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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOLOGNA SEMINARS

Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport
(Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education/Higher Education and
Research Division)

The present document gathers the conclusions/reports and the recommendations of the Bologna seminars held so far in 2003.   It is a background document under item 4 of the agenda of the Working Party and may also be relevant to other parts of the discussions.

The following documents are reproduced:

APPENDIX 1

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**Bologna Follow-up Seminar
"Exploring the Social Dimensions
of the European Higher Education Area"
Athens, Greece, 19-20 February 2003**

General Report
by Stephan Neetens, ESIB

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1. Introduction

The seminar focused on three main issues and the challenges they pose for the construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). These three issues are: (1) the social dimension of the EHEA, (2) higher education as a public good and (3) higher education in the GATS negotiations. Each of these tree issues were dealt with in the answers to the questionnaire that was sent out by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs before the seminar, were analysed by several speakers and were the topic of working group discussions. This draft report tries to put forward a generally acceptable synthesis of questionnaire answers, speakers' input and working group results for the three main issues. At the same time it makes some careful proposals of passages to be included in the communiqué that the European ministers of education will agree upon at their next ministerial summit in September 2003 in Berlin.

2. The social dimension of the EHEA

Starting points

The European ministers of education didn't mention the social dimension in their Bologna Declaration. In their Prague Communiqué on the contrary they stressed the social dimension several times. Firstly they mentioned it in a general way under the heading "Higher education institutions and students": "Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna Process." Secondly they referred to it on two specific occasions, on the one hand under the heading "Promotion of mobility": "Therefore, they (…) emphasized the social dimension of mobility.", on the other under the heading "Lifelong learning": "(…) lifelong learning strategies are necessary (…) to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and quality of life." They encouraged the follow-up group to organise a seminar on the "social dimension, with specific attention to obstacles to mobility" to explore the topic further.

Furthermore it must be remembered that all the signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration have signed and ratified the "United Nations Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights". Article 13 of this Covenant is directly relevant for the social dimension of the EHEA: "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to

all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education."

One of the overall goals of higher education is to enhance social cohesion and equity. This goal should therefore also be central in the creation of the EHEA. To be able to achieve this goal it is essential to take into account the social dimension of higher education, to elaborate and implement appropriate policies and to agree upon and co-ordinate European-wide action lines.

Two policy levels can be discerned. Firstly all signatory countries should share some characteristics on social student policy. Secondly some specific European policy initiatives could be developed.

Shared characteristics

The social student policy of all the signatory countries should be aimed at allowing those persons who have the capacities and the will to study to actually access and finish higher education studies. To achieve this aim activities have to be deployed in two domains.

The first domain is that of access to higher education, meaning access to both the first cycle and the second cycle.
- Equal and free access should be guaranteed. This means that access policies can only be based on merit and capacities. Furthermore it is clear that tuition fees can form severe access thresholds. In correspondance with article 13 of the UN Covenant they should be eliminated or at least be reduced to as low an amount as possible. Equal and free access should not only be guaranteed for the traditional student but also for non-traditional students such as older and/or employed persons. For these the developments of flexible learning paths and the introduction of an ECTS compatible credit accumulation system are essential features. Also alternative delivery modes could prove to be very useful.
- Not only should equal and free access be guaranteed, participation of underrepresented or socially disadvantaged groups should also be enhanced. Special attention should be devoted to persons stemming from lower socio-economic classes, ethnic minorities, immigrants, disabled persons, etc. Their situation and background is very complex. Therefore structural policies are required which should at least contain special financial incentives and flexible learning paths.
- Essential in the access and participation debate are decent information campaigns. It is clear that co-ordination and co-operation between secondary and higher education are needed here.

The second domain is that of the social support for those students who are studying in higher education. Essential is that an adequate social student infrastructure is set up that will allow every student to finish his or her studies on time and with the biggest welfare possible. This social student infrastructure is amongst others made up of:
- a performative financial support system
- decent housing facilities
- encompassing social security coverage
- accessible health care

- relevant academic, social and legal guidance and counselling
- supportive job and career services.

Next to this a constant fight against drop-out rates should be waged. Appropriate counselling is important here. But as important is once more the introduction of flexible learning paths and an ECTS compatible credit accumulation system.

The development of a social student policy in these two domains is a joint responsability of governments and higher education institutions. In a higher education environment characterised by institutional autonomy the higher education institutions have to actively contribute to the enhancement of social cohesion and equity.

The European level

The Bologna Declaration contained action lines on the "promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance" and the "promotion of the European dimension in higher education". Likewise in the future development of the EHEA a European approach and European co-operation in the social dimension should be promoted.

It is clear that there is no need whatsoever for a common European social student support system. But there is a well-defined need for consultation and concertation within the EHEA on the aims and goals of the social student policy. The way each country implements the aims and goals agreed upon in this process of consultation and concertation is a matter of national sovereignty. The Bologna Process offers an ideal occasion for such a process of consultation and concertation.

In the EHEA there exists an enormous and rich diversity in access and social support policies. There is a clear need for more but above all more qualitative information on this diversity. Euro-Stud is for instance a good example of an attempt to offer such information. Nevertheless it should be enlarged to all Bologna signatory countries and the information provided should become more analytical and comparative. The collection and dissemination of best practices in access and social support policies should also be stimulated. Moreover there is also a clear need for more comparable policy criteria. Just as ENQA receives study assignments in the field of European co-operation in quality assurance it should be considered to give for instance ECSTA comparable study assignments which deal with the aforementioned topics.

In the Prague Communiqué the ministers of education specifically stressed the social dimension in relation to student mobility. Social aspects are indeed very often considerable thresholds to European student mobility. These threshold resulting from social aspects could be tackled by the following measures:
- clearer and more targeted information on student mobility opportunities
- portability of all financial student support albeit under certain conditions
- equal access for mobile students to the social support systems of the countries where they are studying
- specific measures to improve the participation of disadvantaged social groups, especially students originating from the lower socio-economic strata, to student mobility
- solidarity in the EHEA to fight the current disparity between European countries which very often hinders student mobility: this could be done by devising some

sort of mechanism by which the wealthier countries in the EHEA assist the relatively less wealthy countries.

Conclusion

In the Prague Communiqué attention was drawn to the social dimension of the EHEA. The Berlin Communiqué must follow up this dimension and treat the different elements which make it up more intensively.

Therefore it is proposed to include the three following paragraphs in the Berlin Communiqué.

The preamble should state: "The Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the process in the construction of a European Higher Education Area. They point towards the importance in this matter of article 13 of the UN Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights."

A specific paragraph should be added on the social dimension of the EHEA stating: "A European approach and European co-operation in the social dimension

To be able to contribute to bigger social cohesion and equity the Ministers stress that higher education in the EHEA should be equally and freely accessible. Equally accessible means that everyone who has the capacities should be able to access higher education. Freely accessible means that higher education should be as free of cost as possible, tending towards gratuity. Moreover the Ministers state that participation of underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups in higher education must be enlarged. Financial incentives, flexible learning paths and the introduction of an ECTS compatible credit accumulation system are useful measures to this end. Furthermore the Ministers emphasize the introduction and maintenance of a qualitative social student support policy consisting of performative financial support systems, decent housing facilities, encompassing social security coverage, accessible health care, relevant academic, social and legal guidance and counselling, supportive job and career services, etc. Finally the Ministers believe that a structural fight against drop out rates via flexible curricula and degree structures is of the utmost importance. The implementation of these policies is a shared responsibility of governments and institutions.

The Ministers also recognise the need for more but above all more qualitative information on the diversity of access and social student support policies in the EHEA. Furthermore they request the collection and dissemination of best practices in access and social support policies. Moreover they recognise the clear need for more comparable policy criteria. By 2005 they would like to ask ECSTA to execute study assignments which deal with the aforementioned topics."

The paragraph on the promotion of mobility should contain the following sentences: "To counter thresholds to European student mobility which result from the socio-economical background of students the Ministers propose the following measures: the portability of all financial student support albeit under certain conditions, equal access for mobile students to the social support systems of the countries where they are

studying and the implementation of solidarity mechanisms in the EHEA to balance the effects on student mobility of the existing disparity between European countries."

3. Higher education as a public good

Starting points

In the Bologna Declaration the ministers of education did not explicitly express their view on the question if higher education has to be considered a public good. They did so in the Prague Communiqué where they stated in the introductory remarks: "They (the ministers) supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.) (…)."

Relevant here is also the fact that higher education can be considered to be a human right. This is made clear in the aforementioned article 13 of the "United Nations Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights".

Definitions

A main point of discussion has been the definition of higher education as public good. From an economical point of view a public good has the following characteristics: (1) it is available to all, (2) it is not subject to competition and (3) it is not subject to exclusion. As such it opposes a so-called commodity which has as defining characteristics: (1) it is only available to a limited number of persons and (2) it is subject to market laws. Throughout discussions it became clear that higher education cannot entirely be considered to be a public good in the economical sense of the word, neither is it entirely a commodity. It is probably a mixed good.

Nevertheless as some speakers stressed an economical point of view is only one way of approaching the reality of higher education as a public good. There is also a political-ideological approach to the question. Important elements of this approach are the conception of higher education as a fundamental human right and as a public service. This vision is a much more voluntaristic notion. It majorly depends on the consequences of higher education, on the societal aims, goals and functions we ascribe to higher education.

Tradition plays a big part here. Higher education institutions are traditionally places of knowledge transfer that form their students to become independent minds that look critically at the world and the society surrounding them. Higher education institutions are also centres of knowledge creation in a spirit of academic freedom with a special stress on independent fundamental research. This tradition, part of the university heritage, is worth preserving.

At the same time modernity determines the aims, goals and functions of higher education. In this view higher education can become through massification and participation a lever for social change, social mobility and social cohesion. Vis à vis a political understanding of higher education as a public good this modernist approach is still considered to be of extreme importance.

Consequences

One of the major consequences of considering higher education as a public good is that higher education becomes a public responsibility. It was agreed upon that this is probably a more important and fruitful approach than the definitional discussion about higher education as a public good. Higher education as a public responsibility clearly means that both the tasks of governments and higher education are determined by it.

One of the speakers nicely synthesized the meaning of public responsibility for the government. His interpretation finds support in the Prague Communiqué itself where the ministers of education mentioned one example of the public responsibility, *id est* the regulating of higher education. Governments have the sole responsibility for defining the framework of higher education. They have a main responsibility for assuring equal access to higher education. They have an important role to play in the provision of higher education and in the financing of higher education. Next to this they have a shared responsibility for assuring the quality of higher education. This is clearly considered to be the counterpart of equal access. Massified higher education needs to stay qualitative. Else it is a useless exercise.

Higher education institutions have to operate in an environment that is getting more globalised, commercialised and therefore competitive every day. It would be useless to deny this reality. When positioning themselves in this environment they have to keep in mind that also they, in a higher education area that is defined by relative autonomy, carry an important part of the public responsibility for higher education. Their policies have to be coherent with this responsibility. They also have to contribute to assure equal access to higher education. They have to take care of their fundamental research, *eg* via an overhead policy on contract research. They play an important part in quality assurance and they have to be accountable to government, parliament and society at large.

Conclusion

The Berlin Communiqué should stress once more the fact that higher education is a public good and stays a public responsibility. It should elaborate more on the roles that the different higher education actors play in realising these contentions in practice. Finally it is very clear that everybody expects that the ministers of education will guarantee adequate public funding of higher education.

4. Higher education in the GATS negotiations

Considerations

Participants took notice of the emerging global market for higher education services as well as developments in trading these services in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Participants also noted the increasing trend towards global competition in higher education. However, they reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of

the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world.

Several participants further stressed the announcement of the European Commission to not include (public) education in their negotiation proposal for the ongoing GATS negotiations as a positive development. The majority also welcomed the efforts of keeping the commitments of the EU limited to entirely privately funded and/or for-profit education services.

Principles

While there were different viewpoints expressed as to how GATS might affect the higher education sector, participants agreed on a number of principles which should be guidelines in discussing the ongoing WTO negotiations.

Considering the commitment to Higher Education as a public good and responsibility in the Prague Communiqué, also affirmed in various UN and UNESCO agreements, participants reaffirmed this commitment and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardise the responsibility of financing the public education sector. They further stressed, that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question by the GATS negotiations.

Generally, participants felt that the potentials to develop future and maintain existing regulatory and funding frameworks on national and international level have to be guaranteed in the light of the GATS negotiations.

Participants also felt that it is necessary to develop alternative frameworks for internationalisation within the Bologna Process and the international arena based on academic co-operation, trust and respect for diversity.

Furthermore, it seems necessary to assess the impact of GATS on education systems from a legal perspective, also taking into account the role of higher education in society.

Lastly, it was stressed, that the transparency of the negotiations needs to be increased and an inclusion of the stakeholders is necessary. *Per analogiam* if one day "trade" disputes concerning educational services would arise under the WTO dispute settlement procedure educational experts should be consulted and involved in settling these cases.

Conclusion

It is suggested that a text proposal on European higher education and GATS is elaborated for inclusion in the Berlin Communiqué by the next meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group in June 2003 taking into account all the aforementioned considerations. In any case it is clear that the European ministers of education have to insert a joint statement on GATS in their next communiqué.

APPENDIX 2

**Bologna Follow-up Seminar
"Exploring the Social Dimensions
of the European Higher Education Area"
Athens, Greece, 19-20 February 2003**

Conclusions

A. The issues of the "social dimension" and the "public good"

1. In the Berlin Communiqué, the Ministers should explicitly reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process towards the construction of the European Higher Education Area. They should also reaffirm their position that higher education should be considered a public good and a public responsibility. Moreover, the Ministers should specify the social aspects of the European Higher Education Area, taking also stock of the outcomes of the official Bologna Seminar held in Athens and of the European Student Convention.

2. Improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area should counterbalance the need for competitiveness and be seen as a value in itself as well as one of the conditions of competitiveness, and should aim at reducing the social gap and strengthening social cohesion, both at national and at European level. In the knowledge-based society and economy, the social component should be given considerable concern with regards to research as well.

3. Higher education as a public good cannot only be interpreted as an economic issue but also as a social and political one. In that context, higher education should be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction and the defence of free education.

4. Under conditions of wide access to higher education, the need for quality and accountability becomes predominant, and should be realised through the establishment of appropriate quality assurance procedures. At the same time, the maintenance of public support on the one hand and the efficient use of the available resources on the other are of special importance as well.

5. Appropriate studying and living conditions should be ensured for the students so that they can finalise successfully their studies in time without being prevented by obstacles related to their social and economic background. In this context, it is necessary to introduce and maintain social support schemes for the students, including grants, portable as far as possible, loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling.

6. Removing the obstacles to the free movement of students should be considered a prerequisite for provision of equal mobility opportunities to all students irrespective of their social and economic background, thus providing for a genuine mobility.

7. Participants underlined the need for on-going research at European level, including comparative analyses and best practices, so that the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the consideration of higher education as public good and public responsibility to be further improved.

B. The issue of the GATS negotiations

1. Participants took notice of the emerging global market for higher education services as well as developments in trading these services in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

2. Participants also noted the increasing trend towards global competition in higher education. However, they reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world.

3. Participants welcomed the announcement of the European Commission not to include education in its negotiation proposal for the ongoing GATS negotiations as a positive development. The majority also welcomed the efforts of keeping the existing commitments of the EU limited entirely to for-profit privately funded education services.

4. Participants reaffirmed the commitment of the Prague Communiqué for considering higher education a public good and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardise the responsibility of financing the public education sector. They further stressed, that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question.

5. Generally, participants believe that the positions to develop future and maintain existing regulatory and funding frameworks on national and international level have to be guaranteed.

6. Participants also believe that it is necessary to continue to develop alternative frameworks for internationalisation within the Bologna Process and the international context based on academic co-operation, trust and respect for diversity.

7. Furthermore, it is necessary in each country to assess the possible impacts of GATS on education systems from a legal and practical perspective, also taking into account the role of higher education in society.

8. Participants expressed the need for transparency in the GATS negotiations and that GATS negotiators should consult closely the higher education stakeholders.

9. Participants stressed that in case of the necessity of dispute settlement under GATS procedures, experts from the higher education sector should be consulted.

