcomes.

Within the EHEA the key point is to ensure that there is more transparency about how the Lisbon Recognition Convention is implemented, the processes involved and the criteria for decisions. Not least, there are still different "recognition cultures" throughout Europe. One of the biggest challenges we face is to develop a common understanding of the concept of qualifications and of possible substantial differences, i.e. how different qualifications may be without there being valid reasons for non-recognition. The existence of quality assurance mechanisms and the linking of degrees to national qualifications frameworks should also contribute to greater trust in issues of recognition.

Coherent recognition practices within a country and between countries should be ensured through cooperation between higher education institutions and the national ENIC/NARIC centres. This cooperation would also help higher education institutions to develop institutional guidelines and recommendations for recognition ensuring implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention across the institution. The quality of institutional recognition procedures should be included in the internal quality procedures of the higher education institutions and also in the external quality reviews.

Generally speaking the common degree structure and the qualifications framework, quality assurance and academic recognition are action lines that have led to structural reforms and to the institutionalization of the Bologna Process. It is worth recalling that the European register for quality assurance agencies, which is the very product of the Bologna Process, is a legal entity. The degree structure and the qualifications framework have direct implications on the governance of the various systems of higher education and the way participating countries organize them. At this stage there is no felt need for new measures or new rules at European level, but what is called for is a proper understanding and implementation of these action lines, especially at institutional level.

1.2 Policy areas

The social dimension, employability, lifelong learning, mobility and the Bologna Process in its global dimension are defined as policy areas in the sense that they define objectives that have not been translated into a regulatory framework.

1.2.1. Social dimension

The definition given to the social dimension is one that includes all provisions needed for having equitable access into, 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 is about justice to the individual as well as about making the best possible use of our societies' resources by allowing and encouraging every citizen to make the best possible use of their talents and capabilities.

The Bologna Process has increasingly heightened its policy attention on the social dimension. The key policy messages are:

- In a knowledge-society higher education is important to the development of successful economies by providing opportunities for all individuals to participate in and benefit from a successful economy;
- Equity and social justice define higher education, which becomes a driver for social cohesion and active citizenship.

The vision of higher education as contributing to social cohesion is part of the welfare state model. Education and more specifically higher education institutions contribute to 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 these higher education institutions have met their obligations of social cohesion in terms of groups defined by social background or relative disadvantage.

While participation rates vary considerably between European countries, measures to expand enrolments have not necessarily increased social equity. Inequalities remain large. The reasons given can be found both inside and outside the higher education sector. Higher education is part of a system where choices are made earlier on in a pupil's career. Efforts to achieve equity in higher education therefore have to be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system.. Barriers to equitable access within the higher education sector include the cost of participation, entry qualification requirements, a lack of flexible learning opportunities, limited availability of support services and an "institutional culture".

The key point is to improve access to higher education and the successful completion of first and

second cycle study programmes for all those who have the potential to benefit from higher education. This involves improving the learning environment and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels. Widening participation will also require making further progress towards ensuring flexible learning paths and introducing the necessary incentives to allow a diverse student population to participate in higher education.

The social dimension of higher education is not only related to the student body in the first and the second cycle. While there is now a consensus to consider doctoral candidates as early stage researchers, there is still a long way to go before they will be entitled to all commensurate social security and pension rights or equivalents, acknowledging their professional experience as researcher.

As the social dimension of higher education is a very wide topic, it requires integration of national policies on education with other policy areas.

Ministers should commit themselves to the continuation of collecting and developing sound data and indicators, also in view of possible future benchmarking, to facilitate monitoring of progress and evidence-based adjustments of policy-making towards a more inclusive higher education in Europe.

1.2.2. Employability

Employability has been defined as the empowerment of the individual student to seize opportunities on the labour market, i.e. to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market. It involves the acquisition of generic skills and competencies like analytical skills, communication skills, ethical awareness, the ability to assess risks in a longer time perspective as well as the capacity to reason at a level of abstraction and to learn further. The balance between knowledge on the one hand and transferable skills on the other hand is a delicate one since good professional knowledge and understanding remain the condition sine qua non for employment. The learning of generic skills entails the restructuring of whole curricula and it has a direct impact on the way scholars or teachers perceive their role, which differs from the one in which the teacher merely acts as a lecturer. It is thus not only a question of content but also of teaching methods. This new paradigm is changing the life of the university department and its impact needs to be further discussed and consequences drawn in institutions across Europe.

Given the ever more rapid changes in the labour market and in skills required, employability also refers to the updating of skills of those already in employment and therefore does not only concern recent graduates. Higher education institutions need to play an important role in continuing education and training and thus to further invest in lifelong learning.

Universities have always trained practitioners of law, medicine, theology and engineering; they have also been the training institutions for future civil servants and teachers. Experience with the Bologna reforms has shown that the introduction of the two cycles into the regulated professions proves challenging given the role of the professional bodies and the EU internal market legislation.

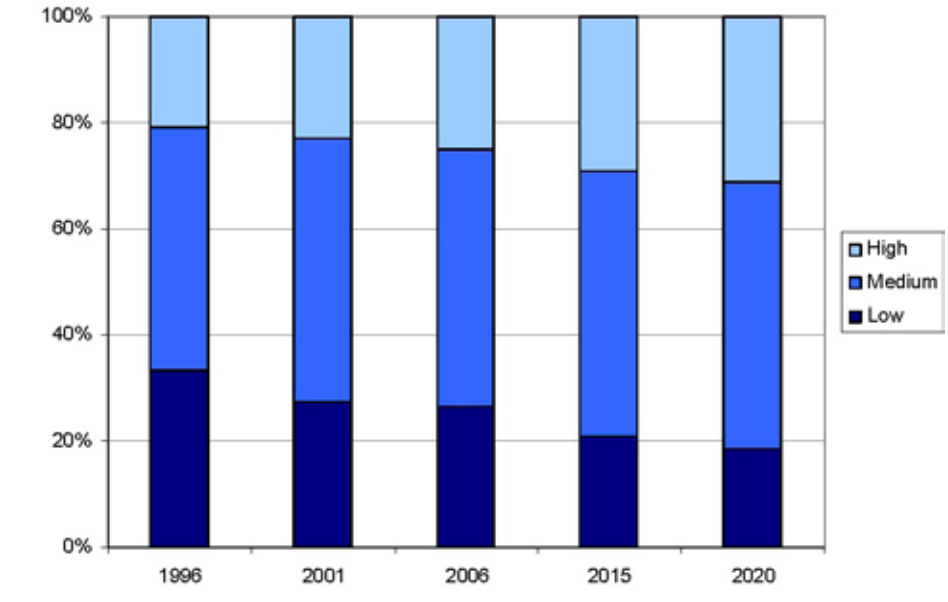
A new challenge for those systems with traditionally long first cycles is the design and implementation of bachelor programmes that prepare for the labour market. Experience hitherto suggests that in many countries the full potential of the first cycle degree is not yet fully developed and more awareness raising is needed.

