



***Beyond the Bologna Process: Creating and connecting national, regional and global higher education areas***

**Background paper for the Third Bologna Policy Forum**

***Bucharest, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012***

## **Introduction**

Higher education and research play a critical role in international exchange and intercultural dialogue. One of the most noticeable modern trends is the growing interest amongst higher education institutions worldwide to internationalize.

The European Higher Education Area, which is in many ways a regionally confined internationalization project, is clearly influenced by global forces, and should be responsive to an increasingly global higher education landscape and agenda. It is for this reason that the first two editions of the Bologna Policy Forum, held in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) and Vienna (2010) respectively, engaged governments from around the world in a dialogue on the Bologna Process reforms and on how they impact or influence higher education in other parts of the world. Held in conjunction with the Bologna Ministerial meetings, the two Fora have been important platforms for the sharing of European experiences with global partners as well as for sharing global partners' experiences with Europe.

The Third Bologna Policy Forum (Bucharest, 2012) will continue and deepen the dialogue. International government delegations are invited to engage in debate on four key issues:

- Global student mobility: incentives and barriers, balances and imbalances;
- Global and regional approaches to quality assurance;
- Public responsibility for and of higher education;
- The contribution of higher education reforms to enhancing graduate employability.

These topics have been identified by the Bologna Follow-Up Group and national contact points as nominated by the previous international government delegations. The intent of this document is to provide background information on key policies and strategies relevant to the debate and to show how these issues are connected. The title of this document, 'connecting national, regional and global higher education areas', has been chosen to reflect the extent to which other world regions are contemplating and implementing regionalisation agendas, many of which also include the same thematic priorities.

This paper aims to briefly introduce these topics and to suggest questions that could structure the dialogue between the participants in the Bologna Policy Forum. The results of this inter-governmental dialogue will be reflected in the Third Bologna Policy Forum Statement and followed up in the years to come through future Policy Fora as well as bi- and multiregional events and initiatives.

## **Chapter 1 - Global Student Mobility: Incentives And Barriers, Balances And Imbalances**

*Text prepared by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)*

### **a. Mobility in the context of the Bologna Process**

The promotion and enhancement of international student mobility has been a central objective of the Bologna Process from the start. The *Bologna Declaration* introduced the structural reform of study programmes and degrees as, among others, a significant means to facilitate the increase of student mobility *in* Europe, but also *to* Europe. In the years that followed, in addition to the implementation of the new degree architecture, participant countries have constantly been preoccupied with collectively finding meaningful ways to address the major obstacles to student as well as staff mobility. A special Working Group on Mobility was created to monitor progress and support EHEA countries in reaching the mobility-related objectives. In 2009, the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué put forward the first mobility benchmark for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): “In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad”. In short, mobility has come to be considered the “hallmark” of this higher education space.

With the launch of the *EHEA Strategy “Mobility for Better Learning”* at this Bucharest ministerial conference it becomes very clear that Ministers intend to give student mobility new momentum. In addition to the quantitative target for the mobility of graduates in the EHEA mentioned above, this strategy also “draws attention to [...] the number of students enrolled in the EHEA who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA as one possible indicator of its international attractiveness” And, while significant attention has been paid to student mobility in Europe, it is also clear that the challenges, opportunities and ramifications of international student mobility are not unique or restricted to EHEA. Similarly, although staff mobility is a critical factor in the internationalisation of higher education, less attention seems to have been paid to this aspect both in the EHEA and in other parts of the world. The EHEA countries thus feel the need for dialogue with countries from beyond this region on a number of specific mobility issues, of global relevance and with an international impact.

### **b. Recent trends, data collection imperatives and ‘balance’ in global mobility flows**

Getting a comprehensive overview of international student flows is certainly more complex and challenging than generally expected, given the variety of types of international mobility of students<sup>1</sup> and the many challenges in data collection associated with each of these mobility categories.