10. It is asked from the Bologna Follow-Up Group to elaborate a text proposal on European higher education and GATS for inclusion in the Berlin Communiqué by the next meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group in June 2003.

APPENDIX 3

Conference on Master-level Degrees
Helsinki, Finland, March 14 - 15, 2003

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference

Different dimensions of master degrees

(In this document the term master degree is used to describe all second-cycle higher education degrees at master level irrespective of their different national titles)

As the study made by European University Association shows most European countries have introduced or are about to introduce a higher education degree structure based on a sequence of bachelor, master and doctoral degrees.

According to this report, there is still some variety in the length of the study programmes leading to the master's degree, but there seems to be a trend towards master degrees the total extent of which is 300 ECTS credits. In practice, this usually means five years of full-time studies.

The degree structures still vary considerably between the countries taking part in the Bologna Process. In addition, the two-tier structure is still perceived differently in our respective countries. In some higher education systems, bachelor's and master's degrees are seen as clearly self-supporting entities, whereas in others, the two cycles form rather a cumulative sequence of knowledge, skills and competencies in more or less the same disciplinary area. These differences can be accommodated within the European Higher Education Area if reconciled with its objective of creating more flexibility and individual choice in higher education qualifications.

Traditionally, most higher education institutions not included in the university sector in Europe have offered bachelor degrees, and only recently have they introduced master degrees in some countries. This development serves the purpose of diversification of higher education, which is called for by European labour market needs and the increasingly heterogeneous student population.

In order to increase the transparency of qualifications earned at different types of institutions or with different profiles, all higher education institutions should make use of the Diploma Supplement. Governments should make every effort to ensure that qualifications at the same level earned in different types of institutions enjoy, where appropriate, the same civil effect in professional life and in the pursuit of further studies.

The diversification of contents and profile of degree programmes calls for a common framework of reference of European higher education qualifications in order to increase transparency and thus to facilitate both national and international student mobility. Increasing student and teacher/staff mobility adds to cultural understanding and appreciation and promotes innovation in European higher education. Readable and comparable degree structures facilitate the professional recognition of qualifications and the mobility of labour force thus contributing to making the European labour market more dynamic for employers and graduates.

European higher education - a hallmark of excellence

Many European higher education institutions offer degree programmes designed for and marketed to international students. To serve this purpose, many institutions have chosen to develop education through widely-used foreign languages. This approach is understandable and welcome, as it increases the global attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in smaller linguistic areas. Development of the EHEA must not, however, lead to a mono-linguistic world of higher education. Within the EHEA governments and higher education institutions should make every effort to ensure teaching of the national languages to foreign students, even if the degree programme itself is in another language and proficiency in the language of the host country is not a prerequisite for admission. Multiculturalism, pluralism and linguistic skills are to remain the intrinsic values of European higher education.

Joint master degrees at the European level should become an important feature of European higher education both to promote intra-European cooperation and in order to attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention needs to be paid to introducing quality assurance mechanisms and to solving the specific recognition issues raised by joint degrees.

To serve a wider range of international students and contribute to capacity building in developing countries, the possibility of delivering European higher education through branch campuses operated by consortia of European universities should be explored and encouraged, especially at the master's level.

Two-tier degree structure: implications for mobility

General: Steps must be taken to consolidate and increase the present volume of mobility, also for longer periods of time. In order to be able to monitor in any precise way the volumes and flows in mobility, reliable statistical data not available at present need to be produced on a regular basis. The ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in all EHEA countries would be desirable to increase mobility.

Intra-European mobility: Further growth in intra-European mobility (exchanges) presupposes a strong effort by governments and higher education institutions to consolidate and extend inter-institutional arrangements of a high quality, which will assure full recognition of periods studied and credits earned abroad. This also entails a coherent application of ECTS across the entire EHEA, as laid down in the recent "Key Features" document and the recommendations of the Zürich Conference on ECTS. National support schemes should be made portable.

With reference to intra-European degree (vertical) mobility, a strong plea is made to governments and institutions to ensure equal treatment of bachelor degrees between EHEA countries as a formal requirement for admission to master programmes.

Mobility between Europe and the world: In order to attract more students and young researchers from outside of Europe, supportive action is necessary. One such activity is the marketing of European higher education on other continents. Another is the creation of internationally attractive programmes taught in major world languages. Europe's offer of this type of education must be considerably stepped up, beyond its present modest level. Framework conditions, such as conditions for entry and residence of third-country nationals in Europe, work permits and student services, must be improved to facilitate access to European higher education.

Framework of reference for master degrees in Europe

There are various European initiatives underway today that aim at defining learning outcomes and skills and competencies both at the bachelor and master level. This will allow capitalising on the richness of European higher education traditions and creating European profiles in the various disciplines. At the same time, the promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and comparability of European higher education qualifications. Some common criteria for the structural definition of master's degrees - in their various national names - are needed. This framework of reference should be flexible enough to allow national and institutional variations, but at the same time clear enough to serve as a definition.

The following recommendations adopted by the participants in the conference could be seen as useful common denominators for a master degree in the EHEA:

1. A master degree is a second-cycle higher education qualification. The entry to a master's programme usually requires a completed bachelor degree at a recognised higher education institution. Bachelor and master degrees should have different defined outcomes and should be awarded at different levels.

2. Students awarded a master degree must have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding, or high level in artistic competence when appropriate, which allows them to integrate knowledge, and handle complexity, formulate judgements and communicate their conclusions to an expert and to a non-expert audience.

Students with a master degree will have the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner.

3. All bachelor degrees should open access to master studies and all master degrees should give access to doctoral studies. A transition from master level to doctoral studies without the formal award of a master's degree should be considered possible if the student demonstrates that he/she has the necessary abilities.

Differences in orientation or profile of programmes should not affect the civil effect of the master degrees.

4. Bachelor and master programmes should be described on the basis of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only according to the duration of programmes or other formal characteristics.

5. There are several ongoing international projects related to developing coherent quality assurance mechanisms in the EHEA. This work should be continued, and international aspects of national and regional quality assurance systems should be further developed.

6. Joint master programmes at the European level should be developed to promote intra-European cooperation and attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention must be paid to solving recognition problems related to joint degrees.

7. While master degree programmes normally carry 90 - 120 ECTS credits, the minimum requirements should amount to 60 ECTS credits at master level. As the length and the content of bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have similar flexibility at the master level. Credits awarded should be of the appropriate profile.

8. In certain fields, there may continue to exist integrated one-tier programmes leading to master degrees. Yet, opportunities for access to intermediate qualifications and transfer to other programmes should be encouraged.

9. Programmes leading to a master degree may have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. Master degrees can be taken at universities and in some countries, in other higher education institutions.

10. In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile of a given qualification is explained in the Diploma Supplement issued to the student.

APPENDIX 4

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**Conference on Qualification Structures
in European Higher Education
København, March 27 – 28, 2003**

Recommendations

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The participants in the conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education, organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 – 28, 2003 recommend:

1. The Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should encourage the competent public authorities responsible for higher education to elaborate national qualifications frameworks for their respective higher education systems with due consideration to the qualifications framework to be elaborated for the European Higher Education Area.

2. The Ministers' meeting should also be invited to launch work on an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, with a view to providing a structural framework against which individual national frameworks could articulate with due regard to the institutional, historical and national context.

3. At each appropriate level, qualifications frameworks should seek to describe the qualifications making up the framework in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile. An EHEA framework should seek to describe qualifications in generic terms (e.g. as first or second cycle degrees) rather than in terms specific to one or more national systems (e.g. Bachelor or Master)

4. Qualifications frameworks should also seek to describe these qualifications with reference to the objectives or purposes for higher education, in particular with regard to four major purposes of higher education:

    (i)   preparation for the labor market;
    (ii)   preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society;
    (iii)   personal development;
    (iv)   development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base.

5. While at national level, qualifications frameworks should as far as possible encompass qualifications at all levels, it is recommended that, at least as a first step, a framework for the European Higher Education Area focus on higher education qualifications as well as on all qualifications giving access to higher education. As far as possible, an EHEA framework should also include qualifications below first-degree level.

6.   Within the overall rules of the qualifications frameworks, individual institutions should have considerable freedom in the design of their programs. National qualifications frameworks, as well as an EHEA framework, should be designed so as to assist higher education institutions in their curriculum development and design of study programs. Qualifications frameworks should facilitate the inclusion of interdisciplinary higher education study programs.

7.   Quality assurance agencies should take the aims of the qualifications frameworks into account in their assessment of higher education institutions and/or programs and make the extent to which institutions and/or programs implement and meet the goals of the qualifications framework of the country concerned, as well as an EHEA framework, an important element in the overall outcome of the assessment exercise. Higher education institutions should also take account of the qualifications frameworks in their internal quality assurance processes. At the same time, the qualifications frameworks should define their quality goals in such a way as to be of relevance to quality assessment.

8.   While an EHEA qualifications framework should considerably simplify the process of recognition of qualifications within the Area, such recognition should still follow the provisions of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention. The Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should therefore invite all states party to the Bologna Process to ratify this Convention as soon as possible.

9.   The main stakeholders in higher education within the EHEA should be invited to contribute to a dialogue on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area as well as give consideration to how such a framework could simplify the process of recognition of qualifications within the framework. Considerations of national frameworks could benefit from taking into account experience with other frameworks.

10. Transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS should be reviewed to make sure that the information provided is clearly related to the EHEA framework.

11. Whether at national level or at the level of the European Higher Education Area, qualifications frameworks should make provision for the inclusion of joint degrees and other forms of combination of credits earned at the home institution and other institutions as well as credits earned through other relevant programs or experiences.

12. Qualifications frameworks, at national level as well as at the level of the European Higher Education Area, should assist transparency and should assist the continuous improvement and development of higher education in Europe.

APPENDIX 5

Conference on Qualification Structures
in European Higher Education
København, March 27 – 28, 2003

Report
by Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe

INTRODUCTION

Franz Schubert is reputed often to have asked about people he did not know well: "*Kann er was?*". In discussing higher education qualifications, we have moved a step further and would tend to invert this basic question: "*Was kann er*?"

Unfortunately, the pun is lost in the English translation, but it may be worth emphasizing the shift from a concern with whether a person knows *anything* to a concern with *what* he knows and can do. It may also be worth underlining that today, we would not restrict ourselves to the masculine personal pronoun.

My task as Rapporteur to this conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education could be seen simply as providing a synopsis of our discussions during this day and a half. However, I will not simply push the replay button, and I have my reasons. Firstly, the background report by Professor Stephen Adam is both as comprehensive and as readable as those who know him well have come to expect, and I would not be able to do him justice by attempting to produce an "executive summary", all the more so as Stephen has provided such a summary himself.

Secondly, the other presentations as well as the discussions have been rich and stand on their own merit, and the reports from the discussion groups give an overview of the main points in these. So, I am also indebted to Seán Ó Foghlú's presentation on the way ahead; to Julia Gonzalez, Nick Harris and Andrejs Rauhvargers for their introductions on curriculum planning, quality assurance and recognition, respectively; to the panel of "end users": Bastian Baumann on behalf of the students, Stina Vrang Elias on behalf of the employers, Maria Sticchi Damiani on behalf of the institutions and Peter van der Hijden, speaking for the European Commission; and not least to the rapporteurs of the discussion groups: Maria Sticchi Damiani, Dorthe Kristoffersen and Helle Otte. The latter played a particularly important role in helping me elaborate a set of recommendations that were submitted to and adopted by the participants at the end of the conference. These recommendations are reproduced in a separate document and will be submitted to the Bologna Follow Up Group as well as to the Berlin Higher Education Summit.

Allow me, therefore, to choose a different strategy. Allow me, rather than reproducing extensively from what has been said during this conference, to offer my own reflections on the discussions. It goes without saying that such an approach is as indebted to Stephen Adam's background report, the other presentations and the discussions as a more traditional approach would have been.

I also hope I can take this more analytical approach without practicing what I have come to call Sir Humphrey's Theory of Minutes. Those of you familiar with the British TV series *Yes, Minister* and, after Jim Hacker's principled fight against the Euro-sausage, *Yes, Prime Minister*, may remember the scheming senior civil servant Sir Humphrey lecturing his apprentice Bernard on how to write meeting reports. Minutes, according to Sir Humphrey, are not there to show what *happened* in a meeting, but what *should* have happened.

This, however, is not my intention. Rather, I will attempt to combine an analysis of what has been discussed at this seminar with some thoughts on what needs to be discussed in the time to come.

One additional point may be in order by way of introduction. In the same way as qualifications is used as a generic term covering a whole range of outcomes of higher education programs[1], I would much prefer to use generic terms also when describing qualification structures or frameworks. This point was also strongly made by Maria Sticchi Damiani. Therefore, unless referring to activities organized and named by others, such as the Helsinki seminar on Bachelor degrees, I will refer to first and second tier systems or first tier and second degrees rather than "Bachelor" and "Master's". This, incidentally, is in keeping with the principles of the Diploma Supplement, and the reason is that by translating the name of a qualification, one also gives a hint of the recognition of that qualification. A Russian *bakalavr* may well be recognized on the same level as an Irish Bachelor, but that decision is for a competent recognition authority to make and not for a translator.

QUALIFICATION STRUCTURES AND INITIATIVES

The Bologna structure

The København seminar focuses on qualification structures, a topic that is of course at the heart of the Bologna Process. As Director General Jens Peter Jacobsen of the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation said in his opening remarks: We are here at this seminar to develop the Bologna Process. One of the stated goals of the European Higher Education Area is to establish a qualification structure consisting of a first degree of at least three years' duration (today, we would probably have said of at least 180 ECTS credits), of a second degree and of a doctoral degree. The Bologna Ministers also explicitly said that the first degree should be relevant to the labor market. Since this is at least an implicit goal of both the second degree and the doctoral degree, we may safely assume that all parts of the "Bologna" degree structure should be relevant to the labor market as well as serve as a basis for further studies (with the exception, of course, of the doctoral degree, which will not lead to a further formal qualification, but which will nonetheless serve as the basis for further development of real competence through research).

That is, however, about as much as the documents of the Bologna Process so far say about the qualification structure, and that is one reason why I believe the København

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[1] Cf. Article I.1 of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention, which defines a higher education qualification as "Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme".

seminar is an important contribution to the elaboration of the European Higher Education Area. We have a skeleton of a Bologna qualification structure, and I believe what we already have has the potential to be helpful because it provides the beginning of a framework within which we can locate higher education qualifications from various European countries. However, like Stephen Adam, who spoke of this framework as something of an empty shell, I also believe that this qualification structure needs to be developed further for the European Higher Education Area to become a reality, and that the main contribution of the København seminar to the Bologna Process will be to launch a debate on how this could be done as well as to make some proposals. Hopefully, some will emerge at the end of this report. To quote the Danish Qualifications Framework: "Locating the degrees in the context of the terms used in the Bologna Declaration only provides limited additional value unless supplemented with a description of the individual degrees"[2].

In developing a qualification structure for the European Higher Education Area, it will be helpful to take account of developments at various levels in Europe, and Stephen Adam's report provides an excellent overview of a good number of initiatives and developments.

These come in several categories, and I will list them briefly for reference and recapitualtion. The first set concerns international attempts at describing qualifications.

Joint Quality Initiative

The *Joint Quality Initiative* (JQI) is an informal network for quality assurance and the accreditation of first and second tier degrees, and it has elaborated what has come to be known as the Dublin Descriptors as well as the Amsterdam Consensus. The JQI, consisting of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain (specifically represented by Catalunya), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, has sought to establish generic descriptions for first and second degrees.

Bologna seminars

Two official Bologna seminars, both held in Helsinki in February 2001 and March 2003, respectively, have attempted to describe first and second degrees[3]. These descriptions include workload expressed in terms of ECTS credits and level, and they underline the need to provide a description of the orientation and profile of the qualification in the accompanying Diploma Supplement. The consideration of second degrees was much helped by a recent EUA study[4].

A Bologna seminar on recognition issues in the Bologna Process, organized by the Council of Europe and the Portuguese authorities in April 2002 addressed a set of recommendations to various actors in higher education, including to the Berlin

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[2] Towards a Danish "Qualifications Framework" for higher education (final report of January 15, 2003), p. 13.

