



Bologna Conference

Fostering student mobility: next steps?

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Involving stakeholders for an improved mobility inside the EHEA

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Report of Working Session 3

1. Bologna, attractiveness and mobility

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to attractiveness of a HEI and/or a national HE system.

Traditional mobility has been *horizontal*: students go and come back. Now, mobility changes to *vertical*: students go to MSc programmes at other HEIs.

Within the vertical mobility, the most 'attractive' student group seems to be *second cycle students*.

Institutions should be attractive for those who aim to come. There is no absolute recipe for institutions how to become attractive.

**2. Are competitiveness, attractiveness,
openness and diversity compatible?**

Of course they are!

3.0 What does attractiveness mean from the stakeholders' perspectives?

Decisive points which determine students' decisions to become mobile:

- (a) educational provision,
- (b) the country (destination),
- (c) finances (and other material issues).

Two horizons of equally importance from students' perspective:

- “*structural dimension*”: the overall quality of (expected) educational provision, the “true value” for an individual student etc.;
- “*social dimension*”: work permits, fees, portability of grants and loans, visas, student rights in general

3.1 ... stakeholders' perspectives

Mobile students' *integration* (both academic and social) is particularly important issue.

Employability is an important criterion to study abroad; yet, it is not the only one.

Institutional cooperation should not be closed in traditional and existing networks. New links and networks between HEIs should be developed to support and to broaden student mobility.

Why/How an individual HEI chooses a (new) partner?
Basic answer: a *trust*! Academic cooperation and academic exchange support building of trust.

4.0 Comparative advantages of the EHEA?

The main advantage of the EHEA remains *diversity*: institutional, cultural, national.

The Bologna Process has developed structural tools which guarantee necessary *compatibility* between national systems.

These tools should be considered as necessary means which allow everyone to enjoy the *richness of European diversities*.

Diversity of *languages* can be considered as an obstacle (linguistic "Babylon") as well as an advantage.

4.1 Comparative advantages of the EHEA?

An important question is: do European HEIs have *capacities to be attractive on a world scale*? How to enhance these capacities? The Bologna cooperation could (should?) contribute to the capacity building.

It is not only important to set up an "attractive" web site; it is even more important to immediately respond to interests expressed from abroad.

In comparison to USA, relatively *lower costs* for students can be also taken as European advantage.

5.0 How can mobility strategies contribute to the attractiveness of HEIs in the EHEA?

Again: no uniform answer. As we are aware that there are different groups of students as well as diverse institutions, different strategies should be developed as well.

However, even at institutional and national levels these strategies haven't been fully developed yet and this is one of reasons why the construction of a European strategy faces so many challenges.

We have to build upon the Bologna-style "Open Method of Cooperation" and make further developments on basis of good practice and mutual learning.

5.1 How can mobility strategies contribute to the attractiveness of HEIs in the EHEA?

There are certain points which should be stressed with regard to this question:

- *brain circulation* ó and *not brain drain* ó can importantly contribute to attractiveness of the EHEA (we need a European policy against brain drain);
- we still lack good, accurate and up-to date *information on study in Europe* (for non-European students);
- ways should be identified *how to attract immigrants* who are already living in EU countries; etc.

5.2 How can mobility strategies contribute to the attractiveness of HEIs in the EHEA?

HEIs should put as much attention as possible to help students competing with challenges of student life, e.g.:

- É transition from secondary to tertiary education,
- É organising supportive measures (counselling, guidance etc.),
- É addressing their special needs, etc.

Student-centred paradigm has a similar potential.

An investment in enhancing teaching skills of academic staff is an investment to attractiveness of their institutions.

In the same sense, improving the (second) language skills of teachers seem very important point on attractiveness agenda.

6. How can joint programmes be further developed and respond to attractiveness challenges?

It seems that legal problems with joint degrees still exist.

After a period of enthusiastic expectation that joint degrees bring answers to almost all questions of mobility and attractiveness we face a relative scepticism.

Legal problems are not the only problems. Joint degrees are very demanding from academic as well as financial point of view; it is difficult to develop them into a real *öbrandö* and their sustainability is often questioned; it seems that they also remain *öunfamiliarö* to employers.

On the other hand, dual degrees are much more feasible and do not encounter the above mentioned problems.

7.1 Recommendations

1. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to attractiveness of HEIs and/or national HE systems. Institutions should be encouraged to develop diverse strategies to attract diverse student groups. While developing attractiveness strategies, institutional, national and European diversities should be considered.

7.2 Recommendations

2. Interconnection of *structural* (compatibility and comparability, convergence of systems) *and social* (partnership, student rights, social support) dimension of the Bologna Process is the backbone of the attractiveness of the emerging EHEA. It should be considered as one of the cornerstones of European Higher Education beyond 2010 as well.

7.3 Recommendations

3. If European Higher Education really aims at an increased attractiveness, *capacities to be attractive* on a world scale should be developed. Concrete action lines should be developed at institutional as well as national level; they should be supported by existing European programmes and capacity building activities within the Bologna Process.