Available statistics, from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), OECD and EUROSTAT, show that international mobility for full study programmes (*degree mobility*) has been increasing annually, reaching 3.7 million students worldwide in 2009. Remembering that in the mid-1970s the numbers stood at approximately 800 000 it is clear that absolute growth has been remarkable over time. Nevertheless, given that student enrolment worldwide has increased at a similar rate, the share of mobile students has remained constant throughout these decades, at about 2% of the global student population. In other words, only a small minority of students still study towards a degree in other countries (and continents) than their country of origin. Moreover, while international *degree mobility* has generally been on the rise, the mobility picture at the level of individual countries varies greatly for reasons of size, capacity, accessibility, reputation and resources. The diversification of study destinations worldwide, manifested in traditional sending countries becoming ever more important host countries of foreign students (e.g. China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Brazil, South Africa) has had a visible impact on the international mobility

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<sup>1</sup> For example: credit vs. degree mobility; organised (within programmes) vs. free-mover mobility; mobility for studies vs. placements, language courses, summer schools, etc.

landscape and particularly on the global positioning of traditional net recipients of foreign degree-seeking students like the US and Australia, but also the UK, Germany and France.

Quantifying the extent of *short-term mobility*<sup>2</sup> (often referred to as *credit mobility*) is practically impossible at the global level, given the absence of a worldwide database that covers this type of mobility, as well as due to the lack of comparable data at the national and institutional levels. The UOE data collectors are now facilitating the transition to better mobility definitions, which take the 'country of prior residence or education' as a more suitable proxy for capturing the crossing of borders for the purpose of study than the mere 'nationality' of students. Nevertheless, this is work in progress and it will be years before all countries manage to adapt their data collecting mechanisms to these changes, and ultimately before we will know how many students are truly internationally mobile every year.

Leaving aside these important data challenges, it is noticeable that individual countries experience different mobility realities. Some are clearly net 'importers' of students from abroad, others are net 'exporters', while very few countries actually display student inflows that equal their outflows. In this complex setting, the question of 'balance' arises as well as that of acceptable 'imbalances' in mobility flows comes up naturally. These discussions have been recently encouraged in the EHEA context, and the *EHEA Mobility Strategy* addresses this issue in detail. For the purpose of discussion, it refers to balanced mobility and directs attention in particular at degree mobility. In this context, it is important not to limit mobility in order to reach a numeric balance of mobility flows. Balanced but low mobility flows should not be the goal. The strategy encourages countries to redress problems in this area through bilateral communication, hoping that more countries will manage to avoid the 'unintended consequences' of this. As this is an issue with ramifications well beyond Europe, the strategy also encourages "the member countries to strive for more and better balanced mobility of the EHEA with countries outside the EHEA".

Beyond these mainly quantitative reflections, many countries around the world are moving to qualitative reflections on mobility. This trend takes many forms: some countries embark on measures to ensure that not necessarily 'more' but in fact 'the best' students from abroad access their higher education systems; others are designing measures to guarantee that the mobility period abroad is of 'good quality'; also, some countries are keen to explore the question 'Why mobility?' and to bring more proof of the academic, personal or professional impact of international mobility experiences. In this sense, the impact of international mobility on the employability of graduates has been a central point of interest and debate in the EHEA and European Union (EU) contexts and more widely. Already a number of studies that attempt to assess this impact from the employers' and employees' points of view have been published and show that international experiences have a positive impact on future career paths of mobile graduates.

### **c. Mobility barriers and incentives**

To enhance international mobility, addressing the key mobility barriers becomes crucial. The most often quoted obstacles to international student mobility are literally the same across the world: a lack of personal motivation; a lack of quality (of study programmes, but also of 'quality' students); insufficient funding; insufficient language skills; too little information; flawed student services; limited recognition of study abroad periods and of foreign qualifications; immigration and visa impediments, and last but not least (rigid) curricular design.

