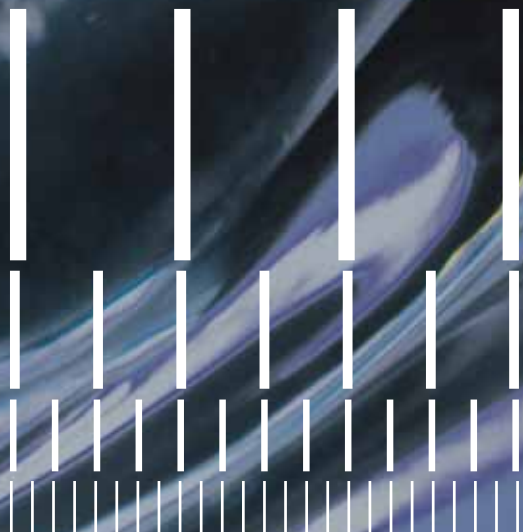


The Bologna Process: Its impact in Europe and beyond

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UNESCO:
International
Institute
for Educational
Planning



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Fundamentals of educational planning

The booklets in this series are written primarily for two types of clientele: those engaged in educational planning and administration, in developing as well as developed countries; and others, less specialized, such as senior government officials and policy-makers who seek a more general understanding of educational planning and of how it is related to overall national development. They are intended to be of use either for private study or in formal training programmes.

Since this series was launched in 1967, practices and concepts of educational planning have undergone substantial change. Many of the assumptions which underlay earlier attempts to rationalize the process of educational development have been criticized or abandoned. Yet even if rigid mandatory centralized planning has now clearly proved to be inappropriate, this does not mean that all forms of planning have been dispensed with. On the contrary, the need for collecting data, evaluating the efficiency of existing programmes, undertaking a wide range of studies, exploring the future and fostering broad debate on these bases to guide educational policy and decision-making has become even more acute than before. One cannot make sensible policy choices without assessing the present situation, specifying the goals to be reached, marshalling the means to attain them, and monitoring what has been accomplished. Hence planning is also a way to organize learning: by mapping, targeting, acting and correcting. The scope of educational planning has been broadened. In addition to the formal system of education, it is now applied to all other important educational efforts in non-formal settings. Attention to the growth and expansion of education systems is being complemented and sometimes even replaced by a growing concern for the quality of the entire educational process and for the control of its results. Finally, planners and administrators have become more aware of the importance of implementation strategies and the role of regulatory mechanisms, including the choice of financing methods and examination and certification procedures. The concern of planners is twofold: to reach a better understanding of the

validity of education in its own empirically observed dimensions, and to help in defining appropriate strategies for change.

The purpose of these booklets includes monitoring the evolution and change in educational policies and their effect upon educational planning requirements; highlighting current issues of educational planning and analysing them in the context of their historical and societal setting; and disseminating methodologies of planning that can be applied in the context of both the developed and the developing countries. For policy-making and planning, vicarious experience is a potent source of learning: the problems others face, the objectives they seek, the routes they try, the outcomes they achieve, and the unintended results they produce all deserve analysis.

In order to help the Institute identify up-to-date issues in educational planning and policy-making in different parts of the world, an Editorial Board has been appointed comprising professionals of high repute in their fields. The series has been carefully designed, but no attempt has been made to avoid differences or even contradictions in the views expressed by the authors. The Institute itself does not wish to impose any official doctrine. Thus, while the views are the responsibility of the authors and may not always be shared by UNESCO or IIEP, they warrant attention in the international forum of ideas. Indeed, one purpose of this series is to reflect a diversity of experience and opinions by giving authors from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines the opportunity to express their views on changing theories and practices in educational planning.

One of the great challenges today is to bring transparency and comparability to the thousands of programmes in higher education offered worldwide. In a globalized world, students are more mobile; so are highly qualified workers. How could such transparency be established? The Bologna Process is an important step towards developing a more harmonized higher education system across countries in Europe. It envisages the introduction of a common degree structure, a common system for academic credit, quality assurance, the promotion of student mobility, and so on. The higher education ministers of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The adoption of this process triggered a set of reforms in the

initial signatory countries and later expanded to another 18 signatory countries. The formation of the European Higher Education Area in 2010, as envisaged by the Bologna Process, further reinforced efforts to develop a comparable level of higher education across countries in Europe. The meeting of European higher education ministers held in April 2012 in Bucharest underlined the importance of promoting mobility, employment, and quality as priority areas for higher education in Europe.

Although the Bologna Process started as a European initiative, its implications reach far beyond the continental boundaries. The past decade has shown that this process has influenced higher education policies in several countries towards regional harmonization focusing on credit transfer systems, quality assurance frameworks, and increased student and teacher mobility. In this booklet, the authors David Crosier and Teodora Parveva provide an interesting analysis of the origin and significance of the Bologna Process, drawing its implications for other regions. This booklet contributes to an informed understanding of the need for increased cooperation among institutions of higher education across countries through a process of regional harmonization.

Khalil Mahshi
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Preface

Higher education has expanded rapidly in all regions over recent decades. Enrolment in higher education increased from 68 million in 1991 to 164.5 million in 2009. In most European countries, the 2009 gross enrolment ratios in higher education exceed 50 per cent. This fast expansion reflects increasing demand for trained people in the productive sectors to meet the requirements of a growing knowledge economy in the globalized context.

Higher education was traditionally offered through the unitary system of universities. Today, it is offered through a network of diverse institutions, which includes university and non-university institutions. Diversification of higher education can be seen in terms of the diversification of providers, programmes, clientele, and sources of financing. The level of courses offered varies among institutions of higher education. Non-university institutions offer courses that are very often vocationally oriented programmes closely linked to the demands of the labour market; even when they offer prestigious degrees, they very rarely offer courses leading to advanced research degrees.

Course duration can vary within the same level of education (ISCED levels 5 and 6), making it difficult to compare degrees and diplomas offered by different countries in terms of content, quality, and duration, thus reducing the chances of regional mobility of students and programmes. In Europe, for example, bachelor-master systems in some countries were of four to six years' duration, and the degree structure in other countries having several levels was not compatible with the bachelor-master systems. Worldwide, it is felt that transparency and trust among higher education systems are needed to improve the global attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education.

The Bologna Process represents an attempt to achieve this. It was an initiative by European countries to harmonize European educational programmes to provide comparable, compatible, and coherent systems of higher education in the region. The Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999 by the higher education ministers of

29 countries, envisaged the creation of a common degree structure, the introduction of a common credit system and quality assurance mechanism, and the promotion of the mobility of students and academic and administrative personnel between institutions and countries.

The appeal of the Bologna Process has been very impressive, with more and more countries joining by becoming signatories. As of 2012, 47 countries were implementing the Bologna Process. The report on implementation of the process to the 2012 ministerial conference in Bucharest (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012) indicated that the introduction of the three-cycle degree structure in most institutions and programmes has been one of the most significant achievements of the process. Progress has also been made in developing national qualifications frameworks, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and Diploma Supplement, increasing student mobility, and so forth. Another area of success has been the creation of quality assurance mechanisms and the establishment of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). In 2010, the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as envisaged in the Bologna Process, also became a reality.

Today, the Bologna Process stands out as a highly significant reform that has triggered a chain of national-level reforms in higher education. Its effects are not confined to European countries or the signatory countries, as the move towards harmonization is being attempted in several countries outside the orbit of the Bologna Process. For example, in Latin America, the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education initiated a programme to create a Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Area. Similarly, in West Africa, 15 countries signed an agreement to promote intraregional student mobility, and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development is taking initiatives to create a South-East Asian higher education space by developing a credit transfer system, a quality assurance framework, a diploma supplement, and research clusters. The harmonization measures in the CIS countries attempt to align their universities with international standards and their education systems with those of the West. They also attempt to develop a

comparable structure of credit transfer systems between universities located within the CIS.

These numerous initiatives in different regions of the world indicate the importance of the Bologna Process in reforming higher education not only in Europe, but globally. The authors of this booklet, David Crosier and Teodora Parveva, have ably analysed the origin and spread of the Bologna Process within the European higher education space and its implications beyond the boundaries of the signatory countries. They offer strong insight into the efforts and resulting process to harmonize highly diverse systems, and the booklet may serve as an important reference for policy-makers and researchers. The Editorial Board is grateful to David and Teodora for their analysis and conclusions on the Bologna Process for the future development of higher education systems. We also appreciate the comments received from the reviewer, which were useful in suggesting revisions of the draft version of the booklet.

Francoise Caillods and N.V. Varghese
General Editors

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List of abbreviations

BFUG	Bologna Follow-up Group
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education (Germany)
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EI	Education International
ELES/ENLACES	Latin American and Caribbean Common Area of Higher Education
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres in the European Region
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
FQ-EHEA	Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area
GDP	gross domestic product
IMF	International Monetary Fund

List of abbreviations

IOHE	Inter-American Organization for Higher Education
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
NQF	national qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA	quality assurance
SEAMEO RIHED	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-CEPES	UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education
UNICE	Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (later to become Business Europe)
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

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I. The Bologna Process: Its history and evolution

Introduction

The past 12 years have seen unprecedented developments in higher education, both in Europe and across the world. The range of societal demands on higher education has expanded rapidly. Higher education is now expected to meet a wide range of needs for evolving knowledge societies and economies: educating ever-larger numbers of the population, creating new opportunities for non-traditional students, developing research and innovation, responding to local and regional economic challenges, and acting to improve quality and efficiency in all aspects of the higher education mission.

While these trends began before the turn of the 21st century, the speed of change has accelerated in recent years. Higher education is at the centre of the global transformation from an industrialized to a post-industrial knowledge society. In this emerging globally connected knowledge society, higher education is no longer on the margins of social and political reality, in the traditional realm of comfortable ivory towers. Rather, it has been brought centre stage as a key factor in national competitiveness and modernization.

The Bologna Process can be seen as a concerted pan-European response to these societal shifts. Interestingly, part of the response to external pressure to become more competitive has been brought about through an experimental process of cooperation in reforms based on voluntary participation. A unique process that will continue to shape reality for years to come, the Bologna Process fulfils a number of functions, but central to them is the space offered between European countries and also with the rest of the world for policy discussion regarding the nature of the changes that countries are experiencing. It also provides a framework that helps to make sense of the relationships among the institutional, national, and supranational policies that are being developed and implemented to meet the needs of the knowledge society.

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Its impact on higher education development in Europe and beyond*

The Bologna Process thus provides a new model of international governance and policy-making in the field of higher education. The process can also be seen as a means of engaging students, higher education institutions, stakeholders, and public authorities in debate over a common project. At a time when countries are trying to find a path out of major financial and economic problems, the Bologna Process could move in new directions. Indeed, in their April 2012 meeting in Bucharest, the ministers emphasized the importance of higher education in lifting countries out of the current economic crisis and identified three domains – mobility, employment, and quality – as priority areas for higher education in Europe in the coming years (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012).

The Bologna Process

Higher education ministers from 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999. It was open to other countries signatory to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe, and by 2012 the number of countries that had joined the process had risen to 47, a number that is unlikely to change given the criteria for eligibility.

The Bologna Process originally aimed to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. The vision was that students would be able to choose from a wide and transparent range of high-quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures both within and between national higher education systems. Thus, the stated intention was to make European higher education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and attractive, both for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents. In order to achieve this, reforms were needed to make European higher education systems more understandable and to improve their quality.

Thus, from the very beginning of the process, issues regarding Europe alone – reforms to ensure greater convergence of higher education systems – were mixed with policy objectives that extended beyond the continent. Yet despite the stated aims and ambitions for the Bologna Process, few could have predicted that it would stimulate and guide reforms to the extent that it has. Indeed,

the Bologna Process has arguably become the most significant and transformative higher education reform process in history. It provides a forum for debate and an important mechanism to focus higher education reforms in European countries. All of the 47 countries that are currently formal members of the Bologna Process have undertaken significant reforms to their higher education systems.

It was not entirely a matter of chance that the Bologna Process emerged at the beginning of the new millennium. The pressure on higher education systems to expand and meet new societal demands was growing strongly in the closing decades of the 20th century. In most European countries, and in other regions as well, student numbers had begun to swell considerably. According to UNESCO statistics, enrolment in higher education increased from 68 million in 1991 to 100 million in 2000 and further to 164.5 million in 2009 (UIS, 2011). Indeed, the massification of higher education in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries reached a stage in the 1990s where higher education institutions became ‘the place to be’ and ‘the experience to have’ (OECD, 1999: 37).

The end of the 20th century also saw the emergence of knowledge economies. According to the OECD, human capital has been ‘the single-most important engine of growth in OECD countries in the past three decades’ (OECD, 2002: 17). Knowledge economies also facilitated faster cross-border movement of goods and services and contributed to the globalization process. As globalization was becoming an ever-increasing force, the idea that knowledge-based economies offered the only path for future competitiveness became the political orthodoxy. The shift towards knowledge-based economies brought higher education centre stage as a policy domain. Knowledge was seen as a catalyst for economic development and competitiveness, and the production and transmission of knowledge were the core business of higher education. All societies had a need for greater numbers of graduates with more relevant skills for the new global labour market. At a time when countries were facing these common trends and challenges, the idea of a European process was attractive, corresponding to the spirit of the times.

Ministerial meetings on the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process can be viewed formally as the product of a regular series of meetings of the ministers responsible for higher education, but it extends beyond the ministerial level. Its achievements are due to the role played by many other stakeholders and international organizations. Indeed, without the engagement of the main representative higher education stakeholder organizations at European level, as well as that of stakeholders in national settings, there is no doubt that the Bologna Process would have proved to be hollow and unproductive.

Since 1998, seven ministerial conferences devoted to mapping out the short- and medium-term goals of the Bologna Process and reviewing progress in implementation have been held in different European cities, namely Paris (at the Sorbonne University), Bologna, Prague, Berlin, Bergen, London, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, and most recently, in April 2012, Bucharest. The EHEA was officially launched by the Budapest-Vienna Declaration in May 2010, and a roadmap has been drawn for further progress to be made by 2020.