[3] The two seminars were referred to as being on Bachelor and Master's degrees, respectively.

[4] Andrejs Rauhvargers and Christian Tauch: *Survey on Masters Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe* (Bruxelles 2002: European University Association).

Summit to be held in September 2003. In particular, this seminar emphasized the importance of moving toward recognizing qualifications on the basis of learning outcomes and competences rather than on the formal characteristics of the study programs leading to the qualification, such as length of study. The seminar also underlined the role of the ENIC and NARIC Networks[5] in this respect, recommended that all countries party to the Bologna Process ratify the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and underlined the importance of providing adequate and relevant information on qualifications.

Another Bologna seminar, focusing on credit transfer and accumulation and organized by the European University Association and the Swiss authorities in October 2002, emphasized the importance of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as a credit *transfer* system and also its potential as a credit *accumulation* system.

The Tuning Project

The Tuning Project, coordinated by the universities of Deusto and Groningen and financed by the European Commission, has sought to establish learning outcomes at first and second degree level in a number of academic disciplines[6]. A particularly interesting feature of the Tuning Project, presented at the conference by Julia Gonzalez, is that it drew a distinction between generic and subject specific competences. The former include the capacity for analysis and synthesis, the capacity to learn, problem solving, capacity for applying knowledge in practice, concern for quality and information management skills. The Tuning Project is important because it is, to my knowledge, the first attempt to establish learning outcomes on such a wide basis, and also because it shows how difficult this is. However, the inherent difficulty in establishing learning outcomes should be taken as an encouragement to undertake further work, and not as an indication that it may not be worth the effort, because this undertaking is crucial to the definition of a qualification structure as well as to the recognition of the qualifications that emanate from this structure.

Transnational European Evaluation Project

Last, but not least, the Transnational European Evaluation Project (TEEP), which was launched in 2002 and is currently under way and coordinated by the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA), seeks to develop a European methodology for the use of common criteria for quality assurance. In this, it builds on initiatives like the Tuning Project and the descriptors for first and second degrees developed by the Joint Quality Initiative.

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

At national level, some attempts have been made to define qualification frameworks, and Stephen Adam refers extensively to the Danish, Irish, United Kingdom[7] and Scottish frameworks. It may be worth making the point that all higher education

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[5] http://www.enic-naric.net
[6] Business, education science, geology, history, mathematics; "synergy groups" have been established in physics, chemistry, languages, humanitarian development, law, medicine, mechanical engineering and veterinary science.
[7] In this context, covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

systems have a qualifications framework. What distinguishes the frameworks surveyed for this conference, however, is that they have gone a good step beyond the traditional frameworks in emphasizing not only input factors and formal characteristics but also output factors such as learning outcomes, and that they are explicit about some elements that have traditionally been assumed or understood.

There is perhaps no agreed definition of a qualifications framework, but it is worth bearing in mind what Stephen Adam says in his report:

> *A national qualifications framework is simply a systematic description of an education system's qualifications where all learning achievements are measured and related to each other. A European qualifications framework would amount to an agreement about a common structure or architecture within which different national qualifications could be located. It is essential to stress that this should not entail the creation of identical qualifications in terms of delivery, content or approach.[8]*

Stephen Adam goes on to outline some of the possible functions of a qualifications framework, which include:

- make explicit the purposes of qualifications;
- raise the awareness of citizens/employers about qualifications;
- improve access and social inclusion;
- delineate points of access and overlap;
- facilitate recognition and mobility;
- identify alternative routes;
- position qualifications in relation to one another;
- show routes for progression as well as barriers[9].

Not all qualifications frameworks will fulfill all of these functions, but Stephen Adam's list is still a very useful guide.

The aims stipulated for the Scottish framework are also worth quoting:

> *"The general aims of the SCQF are to:*
>
> - *help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfill their personal, social and economic potential*
> - *enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how the qualifications relate to each other, and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.*

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[8] Stephen Adam: *Qualifications Structures in European Higher Education: To Consider Alternative Approaches for Clarifying the Cycles and Levels in European Higher Education Qualifications*, section 1.2.
[9] This list is taken from Stephen Adam's Power Point presentation at the seminar.

> *The SCQF will provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and make the relationships between qualifications clearer. It will also clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors and increase the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways it will assist learners to plan their progress and minimise duplication of learning.[10]"*

Thus, a qualifications framework is concerned with describing each qualification as well as with how the various qualifications interrelate and how students can progress from one qualification to another. Qualifications frameworks, at least the ones covered by Stephen Adam's reports, are not concerned with higher education alone, rather they cover the whole range of qualifications, both theoretically and practically oriented, from beginning level to research qualifications.

The common point of the qualifications frameworks covered by the report is that they seek to define levels in terms of learning outcomes and competencies. As Stephen Adam says about the Irish framework: "The approach is to build from the bottom up in terms of how outcomes should be expressed in awards". The concrete make up of the national qualifications frameworks vary, thus the United Kingdom framework distinguishes between 9 levels, whereas the Irish has 10 and the Scottish 12. The frameworks tend to emphasize operational skills, in the broad sense of what one can do with a given qualification, rather than the attitudes or values the qualifications convey, but it is worth noting that the Danish framework explicitly mentions "democratic competence" as a general goal at all levels and also stipulates "responsibility in relation to own research (research ethics)" [11] as a goal for doctoral qualifications.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Clearly, the developments, initiatives and frameworks described by Stephen Adam and discussed at this conference are very valuable, and their importance is not limited to the framework within which they were designed. On this basis, then, I would like to take this opportunity to offer some reflections on where we are and where we might go from here.

A qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area?

The starting point for my reflections is two seemingly contradictory tendencies at work today. On the one hand, there is a tendency to define study programs in more flexible ways, so that students may combine elements and disciplines in ways that suit them, whether out of personal interest, to improve employment opportunities or for other reasons. This is positive in that it allows individuals to tailor make their studies and thus increase their relevance. However, this development also presents a formidable challenge, and this is the other tendency: this individualization of study programs may easily lead to confusion, and confusion may easily lead to lack of recognition of the qualification. Therefore, we have to develop systems that allow us

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[10] An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (September 2001), Executive summary, p. vii

[11] Towards a Danish "Qualifications Framework" for higher education (final report of January 15, 2003), pp. 14 and 26, respectively.

to describe this diverse reality within an understandable framework - in fact, within a clear qualifications framework or structure.   What the Danish Qualifications Framework says about the needs of employers for an "academic system that is simple, with as few levels as possible, and coherent, so similarities and differences clearly stand out" is undoubtedly true, and I believe this need is not limited to employers.

Therefore, establishing a transparent qualifications framework or structure should be a high priority for national education authorities, but saying this begs a question that is also raised by Stephen Adam: what is the relationship between national qualifications frameworks and a similar framework for the European Higher Education Area?

Again, allow me to make a point about terminology that is considerably more than a digression from the main line of argument: I prefer to refer to a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) rather than a "European" framework for at least two reasons. Firstly, the adjective "European" has become imprecise through overuse and is now applied to a variety of geographical and political constellations far short of its real meaning[12], and it is also used as a very imprecise quality label to describe any number of networks, diplomas and products. As one small illustration, it may be recalled that in the 1780s, the quality of Ottoman produced gunpowder had declined so dramatically that gunpowder was imported from abroad. New factories were built to relaunch Ottoman gunpowder production, and the aim was to reach what was commonly referred to as "European standards"[13], which in this context were neither a law nor an ISO type industry standard, but simply an aspiration for high or at least improved quality.

Secondly, the name given to a qualifications framework also indicates the authority with which this framework has been established. In the case of national education systems, this authority is clear, and it is safe to refer to a Danish, Irish, United Kingdom or Scottish qualifications framework. The authority is less clear at supranational level, but if the European Higher Education Area is to be come a reality, some kind of agreement on a qualification structure or framework as well as on its relationship to the frameworks of individual higher education systems is needed. An EHEA reference will therefore hopefully make sense, whereas an imprecise reference to "European" will not, I am afraid.

One could, of course, see the EHEA framework as a synthesis or a lowest common denominator of the frameworks of its constituent higher education systems. However, a more proactive approach would seem preferable. As Jens Peter Jacobsen said, we need to do more than develop some 30 different national frameworks. Even if some "Bologna" countries have established well-conceived national qualifications frameworks of the kind described in Stephen Adam's report, most have not, and this would be an opportunity to outline an EHEA qualifications framework before most countries start elaborating their own. While this work should of course draw on the experience of those that have a qualifications framework, work on an EHEA framework could be very helpful to the majority of countries that have yet to establish

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[12] See, for example, the European Commission's Communication on the role of universities in the Europe of knowledge, which defines "Europe as a whole" as the countries of the European Union, "the other Western European countries" and the candidate countries, cf. section 3.2 of the Communication.
[13] Philip Mansel: *Constantinople - City of the World's Desire 1453 - 1924* (London 1997: Penguin), p. 254.

their own frameworks. What Julia Gonzalez said about the Tuning Project being an experience of joint learning could hopefully also be applied to the development of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. At the same time, this would provide an opportunity to develop a common understanding of the key concepts and parameters of a qualifications framework that should also serve as a basis for qualifications frameworks of the higher education systems that make up the European Higher Education Area. Peter van der Hijden in his introductory remarks referred to the need to bring together the various national experiences and experiences in different European context, ranging from the Tuning Project and ENQA to the ENIC and NARIC Networks and the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention.

Of course, many issues remain to be addressed, and these include what we should aim at. Nick Harris defined this clearly by asking whether a qualifications framework for the EHEA should aim at information or regulation, and whether it should describe "typical" qualifications or define the absolute minimum standards or threshold. He may well have answered his own question by hinting that an EHEA framework might have to address all of these aspects. Certainly, one should be careful not to be too directive at the level of EHEA, as national authorities in cooperation higher education institutions, students and other stakeholders should have a key role in defining qualifications frameworks for their own systems. The goal should not be to arrive at identical frameworks, and the reasons for this also includes one mentioned specifically by Stephen Adam: qualifications frameworks are also about the ways in which we define and transmit our culture. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine an EHEA framework totally devoid of prescriptive elements. Again, I think of an EHEA framework as an image of Europe: a unique balance of unity and diversity, where considerable variety is found within a recognizable overarching frameworks. Cars, buses and trucks come in many different shapes, sizes and colors, but it helps if they all drive on the same side of the road. If the cars drive on the right, the trucks on the left and the buses in the shade, the system will quickly reveal its limitations.

Workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile

Qualifications are generally described in terms of their workload and level, as is indicated by the frequent reference to Bachelor and Master's degrees or, for that matter, to one and two tier higher education systems, as well as to the number of years of study required. Luckily, the latter is now increasingly being replaced by a reference to the number of (ECTS) credits required, so that we are no more likely to speak about a qualification requiring 180 ECTS credits than one requiring three years of study. Level is, of course, one important parameter in describing qualifications, and it is a prominent feature of the frameworks described in Stephen Adam's report. Thus, the Danish framework, at least in its English version, refers to Bachelor, Candidate, Master and PhD levels at higher education level, whereas the United Kingdom, Irish and Scottish frameworks outline 9, 10 and 12 levels. Workload is also an important parameter, and it is particularly interesting to see that some qualifications frameworks combine these two requirements, so that any given qualification is described in terms of both workload and level. To take just two examples, a Scottish Master's degree is described as being of level 11 in the Scottish Qualifications Framework, and it consists of at least 180 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 150 should be at level 11. Similarly, a United Kingdom Master's degree

is classified as level 7 in the UK framework, it consists of a minimum of 180 credits, and of these at least 150 must be taken at level 7, and none of the remaining must be at a lower level than 6.

While level is an indispensable part of the description of a qualification, it is not sufficient. If it were, what the Bologna Declaration has to say about a two-tier system might have been enough to establish an EHEA framework. Whether you were to describe your own qualifications framework or to recognize a qualification from a foreign framework, it would be difficult to do so without referring to quality. This is, in fact, an area in which developments have been quite rapid, in that we have moved from implicit assumptions of quality in education systems that have essentially been state run to explicit provision for quality assurance in more diverse systems. As late as 1997, when the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention was adopted, there was still discussion of whether a formal quality assurance system was necessary or not, but today, the discussion focuses on what such a system should look like.

For good reason, quality assurance is one of the action lines of the Bologna Process. Provision for quality assurance is a part of the public responsibility for the higher education framework[14], which implies that public authorities are responsible for defining and establishing this provision, but they do not have to carry it out themselves. So as to avoid misunderstandings, I would also like to make it clear that I consider quality assurance to be a part of national higher education systems, and that I am not in favor of any kind of European quality assurance agency. However, I believe criteria and procedures for quality assurance should be agreed through a European network. As Nick Harris said, there should be an overarching Code of Good Practice for the management of quality and standards.

As several speakers mentioned, there is an increasing emphasis on learning outcomes or, to put it crudely, on what you can do with a qualification rather than on how it has been earned. This is a challenge, and a project like Tuning has shown both how important this is and how difficult it is. Still, challenges are there to be met and not to be run away from, and defining learning outcomes in such a way that they can be an important factor in describing qualifications frameworks is a challenge to all major stakeholders in higher education in Europe and another reason for them to intensify their dialogue and cooperation.

Thus, we see that workload, level and quality are all given due consideration and that we at least bring up learning outcomes quite frequently in discussion, even if these considerations are not always explicitly placed in the context of a qualification structure or framework. A fifth factor is given far less consideration, and I am referring to the profile of a qualification. There are, of course, limits to what a national qualifications framework – and probably more so for a framework for the European Higher Education Area – can say about the profile of qualifications, since these may differ considerably from one academic discipline to another, since some of the requirements may be highly specific to one discipline and since national traditions

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[14] A thorough discussion of the public responsibility for higher education will be found in the proceedings of the Bologna seminar on the Social Dimension of Higher Education, organized by the Greek Ministry of Education in Athenai on February 19 – 20, 2003. The proceedings are under publication.

may also vary. However, the ways in which you can combine credits to give your qualification an appropriate profile is crucial in making sure, to use Nick Harris' phrase, that a degree is something more than the sum of its component courses.

Nevertheless, there is implicit agreement on some important points. While a first degree may be specified as being of 180 or 240 ECTS credits of the appropriate level, there is also an unstated agreement that there should be some kind of coherence to the qualification. Students who earned 10 credits in history, 10 in each of two foreign languages, 10 in mathematics and so on with no further concentration in any area may have had a taste of higher education, but they would hardly have earned a higher education degree even if the total amount of credits thus earned were to add up to 180 or more. In practice, such an eclectic menu would at least be discouraged by higher education institutions, but it may be useful to give some thought to whether a qualifications framework for the EHEA should not give some indication as to profile and concentration. In particular at first degree level, traditions may vary considerably from one country to another, so that it may be difficult to reach firm agreement, but at the very least, the issue deserves to be explored. At second degree and doctoral degree level, it may be easier to reach agreement, and maybe one should start here.

However, even if agreement on the details may be difficult, it may also be worth pointing out that discussions are likely to focus on the right balance between specialization or concentration on the one hand and a broader orientation on the other, and not on the principle of either. Essentially, three types of courses are all seen as legitimate within a given study program:

(i)   those that contribute directly to the student's specialization or main area of competence;

(ii)   those that are in other academic areas but that underpin this specialization;

(iii)   those that are in distinct academic areas and do not contribute to or underpin the student's specialization, but that give his or her qualification an added dimension by broadening the student's horizon or by providing a basic competence in a second academic area.

Admittedly, these may seem like abstract speculations, so let us take an example, at the risk of falling into some of the many pits such an exercise seems to offer.

A student whose academic specialty is history should probably earn a considerable part of his or her credits from history courses, the level of which should be appropriate to the level of the qualification. However, such a student would most likely also need some knowledge of relevant areas – we may perhaps call these "supporting disciplines"[15]. According to the student's specialization within the quite broad discipline of history, these "supporting disciplines" could be economics, statistics, a foreign language or a whole range of other disciplines, and the courses may not necessarily be of the same level as the qualification the student is working toward. A history student at second degree level may well need a basic introduction

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[15] May I be forgiven for calquing this term on the one my native language, at least in a previous system, used to describe such disciplines: *støttefag* or *redskapsfag*.

to statistics, but there should also be a limit on how many introductory courses in "supporting disciplines" may count toward the degree. Finally, the same student may wish to broaden his or her horizon or add a second area of competence by taking a number of credits not related to the relevant specialization within history. That credits outside of a student's academic specialization are important to his or her overall competence on the labor market was strongly emphasized by Stina Vrang Elias.

