

11 March 2010, 13.30 – 14.30, Budapest (9 speakers)

Degree and curricular reform + cooperation in QA (cf paras 8 – 15 of the Executive Summary)

DEGREE AND CURRICULAR REFORM

Bologna has served as a catalyst to improve teaching and the students' learning experience at all three degree levels:

- The three-cycle degree structure is in place for 95% of respondents
- 77% have reviewed curricula in **all** departments
- 53% have developed learning outcomes in **all** courses (and 32% in some courses)
- 46% have changed the organisation of the study programmes to a system based on modules
- Doctoral reforms have proceeded very quickly, with the rapid expansion of Doctoral schools and more attention paid to the supervision and training of Doctoral students and their employment outside academia.

- These changes have not only been structural but represent a real move towards student-centred learning, flexible and transparent learning paths for a greater variety of students, as well as an opportunity to improve the quality of the learning experience

Looking back over the last decade, it is clear that a great deal of progress has been made but employability is still a problem at the Bachelor level. It is clear that some countries are struggling with the notion of a short first degree: this is true for both academics and employers. As evidence of this:

- 45% of universities expect their Bachelor to continue directly to the Master
- Only 37% of Trends respondents track their graduates' career progress and this is more likely the case in countries where the first degree is considered as a legitimate ticket into the labour market

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Much progress has also been achieved in the QA area with the development of internal quality processes by

institutions. Trends data show that for 60% of HEIs, one of the most important changes in the past ten years has been enhanced internal quality processes. This is true particularly for institutions that are interested in European partnerships and those that deliver the Doctorate.

QA at national level has been very dynamic but a recent ENQA survey shows that this has consisted in an accumulation of QA procedures, the predominance of QA at the programme level and the spread of accreditation. These national developments are worrisome. A focus on the external QA of programmes leaves little room for the responsibility of institutions in quality. Accreditation generally emphasises conformity rather than the capacity of institutions to contribute to the knowledge society.

At European level, both the European Standards and Guidelines and the European Quality Assurance Register have had a positive impact, primarily in internationalising the review panels, ensuring the

participation of students, and further professionalising QA agencies.

To ensure more effective implementation and commitment, it is critical that the ownership of the ESGs continues to rest with the stakeholders and that responsibility for any revision of the ESGs must continue to lie with the E4 Group.

GENERAL

When measuring the achievements to date our analysis shows that the more the stakeholders are involved, understand and take ownership for the reforms the more important and sustainable the change process becomes. This has been true particularly for Doctoral education. It also holds good for European level QA discussions.

Recommendation: *Important to remember that BP is not a goal in itself but a means to an end, that is to create the EHEA for the citizens of the 21st century. This requires a shared partnership to facilitate and support a new paradigm for higher education.*

11 March 2010, 15.00 – 16.00, Budapest (8 speakers)
Mobility and recognition (paras 20/21, Summary)

Mobility should be seen as part and parcel of an institution's internationalisation strategy. The Trends data show that internationalisation – also Bologna as an internationalisation process inside Europe – has had a major impact on institutions and that their expectation is that the importance of internationalisation will continue to be grow in the next ten years.

In the past decade, the concept of mobility has evolved from being focused on short term mobility to a focus on full-degree mobility or vertical mobility, and as part of the institutions' overall internationalisation strategies.

Thus, we can expect that mobility levels will rise in the next decade but responses from universities suggest that this will affect mostly vertical mobility i.e. mobility between cycles.

Thus, the *Trends 1020* survey shows that institutional expectations regarding short-term mobility seem to have remained stable and relatively low over the last decade while the expectations for full-degree (vertical) mobility seem to be growing.

The Trends 2010 report provides a rich documentation of institutional experience regarding obstacles to mobility which include visa or language requirements, compressed degrees, problems with recognition, lack of funding, lack of harmonisation of academic calendars across Europe, etc.

Recognition of credit transfer is a central issue in the promotion of mobility. Trends emphasises that problems with the recognition of credits obtained after a short-term mobility seem to have remained stable over time. These data are coherent with the unchanged institutions' expectations regarding short-term mobility.

From a policy perspective:

- There is a need to develop more precise definitions and measurements of the different types of mobility in order to correct the flaws of some current measurements.
- It is critically important to promote mobility by taking appropriate European action to address long-standing problems such as visa requirements, promoting the portability of pension provision for researchers, study grants and loans for students, etc., both for EU citizens and international students, staff and researchers.
- Academic calendars need to be coordinated at European level in order to facilitate short-term mobility.
- There is also a need for institutions to better organise their recognition process. Trends data show that recognition problems are reduced when recognition is done centrally.

12 March, 9.10 – 10.30, Vienna (4 speakers)
Social dimension (cf. para 16, 17 Exec Summary)

The Bologna tools and new degree structures are likely to promote greater diversity in the student body. *Trends 2010* data show that an increasing number of European HEIs have begun to rise to the challenge of attracting and teaching a more diversified student body, and to introduce institutional policies which are more inclusive and responsive.