Sorbonne Declaration

The basic precepts of the Bologna Process date back to the Sorbonne Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System, signed on 25 May 1998 by the education ministers of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

The Sorbonne Declaration focused on:

- improving the international transparency of programmes and recognition of qualifications by means of gradual convergence towards a common framework of qualifications and cycles of study;
- facilitating the mobility of students and teachers in the European area and their integration into the European labour market;
- designing a common degree level system for undergraduates (bachelor's degree) and graduate students (master's and doctoral degrees).

Bologna Declaration

The Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area, largely inspired by the Sorbonne Declaration, was signed in June 1999 by ministers responsible for higher education in 29 European countries. This declaration became the primary document used by the signatory countries to establish the general framework for the modernization and reform of European higher education. It also lent its name to the Bologna Process.

In 1999, the signatory countries included the 15 EU member states, 3 European Free Trade Association countries (Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland), and 11 EU candidate countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). International institutions such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and associations of universities, rectors, and European students also participated in drafting the declaration.

In the Bologna Declaration, the ministers affirmed their intention to:

- adopt a system of **easily readable and comparable degrees**,
- implement a system based essentially on **two main cycles**,
- establish a **system of credits** (such as ECTS),
- support the **mobility of students, teachers, researchers, and administrative staff**,
- promote **European cooperation in quality assurance**,
- promote the **European dimensions in higher education** (in terms of curricular development and inter-institutional cooperation).

Ministerial conference: Prague 2001

The next ministerial conference was held in May 2001 in Prague. Thirty-three countries participated, with Croatia, Cyprus, and Turkey accepted as new members. Liechtenstein was included as well, having formally committed to the process between the Bologna and Prague conferences, and the European Commission also became a member.

Correspondingly, the higher education ministers decided to establish a Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) responsible for the continued development of the process. BFUG is composed of representatives of all signatory countries, the European Commission, and key stakeholder organizations. From 2001 to 2010 it was chaired by the rotating EU presidency. Since 2010 there has been a co-chairing arrangement involving the country holding the EU presidency and a country within the EHEA but not a member of the EU.

Where content is concerned, the Prague ministerial conference will be remembered as the moment when the ‘social dimension’ of higher education was added to the action lines of the Bologna Process.

Ministerial conference: Berlin 2003

The Berlin conference, held two years later, in September 2003, proved an important stage in the follow-up to the Bologna Process. The inclusion of seven new signatory countries (Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Holy See, Russia, and Serbia-Montenegro) brought the total number of countries involved to 40.

In the Berlin Communiqué, the ministers charged BFUG with preparing detailed reports on the progress and implementation of the intermediate priorities and organizing a stocktaking process before the next ministerial conference in 2005. The UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) also joined the work of BFUG as a consultative member. In terms of content, the Berlin Communiqué made an important contribution to thinking about quality assurance in European higher education, highlighting the role of higher education institutions as having primary responsibility for quality assurance.

Ministerial conference: Bergen 2005

By May 2005, the Bologna Process extended to 45 signatory countries with the inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Higher education ministers met in Bergen to discuss the mid-term achievements of the Bologna Process. The commissioned

Stocktaking Report was submitted by BFUG for the occasion. The Bergen conference also marked the adoption of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA).

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Education International, and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE, later to become Business Europe) joined BFUG as consultative members.

Ministerial conference: London 2007

The London ministerial meeting, held on 17 and 18 May 2007, provided a landmark in European higher education by establishing the first legal body to be created through the Bologna Process: the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). Through external evaluation, EQAR would serve as a register of quality assurance agencies that comply substantially with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in ESG.

The London conference also saw developments in two key areas: the ministers agreed to develop national strategies and action plans concerning the 'social dimension' and agreed on a strategy to develop the global dimension of European higher education. The membership expanded to 46 countries with the recognition of the Republic of Montenegro as an independent state in the EHEA.

Ministerial conference: Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 2009

The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial meeting, held on 28 and 29 April 2009, took stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process and laid out the priorities for the EHEA for the next decade.

Looking back on 10 years of European higher education reform, the ministers emphasized the achievements of the Bologna Process, highlighting in particular the increased compatibility and comparability of European education systems through the implementation of structural changes and the use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement. Acknowledging that the EHEA was not yet a reality,

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the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué also established the priorities for the decade to 2020.

The organizational structures of the Bologna Process were also endorsed as being fit for their purpose, and the ministers decided that in the future the Bologna Process would be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country.

Ministerial conference: Bucharest 2012

Held on 26 and 27 April 2012, the ministerial conference in Bucharest adopted a communiqué that is both concise and comprehensive in scope ('Making the Most of Our Potential', 2009). The communiqué came at a time when countries were faced by major economic challenges, and it offers a vision of higher education as a major part of the solution for recovery. The 'social dimension' is centrally placed, and the need for higher education institutions to educate students with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure their employability is emphasized. With the adoption of a strategy for mobility in the EHEA, mobility continues to feature strongly in the European higher education policy arena. The communiqué also acknowledges that some aspects of Bologna implementation need to be intensified and that better national information and monitoring systems are needed to assess the impact of policy choices.

Perhaps the most interesting new goal is the long-term objective of making academic recognition automatic. A pathfinder group of countries will work until 2015 on ways to facilitate this objective.

II. Organization and management of the Bologna Process

Decision-making under the Bologna Process

The organization and governance of the Bologna Process are both unique and surprising. The ministers from the signatory countries meet at two- or three-year intervals to assess progress on commonly agreed goals and to agree on priority action for the forthcoming period. Decisions are reached by consensus. While these decisions are essential for the Bologna process to advance, they are not legally binding on the countries. It is thus important to recognize that all communiqués, from the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations through to the Leuven and Bucharest communiqués, express only voluntary agreement and commitment.

Initially, many observers saw the lack of any legally binding agreement as a likely obstacle to successful reform. In practice, however, the non-binding or voluntary nature of the process has not been a serious obstacle to implementation. On the contrary, voluntary agreement has helped to build consensus at the country level. This consensual decision-making process and monitoring of key objectives of the Bologna Process has proved to be more than sufficient to stimulate reforms. There is no denying the major wave of higher education reform that has swept across the continent, involving countries both big and small. While the scale of reform may be explained by many factors, the form governance of the Bologna Process – and particularly the sense of joint ownership between governments, institutions, students, and other stakeholders that has emerged – has played a significant role.

Arrangements for implementation

The decision-making body is the ministerial conference, which meets once every two or three years (it last met in 2012, and will meet again in 2015, 2018, and 2020). It is supported by two bodies: the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and the Bologna Board.

The BFUG is comprised of all signatory countries of the Bologna Process. It is the mandated decision-making body between biannual ministerial conferences, and its role is very important. It meets at least twice a year, prepares the next ministerial summit, adopts the Bologna Process work plan, elects the Board, creates official working groups, adopts the terms of reference for the working groups and the Secretariat, and may organize ‘official’ Bologna seminars to discuss major initiatives.

The BFUG functions in a manner that is generally perceived to be open and democratic. All countries, large and small, interact as equals. Moreover, despite a formal difference in status, stakeholder organizations are able to play a full role and to contribute to all debates and agreements. BFUG is a forum where all countries and stakeholder organizations can bring their own initiatives to the table and discuss matters freely. The absence of any legally binding outcomes can perhaps be seen as a stimulus to such debate.

Between meetings of the BFUG, the work is overseen by the Bologna Board. The Board comprises the country representatives who are, have been, or soon will be co-chairing the process (there is a co-chairing arrangement in the BFUG between the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country), as well as the European Commission and four consultative members (the Council of Europe, the European University Association [EUA], the European Students’ Union [ESU], and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education [EURASHE]).

The overall follow-up work is supported by a secretariat, provided by the country hosting the next ministerial conference. The mandate of the Bologna Secretariat coincides with the period between two ministerial conferences, aiming to ensure continuity for all Bologna Process reforms.

The central task of the Bologna Secretariat is to support the follow-up work at various levels: BFUG, Board, working groups, networks, ad hoc working groups, and seminars. The Secretariat prepares draft agendas, draft reports, notes and minutes and carries out the practical preparation for meetings as requested by the co-chairs.

*Participatory process of implementation:
Stakeholder involvement*

Initially, the Bologna process was conceived mostly as an intergovernmental (ministerial) initiative with only minor involvement of particular experts and organizations. However, it soon evolved into a more participatory process involving the representative organizations of higher education institutions and students. Indeed, it is now vital to the process that BFUG continue to gather together representatives of all member countries, the European Commission, and the key stakeholder organizations: EUA, EURASHE, ESU, ENQA, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, Education International (EI), and Business Europe.

Stakeholders' involvement in decision-making procedures is one of the major strengths of the Bologna Process. It is also a crucial factor for success in the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms in national contexts. The presence of stakeholders in the Bologna Process developed gradually; they were involved as consultative members at different phases of the process. Representatives of universities and the Council of Europe were already present during the initial phases, while student representatives pressed for involvement and became consultative members in Prague in 2001, along with EURASHE. UNESCO/CEPES joined the group of consultative members two years later in Berlin, while representatives of employers (the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations in Europe, then UNICE, now Business Europe) and trade unions in education (Education International) were accepted as consultative members in 2005.

One of the positive effects of stakeholder involvement in the Bologna Process at the European level is that consultation with stakeholders at the national level has become a normal expectation. While this may not operate in the same way in all countries, there is strong evidence that the general trend in most countries has been towards greater stakeholder involvement in national higher education debates.

III. Achievements and implementation of the Bologna Process¹

The focus of this chapter is on the progress made so far in the creation of a more transparent and integrated European higher education space and on the benefits of enhanced European cooperation. This section presents the status of implementation of the major areas or ‘action lines’ of the Bologna Process.

Context: Expanding higher education systems and evolving policy priorities

Bologna countries implement reforms in very different contexts. One important consideration is that student numbers vary enormously. Students in Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Germany, and the United Kingdom make up more than 50 per cent of the total EHEA student population, while Russia alone accounts for more than 25 per cent. In addition, while demographic changes are of concern to most countries, some face relatively big increases in the student population in the coming years, while other countries will experience a decline in numbers.

Another important development is the fact that since the beginning of the Bologna Process, European higher education systems have grown significantly. Although the trend towards mass higher education began before the launch of the process, the speed of transition has certainly accelerated during the last decade. The student populations in Armenia, Lithuania, Montenegro, and Romania have practically doubled in size. In another 20 national systems, student participation has increased by more than 20 per cent. Overall, this picture across Europe fits in well with recognized global massification trends in higher education; indeed, the rapid pace of change in European higher education demography is now being exceeded in other world regions.

1. *Chapters 3 and 4* draw on reports of the ministerial meetings published by Eurydice in two publications: EACEA/Eurydice, 2010, 2012.

As the size of the student population has grown, so too has the number of higher education institutions, at least in most countries. In Armenia, the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, and Slovenia, the number of higher education institutions has increased by more than 100 per cent. A large part of this growth has been in vocational and professional higher education programmes, and the sector has also seen growth in private, government-recognized higher education institutions.

Over the same period, changes in policy priorities reflect developments in the emphasis placed on different action lines in the ministerial communiqués. In 1999, just after the Bologna Declaration, implementing Bologna degree structures or acceding to the Bologna Process itself were among the main policy goals for many countries. This priority was, however, much less prominent in 2008/09, when the focus had shifted to other Bologna issues, particularly quality assurance and the development of national qualifications frameworks. Questions of mobility, access, participation, and funding remain consistently important over time when looking at all Bologna countries.

The Bologna three-cycle structure

Central to the Bologna Process is the commitment of countries to establish a three-cycle degree structure in higher education. Contrary to persisting misconceptions, neither the Bologna Declaration nor the subsequent ministerial communiqués rigidly prescribe the length of these cycles. They merely state that first-cycle qualifications should last a ‘minimum of three years’, while master’s degrees should range from 60 to 120 ECTS credits.

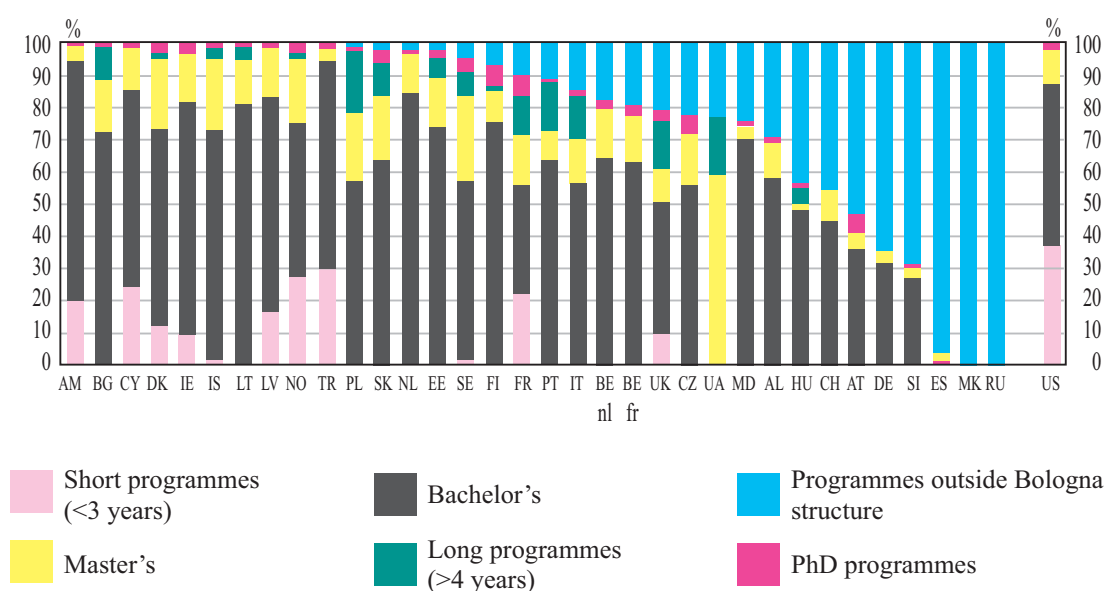
The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), adopted by the ministers in Bergen in May 2005, reflects this focus on the three-cycle structure. Typically, first-cycle qualifications comprise 180–240 ECTS credits and second-cycle qualifications 60–120 ECTS credits. These typical models are referred to in this booklet as the ‘typical Bologna structure’.

