

Enhancing Quality: Academics' Perceptions of the Bologna Process
A Study by the Education International Pan-European Structure
On the Occasion of the Bologna Process Celebration Conference - March 2010

In fact, it was the third survey we carried out on the Bologna Process, 2006 (just after IE was admitted as a consultative member, and then two years later, 2008). Survey replies were received from 34 member organisations from 25 European countries. The replies represent a wide spread across the European region, from North to South and East to West. In many cases replies were compiled by union representatives following further research with higher education staff at the local level and within higher education institutions (HEIs).

Albania, Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, The United Kingdom.

The results illustrate the sensitivity of academics to a range of Bologna issues, as well as their vulnerability in an ongoing world of change in higher education systems across Europe. These considerations highlight a number of key issues, which, in the eyes of academics, are necessary conditions for the successful attainment of the Bologna objectives across Europe.

I shall briefly outline them now.

Deterioration in Working Conditions of Academic Staff

Increased workload and bureaucratic work in particular are portrayed above as being a direct consequence of Bologna Process reforms, fixed term contracts and part-time jobs are increasing.

While remuneration of academic staff is decreasing in a number of countries (The implementation of the necessary reforms is difficult where resources for higher education and research have become even scarcer since the onset of the global financial and economic crisis).

If we compare the perception of working conditions with the Bologna stocktaking criteria (from the 2009 Stocktaking report, it appears that both research and teaching have suffered the most while the rate of success of Bologna Process is significantly higher.

Conclusion: the need of support for implementation of the reforms

The findings of this study show that, across Europe, both governments and higher education institutions (HEIs) need to provide more support to academic staff for the implementation of Bologna reforms and in particular for the large amount of bureaucratic and administrative work that the implementation of the Bologna Process requires in practice.

Participation and Involvement of Academic Staff

The diapo shows that while the level of pro-activity of unions representing higher education staff in relation to the Bologna Process is high, involvement in relevant follow-up bodies at the national level, whether formal or informal, remains low.

Findings show that, at the local level (institutions)

- autonomy of Higher Education Institutions has increased in 38 % of the countries covered in this study,
- and concomitantly, public funding for HEIs has also decreased in 38 % of the countries (It is interesting to note however that 88 % of unions represented in this study do not attribute the rise in private financing to the influence of the Bologna Process in their respective countries).
- academic freedom of higher education staff has decreased in 35 % of the countries,
- with a decrease in democracy in Higher Education institutions in 31 % of the countries
- and a decrease in participation of academic staff in 38 % of the countries.

If we compare again the correlation with the Bologna stocktaking criteria (from the 2009 Stocktaking report, it appears that where unions representing higher education staff are involved in national Bologna Follow-Up structures, and when staff is involved at the institutional level, the probability for a more successful fulfillment of the Bologna action lines is higher.

This study shows, without any doubt, that the full involvement and participation of academic staff and their unions in decision-making procedures at both national and local levels, is a necessary precondition for the successful implementation of the Bologna Process.

We consider that academics need to feel ownership of any kind of reform that they must implement.

Conflicting agendas

It is interesting to note however that 88 % of unions represented in this study do not attribute the rise in private financing to the influence of the Bologna Process in their respective countries ; but, additionally to national policy and the Bologna Process,

- institutional policy of HEIs,
- international globalisation,
- the European Union's Lisbon Process,
- Recommendations by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

also have an impact on ongoing reforms in higher education in the various countries represented in this study.

The general opinion about the Bologna Process has always been positive in our different surveys. And it is still the case. While academics project the Bologna Process in the future as a **symbol of quality (55%)**, they also view the EHEA as constituting an **academic labour market (68 %)** in the future.

It is clear that academic staff remains really committed to the proper implementation of the Bologna Process as envisaged in the 1999 Bologna Declaration and subsequent Ministerial Declarations.

There are many other interesting results in this study.

http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EI_BolognaReport2010_en.pdf