Yet, while this typology of obstacles is universal, the seriousness – the hierarchy - of barriers is very often country-specific. For instance, while many countries report financial difficulties as the

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<sup>2</sup> Short-term or credit mobility is mobility that takes place within the framework of ongoing studies at a home institution. After the mobility period, the mobile student returns to the latter for the completion of studies.

most serious obstacle, for others the deficit in language skills is a much bigger deterrent for study abroad, not to mention that the exact obstacles and incentives are specific to the different types of mobility in question. This means that in policy and practical terms countries need to address different priorities, and it shows that ultimately, there is no 'one fits all' solution.

Nevertheless, international dialogue and cooperation can foster progress in this area. That is why many of the mechanisms put in place so far in the EHEA and EU contexts have been geared towards removing the perceived obstacles to international student mobility. By way of example, the country-level implementation of mobility-enhancing tools such as the ECTS system of cumulative and transferable study points (credits) and the Diploma Supplement (DS) have been constantly monitored, as has the progress made by individual countries in addressing financial, administrative and legal impediments to mobility. Overall, progress has been achieved across countries in lowering obstacles to mobility, but it remains unquestionable that more could and should be done in order to give more students the opportunity to study abroad and to open the national 'doors' to more students from abroad.

**Questions for discussion:**

- **What are the biggest barriers to mobility in your country/region and how is your country working to address them?**
- **If international mobility experiences benefit students on a personal and professional level and society as a whole, what should be done to increase and improve mobility between the EHEA and other parts of the world?**

## **Chapter 2 – Global And Regional Approaches To Quality Assurance**

*Text prepared by the E4 group, which includes the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Higher Education Institutions (EURASHE), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Students' Union (ESU)*

Given the expansion of higher education systems globally and the increasing pressure on higher education institutions to stimulate economic and social development, quality assurance has evolved rapidly and faces a myriad of expectations. In general, external quality assurance is regulated at national or regional system level, where higher education policy is formulated. In many cases, public pressure to justify efficient government investment translates into higher demands on the quality assurance system. The call for efficiency and effectiveness is heard in countries crippled with austerity measures, as well as in countries where governments are investing significant public funds in the sector.

### **a. Placing quality assurance into context: challenges and opportunities**

Despite considerable national differences, one can observe a tension between quality assurance for accountability and, on the other hand, quality assurance for enhancing quality of education. What emerges is a great diversity of quality assurance systems and different arguments may win out at different points in time. Quality assurance systems have demonstrated their ability for change and development, ranging from one philosophy to another, depending on many factors.

The variety of system level approaches to QA is considerable: some systems look at individual programmes while others look at entire institutions, and anything in between. Some have a two-tier system where the authoritative (usually state) body takes the ultimate decision regarding applicability of standards while quality assurance procedures themselves are carried out by agencies that are separate entities. In other cases, one agency decides and organises everything. In a number of systems, competition is encouraged between freely operating agencies which are also subject to external review and accreditation. Not all reviews are organized through site visits, though peer or expert review remains an integral part of most quality assurance systems. In many cases, trained evaluators conduct visits, while in other systems the visits involve peers. In the EHEA, student reviewers and student/stakeholder participation is also important in quality assurance.

Quality assurance already includes the following, depending on the context: assessment of institutional performance, sometimes using benchmarking; provision of information about the 'trustworthiness' of institutions; provision of policy guidance to government; offering consultancy services to the rectors; presidents and vice-chancellors; keeping institutions accountable to both the government and students; facilitating improvement in quality, ensuring that students leave with needed competences and jobs, etc. The list of possible tasks for quality assurance is only growing. This plethora of purposes can pose challenges to the cross-national understanding of quality assurance, as well as to the trust between the higher education systems it should provide a basis for. Quality assurance also takes a commercial shape at times, providing quality labels of various sorts that emphasize excellence instead of meeting basic standards. Finally, it can also be noted that international quality assurance agencies are starting to operate more widely, especially in professionally regulated fields. And it is becoming increasingly evident that many of these challenges are related to developments in other countries and regions or, more broadly speaking, that they are a consequence of globalisation.

