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Bologna Process - 10 years later: Towards a European Hi

The overarching aim of the Bologna Process is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to European students and staff as well as to students and staff from other parts of the world.

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On 12 March 2010, the 10th anniversary of the Bologna Process has been celebrated by 47 participating countries. The 47 ministers of education have adopted the Budapest-Vienna Declaration and officially launched the European Higher Education Area according to the agenda already defined in 1999. The "Conference of the European Higher Education Area Ministers" was followed by a meeting with ministers from different parts of the world in the "Second Bologna Policy Forum on Building the Global Knowledge Society: Systemic and Institutional Change in Higher Education" that was concluded with the Vienna Bologna Policy Forum Statement.

The ministers have expressed their vision for the future as:

"In the decade up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realising a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative... Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximises the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in lifelong learning as well as in widening participation in higher education."

This declaration follows a decade of intense reforms in the higher education environment based on the Bologna Process. This European strategy is named after the Bologna

Declaration, which was signed in the Italian city of Bologna on 19 June 1999 by ministers in charge of higher education from 29 European countries. Today, the Process unites 47 countries, all party to the European Cultural Convention and committed to the goals of the European Higher Education Area. The overarching aim of the Bologna Process is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to European students and staff as well as to students and staff from other parts of the world. The envisaged European Higher Education Area will:

- facilitate mobility of students, graduates and higher education staff;
- prepare students for their future careers and for life as active citizens in democratic societies, and support their personal development;
- offer broad access to high-quality higher education, based on democratic principles and academic freedom.

On 28 and 29 April 2009, the Ministers responsible for higher education in the 46 countries of the Bologna Process have met in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve to establish the priorities for the European Higher Education Area until 2020. They have highlighted in particular the importance of lifelong learning, widening access to higher education, and mobility. By 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad.

The reforms introduced by the Bologna Process are about:

- Easily readable and comparable degrees organised in a three-cycle structure (e.g. bachelor-master-doctorate): Countries are currently setting up national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and define learning outcomes for each of the three cycles.
- Quality assurance in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- Fair recognition of foreign degrees and other higher education qualifications in accordance with the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention.

Work is also undertaken in areas of broader societal relevance, such as the links between higher education, research and innovation; equitable participation and lifelong learning. The ongoing reforms will have a strong impact on how European higher education relates to higher education in other parts of the world, which is why Ministers have adopted a Strategy for the European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting.

Since 2000, the Bologna Process has been efficiently supported by European tools like the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus framework and by the strong willingness of the member states to achieve this global vision expressed initially in Lisbon. However, these efforts are not always concluded with significant results. The European Student's Union has clearly underlined the process of commercialisation of the

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higher education, the introduction of high level tuition fees generating social inequities and the limited results in increasing the mobility of the students. Until now, the Bologna Process could be seen as a half success by targeting mainly the teaching activities.

The need is now for a more holistic view of higher education within the Bologna Process and that would inevitably mean more attention paid to the research dimension. A good example is the necessity to develop joint doctoral programmes which are already existing de facto in research activities like those supported by the European Research Framework Programme (FP7). All universities, and most other higher education institutions, engage in research as part of their core mission, even if what they mean by "research" may vary. A majority of teachers in higher education are also engaged in research and, conversely, many researchers are also involved in teaching. Admittedly this has begun to be reflected in the Bologna process since its extension to cover the doctoral phase of study; after all, today's PhD students are not only tomorrow's researchers but also tomorrow's higher education teachers. Finally, the global standard in higher education is of institutions that both provide advanced education but also engage in research.

The challenge for the next decade will be to integrate both aspects – teaching and research - in a comprehensive vision based on a "quality culture". In parallel, the research paradigm has to evolve: research has now to embrace so-called applied and translational research and even to extend, through various forms of consultancy, to technology transfer and even knowledge management. These radical changes, associated to long-term significance, are strongly needed in order to achieve a sustainable higher education and research environment.