

Background in

Trends III, EUA policy statements, bologna-follow-up seminars, pilot-projects, Graz reader, And reports from the group discussions

Vision for 2010 and beyond

Our common vision is a Europe of knowledge based on strong research and research-based education in European Universities across the continent. Our diversity is a strong asset and a base for a common cultural and civic European identity. Our diversity is also beautifully reflected in the abundance of higher education institutions of different orientations.

We want to be active and competitive on a global scale. Our diversity and cultural heritage can be made the social cohesion in the European Higher Education Area, characterised by networking across Europe creating excellence in teaching and research. We also make our cultural richness a strong asset in the global arena. We see the European Research Area as a frame for internationally competitive research and attractive for scientists and scholars.

We see students as partners in education. They are key members in the academic community. Flexible and individualised learning paths in a system of three cycles in European institutions of higher education are attractive to students across borders and from other continents.

We, Higher education institutions identify our essential role in Europe but also in the wider global context:

We constitute central forces in the development of society in constant dialogue with the European society, safeguarding and creating the vital knowledge for the social and economic welfare in society; locally, regionally and globally while maintaining long term perspectives and academic values.

Recognising our role in the global competitive agenda set up by heads of states in Lisbon we have to create a European brand for European higher education.

Each of us have to find the crucial balance between the European ambitions

Competitiveness and excellence with social cohesion and access

We can base our identity as European higher education institutions on our rich cultural heritage., defining our core values making us attractive on the global platform

- Equity and democratic access
- Cultural and linguistic diversity
- A European quality culture
- Links between teaching and learning and research and research and scholarship.

We are ready to reach out to society for strong interaction with e.g. industries, social and health care, schools. We take on responsibility as agents of change in our societies.

We have to analyse our diversity also among ourselves as higher education institutions. We need the functional differentiation in categories, i.e. we need the research-driven universities, the special-focus institutions like technical universities among the richness and diversity of HEIs.

We may also have to face the diversity as a stratification based on quality.

Not least we also face a situation where we have to identify new funding partners in strong competition. This creates new challenges to autonomy as we have to balance autonomy relative to several funding stakeholders.

What needs to be done to empower the vision for Europe 2010 and beyond

The process ahead of us has to develop within a social contract between governments, higher education institutions and students, all committed to the long-term vision of a Europe of knowledge. An essential element of the Bologna process is that we go further by committing ourselves in a voluntary process – national governments, higher education institutions and students. The European Commission continues to give valuable support to this process.

We identify raising academic quality, employability of graduates, attractiveness of European education and increasing mobility as central driving forces towards the EHEA.

Autonomy – effectiveness – accountability

Universities as a public responsibility

Recognising the need for strong, quality HEIs evenly across the entire European continent *governments* should

- guarantee the principle of accountable autonomy and self-organisation of universities and institutions of higher education
- sustain legal frameworks to allow universities to design decision-making structures that are congruent with their specific missions and goals and to enable them to develop long-term strategies and human resource policies in a European and global context.
- continue to support higher education as a public responsibility requiring long term commitments, stable legal and funding environments.

- Recognize need for funding of on-going reforms; - new degree structures, curricular reform and integration of ECTS for transfer and accumulation.
- recognise and act to achieve the target of research funding at 3% of GDP as spelled out in Lisbon.

Legal frameworks must promote European co-operation in research and teaching among higher education institutions as well as with other partners.

Building strong institutions - Governance and management - The institutional perspective

When we propose further action within the Bologna Process we should avoid being dogmatic or prescriptive. Instead we can move forward our recommendations for the European Higher Education Area as a frame and vision that can be a tremendous force for reforms within our HEIs.

The work lying ahead of us is a challenge to university leaders. We need to create and support a new generation of university leadership capable of taking on the challenges of tasks ahead of us.

The improvement of institutions' quality and strategic management capacity is essential to achieve our objectives.

