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Bologna process – main assumptions, implementation in Poland and Ukraine

1. Introduction

In my short presentation I will describe briefly Bologna process, its aims, actions and main documents which contributed to a final shape of Bologna declaration. I will also include an assessment of a progress in implementation of main assumptions of Bologna process in Poland and Ukraine.

2. Magna Charta Universitatum

In 1988 Bologna University was celebrating the 900th anniversary of its foundation. On this occasion rectors of European universities created a document which stressed a role of the higher education at the doorstep of second millennium. Besides recognising the role of universities in creation of cultural, economic and technical development, signatories of Magna Charta Universitatum formulated several principles which should apply to a higher education institution: “its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent from all political authority (...) and economic power”¹, “teaching and research in universities must be inseparable”², “free-

¹ Pt. 1 in Magna Charta Universitatum, Bologna, 18 September 1988.

² Pt. 2 *ibidem*.

dom in research and training must be a fundamental principle of university life”³. The need for closer co-operation between universities was also considered as essential.

3. Sorbonne Declaration

In 1998 ministers of education of France, Italy, Germany and United Kingdom met on University of Paris and signed Sorbonne Declaration⁴. This document was fundamental to a large degree for creating the content of Bologna Declaration. Sorbonne Declaration emphasised “pivotal role of universities in creating intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent” and articulated the significance of the education in contemporary world. Actions outlined to harmonise the architecture of the European Higher Education system are as follows:

- Introduction of easily readable system consisting of undergraduate and graduate degrees,
- Use of credit points in order to allow validation of education continued on different European universities throughout the life,
- Improved recognition of degrees and qualifications,
- Support of students and academic staff mobility,
- Progressive harmonization of the overall framework of degrees and cycles.

³ Pt. 3 *ibidem*.

⁴ Joint declaration on harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system, Paris, 25 May 1998.

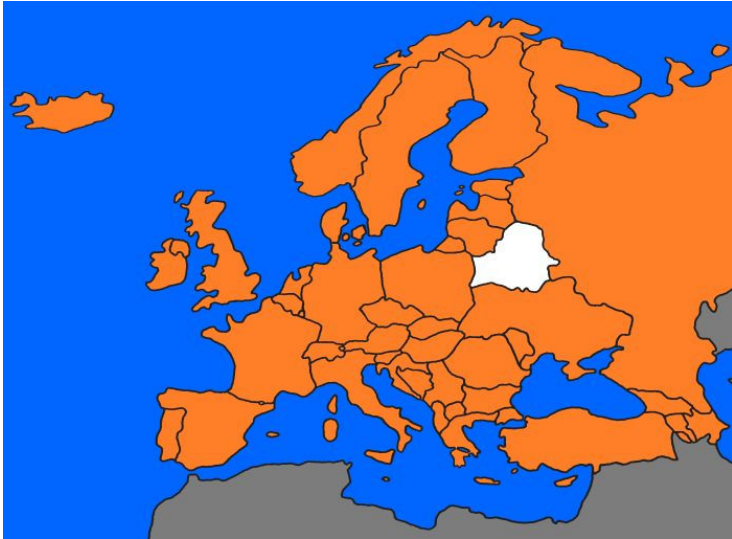
4. Lisbon Convention

It is also worth to mention *The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* developed by Council of Europe and UNESCO which can be considered as a milestone in creation of European Higher Education Area. 36 of 45 members of Bologna process have signed Lisbon Convention. This document focuses on recognition of qualifications – all diplomas issued in one country should be recognised in other countries which signed the convention. This convenience allows graduates and students to have equal access to education and labour market in Europe.

5. Bologna process

In 1999 representatives of 29 European countries met in Bologna and signed the Bologna declaration⁵. This document initiated many revolutionary changes in educational system of almost all European countries. The whole process, according to the plan, is going to end in 2010 by creating a final structure of European Higher Education Area. Rising number of Bologna process member states showed how popular this initiative is. By the 2005 number of members reached 45.

⁵ The Bologna Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education.



Bologna process member states (<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/BASIC/Map.htm>)

Main aim of creation of EHEA is to improve mobility of students and teachers, allow students to develop fully their personality and skills, increase employability of graduates on labour market, make European educational system competitive and attractive to students from around the world and last but not least build “Europe of Knowledge” – the biggest world economy based on knowledge.

Main actions to achieve EHEA are:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
This should be achieved by introduction of Diploma Supplement.
This document contains data allowing characterising level and type of education achieved by graduate and also personal achievements of every student. It is written in one of the ‘international’ languages.