The prevailing expectation still is that a specific diploma prepares for a specific job and that the longer the study programme the better the preparation for the job. This is short sighted and confuses the length of study and the level of a qualification with its quality. Qualifications at any level may be of good or less good quality. For some kinds of employment, a second or third cycle qualification may be required whereas for others a first cycle qualification will be well suited. In a changing economic environment degree holders must be capable of summoning knowledge and skills that make it possible for them to adapt to manifold situations. Employers in both the public and the private sector must be open to this perspective. Not least, public authorities – which have been a driving force in the important restructuring of European higher education qualifications – must be clear about the role of first cycle qualifications for employment in the public sector.

Moreover, if we turn to forecasting qualification needs of the labour market, admittedly a hazardous affair, the CEDEFOP forecast produced in 2008 predicts a relative increase in demand for highly qualified persons. This means that our economies need more graduates and the question is whether they are going to be ready for the jobs and whether their studies prepare them for the jobs available.

The key point is to design curricula and to foster teaching methods that promote the learning of competencies and skills that are needed in tomorrow's economy, including in the regulated professions. The employers' engagement in the design of curricula is a way of tuning programme provisions in such a way that they are relevant for the labour market. However, programme construction will still have to pay attention to the longer term needs of society for the provision of important centres of knowledge and research regardless of a more immediate context. Moreover, institutions of higher education contribute to the identification of competences and skills of relevance for the labour market. This is a delicate balance to strike, but nevertheless there is a need to encourage a more systematic dialogue between higher education institutions and employers.

Figure 1: Past and likely future qualification structure of jobs, shares in %, EU-25



Source: Cedefop, Skill Needs in Europe. Focus on 2020. Luxembourg, 2008, p. 12.

Figure 2: Relative importance (1= most important) employers, graduates and academics attach to a selection of generic competences

Employers	Graduates	Academics
n = 944	n = 5183	n = 998
1. Capacity to learn	2	3
2. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice	3	5
3. Capacity for analysis and synthesis	1	2
4. Capacity to adapt to new situations	5	7
5. Interpersonal skills	6	14
10. Elementary computing skills	4	16
12. Basic general knowledge	12	1

Source: Tuning Educational Structures/ Universities' contribution to the Bologna Process: An introduction (2007), pp. 38-39.

Moreover, the further promotion of the new degree structure among employers, especially among small and medium sized enterprises, is an urgent short term task. The public sectors, too, need to set the standards by adjusting their career structures to the new Bologna degree structure. Raising awareness of the value of the Bachelor degree is not only important for the employers but also for students, parents, academics/professors and higher educations institutions themselves.

Giving information, advice and guidance for students at the end of their study period and for potential students about future careers and employment opportunities is fundamental. The responsibility for the provision of advice and guidance should be strengthened within the higher education institutions. Governments/government agencies and employers should -together with higher education institutions- improve the accessibility and quality of their employment–related service to the students.

Employability is not restricted to the first two cycles. In carrying out their central role in the training of researchers universities increasingly have to face the challenges of a changing labour market for young researchers and need to prepare them for a wider variety of careers than in the past i.e. not only in the academic environment, but also in industry, non-profit organisations, private companies, private and public independent research centres.

1.2.3. Lifelong Learning

Goals like the social dimension and employability can only be reached if they are set within a perspective of lifelong learning. The concept of lifelong learning is a broad one where education that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and places is pursued throughout life.

Change and uncertainty are often seen as defining characteristics of the contemporary world. Lifelong learning is about empowering citizens to address the different forms of change - economic, cultural, technological and demographic – in a positive manner by allowing them to move in and out of higher education throughout their lives for different purposes. Lifelong learning puts emphasis on the need to become a "learning society" and lends support to the need for both economic competitiveness and social cohesion.

Lifelong learning is a multifaceted concept, which may involve climbing higher up the qualifications ladder, extending knowledge, gaining new skills and competences, upon the recognition of

prior learning or simply pursuing learning to enrich one's personal growth. Lifelong learning has become a policy goal for supporting economic growth, social cohesion and personal development. In this sense it is a policy to increase participation in higher education, also for those who have not traditionally been previously involved in higher education.

The key point is that if lifelong learning is to succeed it must be rooted in a social and economic climate in which learning is valued, used and rewarded and in which it is accepted that a given qualification may be obtained through different learning paths. This amounts to a cultural change. The more fundamental structural issues to face are in terms of building the kind of seamless robe of provision required for a system of lifelong learning with alternations of learning and working periods and with study programmes based on student centred learning. Lifelong learning therefore needs to be integrated into individual institutional strategies and to be mainstreamed.

Lifelong learning is part of the education system and a fundamental tool for both social development and economic growth. The systems and modes of provision for lifelong learning obey the fundamental principles of education as a public good and a public responsibility.

In the context of lifelong learning it is necessary to relate further education qualifications to the three cycle Bologna degree structure and to provide information on their value in a transparent way.

1.2.4. The attractiveness of European higher education

The Bologna Process clearly impacts on how higher education in Europe relates to higher education in other parts of the world. 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.

There seems to be a clear trend towards an increase in promotion activities at all levels (institutional, national and European) but those activities are unevenly developed across the EHEA and, especially concerning institutional promotion activities, a systematic overview is missing. At national level, a growing number of promotion activities/ campaigns can be found, specific agencies are set up or mandated for this purpose, and the implementation of the Bologna Process is used to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of the national systems. However, the focus of these activities lies on the individual systems as part of the EHEA and not on the EHEA as such. A major challenge for future promotion activities at European level will be to ensure that they are sustainable and cover the entire European Higher Education Area.

The attractiveness of the EHEA is based on its striving for excellence and its openness; it hinges on a number of conditions, among which the following ones feature prominently and could encourage international students and academics to work/study in Europe.

The EHEA must be:

- an attractive place for study and research;
- an attractive labour market for academics and professionals through the quality of the experience and clearly defined career paths;
- an attractive area preserving its rich and diverse cultural heritage in terms of languages, institutional cultures, curricula, and teaching and learning styles;
- an attractive higher education area because of the connection between teaching and research.

The external dimension of the Bologna Process is also about positioning the EHEA in the global world of higher education. By 2020, the role competition plays in higher education will have grown substantially on account of the increase in investments and in innovation in many parts of the world. There is talk of an international race in terms of investments in research and in innovation given their strategic importance for economic development and competitiveness. The EHEA will have to position itself vis-à-vis its competitors, and the EHEA should aim at becoming the most creative and innovative region in a global setting.