## **b. Quality assurance in an international setting**

While there is diversity of quality assurance systems in terms of purposes and how they are organized, there are also similarities and trends. What is more, cooperation between quality assurance systems and actors is becoming more international and even global. It is noteworthy that global and regional approaches to cooperation have been adopted in almost every part of the world. These often translate into networks of quality assurance agencies, structured around certain regions or groups of countries with otherwise well-developed political, cultural and economic links. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which has grown from 8 members in 1991 to more than 250 today, certainly confirms this trend.

The first objective everywhere seems to be the sharing of experience and best practice. Cooperation also entails linking international experts or peers and building common databases, organising training and capacity building. Secondly, a practical need is emerging through provision of trans-border education, where providers cross national or system borders (operating joint degrees or establishing new campuses, etc). This in itself requires a successful dialogue regarding the purposes and approaches of different quality assurance systems, which should generate mutual trust among systems. The UNESCO-OECD guidelines on “Quality provision in cross-border higher education” (2005) were developed exactly in the context of new forms of cross-border provision of higher education, where international cooperation became essential to further strengthen quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications schemes at both national and international level. These non-binding guidelines were not meant to supersede individual countries’ authority to regulate the quality assurance and accreditation of their own higher education system. The application and influence of these guidelines should be analyzed.

Furthermore, international student mobility and labour mobility are a catalyst for streamlining recognition procedures so that qualifications from recognized and quality assured higher education institutions or programmes would receive a similar status in any country. Finally in some cases as in Europe, ambitions for cooperation in quality assurance are also to develop a regional quality assurance system in itself, or at minimum, a system of systems where international trust is achieved.

## **c. Quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area**

In 2005, the EHEA ministers adopted the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) that were developed by the stakeholder group consisting of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students’ Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The ESG formed the basis for the improvement of quality assurance, notably in formulating national standards and helped to realign procedures all over Europe in order to better understand and respect a set of principles while respecting the diversity of quality assurance approaches and national competence.

In addition, agencies in Europe started to go through reviews, which were based on criteria derived directly from the ESG. The ESG are also used as membership criteria for ENQA. In 2008, the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was founded with the purpose to further enhance cooperation by listing trustworthy agencies that work in accordance to the ESG. EQAR, among other goals, seeks to make recognition of quality assurance decisions easier between countries. Establishment of EQAR also recognises that commonly respected principles in quality assurance in Europe would enable quality assurance agencies to work and conduct reviews across Europe. This is a principle which EHEA members have adopted, subject to national requirements.

In a recently published report on the implementation and application of the ESG, they are considered to have had a mainly positive impact and the ESG are regarded as a major achievement of the Bologna Process itself. They have proved to be applicable across a wide range of contexts and have facilitated a shared understanding of quality assurance in Europe. The Bucharest Ministerial Communique underlines that in the coming years the ESG should be further improved in their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope. An example of a European quality assurance approach that adopts the ESG is the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), an international programme of the EUA, which provides reviews and recommendations to institutions that are willing to undergo an external quality review from a team of international experts. IEP has also carried through several system reviews of entire countries in Europe.

#### **d. Good practice at international level**

European stakeholders are also involved in quality assurance initiatives at the global level. For example, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has taken part in the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC), aimed at funding projects to build capacity within regional quality assurance networks at the global level led by the World Bank and co-ordinated by UNESCO. ENQA is currently leading a major project in capacity building in Central Asia. From this perspective, GIQAC has proved to be a very powerful initiative which has facilitated contacts between the regional networks and has promoted co-operation and trust among them under the umbrella of UNESCO. Another major example is cooperation between Europe and Asia where the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM Ministers' Meeting for Education (ASEMME3) put emphasis on strengthening interregional cooperation in the field of external quality assurance. Quality assurance agencies and networks in Asia and Europe will be involved in organizing joint meetings, with a view to developing common principles across the ASEM education area. Finally, EUA actively encourages bi-regional dialogue on quality assurance and has launched a pilot project in conjunction with the Association of African Universities to conduct IEP evaluations in Africa (Europe-Africa Quality Connect: [www.qualityconnect-africa.eu](http://www.qualityconnect-africa.eu)). EUA is also engaging QA stakeholders in Latin America and is supporting the CONSUAN (University rectors of the Andean region) to conceive a joint QA and accreditation scheme for Europe and South America (Alfa-Puentes project: [www.alfapuentes.org](http://www.alfapuentes.org)).