At *Institutional level* long term strategic thinking is required of institutions to

- Reflect on its strengths and weaknesses in order to clarify its profile, identify its mission and goals, and action plans to meet these goals.
- Reflect on its internal and external governance to optimise decision making, engage students and stakeholders, ensure an effective administrative structure and develop an internal and external communication strategy.
- Reflect on the way it wants to reach out into society, to be an active partner in change and demonstrate what it can do in different arenas including knowledge transfer
- Strengthen the internal quality culture including human resource development considering gender perspectives.
- Find an optimal balance between centralisation and decentralisation (relative responsibility of faculties and central university leadership) based on notions of institutional effectiveness and a clear internal division of responsibilities, within a participative and collegial system.

Academic quality and employability of graduates

Research and scholarship as integral parts of higher education

While accepting increased differentiation of mission, universities must ensure that their graduates at all levels have been exposed to a research environment and to research-based training, (are skilled in problem solving, and have been introduced to research methods in an appropriate way as part of their education). It is of vital importance for universities to make a clear case for research-led teaching and learning in Europe's universities in response to different government initiatives to concentrate teaching in teaching-only universities.

The geographical spread of universities across Europe provides the potential for networking based upon interests, missions, strength and complementary to create dynamic interactions for quality and excellence.

Degree structure and employability of graduates

Governments should

- Take action towards a three tier system with introduction of transparent degree structures based on bachelor, master and doctor
- recognise the doctoral level as the third tier/cycle in the Bologna Process and also look to the post-doctoral level as these are integral parts of the European Higher Education Area as well as the European research Area.

Governments need to focus on

- the provisions for research based training for ever larger numbers of young people and
- The opportunities provided for pursuit of interdisciplinary research and scholarship

Institutions

The enormous momentum created by structural reform based on three cycles and new degree structures, bachelor, master and doctor, has to be taken further by HEIs in curricular reforms. In the years ahead the rich cultural diversity across the European continent should be kept at the forefront as the frame as *universities and HEI go further to*

- identify ECTS as a powerful instrument in restructuring curricula aiming at student-centered flexible learning paths including life long learning.
- involve academics, students, professional organisations and employers in making the bachelor a viable degree in its own right. Graduates should be prepared for employability in a broad sense.
- engage in the discussion and development of broad definitions of qualification frameworks and learning outcomes on the European level while safeguarding against potential risks of top-down prescriptions and threats to diversity.

- Pay attention, in view of the changes at bachelor and master levels, to the interface between master and PhD level, specifically to ensuring that the goal of PhDs remains that of advancing knowledge. However, training of researchers also involves transmitting specific research skills, complementary or horizontal skills and an element of mobility through international research experience. More transparent study structures should facilitate cross-border co-operation, mobility and employability.
- develop and introduce the Diploma Supplement as a tool for strengthening employability and recognition making it widely known among employers and professional organisations. The DS should also be issued in a major European language.
- strengthen networking across Europe in creation of joint programs and degrees with a view to international competitiveness.

Joint programs and degrees

Joint programs and degrees based on integrated curricula are excellent instruments that should be introduced on a broad scale.

They promote the European dimension by building on the strength of participating institutions,

they provide a diverse cultural and linguistic experience,

they promote mobility within Europe and can enhance attractiveness of European higher education considerably.

Joint doctoral programs are cornerstones for greater co-operation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

Awareness and knowledge of the value of these instruments should be raised.

Governments

In many of the signatory countries amendments to national legislation are required if joint degrees are to be powerful instruments for institutional co-operation. Legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees should be removed.

On a system level financial support is essential for the future development of joint program on all levels.

Institutions should develop joint programs based on identified needs of European and global society. Further development on can be based on exchange of best practices from the pilot projects now in action across Europe. Learning outcomes and competencies described in ECTS credits should be viewed as crucial elements.

Mobility

Mobility is a resourceful instrument to promote academic quality and recognition and to promote the employability of the individual. Mobility of staff is essential in the international arena but is still curbed by major obstacles.

Governments need to tackle identified obstacles to the mobility of students and academic staff, promote mobility through incentive schemes and specifically address student support and recognition issues linked to joint degrees.

The diversity and richness of Europe are sometimes also its weakness. Governments should safeguard the high quality and availability of language education across Europe.

The Lisbon recognition convention provides frameworks for recognition and should be recognised by *governments*, who have not yet done so.

