
Dr Una Strand Viðarsdóttir
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland
The Bologna Process: a brief reminder

- Launched in 1999: 29 countries sign the Bologna Declaration
- 2017: 48 countries and 8 main HE stakeholders
- European Higher Education area from 2010.
- Time to take stock: Where have we been, where are we now and where are we heading?
The Bologna Process: The Utopia of higher education?

• Single most influential movement in European higher education today
• Change in the way we structure higher education – shared tools and transparent systems
• More important: highlighting ideal principles of European Higher education systems
• Not simply a structural tool but a philosophy
  – Academic freedom
  – Democracy
  – Citizenship
  – Stakeholder participation
  – International collaboration
  – Social cohesion
  – Mobility

• A philosophy that requires effective commitment to mechanisms of implementation, and coordination, nationally and across borders.
Traditional role of QA in the Bologna Process

- Backbone
- Trust and transparency
- Streamlining
- Translating
- Simplifying
- Enabling
QA and the tools of the Bologna Process

- Standardisation of degree composition (ECTS)
- Qualification frameworks
  - National and overarching
- Quality Assurance standards
- ENIC /NARIC networks
- Diploma supplement
- Implementation reports and Communiqués
1999: 29 countries
2017: 48 countries
2017: 48 countries
The EHEA in context

- Post-economic crisis: clear impact on funding and jobs
  - Education for a job vs education for work?
  - Transferable skills
- Europe in Question?: Brexit, Frexit, free movement
- Continuous expansion in the demands on HEIs
- Demography:
  - Ageing populations
  - People without papers
  - Papers from different systems
- Can Bologna cope with, and function within, this context?
Reality check:

The Principle of Implementation
Overview of developments

- Agenda setting (1998..)
- Legislative reform (2000..)
- Implementation (2005..)
The current state of implementation
Bologna Basics: degree systems
Bologna Basics: Degree systems

• First and second cycle implementation has improved:
  – 1st cycle: 180 to 240 ECTS; 2nd cycle: 60 to 120 ECTS
  – Combined length 240 - 360 ECTS: Variations in length may lead to recognition problems

• Extreme variation in nr students continuing into 2nd cycle

• Short-cycle: status and purposes differ (little comparability)
Access of first cycle graduates to the second cycle

Share of first-cycle students continuing studies in a second-cycle programme
Qualifications frameworks

38 countries in 'green ', but 10 others have not started implementation at institutional and programme level, and some show no progress since 2012. Non formal qualifications often problematic
Recognition of qualifications and credits

- All but one EHEA countries have ratified the LRC
- (Only) 10 countries specify the main principles in legislation
- HEIs make most decisions upon recognition of qualifications and all decisions on credits gained abroad
- Revised ESG includes duty of QA to monitor recognition
- Pathfinder group has demonstrated that automatic level recognition can be achieved with political commitment
- Diploma supplements – improved use but 2/3 do not fulfill all requirements, in particular automatic issuing
Quality Assurance

• Dynamic evolution continues...

• However:
  – Participation of stakeholders sometimes still problematic
  – Lack of attention to social dimension
  – Slow progress in allowing EQAR-registered agencies to work across EHEA

• Challenge of European approach to joint programmes
Openness to cross-border QA

2015 Report

- AD: 8
- LU: 4
- LI: 8
- MT: 5
- VA: 23
Student participation in QA

[Map of Europe showing student participation in QA with a table beside it showing numbers for 2015 and 2012 reports.]

- 2015 Report
- 2012 Report
- 14 11
- 7 11
- 13 13
- 7 5
- 7 7
A voluntary system without legislative framework

- Implementation key to function
- Reliant on peer-support and peer-pressure
- Pick and mix -> two-tier system/multiple tier system
- Undermining the system:
  - highlighting lack of implementation
  - Hiding lack of implementation
“We ask the BFUG [...] to submit proposals for addressing the issue of non-implementation of key commitments in time for our next meeting.”