In the complex and increasingly interconnected world of higher education, the developments in quality assurance demonstrate that cooperation is key to making higher education systems more comparable and compatible globally. Improving understanding of quality assurance practices across borders is difficult, and thus regional and global dialogue is crucial.

#### **Questions for discussion:**

- **What practical policy tools exist or should be developed in order to build and sustain cooperation between quality assurance initiatives globally - to facilitate more efficient recognition procedures and mutual understanding of educational systems?**
- **How should involvement of stakeholders be improved to increase the effectiveness of quality assurance and how can international cooperation promote this?**

### **Chapter 3 - Public Responsibility For And Of Higher Education**

*Text prepared by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the International Association of Universities (IAU)*

#### **a. A reciprocal relationship**

As education, particularly higher education, becomes a core element of socio-economic and cultural development in all nations, a sound reciprocal relationship between the sector and society, based on mutual responsibility and accountability, becomes ever more critical and must be strengthened.

The public responsibility for and of higher education needs to reflect the multiple purposes of higher education in modern, complex societies. These include preparation for the labour market, preparation for active citizenship in democratic societies, personal development and the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base. Higher education plays a key role in developing and maintaining societies that are sustainable environmentally, socially, politically, economically and culturally and whose members are proficient in the intercultural dialogue required to live harmoniously.

#### **b. Public responsibility for higher education**

Public responsibility *for* higher education is primarily responsibility for the higher education system, as well as for providing higher education institutions with conditions conducive to the pursuit of their mission and carrying out their activities. It should take due account of the basic principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, which are key features of democratic societies. Public responsibility for higher education includes, but extends well beyond, the provision of sufficient levels of investment. It concerns, the establishment and continuous improvement of the policy environment and regulatory framework that allows for institutional diversity and quality to flourish, and for higher education to make its full contribution. In particular, public authorities have exclusive responsibility for establishing the framework within which higher education is provided; they have leading responsibility for ensuring that equal opportunities for access and success are available to as broad a spectrum of society as possible. In most countries they have substantial responsibility for financing and provision<sup>3</sup>.

To a considerable extent, public responsibility for higher education implies balancing various and sometimes conflicting concerns. While the proportion of public vs. private funding varies between countries and institutions, public authorities lay down the rules governing accountability for the use of funding as well as for transparency in the provision of funding. Quality is developed and nurtured by institutions but external quality assurance – in frameworks provided by public authorities – is an essential part of public policy. Qualifications are granted by institutions but within a degree system or qualifications framework established by public authorities. Institutions may be public or private but, notwithstanding the principle of institutional autonomy, in some areas need to conform to public regulations on issues ranging from the safety of laboratories, the ethical protocols in research, through labour legislation pertaining to non-discriminatory hiring practices to equal access requirements.

#### **c. Public responsibility of higher education institutions**

On the other hand higher education institutions, benefitting from such an enabling environment and within the frame of public responsibility *of* higher education, should use the full scope of their scientific/academic and governance autonomy to respond to societal needs locally. They should

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendation Rec (2007)6 by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research.

also play their full role in research, teaching/learning and outreach to prepare for the future, addressing the large number of challenges that face humanity and its physical environment locally, nationally and globally. Higher education should play a key role in developing the kind of societies in which we wish to live, by educating citizens aware of and ready to confront and meet the complex challenges facing the modern world.

