



**International Forum on Higher Education Reform
FORESIGHT 2020**

Centre for Advanced Academy Studies of the University of Zagreb
Dubrovnik, 27 – 29 September 2010

**Focus on Higher Education in Europe
in 2010**

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CENTRE FOR
EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

1. Reforms: from design to implementation

Implementation of HE reforms as *a risky process*

National HE reforms: centrally initiated but responsibilities are (should be) shared between partners at different levels.

Bologna reforms: voluntary process of “connecting” national reforms. Design at the European level, implementation at the national/HEIs level.

A success at the European level (an emerging common EHEA) is accompanied by *problems at the national/HEIs level*.

“Bologna Stocktaking” (2009) – a confirmation that something went wrong; e.g.: “It seems that there is **not enough integration at national level** between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS.”

2. Bologna vs. “bolonja”

The *strongest* and the *weakest* point of the Bologna Process: it is a *voluntary* process.

The risk of *different* (even *conflicting*) *interpretations* and different views on priorities and pace of reforms.

Transvestism of particular reform aims (at least in some countries) into “Bologna reforms” (“pan-bolonjasation”) has resulted in:

- an inadmissible “broadening” of the Bologna action lines into various “*bolonja*” scenarios (e.g. “*bolonja* requires that students pay fees in all countries” etc.);
- nationally constructed “*bolonja*” reform aims as an excuse for domestic pushes and clashes;
- darkening of the national responsibility for higher education (excuses like “*Brussels requires it*” etc.).

3. Phases of the Bologna Process

“Pre-history” (→ 1999):

- ▶ developing a concept of “a common European Higher Education Area”.

“History” (2000-2005):

- ▶ drafting a framework for the EHEA: “a devil is in details”.

Towards “the end of history”?

- ▶ 2006-2010: “implementation of the agreed principles and guidelines”...

... And now?

- ▶ 2010: A need for a critical evaluation (**strengths & weaknesses**) as well as reconceptualisation.

4. Quality in European HE

Co-operation, competition and attractiveness depends on quality: it is about *mutual trust*.

Development of quality assurance (QA) 1999-2009:

- “European co-operation in quality assurance” (Bologna, 1999);
- European Network QA (ENQA, 2000);
- Standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA (2005);
- Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border HE (UNESCO & OECD, 2005);
- European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR; 2008).

There is an obvious *strength* of the emerging common EHEA: Europe has succeeded in establishing framework conditions of its own QA system (hopefully not ‘biased by national stakes’). – Problems reported in implementation may represent risks and *weaknesses*.

5. European overarching Qualification Framework

Bologna, 1999: »a system essentially based on *two main cycles* – within the first decade of the first millennium.«

Development toward European QF:

- national frameworks of comparable and compatible qualifications – in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile (Berlin, 2003);
- adoption of »the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA« (Bergen, 2005);
- the »central element of the promotion of European higher education in a global context« (London, 2007);
- »We aim at having them implemented by 2012« (Leuven, 2009).

2009: variety of models; implementation of NQF in delay.

At this point, the *strengths* and *weaknesses* of the ongoing European HE reforms are put in the sharpest contrast.

6. The diversity of European HE

The Europeanisation process in higher education: are *convergence* and *diversification* parties in conflict?

Harmonisation is not ‘standardisation’ or ‘unification’, but ‘the *guiding principle of the orchestra*’ (Allègre, 1998).

The Bologna reforms as an attempt to promote and not abolish diversities.

The *Tuning* project (2001-2008): »convergence and common understanding« does not mean »imposition«.

European diversities (cultural, linguistic, institutional, paradigmatic, etc.) are “our richness” and a *strength* – but at least in the view of non-European student and staff may at the same time be both, *strengths* and *obstacles*.

In this regard, what everyone definitively needs is *transparency in diversity*.

7. Excellence in European HE

Ranking higher education institutions ‘league-table-style’:
e.g. ARWU, WUR etc.

Criticism of *methodology* – but growing *media* attention!

Position of European HEIs on league tables is not so bad –
but *what rankings actually measure?* What is excellence?

An ‘*excellence of excellence*’ is dangerous and against the
spirit of academia: it is like striving for ‘the truth about
the truth’ (as opposed to ‘the pursuit of the truth’).

Yet, the low rankings of European universities in global
league tables should be recognised as a ***weakness***. But
there are also ***strengths***: increasing EU co-operation
leading towards excellence, cases of good practice, etc.

8. The ‘social dimension’ of European HE

The ‘*social dimension*’ – evolution of the concept.

The idea of *equity*: the »*student body within HE should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations. [...] Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in HE*« (Leuven, 2009).

In fact, “student body” today *does not reflect* “the diversity of Europe’s populations”. – *Eurostat Report 2009*: huge differences across Europe (public support, part-time, etc.).

The ‘social dimension’ of European higher education reflects again both aspects – *strengths* and *weaknesses*.

9. The “concerns for the post-Bologna” of 1999

Remind today G. Haug (**Dec. 1999**) and his five “main areas of concern for the post-Bologna developments”:

- *the risk of non-concerted reforms* (“if some countries were to introduce superficial, window-dressing reforms, e.g. taking a long curriculum and just cutting it in bits and pieces”);
- *the risk “to focus on very small differences rather than looking at the big common issues”* (e.g. tracking the minor differences in content and organisation between degree in chemistry in two countries) ;
- *the risk that the challenge from abroad remains under-estimated* (e.g. transnational education, etc.);
- *the risk if “not all countries in Europe be included in the process of setting up the European space for higher education”*;
- *“the most important risk [...] is that HE institutions themselves under-estimate the level of change [...] and wake up a little bit too late”*.

Thank you!