



Bologna Process Follow-Up Seminar
NEW CHALLENGES IN RECOGNITION
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Preliminary Report

Pavel Zgaga, General Rapporteur
University in Ljubljana

Recognition issues in the Bologna Process

- Recognition* is not a magic word of the Bologna Declaration; yet almost its all action lines are closely connected to it:
- “adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees” and “a system based on two (three) cycles”;
 - “establishment of the system of credits”, “including LLL”;
 - “promotion of mobility”;
 - “European co-operation in quality assurance”;
 - “promotion of European dimension in higher education”;
 - “the attractiveness of the EHEA”;
 - “partnership”, “social dimension”, etc.

Recognition is *a cross-cutting Bologna issue*.

Recognition is a term with a broad meaning; e.g.:

- ✓ “macro”: recognition of *foreign qualifications*;
- ✓ “micro”: recognition of *prior (experiential) learning*.

Frequency of some key Bologna terms

	Sorbonne	Bologna	Prague	Berlin	Bergen
Mobility	3	4	8	8	7
Recognition	4	1	4	8	13
Quality A.	0	1	9	11	13
2 (3) Cycles	4	5	3	12	8
Qualification F.	(1)	0	1	5	10
Attractiveness	(1)	(1)	6	3	4
Employability	1	2	2	2	2
LLL	0	1	5	4	2
Learning Out.	0	0	0	1	1
Prior Learning	0	0	0	1	1

Developments vs. delays

Not only the language but the issues have evolved!

Developments are obvious; however, there are also delays.

In Bergen, among other items ministers noted:

- *“that 36 of the 45 participating countries have now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention”*,
- they urged *“those that have not already done so to ratify the Convention without delay”* and
- promised to work *“to improve recognition of prior learning”*.

What is a situation today, that is, 20 months after Bergen, almost 8 years after Bologna and 10 years after Lisbon?

Preliminary reports and some data are already available...

LRC Ratification Process: *ad infinitum*?

LRC ratifications	Bologna members	Ratified	Not yet
May 1999	29	7	22
May 2001	33	21	12
Sept. 2003	40	29	11
May 2005	45	36	9
January 2007	46	39	7
???	0

“Some students have [constant] problems...”



Credit systems and Diploma Supplement

- ECTS gaining ground, both as accumulation system (T5 66% / T3 50%) and as transfer system (T5 75% / T3 68%)
- Yet no improvement in recognising credits from partner institutions: « some students have problems » T5 48% / T3 50%
- Diploma Supplement: 47% of HEIs say they issue it to all students

Go deeper! Go further!

The Process at early stages:

- *negotiating* and *developing* principles;
- *internal focus* – European occupation with Europe

The Process at the present stage:

- *implementation* of principles – elaboration for practice;
- “*looking out*” – cooperation with other parts of the world;
- *the future* – EHEA over 2010?

Bologna is a construction of necessary common “*tools*” and “*frameworks*” (**how** does it work?), but not only.

It is also a “*philosophy*” – it is a reconstruction of our HE systems on basis of *common values* (**why** do we need it?).

Change of minds (e.g. “academic culture”) necessary!

This change already takes place: e.g. good practices in AP(E)L; development of international co-operation, etc.

European HEIs looking out: *Trends V*



International regions of interest

In which areas would your institution most like to enhance its attractiveness?

■ EU	86%	(T3 91%)	-
■ Eastern Europe	62%	(T3 62%)	
■ Asia	58%	(T3 40%)	+
■ US/Canada	50%	(T3 57%)	-
■ Latin America	32%	(T3 32%)	
■ Africa	26%	(T3 24%)	+
■ Arab world	21%	(T3 16%)	+
■ Australia	20%	(T3 23%)	-

Change and resistance

Yet, this *change* does not take place without a *resistance*.
If the new values are so appreciated we should ask – *why*
resistance?

As always in philosophical disputes, values are disputed and
subjected to (different) interpretations.

Since 1999, “*the experience [...] has demonstrated that there is ample room for different and at times conflicting interpretations regarding the duration and orientation of programmes. Especially the employability of 3 year Bachelor graduates continues to be an issue in many countries.*” (Trends IV)

A *dispute* is a “normal” way of changing minds & culture...
However, resistance can also take place when *preconditions*
(resources, skills, “tools” etc.) for change are *not met*.

From Middle Ages to the EHEA

There were *no* obstacles to mobility in *Middle Ages* as well as *no* “foreign qualifications”.

The *national country state* is related to a defence of the “national” (labour) markets & “national qualifications”.

Increasingly different national HE systems limited free mobility and made “qualification customs” necessary.

Today, global world is *increasingly interdependent* – but it remains (culturally, linguistically etc.) *diverse*.

“Protectionism” is not the only reason that our qualifications are not “the same”. *But should they be?*

Consider qualifications *comparable*, not *equal*! In what way?