The distinction between "supporting disciplines" and non-related credits may sometimes be difficult to draw and may depend on the precise specialization the student chooses, in our case within the field of history. This freedom to choose some credits that do not seem immediately "relevant" from the strict point of view of the main discipline is also important in avoiding that the boundaries of academic disciplines be "fossilized" and to encourage a measure of transdisciplinarity. A student of Latin American history can hardly do without Spanish and Portuguese, while for a student of economic history, Spanish and Portuguese may provide an added qualification and broaden his or her horizon. The example also illustrates the limits of a qualifications framework: it should stipulate the main outlines and principles but it should not attempt to regulate all details.

We have, then, examples of national qualifications frameworks that make explicit stipulations concerning workload and level, that operate within higher education systems with adequate provision for quality assurance and that increasingly seek to define learning outcomes. Could we take this as a model also for an EHEA qualifications framework and add considerations on the profile of qualifications? This will not be easy, but it is a challenge to which I believe we should rise. Expressing this in clear and simple terms will not be less of a challenge. As Stina Vrang Elias said: "Industry needs something much simpler than you have ever imagined". While those of us in higher education may be forgiven for questioning whether reality can be made quite that simple, or indeed if employers are not in actual fact guided by a slightly more complex view of reality, the injunction to avoid undue complexity is well taken and should be translated into practice.

Stina Vrang Elias' comment also points to the importance of involving a broad range of stakeholders in the elaboration of qualifications frameworks, whether at national level or for the European Higher Education Area. These include the social partners, and higher education institutions should play a very important role. The same is true of students, and I was amazed that in the very broad range of stakeholders contributing to the Scottish framework, unless I have misread the information, students seem to be absent. I also believe that no national framework should be elaborated without reference to relevant developments elsewhere.

What do we measure?

The national frameworks covered by Stephen Adam's report are mainly focused on measurable skills and competencies, and this is by no way an unnatural bias, both because what is measurable is more easily described in terms of a framework and because one of the main purposes of education is to develop and convey skills useful to the labor market. Nevertheless, a qualifications framework based exclusively on such skills and competencies would miss some important dimensions that distinguish education from training and, in a more profound sense, makes human existence worth

the effort. It is therefore important to note that the qualifications frameworks surveyed include references to intellectual competencies[16]; generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis[17] or critically evaluate new concepts and evidence[18]. As already mentioned, the Danish framework is also explicit about developing values and attitudes, even if it assumes that this factor is present to the same degree at all levels of the framework and therefore does not specify or describe the degree of attainment at each level.

Developing qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area could be a welcome opportunity to think more systematically about the purpose of higher education, since the qualification framework should presumably be defined with reference to these objectives. I believe higher education has at least four fundamental objectives:

(i)   preparation for the labor market;
(ii)   preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society;
(iii)   personal development;
(iv)   development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base.

This point was also made by Bastian Baumann, even if his list differed slightly from mine.

Ideally, a qualifications framework should take account of all these elements, even if I realize that developing adequate descriptors will be a tall order. However, I believe the Bologna Process would be well advised to pay greater attention to its vision for higher education, both in terms of a qualifications framework and in the broader discussion leading us toward 2010.

The range of qualifications

All the national frameworks surveyed for the København conference are comprehensive in that they span the full range of qualifications from basic education[19] to doctoral degrees. This is, in my view, highly commendable, and I would encourage other countries to do the same. In his presentation, Seán Ó Foghlú outlined a number of other initiatives that ago in the direction of defining competencies and qualifications in other areas of education, such as the København Declaration for vocational education and training, European lifelong learning policies, EU policies and Directives on recognition for professional purposes[20] and the OECD frameworks of qualifications review. He also emphasized the need for links to schooling.

These initiatives and links are important, and when the time comes to start work on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, they should be taken into consideration as concerns content as well as methodology. For example,

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[16] The Danish framework
[17] The Scottish framework
[18] The UK framework
[19] In the case of the Scottish framework, there is explicit mention of a level describing outcomes for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties.
[20] Meaning, in general, qualifications giving access to regulated professions, typical examples of which are medicine, dentistry, and architecture.

the extended use of working groups with clearly defined areas of work used in some of the other context may, as emphasized by both Seán Ó Foghlú and Peter van der Hijden, be a good model for work on an EHEA framework.

The question is, however, whether close structural links to other sectors of education or a comprehensive qualifications framework are a realistic goal for a framework above the national level, at least in the near future. With some regret, I would think, as Nick Harris also said in his presentation, that we would do better to focus on elaborating a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area that would focus on higher education qualifications, but preferably also including considerations on qualifications giving access to higher education. If we stick to the terms of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention, such a framework would be for "qualifications concerning higher education".

One specific issue is whether an EHEA framework should include qualifications situated between entry level and the first degree, something akin to the UK Foundation Degree or the Danish Vocational Academy Degree (AK). Strictly speaking, these qualifications are not covered by current Bologna policies, but they are a reality in many systems. Should not the EHEA framework take account of this reality? I believe that if it does not, we will have a weakened and less useful framework.

Another issue, raised by Stephen Adam, concerns the place and role of what in shorthand is called "lifelong learning qualifications". These will be the topic of a Bologna seminar to be organized by the Czech authorities in Praha on June 5 – 7, so it may be premature to address this issue in detail, but Stephen Adam is right in pointing out that some of these qualifications belong in a framework of higher education qualifications. However, I think we also need to ask whether the shorthand is really correct rather than misleading. The term "lifelong learning qualifications" would seem to indicate that we are talking about a separate set of qualifications for those who come to higher education late in life or through alternative routes, and I am not at all sure that this is the right approach. Rather, I would prefer to think in terms of alternative learning paths that more often than not lead to the same qualifications earned by those following more classical learning paths.

What use for higher education institutions?

Even though the Bologna Process was launched by Ministers responsible for higher education, the European Higher Education Area cannot become a reality without the active contributions of higher education institutions, students and staff, the large majority of whom have to identify with the goals for the Area. An important question is therefore what use institutions can make of a national qualifications framework as well as one for the EHEA.

A qualifications framework should guide and be of help to institutions in designing their higher educations programs and curricula. Admittedly, a qualifications framework could be seen as a restraint, but only if it is overly detailed and directive. It should lay down certain ground rules to be followed, but its main function should be that of providing guidance and assistance – along with improved acceptance of the study programs outside of the institution. It should also be emphasized that within the

overall rules of the qualifications framework, the individual institution will have considerable freedom in the design of its programs.

By stipulating broad requirements as to the workload, level, quality and profile of qualifications, the framework will offer basic guidance that must, however, be implemented at institutional level. Within these basic outlines, a framework will also offer institutions for creative curriculum development and creative ways of complementing competence in a core area with competence in other academic fields that will strengthen students' position on the labor market as well as contribute to their personal development. While a strong competence in a given field will continue to be of paramount importance, academic disciplines are no longer separated by impenetrable walls. Rather, interdisciplinary approaches add new dimensions to academic programs, and the qualifications frameworks must make such approaches possible.

Quality assurance and the qualifications framework

As we have already seen, quality is an important element in the make-up of a qualification. Making provision for quality assurance is increasingly seen as one of the basic responsibilities of public authorities for higher education, and this is an important development in attitudes in European higher education over the past 5 years or so. Public authorities may choose to carry out quality assurance themselves or leave this task to others, but the responsibility for the framework for quality assurance will and should remain with public authorities.

It may also be worth underlining that, in my view, quality assurance is the responsibility of the individual higher education system and thus, in the majority of cases, a national responsibility. There should be European cooperation, and cooperation within the EHEA, as concerns methodology, criteria and procedures, and there should be transparency about the results of the quality assurance exercise, but I am not in favor of a European quality assurance agency, nor even one for the EHEA.

Hence, it is important that quality assurance agencies take the aims of the qualifications frameworks into account in their assessment of higher education institutions and/or programs and make the extent to which institutions and/or programs implement and meet the goals of the qualifications framework of the country concerned, as well as an EHEA framework, an important element in the overall outcome of the assessment exercise. Higher education institutions should also take account of the qualifications frameworks in their internal quality assurance processes. At the same time, the qualifications frameworks should define its quality goals in such a way as to be of relevance to quality assessment.

Recognition

A qualifications framework would be an important contribution to facilitating the recognition of qualifications within the European Higher Education Area. As Bente Kristensen, speaking on behalf of the Danish Rectors' Conference, said in her introductory remarks: a more systematically defined degree system will facilitate recognition. I also very much agree with the point made by Andrejs Rauhvargers underlining that with the Bologna Process, recognition has developed from being a

technical issue for specialists to one of the main concerns of higher education policy in Europe. However, it is important not to create expectations about "automatic recognition", as recognition depends on the purpose of the application and as, even in seemingly obvious cases, a minimum of assessment is needed. Recognition, as Andrejs Rauhvargers pointed out, is about assessing a foreign qualification with a view to finding a correct place and path in another country's education or employment system. A qualifications framework for the EHEA will greatly facilitate the evaluation, but the evaluation will still have to be done.

An EHEA framework would allow us to relate the variety of higher education qualifications within the Area to a commonly understood qualifications framework, and this would be a significant step forward. In particular, it should facilitate the most basic form of recognition: that ascribing a level within one's own higher education system to a foreign qualification, and for many purposes, including many kinds of recognition for the labor market, this would be sufficient. For example, in several countries, candidates for employment in the civil service need a higher education degree at either first or second level, but the specialization and profile of the qualification may in many cases not be important. I believe that our goal should be to elaborate an EHEA qualifications framework where any first degree within the Area is recognized as a first degree within any other part of the Area, and the same should of course be true for second degrees and doctoral degrees. Thus, we would have "EHEA degrees", in the sense of easier recognition, if not in the sense of a common education system.

For other purposes, however, recognition is somewhat more complex and must take account of factors other than level, e.g. profile. Even these more complex cases, however, would be much helped by an EHEA framework, and they should otherwise follow the provisions of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention, which all states party to the Bologna Process should be invited to ratify as soon as possible. I am, incidentally, pleased to note that our host country, Denmark, deposited its instrument of ratification on March 20, 2003[21]. The ENIC and NARIC Networks should be invited to contribute to a debate on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area as well as give consideration to how such a framework could simplify the recognition of qualifications within the framework.

However, as was emphasized by Bastian Baumann as well as by several participants in the debates, an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area should not only facilitate recognition within the EHEA; it should also facilitate the process of recognition of qualifications emanating from higher education systems that are a part of the Area and other parts of the world, and *vice versa*. Therefore, a qualifications framework for the EHEA is also important for what is commonly referred to as the external dimension of Bologna.

Recognition is also much helped by what we have come to refer to as transparency instruments, above all the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer System. These instruments describe a qualification in terms of the system within which it is issued. National qualifications framework will be valuable elements in

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[21] An updated overview of ratifications and signatures may be found at http://conventions.coe.int, search for ETS 165.

describing qualifications, but an EHEA framework would be an even more important guide in hat we would then be able to relate all qualifications issued within any system of the European Higher Education Area to a commonly understood framework. When we will have progressed on the development of an EHEA framework, transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS should be reviewed to make sure that the information provided is clearly related to the EHEA framework.

Mobility

Increased academic mobility both within the European Higher Education Area and between the Area and the rest of the world is another key goal of the Bologna Process, and an EHEA qualifications framework would be an important contribution to this goal.

So far, I have not drawn any clear distinction between the terms framework and structure, and I am not aware that any meaningful distinction actually exists. Reverting to the concept of structure does, however, allow me to make what I think is a valid point. Essentially, structures come in two varieties: those that are closed and would tend to lock people in and those that are open and help people move. An EHEA qualifications framework must be an open structure that helps mobility - it must be a bridge and not a fortress. A qualifications framework should be an essential part of the infrastructure of the European Higher Education Area and help students and graduates move between its constituent systems.

Therefore, qualifications frameworks have to be constructed in such a way that some of the elements of the construction can be foreign made and still be immediately usable in the structure. This is a principle of major organized exchange programs such as ERASMUS, NORDPLUS or CEEPUS, but we also know that there are a number of problems with the recognition of study periods taken abroad.

Another example is joint degrees[22], which is a potentially powerful instrument in encouraging academic mobility, but which also suffer from recognition problems, to the extent that we are now preparing a draft Recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees to be submitted to the Lisboa Recognition Convention Committee. Since qualifications frameworks lay down the ground rules for how qualifications may be made up, it is worth asking whether they should not explicitly allow for joint degrees or other forms of combination of credits earned at the home institution and other institutions as well as credits earned through other relevant programs or experiences.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I admit that some of the preceding paragraphs have been complex and that they may have tried to express in too compressed a form what I consider as important considerations in the construction of the European Higher Education Area. The

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[22] See Andrejs Rauhvargers' article in Andrejs Rauhvargers and Christian Tauch: *Survey on Masters Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe* (Bruxelles 2002: European University Association).

reader will therefore be forgiven for letting escape a sigh of relief when seeing the subtitle of this final part of the report.

I have sought to outline some key elements and proposals for further action, and these are admittedly relatively ambitious. Much remains to be doen, and much remains unclear. Even the vision for the Euroeapn Higher Education Area to be established in 2010 is not completely clear. Maybe we can take comfort in Seán Ó Foghlú's comparison with the Peace Process of Northern Ireland, where some lack of clarity was necessary to bring all concerned parties on board, and where the initial years of the Peace Process relied on space for the different sides to have their own interpretation. However, ultimately, these interpretations must to a large extent converge.

The idea of setting up a European Higher Education Area in little more than a decade is in itself an ambitious undertaking and cannot be realized without ambitious proposals. To those who worry that we may be describing a Utopia, I would be tempted to borrow my answer from the Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater: in that case, there is little reason to worry. The dangerous Utopias are not those that remain Utopia, but those that may actually materialize[23]. Granted, Savater is describing 1984 and the like, but the point may be worth keeping in mind even for a less dramatic field such as higher education, all the more so as, even if the damage caused by a bad education may not be immediate, it may be devastating.

In my view, the answer has to be that the European Higher Education Area is not Utopia, but reality in the making, and it depends on our clarifying and agreeing on concepts and priorities in a range of higher education policy areas. If we want the Bologna Process to end up in a European Higher Education Area by 2010, we have to be more explicit about its goals as well as about its structure, and an EHEA qualifications framework will be an important contribution to in this sense. It is worth bearing in mind Peter van der Hijden's two conditions for a qualifications framework to be useful:

(i)   it must in fact be what it claims to be: a framework – nothing less, but also nothing more;
(ii)   it must be well known and accepted.

I would go as far as to say that an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area is a *conditio sine qua non* to the setting up of a European Higher Education Area that is broad in terms of geography and firm in terms of the implementation of higher education policies, that addresses the whole range of purposes of higher education, that is useful to the labor market, society in a broader sense and the individual, and that ultimately furthers education as defined by Ambrose Bierce:

> *Education, n. That which discloses to the wise and disguises*
> *from the foolish their lack of understanding[24].*

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[23] Fernando Savater : *El contenido de la felicidad* (Madrid 2002: Aguilar), pp. 50 – 53.
[24] Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

APPENDIX 6

**Unesco-Cepes / European University Association (EUA) Conference
on "The External Dimension of the Bologna Process: South-East
European Higher Education and the European Higher Education
Area in a Global World"
Bucureşti, 6 – 8 march 2003**

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Background

The participants in the UNESCO-CEPES/EUA Conference, organized within the framework of the Project "Regional University Network of Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe (SEE)[25]", explored the following topics:

   i)   challenges and opportunities facing higher education systems and institutions participating in the project[26] in the context of the Bologna Process;
   ii)   challenges to academic values and to the organization of academic work at a time of increasing globalization;
   iii)   higher education as a public good and its significance for higher education in the region;
   iv)   quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications as regulatory mechanisms in the European Higher Education Area

in the context of the applications of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro to join the Bologna Process, bearing in mind the letters sent by the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG)[27] inviting applicant countries to review their achievements so far and set out their plans in relation to the objectives of the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué.