As the Bologna Process developed, a growing interest in both the Process as such and the emerging European Higher Education Area could be noted worldwide and it has become increasingly clear that the Bologna Process needs to react to this growing interest. While changing the criteria for membership or defining different categories for countries that expressed interest but are not eligible for membership do not seem feasible solutions, the EHEA is not and should not appear as "fortress Europe". The Bologna Process recognizes and appreciates the importance of the significant number of countries that have chosen to align their higher education systems with "Bologna". The Bologna Process will engage in policy discussions and projects with other countries and regions on the basis of its acquis of its good practice. Cooperation with other countries will focus on content and be carried out in a spirit of mutual respect.

The key point thus is to provide information on the EHEA specifically targeted at countries outside the EHEA through, among others, an appropriate EHEA-website and to facilitate coordinated information visits to and from countries outside the EHEA.

As agreed at the ministerial meeting in Berlin, the geographical scope and overall criteria for determining membership of the Bologna Process are being party to the European Cultural Convention and a commitment to pursuing and implementing the objectives of the Bologna Process in the national systems.

Policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership are crucial to the further development of the Bologna Process and its global standing. The present criteria for membership of the Bologna Process are effective and should be kept. At the same time, opportunities have to be developed at the level of national and regional government agencies, higher education institutions, higher education institution representative bodies and higher education organisations, in order to foster mutual understanding and learning, and to lay the ground for wider sustainable cooperation.

To further dialogue and cooperation with countries in other parts of the world, the following forms of cooperation will be developed:

- Balanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation based on partnership, e.g. in the framework of relevant EU programmes and projects, should be enhanced and intensified with partners across the world;
- Bologna policy fora;

  involving participants at ministerial, stakeholder and/or civil servant level, from EHEA countries and countries that are not party to the European Cultural Convention;

  fostering policy dialogue on specific topics (such as mobility, quality assurance, recognition, student involvement, governance etc.) or on higher education reforms in general; and making full use of existing EU and UNESCO initiatives;
- Inviting stakeholders from countries that are not party to the European Cultural Convention to Bologna-related conferences, seminars and other events and to contribute to projects and initiatives as part of the BFUG work programme, where appropriate;
- Contribution by the BFUG to relevant projects and activities in other regions.

It is crucial that at European and at national level, funding instruments are available that allow to establish solid, multilayered and sustainable cooperation initiatives, complemented through

interregional higher education policy dialogue driven by stakeholders, such as higher education and student associations.

1.2.5. Mobility

Mobility is one of the fundamentals of European cooperation and it has been a dominant issue in the rationales of the various communiqués of the Bologna Process. Indeed, apart from the economic value of creating a mobile labour force, student, early stage researcher and staff mobility also has a cultural value enhancing mutual understanding between countries and regions as well as personal fulfilment. Mobility also has academic and scientific benefits for both the institutions and the individual researchers. Mobility has much to do with the internationalisation of the system and the institutions and it finds its corollaries in multinational faculty and in international curricula. However, progress in this area does not seem to match the initial expectations.

The original expectation was that the creation of a single space of education would give mobility a further boost. This does not seem to have happened yet. With regard to intra-European short-term programme mobility (Erasmus type mobility) the introduction of a two-tier degree system is sometimes pointed at as an obstacle to student mobility. It is therefore recommended that stronger curricular efforts are made to devise study programmes with adequate workload and to integrate opportunities for mobility in the structure of all programmes.

With regard to intra-European degree mobility, the positive expectations have remained in place. The existence of one and the same degree structure should make mobility from one country to another easier. Nevertheless, it is important to further enhance degree mobility, in other words to encourage more students to be mobile for the entire duration of a programme (be that at bachelor or master level) and more early stage researchers to do their PhD abroad, not least as an element of international competitiveness and as an element of developing the European dimension.

There is a growing emphasis on student mobility from other parts of the world. Promotional activities and recruitment of international students is a growing priority for many higher education institutions. Growing proportions of mobile students from other parts of the world will impact on issues of quality, curricular change and language of instruction to accommodate their needs and expectations.

In this context, immigration issues cannot be ignored as they define the relationships between the two groups of countries of the Bologna Process - those who are members of the European Union and those who are not – and their respective relationships to countries in other parts of the world. To foster more balanced mobility across the entire European Higher Education Area it is recommended that special provisions are made for higher education staff, early stage researchers and students, allowing them (and their families) to get visas and work permits relatively easily. Entry requirements into a country should reflect the openness of the EHEA.

As full programme mobility could increase emigration and brain drain from some countries, further discussions and new arrangements are needed to address this issue.

When promoting increased mobility and international recruitment of academic staff., issues of careers, social benefits, job security and pensions also need to be taken into account

Given the important role teachers and administrative staff play in promoting student mobility, higher education institutions should recognise, both in terms of career advancement and teaching load, the work done by members of staff who are responsible for student mobility or who are mobile themselves.

An analysis of the composition of the student body experiencing mobility periods abroad points to an imbalance of representation by socio-economic background. More efforts are therefore needed to widen participation in mobility. Better information, guidance, and counselling are crucial in this regard. Moreover, students at all levels should be given the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages. To address the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, also taking into account the effects of lifelong learning, a rethinking of mobility programmes is necessary to diversify both the types and the scope of mobility.

Substantial progress also still needs to be made to achieve transparent and fair recognition of qualifications as well as credit transfer on the basis of learning outcomes and according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Last but not least, it is necessary to increase and diversify the funding available for mobility at all levels (institutional, national, regional and European) and to make grants and loans portable. The Expert Network sharing experience and data, facilitating the implementation of portable grants and loans should be continued and extended to include a larger number of Bologna countries.

Mobility remains one of the key issues to be further developed under the Bologna beyond 2010 agenda and a firm commitment is needed at European, national and institutional level to finally create mobility opportunities for all. For this purpose, national action plans for large-scale mobility - with clear benchmarks for inward and outward mobility - should be developed and included in any future stocktaking exercise. As a mid-term objective, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA in 2020 should have been mobile during their studies. Data collection will help monitor developments in this field and should provide a better view of (a) mobility flows and (b) the funding available to support mobility. Where measures to increase mobility interact with other areas of policy-making (e.g. immigration), liaison with experts from those policy areas should be sought.

1.3 Curriculum and learning outcomes

The 2007 stocktaking report pointed out that while there had been progress on specific action lines and indicators, it was not enough to look at these in isolation because all aspects of the Bologna Process are interdependent. It was suggested that there are two themes that link all action lines: a focus on learners, and a focus on learning outcomes. The London Communiqué clearly signalled that a significant outcome of the Bologna Process is "the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning" and indicated that the 2009 Stocktaking exercise should "address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning." The endorsement of learning outcomes by the Ministers was a significant development, since the 2007 stocktaking report identified implementation of learning outcomes as a precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010. It remains equally true in 2009 that learning outcomes are central to the development of qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance.