The data indicate, however, that there are still three groups of potential students for which about only one third of HEIs have policies in place. These are students from ethnic minorities, immigrants and students without formal qualifications who need to rely on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), but RPL is a practice found in 54% of *Trends* respondents and only 17% give full-degree equivalence.

In the majority of European countries, lifelong learning is considered as a set of activities provided outside mainstream education, in relation to which Bologna

tools such as learning outcomes and academic credits are only rarely defined or attached.

Therefore, as stated in the EUA LLL Charter, there is a clear need for European HEIs and national authorities – together – to connect policies in order to create accessible, flexible and transparent student-centred learning and to monitor and evaluate implementation continuously. This is necessary in order to ensure that all education provision is seen within a lifelong perspective and in specific national, regional, local and institutional contexts.

The importance of student services has been relatively ignored as policy priority throughout the Bologna decade even although it is central to the shift towards a student-centred approach and to a stress on student attainment.

The *Trends 2010* questionnaire data on this topic and the site-visit reports suggest that career guidance is the fastest growing area, followed by growth in psychological counselling services. This indicates that

the focus is moving, to a certain extent, from providing student guidance primarily during the pre-admission phase to improving student retention and preparing students for employment.

In conclusion,

- First, legal frameworks must ensure the institutional autonomy necessary to enable European HEIs to engage in creating strategies and provision for promoting broader and wider participation in higher education.
- Second, a student-centred approach to lifelong learning must be adequately resourced, for instance, to support the development of new teaching methods and course material that are tailored to the needs of learners and employers.
- Third, to enhance further the development and the potential success of the social dimension of the EHEA it will be vital for both national authorities and HEIs to be able to collect data on the social

background of students and their attainment.

- Fourth, in some countries, the organisation of student services is shared by a variety of bodies, thus requiring good collaboration at national, regional and local level. As their primary responsibility HEIs need to ensure that students have access to the services they need. It is also incumbent upon institutions to establish local and national links where necessary, e.g., by pooling resources with other HEIs and cooperating with national and local bodies and student organisations that have responsibilities in this area.

12 March 2010, 11.00 – 12.40, Vienna (3 speakers = EURASHE, ESU, EUA)

EHEA Overall implementation – essence and impact

The Bologna Process has introduced unifying elements that are shared by institutions across 46 countries while respecting the diversity of disciplines, national and institutional contexts.

58% of Trends respondents view the realisation of the EHEA as positive. Only 0.1% views it negatively.

These developments have attracted very positive attention from around the world and have shown that European higher education is dynamic and capable of responding to the complex needs of knowledge-driven societies.

It is important, however, to note that the Bologna Process has been characterised by an evolving agenda and that, too often – even if understandably – the

stress on the technical aspects of the action lines has obscured the underlying objectives.

Looking back over a decade of reform, Trends data show that a great deal of progress has been made but that the rapid implementation of 'Bologna tools' peaked around 2007. The next phase will be to deepen the change process by creating new organisational cultures and using the architecture, quality infrastructure and the Bologna tools in the national and institutional contexts and within institutional and national priorities, resource constraints, and a changing international context.

The most pressing needs include:

- implementing the Bologna reforms as a package (as opposed to 'à la carte')
- investing higher education institutions with the ownership of the reforms if they are to be implemented properly
- communicating better to a wider public the benefits of these significant changes

- understanding that curricular changes take time to be implemented properly
- funding the development of student-centred learning
- and recognising that the Bologna reforms are being implemented in a context of significant and profound changes in institutions

Most importantly, the expressed interest in shifting to a student-centred learning paradigm offers the opportunity to communicate a more humanistic view of education and the full benefits of the Bologna reforms by presenting its various elements in a connected way and focused on the underlying objectives of enhancing the professional and personal developments of all.

IN SUMMARY

- Successful implementation of Bologna is partly conditional on the capacity of institutional leaders to bring institutional coherence to a multi-dimensional change agenda, and to explain, persuade and motivate staff members, and students. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on institutional responsibility in the further implementation of the

Bologna Process and HEIs should have considerable scope in implementing the change agenda, which they must be able to relate to their specific mission and objectives, thereby respecting institutional diversity.

- The success of Bologna has hinged on the involvement of all actors, including students and institutions, in policy discussions. This *modus operandi* at the European level must continue and be strengthened at the national and institutional levels in order to meet the ambitious objectives set for Europe.
- Both the EHEA and the ERA create opportunities and responsibilities for European HEIs. It will be important to strengthen the links between the European higher education and research areas to enhance one of the singular strengths of European higher education – the unique role of universities in ensuring a close interface between education, research and innovation. To meet these objectives EUA will also continue to advocate for closer links

between the EHEA and the ERA and thus for a European Knowledge Area crucial for universities to be able to educate graduates equipped with the high level skills Europe needs for the knowledge societies of the 21th Century.