2. Progress so far: Achievements and Shortcomings

2.1. The applications of the above mentioned countries[28] to join the Bologna Process formally reflect their clear and strong commitment to achieving the Bologna Process objectives. Experience in the EC / UNESCO-CEPES Project on «Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in SEE» has demonstrated that those responsible for higher education in these countries have already used the provisions of the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué as a **reference framework for their reform initiatives.** There is evidence of a

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[25] The project is supported by the European Commission in the framework of the CARDS Programme
[26] Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.
[27] Participants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro informed the conference that the letters had not been received by their Ministries

growing mobilisation in this direction at the level of national authorities and institutions, as well as among the academic community and students. The goals are to improve transparency and to reaching an increased convergence between higher education systems in the region and those of the Bologna Process signatory states. The key issues are as follows:

2.2 University autonomy is now legally protected in all the countries concerned and the practical implementation of this essential element is also improving. The values of academic freedom are highly regarded and embedded in everyday academic work. However, in terms of **governance,** particularly regarding the importance of ensuring accountability towards stakeholders, there are still many issues to be addressed. The current organization of universities as weak federations of legally autonomous faculties hinders the effective implementation of the objectives of the Bologna Process. Academic management and administration are still underdeveloped. Although students have a formal role in institutional governance bodies, they are, in practice, in many cases not actively involved.

2.3. Quality assurance has become a key challenge for national authorities and institutions across the region. Almost all countries are in the process of establishing national agencies in charge of quality evaluation and accreditation. The evaluation of study programmes and institutions includes internal assessments and external reviewing. To promote the development of a quality culture at institutional level, 10 universities of the region are elaborating detailed strategic plans within the Project. Given the small size of the respective higher education systems, the introduction of more systematic and effective institutional quality assurance mechanisms, including a wider European dimension, becomes ever more important. Where a decision is taken to establish national agencies of quality evaluation and accreditation they need to be properly resourced.

2.4. Two-tier structure. The two tier structure is the dominant structure in most of the region's universities. However, curricula have not been restructured and the duration of studies for a bachelor degree is longer than intended in the Bologna Process. In addition, the master level tends to be simply added to the previous level, once again without reflecting upon the restructuring of curricula. Despite high interest, there is as yet little evidence of the introduction of joint study programmes as a means of developing sustainable inter-institutional European partnerships.

2.5. Study credits. A considerable effort has been made to introduce study credits, particularly ECTS, in all countries. However, the gap between theory and practice is still wide. Credits are not easily transferable, nor are they cumulative. A combination of old and new practices of curriculum organization exist side by side. HEI are encouraged to introduce ECTC both transfer and accumulation. Higher education institutions are encouraged to introduce widely ECTS for transfer and accumulation.

2.6. Academic mobility. Compared to the past, academic mobility has increased dramatically, despite obstacles encountered both by staff and students, particularly related to visa requirements and the availability of financial resources. The level of outgoing mobility is much higher than that of incoming, and many of the best students

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[28] Croatia joined the process officially in 2001.

and graduates do not return after their study abroad period, thus contributing to brain drain from the region. In the future it will be important to support further mobility of staff and students while at the same time providing incentives for the best to return home, for example through the improvement of working conditions of young researchers.

2.7. Readable and comparable degrees. There are still difficulties with the recognition of qualifications and periods of study both internally between the countries in the region, and in relation to Bologna signatory countries. Participants encouraged countries that have not yet ratified the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention (i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro) to do so as soon as possible. They also encourage all institutions in the region to make full use of the Diploma Supplement.

3. Full participation in the Bologna Process: recommendations

3.1. Participants welcomed the opportunity provided by the Conference of promoting debate and exchange of experience between representatives of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) and of the various applicant countries from the region. Through the reform activities already undertaken at national and institutional level they have clearly demonstrated and reiterated their commitment to joining the Bologna Process, and to implementing its provisions progressively. **Participants recommend that the Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 take this into consideration and welcome all four applicants from the region as full members in the Bologna Process.**

3.2 At the same time, the results of the analysis of the TRENDS III data as well as the case study analysis presented on progress in curricular reform, demonstrate that much remains to be done to consolidate the position of higher education in South East Europe in the emerging European Higher Education Area. Participants identified key challenges and priority areas for further action as set out above and in the following paragraphs.

4. Facing the challenges of globalization

4.1. The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is taking place in parallel to a process of increasing **globalisation of higher education**. The education systems of South East Europe are at present outside the EHEA and thus are choosing to express their commitment to Europe at the same time as having to function in an increasingly global environment. In the wider context of the globalization of higher education, emphasis was put on its impact on academic values and on the organisation of academic work, including the relationship between faculties and departments, the role of the different academic actors and the nature of the organisational structure.

4.2. The key challenge for South East Europe was recognised as being that **of articulating the voice of the region in this framework, of being proactive, and particularly of preparing students to deal with global issues** through adequate analysis and investigation. The need to cope with uncertainties was underlined, as well as the importance of promoting change while at the same time preserving core

academic values. Attention was drawn to the importance of diversification, the need to develop alternative forms of provision, and to promote lifelong learning.

4.3. Participants recognized that the debate on higher education as a public good is multifaceted and includes economic, legal and normative-political dimensions. At the same time they stressed the need for moving on to a discussion focused on **the responsibility of the public authorities for higher education, who, together with the different actors in the higher education system, should, among other things, define objectives and establish the framework for higher education.**

4.4. The dilemma facing the countries of the region was recognized to be that of coping with the consequences of accepting public responsibility for higher education - in terms of the challenges of supporting a system ensuring equity and equal access for all according to merit, and high quality of provision - at a time of strictly limited state budgets, multiple and growing funding demands and recent large increases in higher education participation rates across the region. There is a need for **further investigation of the different possible models of funding higher education systems,** taking into consideration growing competitiveness in the emerging European Higher Education Area where sustainable levels of excellence are a prerequisite.

4.5. For the EHEA and in the context of globalization participants agreed that questions of quality assurance, accreditation and recognition are at the centre of the debate. **For higher education systems in SEE the issues of quality assurance, accreditation and recognition are key to reform**. The interlinkage of the three elements should lead to the development of an institutional quality culture in the region going beyond the introduction of simple quality management and control mechanisms. Institutions are encouraged to strengthen their European networking activities in this field and fledgling national agencies to work together with the European Network of National Quality Agencies (ENQA). Countries that have not yet established an ENIC should do so as soon as possible.

5. Participants expressed thanks to UNESCO/CEPES and the European University Association (EUA) for organising the conference as well to other partners for their support, and underlined the importance of the organisation of follow-up activities in support of higher education reform and development in South East Europe.

Bucharest, 8th March 2003

APPENDIX 7

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**Bologna Process Seminar on
"Integrated curricula – Implications and Prospects"
Mantova, 11th and 12th April 2003**

Final Report

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1.   Preamble

The European summit of education ministers held in Prague on 19 May 2001 drew attention to joint programmes and degrees. The final communiqué expressly calls upon the higher education sector "to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with 'European' content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree".

This commitment had already been highlighted in the Bologna Declaration which explicitly set as an objective the "promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research".

Nevertheless, still today restrictive national legislations make joint degrees impossible to award and recognise in most European countries.

2.   Main features of joint study programmes

Co-operation between HE institutions of different countries in specific disciplines has generated common education and training activities, generally under the heading of joint study programmes, which are characterised by a common assumption of responsibility by the participating institutions as regards:
-   the definition of the objectives of the programme
-   the design of the curriculum;
-   the organisation of the studies;
-   the type of qualifications awarded.

2.1. Objectives of the programme

The objectives of a programme are jointly defined by partner institutions with a view to giving graduates an added value when they enter the European/international job market. This requires the identification of professional profiles that will be needed, as well as a search for coherence between the objectives pursued and the curriculum developed.

2.2. Design of the Curriculum

Cooperation in curriculum design means drawing up of a common study path aimed at reaching the educational goals that have been jointly defined.

In these schemes the partners offer specific segments which complement the overall curriculum designed, thus making it necessary for students to spend time at each or several of the participating institutions. In some instances, joint programmes based on the combination of segments identify some existing components of each participating institutions' study programmes - be they basic parts of the curriculum or specialist areas - and then proceed to put together a programme which utilises those components to the maximum. In other cases, new segments are developed by the institutions involved. Overall, it is the organic combination of diverse approaches, in terms of contents, conceptualisation and teaching methods, that should form the key feature of an integrated curriculum. Accordingly, in this context student mobility is seen not only as a cross-cultural experience - that has a value in itself - but also as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills not available at the home institution and which complement and integrate the activities carried out at the home institution.

2.3. Organisation of Studies

The organisation or management of studies mainly concerns decisions on logistical and financial aspects of the programme, the selection of students and the choosing of the teaching staff. In joint programmes there are different approaches to these organisational issues. Students from various institutions may, for example, rotate systematically among different institutions or be able to choose the partner institution where certain modules can be taken. They may be subject to the same selection procedures or be selected by each institution in accordance with different criteria. The contributions of teachers from partner institutions may be organised in different ways.

2.4. Type of Qualifications Awarded

The type of qualifications awarded by partners depends on the characteristics of the programme in terms of curriculum design and programme organisation. A programme that is jointly designed and implemented, on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements also including a common definition of the required learning outcomes, should naturally lead to a single qualification awarded jointly by all participating institutions. At present, however, in many cases national legal constraints make it impossible, to award fully recognised joint degrees. Very often, therefore, two national degrees have been awarded instead, even when they do not reflect/represent accurately the joint design and implementation of the programme.

3. Contributions already made on joint study programmes and joint degrees

3. 1. The Stockholm conclusions

The seminar on the development of joint degrees, that took place in Stockholm in May 2002 within the framework of the Bologna process, explored the theme mainly from a legal point of view. In the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar *the following criteria have been identified as common denominators for European joint degrees:*
- two or more participating institutions in two or more countries;
- the duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous (e.g., one year at bachelor level);

- joint degrees should require a joint study programme established by cooperation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions;
- joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects;
- full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications;
- a joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations;
- joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility;
- linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured;
- joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

3. 2. The EUA Survey on Master and Joint Degrees in Europe

The survey, presented in September 2002, was commissioned by the European University Association (EUA) with the support of the European Commission. It is an attempt to describe and analyse the state of the art with reference to master level programmes and joint degrees offered across Europe. The analysis of joint degrees in the European Higher Education Area was undertaken by Andrejs Rauhvargers .

The study offers a definition for joint degrees proposing that they should be awarded on completion of joint study programmes *that share at least some of the following characteristics:*
- curricula are developed or approved jointly by two or more institutions;
- students from each participating institution study parts of the programme at other partner institutions;
- the students' stays at the partner institutions are of comparable length;
- periods of study and exams passed at the partner institutions are recognised fully and automatically;
- professors of each participating institution also teach at the other partner institutions, work out the curricula jointly and form joint commissions to decide about admission and the awarding of the degrees;
- after completion of each individual programme, students are conferred the national degrees of each participating institution or just one degree jointly agreed upon by them all.

The survey confirmed the Stockholm conclusions.

4.   The Mantova conclusions and recommendations

This seminar focused on the curricular component of joint degree programmes, on the assumption that curricular integration - intended as joint curriculum design and implementation – is a necessary condition for awarding joint degrees.

A report on "Joint Degrees: the Italian Experience in the European Context" – distributed to all participants – provided some background information on the Italian case. During the seminar the theme was approached at three levels, the country, the institutions and the learners/users. Special emphasis was placed on the institutional

perspective, exploring why institutions might get engaged in developing integrated curricula, what methods they could use and what models they could adopt. The reflections presented by three panels of experienced speakers were discussed in the working groups. Both presentations and group discussions contributed first to the development of a shared vision and then to the formulation of a set of recommendations.

4. 1. Shared vision

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are one of the major priorities for the building of a European "identity" within the common European Higher Education Area, as they provide the learners in all cycles – including doctoral studies - with a coherent, recognisable and challenging experience of European diversity. This is also an obvious added value to national HE systems.

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are valuable instruments for developing European "citizenship" and "employability". These terms are used in a broad sense and from the point of view of students and citizens. That is, "citizenship" means having the cultural, linguistic and social experience necessary to live knowledgeably and responsibly in the multinational/multilingual framework of the broader Europe; "employability" means not only being able to find employment or have the attributes that industry or other employers desire, but also having the knowledge and competences necessary to have a satisfactory and fulfilling professional life in a global society.

- Joint doctoral programmes educating for research professions in Europe are a cornerstone for greater co-operation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Synergy between the two areas is viewed as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Europe of Knowledge.

4. 2. Recommendations to the education ministers meeting in Berlin

- Legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees should be removed in all countries.

- Additional funds should be provided to cover the higher costs of joint degree programmes, keeping in mind particularly the need to create equal opportunities for student participation. Besides national and regional governments, which will normally bear the costs, HE institutions - in the framework of their autonomy -, international bodies and other actors should be invited to provide special support for these programmes.

- Involvement of institutions in joint degree programmes should be encouraged and supported in all Bologna signatory countries, particularly in those which are not yet participating actively.

- Public awareness of the high value of joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula, in terms of European identity, citizenship and employability, should be increased, also by guaranteeing adequate visibility to existing examples of good practice.

4. 3. Recommendations to HE institutions

- The development of European joint degree programmes should be based on the criteria identified in the Stockholm conclusions. Moreover, a clear distinction should be made between joint and double degree programmes, in terms of their curricular objectives and organizational models, also with a view to protecting the learners/users. A complete glossary of terms should be drawn.

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula should be developed to address identified needs of European and global society that cannot be adequately addressed through national programmes, both in educating new professional figures and identifying new research areas.

- Students, graduates, employers and other relevant actors should be consulted about the areas in which the implementation of joint degree programmes would be most appropriate. However, it is recommended that HE institutions use to full potential their role as proactive planners for long range societal needs. Students should also be involved in planning and evaluation activities.

- Institutions that develop joint programmes should fully integrate and support them as a core function of their mission.

- Partners for a joint degree programme should be chosen on the basis of shared mission and commitment, as well as their capacity to develop and sustain such a programme in academic, organisational and financial terms. Thematic networks could provide experience for identifying suitable partners in any European country.

- Full consensus should be reached with partners regarding the model and the methodology to be used, as well as the elements of innovation and academic interest.

- Learning outcomes and competencies, as well as student workload described in ECTS credits, should be viewed as crucial elements in constructing any joint programme.

- Adequate quality assurance procedures should be jointly developed and activated by partners in a joint programme, and made explicit to learners/users.

- Proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning should be ensured all through joint degree programmes. These programmes should also promote European identity, citizenship and employability.

May 12, 2003

APPENDIX 8

Bologna Seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning
Praha, June 5 – 7, 2003

Report by the General Rapporteur
Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe

and

Recommendations

Let us make a golden rule: to show everything to all the senses as far as possible. In other words, to show visible things to the eyes and audible things to the ears. And if something can be perceived by other senses, then it should also be presented to those senses.

(Comenius' Golden Rule, displayed outside of the room in which the seminar was held)

INTRODUCTION

The starting point for the Bologna Seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning organized by the Czech authorities in cooperation with the Czech Technical University is that higher education is no longer a once in a lifetime experience, if it ever was.

While this may seem obvious, it is worth underlining the fact, since our everyday language abounds with expressions and images that point in the opposite direction. Graduation may not be a part of everyday vocabulary, but the much more definite (and definitive) sounding "finish university" and "finish school" are. If people finish their education at age 25 or even 18, what do they do for the rest of their lives? Certainly, imagining that at 18, people will have all the knowledge or skill they will need until the end of their existence is wildly optimistic. I would even be tempted to say it is wildly pessimistic, if we consider what such a view implies in terms of lack of development and intellectual stimulation.