In effect, the success of the Bologna Process depends on the comprehensive implementation of a learning outcomes approach in higher education. Learning outcomes are the common language that is used in the Dublin descriptors which are the basis of the three-cycle degree system. They also feature in the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA to which national frameworks are being aligned. They are an essential ingredient in quality assurance systems and in ECTS-compliant procedures for credit accumulation and transfer. They make transparency and recognition of qualifications more easily manageable. In short, learning outcomes encapsulate a learner-centred approach and shift the focus in higher education away from the traditional teacher-centred or institution-centred perspective.

To implement national qualifications frameworks with an understanding of and according to the same interpretation of the overarching European framework, a common methodology based on learning outcomes (i.e. knowledge, skills and competencies descriptors), as well as a common approach to their self-certification is required.

While learning outcomes have been generically defined for the degree structure, the "Dublin descriptors", the key point is to further develop descriptors for subject specific knowledge, skills and competences. Since the start of the Bologna Process, higher education institutions and their academics have taken up the challenge to develop international descriptors and reference points for a growing number of subject areas. Initiatives in this direction - like the Tuning Project and thematic networks- are welcomed and need further encouragement. The further development of such descriptors should take place with due consideration of the diversity of programmes in Europe as well as of institutional, methodological, didactical and academic autonomy.

The establishment of too detailed subject specific descriptors could hinder the development of interdisciplinarity, which may be considered as a possible academic response to the challenges of the 21st century. There is a tension between the principle of programme diversity and convergence of programmes through the introduction of shared subject descriptors. In practice however, shared subject descriptors are only to be seen as indicative for a kind of core curriculum, leaving still plenty of freedom for programme diversity.

Common reference points could also be developed for an entire sector, which might lead to the definition of sectoral descriptors and the establishment of sectoral qualifications frameworks. If sectoral descriptors were to be developed it must be done in such a way that they relate to the national and existing European frameworks.

Chapter 2

Bologna 2020: Challenges for the EHEA

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 vision 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 set against a background of new challenges in order for relevant operational objectives to be defined.

The European Higher Education Area is facing the twin challenges of globalisation and demographics. The Bologna Process cannot be viewed in isolation from global processes – it is the response of European higher education to global integration and to the expansion in the provision of Higher Education; it needs to address the accompanying financial resource challenge.

2.1 Globalisation: competitiveness and cooperation

2.1.1. Global competitiveness

The demographic changes with an ageing population in Europe and with an increasing population in other regions of the world, the ensuing huge increase in the world-wide demand for higher education, the budgetary and capacity problems of many countries to meet this demand, coupled with opportunities created by new communication technologies and the Internet, shape an environment in which the traditional higher education institutions have had to seek new responses to these challenges and in which new providers can successfully expand the supply of educational services.

The European Union's higher education modernisation agenda has already identified some of the key issues which need to be addressed if higher education in Europe is to adapt effectively to the needs of globalisation. Increasing autonomy for institutions, more effective working with business and employers, qualifications matched to employment needs, adopting alternative funding mechanisms and developing university leadership are the key areas. Moreover a closer link between education and research is needed if European higher education is to retain its broad research basis.

As a response to the changing environment, there has been a continuing move towards a diversification of higher education provision. This diversification is not only observed in the missions and profiles of higher education institutions, but also in the forms of delivery. 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 are likely to remain the most important form of provision but in the future, this traditional approach will face increasing competition and challenges from a range of other forms. Therefore, the conceptualisation and design of new forms of provision based on and exploiting modern-day information and communication technology (ICT) represents yet another imminent challenge.

One of the most visible manifestations of globalisation is the emerging "borderless" higher education market. Universities from North America, Europe and Australia take initiatives to widen their appeal and attractiveness and tap into this so-called international higher education market. They do so by actively recruiting international, mostly fee-paying students, by establishing branch campuses or franchising and seeking 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 pressure of these global market dynamics urges European higher education institutions to gradually adopt an approach increasingly informed by a marked entrepreneurial spirit. Today's higher education institutions find themselves juggling new roles and expectations with traditional identities and conceptions. In a most delicate balancing act they have to seek to reconcile academic traditions and identities with new expectations and demands from society. Research results might, for example, be used as a means to increase income; on another level the funding of research through research projects could potentially endanger the autonomy of the researchers in the sense that tenure is no longer guaranteed since it is dependent on revenue from projects. Such quandaries call for open-minded, creative and innovative solutions. Repositioning of the universities and the pursuit of a gradually more enterprise-minded approach will accentuate the vital role of European universities in the knowledge triangle of research, education and innovation, which permeates a knowledge-intensive society.

Europe's answer to the ever more competitive global educational sphere ought to unequivocally highlight the numerous benefits of a dynamic European Higher Education Area. Deeply entrenched in the traditional yet open-minded unity and symbiosis between teaching and learning the latest research findings shall inform and drive teaching and learning at European universities. The quality of European higher education shall become a characteristic of the Bologna Process. The EHEA shall boast a diversified catalogue of easily readable degrees and comparable degrees (described by the Diploma Supplement), a thorough implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, it shall champion the promotion of mobility, European cooperation in quality assurance and an overarching European dimension in higher education in general. The EHEA rests on these vital pillars, which allow universities to continuously strive for innovation on the basis of their traditions.

The key point is to reassert the unity between teaching and research and to stress the fact that a distinguishing characteristic of European higher education is to base teaching and learning on the latest research findings. It should be noted that in a context in which the new models of open innovation and technology management are non linear and user-driven many types of research occur. By teaching research methodologies as part of the curriculum from early on, institutions of higher education will contribute to educating creative graduates able to function in the knowledge society and to rely on skills to deal with continuously changing technologies.

Furthermore the key issue is to design new forms of provision of good quality education compatible with the ICT age and in line with the demands of an interdisciplinary approach.

Finally, we have to take up the challenges posed by global competition both by improving the financial conditions of our higher education institutions and by ensuring that the quality of their offers is internationally acknowledged.

2.1.2. International cooperation

At a European and at an international level, the necessity to be competitive is not the only mover. Competition and cooperation are not mutually exclusive, they are corollaries.

The pursuit of knowledge is a global enterprise and it is founded upon cooperation among academics. The resources needed for knowledge production are such that they can rarely be found within a single institution. Effective generation of new knowledge is increasingly based on complementary division of labour between various institutions, but also between industry and academia. Collaborative research and knowledge production can successfully take place in both a legal and non-legal framework with partners themselves agreeing on legal constraints involving patents and publishing rights if required.

Cooperation is needed for the advancement of science. Global problems are such that they cannot be solved by the methodology or the knowledge gained in one science alone. The most interesting debates often take place at the fringes of scientific fields or at the crossroads of sciences. The European Higher Education Area is rich in academic fields and boasts an unparalleled diversity of cultures and traditions. Linking these disciplines in order to maximise students' benefits should be an overarching goal. Interdisciplinarity reflects Europe's diversity and it is crucially needed to address new investigations which are required by scientific developments in society, for example in bio-ethics, or by research opening up new fields at the crossroads of subject areas. Interdisciplinary approaches empower students to address an issue from a wider range of perspectives, to ease communication across disciplines, to better grasp an ever-complex reality.