Yerevan Communique
Work Programme 2015-2018
Key commitments of the Bologna Process

• Focus on three key elements of the Bologna Process: The core of the commitments all countries signed up to when joining the EHEA.
• Do not represent all EHEA tools, reforms and common values.
• Allow recognition and mobility across the whole EHEA to function.
• Their correct implementation prerequisite to any higher education system that embraces the fundamental values of the Bologna Process.
Bologna Key Commitments

• **A Three-Cycle System compatible with the QF-EHEA and scaled by ECTS:**

Programmes are structured according to the three cycle-system of the Bologna model and scaled by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Qualifications achieved in each cycle are defined in a National Qualification Framework (NQF) which is compatible with the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
Bologna Key Commitments

• *Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)*: Cross-border recognition practices are in compliance with the Lisbon Recognition convention, including promoting the use of the UNESCO/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties.
Bologna Key Commitments

• *Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG):*

Institutions granting degrees assure the quality of their programmes leading to degrees following the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015). External quality assurance is performed by Agencies that have demonstrably complied with the standards and guidelines stipulated in the current ESG. This is best ensured where only those agencies registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) are allowed to operate in the country.
Procedure for dealing with non-implementation

- To be discussed and proposed at the Ministerial Meeting in Paris 2018
- Debate on incentives and end results ongoing in BFUG
- Voluntary Process with no Legal framework
- Report on implementation of key commitments to be published for Paris 2018.
Reality check: financial crises affect academia
Reality check: financial crises affect academia
Reality check: financial crises affect academia
Lack of funds in academia

- Focus on maintaining research activity
- Fewer, ageing staff – worse in small institutions
- Increased stress and job dissatisfaction
- Teaching as a source of funds
- Lack of funding for innovation in teaching
- Adjunct teachers
- No new jobs – brain drain
- Staff-student numbers poor
- Decrease in quality of teaching and learning.
“We will encourage and support higher education institutions and staff in promoting pedagogical innovation in student-centred learning environments and in fully exploiting the potential benefits of digital technologies for learning and teaching. We will promote a stronger link between teaching, learning and research at all study levels, and provide incentives for institutions, teachers and students to intensify activities that develop creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.”

Yerevan Communique
Work Programme 2015-2018

Bologna Follow-Up Group

BFUC Board

- AG1 - EHEA International cooperation
- AG2 - Support for the Belarus roadmap
- AG3 - Dealing with non-implementation
- AG4 - Diploma Supplement revision

WG1 - Monitoring

WG2 - Implementation
Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments

WG3 - New Goals
Policy development for new EHEA goals

In cooperation with national stakeholders

BFUC Secretariat

Legend

- Advisory group
- Working group

V3 - September 2016 - based on work programme consolidated version of 14.09.2015
Employability in a changing world

KEEP CALM AND DEVELOP EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
Employability

• Fostering employability one of the main goals of Higher Education
• Educating for a job vs educating for a changable world
• Competences suitable for entry into the labour market
• Adaptability to develop new competences for employability throughout their working lives
“Commitment to ensure that competence requirements for public employment allow for fair access to holders of first cycle degrees, and encourage employers to make appropriate use of all higher education qualifications, including those of the first cycle...”

Yerevan Communique
Reality check: a changing Europe/EHEA
Reality check: a changing Europe/EHEA

- continuing economic and social crisis
- dramatic levels of unemployment
- increasing marginalization of young people
- demographic changes,
- new migration patterns
- conflicts within and between countries
- extremism and radicalization
“We will support higher education institutions in enhancing their efforts to promote intercultural understanding, critical thinking, political and religious tolerance, gender equality, and democratic and civic values, in order to strengthen European and global citizenship and lay the foundations for inclusive societies.”

Yerevan Communique
Higher education: role and responsibilities

• Contributing to inclusive societies, founded on democratic values and human rights

• Mobility as tool for inclusivity
  – Education students
  – Disadvantaged backgrounds
  – Conflict areas
New goals
Political engagement
Change in priorities: New Goals

• Focus on implementation
  – Relevance for all?
  – Two tier system
  – Givers and takers

• Developing new goals
  – Teaching and learning
  – Research links
  – Digitalisation
  – Social dimension (old goal unexplored)
Change in priorities:
don´t forget our fundamental values

- Increasingly important BUT actively undermined or ignored by some EHEA members
- Focus of new parts of implementation report
  - Academic freedom
  - Institutional autonomy
  - Democracy and citizenship
  - Stakeholder participation
  - Student participation in governance
  - Social dimension of HE and promotion of social cohesion
  - Student-centred learning
So has anything really changed since Yerevan 2015?

- Awareness that fundamental issues unsolved (recognition still problematic, social dimension ignored etc)

- Debate on Belarus accession has re-opened the question on bigger goals: vision for open, inclusive European higher education

- Focus on ensuring that commitments are implemented, that important issues are discussed, and that change is real

- Momentum for change, but is it slipping away?
Is there a need for a change in the role of QA?

• IS there a risk that the emphasis on new goals leaves behind countries with poor implementation?
• Responsibility of QA?
• Are changes needed in procedures? Focus of assessment? Further updates of tools?
• QA as part of wider system of support and control, and protection for students
• New Goals QA?