The three-cycle structure has been overwhelmingly introduced in most institutions and programmes in countries that adopted

the Bologna Process. The proportion of students studying in programmes corresponding to the Bologna three-cycle system is greater than 90 per cent in just over half of the countries, and between 70 and 89 per cent in another quarter of the countries. However, most countries still have long programmes of 5–6 years in specific disciplines that are not in line with the typical Bologna cycle structures. This applies most often to medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture, veterinary medicine, and, to a lesser extent, engineering, law, theology, psychology, and teacher training.

Figure 3.1 illustrates that, based on 2008 statistical data, 10 of the 34 higher education systems for which data are available had all students enrolled in programmes following the Bologna three-cycle structure. At the other extreme, four countries, Austria (47 per cent), Germany (36 per cent), Slovenia (31 per cent), and Spain (4 per cent) had less than half of their students following programmes within the Bologna structure. In 2008, programmes in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Russia were still not following the Bologna degree structures.

Figure 3.1 Percentage of students enrolled in programmes following the Bologna three-cycle structure, by cycle (2008/2009)



Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Short-cycle (less than three years) programmes existed in 11 countries, with enrolments amounting to between 2 per cent (in Iceland and Sweden) and 30 per cent (in Turkey) of the total student population. This marks a significant difference between European systems and the US system: in the latter, 37 per cent of students were enrolled in programmes lasting less than three years.

More than three-quarters of the countries had some long programmes covering the first two cycles. The percentage of students enrolled in this type of programme ranged from 1 per cent in Finland and Moldova to 19 per cent in Poland.

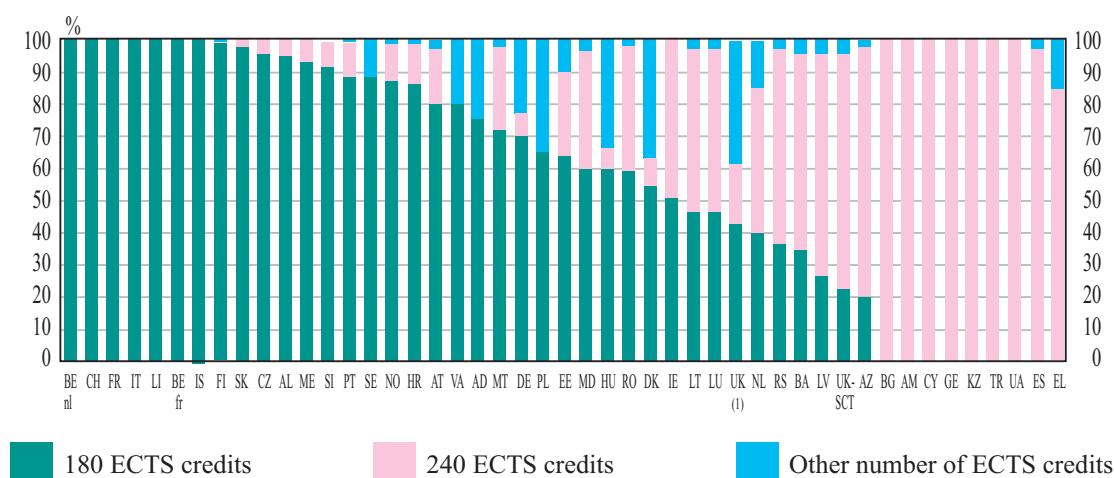
Despite the variations from country to country, the current situation is a fundamental and dramatic change from 1999/2000. At that time, the majority of institutions and programmes in Europe were not organized according to the three-cycle structure. The introduction of the three-cycle structure has had the most significant impact on higher education systems in Central and Eastern Europe. Most higher education systems in Northern and Western Europe already had some form of a three-cycle structure in place in 1999.

Despite ongoing debate about the implementation of these fundamental reforms, it is possible at this stage to identify commonalities between higher education systems concerning the workload and duration of the majority of programmes at the bachelor's and master's levels. While the doctoral level has been a focus of increasing attention since 2005, developments are driven from within autonomous universities, and dominant national patterns are quite difficult to discern. Most third-cycle degrees have an official duration of three to four years, although most countries note that, in reality, doctoral candidates usually take longer than this to complete their degrees.

Figure 3.2 shows that most countries have a combination of 180 ECTS and 240 ECTS programmes in the first cycle. Only the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland have a single 180 ECTS model for bachelor's degrees. While Finland also shows a strong predominance of the 180 ECTS model, the available data cover the situation in universities only, and the professional higher education system is not included. The

180 ECTS model also dominates – with more than 75 per cent of programmes – in 14 more higher education systems.

Figure 3.2 Share of first-cycle programmes having a workload of 180 ECTS credits, 240 ECTS credits, or other number of credits (2010/2011)

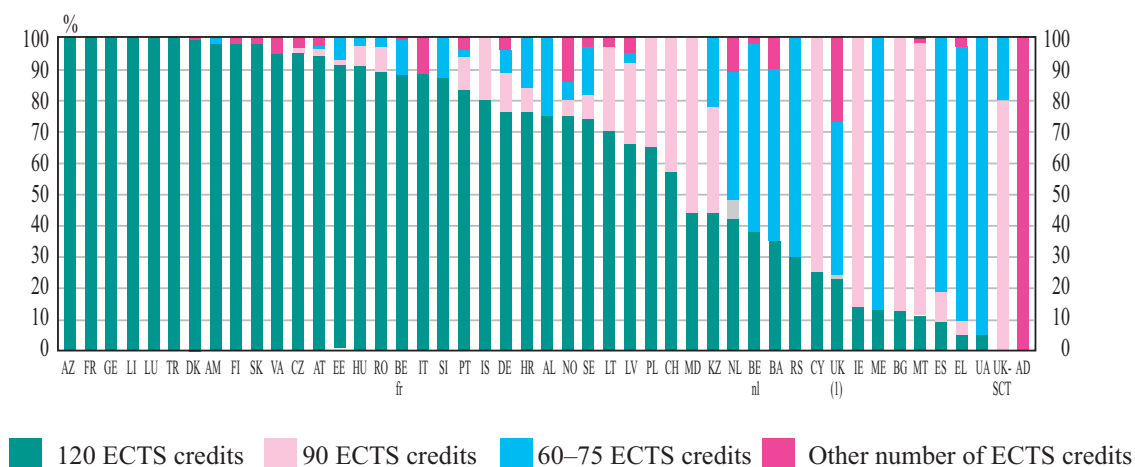


Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Note: UK (1) = England, Wales, Northern Ireland; UK-SCT = Scotland.

In the second cycle (see *Figure 3.3*), the 120 ECTS model is by far the most widespread, existing in 42 higher education systems. It is the sole model in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, France, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Turkey, and is used in more than 75 per cent of programmes in a further 18 systems. The 60–75 ECTS model is present in 27 countries and dominates in 8 systems. The 90 ECTS model is less widespread: while present in 21 systems, in only 6 of them – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Moldova, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Scotland) – does it represent at least 50 per cent of programmes. In 17 higher education systems, there are also programmes with a workload other than 60–75, 90, or 120 ECTS credits. With the exception of Andorra, however, these programmes do not exceed 10 per cent of provision.

Figure 3.3 Share of second-cycle (master’s) programmes having a workload of 60–75, 90, 120, or other number of ECTS credits (2010/2011)



Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Note: UK (1) = England, Wales, Northern Ireland; UK-SCT = Scotland.

Overall, it appears that there is no single model of either first- or second-cycle programmes in the EHEA: in the first cycle, most countries have a combination of 180 ECTS and 240 ECTS and/or another duration. In the second cycle, the most common model is 120 ECTS. The 180+120 ECTS credits (‘3+2 years’) model is therefore the most widespread, but a number of other combinations can be found.

Changes to degree structures have been made to serve wider societal and educational goals, relating to the broad purposes and quality of higher education. In this context, the data point to significant differences in the share of first-cycle degree holders who actually continue their studies in the second cycle. In some countries, the high levels of direct progression between the first and second cycles could be an indication that the first cycle may not yet have been developed as an exit qualification providing relevant skills to improve access to the labour market.

Professional and vocational programmes in the Bologna model

Depending on the country in question, professional and vocational programmes may or may not be considered as part of the higher education system. Their inclusion in the Bologna structures has been equally variable and not always transparently managed. The reasons for this lie in the many different national understandings of ‘professional’ or ‘vocational’ programmes and in the blurring of distinctions between academic and professional programmes in some countries as the entire higher education sector focuses more consciously on employability concerns and on providing relevant education for the labour market.

Several countries have specifically identified problems in linking vocationally oriented programmes to their Bologna model. The most common problem articulated is that many vocational and professional qualifications are offered in short-cycle programmes that require fewer than 180 ECTS. There are, however, a number of countries that can be said to have successfully integrated their professional programmes into the Bologna structures. In Denmark, for example, all short-cycle programmes (duration of 120 ECTS) are part of the first cycle, but a transfer into a second-cycle programme requires additional credits. Other countries, such as Latvia, have integrated their professional higher education programmes into the Bologna degree-cycle structure and allow their graduates access to academically oriented second-cycle programmes. The situation is equally positive for countries that have explicitly referenced their professional programmes to their national qualifications frameworks, illustrating the importance of this tool.

The Bologna tools: The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, the Diploma Supplement, and national qualifications frameworks

On the structural level, the Bologna Process has led to greater convergence in the architecture of national higher education systems. The overall broadness of the guidelines expressed in communiqués and related texts, however, allows countries and institutions to maintain specific characteristics for most programmes. In order

*The Bologna Process:
Its impact on higher education development in Europe and beyond*

to facilitate the development of comparable and understandable degrees and systems, a number of pre-existing ‘tools’ were introduced in the Bologna Process to foster transparency and mutual recognition. These aim to make education systems and programmes more transparent and understandable for all.

*The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and
the Diploma Supplement: Two tools brought to work for the
Bologna process*

Two long-established elements of the ‘Bologna toolkit’ are the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement. ECTS was developed in the late 1980s, prior to the launch of the Bologna Process, to facilitate credit transfer in the Erasmus programme and thus to foster student mobility. Over the decade since the year 2000, it has become a cornerstone of the implementation of the Bologna reforms.

In 1999/2000, 31 countries reported that they did not use ECTS for either credit accumulation or transfer. Even for transfer (which was at that time the only recognized function of the ECTS), only the Flemish Community of Belgium, Iceland, Latvia, Spain, and Sweden reported significant use by higher education institutions, with use in higher education programmes even weaker.

This situation has now changed radically. In 34 countries, ECTS is used in the overwhelming majority of programmes. Overall, implementation of ECTS as a credit transfer and accumulation system appears to be almost completed. In seven countries – Andorra, Austria, France, Germany, Greece, the Holy See, and Turkey – ECTS credits are used for transfer and accumulation in only 50–74 per cent of programmes, so the work there is far from complete.

Proper implementation of ECTS is one of the essential tools for reaching the Bologna goals. The use of ECTS for accumulation makes programmes more transparent and supports the use of learning outcomes earned at another institution at home or abroad, but also those earned outside the formal education system. Implementation of ECTS is one of the Bologna action lines that requires further effort. In the early stages, the main challenge was the transformation of ECTS from a credit transfer system to a transfer and genuine

accumulation system. Currently, the most demanding issue is to link all programme components with learning outcomes.

The Diploma Supplement, the second important Bologna tool, was developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO-CEPES in the 1990s. It follows a standardized template containing a description of the nature, level, context, content, and status of the studies completed by the individual holding the original diploma. The goal of the Diploma Supplement is to increase the transparency of education acquired for the purposes of securing employment and facilitating academic recognition for further studies ('Realising the European Higher Education Area', 2003). The intention is thus to improve understanding of the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired by the learner. The Diploma Supplement should be attached to the original national diploma, together with a description of the national higher education system within which the diploma was awarded.

In Berlin, in 2003, the ministers agreed that from 2005 all graduates should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. In 2011, the Diploma Supplement was issued automatically in only 25 higher education systems. As regards the other 22 systems, either all Diploma Supplements or those in a non-national language are issued only upon request. In Andorra, Azerbaijan, France, Greece, and the Holy See, Diploma Supplements are not issued to all graduates; and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine, the Diploma Supplement is issued for a fee that varies from €10 in Ukraine to €50–100 in Serbia. In nearly all countries, the Diploma Supplement is issued in the national language(s) and English – the dominant, 'widely spoken European language'.

The use of the Diploma Supplement is clearly growing, but there is no consistent national monitoring of its effectiveness. Only seven higher education systems (in the French Community of Belgium, Germany, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Sweden) report that they have launched studies to monitor how employers use the Diploma Supplement; and in Germany and the French Community of Belgium, the results of these studies are as yet unknown. Slovenia and Sweden confirm that no more than

10 per cent of employers are aware of the Diploma Supplement and that they show little interest in it. In Moldova, however, employers wish to see a much more detailed Diploma Supplement, although they appreciate the presence of learning outcomes listing generic and specific competences. With regard to monitoring the use of the Diploma Supplement in higher education institutions, fewer than half of the countries state that such monitoring takes place, and only Croatia, France, Serbia, and the Holy See have provided any outcomes of such monitoring.