Moreover, higher education is a means of cooperating with other parts of the world. It is about strengthening North-South and East-West cooperation and working towards a globally engaged European higher education sector. The economic effect of globalisation leading to the creation of wealth is increasingly linked up with a capacity to handle differences and diversity.

At the same time our societies are faced with a number of challenges requiring that their members have the intellectual ability to analyze problems, 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 negotiation 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 as well as short term gain and long term benefits.

Higher education institutions can play a special role in this context. They are particular places for debating fundamental issues and they, therefore, should develop:

- intercultural competencies;
- understanding of different societies, their traditions, cultures and beliefs in Europe and beyond;
- an ability to reason ethically;
- responsible citizenship.

The key point is to encourage international collaboration between institutions and to boost the emergence of new scientific fields at the crossroads of traditional disciplines so that the global problems can be properly addressed. This will require the introduction of new rewards systems in the researchers' careers as well as intensified global cooperation among scientists.

Moreover, curricula should help students to attain knowledge and develop skills and habits of mind to be able to reflect on their own beliefs and the choices they make; they should be aware and critical of their own assumptions and beliefs and engage open-mindedly with different cultural forms and historical moments.

2.2. Demography

European 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. In the years until 2020, there will be a reduction of 10% among the overall European youth generation between 15 and 29 years of age. In the same period technological changes will be even more pervasive and global competition will increase, not least the competition for talented people. Against this background, the central questions are how we secure enough professionals as well as how we develop a civic culture that will include and preserve a measure of solidarity between generations. The ageing population requires a lifelong learning agenda and a reflection of how to meet the active student's need of new knowledge related to the issues of the 21st century.

European higher education has experienced "massification" during the last quarter of the previous century, without, however, giving fair access to learners from culturally and economically less privileged backgrounds. Our capacity to address the societal issues of the 21st century, be they related to energy, climate change or social cohesion, could better be met if higher education institutions manage to tap into intellectual potential which has hitherto been neglected.

Lifelong learning is a way of addressing this issue. In an ageing population, advanced education for professionals is of paramount importance if they want to remain creative and innovative within their field or move to another one.

Lifelong learning and the implementation of the social dimension of the Bologna Process are ways of offsetting the implications of an ageing population on the capacity to remain creative and innovative in a knowledge society.

The key issue, therefore, is to design the lifelong learning agenda in such a way that it can meet the challenges posed by an ageing population. Widening access and diversifying the body of learners are objectives that are met through the implementation of student centred learning and through flexible learning paths connected to qualifications frameworks and to recognition of prior learning.

This will entail a mainstreaming of lifelong learning in institutions of higher education.

Furthermore, the implementation of lifelong learning to meet the demographic challenge has an impact on mobility. Mature students are less likely to engage in mobility schemes for personal or family reasons. The same situation applies to part-time students who will have to combine work and study. Mobility will have to be conceived of differently to meet the demands of an ageing population, which should not be excluded from mobility schemes.

2.3. Issues arising out of globalisation and demography

As has been hinted at in the preceding paragraphs the combined challenges of globalisation and demographics tend to redefine the relationships that exist between higher education institutions and the State both at micro and at macro level. The higher education institutions need to have the necessary autonomy so that they can respond to these challenges adequately. However, this changing environment has given rise to market forces intervening within the world of higher education and has thus led to a rethinking of the role of the State. Moreover, the response of higher education to these societal trends has been one of diversification. Finally, with expanding

higher education and with more demands being placed on higher education institutions to be relevant for society the financing of higher education needs to be seen in a new light.

The following paragraphs will deal with these points separately.

2.3.1. Roles and responsibilities

It is worth recalling that the modern university was put at the disposal of the nation-state. One of the main functions of the university was to train future civil servants, which led to the nineteenth century nation building mission of the university. However, there is now a growing disentanglement in the relationship between institutions of higher education and the State. Moreover, the sole responsibility of the nation state has been nuanced by greater Community action within the European Union. Roles and responsibilities are thus undergoing change.

The Bologna Process 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 arm's length and creating a new relationship between higher education institutions and the state. The reform process leading to greater institutional autonomy has been accompanied by a growth in the expectations of society towards higher education institutions and has taken place in an environment of structural changes in the economy and was for some time and is now again accompanied by a serious economic crisis. At the same time, the instrumentality of system steering through evaluating institutional performance, efficiency and achievement has been developed.

At the European level, a growing "contractualisation" of relationships is expected and at the same time there will be an increasing penetration of international conventions and declarations into legal systems or into the governance of higher education. Institutional autonomy is placed within this increasing number of interacting and overlapping layers of governance. Political goals and strategies, economic considerations as well as an evolving body of good practice will increasingly supplement legal provisions in setting the framework within which institutional autonomy is exercised.

The Council of Europe Recommendation on public responsibility adopted by the Council's Committee of Ministers suggests that the responsibility of public authorities for higher education and research should be nuanced and defined relative to specific areas. The text broadly recommends that public authorities have:

- exclusive responsibility for the framework within which higher education and research is conducted;
- leading responsibility for ensuring effective equal opportunities to higher education for all citizens, as well as ensuring that basic research remains a public good;
- substantial responsibility for financing higher education and research, the provision of higher education and research, as well as for stimulating and facilitating financing and provision by other sources within the framework developed by public authorities.

The state is thus less seen as a regulator, but rather as a catalyst, next to being the main funder, though there is much variation across Europe.

While market forces clearly play a role in determining the kind of higher education that is globally developed and offered, public authorities thus have a crucial role in ensuring that higher education can also meet its manifold objectives.

2.3.2. Institutional diversity

The more autonomous higher education institutions have become over recent years, the more demands have been placed on them to be relevant for society in different ways. This in turn has led the institutions to define specific profiles and priorities and to decide on their own missions. The latter certainly include economic ones, but also roles in relation to social equity, social mobility, social cohesion, citizenship, cultural engagement. All these form the various potential "public goods" of higher education. Being relevant to society has thus led to profiles and mission statements focusing on local, national, regional and international needs. At the same time the need for Europe to maintain its research competitiveness has contributed to the profiling of research intensive universities with a certain critical mass whose aim also is to maintain global reputations. This trend will lead to a few highly competitive research universities. This diversity, though not well understood, is necessary to ensure that societal expectations of higher education institutions are met.

Global competition in higher education brings with it international league tables, rankings, benchmarks and other comparisons of the performance of higher education institutions. These international league tables focus on the research capacity of the institution and thus invite the creation of new groupings whose reference points will be the need to maintain global reputations rather than to contribute to national or local needs.