Since 2005 diploma supplement is issued to every person graduating university in countries belonging to Bologna process.

- Adoption of a system based on two main cycles of education

System based on two degrees – undergraduate, which should last 3-4 years (i.e. Bachelor) and graduate which should last 5-6 years (i.e. Master). This system is introduced in majority of European countries.

- Establishment of a system of credits (such as ECTS)

ECTS system allows student to complete studies at several different educational institutions (at home or abroad). Period of studies at one university is recognised at mother university. In order to complete semester one must obtain 30 points and to complete year one must obtain 60 points. System of credit points is widely accepted as the tool to estimate students achievements.

- Promotion of mobility

This postulate is fulfilled thanks to Socrates/Erasmus programme which helps students to complete part of education in foreign country. Many educational institutions co-operate and introduce common curricula, courses and students exchanges.

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

This should be achieved by introduction of comparable criteria and methodologies of accreditation. ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance) is a platform on which countries coordinate their accreditation policy. By the year 2005 every member state of Bologna process should establish institution covering this area.

- Promotion of European dimensions in higher education

For example creating of new courses such as European studies or preparing special curricula taking European perspective into consideration.

6. Communiqués

Every two years ministers of education of Bologna process member states meet and discuss achievements and mark out further directions of process development. Each summit ends with announcement of special report. So far there have been three such meetings, each ended with publishing of communiqués which introduced following actions:

Prague Communiqué (2001)⁶

- Lifelong learning

Due to changing demographic structure of Europe and rapid technological development lifelong learning should become integral part of universities educational offer. This kind of education is widespread in Western Europe and becomes increasingly popular in other countries.

- Higher education institutions and students

Involvement of universities, higher education institutions and students as active, competent and constructive partners is very desirable. There is a number of institutions supporting Bologna process: European University Association, European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, National Unions of Students in Europe,

⁶ Towards the European Higher Education Area: Communique of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001.

UNESCO, Council of Europe, and many other institution involved in academic issues.

- Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Attractiveness of EHEA to students from around the world should be improved. Qualifications and diplomas issued in Europe should be recognised world-wide.

Berlin Communiqué (2003)⁷

- European Higher Education Area and European Research Area Researches are essential part of educational system. EHEA and ERA are two pillars of the knowledge based society.

- Introducing doctoral level as a third cycle in the Bologna process.

Adding third cycle to scope of Bologna process will improve standard of researches and will improve the quality of higher education.

Bergen Communiqué (2005)⁸

- Higher education and research

Ministers underlined specific bond which links higher education and researches. This bond should be enhanced and strengthened.

- The social dimension

Higher education should be available to all people regardless of their sex, race, social and economic background

⁷ Realizing the European Higher Education Area – Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003.

⁸ The European Higher Education Area -Achieving the Goals Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005.

- Mobility

Mobility of staff and students is considered to be one of the most important elements of Bologna process and thus members reconfirm commitment to facilitate it.

7. Ukrainian educational system

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union Ukraine gained independence. There was a mark of Soviet philosophy on educational system of this country – i.e. very popular pre-school education, overdeveloped technical education for needs of industry, Russian languages in many educational institutions, centralised decision making process. Since 1992 Ukrainian educational system has undergone several changes and reforms and there are efforts to make it comparable to this of Western European countries.

Currently the structure of education in Ukraine looks as follows:

- Pre-school education based on 17200 institutions. In 2001 39% of all children were attending kindergartens and similar institutions⁹.
- Primary and secondary education „shall ensure the comprehensive development of a child as individual, its gifts, skills, talents, labour training, professional self-determination, formation of the general human moral, digestion of the scope of knowledge on the nature, human being, society and production generally accepted by public and national-cultural needs, environmental education, physical improvement”¹⁰. It is compulsory and free of charge. It is based on over

⁹ After: http://www.education.gov.ua/pls/edu/docs/common/education_eng.html

¹⁰ Art. 35 in Law of Ukraine “On Education”, 23 May 1991

21000 of education institutions. There is also a small number of schools for gifted children and youth (in 2001 there were 273 gymnasiums, 232 lyceums, 25 colleges). There is also small number of private schools functioning in Ukraine. Period of comprehensive education lasts 12 years and is divided into 3 shorter stages:

I level – 4 year - elementary school - provides primary general education

II level – 5 year basic school - provides general basic secondary education

III level – 3 year upper school - provides complete general secondary education.