Within the framework of institutional autonomy, higher education institutions are key protectors/guarantors of academic freedom that allows for original research, innovation and questioning of accepted truths, including the critical examination of public policies. Given their broad obligation of public accountability for the quality of research, teaching/learning and outreach services, higher education institutions are responsible for providing graduates with expertise in a very broad range of disciplines as well as transversal skills that will enable them to communicate and work with others at home and internationally in collaborative ways, crossing cultural, linguistic and generational boundaries.

The opportunities to benefit from higher education must be made available to as many members of society as possible, since '[a] well-educated citizenry is the foundation of social equity, cohesion and successful participation in the global knowledge economy.'<sup>4</sup>

#### **d. Domains of shared responsibility**

Among several others, widening access and ensuring equity in higher education is a shared responsibility of public authorities and higher education institutions. They are twin goals whose achievement requires a public policy environment that places high priority on inclusion and an institutional context that promotes innovative approaches to responding to learners with diverse needs.

Numerous and rapid changes taking place in the higher education landscape in Europe and around the world are shifting the terrain on both sides of this equation, often straining this two-way relationship and reshaping it continuously. The Bologna Policy Forum will explore these changes and share current ways in which public authorities and higher education institutions respectively exercise, or fail to exercise, their responsibility and to ensure that this relationship is as productive as possible.

#### **Questions for discussion**

- **What are the most effective mechanisms for exercising public responsibility for fulfilling all major purposes of higher education?**
- **If inclusive education is the overall goal of equitable and democratic societies, what approaches need to be developed and explored to widen access to and facilitate success of all potential students?**

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<sup>4</sup> Equitable Access, Success and Quality in Higher Education: a Policy Statement by the International Association of Universities.

## **Chapter 4 –The Contribution Of Higher Education Reforms To Enhancing Graduate Employability**

*Text prepared by EURASHE with input from Business Europe*

### **a. The role of (higher) education in society**

The role of higher education has evolved in the more complex societies we are living in. Society values (higher) education more than ever - pointing to knowledge as a powerful driver of change and development. Education plays a key role in the life of citizens, as it responds to the various needs of individuals and society as a whole. Still, many countries do not manage to guarantee access for those that have the potential for studying but who cannot attain higher education for financial/economic and/or social reasons. Increasing levels of higher education attainment is beneficial from both the economic point of view, as it taps into a larger and more diverse share of the national pool of talent, as well as from the social justice point of view, by enabling more citizens to develop to their full potential.

### **b. Employable graduates**

Understandably, more and more young people choose an education that they believe will secure their prospective employment. However, such a short-term vision may not necessarily be the best guarantee for sustainable employment, as generic skills and a sound general education background constitute the firmest basis for finding employment.

An area of concern remains the mismatch between qualifications of graduates and the skills needed at a given time, while one has to be conscious of the difficulty in predicting the needs of the labour market in a changing society.

In European countries where the three-cycle system has been implemented as one of the priorities of the higher education reform process, the employability of bachelors in disciplines in which the first degree did not exist was originally seen as problematic. This is something that the second decade of the Bologna Process is tackling through a shift to learning outcomes approaches, better synchronization of the existing Bologna tools, such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement and qualifications frameworks and increased dialogue between the academic community and the world of work. It should be reiterated that in many systems, where the reforms are very new, it becomes difficult to draw firm conclusions about whether or not Bologna has contributed to graduate employability.

### **c. Research findings on employment and employability**

Stocktaking reports for the Bologna Ministerial Conferences and studies by stakeholder organizations reveal that the impact of the introduction of the three-cycle system on the employability of graduates varies greatly according to the country (and the time of its accession to the EHEA), the sector of activity, etc. A diversified offer of programs seems to respond more accurately to the diverse needs of society in rapidly changing contexts. Latest research on the outcomes of education shows the direct relevance of education for the employment prospects of graduates. There is clearly a 'transition problem' between higher education and the labour market, as quite often young persons with higher education qualifications often take up jobs not usually requiring such a qualification.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report

A European Commission staff working document<sup>6</sup> indicates that highly-skilled workers suffer less from the consequences of the economic and financial crisis than low-skilled workers and that education can play an important role in combating problems with employability and thus the economic downturn.