Overall, it is clear that these two instruments have played an important role in embedding aspects of the Bologna reforms and facilitating the understanding of national higher education systems.

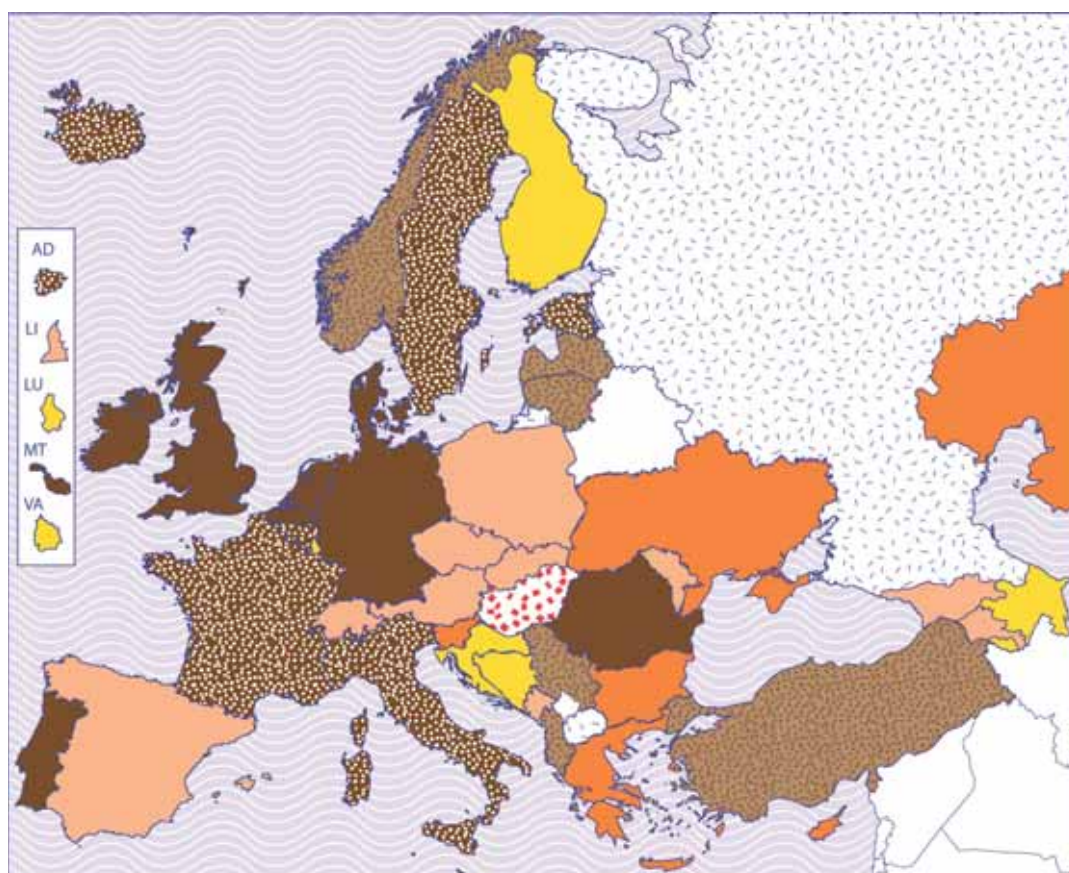
National qualifications frameworks









The third tool to have been introduced and developed in the Bologna Process is the national qualifications framework (NQF). It is a tool for describing and clearly expressing the differences between qualifications in all cycles and levels of education. Ideally, NQFs work in close conjunction with the ECTS and Diploma Supplement. The development of NQFs has been encouraged in recent years by a range of initiatives and processes. In Bergen in May 2005, European ministers of education adopted the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and committed to the development of NQFs. National qualifications frameworks should include a reference to the three-cycle structure and the use of generic descriptors based on learning outcomes, competences, and credits for the first and second cycle.

This task was made more challenging by the later adoption – in the context of the EU Lisbon strategy – of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, which is structurally compatible to the FQ-EHEA but has different descriptors. Thus the task for countries when developing or adapting their NQFs is far from simple: not only should these new national instruments reflect the shift from traditional input-based approaches to categorizing qualifications to a focus on learning outcomes, credits, and the profile of qualifications, but they should also ensure that national developments are compatible with both overarching European frameworks.

In 2009, the ministers foresaw the implementation of NQFs in all countries by 2012, but this has proved to be one of the biggest challenges.

Figure 3.4 Implementation of national qualifications frameworks (2010/2011)



-  Current development is between steps 1 and 4.
-  Step 5: Consultation and national discussion have taken place, and the design of the NQF has been agreed by stakeholders.
-  Step 6: The NQF has been adopted in legislation or in other high-level policy fora.
-  Step 7: Implementation of the NQF has started, with agreement on the roles and responsibilities of higher education institutions, quality assurance agency(ies), and other bodies.
-  Step 8: Study programmes have been redesigned on the basis of the learning outcomes included in the NQF.
-  Step 9: Qualifications have been included in the NQF.
-  Step 10: The framework has self-certified its compatibility with the European Framework for Higher Education.
-  Data not available.

Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

By 2011, as shown in *Figure 3.4*, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom had fulfilled all 10 steps in implementation of their qualifications frameworks. At the time of writing, the higher education systems of another group of 13 countries had a good chance of joining the first group during the course of 2012. Those countries have to complete a self-certification procedure, and some of them also need to complete the redesign of programmes on the basis of learning outcomes, which will take more time and effort. A group of 18 countries has either adopted the NQF in legislation or in other high-level policy fora or, as in the cases of Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, the Holy See, and Luxembourg, has completed the initial, fundamental discussions with all stakeholders. Other countries lag behind. Bulgaria, Greece, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine are in the very first stages of implementation and have yet to draft and agree on a proposal for an NQF structure.

Rapid rise of external quality assurance

Ensuring and improving quality of higher education and establishing quality assurance (QA) systems remains a high priority for many countries. While it is a moot question whether quality in higher education has improved during the lifespan of the Bologna Process, there is no doubt whatsoever that QA has seen dramatic developments. In higher education, QA can be understood as policies, procedures, and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain, or enhance quality as it is understood in a specific context.

The ministers' conference of 2003 in Berlin underlined the importance of placing the quality of higher education at the heart of the establishment of a European Higher Education Area. The call for transparency, comparability, and compatibility of criteria and procedures of external QA has intensified in the emerging EHEA. Hence, as a follow-up to the ministerial meeting, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), together with the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), have agreed on European standards and guidelines for the

internal and external QA of higher education institutions and QA agencies and for the external review of QA agencies themselves.

These European standards and guidelines (ESG) were reported back to the ministers through the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), and the principles outlined in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area were adopted at the ministerial meeting in May 2005. The ministers stressed stakeholder interest, institutional autonomy, and minimum burden on higher education institutions. Thus, quality assurance should focus on:

- the interests of students, as well as employers and society more generally, in good-quality higher education;
- the central importance of institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this entails heavy responsibilities;
- the need for external quality assurance to be fit for its purpose and to burden institutions only to the extent that is appropriate and necessary for the achievement of QA objectives.

Creation of quality assurance agencies in the last decade

Although nearly all Bologna countries now have a system of external quality assurance in place, usually with one or more independent agencies charged with prime responsibility, a quick glance through the dates of establishment of these bodies shows that this is a recent and rapidly developing phenomenon. Prior to the Bologna process, only a handful of countries had established clear external QA systems.

Moreover, there are significant differences in the objectives and approaches of existing systems. One important distinction that can be drawn is whether the main focus of QA is on institutions or programmes or both. A second is whether the QA agency or national body is invested with the power to grant permission for institutions or programmes to operate. Although the features of certain national systems make this aspect more complex (e.g. when governments retain the power to issue degrees at central level), these orientations give a good general sense of the approach to QA.

It is noteworthy that the vast majority of QA systems now focus on a combination of institutions and programmes (24) rather than on either programmes (7) or institutions (4) alone. This picture suggests that QA systems are becoming more complex as they evolve.

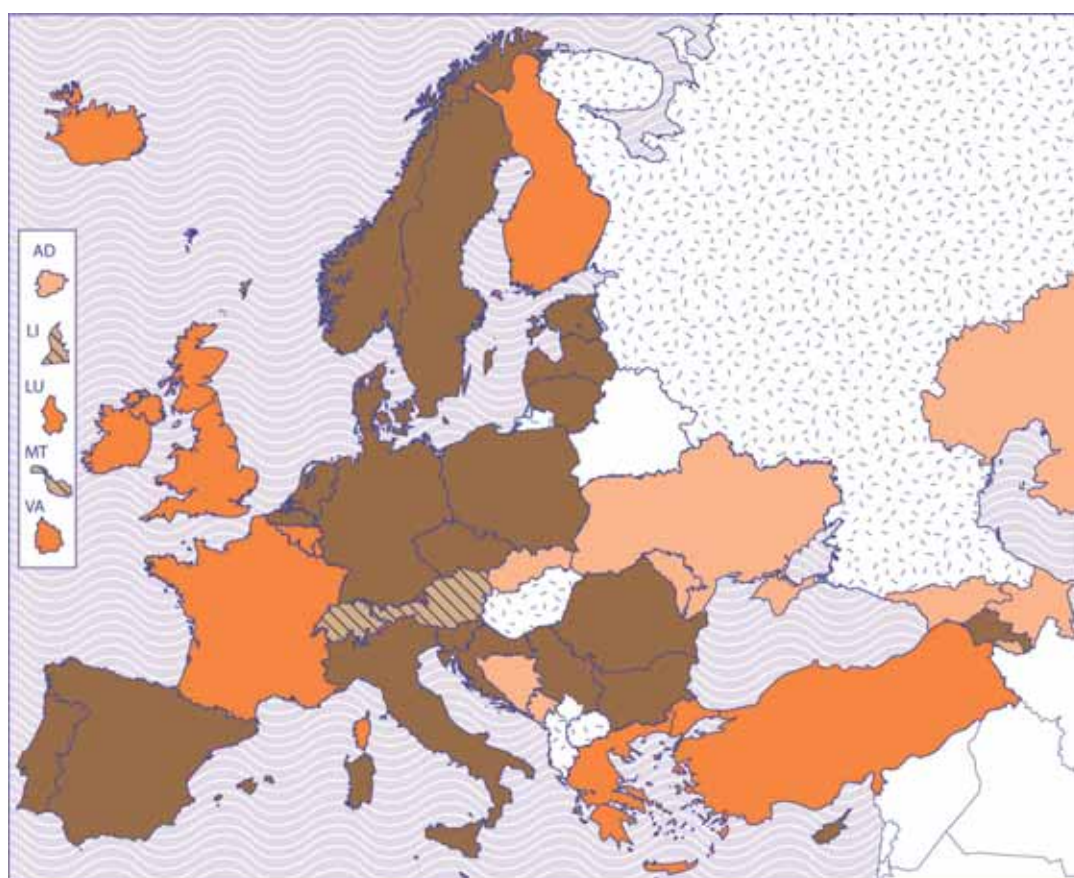
QA can broadly be perceived as supervisory in character in systems where QA bodies or agencies have the power to permit or refuse programmes and/or institutions to operate, or where they advise governments on such decisions. In these cases, the aim is generally to ensure that minimum quality thresholds are met. Agencies may of course play other roles, including advising on quality enhancement. This is indeed specifically mentioned by a number of countries, but such additional roles are likely to be subordinate to the decision of permitting programmes and/or institutions to operate.






In other systems, QA agencies report on institutions' management of quality and, although they have 'only' an advisory role, aim to support quality enhancement. In such a configuration, the primary emphasis is thus on empowering higher education institutions with responsibility for quality improvement. These are systems that will be more likely to use 'light touch' external QA processes, aiming to ensure that necessary measures to improve quality have been established within institutions and interfering less in decision-making processes at institutional level.

The majority of systems across the EHEA are primarily supervisory in character. If we include countries in which the agency makes a proposal for a decision and the government is responsible for the actual decision, 21 systems have established agencies with decision-making powers. Eleven systems have agencies that are advisory and more enhancement-oriented in character. Four countries (Austria, Liechtenstein, Malta, and Switzerland) have a mix, with different agencies having different orientations (see *Figure 3.5*).

Eleven countries in the EHEA have not yet established QA agencies. These include countries with a small higher education sector, such as Andorra, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Malta. However, the small size of the sector in these countries does not mean that QA is neglected, but rather that a different approach may have been developed.

Figure 3.5 Main outcome of external evaluation by QA agency (2010/2011)



-  Ministry or government-dependent agency responsible for QA
-  Decision granting permission
-  Other
-  Advice
-  Data not available

Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Development of ENQA and creation of EQAR

Developments at the national level have also been accompanied by major changes at the European level. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was established in 2004 after four years as a more informal network. It works to promote European cooperation in the field of QA.

The launch of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in March 2008 represents the culmination of efforts to promote European cooperation in QA through the Bologna Process. EQAR aims to enhance trust and confidence in European higher education by listing QA agencies that operate in Europe and have proved their credibility and reliability in a review against ESG. By January 2012, 28 agencies in 13 countries were listed on EQAR. The countries with at least one agency in EQAR are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain.

EQAR is also notable for its governance structures, as it is governed and supported by an international not-for-profit association that comprises all major European higher education stakeholders and European governments. This inclusive approach to governance is a strong symbol of the close partnership that has developed through the Bologna Process and offers a model for other regions of the world.

The development of external quality assurance systems has been a central feature of change in the governance structures in higher education. Whereas institutions were previously 'supervised' directly by the state, the steering mechanisms now are much more likely to involve QA agencies. Moreover, just as there has been increasing convergence towards particular models of degree structures, so too there appears to have been convergence towards a particular model of external QA. No doubt this has been facilitated by the increased communication between governments, agencies, and other QA actors throughout the Bologna period.