Yet, expressions like these are found in many languages. In my native language we talk about a person who is *ferdig utdannet* or *utlært*, and both expressions imply that there is no need for further education. As often when trying to translate from Norwegian, the German equivalent comes most readily to mind, in this case as *fertig ausgebildet* or *ausgelehrt*. In Spanish, someone who *ha terminado la carrera* is not ready for retirement, but rather for starting his or her professional career, the idea being that the person in question has – once again – completed his or her education.

So as not to leave out the third large European branch of the Indo-European language family, the Slavic, the Russian *Я кончил(а) школу* also does not exactly leave the doors of learning wide open , as it were.

AIM OF THIS REPORT

The program of the Bologna seminar organized by the Czech authorities in cooperation with the Czech Technical University is a complete one, and it covers the main issues relating to recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning. Sessions focusing on transferability in the tertiary sphere, qualifications frameworks in the context of lifelong learning, transparency instruments, validation of prior learning and the recognition of non-traditional qualifications bear witness to the complexity of the seminar and the variety of issues addressed. Add to this intensive group discussions as well as plenary presentations and comments by stakeholders representing students (ESIB), higher education institutions (the European University Association), a higher education institution with very close links to an employer (Škoda Auto College), the Czech Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Czech Accreditation Commission and networks and projects working in the field (ENIC and NARIC Networks[29], TELL, Transfine[30]), and the reader will further appreciate the complexity of the discussion, which was completed by the presentation of national case studies.

The complexity of the issue, which was so well reflected in the conference program, has in a sense also structured the ambitions and scope of this report. Providing anything close to a thorough and faithful synthesis of the various presentations would not only be verging on *hubris* – and we know what happened to those who, in Greek mythology, overstepped this line - but it would also in a sense be superfluous. Conference participants heard the original presentations, which are of an infinitely higher quality than any attempt to summarize them in a late hour of the night could possibly be, and those who were not at the conference, will have an opportunity to read the various contributions in the publication to be prepared by our Czech hosts.

I see my function as Rapporteur, therefore, rather to attempt an analysis of the issues that have been raised, to try to put the various bits and pieces together in something like a coherent whole and, not least, on the basis of the presentations and the discussion at the seminar, to seek to identify some issues that warrant further consideration. It is also my belief that addressing the various issues raised at the seminar will be of importance in establishing a European Higher Education Area that by 2010 will encompass all kinds of higher education.

An analytical report is as much indebted to the presentations and discussions at the conference as a synthesis report would have been. This report therefore relies on the presentations and prepared comments of Ivan Wilhelm, Josef Beneš, Věra Šťastná, Stephen Adam, Peter van der Hijden, Volker Gemlich, Michel Feutrie, Jindra Divis, Štěpánka Skuhrová, Birgit Lao, Sylvie Brochu, Eva Münsterová, Milan Sojka, Alena Chromcová, Hana Slámová, Elisabeth Tosti, Andrew Cubie and Pavel Zgaga, as well

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[29] http://www.enic-naric.net
[30] http://www.transfine.net

as on the opening remarks of the Vice-Minister for research and higher education, Petr Kolář and Professor Miroslav Vlček, Vice Rector of the Czech Technical University.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON LIFELONG LEARNING

It is difficult to provide a short and snappy definition of lifelong learning that would meet with the approval of most of those directly concerned or who have otherwise given some thought to the issue. As the Trends III report[31] shows, definitions vary greatly throughout Europe. Lifelong learning may simply be another one of those ubiquitous relatives of the duck, whose common denominator is that we cannot provide an adequate definition, but we instantly recognize them when we see them.

Nevertheless, Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná in their presentation not only reminded us that lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area; but also that it can be defined as a concept and as a "continuous learning process enabling individuals to acquire and update knowledge, skills and competencies at different stages of their lives and in a variety of learning environments, both formal and informal". This definition follows the one given in the Council of Europe's recommendation on lifelong learning in higher education[32], arising from the project on Lifelong Learning for Equity and Social Cohesion: a Challenge to Universities. Stephen Adam referred to the definition offered by the European Commission where lifelong learning is seen as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective". However, one of the participants, in a comment from the floor, felt that a working definition rather than a political definition was needed. There is also considerable truth in Andrew Cubie's definition of learning as being about not reinventing the wheel.

On this background, it may be worth exploring some characteristics of lifelong learning. The one that first comes to mind, simply because it is the one emphasized by the term itself, is that lifelong learning is situated in a different timeframe than traditional learning. One could perhaps paraphrase Henry David Thoreau and say that lifelong learners march to the beat of a different drummer. Given the brevity of human life, saying that lifelong learning, unlike the traditional concept of "standard learning", is indefinite and therefore has no beginning and no end, is perhaps something of an exaggeration. However, within the time frame of the life of an individual, lifelong learning emphasizes that one is never done with absorbing new knowledge, skills and competence. Nobody can talk about lifelong learning with the authority of someone who has completed it all. In this sense, lifelong learning should be a model for all learning, at whatever level, and indeed for all human existence. As Volker Gemlich rightly said, lifelong learning can also be described as a culture, and Elisabeth Tosti argued the importance of life experience..

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[31] Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch: *Trends in Learning Structures in European Higher Education III. Bologna four years after: Steps towards sustainable reform of higher education in Europe.* Draft summary – EUA Graz Convention 29 – 31 May 2003

[32] Recommendation R (2002) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on higher education policies in lifelong learning.

Often, though, discussions of lifelong learning betray an assumption – implicit as often as explicit – of alternative learning paths and contents. More often than not, lifelong learners are thought of not as persons undergoing traditional education at a more mature age than the classical student population, but as mature learners learning in different ways and perhaps also acquiring alternative knowledge and skills.

Such implicit assumptions have an impact on the topic of this seminar, in that if learning paths and contents differ from those of classical students, one may ask whether lifelong learners should not also be guided toward alternative qualifications.

It is worth dwelling on the assumption that lifelong learning should lead to alternative qualifications, not because it is universally held, but because those that hold it may not make the assumption explicit.

Lifelong learners have a variety of motives, ranging from personal fulfillment to earning qualifications that are immediately tradable on the labor market. In the words of Andrew Cubie, a key goal of the Scottish Qualifications Framework is to "help people of all ages and circumstances access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfill their personal, social and economic potential".

These motivations and potentials are of course not mutually exclusive; rather, they very often reinforce each other and a learning path that will increase a person's value on the labor market may equally provide him or her with deep personal satisfaction. In this, lifelong learning may well contribute to all the major functions of higher education:

- preparation for the labor market;
- life as an active citizen in democratic society;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge base.

Underlining that lifelong learners often follow other learning paths than "traditional" learners is certainly a valid point. This almost always applies to the aspect of time, and it often applies to the contents and combinations of study programs as well as the way in which qualifications are earned.

WHAT IS IN A QUALIFICATION?

Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether lifelong learning paths necessarily have to lead to non-traditional qualifications. In a deeper sense, this amounts to arguing that we should review the ways in which we define and measure educational achievements. Where traditionally we have been concerned with the formal ways in which a given qualifications could be achieved and how long it would take to earn it, there is now much discussion of whether it would not be better to seek to assess what a person has learned; what he or she knows and is able to do with a given qualification. In the words of Volker Gemlich, we need to identify the "can do levels".

This emphasis on learning outcomes is not unproblematic, but it has been put on the agenda both of the recognition community, through the ENIC and NARIC Networks and their individual member centers, and of universities. A university driven project, the TUNING project coordinated by the Universities of Deusto and Groningen[33] and covering a variety of subject areas, has done pioneering work in this area, showing how difficult it is to define learning outcomes that go beyond stating the obvious but also that this can actually be done. In particular, the TUNING project makes a highly useful distinction between subject specific and transversal competence, reminding us that higher education is not just a question of learning facts but also of developing a number of skills like the ability to reason in abstract terms, capacity for analysis and synthesis, problem solving, adaptability, leadership, ability to work autonomously as well as part of a team[34].

Thus, lifelong learning is one of several elements that should lead us to reexamine what we mean by qualifications. Here, Sylvie Brochu emphasized the paradigm shift from teaching to learning, while Volker Gemlich underlined the need to look at lifelong learning provision from the learner's perspective. In this way, the issue of lifelong learning links directly with another issue that has been pioneered in a few countries like the United Kingdom[35], Ireland and Denmark, namely that of defining a qualifications framework. In commenting on this, I draw not only on the present seminar, but also on the Bologna seminar on Qualifications Structures in European Higher Education organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 – 28, 2003[36]. Not least, I draw on Stephen Adam's presentations to both seminars.

Essentially, a qualifications framework is a system for describing all qualifications offered within a given education system and how they relate to each other. Not least, elaborating a qualifications framework helps us refine our concept of a qualification, and here much has happened lately. As described by Andrew Cubie, a key function of qualifications frameworks is to guide individuals and help them reach their educational goals with as few complications as possible. The traditional concepts of workload and level have been refined and are no longer expressed only in terms of "years of study". Rather, ECTS credits have largely won acceptance as units measuring the workload required to earn a specific qualification, and these can be earned fast or slowly, depending on the learner. If the ECTS is developed into a credit accumulation and not only a credit transfer system, this would also help with the definition of level.

The concept of level is, however, being refined beyond the insistence of the Bologna Declaration on a two-tier system consisting of a first and a second degree, and the existing national qualifications frameworks are relatively explicit in their level descriptors.

However, when assessing a qualification, we not only need to know something about its workload and level. We also need to know something about the quality of the qualification. While the concern for quality is not new, the widespread acceptance of

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[33] Cf. http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/
[34] The list has essentially been taken from the TUNING project.
[35] Where the qualifications framework for Scotland is distinct from that for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
[36] Cf. . http://www.vtu.dk/fsk/div/bologna/Koebenhavn_Bologna_Reprot_final.pdf

the need for formal systems assessing the quality of higher education is a fairly recent development. It may be worth recalling that as late as 1997, when the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention was adopted, there was still discussion of whether a formal quality assurance system was necessary or not. Today, the discussion focuses on what such a system should look like.

Learning outcomes, referred to above, are also an integral part of the discussion of qualifications frameworks. Less discussed is the issue of the profile of a qualification, even though it will often not be sufficient for someone assessing a qualification to know that it is of adequate level. Whether assessing a qualification for employment purposes or for the purpose of further study, an evaluator will often need to know the specific profile of a qualification. While all second degrees will probably provide the learner with a good number of transversal competences, the subject specific competences will also be of importance for someone looking to hire a historian with good knowledge of Czech or considering applications for admission to a doctoral program in information science.

LIFELONG LEARNING - SEPARATE BUT EQUAL?

If we develop a more sophisticated view of what qualifications actually constitute and how different qualifications relate to each other, a safe assumption would also be that we would more readily accept that different learning paths may lead to the same qualification. This is of immediate relevance to the discussion of qualifications, recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning.

One may of course take the view that earning one's qualifications off the beaten track, as it were, constitutes an additional value that should be recognized through a separate qualification. However, the opposite view is equally plausible: that any qualification deviating from the traditional ones may easily be considered second rate, even if the justification for reaching such a conclusion may be entirely lacking. An additional consideration is that, in the interest of transparency, which is another major concern of the European Higher Education Area, a balance has to be struck between allowing learners to define study programs that fit their own profiles and interests and providing a framework for describing the qualifications earned through these programs in a way that is understandable to informed outsiders. Variety has many advantages, but increased transparency is not one of them.

I would therefore argue that lifelong learning should primarily be seen as alternative learning paths toward qualifications described in the qualifications framework of a given education system. This is not to say that all lifelong learning experiences have to end up with a traditional qualifications, but I would be even more concerned if they *a priori* had to end up with a qualification marked "LLL", say a Master of Science LLL. Separate learning paths may be seen as equal, but the chances of gaining acceptance for separate but equal lifelong learning qualifications is not something I would put a lot of money on if I were a gambler. There is even historical precedent for considering that "separate but equal" will easily end up as anything but[37].

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[37] In 1896, a US Supreme Court decision, known as *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, approved segregation in schools by accepting the formula "separate but equal". This decision was not overturned until 1954, when the Supreme Court, in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ordered the

Saying that there should be room for earning traditional qualifications through lifelong learning experiences does, however, amount to saying that we must take a broader view of how qualifications may be earned and which elements may go into any given qualification. This is no small challenge for a qualifications framework.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná remind us that an important part of the background for the discussion about lifelong learning is an increased demand for qualifications at all levels combined with an increasingly diverse student population. This is matched by a diversity of provision, including post-secondary or tertiary programs not considered a part of higher education, at least not in all countries, as well as different kinds and levels of higher education programs and a diversity of study forms, ranging from the classical full time student in his or her early 20's through the increasingly common part time student, encompassing a considerably broader age group, to distance learners.

All of this implies that qualifications may be obtained in different ways, at different speeds and at different ages. We may refer to different learning paths leading to the same qualifications, and in some countries, public authorities responsible for the higher education framework have begun to see the various qualifications of their higher education system as a coherent whole. Therefore, they have set out to describe these qualifications, the way they relate to each other, and the competencies, knowledge and skills they certify in terms of what is often referred to as "new style" qualifications frameworks[38]. This concept was explored in detail at the Bologna seminar organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 - 28 this year, and I will therefore not attempt to give anything like a full description of the concept.

Nevertheless, as Stephen Adam demonstrated in his presentation, the concept of qualifications frameworks is highly relevant also to lifelong learning. Indeed, one could say the concept helps "demystify" lifelong learning by showing that various learning paths may lead to the same goal. Lifelong learning is one among several possible paths, it is as valuable as the more classical paths. Most likely, a given qualification can be earned by several lifelong learning paths as well as several more traditional paths.

It may be worth recalling the functions of national qualifications frameworks, as outlined in Stephen Adam's presentation. These include:

- making explicit the purposes of qualifications;
- delineate points of access and overlap;
- identify alternative routes;

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integration of American schools. The implementation of this decision was a central element of the Civil Rights struggle of the 1950s and early 1960s.

[38] The point being that all education systems by definition have a qualifications framework but that, traditionally, the description of the qualifications and not least the relationship and interaction between them leaves much to be desired. The "new style" framework therefore represent a significant step forward.

- position qualifications in relation to one another;
- show routes for progression as well as barriers.

Stephen Adam underlined that lifelong learning is an all-inclusive concept in need of deconstruction. Indeed, he jokingly referred to lifelong learning as suffering from a multiple personality disorder. I think he is right in his assertion, and it may be that lifelong learning is not sufficiently well integrated into higher education policies in part because it has been thought of as something entirely different from standard higher education policies and therefore something to be left to those with a special interest in the issue. The not uncommon assumption that there are separate "lifelong learning qualifications" may also in part arise from this. In my view, the focus on qualifications frameworks and the place of lifelong learning paths within them will help deconstruct lifelong learning and put it in its proper context as an important part of overall higher education policies.

By showing how different qualifications relate to each other, qualifications frameworks should also facilitate the transfer of qualifications between different parts of the system. The need for facilitating such transfer was underlined by several speakers. It is also worth bearing in mind the timely reminder by Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná: broad transferability does not mean automatic transferability. Therefore, systems and methods must be developed to facilitate transfer, and one example from the Czech Republic is the transfer between the higher professional and university sectors described by Hana Slámová.

DESCRIPTION OF QUALIFICATIONS EARNED THROUGH LIFELONG
LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES

As the variety of qualifications and learning paths increases, developing tools to describe these qualifications and learning paths in a way that makes them understandable to informed - and, sometimes, less informed - outsiders is of great importance. Two such tools have been developed and are in quite wide use today, and both have their place within the Bologna Process.

The Diploma Supplement, developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, aims at describing a qualification in terms of the education system within which it was earned. The Diploma Supplement can also be adapted to qualifications - such as joint degrees - earned within two or more higher education systems. The Diploma Supplement, which is an addition to and not a substitute for the original diploma, contains information on the student, the institution and program, the competencies earned and the higher education system. In many countries, institutions are now obliged by law to issue Diploma Supplements to their students once these earn their degrees.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), developed by the European Commission, facilitates the transfer of competence earned at one institution or within one higher education system to another institution and/or system. It has achieved this by developing a standard unit expressing workload - the ECTS credit, 60 of which constitute an average workload for an academic year - as well as a standardized grading scheme. There is also discussion of broadening the ECTS to a credit accumulation as well as a credit transfer system. As emphasized by the Bologna

seminar on credit transfer, organized by the EUA and the Swiss authorities in Zürich in October 2002, the ECTS must be developed to include the concept of level.