However, as we have seen, the demands placed upon higher education institutions in a context of greater autonomy, have led those same institutions to further differentiate themselves and to show considerable variation in mission and ambition. Moreover, amidst this variety of specific missions and profiles, there is a growing discourse on "parity of esteem" no matter what the profile or the priorities of the higher education institutions are. A European response should be developed to support this diversity and make it transparent. Excellence must be pursued at all levels of higher education in order to properly address the challenges of future. The public policies should stimulate this development by recognition of the value of various missions of higher education, ranging from teaching and research to community service and engagement in social cohesion and cultural development. The objective should be to support institutions of higher education in such a way that they are capable of achieving excellence in those areas where they show/prove their major strengths. By this framework institutions should be allowed to set their own targets built on their attractiveness and reputation.

The next phase of the Bologna Process should therefore consist of contributing to the monitoring of new instruments developed inter alia by international institutions and designed to point out the strengths of higher education institutions with diverse mission statements, to address diversity and make it readable and understandable. The tools used for this differentiation of institutions would be the development of relevant multidimensional transparency instruments conveying information based on a sound methodology, full involvement of all stakeholders and the acknowledgement of diverse policy contexts. Diversification should become clearer and more visible and should not entail ranking in the traditional sense of the term. Moreover, all transparency instruments should help to further support the differentiation process so that excellence can be promoted in relation to a broad range of different missions.

2.3.3. Funding

The demands put on higher education in both their teaching and research missions are growing rapidly. The lifelong learning agenda, widening participation rates, an increasingly costly research infrastructure due to advances in the field of technology and tougher quality requirements raise the question of how to fund the higher education institutions if they are to meet these challenges.

Generally speaking, the funding of higher education in many countries takes place by means of allocating grants to higher education providers. In the past the main criteria to determine the amount of funding allocated to each institution by the State have been based on input. There has been a change over the last years from input funding to output criteria, through the introduction of output criteria in the calculation of funding and through the use of instruments such as performance-based funding and contract funding.

Furthermore, the sources of funding have been shifted with the introduction of cost sharing in higher education, mostly associated with the introduction of tuition fees to cover part of the costs of instruction.

Future debates about the funding of higher education will continue to engage both the allocation of costs and also the legitimacy of those costs but also the efficiency of higher education funding. There will continue to be pressures to find new revenues since in most countries tax revenues are already stretched. Certainly changes in tax policy encouraging private philanthropy would be a step forward.

Moreover, from 2001 to 2005, annual public expenditure on tertiary education increased at the same pace as GDP in most Bologna countries. However, a look at the annual expenditure per full time student across the Bologna countries shows that a "typical" Bologna country spent Đ 8 300 PPS (Purchasing Power Standards) per full time equivalent student in 2005, of which nearly 30% was devoted to R&D and ancillary services. Bologna countries are increasingly investing in R&D and ancillary services while expenditure on core educational goods and services increase at a lower rate. A comparison with the US shows that in the US spending on core educational goods and services per student is twice as high as in most Bologna countries[2].

The key issue is to encourage further discussion and sharing of good practice in relation to accessing diverse sources of funding, recognising that in practice very few countries are going to be able to provide sufficient public funds to fund all the higher education provision they would like. A diversification of funding mechanisms does not mean, though, that higher education ceases to be a public responsibility. The responsibility of public authorities is not limited to providing direct funding. It includes laying down the rules under which alternative funding may be sought and provided thus acknowledging that European higher education needs sustainable funding.

Furthermore, core educational goods and services require further financing.

[2] Eurostat & Eurostudent (eds), The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe. Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility, 2009.

Chapter 3

Follow-up structure

The first two chapters of this report have outlined the possible content of future Bologna Process cooperation. This third chapter will deal with the follow-up structure needed to support this cooperation, as requested by Ministers at their meeting in London:

"We ask BFUG as a whole to consider further how the EHEA might develop after 2010 and to report back to the next ministerial meeting in 2009. This should include proposals for appropriate support structures, bearing in mind that the current informal collaborative arrangements are working well and have brought about unprecedented change."

(London Communiqué, paragraph 4.3)

3.1. Present support structures

Since 1999, Ministers have met every two years to assess progress made and to decide on new steps to be taken. The follow-up structure supporting the process in-between those ministerial meetings has emerged gradually; the arrangement as it exists now, was agreed upon by Ministers at their meeting in 2003 in Berlin.

"Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a Follow-up Group, which shall be composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES as consultative members. This group, which should be convened at least twice a year, shall be chaired by the EU Presidency, with the host country of the next Ministerial Conference as vice-chair.

A Board also chaired by the EU Presidency shall oversee the work between the meetings of the Follow-up Group. The Board will be composed of the chair, the next host country as vice-chair, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies, three participating countries elected by the Follow-up Group for one year, the European Commission and, as consultative members, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. The Follow-up Group as well as the Board may convene ad hoc working groups as they deem necessary.

The overall follow-up work will be supported by a Secretariat which the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference will provide.

In its first meeting after the Berlin Conference, the Follow-up Group is asked to further define the responsibilities of the Board and the tasks of the Secretariat."

The BFUG in Rome on 14 November 2003 reacted to this request by Ministers and further defined the responsibilities of Board and Secretariat.

In 2005, Education International Pan-European structure (EI), ENQA and UNICE (now BUSINESSEUROPE) were accepted as additional consultative members of the Bologna Follow-up Group.

The main **advantage** of the Bologna Process and the present support structures is that they enable the key stakeholders to work together as partners. The present arrangement creates a sense of collective ownership among ministers (and ministries) as well as higher education institutions, students and staff based on informal cooperation and partnership.

EUA, EURASHE, ESU, Education International, ENQA and BUSINESSEUROPE, together with the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES, have greatly contributed to the process of policy formulation and also play an important role in facilitating the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms.

Another element of the present support structures that is often mentioned as a strength (not least in the London Communiqué) is their relatively informal character, which further increases the sense of engagement and ownership among all participants.

In terms of **membership**, the Bologna Process currently has two categories: members (the 46 countries and the European Commission) and consultative members. To become a member of the Bologna Process, countries have to be party of the European Cultural Convention and to declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education.

BFUG introduced the additional category of "BFUG partner" for organisations that wished to be involved more closely with the Bologna Process but were not interested in or not eligible for consultative membership.

Ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process meet on a regular basis (currently every two years) to assess progress made, to decide on new steps to be taken and to set priorities for the period leading to the following **ministerial conference**. These meetings play an important role in overseeing the implementation and maintaining the momentum of the process but also allow Ministers to react to new challenges. The communiqués and reports endorsed by the ministers are the political guidance for work between the ministerial conferences.

The Bologna Process is currently **chaired by** the country holding the EU Presidency, which rotates every six months. This means the EU Presidency country chairs and usually also hosts the meetings of Bologna Follow-up Group and Board, oversees the work in-between those meetings and represents the Bologna Follow-up Group at international events. In the interest of the continuity between the ministerial conferences the vice chair to the BFUG comes from the hosting country.

The Bologna Follow-up Group **(BFUG)** oversees the Bologna Process between the ministerial meetings and meets at least once every six months, usually for one-and-a-half days. The BFUG has the possibility to set up working groups to deal with specific topics in more detail and also receives input from Bologna Seminars.