Despite the major developments that have taken place since the launch of the Bologna Process, a number of challenges remain. Many external QA systems fail to take a holistic view of quality, with student services being the most commonly neglected key issue. With regard to stakeholder participation in external QA, there is also some way to go before students systematically participate in all relevant processes. Participation of other key stakeholders, such as employers, also needs to be improved. Moreover, despite the development of EQAR, many countries still do not allow higher education institutions to be evaluated by agencies from outside their country.

IV. Impact of the Bologna Process on higher education policies

Beyond issues that are strictly related to higher education structures and tools, the Bologna Process has had a significant impact on several important policy areas where countries have agreed to work towards commonly agreed goals.

Policies to encourage student mobility

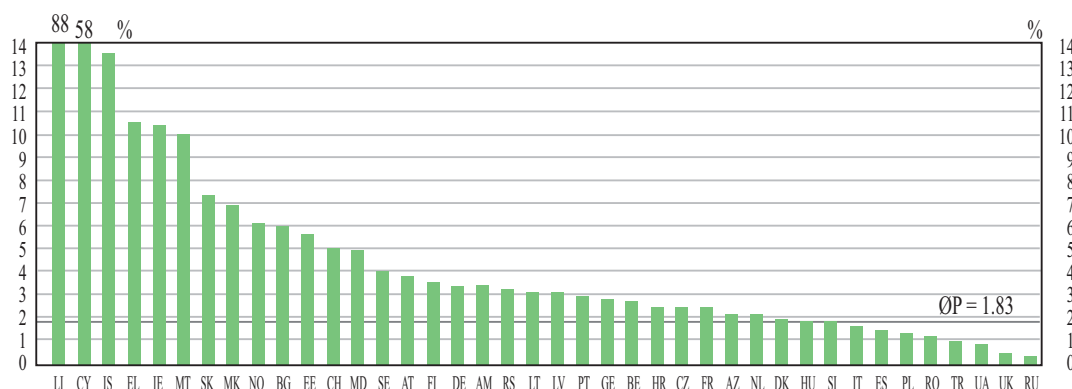
Student mobility has been an overarching goal of the Bologna Process since its inception, and the drive to promote mobility has been consistent throughout the last decade. It has been given a new boost with the setting of a target for EHEA countries: ‘In 2020, at least 20 per cent of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad’ (‘The Bologna Process 2020’, 2009: 4).

Despite the high profile of mobility issues in the Bologna ministerial meetings and the sustained growth of European programmes (including Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus) that promote and fund mobility, surprisingly little effort has been made to analyse national policies and measures to promote mobility.

Questions of policy and information are clearly related, however, and it is to be expected that information on mobility would be provided in support of policy objectives. However, many of the information gaps that have been highlighted at the European level are mirrored at the national level. For example, efforts to gather reliable data on degree mobility are hampered by the fact that few countries collect such data. Instead, countries will typically gather statistics on the citizenship or nationality of students and use them as a proxy for information on degree mobility. The problem is that students who have studied in the country at a prior educational level and even, in some cases, students born in the country as second-generation migrants will appear in these data on mobile students.

Statistical data on credit mobility are even less reliable than those on degree mobility. Indeed, the Erasmus programme data are currently the only reliable guide for the scale of credit mobility. Considerable methodological improvements have been made to capture a wider range of mobility figures, however, and provided that countries make efforts to strengthen their data collection in this area, a more accurate picture should emerge in the coming years.

Figure 4.1 Outward degree mobility rate: tertiary education graduates from an EHEA country graduating in a different country inside the EHEA as a percentage of the total number of graduates of the same country of origin (2008/2009)



Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Notes: ØP = weighted average.

In *Figure 4.1* the following destinations inside the EHEA were not included: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, and Montenegro.

For outward mobility in terms of graduation, the data refer to foreign students instead of mobile students for the following destination countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Russia, and Turkey.

Currently, all but two countries in the EHEA show an incoming degree mobility rate of less than 10 per cent, and the vast majority of countries have values below 5 per cent. This is also true concerning outward degree mobility rates of graduates inside the EHEA. The

weighted average for this mobility flow is currently slightly below 2 per cent. For outward movement of students going outside the EHEA for study, the rate for the majority of countries is less than 1 per cent. However, as these figures relate only to degree mobility, statistical information on credit mobility also has to be considered when assessing progress towards the 20 per cent mobility target. The current projection of short-term trends in the framework of the Erasmus programme anticipates that 7 per cent of students within the eligible countries will have an Erasmus mobility period by 2020. Other sources of reliable credit mobility data need to be identified and added.

Mobility flows typically follow East–West patterns, in both European and global terms. Inside the EHEA, Southern and Eastern Europe tend to have more outward students, and Northern and Western European countries more incoming students. Hardly any country can claim to have genuinely balanced mobility, in the sense of reciprocal mobility flows. For, even when inward and outward flows reach similar levels in a country, the main destination countries for outgoing students tend to be different than the sending countries for incoming mobility.

A number of obstacles that prevent students from benefiting from mobility periods abroad have been identified at the national level. However, mechanisms to monitor change in these perceived obstacles are absent in many parts of Europe, and many countries also lack a clear strategy to improve the situation.

At the national level, mobility policies are rarely backed up by comprehensive and reliable information on actual student movement. In fact, the majority of countries routinely gather information only on some rather than on all main forms of student mobility. Moreover, even among countries that do gather information on all the main forms, very little information can be captured about ‘free movers’ – those who leave a country and enrol in a higher education programme in another country without taking part in any organized mobility programme – despite the fact that their numbers appear from European-level statistical information to be growing significantly. The many factors affecting mobility flows thus remain difficult to gauge with certainty.

Given the complexity of individual decisions related to mobility choices, it would be a mistake to assume a direct causal relationship between the existence of a national policy on mobility and the phenomenon of student mobility itself. It may reasonably be assumed, however, that mobility will more likely be stimulated when actively encouraged through policy measures. For most countries, when country-level data are compared with Eurostat statistical data on mobility, there are positive correlations between the existence of policy and information and the growth of student mobility, and conversely between the lack of policy and information and a relative lack of growth in student mobility.

The nature of mobility policy

Bologna countries rarely express clear objectives related to student mobility. It is more common to find general expressions of a desire for more mobility, whether incoming or outgoing. It may also be mistaken to assume that all countries share the same basic objectives in this respect. For example, some countries may focus on incoming mobility while putting in place few measures to encourage outgoing mobility, while others may be more concerned with stimulating outgoing movement, and still others may aim to encourage both.

Certain forms of mobility may also be more favoured in some countries, such as mobility within a degree cycle, mobility between degree cycles, or mobility within joint programmes. For example, it is common for students to be eligible for financial support in the form of loans or grants if taking a part of a degree cycle in another country, but not if taking an entire cycle abroad. This is no doubt a complex issue for policy-makers, and comparison of national situations must take account of the fact that the desired outcomes may differ from one country to another.

Mobility policies, even when given a high priority, tend not to be complete in the way that might be expected. A distinction can be drawn between the countries that have incorporated policy measures for student mobility within a wider internationalization strategy and those that have focused more specifically on mobility. Those that set policy for internationalization tend to gather together a number of related policy elements (such as degree structure, ECTS

implementation, and recognition procedures) but may be quite vague about benchmarks and targets. In contrast, those that focus on policy to increase and/or improve mobility tend to be more likely to have set specific targets.

Overall, however, an analysis of policy commitment to mobility reveals that there are many measures that can be brought into a mobility or internationalization strategy. The following list presents the issues mentioned by countries when invited to outline their mobility policies:

- amending immigration legislation to facilitate visa procedures for students and researchers;
- a panoply of financial measures, from scholarships, grants, and fee waivers to ensuring the portability of student support;
- information campaigns, directed either at encouraging national students to study abroad or at attracting foreign students to the country;
- bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements;
- support to institutions in considering internationalization in curriculum design;
- focus on fair and simple recognition procedures and on proper use of ECTS;
- strengthening implementation of the Bologna measures;
- support for language learning (both incoming and outgoing students);
- encouraging language learning among staff in higher education;
- provision of programmes in other languages (particularly English);
- supporting higher education institutions in their mobility strategies;
- attention to mobility in quality assurance (QA) procedures;
- promotion of joint and double degrees;
- adaptation of information and counselling services for mobile students;
- support for housing for mobile students.

Financial measures to support student mobility

Of the measures outlined above, financial measures are by far the most frequently mentioned. While this is significant, the widespread existence of financial measures needs to be considered in relation to the enormous socio-economic diversity within and especially between countries in the EHEA. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank rankings of countries by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita both place 6 of the EHEA countries in the top 10 world economies, while other EHEA countries rank as low as 114th out of the 166 countries included. This means that, even with the best political will to promote mobility and with some financial measures in place, less wealthy countries are simply unable to bridge the funding gaps that prevent a substantial number of their citizens from covering the costs of studying in the more wealthy countries. Thus, it is primarily the available funding sources from host countries in the form of scholarships and grants that enable mobility flows in this direction to take place.

It is also interesting to note that, with the exception of France and Germany, very few countries appear to have mounted specific campaigns to inform students of the benefits of studying abroad. In Germany, a campaign called ‘Go Out’ has been organized through the Federal Ministry of Education (BMBF) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), putting together information on scholarship and cooperation programmes. Similar initiatives are undertaken regularly in France.

No country has a comprehensive mobility policy combining all the above measures, at least not in explicit terms. This suggests that the commitment made for the EHEA to develop mobility opportunities extensively and to aim for a goal of 20 per cent of students benefiting from mobility during their studies will require a major push in policy-making and implementation of measures if the EHEA is to meet the aspirations for an open and inclusive space for mobility. The adoption at the 2012 Bucharest ministerial conference of a mobility strategy for the EHEA may help to stimulate further action in this field.

Links to other policy areas

Policy for mobility cannot be made in a vacuum. While all areas of policy-making can be seen as inter-related, this is particularly true of mobility and a number of areas of social welfare policy, particularly immigration policy. Many countries that have developed policy to stimulate mobility in the higher education sector have also implemented policy to control and limit immigration, but few mention any tension or even any relationship between these policy areas. Indeed, despite the close relationship between mobility and immigration policy, only a few countries mention attention to immigration legislation as a means of creating a supportive legal environment for mobility.

Target setting

Fewer than half of the countries in the EHEA have set specific mobility targets. Of the countries having national strategies or action plans, however, around three-quarters have set a target for at least one type of mobility.

The agreed target of at least 20 per cent of those graduating in the EHEA having a study or training period abroad, as formulated in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué ('The Bologna Process 2020', 2009), is often mentioned by those countries that state their targets for different forms of outward mobility. Only Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands set more ambitious targets. Germany's target, for credit and degree mobility combined, is to reach 50 per cent of higher education institution graduates staying abroad, of which at least 20 per cent should study at least one semester at a foreign institution. Austria and the Netherlands set their targets in terms of credit mobility only. That of Austria is 50 per cent of graduates by 2020; that of the Netherlands, 17 to 25 per cent by 2013.

Impact of EU programmes

Whatever the state of policy on mobility, there can be no doubt that European programmes and action continue to have an extremely strong impact on national policy and action in this field. Indeed, it would be fair to say that, in some countries, national policy does not

extend very far beyond implementing particular European mobility programmes. Moreover, the majority of countries mentioned at least one European programme as a part of their national policy measures, with Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, and Tempus featuring very strongly.

European mobility programmes also appear to have an important impact on the availability of information on student mobility. Although student numbers for certain forms of mobility extend far beyond the numbers participating in European programmes, in several countries the only data that are systematically collected are those required for participation in European programmes.

This suggests that European-level policy and programme developments, as far as mobility is concerned, are acting as extremely important catalysts in stimulating national action. Moreover, where countries have been taking serious initiatives to develop their own policy, they are building on existing European programmes and actions.

Focus on the social dimension of higher education

The ‘social dimension’ has been an integral, and increasingly important, part of the Bologna Process, although the nature of the concept was clarified only in 2007, when the London Communiqué defined the objective of the social dimension as the ‘societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations’. In order to move towards this objective, countries agreed that the social dimension should be understood as ‘an evolutionary process leading to the objective that requires the ongoing commitment and effort from all relevant stakeholders’ (Ministry of Education and Research [Sweden], 2007: 6). On this basis, each country pledged to develop its own strategy and action plan for the social dimension, which would initially call for the identification of any under-represented groups.

Although one of the most significant trends in European higher education in the past decade has been the considerable expansion of the sector, this expansion has not benefited all societal groups in equal measure. However, almost all EHEA countries are trying

to address this issue, using various policy approaches. Most of them combine policy actions focusing on selected societal groups with general policy measures targeting all students (or prospective students). These measures commonly include financial support schemes, outreach programmes, provision of alternative access routes to higher education, and guidance and counselling services.

Definitions of under-represented societal groups

Although national definitions of under-represented societal groups vary from country to country, there are important points of convergence in priorities and approaches. In most cases, national authorities identify several categories of under-represented groups.

Across the Bologna countries, under-representation is most often linked to socio-economic background, parents' educational attainment, minority status, or disability. Other categories such as gender (with targeted groups being either men or women depending on the country and field of study), mature students, insufficient formal educational qualifications for entry into higher education, and geographical region (i.e. isolated rural areas) are also relatively common.

Reasons for under-representation

Countries identify a variety of reasons for the under-representation of particular societal groups. For students at a socio-economic disadvantage, often-cited reasons for under-representation are poor performance at school, lack of motivation to complete secondary education or to attend university, and lack of family experience of the benefits of higher education. Thus, the main explanations for under-representation lie in educational and societal failure prior to higher education. Research in the United Kingdom also suggests that the main factors for under-representation of students from a low socio-economic background include lack of aspiration and the gap in educational attainment between different socio-economic classes. There are particular government measures designed to raise aspiration and attainment, including narrowing the gap in educational attainment between socio-economic classes.