- ✓ In term of “tools”, *international fora* (communication; discussions; “open method of coordination”) are necessary.
- ✓ In terms of “philosophy” we can draw upon *new pedagogic paradigms* like *learning outcomes*.

Conclusions and Recommendations (1)

The Bologna Seminar *New Challenges in Recognition: recognition of prior learning and recognition between Europe and other parts of the world* was

- a well organised *European/international forum* as well as
- another opportunity to *share good practices* and deepen *understanding of new paradigms* in higher education.

The following conclusions and recommendations can be summarized:

- 1.** First of all, the seminar reaffirmed that *recognition of higher education qualifications, of periods of studies acquired abroad or of prior (experiential) learning are an integral part of the **right to education** and the promotion of the **freedom of movement**.*

Conclusions and Recommendations (2)

2. Participants encourage all European HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities *to assess qualifications from other areas of the world with the same open mind with which they would like European qualifications to be approached elsewhere*, and to assess qualifications from outside Europe according to the criteria and procedures outlined in the CoE/UNESCO Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts.

In view of the great variety of higher education systems and approaches worldwide this should include shifting the emphasis further *from input characteristics* of the qualifications *to the learning outcomes* achieved.

The Convention and its principles should be observed in a spirit of openness to all potential partners and a revision of regional conventions in a mutual dialogue should be encouraged.

Conclusions and Recommendations (3)

- 3. Reliable, easily understandable and easily accessible information on education systems and qualifications frameworks is essential to promoting the fair recognition of qualifications from the EHEA in other parts of the world.*

To a large extent information on educational systems is already provided. Yet, there is a need to adapt this information for easier understanding by those from outside the EHEA who are not familiar with the specific terminology created through the Bologna Process. The information should be made available on the web together with other information on the Bologna Process.

Conclusions and Recommendations (4)

4. Participants firmly support *the proposal to establish policy fora with partners from other areas of the world*, as a part of the Bologna Process in a global context.

They encourage the BFUG to make *recognition the topic of one of these fora*, building on the work undertaken in this area by ENIC/NARIC Networks and involving them closely in this work.

A promotion of cooperation between the ENIC/NARIC Networks and similar networks from other world regions, in particular with a view to the development of a common understanding of recognition criteria, procedures and practices as well as transnational higher education provision is highly recommended.

Conclusions and Recommendations (5)

5. European HEIs rely today on a number of useful tools developed through the Bologna Process and these tools are often well accepted in other areas of the world. These tools should be kept update and efficient. Participants realize that the *Diploma Supplement was designed already in 1998* and that *afterwards European higher education systems have undergone substantial reforms.*

The Diploma Supplement is still well suited but it is *recommended to amend and renew its Explanatory Report* (e.g. joint degrees, workload and credits, quality assurance systems, transnational higher education etc.). Since DS is a joint instrument, amendments have to be adopted both in the framework of the Lisbon Convention Intergovernmental Committee and the European Commission.

Conclusions and Recommendations (6)

6. Participants realize that *recognition of prior learning* and *credit allocation for competences acquired outside formal higher education* (APL/APEL) is well developed only in a relatively small part of the emerging EHEA. Therefore, it is essential that progress be made in this area in the next period and ministers in London should make a specific commitment in this regard. Existing and planned developments to create national lifelong learning systems, including the “new style” qualification frameworks, should include systems to facilitate APL/APEL.

This will, *inter alia*, require that study programmes and individual courses of formal higher education be linked to *learning outcomes* and *competences*. ENIC/NARIC Networks can give information also about APL/APEL and similar strategies in various countries – in Europe and worldwide – and their educational systems.

Conclusions and Recommendations (7)

7. The seminar proved that *recognition issues are substantially interlinked with quality assurance issues*. Therefore, participants encourage ENQA, in conjunction with E-4 partners and other appropriate bodies, to *explore the creation and implementation of good practice* (models, procedures and guidelines) *for recognition procedures in general*, including *APL/APEL*, consistent with their ‘Standards and Guidelines’ and in the context of lifelong learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations (8)

8. National higher education authorities are encouraged to include *elements to facilitate APL/APEL in the national lifelong learning systems*, including the development of ‘new style’ qualifications frameworks.

National authorities are also expected to introduce operational *guidelines and principles for APL/APEL fully integrated with national quality assurance processes* and to promote the widespread implementation and acceptance of APL/APEL and lifelong learning by academics, employers and students.

Conclusions and Recommendations (9)

9. Similarly as in quality enhancement issues, main responsibility for improvement of recognition lies with institutions. All European HEIs are encouraged to *put in place clear processes and practices that transparently detail their internal APL/APEL systems and procedures for staff, students and employers.*

They are also expected to adopt appropriate staff development strategies to overcome barriers to broader implementation of APL/APEL and to ensure that all processes are transparent, fair, rigorous and efficient.

Thank you and goodbye!