Peter van der Hijden raised the issue of whether credits have absolute or relative value, i.e. whether the value of credits may depend in part on the use to which they will be put. His question was perhaps not quite answered by the participants in the seminar, but a reasonable assumption seems to be that while for many purposes, a credit is a credit is a credit, some study programs will have limits on the amount of credits that can be earned in a given area. Whether this is assigning relative value to credits or emphasizing the profile of a given qualification is perhaps a debate worth pursuing.

The two transparency instruments are complementary, and an ECTS transcript can easily be incorporated into a Diploma Supplement. In this context, it is well worth remembering Michel Feutrie´s reference to ECTS as a transferable model combining

- formal learning in higher and vocational education, for the purpose of certification;
- non-formal learning in companies or organizations, for the purpose of employability;
- informal learning in the voluntary sector, for the purpose of professionalization.

To the extent that the various kinds of educational experiences could not be readily described through the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, these transparency instruments could be brought together with the remaining elements in a portfolio, describing all the relevant experience, skills and competencies that constitute the person's overall achievements. One possible model could be the European Language Portfolio, developed by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division to describe a person's competencies in foreign languages, whether formally certified or not, according to a list of well established criteria of fluency. In the case of computing skills, the EU has developed a European Driving License. In the case of many lifelong learning experiences, it is an important part that candidates are closely involved in constituting their own portfolios, as underlined by Jindra Divis.

The point was made by several speakers that recognition, quality assurance, certification and documentation procedures must be kept as "light" as possible. They specifically warned against creating too heavy a bureaucracy. It is easy to agree with this view in general terms, but since "bureaucracy" has become a catchword for all that is wrong with public administration, it may be worth recalling that a key characteristic of bureaucracy is that it provides for predictable decisions based on the merits of the case and taken by professional employees in the sense that they derive their income from their administrative post[39]. Therefore, decisions are not based on arbitrary factors such as who examines the files, at what time of day this happens or on the payment of direct fees or provision of other services to the individual bureaucrat, commonly referred to as corruption. Bureaucracy should be kept at a reasonable level, but it is as much of an illusion to believe that modern, complex

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[39] Cf. Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922); the reference here is to a Norwegian edition of Weber's writings: *Makt og byråkrati* (Oslo 1982: Gyldendals Studiefakler), pp. 105 - 157).

societies can function without an element of public administration as to believe they can be governed without politics.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE LISBOA RECOGNITION CONVENTION

The Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, adopted in Lisboa in April 1997 and hence referred to as the Lisboa Recognition Convention, provides the legal framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications in Europe. At the time of writing, it has been ratified by 31 states and signed by a further 12[40]. The main point of the Lisboa Recognition Convention will be found in Appendix 1, suffice it here to underline the following aspects:

Among the main points of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention are the following:

- Adequate access to an assessment of foreign qualifications.
- Non-discrimination.
- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Recognition unless the competent authority can demonstrate a substantial difference.
- All parties shall provide information on the institutions and programs they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.

In a legal sense, the Convention is only applicable to the parties, i.e. the countries that have ratified the Convention or otherwise declared themselves bound by it, and for qualifications belonging to their higher education systems. However, the Convention also has a second function: that of serving as a guide to good practice. In this sense, its provisions can equally well be applied in other contexts and to other kinds of qualifications.

If national qualifications frameworks – and possibly a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area – are construed so as to include different learning paths to the same educational achievements and qualifications, there should be no formal reason why the provisions of the Lisboa Recognition Convention could not be applied to qualifications earned through a lifelong learning path. If these paths were not to be recognized as belonging to the higher education qualifications of a Party, the Convention could still be applied *de facto* and its principles be applied to lifelong learning at higher education level.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

If recognition aims at taking due account of a person's competence, skills and knowledge without regard to how these have been attained, the question of recognition of non-traditional qualifications - or at least of qualifications earned in non-traditional ways - arises. Again, it is good to keep in mind the context of

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[40] An updated list of ratifications and signatures, as well as the text of the Convention and its Explanatory Report, may be found at http://conventions.coe.int, search for ETS 165.

diversification of higher education, including the development of transnational education and virtual learning, in which this discussion takes place. This is not a concern only for lifelong learners, but since they tend to follow more varied paths than traditional higher education graduates, the issue of recognition of prior learning takes on a special importance in discussions of lifelong learning.

As presented by Jindra Divis and Štěpanká Skuhrová, a project on prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)[41], carried out by the ENICs/NARICs of the Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden and led by the Dutch ENIC/NARIC, has sought to develop a methodology for the recognition of non-formal or informal learning or, in broader terms, any kind of competence at higher education level that cannot be documented by traditional means. Through different forms of assessment, including interviews, simulations and tests as well as the candidate's portfolio, the PLAR methodology seeks to establish the candidate's actual competencies, whether for the purpose of access to higher education (at whatever level appropriate) or for employment. In the Netherlands, which has pioneered this form of assessment, the PLAR methodology has not least played an important role in assessing immigrants' teacher qualifications.

LIFELONG LEARNING AS A PART OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Lifelong learning policies, as well as the broader issue of the European Higher Education Area, are discussed in a context marked by globalization, massification of higher education, decreasing demographic curves, an increasingly heterogenous student body, an emphasis on the need for quality education and increasing pressures as concerns employability and the competitiveness of students on the labor market, as Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná so usefully reminded us. Sylvie Brochu as well as one of the working groups usefully emphasized that higher education institutions have to satisfy a double agenda: one the one hand, they have to be competitive economically, while on the other hand they also have to fulfill their social responsibility. She also reminded us that in addition, higher education institutions have to reconcile the need for a market orientation with the need to keep a certain distance in order to discern longer term trends. The classical university model was of course not devoid of market orientation, but the shape of the market has changed quite dramatically since the day of the Medieval university. As we have put it in another context, one of the dilemmas facing modern universities is how, in the age of the sound bite, one can develop an understanding of the importance of an institution that by its nature takes the longer view[42].

As Stephen Adam emphasized, this context also includes the fact that only half of the EU member states have strategies for lifelong learning, even if the recently published Trends III report indicates that most Bologna countries are now planning to develop lifelong learning strategies or already in the process of doing so. Of the 11 Bologna countries that already have established such policies, north western Europe is clearly overrepresented[43].

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[41] http://ice-plar.net
[42] For these and related issues, see Nuria Sanz and Sjur Bergan: *The Heritage of European Universities* (Strasbourg 2002: Council of Europe Publishing).
[43] Cf. *Trends III*, pp. 12 - 13.

In reflecting on the role and place of lifelong learning within the Bologna Process, it may be worth emphasizing that lifelong learning should be considered a part of overall higher education policies rather than as a separate strand. The same would be true for policies directed at other levels or profiles of education, and Stephen Adam very usefully reminded us that the Bologna Process should interact with initiatives in other areas of education, such the Brugge-København Process. However, to borrow from Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná again, higher education is our "playground".

The current work program of the Bologna Process, covering the period 2001 – 2003, is divided into 5 or 6 categories. However, it is also possible to read it differently. In my reading, this program consists of two broad areas, the first of which focuses on qualifications and degree structures, while the second has to do with the social dimension of higher education, which was in particular emphasized by Birgit Lao, but also by several other speakers like Sylvie Brochu and Stephen Adam. In my view, lifelong learning touches on both of these aspects within the Bologna Process. In his closing remarks, Pavel Zgaga also touched on this, and he emphasized that lifelong learning is such a general idea that it could be left happily to live its life in theories, but considerable effort is needed to translate these theories into practical policies and action.

As concerns the first, I believe the main issue for the further progress toward the European Higher Education Area is how lifelong learning can be integrated into qualifications frameworks at both national level and for the European Higher Education Area as entirely valid paths leading to the various qualifications making up these frameworks. In the terms of the Lisboa Recognition Convention, lifelong learning paths would then be a part of the higher education systems of States party, which also means that the qualifications thus earned would be considered for recognition on a par with the same qualifications earned through more traditional higher education learning paths. A second issue is how these learning paths could then be adequately described through transparency instruments like the Diploma Supplement, the ECTS and possibly a lifelong learning portfolio.

As concerns lifelong learning as a part of the social dimension of higher education, the issue is probably considerably easier to phrase than to solve: if lifelong learning paths are integrated into accepted qualifications frameworks, how can authorities and higher education institutions encourage people to actually follow those paths. This was not one of the main issues for the present conference, which focused on qualifications and credits, but it is worth underlining that it touches on issues like equitable access, student finance, motivating members of new or underrepresented groups to pursue higher education, adapting learning methods and institutional working schedules and certainly a host of other issues. Trends III also emphasizes that if the "competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets and not counterbalanced by government incentives, university provision of LLL may well be forced to let go of the more costly social agenda", something that would be detrimental to the goal of an inclusive European Higher Education Area and that would not help us achieve the goal stipulated by the Ministers in their Praha Communiqué:

Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life.

Personally, I cannot conceive of quality of life without an opportunity to learn and broaden horizons, as I fully share Pavel Zgaga's desire to "live a long life in learning". I also cannot conceive of a developed society that would not offer its citizens an opportunity to develop their competencies, skills and knowledge. The choice in favor of lifelong learning should not be all that difficult if one contemplates the alternatives – is one of them lifelong ignorance? However, reaching a goal is generally more difficult than imagining it, so we still have work to do before this part of the Bologna Process will meet the two criteria for success defined by Ivan Wilhelm in his presentation:

(1)   making the right decisions;
(2)   convincing the majority of people that your decision is right.

Hopefully, the recommendations from this conference will help persuade higher education institutions, public authorities responsible for higher education, international organizations and institutions and the Ministers of the Bologna Process set out to consider lifelong learning as an integral part of higher education policies, as learning paths within higher education qualifications framework that will help broaden access to higher education and further equity and social cohesion. If so, the seminar will have been a successful one.

Lifelong learning, as life itself, is sometimes difficult. However, the alternatives are unappealing, and this should in itself constitute a strong incentive to success.

APPENDIX 1

MAIN POINTS OF THE LISBOA RECOGNITION CONVENTION

- Holders of qualifications issued in one party shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another party.

- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, color, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.

- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.

- Each party shall recognize qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.

- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another party shall have one or both of the following consequences:
    a.   access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
    b.   the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought.
In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labor market.

- All parties shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfill the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence.

- All parties shall provide information on the institutions and programs they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.

- All parties shall appoint a national information center, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons.

- All parties shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system within which it was issued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To higher education institutions and others

Higher education institutions and others should:

- reconfirm their historical commitment to, and reconsider their approach and relationship to, lifelong learning, bring learning closer to the learner and interact more with local communities and enterprises;
- adopt internal policies to promote the recognition of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning for access and study exemption;
- reconsider skills content in courses and the nature of their study programs;
- use the Diploma Supplement, ECTS credits and skills portfolios to record learning as well as to facilitate individual learning paths;
- express all qualifications in terms of explicit reference points: qualifications descriptors, level descriptors, learning outcomes, subject related and generic competencies;
- integrate lifelong learning into their overall strategy, global development plan and mission;
- develop partnerships with other stakeholders.

To public authorities responsible for higher education

Public authorities responsible for higher education should:

- clarify and define their goals with regard to lifelong learning and develop appropriate implementation strategies;
- develop new style national qualifications frameworks that integrate forms of lifelong learning as possible paths leading to higher education qualifications, as well as access qualifications, within this qualifications framework;
- take appropriate measures to ensure equal access to and appropriate opportunities for success in lifelong learning to each individual in accordance with his/her aspirations and abilities;
- ensure the right to fair recognition of qualifications acquired in different learning environments.
- encourage higher education institutions to develop and implement lifelong learning policies and measures the measures and support them in their endeavors;
- apply appropriate methods for the evaluation and, where appropriate, accreditation of various forms of lifelong learning.

To international institutions and organizations

International institutions and organizations should:

- through the ENIC and NARIC Networks, seek to develop international good practice to promote the recognition of qualifications earned

through lifelong learning paths, as far as possible using the provisions and principles of the Lisboa Recognition Convention;

- where appropriate and needed, develop international instruments to facilitate such recognition;
- bring together existing experience with national qualifications frameworks with a view to facilitating the development of further national frameworks as well as a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area that would encompass lifelong learning paths.
- support and develop projects furthering the integration of lifelong learning paths within qualifications frameworks, improved description of lifelong learning paths and improving the opportunity of learners to follow the paths thus established;
- stimulate networks working in this area.

To the Berlin Higher Education Summit

The Ministers of the Bologna Process, meeting for the Berlin Higher Education Summit on September 18 – 19, 2003 may be invited to:

- launch work involving all appropriate stakeholders on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area encompassing the wide range of lifelong learning paths, opportunities and techniques and making appropriate use of the ECTS credits. In entrusting the Bologna Follow Up Group with the organization of this endeavor, they should encourage cooperation between the development of this framework and the work of the Brugge-København Process in vocational education and training;
- underline the importance of improving the possibilities of all citizens to follow the lifelong learning paths established within qualifications frameworks in accordance with their aspirations and abilities and entrust the Bologna Follow Up Group, in time for the 2005 Ministerial Conference, with exploring how this goal may be achieved.

APPENDIX 9

General Report
Bologna Follow-Up Seminar
"Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education"
Oslo, Norway – 12/14 of June 2003

1 – Introduction

**From Bologna to Oslo –
Students' Participation as a key issue on the Bologna Process**

On the 19th of June 1999, 4 years ago, Ministers of education coming from all over Europe, gathered in the University of Bologna and agreed on a joint declaration later known as "The Bologna Declaration". This declaration got its inspiration from the Magna Charta of the Universities, signed a decade before, in the same University, and also on the Sorbonne Declaration signed in the previous year by the four Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

On the Bologna Declaration Ministers saw the necessity for creating a "Europe of Knowledge (…) as an "irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship (…)". Education and educational co-operation was seen as paramount in the "(…) development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies (…).

However it was very well noted by State Secretary Bjørn Haugstad in his opening speech of this seminar that even though the Bologna Declaration points to education as a key element in the development of democratic societies it makes no specific mention of democracy at the higher education institutions themselves. It is also a fact that students were not even officially invited to attend the Bologna Meeting.

Two years later a fundamental shift occurred when Minister gathered again in Prague on the 19th of May 2001, for accessing the developments taking place on the Bologna Process and making new commitments within the process. From the resulting communiqué coming from the Prague Ministerial Summit it was recognised that "(…) students are full members of the higher education community" and "should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers also recognised the necessity and welcomed the role of students as "(…) competent, active and constructive partners (…)" in the creation of the European Area of Higher Education.

One of the reasons behind this achievement was the involvement of ESIB and its Member Unions on the European and National follow up process between the meetings in Bologna and Prague. In opposition with what happened before, this time students were officially present during the ministerial summit and in the end ESIB was recognised, side by side with EUA, EURASHE and the Council of Europe as fully capable participants of the ongoing process.

Students' involvement was singled out as one of the important topics for the future discussions within the Bologna Process and the Norwegian Ministry eagerly took the

call for a follow-up seminar on the topic. This is the reason why representatives from the Ministries, institutions, European organisations and student organisations gathered between the 12th and the 14th of June 2003 in Oslo in a seminar hosted by the Norwegian Royal Ministry for Education and Research and where ESIB, the Norwegian national unions of students (NSU and STL) and the Council of Europe were valuable co-organisers.

The seminar's main theme was the role of students' participation in both national and international processes of governance in higher education. There was a focus, from various perspectives on how legislation may include and regulate students' participation in governance of higher education institutions and on the students' participation in the academic life.

This general report tries to outline the discussion and outcomes of the seminar and together with the seminar conclusions will produce the background necessary for the recommendations to include on the Berlin Communiqué.

2 – Seminar presentations

Bologna: a new start or the reaffirmation of practices that are centuries old?

"In the Beginning was the student"! This was how Professor Gudmund Hernes, Director of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning and former Norwegian Minister reminded the participants of the history of the University organisation as we know it nowadays. In Bologna some three quarters of a millennium ago the first university was created when students emulated the existing professional guilds and created a learning place were professors were called upon to teach these first university students that among themselves organised all the necessary facilities and conditions.