- Higher education system is based on almost 1000 educational institutions. It is possible to obtain Junior Specialist, Bachelor, Specialist, Master degrees. Admission of candidates is based on competitive basis. Higher education institutions are divided according to level of accreditation:

- first level - technical schools, vocational schools and other higher educational institutions of a corresponding level. On this stage a degree of junior specialist can be issued

- second level - colleges and other higher educational institutions of a corresponding level. On this stage degree of bachelor can be issued

- third level - institutes, conservatories, academies, universities. On these levels degrees of specialist, master can be issued

- fourth level - institutes, conservatories, academies, and universities. On these levels degrees of specialist, master

can be issued. Only difference between third and fourth level is assessment made by accreditation commission.

To obtain junior specialist or bachelor degree it is needed to complete 3-4 years of education and to obtain specialist or master degree it is needed to complete first degree and study for next 2-3 years. Owner of the highest degree may apply for Ph.D. studies.

8. Ukraine and Bologna process

Ukraine was welcomed to Bologna process at the summit in Bergen in 2005. Although the period of membership is quite short Ukraine made several measures in order to meet Bologna requirements: In 2000 Ukraine signed Lisbon Convention, there is working system of accreditation responsible for assessment of education quality, primary and secondary education has been extended to 12 years, many important documents has been translated into English, in 2002 there was a reform of „Law on Education” to meet Bologna procedures and postulates. Also the involvement of academic institutions is visible. But there are still many areas to cover: mobility of students is quite low, students influence on higher education is not clearly defined, institutions autonomy regarding curricula is restricted by state, simultaneous existence of Bachelor, Master and Specialist degrees causes confusion on the labour market because Bachelor degree is not fully respected.

It is very desirable that Ukraine would create database, in a form of a web site, providing information about progress in fulfilling Bologna process assumptions. At the moment such source of information is unavailable.

9. Polish educational system

Present Polish educational system was introduced after reform of 1998/99. Unfortunately the reform was not considered as a success and it is criticised by many teachers and students. Particularly new Matura exam has caused many problems among pupils and it is going to be partially modified this and next year. Education is free of charge and compulsory from the age of 6.

Currently Polish educational system looks as follows:

- Pre-school education based on nurseries and kindergartens. On this level children start their education at the age of 6.
- Primary school – children attend primary schools from age of 7. Education in these institutions lasts for 6 years end is ended with a test which measures how much pupils have learned during this period of education.
- Middle school (gymnasium) – this stage of education lasts 3 years and ends with tests divided into humanities and sciences parts. Results of this exam are basis for secondary school recruitment.
- Secondary schools in Poland are divided into 3 year grammar schools, 4 year technical grammar schools and 2-3 year vocational schools. Grammar and technical schools ends with Matura exam which is marked externally. Many higher education institutions carry out recruitment based on this exam results. Vocational school end with professional examination of an external type. After graduating vocational school it is possible to enrol on complementary grammar or technical school which ends with matura exam.

Higher education – there are various types of higher education institutions: universities, technical universities, economic academies, agricultural academies and growing numbers of non-public institutions. After 3 years of successful education student obtains bachelor degree and after 2 next year it is possible to obtain masters degree in similar field of study. There are also uniform courses such as law or medicine which last 5-6 years. After obtaining master degree it is possible to apply for PhD studies.

10. Poland and Bologna process

As Poland is one of original 29 members of Bologna it is advanced in realisation of main assumptions of Bologna process. In 2001 Poland introduced accreditation board which is responsible for assessment of education quality on higher education institutions. Of all 104 available courses 98 are divided into II levels – undergraduate and graduate. A system of credit points is very popular and widely spread among higher education institutions. Promotion of mobility is facilitated by Socrates/Erasmus programme and thanks to ECTS points. Polish universities are issuing Diploma supplement since 2005. Poland signed and ratified Lisbon Convention on recognition of qualifications. European dimensions in higher education are propagated thanks to new European studies course and new European specialisation on courses such as law, international relations, economy and political science.

11. Conclusions

As we can see Bologna process is developing rapidly. Probably in 1999 founders of process didn't think that initiative they had started would be so successful. At present all students draw many benefits from it – higher quality of studies, easier exchanges and learning abroad, better possibilities on European work market, easier access to many learning possibilities. But there will be more profits as Bologna process is still heading towards European Higher Education Area. I think Poland has taken advantage of possibilities created by Bologna process. The question is if Ukraine will handle with it? Taking into consideration recent political and social changes I think it is very likely.