Institutions should use the tools available to promote mobility, e.g. that means

- Ensure that the use of ECTS is integrated into institution-wide policies and that its guidelines, principles and tools are properly understood;
- Ensure that the basic principles and tools of ECTS and its key features are translated into institutional guidelines and conveyed to academic and administrative staff and students alike in order to exploit the potential of ECTS as a transparency tool;
- Provide support and advice, in particular regarding credit allocation, workload definition, and the use of ECTS for credit accumulation;
- Increase awareness of the potential benefits of the Diploma Supplement, especially among employers;

Social dimensions

The social dimensions cover a wide spectrum, some of which are more essential to promote the Bologna process and institutions as active and responsible partners in development of our societies.

We expect our *governments* to

- Amend legislation on student support such as portable study grants and loans, regulations on health care and social services, working permits, etc.
- Consider career prospects and the development of career paths for young researchers, and the need for financial support
- Find measures to encourage young PhDs to continue working in Europe
- to facilitate their return from post-doctoral periods abroad.

On the European level

we foresee further development of mobility schemes for young researchers and academic teachers with special measures for dual career families.

Also on *the European level* solutions should be worked out regarding restrictions on pension rights possibly with the introduction of portable pension systems and other social support schemes.

Higher education institutions

We take on the responsibility to

- continue developing student support structures such as academic and professional counselling, social support, housing.
- Recognise the need of students to amend their economic situation by part-time work.
- Maintain and improve language education
- Promote the cultural integration of incoming students...

The gender perspective

In a competitive Europe women and men alike take on responsibilities. Gender aspects and gender equality emerges as an important issue for the future of academic quality. It is also a key question regarding mobility.

Mobility schemes should encompass dual careers.

Institutions should consider that recruitment policies have to include recruiting couples.

Human resource policies should address diversity and gender equality.

Quality assurance and accountability

Quality assurance is one of the major issues in the Bologna process, and its importance increases as reform work is gaining momentum. The EUA has proposed a foundation for a European QA policy and a code of best practice.

Institutions are responsible, with the active contribution of their students, for monitoring and evaluating all of their activities, including the quality of their study programmes, their service departments etc. External quality assurance procedures should focus on checking that the internal monitoring is done effectively through institutional audits.

The discussions yesterday agreed that the following characteristics for QA procedures were important:

- They must promote cultural, academic and organisational quality
- They must respect institutional autonomy
- They must develop internal quality culture

- They must be cost effective
- They must include an evaluation of the QA agencies
- They must minimise bureaucracy and avoid over regulation

It was suggested that EUA will organise a provisional committee, with all concerned stakeholders to build a first version of an operational body to manage and develop a European dimension in quality assurance.

The process should be based on:

- mutual trust
- respect for diversity of national contexts, subject areas and other factors
- transparency: clear architecture of the committee and clear procedures

The provisional committee will be based on principles that include:

- Independence
- Institutional responsibility for quality
- Public accountability
- Consensus on QA procedures

Conclusion: Challenges for the future

Recognising that the Bologna process is initially a politically driven process, we see that it is now gaining momentum through the participation of all interested partners; higher education institutions, governments, students and other stakeholders. We have to allow time for the academic consensus type culture to cope with the tremendous possibilities for fundamental reforms. We recognise the dangers in pushing reforms in a top down approach.

The theme of this Convention is "Strengthening the role of institutions". The discussions have identified a multitude of actions to support this process.

We expect of *governments*

to take action to empower institutions by providing stable legal and funding environments.

To safe-guard the autonomy of institutions

We expect from ourselves, as higher education institutions, to take on the reforms wholeheartedly in a holistic perspective in close cooperation with students and stakeholders as expressed so well by madame Reding on Thursday

We foresee a period of experiments and exchange of best practices to create the European Higher Education Area making best use of our diversity.

Our aim is to use the tools and instruments to achieve a Europe of knowledge taking up global competition while forging a civic European society

We have still many challenges ahead and we see the reform process go beyond 2010:

By promoting critical thinking through teaching and research, and demonstrating respect for diversity, universities are essential elements in upholding sustainable democratic societies across Europe."

Thank you for your attention!