The **Board**, as defined by the Berlin Communiqué normally meets once before each BFUG meeting to assist Chair and Secretariat with preparing the BFUG agenda and other meeting documents.

The central task of the **Bologna Secretariat** is to support the work of the Bologna Follow-up Group at four levels: BFUG, Board, working group, seminar. The Secretariat prepares draft agendas, drafts reports, notes and minutes and carries out the practical preparation for meetings as requested by the Chair. It is also at the disposal of the Chair to assist it in its tasks of finding compromise solutions, coordinating work and summing up situations. While the Chair of the Bologna Process rotates every six months, the Secretariat provides continuity in proceedings.

Another task of the Secretariat that has become increasingly important is to provide up-to-date and reliable information about the Bologna Process (for both a European and a non-European audience) and to maintain an electronic archive. To fulfil those functions, the Secretariat makes use of the Bologna website as central tool.

Finally, the Bologna Secretariat is asked to prepare the following ministerial conference. Up to now, the Bologna Secretariat has been provided by the country/countries hosting the following ministerial meeting, which led to a full rotation every two years. Seconding national experts has been a possibility that so far has not been used.

3.2. Support structures beyond 2010

The support structures are deemed to have been working efficiently and effectively over the years. One of the main advantages is that the threat of over bureaucratization has been successfully avoided. The structures in place are light ones and the Secretariat changes on a regular basis. Besides, with its "unbureaucratic" touch, the Bologna Process has managed to create a sense of ownership among its members through the incitement to contribute to specific policy areas, for the good of the EHEA. It is, therefore, suggested that they be modified only slightly.

The chair of the Bologna Follow-up group should also in future be linked to the rotating EU presidency while a twinning arrangement with a non-EU country should be sought. The question of how to define the non-EU country co-chairing BFUG should be further explored.

The Board should be maintained, but its terms of reference should be updated to turn it into an advisory committee for the Chair and the Secretariat to prepare BFUG meetings. The rules for its composition should remain unchanged, although a good balance between EU and non-EU countries should be sought.

The Secretariat should be a rotating Secretariat linked to the next host country(ies). It should preferentially be internationally composed. The issue of continuity from one Secretariat to the next needs exploring.

A permanent website will be established with a country-neutral name and will be managed by the Secretariat from July 2010 onwards.

In order to interact with other policy areas, BFUG will liaise with experts and policy makers from other fields, like research, immigration, social security and employment.

The next ministerial conference will be organized in 2010 jointly by Austria and Hungary. The Benelux countries will provide the Bologna Secretariat until 1 July 2010, with national experts from Austria and Hungary being seconded to the secretariat in Brussels.

The following ministerial conferences will be held in 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2020.

Chapter 4

Conclusions and priorities for "beyond 2010"

Since it was originally agreed upon in 1999, the Bologna Process has led to the modernization of European higher education by building upon and strengthening Europe's intellectual, scientific and cultural dimension. The Bologna Process has brought about a considerable degree of change within European higher education by achieving greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education. Major reforms in the structure of higher education have been made with the adoption of a three cycle-structure, including within national context the possibility of intermediate qualifications; quality assurance guidelines have been developed, a European register for quality assurance agencies has been created, and an agreement has been reached at European level on appropriate qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes.

The Bologna Process has managed to instil European higher education with a permanent sense of cooperation by encouraging and increasing dialogue between different stakeholders, governments, higher education institutions and others. There has been strong adherence to the principles of promoting compatibility and comparability as well as respecting diversity. Through the Bologna Process European higher education has acquired a world-wide degree of attraction. At the same time, the process has generally avoided creating additional bureaucracy.

Full implementation of these principles and objectives, which are adhered to, will still require continual momentum after 2010. Co-operation within the Bologna Process will continue to support and monitor the achievement of the initial objectives of the Bologna Declaration with a view to creating a European Higher Education Area of high quality. The modernisation of European higher education will be pursued and it will rest upon increased institutional autonomy, quality assurance and accountability, as well as sustainable funding.

4.1. The pursuit of excellence in all aspects of higher education

In the years up to 2020, the major challenges identified are those of globalisation and demography. European higher education will respond adequately through its contribution to building the European knowledge society and to making it a cohesive society. European higher education will continue to be a public responsibility and a public good.

Institutions of higher education are vital sources of new knowledge and essential contributors to innovation. Within a framework of public responsibility, they act as providers of personnel educated and trained in both general and specific skills necessary to the well-being of society. In their engagement with the community, institutions of higher education attract international talent and business to a region, but they also contribute to the social and cultural vitality of that particular region. Excellence must thus be pursued at all levels of the institutions of higher education, in teaching and research as well as in innovation and community engagement. The connection between teaching and research will remain a defining characteristic of European higher education.

The overarching aim of the Bologna Process beyond 2010, therefore, is to equip institutions of higher education in such a way that they may achieve excellence in those areas that are most relevant to their specific mission and profile. The European Higher Education Area will become a highly creative and innovative region as well as an attractive global partner in the advent of a global knowledge society.

4.2. Social dimension

Equitable access into, successful progress and completion of higher education for the whole spectrum of the population in their various walks of life and age groups call for a learning environment of great quality geared to the needs of a diverse student body. While a coherent strategy for lifelong learning will be devised, improved and enhanced data collection will help monitor progress in the social dimension. The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations and significant progress should be made within each participating country over the next decade. Therefore each country should set up monitoring systems and define measurable targets.

4.3. Lifelong Learning

The demographic challenge of an ageing population in a knowledge society can only be met by reinforcing the social dimension of higher education and by fully engaging in lifelong learning practices. Lifelong learning is a multifaceted concept which may involve climbing higher up the qualifications ladder, extending knowledge, gaining new skills and competences, upon the recognition of prior learning, or simply learning to enrich one's personal growth. The role of educated people who clearly see how economies and values operate together and how they are accelerated by critical thinking and discovery is central to the achievements of our societies. It is therefore crucial to make the best possible use of our societies' resources by allowing and encouraging every citizen to make the best possible use of their talents and capabilities.

Social and human growth are indispensable components for European citizenship; the advent of a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative rests upon the ability of its citizens to summon the competences that are necessary to address the new challenges. The teaching and learning in the institutions of higher education will aim at educating creative graduates able to function in the knowledge society and to profit fully from lifelong learning opportunities through the provision of adequate learning paths. Student centred learning will be developed as a new paradigm with learning outcomes focusing on specific subject areas. Lifelong learning needs to be integrated into a national as well as into institutional strategies. The European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning will serve as a basis for future developments in this field.