Specific features of some education systems might have a negative impact on equal opportunity and widening participation. The most common examples relate to the early streaming of children and selection policies in secondary schools. In systems that tend towards early educational stratification, students from lower-status socio-economic backgrounds are statistically more likely to 'opt for' (or to have no option but) a vocational training route, from which it is more difficult to continue to higher education. As a consequence, some countries, including Finland, Ireland, and Sweden, have focused on diversifying the entry routes to higher education. Policy measures in this area include easing access for mature students and people with vocational and other non-traditional educational qualifications, as well as developing part-time and flexible learning options.

Under-representation is often the result of a combination of factors. For example, when socio-economic disadvantage is combined with minority or immigrant status, the resulting barriers can be very difficult to overcome. Moreover, countries often mention a lack of attention to stereotyping and ethnically biased perspectives in school curricula.

Selection and/or admissions procedures in higher education are mentioned by some countries as leading to bias against the members of some groups. In the United Kingdom (Scotland), this issue is explicitly addressed by a range of measures under the heading of 'fair admission initiatives'. Other institutional factors are also perceived as constituting significant obstacles for widening access to particular societal groups. France, for example, points out that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more affected by academic failure during the first cycle, which can be due in part to insufficient knowledge of the range of study options. This has led France to develop policies of active guidance to potential students. Thus, some efforts to widen participation aim also at developing awareness among prospective and current students of available support in terms of financial aid and guidance.

It is interesting to note that, although countries most commonly perceive problems of participation related to low socio-economic

status, they rarely make explicit mention of the costs of higher education as a potential reason for under-representation.

For people with disabilities, the most common reasons cited by countries for under-representation are insufficiently adapted infrastructure, lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials, and funding problems. The same issues are also perceived in compulsory education, with several countries mentioning the negative impact of segregated education. Interestingly, very few countries mentioned psychological barriers created by perceived negative attitudes towards disability. The exceptions are Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom (Scotland), which mention the lack of a ‘disability acceptance culture’ within higher education institutions and the negative impact of stereotyping. These countries’ statements chime with empirical qualitative research findings concerning students with disabilities that stress that creating an inclusive higher education environment is at least as important as adapting physical infrastructure.

Benchmarks and targets for social objectives

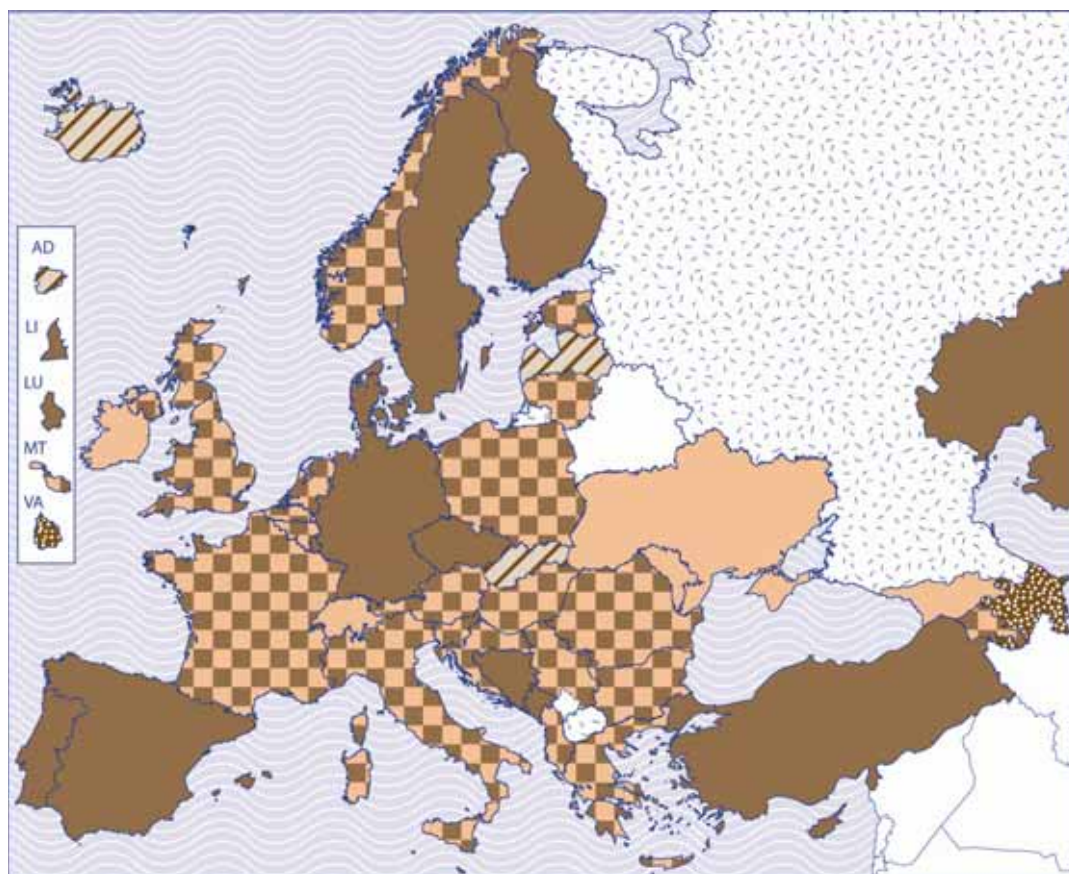
Defining and identifying under-represented groups is clearly a topic that needs to be examined and understood in relation to each country’s specific socio-economic and cultural context. Beyond this, however, there are higher-level policy questions regarding the purposes for identifying under-represented groups in the first place and the measures being taken to improve their participation in and completion of higher education.

Although most countries express a general policy concern to improve the social dimension of higher education, very few appear to have actually linked this concern to the Bologna commitment of raising the participation of under-represented groups to the point where the distribution of the higher education population mirrors that of the overall population. Indeed, it is more common for countries to take measures to increase overall participation in higher education and to hope that in so doing the numbers of students from under-represented groups will also rise.

As shown in *Figure 4.2*, approaches to widening access to higher education can take various forms: a general policy

approach targeting all categories of students, measures focusing on under-represented groups, or – in most cases – a combination of both.

Figure 4.2 National policy approaches to widening participation in higher education (2010/2011)



- Under-represented groups are identified and targeted measures taken to counteract under-representation.
- There is a general policy approach to increase and widen participation in HE.
- Countries implementing a different approach.
- Countries whose HE policy does not reflect the goal of widening participation.
- Data not available.

Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Note: HE = higher education.

It is rare, however, for countries to formulate specific targets or benchmarks for increasing the participation of under-represented groups. Ireland and Finland are good examples in this respect.

In Ireland, targets for several groups are described in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008–2013. The overall objective is for all socio-economic groups to have entry rates of at least 54 per cent by 2020. To meet this objective, large increases in participation will be required for certain groups. For example, the participation of ‘non-manual workers’ has to double to reach this target. Ireland has also set targets for other societal groups, notably for students with sensory, physical, and multiple disabilities (participation to double by 2013) and for mature students (participation to rise to at least 20 per cent of total full-time entrants by 2013).

In Finland, according to the 2007–2012 development plan for education and research, the share of immigrant students in higher education should correspond to their share in the overall population (Ministry of Education [Finland], 2008).

Monitoring of participation of particular societal groups in higher education

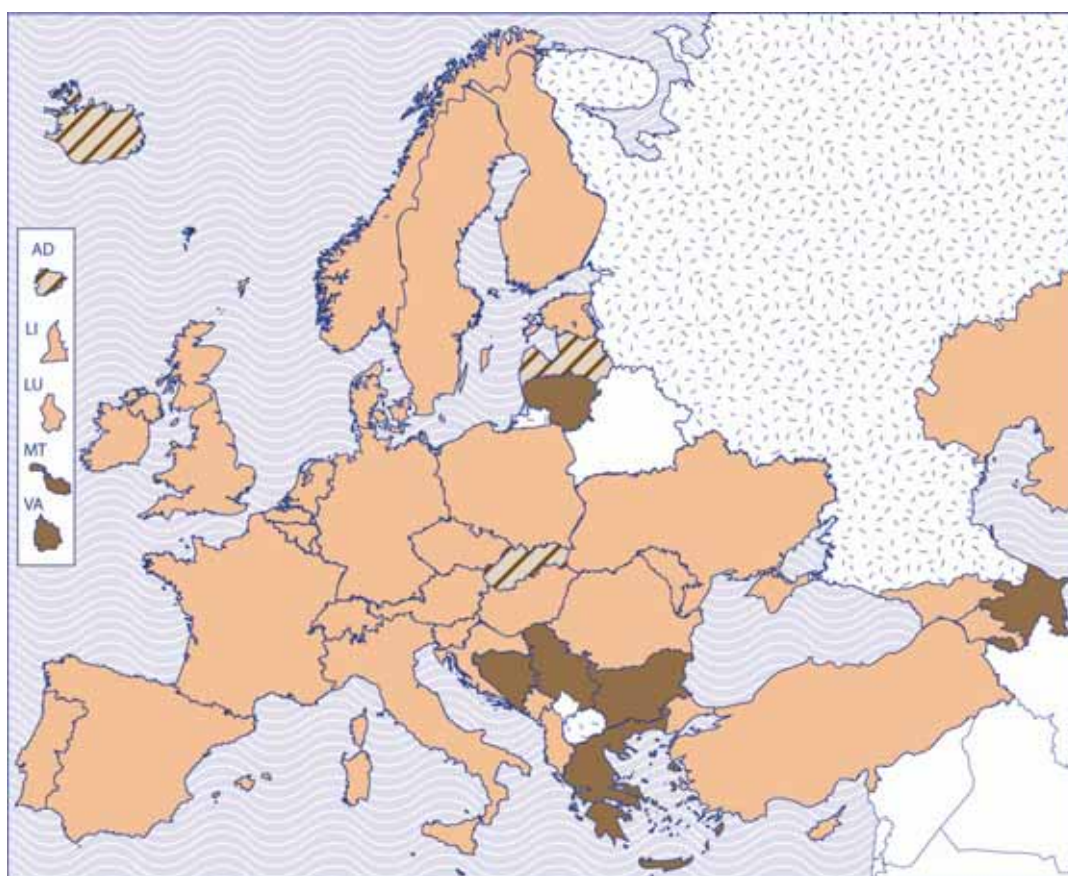
If policies are to address social dimension challenges effectively, it is essential that their impact be carefully monitored. At the same time, monitoring can reveal previously hidden or ignored aspects of under-representation, and bringing this to light can be a source of new action to stimulate participation.

As *Figure 4.3* illustrates, most EHEA countries have put in place systematic activities to monitor the composition of the student body according to various characteristics (e.g. gender, disability, age, social background, and migrant status). These data, in turn, can be used to evaluate the effect of measures to widen participation in higher education. Monitoring activities are frequently part of regular collections of statistical data, which are often made public.

The impact of policies to overcome under-representation is usually monitored by the ministry of education or an equivalent institution. Impact assessment, however, is not undertaken in every country. Nevertheless, a number of governments have put in place

a range of direct and indirect steering mechanisms. The central authorities in the Flemish Community of Belgium have established management agreements with higher education institutions concerning diversity targets and leave it up to the institutions to take appropriate actions to meet these targets.

Figure 4.3 Existence of monitoring activities allowing evaluation of the effect of measures to increase participation in higher education (2010/2011)



The goal of widening participation is reflected in HE policy ...

... and the impact of measures is monitored.

... but the impact of measures is not monitored.

Countries not reflecting the goal of widening participation in their HE policy.

Data not available.

Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

Note: HE = higher education.

Systematic collection of data on the number of students of each under-represented group and their completion rates started only recently and at the time of writing is undertaken only in a minority of countries. In Ireland, for instance, progress has been made over recent years in the development of a student record system within the Higher Education Authority, and in 2007 higher education institutions began for the first time to collect access-relevant data using a common template. This ‘equal access’ student data initiative will provide comparable information on the social, economic, and cultural background of entrants to higher education, as well as information relating to disabilities. This will underpin future funding allocations for access and will allow target setting to be undertaken. It also aims to provide a better understanding of the impact of existing strategies.

In the French Community of Belgium, a Higher Education Observatory was created by law in 2008 and has been operational since 1 January 2009. It is responsible for collecting data, statistics, and information related to all aspects of higher education and the student population. In the near future, it should provide systematic data on the social dimension that will facilitate the implementation of specific policies. A number of other measures – particularly targeted at supporting first-generation higher education students – were brought into effect through the same legislation.

Targeted measures

The majority of Bologna countries have developed specific actions to widen access. Two of these measures are clearly far more widespread than the others: the use of special admission procedures and targeted scholarships and grants for members of under-represented groups. Other measures that are frequently mentioned include outreach programmes, the provision of guidance and counselling services, and information campaigns directed at members of under-represented groups.

In many countries, the responsibility for the organization and implementation of many of these measures is delegated to higher education institutions, and, as a consequence, collation of information and reports at the national level is often lacking.

Overall, the use of financial or other incentives for higher education institutions to increase participation of particular groups is not very common. However, four countries report that they aim to link some of the public funding for higher education institutions to the number of students from under-represented groups that are enrolled in each institution. In the Flemish Community of Belgium and Poland, when determining the operational budget of higher education institutions, extra weight is given to students from low socio-economic backgrounds and with disabilities. In addition, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, extra funding is available for projects that establish structural provisions for diversity within higher education institutions. The Romanian Ministry of Education maintains dialogue with Roma associations and provides specific grants for young people in these communities.