#### **d. A shift of paradigm**

Through the adoption, development and implementation of regional and national qualifications frameworks in different parts of the world, public authorities have engaged in a more student-centred perspective and have focused on the Learning Outcomes approach in higher education. In this perspective, those developments reflect the responsiveness of higher education to the needs of the world of work.

Lifelong Learning and especially Recognition of Prior Learning, which may also include non-formal and informal education, are acknowledged as strategies to broaden access to higher education and to reduce skills shortages by recognizing skills which were not considered before in formal settings.

#### **e. The role of stakeholders**

This Bologna transformation rests upon the involvement of stakeholders in the education process and in the systemic reform of higher education. Examples are the role of employers in the (re)design of curricula, etc. and also the participatory role given to students, in for example external and internal quality assurance. The world of work has become an acknowledged stakeholder in higher education. This has resulted in a closer cooperation between both sectors, education and business, and in greater involvement of the world of work in general, thus supporting national and regional development. It is increasingly seen as the responsibility of higher education institutions to ensure that their graduates have the right skills to contribute to the innovation potential of national and regional players (including SMEs and the not-for-profit sector). The dialogue between higher education institutions and the world of work should also focus on a long term view of employability, in a context in which graduates are expected to be able to develop and change their professional profiles more than once during their active lives.

#### **f. The impact of mobility on the graduate's employability**

It is important to mention the role of mobility here in stimulating and supporting the employability of graduates. Mobility between institutions in different countries and between institutional types helps graduates match their aptitudes and interests with the range of education and training opportunities available to them and thus facilitates their contribution to the labour market and society. Qualifications frameworks play an important role here, in that they can eliminate, or at least draw attention to barriers to mobility that exist within systems. That said, there are still many barriers to student mobility, despite the repertoire of tools and structures that have been developed under the Bologna Process. Erasmus Student Network annual surveys demonstrate that students that have been mobile are more likely to consider international work experiences, and to have developed language skills and intercultural competencies. In this respect, it is critical that governments and higher education institutions work to encourage more and better learning mobility and engage employers in a discussion on its benefits.

#### **g. Employability focus in other regions of the world**

As was stressed in the 2009 *Report on the Bologna Process in a global setting*, there is "a 'general' higher education modernisation agenda which is common to all world regions and to all countries

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<sup>6</sup>Commission of the European Communities (2010). Progress towards the common European objectives in Education and Training, Indicators and benchmarks 2010/2011. p. 78

of today and which is about ‘broadening access, diversifying study programs, quality enhancement, employability’<sup>7</sup>.

According to testimonials from neighbouring countries of the European Union<sup>8</sup> employability of recent graduates is poor, as the system often does not have the flexibility to adapt curricula to current needs of employers. There is a great need for first-cycle professionally oriented programs and traditional training with poor employment perspectives is in desperate need of more innovative study programs or a professional orientation.

#### **h. The link with the economy and the economic crisis**

With the economic crisis and under the influence of the focus of EU governments on the priorities of Education 2020, the Bologna Process is increasingly paying attention to ‘employability’ as a matching of skills and competences gained or enhanced through education with employment perspectives and labour market needs.

Too often there is a mismatch between the demands of the labour market and the qualifications obtained by young people, which is due to a lack of dialogue between the two sectors.

In this context, a reflection is needed on the efforts that regions and individual countries are making to educate more employable graduates. There is a growing awareness among both governments and stakeholders that an exchange of relevant policies and experiences with other regions in the world will also stimulate global employment.

#### **Questions for discussion:**

- **Is there in your opinion a lack of responsiveness to the expectations of employers in your country? If this is the case, how would you address concretely the mismatch of qualifications and labour market needs?**
- **How does one create synergies between higher education, research and innovation, with the aim of fostering entrepreneurial skills of graduates?**

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<sup>7</sup> Report on the Bologna Process in a global setting, retrieved from <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in its gathering in Brussels on 5 October 2011.