The implementation of lifelong learning will be strengthened by full implementation of the national qualification frameworks. These national frameworks, based on learning outcomes, should contribute to better permeability within the system as well easier recognition of prior learning including the non-formal and informal. The aim is to have these national qualifications frameworks implemented and prepared for self-certification against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area by 2012. Results of the prior learning could be assessed with reference to the learning outcomes of the levels defined in the qualifications frameworks. Intermediate qualifications within the first cycle can be a means of widening access to higher education.

4.4. Employability

With labour markets increasingly relying on higher qualifications and requiring deeper levels of expertise, higher education should equip students with the knowledge, skills, and competences individuals need in their working lives. Employability is empowering the individual to fully seize the opportunities of this changing labour market. Raising initial qualifications as well as maintaining and renewing a skilled workforce will foster employability. A close cooperation between

higher education institutions, social partners and students will be further developed. This will allow institutions to be more responsive to employers' needs and employers to better understand the institutional perspective, training responsible, inventive and entrepreneurial graduates for the future. Higher education institutions, together with governments, government agencies and employers, shall improve the provision, accessibility and quality of their careers and employment related guidance services to students and alumni. Work placement and on-the-job learning, embedded in study programmes thus also being part of regular quality reviews, need to be further developed to improve employability of graduates..

4.5. Student-centred learning

Student centred learning requires new pedagogical approaches and a curriculum focusing on the learner. Curricular reform will thus be an ongoing process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths. Academics, in close cooperation with student representatives, will continue to develop international descriptors, learning outcomes and reference points for a growing number of subject areas.

4.6. Education, research and innovation

Higher education at all levels should be based on state of the art research thus fostering innovation and creativity in society.. Doctoral programmes should respond to the changing demands of a fast-evolving labour market and high quality disciplinary research should increasingly be complemented by inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral programmes, bringing added value for the career development of early stage researchers. Cooperation among institutions of higher education shall be consolidated through the awarding of joint doctoral degrees. The number of people with research competences should increase. In this respect the potential of higher education programmes, including those based on applied science is recognised.

4.7. International openness

European higher education will develop an institutional culture of internationalisation. As the Bologna Process is part of the global world of higher education, the attractiveness and openness of European higher education will be highlighted. At the same time, competition on a global scale will be complemented by policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership with other regions of the world.

4.8. More mobility

Mobility of students and staff is the key instrument which higher education will further develop to respond to the above-mentioned challenges and trends. Mobility is important for personal development, boosting people's skills and employability; and it breaks down barriers between people and groups, thus contributing to responsible citizenship. In an increasingly multicultural society, mobility fosters respect for diversity and is a key ingredient for a more stable and peaceful world. Mobility also underpins the multilingual tradition of the European higher education area. It increases cooperation between institutions since it facilitates the flow of knowledge across the spectrum of higher education.

Therefore, mobility of students and staff within Europe and exchanges with the wider world will feature prominently on the agenda of the Bologna Process beyond 2010.

As far as mobility of students is concerned, at least 20% of those graduating in 2020 in the countries of the European Higher Education Area will have been physically mobile. All curricula will be designed in such a way that they integrate mobility opportunities in the structure of the programme and the number of joint programmes will have been increased. The framework conditions will be such that the granting of visas and work permits as well as the portability of grants will be made easier.

Mobility policies must thus bring together initiatives of this kind with a range of practical measures running from recognition through financing to receiving students at host institutions, and they must devise different formulas for mobility to seek to include students who have family and work obligations.

As far as mobility of early stage researchers and staff is concerned, framework conditions will be established to simplify application processes for immigration into the EHEA as well as within and to guarantee social security and adequate pension rights to the mobile staff. The Bologna Process will liaise with those relevant policy areas that are outside higher education and will seek the advice and support of experts and policy makers from the fields of social security and immigration.

Data collection will help monitor the internationalisation of higher education and will serve as a basis for benchmarking.

Progress on agreements for academic recognition supported by the development of national qualifications frameworks remains of utmost importance. National qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA as well as with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning will emphasize learning outcomes, make it easier for learners to obtain qualifications through a variety of learning paths and make recognition of qualifications easier across the borders of education systems. The deadline of having the national frameworks in place and self-certified against the Qualification Framework for EHEA by 2010 will not be met by majority of countries. The efforts should be made to finish this by 2012. This will also require continued coordination at the level of EHEA as well as with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. In this context structured cooperation between the networks of correspondents of both the overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is of crucial importance.

4.9. Mutidimensional transparency tools and data collection

The Bologna Process has achieved transparency through its convergent degree structure, its qualifications frameworks and its quality assurance standards and guidelines. Although the link between teaching and research will remain a principle firmly entrenched in the EHEA, it is recognized that there are various types of research and that there is great differentiation in the missions of higher education institutions. Proper implementation and use of the Diploma Supplement and the European Quality Assurance Register will enhance the transparency of the EHEA. Moreover, in the light of this greater diversification of higher education, the Bologna Process will monitor new instruments designed to show and measure the strengths of institutions with diverse mission statements. These instruments will have impact on the development of higher education systems and should be developed with full involvement of all stakeholders in such a

way that they help institutions of higher education to develop diversity and that they are relevant information tools for students and academic staff in higher education. For institutions of higher education such tools will be helpful to establish cooperative partnerships and to compare and identify their competitive position.

These instruments need to relate closely to quality assurance and recognition and should be based on the development of adequate indicators and sound data collection.

4.10. Resourcing

Moreover, in a global world the relationship between the State and the higher education institutions has changed. Higher education institutions have gained greater autonomy along with expectations to be responsive to societal needs and to be accountable. The demands put on higher education institutions in both their teaching and research missions are growing rapidly. The lifelong learning agenda, widening participation rates, an increasingly costly research infrastructure due to advances in the field of technology and tougher quality requirements raise the question of how to fund the higher education institutions if they are to meet these challenges. Multiple funding set within a framework of public responsibility is seen as an opportunity to guarantee further sustainable development of institutions and their autonomy and as a way of addressing the challenges that the Bologna Process faces beyond 2010.

4.11. The organisational structure and follow-up

The present organisational structure of the Bologna Process is endorsed as being fit for purpose. In the future, the Bologna Process will be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country.

In order to interact with other policy areas, BFUG will liaise with experts and policy makers from other fields, like research, immigration, social security and employment.

The Bologna Follow-up Group should be asked to prepare a work plan to address the challenges identified, allowing for the future integration of the data collection results and the outcome of the independent assessment of the Bologna Process.

The monitoring and stocktaking of the progress should continue. Eurostat together with Eurostudent should continue to be entrusted with data collection as defined above, in co-operation with Eurydice; the work should continue to be monitored by the Bologna Follow-up Group. This monitoring will also include reporting on the development of multidimensional transparency tools.

The next review and reporting on the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives for the decade to come should be carried out for the 2012 ministerial meeting.

The Bologna Anniversary conference will be organized in 2010 jointly by Austria and Hungary.

The next regular ministerial conference will be held in 2012. Thereafter regular ministerial conferences should be held in 2015, 2018 and 2020.