Developing policies for lifelong learning in higher education

Although discussion of lifelong learning has grown rapidly in frequency and importance in recent years, the range of national responses to this issue suggest that there is still no widely accepted European or international definition of the concept in the context of higher education. Indeed, the term ‘lifelong learning’ can be very wide-reaching, is often understood in different ways in different countries, and may evolve as contextual factors change. Depending on the national context, it can refer to adult learning or, more broadly, to ‘non-traditional’ students in either a formal or informal environment. It can also be limited to ‘supplementary (i.e. non-degree) study programmes’. In some countries, a wide range of activities and services can be included under this concept, including part-time, distance, ‘mixed-mode’, and adult learning, e-learning, open learning, evening/weekend learning, community/outreach learning, and more. In other countries, the scope of lifelong learning study options is more limited, with evening or distance learning being the more common forms. The term ‘part-time’ student may also be variously defined, with very different consequences for the potential student population from one country to another.

There is no doubt that economic reality has driven the recent push for attention to lifelong learning, as national policy discussions focus on the development of an effective and sustainable workforce for the knowledge society. This lifelong learning agenda challenges countries and institutions to reorient provision to enable a broader range of individuals to fulfil their potential. The lack of a common definition of lifelong learning in higher education also hinders the identification of coherent policies on this issue.

Lifelong learning as a recognized mission of institutions

The growing preoccupation of governments and stakeholders with the lifelong learning perspective has led to concrete developments in most Bologna countries. Almost everywhere, lifelong learning is currently a recognized mission of either all or some higher education institutions. Where it is a mission of only some institutions, this is often related to questions of institutional autonomy, with some institutions choosing to focus on the mission of lifelong learning and others to avoid it. Consequently, the extent to which programmes and courses are oriented to potential lifelong learners can vary considerably, but the mission is acknowledged almost everywhere.

Furthermore, in a significant number of countries, at least some higher education institutions are legally required to offer lifelong learning services. The earliest such legal act was adopted in France in 1968, with further modernizing legislation in 2002 that created the current comprehensive system of recognition of prior learning. By 1990, only two other countries – Malta (1988) and Italy (1990) – had adopted similar legislation to encourage the development of lifelong learning in higher education.

Over the past decade, however, a significant number of countries have adopted legislation related to higher education's responsibility for lifelong learning. These laws either generically define lifelong learning as a mission for higher education institutions or compel institutions to offer special access routes, provide certain types of programmes, or engage in activities aimed at the general and working population.

Funding lifelong learning

Data on funding of lifelong learning activities remain scattered and are often unavailable at the national level. In most cases, public budgets for higher education do not contain funding specifically earmarked for lifelong learning. As institutions have become more autonomous, they now more often receive lump-sum funding, and it is up to them to decide on the allocation of funds in line with the legal requirements in effect.

Another reason for the lack of overall data is the great diversity of funding sources for lifelong learning activities. Lifelong learning activities are financed through municipal, regional, and national public funds, as well as private sources. The latter can be contributions from business and industry or from individuals through tuition and variously named fees.

From the standpoint of potential lifelong learning students, barriers to lifelong learning may exist in the form of age restrictions for student support measures and social benefits. From a policy perspective, however, the need for comprehensive and reliable data on the amounts and types of spending on lifelong learning cannot be overemphasized. Such information would allow better monitoring of lifelong learning activities. Knowledge about how and to what extent lifelong learning is implemented in higher education institutions would provide a more coherent picture about the degree to which the goal set by the ministers has been achieved and would help further policy development.

Overall, it may be said that the progress made in integrating lifelong learning as an aspect of the missions of institutions has not yet positioned it at the core of higher education everywhere.

Promoting lifelong learning

Various channels and actors are used to inform the public about lifelong learning opportunities. Some countries leave it to higher education institutions and local offices of labour agencies; others organize information campaigns at the central level. A majority of the Bologna countries have dedicated websites providing information to interested parties.

About half of the governments in the Bologna countries have implemented some measures to stimulate cooperation between the private sector (i.e. business and industry) and higher education institutions. This cooperation ranges from developing the content of lifelong learning programmes through regular dialogue between employer representatives and education institutions to close cooperation between governmental institutions, higher education institutions, and employers.

The promotion of lifelong learning is inextricably linked to the social dimension of higher education. Equal opportunity in higher education can become a reality only when study paths are more flexible and the world of higher education is more closely aligned with developments in society at large. In particular, higher education must be responsive to the demands of the European knowledge society and the challenges of demographic change. This requires sustained attention to increasing and widening participation in higher education.

* * *

The overall picture of the state of national implementation of the Bologna action lines and commitments in several policy areas reveals that the Bologna Process has brought about fundamental and dramatic change in signatory countries. Yet European higher education is dynamic and evolving in a fast-changing context, and hence new challenges are inevitably emerging. In particular, the combination of an unprecedented expansion in participation in higher education, the implementation of system reforms, and the stagnation of public funding is creating enormous pressure on the higher education sector. The need to intensify cooperation at the European level is becoming ever more acute, and improved monitoring mechanisms are essential to assess the impact of ongoing reforms.

V. Main challenges in implementing reforms

Diversity in implementation

While the outcomes of the Bologna Process are in many ways striking for the degree of convergence that they have brought to the systems of the 47 signatory countries, there is a great deal of diversity in how countries have addressed different aspects of implementation. The speed and degree of implementation are influenced by national education agendas and priorities, as well as by the date of joining the process. While the subject has not yet been addressed within the official fora of the Bologna Process, it would also appear that some countries are less committed to agreed Bologna goals than others. This tendency may or may not prove to be a significant issue in the future.

Most of the countries have adopted laws and regulations that establish comparable and compatible structures and procedures. However, while some aspects of reform appear at a superficial level to show a high degree of convergence, in reality new forms of diversification are also emerging. Indeed, the understanding and actual use of Bologna instruments at institutional level varies both between and inside countries.

Fast-changing context

At a higher level, it is also clear that the reform agenda for European higher education is constantly evolving, as is the broader context in which higher education systems operate. The socio-economic conditions of countries have triggered a variety of responses, some of which may collide with other goals of the Bologna Process. For example, will high levels of mobility be feasible when student fee and support arrangements continue to diversify in significant ways? In the most extreme examples, Europe now includes countries where no students pay fees but nearly all receive support, as well as countries where all pay fees and few receive support. These issues, combined with very different policies on funding higher education

institutions, create new challenges in the emerging European higher education landscape.

Stakeholder information and engagement

It is also vital for the success of the process that the engagement of all stakeholders be maintained. While the development of frameworks and the changes to legislation have largely been accomplished, it is now time for the reforms to exert their full impact on the daily lives of students, academics, and employers. Looked at from this perspective, the real work of the Bologna Process is just beginning.

Many in our societies, including the key stakeholders, have received scanty, biased, or incorrect information about the nature of the process. The difficulty is that there is no quick fix for this issue. There can be no single source of truth in a broad, open, and democratic process, and hence there is always a risk that certain ideas and agreements will be used and misused in the pursuit of specific ideological agendas. Thus, while in general higher education stakeholders who are well informed tend strongly to be engaged and supportive, there is nevertheless widespread and strong resistance to Bologna reforms. In fact, this resistance tends to be directed at other processes that are perceived as a threat to a desired form of higher education provision. Such processes include greater privatization and the unleashing of market forces in public higher education systems. In the minds of many European students and academics, a neo-liberal agenda has become associated with the word 'Bologna'.

While the Bologna Process does provide a space for discussion on the place of market values in higher education, there is a rich irony in the association of the process with such free-market ideology. Although Bologna can be understood as offering a response to increasing economic and societal pressure worldwide, all official texts have constantly reaffirmed the values of public responsibility for higher education and given strong attention to the social dimension of higher education. Thus, while some observers continue to portray the Bologna Process as an instrument of a neo-liberal political agenda for European higher education, others are acting to use it as a barrier and restraint to such an agenda.

Nevertheless, at a time when the key challenges for the future relate to implementation within higher education institutions, the key issue is going to be whether the stakeholders are engaged positively in the implementation of reforms. At this stage, it is difficult to predict the final outcome, but it is clear that public authorities need to think much more about information and discussion with stakeholders and citizens. Perhaps the greatest failure of the Bologna Process so far has been in its communication with wider society. If citizens – including employers, academics, students, and parents – do not understand why reforms are necessary and have no say in how they are implemented, these reforms cannot succeed. Creating a genuine societal understanding of and support for the process therefore remains the greatest challenge for the future.

VI. The global dimension of the Bologna Process and its impact on developments in higher education in other world regions

In the past decade, the Bologna Process has generated considerable interest among policy-makers and higher education experts around the world. Countries beyond Europe are following the changes in European higher education systems and considering how to respond to Bologna and/or how to better align with the Bologna reforms. There has been active discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Bologna in terms of both content and process, as well as of its relevance to developments in other regions.

This interest in the Bologna Process can be attributed to several causes. The first is the general appeal of the idea of integration and harmonization of diverse higher education systems. Around the world, there is a growing understanding that regional cooperation is vital to facilitate the international mobility of students and workers. In addition, the development of certain specific Bologna tools, such as trans-border recognition of qualifications and mechanisms for quality assurance (QA), has proven to be of particular relevance for other regions.

This section will examine how and why the Bologna Process has become a focus of attention for regional and national higher education policy-making around the world. It will refer to initiatives that can be regarded as broadly inspired by the European example. As in other cases, the real challenge is efficiently to adapt ideas and structures to fit into local contexts.

The global appeal of the Bologna reforms

The core objectives of the Bologna Process – encouraging mobility and working towards regional cooperation and mutual recognition – address challenges common to other regions. Policy-makers and institution leaders recognize that harmonization and regional collaboration can help promote greater mobility of students and academics, increase the transparency of national higher education

systems, and support the mutual recognition of diplomas. All of these objectives are part of the Bologna agenda, and the experience of the past decade provides interesting policy lessons, especially at a time when middle-income countries are giving increasing priority to higher education and research as they seek to create more skilled workforces and strengthen their economic competitiveness. More countries around the world clearly see the need for modernized education systems that can assist their rapid development and confirm their place in the global knowledge economy, as well as help overcome a range of developmental challenges. For many developing countries, limited resources and prevention of brain drain are also important reasons for increasing regional collaboration.

The Bologna drive for international openness

An equally important driver of the increasing international importance of the Bologna Process is the fact that the Bologna countries themselves have increasingly emphasized the need for international cooperation beyond Europe. While in the initial 1999–2003 period the focus was mainly on intra-European cooperation, since 2005 the Bologna countries have demonstrated increasing interest in cooperation and policy dialogue with higher education systems around the world. In the 2005 Bergen Communiqué, the ministers made commitments to work towards ‘enhancing the understanding of the Bologna Process in other continents by sharing their experience with reform processes and engaging into a dialogue on issues of mutual interest like recognition of qualifications, the benefits of cooperation based upon partnership, mutual trust and understanding’ (‘The European Higher Education Area: Achieving the Goals’, 2005: 3).

At the London ministerial conference in 2007, the ministers adopted the strategy ‘The EHEA in a Global Setting’ and agreed to work in several policy areas:

- improving information on the EHEA,
- promoting European higher education to increase its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness,
- strengthening cooperation based on partnership,
- intensifying policy dialogue,

- furthering recognition of qualifications ('European Higher Education in a Global Setting', 2007).

The 2009 Bologna report on progress in international cooperation with non-Bologna partners stated that:

the Bologna Process has made it easier for countries, organizations and higher education institutions outside Europe to cooperate with their counterparts in Europe, and vice versa ... While a lot has already been done in the fields of information, promotion, recognition as well as policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership, further action is needed to sustain existing initiatives, to respond to the growing interest in the Bologna Process and to manage the high but very different expectations from across the world (Austria, 2009: 21).

The same report advances recommendations for a range of specific measures including:

- Providing adequate information that specifically targets non-Bologna countries; creating a Bologna-wide online information system on scholarships.
- Intensifying balanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation with partners across the world (e.g. in the framework of relevant EU programmes and projects).
- Developing a Bologna policy forum involving dialogue on specific topics, such as mobility, QA, recognition, student involvement, and governance, or on higher education reforms in general.
- The ENIC and NARIC² networks should identify partners in other regions and should seek to establish dialogue on recognition policy.
- The ENIC and NARIC networks should make use of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention as a guide to good practice in the assessment of qualifications from countries that are not legally bound by the convention and as a basis for dialogue on recognition policy.

2. ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region; NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union.

Bologna as an example of sustainable cooperation

The governance of the Bologna Process, its non-binding nature, and its evolution are worth exploring and could offer interesting insights for similar policy initiatives elsewhere in the world.

Considering the experience of the past decade and the vast changes that have occurred as a result, the Bologna Process can be seen as a good example of cooperation based on partnership. It has brought together 47 countries that are marked by major differences in culture, population, size, per capita income, language, traditions, and educational structures.

Moreover, the Bologna Process has helped establish a permanent dialogue among all stakeholders at the national level and across Europe. These stakeholders include national administrations, universities and professional higher education institutions, student unions, QA agencies, employer organizations, and others. They are involved in the decision-making process and committed to successful implementation of the various Bologna tools. It is clear that progress would not have been possible without the combination of the political commitment of governments, the active engagement of the European Commission, and the strong role of university associations and student unions. The Council of Europe – an international organization covering all the Bologna countries, whose primary role is in the upholding of human rights – and UNESCO have also added more authority to the process.

The Bologna Process also highlights the importance of consultation and monitoring through activities such as stakeholder discussions, ministerial meetings, and expert working groups. One of its clear achievements is increased transparency and improved information about important aspects of European higher education, including through the well-established process of benchmarking of country performances against commonly agreed objectives.

An impetus for closer cooperation in other regions

The past decade has shown that the Bologna process has global implications for higher education. As stated in one analysis, ‘it is quite likely that the Bologna Process will become the yardstick

against which other higher education systems will be compared internationally' (CMEC Quality Assurance Subcommittee, 2008: 7). The Bologna influence on higher education policies outside Europe can be illustrated with several examples of broadly comparable initiatives that aim for greater regional cooperation. These regional harmonization efforts include credit transfer systems, QA frameworks, diploma supplements, and the establishment of research clusters. To a certain degree, some of them can be seen as illustrating the global impact of the Bologna Process.

