The Bologna Process

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EHEA – a political reality

- 48 member countries
- 20 years of existence for the Bologna Process
- 9 years since the launch of the European Higher Education Area
EHEA Characteristics

Inter-governmental, voluntary, without a permanent Secretariat

“Process of voluntary convergence and coordinated reform” of national HE systems

Inclusive – involves European stakeholder organisations (HEIs, academic faculty, students, QA agencies, business representatives etc.)

Includes another political space – the European Union, while engaging in a complex interaction with it

Grounded on European values:
- public responsibility for HE,
- institutional autonomy,
- academic freedom,
- commitment to integrity
- and stakeholder participation
EHEA evolution

Launching:

Development:
Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005

Consolidation:

Establishment:
Budapest/Wien 2010, Bucharest 2012

Prioritisation and reaffirmation of key values:
Yerevan 2015, Paris 2018

New direction in Rome?
What should it achieve?

1. More coherent and comparable national HE systems

2. Engagement in dialogue with other HE areas (Bologna Policy Forum)

3. Enhanced competitiveness and attractiveness of Europe as an international HE hub

4. A European dimension to HE across the continent and enhance mobility of students and staff
The Bologna Process
EHEA Achievements

1. A space for policy dialogue, a common vocabulary and a sizeable group of Bologna Process experts.

2. Three cycle system and ECTS implemented almost fully across the EHEA.

3. 38 countries have functional qualification frameworks, compatible with the QF-EHEA.

4. Almost all countries have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

5. QA = European Standards and Guidelines for QA (which now includes Student Centered Learning and attention to recognition practices) and EQAR.

6. EHEA Mobility target: 20% by 2020 (EHEA Strategy to support it).

7. Increased stakeholder participation in decision-making.

8. It is still an ongoing process, with (sadly, declining) political commitment.
Challenges

Reform fatigue & search for an identity
in line with the new European context
(impact of migration, financial crisis, demographic downturn, Euroscepticism, extremism and terrorism etc.)

Uneven implementation and difficult translation
of the Bologna Process goals
at the level of academic communities

The move from structural to in-depth reforms
(social dimension, enhancing teaching and learning, linking EHEA with the European Research Area etc.)
EHEA policy documents
Aids in implementation

The revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

The revised ECTS Users’ Guide, as an official EHEA document
Paris 2018 – a vision or realpolitik?

- Acknowledgement of uneven implementation
- Ongoing focus on integrative processes (QA, recognition, diploma supplement, mobility, ECTS)
- Enhanced focus on teaching and learning
- A more ambitious (read: functional) EHEA
- Giving Bologna a meaning before the 2020 ministerial conference
A Belarus strategy for 2018-2020

Key commitments and peer support

- Group A: QF, ECTS
- Group B: Recognition
- Group C: Quality assurance

Short cycle qualifications as a stand-alone qualification level within the overarching Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)

Revised Diploma Supplement, with a recommendation for its adoption in identical form in the respective frameworks of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and Europass
Issues: an emerging EU core?

- There are multiple speeds in EHEA integration
- European Union/EEA members benefit from free movement, mobility programs and similar or common legislative frameworks
- European Universities: a tool that will foster greater factual integration?
- Education a priority in the context of Brexit
- Multi-speed integration with the European core (e.g. Turkey is a party to Erasmus+ despite not being a member).
- Risk of non-EU EHEA members being separated from the rest
State of implementation by 2018

Some areas are nearly fully implemented across the EHEA. These include the three cycles, recognition or use of quality assurance.

Assessment of implementation is still largely dependent on countries reports and does not necessarily reflect *de facto* implementation.

Ongoing, slow improvements

Others are work in progress (e.g. at the `developing strategies` stage). These include teaching and learning, the social dimension, employability (dependent on economic contexts), internationalization and common values.
Beyond technical reforms…

“The Bologna Process has created a **space for dialogue and cooperation** which reaches far beyond Europe. Dialogue not just about the technicalities of credit systems and quality assurance, but about the fundamental principles – freedom of expression, tolerance, freedom of research, free movement of students and staff, student involvement and the co-creation of learning – that reflect the basic values on which European society is based.”

Tibor Navracsics,
Commissioner responsible for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport
Preface to the 2015 Bologna Process implementation report
Lessons learned (1)

**Formal implementation is different from results achieved**

E.g. national qualification frameworks (NQF) are in place, but few national cases that managed real involvement of employers, in order for NQF to be recognised and used.

**Policy instruments need to be fit for purpose and in line with the current realities**

(QA and QF are clear examples in this regard)

**Reaching mutual understanding of policy priorities and instruments**

is perhaps the most underestimated feature of an educational space. No overarching cooperation in HE can be achieved only with governmental commitment.
Lessons learned (2)

Public support from the wider public for the HE policy space is essential.

No progress without **real political commitment** (no double discourse) and joint effort of stakeholders towards common goals (with ownership feeling).

For more effective policies, **reliable research** based on sound data is needed - enhance the role of HE research and the dialogue with policy makers.

(see the Bologna Process Researchers Conferences in 2011 and 2014)

**Coherence with other policy areas**: primary and secondary education, LLL, research, employment, foreign policy, immigration etc.

National or regional ‘recipes’ for reform **cannot be exported**.
Considerations for the future

Fatigue has put EHEA development on the backburner.

The EU is powering ahead with more in depth initiatives.

Some members have seen the rise of authoritarian tendencies.

Common values are threatened amid a nationalist resurgence.

As Bologna becomes less prominent it risks being downgraded by competing national agendas.

Bologna Process is a ‘living animal’. It is and will be what countries make of it.

European HE systems are closer together in 2019 than they were in 1999/2009.
Thank you!

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