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Bologna Process and its progress in Ukraine

In my short report I would like to speak not only about the Bologna Process and problems it deals with but also about the prerequisites of the Bologna Process and about the steps my country, Ukraine, is trying to make in concordance with this process.

The idea of creating the Area of Higher Education in Europe is not new. The first step in the development of this project dates back at least as far as 1974 when the European ministers of higher education adopted the resolution directed at strengthening relations between European universities. This resolution included such steps as mutual acknowledgement of diplomas and exchange of students, teachers and scientists among the European universities.

Moreover, certain steps were made towards the development of European system of documentation and exchange of information in the field of higher education for which the program, named Eurydice was adopted.

In 1987 several more programs, among them Socrates-Erasmus, Socrates-Lingua and others aimed at students exchange and language studies, were initiated. For example, Leonardo da Vinci program was to deal with professional training and Tempus/TACIS was to foster higher education development in the East European countries.

Then the Lisbon Convention (in 1997) and Sorbonne Declaration (in 1998) followed.

The Lisbon Convention stressed that the diversity of higher schools cannot be and should not be an obstacle for students from different countries to the sources of information in all European universities.

In 1998 in Sorbonne four European ministers signed the declaration which included such steps as an formation of the Area of Higher Education in Europe; acknowledgement of diplomas; orientation at two-level higher education (Bachelor and Master's degrees) and a Doctorate; introduction of ECTS, that is the European system of credits.

The next step was made by the conference in the city of Bologna in June 1999 where 29 ministers of Higher Education signed their declaration.

The main goal of the Bologna Conference was a coordination of demands and criteria for all the European national higher school systems in order to create a common educational and scientific area by 2010. This goal had been formulated in concordance with the Lisbon Convention adopted in 1997 which presupposed the acknowledgement of other countries diplomas and in concordance with the following Sorbonne Declaration in 1998, oriented at coordination of higher school systems in Europe.

A well-known European higher school analyst Guy Hang determined two fundamental principles for the process of European cooperation in higher education.

The first one was that all European students must have the right to study at any European university they choose. The second principle said that students should be provided with all the necessary sources and means to acquire proper qualifications.

Thus, the main attention of the Bologna Conference was drawn to the level of qualification of future professionals, rather than to the problem of diploma acknowledgement. Though, it should be mentioned that the idea of creating a single model of higher school in Europe did not appeal to all the participants. Some of them thought that it would affect the peculiarities and diversity of national higher schools.

It is important to mention here that the access to the above-mentioned Declaration was open not only to the countries of the European Union but also to any country in Europe and in the whole world during the last decade. The European Union has not only expanded territorially but has also strengthened its relationships with many European countries. Moreover, not only politicians and scientists but also ordinary people living in Europe have understood that the future of Europe greatly depends on strengthening social potentials.

As for my country, I am glad to inform you that Ukraine is showing more and more interest in the cooperation with the European Union in many fields, especially in the field of higher education. It was in May 2005 when our first deputy Minister Andriy Ghurzhyj announced about our country's intention to sign the so-called Protocol so that Ukraine could join the Bologna Process.

This document aimed at the reformation of the Ukrainian higher school system in order to let our graduates and professionals adapt to the European standards of higher education more easily and within the shortest period of time. We would like our methods of teaching and our higher school diplomas to be acknowledged by the European Universities. That is why we are making definite steps towards it, such as updating higher school curricula and creating more favorable conditions for our students so that they could be able to study more efficiently.

In this aspect, signing the above-mentioned Protocol will actually be Ukraine's first step on the road to joining the Bologna Process in approximately 2010-2012. Yet there is a lot to do.

At present Ukraine is taking part in the students' exchange program between our country and the European Union in order to implement special programs in learning foreign languages and in getting familiar with the European cultural and social traditions. All in all the changes in the Ukrainian higher school are underway. Future students will also have a wider choice of higher schools; they will look more intensively for the ways and means to satisfy the students' demands in professionalism and competence.

Thus, I think that students of all European countries, including Ukraine, will benefit from joining the Bologna Process.