Asia: Australia has led an attempt to establish an Asia-Pacific process similar to the Bologna Process, which has become known as the Brisbane Process. The Brisbane Communiqué was signed on 3–4 April 2006 by 27 Asia-Pacific education ministers and senior officials who met in Brisbane, Australia. The ministers agreed to encourage regional student and academic mobility and exchange and to address barriers to these activities. The communiqué also referred to the need to establish common QA standards and cooperation for enhanced recognition in the region (Brisbane Communiqué, 2006).

In South-East Asia, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED), which is hosted by the government of Thailand, has been raising awareness and taking steps to create a South-East Asian higher education space among its 10 member countries. The four priority areas for its activities are student mobility, QA, credit transfer system, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations research clusters (SEAMEO RIHED, 2011).

Latin America and the Caribbean: One of the strategic objectives of the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE), which includes more than 300 institutions and national university associations in 26 countries, is to support the development of common Inter-American areas of higher education. In particular, IOHE works to reinforce and promote the actions of the Latin American and Caribbean Common Area of Higher Education (ELES/ENLACES), which is to be an 'innovative and flexible common space' that is built in a collaborative manner and contains the 'basic policies and formal conditions' for a common area of higher education: quality, credit transfer and accumulation systems,

curricular harmonization, a common framework of qualifications, and the recognition of academic titles (OUI-IOHE, 2010).

Africa: Considerable efforts have been made to create an African higher education space. The African Union's higher education harmonization strategy was endorsed by education ministers in 2007. The focus is on three key areas: qualifications recognition, harmonization of systems, and QA. An ambitious goal has been set for 2015, when a continental framework of higher educational qualifications is expected to be in place (MacGregor, 2011). There have been separate initiatives at the sub-regional level. One example is the work undertaken by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) to foster regional cooperation and facilitate student mobility in the region, including through the reform of the three-cycle degree system.³ African higher education discussions have also been inspired by the focus within the Bologna Process on public responsibility for higher education and more recently by the increasing attention to the social dimension. This framework has enabled European and African higher education institutions to undertake a number of joint projects, focusing on issues such as equity and access to higher education (EUA, 2010).

North America: Higher education experts in the United States and Canada have identified elements of the Bologna Process that could be adapted to their national contexts of highly decentralized and diverse education. Several reports from US higher education leaders have drawn attention to the advances being made in Europe through the Bologna Process, comparing the situation in the United States unfavourably with the new landscape emerging in Europe. For these experts, the Bologna Process should act as a wake-up call for higher education reform in the United States (Adelman, 2008a, 2008b, 2009).

There are also examples of work that started in Europe in the context of Bologna being 'exported' and adapted to the North American context. One prominent example is the pilot Tuning USA project⁴ which has been influenced by the Tuning Educational

3. See, for instance, Bayemi and Dao Sow, 2006.

4. See the Tuning Educational Structures USA website:
www.tuningusa.org/About.aspx.

Structures in Europe project aiming at harmonizing curricula. Discussions have also concentrated on the potential for setting up some form of national degree framework in the United States. In Canada, efforts to establish a pan-Canadian degree qualifications framework and assessment standards for new degree programmes and providers can be broadly compared with some Bologna tools (CMEC, 2007).

North Africa and Middle East: Although countries in these regions are not formally part of the Bologna Process, they have adopted and are flexibly implementing some of the Bologna principles and tools, most notably the degree structure for the bachelor's and master's levels and the credit transfer system. The well-established partnership relations with the European Union and the possibility of participating in joint projects on modernization of higher education play an important role in promoting the Bologna structures and reforms (EACEA, 2010a, 2010b).

* * *

It has been argued that the global relevance of the Bologna Process will continue to grow as the process develops (Scott, 2009). Reflections and in-depth discussions of the implications of the Bologna Process and the extent to which it can provide inspiration for other regions are in progress. As mentioned above, the Bologna countries are committed to an increasing role in the process of internationalization of higher education worldwide.

More generally, it remains to be seen how the Bologna impact will evolve in its second decade and to what extent its fundamental ideas and reforms will influence future developments in non-Bologna countries. Important questions remain, such as the possibility of the emergence of a global mobility system based on Bologna's three-plus-two-year model.

The key issues of the Bologna Process will continue to be of direct relevance to the rest of the world. In addition, progress achieved in specific policy areas such as recognition of diplomas and degrees and quality assurance can serve as good practice. Other regions can benefit from the experience of the Bologna Process by elaborating on their own approaches to regional integration, without necessarily emulating the Bologna model.

VII. Lessons learned for education decision-makers and planners around the world

In 1999, when the Bologna Declaration was signed, it was difficult to look beyond the established timeline for reforms to be undertaken by 2010. It was foreseeable, however, that the process either would prove to be an over-ambitious failure or would set in motion reforms whose impact would need to be evaluated and examined. As this document has illustrated, the Bologna Process has indeed set in motion such reforms in many countries. However, while much has been achieved and considerable structural convergence has undoubtedly occurred, at the same time new forms of divergence have developed. Moreover, similarities in structure often hide considerable differentiation in the way reforms have been conceived and implemented. Thus, the Bologna project is far from being completed, and it is illusory to think that it ever will be. Rather, what has been set in motion is a process of permanent innovation and reform with a significant degree of coordination from both visible and less visible hands. It remains to be seen how the situation will now develop given a new context and reality for European higher education.

It is also important to recognize that when Europeans may have been getting accustomed to the new reality of mass higher education in the Bologna context, they were hit by the financial crisis, economic downturn, and their continuing aftershocks. Higher education has not generally been a priority topic of public debate in the context of the severe economic and financial difficulties experienced since 2008. Nevertheless, higher education systems and institutions are being affected dramatically. The repercussions are likely to be considerable and long-lasting, and those working in the higher education sector would be wise to develop their own analyses of and responses to the situation.

Even before the events of 2008, higher education systems were facing extraordinary challenges and were under severe and increasing pressure. The Bologna Process is in large part a response to these pressures, enabling major changes to take place with less disruption than might otherwise have been the case. As mentioned above, the

Bologna decade has seen a historically unprecedented rise in student participation, with countries typically seeing an expansion of student numbers of the order of 25 per cent. While such expansion would be challenging in any circumstances, the most significant feature about this wave of growth is that it has been achieved without additional funding. Expenditure on higher education as a percentage of GDP has remained practically static, with only minor changes in most countries.

This experience of massification is far from unique to Europe. Indeed, the rise in participation in Europe, though dramatic, has been far outstripped in other regions. In Asia, the excess of student demand over the supply of places has been a major factor in the creation of a new ‘market’ of international students. However, many Asian countries have been investing rapidly in their own systems’ capacity to meet the growing demand, and participation in many countries has already exceeded the European Union’s target for 2020 of 40 per cent participation in higher education.

If Europe is to compete in the global knowledge society, it needs to invest in education, including higher education. A coherent, transparent, and high-quality higher education sector is essential for cultural, economic, and social development. The Bologna objectives provide essential foundations and outline key staging posts. Indeed, it is a striking aspect of today’s reality that challenges cannot be contained within geographic boundaries. And although too seldom acknowledged, it has been of enormous benefit to European countries that they have started to address many higher education challenges together. In this sense, the Bologna Process has perhaps given Europe a head start over many other world regions.

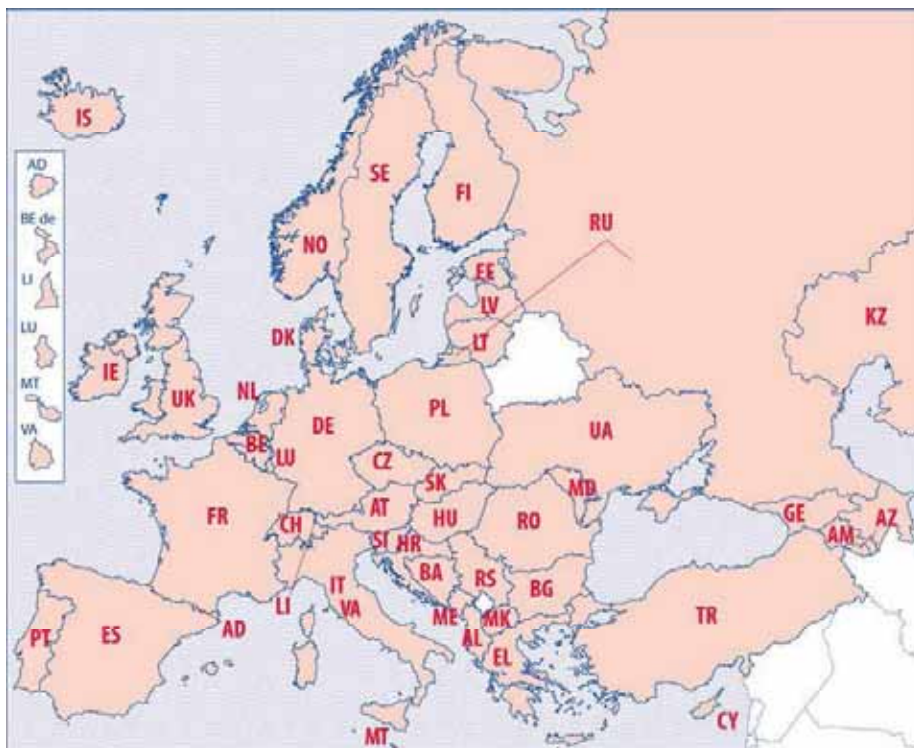
Looking ahead from the outline and action plan presented in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (‘The Bologna Process 2020’, 2009), it is easy to see that there may be less enthusiasm and less dynamism within the process for the further work required. No doubt the financial and economic crisis that began in 2008 has been a major contributor to this shift in mood. However, when countries are looking to respond to economic downturn, the continuing implementation of Bologna reforms can offer an important path for long-term sustainable regeneration. They need, however, to agree at least on certain aspects

of a common vision of what the European Higher Education Area should become, and this is a very challenging task.

The 2009 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué makes an important attempt to outline such a vision, and the key issues highlighted for the next decade mark a significant shift from those of the first Bologna decade. While structural reforms have now taken place across the EHEA, the focus for the future is on giving sense and coherence to these reforms. This shift is equally visible in the Bucharest Communiqué. The emphasis for action has moved away from structural reform towards policies to tackle the social dimension agenda and to help countries face severe economic challenges. Investment in quality higher education, enhancing employability, and strengthening mobility are highlighted as the means to better learning. The ministers have stated that they ‘will especially concentrate on fully supporting our higher education institutions and stakeholders in their efforts to deliver meaningful changes and to further the comprehensive implementation of all Bologna action lines’ (‘Making the Most of Our Potential’, 2012: 1).

Whatever the future for Bologna and European higher education, two things seem clear. First, the process itself has created a dynamic that will not be stopped. Second, the Bologna Process, like higher education institutions themselves, has shown itself capable of adapting to changing reality. As this booklet goes to print, there are fears that the whole European project could unravel as we now appear to be entering uncharted economic and political territory, with institutions, rules, and mechanisms that may prove incapable of dealing with such an unforeseen reality. The Bologna Process offers an interesting counterpoint to these events. Although they have no obligation to do so, 47 countries continue to discuss and debate common goals for higher education and manage to reach consensus on what needs to be done. That nobody appears to be surprised at this is an indication of how far the Bologna Process has come. It is impossible to predict precisely how political, economic, and demographic reality will shape the agenda for higher education in the coming years. However, it seems a safe bet that cooperation and dialogue through the Bologna Process will not only continue but will be a vital means for European higher education to face the challenges of this changing world.

Annex. Country codes



AD	Andorra	DK	Denmark	MD	Moldova	UA	Ukraine
AL	Albania	EE	Estonia	ME	Montenegro	UK-ENG	United Kingdom – England
AM	Armenia	EL	Greece	MK*	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	UK-NIR	United Kingdom – Northern Ireland
AT	Austria	ES	Spain	MT	Malta	UK-SCT	United Kingdom – Scotland
AZ	Azerbaijan	FI	Finland	NL	Netherlands	UK-WLS	United Kingdom – Wales
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	FR	France	NO	Norway	VA	Holy See
BE de	Belgium – German-speaking Community	GE	Georgia	PL	Poland		
BE fr	Belgium – French Community	HR	Croatia	PT	Portugal		
BE nl	Belgium – Flemish Community	HU	Hungary	RO	Romania		
BG	Bulgaria	IE	Ireland	RS	Serbia		
CH	Switzerland	IS	Iceland	RU	Russia		
CY	Cyprus	IT	Italy	SE	Sweden		
CZ	Czech Republic	KZ	Kazakhstan	SI	Slovenia		
DE	Germany	LI	Liechtenstein	SK	Slovakia		
		LT	Lithuania	TR	Turkey		
		LU	Luxembourg				
		LV	Latvia				

* ISO code 3166. Provisional code which does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place under the auspices of the United Nations (http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes/iso_3166_code_lists.htm)

Source: EACEA/Eurydice, 2012.

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This book outlines the development of the Bologna Process, reviewing how it came into existence and the milestones reached over the past decade. It provides a critical examination of the state of implementation of its main policy action lines – such as comparable degree structures and quality assurance systems – and assesses its impact in fostering greater student mobility, widening participation in higher education, and developing lifelong learning.

The impact of the Bologna Process as a driver of reform is set against challenges in implementing agreed goals. And the authors point to the diversity of results across the 47 signatory countries, highlighting problems with the use of instruments at the institutional level.

The book also discusses how the Bologna Process has become a focus of attention for higher education policy-making around the world, presenting examples of the policy initiatives it has inspired. Finally, it considers the lessons to be learned from this European experience, and the challenges to be met in the future.

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