The Bologna Process
Europe’s Journey to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

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EHEA – a political reality

- 48 member countries
- 16 years of existence for the Bologna Process
- 5 years since the launch of the European Higher Education Area
EHEA Characteristics

• Inter-governmental, voluntary, without a permanent Secretariat
• “Process of voluntary convergence and coordinated reform “of national HE systems
• Includes another political space – the European Union, while engaging in a complex interaction with it
• Inclusive – involves European stakeholder organisations (HEIs, academic faculty, students, QA agencies, business representatives etc.)
• Grounded on European values: public responsibility for HE, institutional autonomy, academic freedom, commitment to integrity and stakeholder participation
EHEA evolution

• Development: Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005
• Consolidation: London 2007, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 2009, Budapest/Wien 2010
• Establishment: Budapest/Wien 2010, Bucharest 2012
• Prioritisation and reaffirmation of key values: Yerevan 2015
• Paris 2018: A new EHEA consolidation decade or a new beginning?
What should it achieve?
• More coherent and readable national HE systems
• Enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of Europe
• Engage in dialogue with other HE areas (Bologna Policy Forum)
• Build a European dimension to HE across the continent and enhance mobility of students and staff
The Bologna Process
EHEA Achievements

• A space for policy dialogue, a common vocabulary and a sizeable group of Bologna Process experts
• Three cycle system and ECTS implemented almost fully across the EHEA
• 38 countries have functional qualification frameworks, compatible with the QF-EHEA
• Almost all countries have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention
• QA = European Standards and Guidelines for QA (2nd edition – includes Student Centered Learning and attention to recognition practices) and EQAR
• EHEA Mobility target: 20% by 2020 (EHEA Strategy to support it)
• Increased stakeholder participation in decision-making
• It is still an ongoing process, with political commitment
Challenges

• Reform fatigue & search for an identity in line with the new European context (impact of migration, financial crisis, demographic downturn, Euroscepticism, extremism and terrorism etc.)

• Uneven implementation and difficult translation of the Bologna Process goals at the level of academic communities

• The move from structural to in-depth reforms (social dimension, student centered learning, linking EHEA with the European Research Area etc.)
Yerevan 2015 – a renewed vision

• Enhance the quality and relevance of learning and teaching
• Foster the employability of graduates throughout their working lives
• Make the EHEA HE systems more inclusive
• Implementing agreed structural reforms
+ a renewed governance system for the EHEA to support these goals
New EHEA policy documents

• The revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
• The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
• The revised ECTS Users’ Guide, as an official EHEA document
Beyond technical reforms...

“The Bologna Process has created a space for dialogue and cooperation which reaches far beyond Europe. Dialogue not just about the technicalities of credit systems and quality assurance, but about the fundamental principles – freedom of expression, tolerance, freedom of research, free movement of students and staff, student involvement and the co-creation of learning – that reflect the basic values on which European society is based.”

Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner responsible for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport - Preface to the 2015 Bologna Process implementation report
Lessons learned

• Formal implementation is different from results achieved
  – E.g. national qualification frameworks (NQF) are in place, but few national cases that managed real involvement of employers, in order for NQF to be recognised and used

• Reaching mutual understanding of policy priorities and instruments is perhaps the most underestimated feature of an educational space. No overarching cooperation in HE can be achieved only with governmental commitment

• Policy instruments need to be fit for purpose and in line with the current realities (QA and QF are clear examples in this regard)
Lessons learned (2)

• Public support from the wider public for the HE policy space is essential
• No progress without real political commitment (no double discourse) and joint effort of stakeholders towards common goals (with ownership feeling)
• For more effective policies, reliable research based on sound data is needed - enhance the role of HE research and the dialogue with policy makers (see the Bologna Process Researchers Conferences in 2011 and 2014)
• Coherence with other policy areas: primary and secondary education, LLL, research, employment, foreign policy, immigration etc.
• National or regional ‘recipes’ for reform cannot be exported
Thank you for your attention!

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