From this founding moment and over the centuries HEI have spread and reinvented themselves several times with recognizable power drifts, gaining or losing autonomy, allowing more or less internal democracy, being more active transforming society or closing themselves into Ivory Towers.

Nevertheless students were always there! Indeed a HEI without students was and is a impossibility! Professor Gudmund Hernes, on is detailed presentation claimed that Institutions of higher learning are potent centres of knowledge, knowledge that is created in reaction to the challenges and crisis of time and nature. That is why they look so appealing to the economical world. HEI are also still "Centres of Literacy" were the knowledge of man is used to shape man – to form characters. Finally HEI are also "Centres of Disturbance" in the sense that not always students turn out to be or behave according to the prescription and when vitality and freedom of thinking characteristic of young students are combined with oppressive conditions the result is an explosive chain reaction that still can be heard from when it exploded in the streets of Prague, Paris, Peking or New York over different periods of our history.

According to Professor Hernes is the combination of these three elements or centres that make universities such powerful institutions with a remarkable Darwinian ability to survive. Finally we were reminded that these "explosive" moments don't happen

everyday and that is essential for the HEI continuing existence to inspire "life long obsessions" that must thrill the academic community to go beyond the present boundaries and explore "terra incognita".

Professor Hernes concluded that "In the beginning was the student. In the end – and the end – must be the student also".

At this time I must recall that State Secretary Bjørn Haugstad on is earlier presentation and referring to the importance of student involvement went beyond the explosive moments of the students' movement history and reminded the participants of the new challenges laying ahead when there is a shift of emphasis on learning rather than teaching, on the creation and application of knowledge rather than on passively receiving and memorizing information and where there is a demand for a more active and empowered student. A critical and participative student member of the "universitas", not a mere purchaser of a service.

This vision was in a way testified by the participation of Kamil Azhar, the president of NSU, one of the Norwegian National Students Organisations. He questioned what was really students' participation advocating that students must feel that they are taken in consideration and not only heard as part of a bureaucratic process where students are "consulted" but not truly "understood". At the same time he reminded student organisations of the responsibilities to stay in touch with the student community, to provide transparent information, to promote dialogue and participation. In this way S.O. can do what they know best… to present the student visions and opinions that as such should be heard at all levels.

In the final day of this conference we heard from the voice of Professor Fuada Stankovic, Rector of the University of Novi Sad in Serbia a testimony of the importance of student activism in the social changes occurred in Serbia, a Region in the world that survived two ideologically opposite dictatorial regimes that were not known by their tolerance towards independent student participation. Professor Fuada Stankovic raised concerns about how student organisation should be or not influenced by political parties and also explained some of the current solutions being instated to overcome the scarcity of resources in Serbian Higher Education.

Finally Johannes Fjose Berg, the president of STL presented us with a case study of how the active involvement of students could be the driving force behind ambitious and far reaching HE reforms like the ones taking place in this moment in Norway. Something that was previously recognised by the State Secretary.

Johannes spoke about the future, about how education should look like in this new millennium. Once again the thesis that students should be involved simply because they are students was reinstated. Governance at any level on issues that directly and indirectly affect students cannot pass without the students input. Students are committed, participative, motivated and curious and this provides for valuable contributions.

Students' can either be internal players within the institutional architecture or external players organising themselves in their own way, they can even be an amalgamation of the two and according to Johannes this is the best solution on his vision of the future,

where the best of "independence" and "co-operation" is used and where the shortcomings of both models like excessive formality and the "trench barrier" approach in the case of external representation and the abusive use of the legitimisation of a decision because students were present and excessive bureaucratisation in the case of internal representation are put behind.

3 – Council of Europe Survey

Students' Participation in the Governance of Higher Education in Europe

A survey about student's participation was carried and later on used as the fundamental background information for the success of this seminar. The survey was directed towards the three main groups concerned:
- Students (organizations)
- Representatives of higher education institutions
- Ministries responsible for higher education

Replies from one or several group representatives were received from a total of 36 countries. No answers from any of the three groups represented were received from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Russia, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine or the United Kingdom.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research commissioned the report from the Council of Europe for the seminar. Annika Persson wrote the report, mainly during her internship with the Council of Europe's Higher Education and Research Division. The report has also benefited from comments and suggestions by Per Nyborg, Chair of the Council of Europe's higher Education and Research Committee (CD-ESR) and Sjur Bergan, Head of the Higher Education and Research Division.

This report has its own standing value but (taking the risk of forgetting something important) I will anyhow mention some of the primary conclusions, in line with the presentation made by Sjur Bergan that also referred to a previous study from the Council of Europe on "Universities as Sites of Citizenship".

The survey focused on the issue of students' participation in the *governance* of higher education. Students' influence on social issues, housing, etc. are equally important questions, but they are not the main focus of this survey. The issue of governance has been divided into three parts:

- formal provisions for students' participation in higher education governance based on national legislation;
- other provisions for students' participation;
- the actual practice of students' participation.

Complementarily the "University as a Site of Citizenship" project identified four concentric spheres of issues in which higher education institutions or their members have a role to play:

- Institutional decision making;
- Institutional life in a wider sense, including the study process;

- higher education institutions as multicultural societies;
- higher education institutions in their relationship and interaction with the wider society.

The joint analysis of these several dimensions make me conclude that student participation often surpasses the walls of the institution and other academic frontiers following the trend that induces or obliges the institutions to open up to society.

The survey shows that there is a wide and positive attitude towards increased students' influence in higher education governance.

The respondents stating that students' influence on higher education governance should increase say that the students have a right to influence decisions and practices since they are the largest group within higher education and the main stakeholders. The students are well informed and their influence enhances the quality of higher education. Students may also be a driving force behind changes. It is also important to enhance democracy within the institutions.

Concerning the question of how student influence should increase all three groups focus on the formal aspects of governance influence such as a higher number of seats reserved for students at all levels, stronger rights to vote and speak within the bodies concerned and regulated rights to participate in evaluation procedures. All three groups mention the large responsibility of the students and student organizations to use the possibilities for influence and to organize themselves accordingly at the different levels. The students say that they need support from other stakeholders and the legal framework in order to be able to increase their participation in and influence on higher education governance. The national level is mentioned as the weakest level for student influence because of a lack of regulation at that level and sometimes no or weak national student organizations.

Sjur Bergan stresses in is article something that is also visible on the survey itself, that adequate formal provisions for student participation is sometimes not enough. It is said that is not enough to be present, I would add that besides having proper formal provisions it is necessary to "promote" also the participative will to the students and organizations, at the same time that they are consider full partners by other stakeholders.

At the HEIs Policies and regulation on student participation usually exist. Participation at the department level is less regulated and weaker in relation with the faculty and institutional level. It's also at this level that more difficulties exist on finding participative students.

The study shows that rarely more than 30 % of seats in institutional boards are allocated to students. Students usually have voting rights in the governance bodies concerned but in few cases they don't include all issues. In this case the areas that are not covered by the students' right to vote are primarily staff matters and administrative and finance issues (generally these issues are the ones where students have less influence). In half of the replies it is mentioned that law or other regulations require students' evaluation of courses and programmes. Students' influence appears

to be strongest on social and environmental issues and also in pedagogical and educational content issues.

At this point Sjur Bergan defies some of the existing limitations stating that is difficult to see why students should not vote on some issues. If the competence or stake that students have on the issues is the line of argument, than the same reasoning could be applied to the teacher less proficient on budget sciences or even to the doctorate coming from a different field.

Student representatives are usually directly elected, there are some examples where they are nominated but even on these usually they are appointed by the student organisation. The elections are proper regulated in a vast majority of the cases. The age of student representatives is in general between 20 and 27. Participation in students' elections usually varies between 16 and 30%.

Here Sjur Bergan raises the interrogation if these figures are somehow echo of a democratic deficit in society at large. He also mentions that real influence can only be attained with the correct motivation and access to information.

Even though the participation through political student organizations is legal in most countries candidates with this background are a minority in the cases concerned. Nevertheless, political influence on student organisations is an issue still discussed on several questions of the survey.

Could the lack of transparency on information flow be used as a lever of power that could create a student political elite is the provocation left by the current speaker, that I cannot prevent from adding that it could also be the case for "apolitical" student organisations and even for the other stakeholders.

In the majority of cases students have regular contacts with the government and the national rector's conferences or equivalent bodies. Very few times governmental contacts are restricted to certain topics nevertheless there are at least 10 countries where such regular contacts do not exist at all. National parliamentary assemblies are also reachable for a narrow majority of the cases.

Besides the identified formal and informal procedures treated by the survey, other common forms of participation have been singled out like informal consultations and seminars, student representation in temporary working groups or projects of the ministry, informal contacts between the students and the Ministry and the parliament and representation in national councils or committees on higher education and student affairs. However this in not the case on 22 countries covered.

When the levels exist, regular communication between national and institutional levels is the mainstream. In most of the countries information coming from the governance bodies is public; this is not the case in 15 states. It is considered that university administration and the student organizations should take steps to disseminate information

However more information about the participatory rights of students and the means to attain them must be made available by all stakeholders and it's also necessary for

enhancing accountability and information mechanisms on decisions and discussions taken.

The survey identified the necessity for further studies between the provisions for participation and the actual practices at the different levels. Also the role and organisation of student structures, their interaction with other stakeholders and the often low turn out rates in elections need further examination. In fact a study on higher education governance including all the relevant stakeholders is necessary. This could be the way to see the broader picture of inter-stakeholders relations.

I take the liberty here to make a reference on the recently presented draft summary of the "TRENDS III" report that is an opportunity of attaching concrete significance to the conclusion of the prior survey. In the section dedicated to the role of students in the Bologna Process it is mentioned that at 63% of universities in Bologna signatory countries, students have been formally involved in the Bologna process, through participation in the senate or council or at faculty/departmental level. The same trend is valid for the non-signatory countries in SEE. A significantly lower degree of formal participation in the Bologna Process at institutional level can be noted in Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Iceland and the UK.

Half of the students, as represented by their national and European student associations, feel they are playing a very or reasonably active role in the construction of the European Higher Education Area. At institutional and particularly at departmental level, the inclusion of students in the deliberations concerning a qualitative reform of teaching and learning structures, methods and evaluation in the spirit of the Bologna declaration still leaves considerable room for improvement.

Student representatives express the highest hopes concerning the principles of the Bologna reforms and the harshest criticisms concerning its implementation and frequently reductive interpretations. The students' contribution to the deliberations on the Bologna reforms has been particularly strong on issues of the social dimension of Higher Education and the emphasis of HE as a public good, and in connection with discussions of the possible consequences of GATS on Higher Education Institutions. Students have also continuously stressed the values of student-centred learning, flexible learning paths and access, as well as a realistic, i.e. empirically based, estimation of workload in the context of establishing institution-wide credit systems.

4 – Case Studies on Student Involvement

Confirming the diversity of students' participation

During the first two days of this seminar, students, institutions and ministries had the opportunity to present their national practices concerning student participation. This was an effective way to "means test" the previously known results of the survey on student participation.

Formal provisions for students' participation in higher education governance based on national legislation.

As expected, considerable differences exist within the legal framework that supports students' participation. In some of the examples given legislation covers in a small amount of acts the full provision of students' participation at the different levels of governance (examples of Austria and Hungary) or just at the national level (Italy). It can even happen that the national/regional legislation limits or forbids some forms of students' organisation (Germany). On the other side we have organisations that use the existing framework to establish themselves as simple NGO's (Romania and Serbia) and also others that by the increased influence gain legislative space for example on the regulation of national advisory boards (Sweden, Ireland and Finland).

The presentations also demonstrated that the institutional level is generally better provided in terms of legislation than the national, being it by ruling of law or by the internal institutional settings. At the national level the general trend is that formal interaction with the members of the government at different levels exists.

Other provisions for students' participation.

Event when having a strong political influence, students' organisations don't discard the possibility of using other means to obtain their objectives like media and marketing actions, information to students, direct actions, etc.

The creation of networks of cooperation is also common to the majority of the organisations present not only with similar structures representing for example other students but also with labour unions, rectors conferences, etc. These networks can even include government structures.

Good cooperation between the national and institutional level also secures adequate follow up of measures decided at the highest level (as pointed by Finland).

The actual practice of students' participation.

Students' organisations legitimate themselves in different ways. Some have compulsory membership of individual students (Sweden, Finland, Austria) or from their local councils or organisations (Hungary, Czech, Macedonia). Others have voluntary membership of local councils and organisations (Ireland, Serbia, Germany and Romania). There are even cases of voluntary membership of individual students (as is the case with the current member of ESIB from Italy – UDO).

Direct involvement trough a political party organisation is treated very differently by several organisations. They are visible and accepted in Austria and Finland and rejected in countries like Serbia, for example.

Election results are usually below the expectations of student organisations and should be tackled together with the other stakeholders

Differences exist on the "modus operandi" of student organisations which in some cases limit their work to direct student issues while others have a broader view about their role in society.

Within the national organisation a high priority is given to the training of student activists on the national and also the local level, as a way to improve the "performance" of students' participation at all levels (this was mentioned among others by Ireland, Czech, Hungary and Serbia). Whenever it is affordable student organisations equip themselves also with adequate human resources that provide not only organisational but also expert advise to student representatives. In fact the need to access and produce relevant research material was very emphasised, even by the youngest organisations, which are still in a development process.

Expectations and shortcomings

The participants were generally critical of the fact that some levels of decision-making are still not fully available to them and that sometimes the formal involvement is not a guarantee of actual participation as equal partners. Some of these structures still face and compete with non-functioning and less democratic ways of organising students.

The ongoing discussion between students as partners or consumers is clearly on the agenda of the student organisations with growing concerns that the opening of higher education institutions to the market could rapidly transform HEIs into societies or companies.

Finally I would like to stress that all these organisations show that they have played and are indeed playing an important role in the development of more democratic societies. They are schools of citizenship not forgetting their responsibilities in society towards co-operation and solidarity work.

Comments from ESIB and EUA

Stefan Bienefeld, the chairperson of ESIB, considered that no unique model of student representation can be outlined and that students' participation can be organised formally or informally at different levels (Department – Faculty – Institution – National – International). The existence of a legal framework does not always assure correct participation. The correct attitude and the cultural environment is also necessary for assuring strong participation.

It is necessary for students' organisations to promote a shift from a conflict towards cooperation between stakeholders approach. While respecting diversity student organisations should spread best practices and further develop their working structures. The work done at the European level could be used as an example, but is necessary also here to assure a minimal framework that can provide opportunities for dialogue between the different stakeholders.

Finally he expressed concern about the diminishing power of collegial organs against the current trend to introduce managerial structures into HEI. After all the recent

examples of lack of transparency and corruption of big enterprises prove that the model has severe faults

Professor Lucy Smith, Vice president of EUA and former Rector of Oslo University started her intervention by stating that participation of students at all levels will enhance the quality of HEIs. She referred to the different temporal perspectives that professors and students have within HE governance. She recognized that sometimes students' representatives and the students that they represent differ on opinion, but this is possibly because students' representatives tend to have the long turn vision while the individual student is more immediate.

Attention should be given to the low turn out rates and also to the qualifications of the students' representative. The better the student the more influence he/she could achieve, therefore there is the necessity to device ways to transfer knowledge between outgoing and incoming students. This would insure a stable student representation.

Students and students' organisations should place on their agenda solidarity work, they should respect and promote freedom of expression on their own campus and definitively work against the commercialization of education.

5 – Workshop Outcomes and Discussion

Workshop 1
Students: Partners or Consumers?

This workshop focused on the different approaches governments, International Governmental Organisations (CoE, UE, UNESCO, etc.) and Higher Education Institutions could take towards students. On the one hand there is a concept of students as junior partners in the education process. On the other hand, a number of new developments in Higher Education governance and Higher Education financing conceptualise students as consumers and introduce a more market driven approach. These two different concepts are to a certain extent mutually exclusive, or, at least, their compatibility is questionable. However, with the extension of the activities of Higher Education Institutions in the field of Lifelong Learning, there are also some grey areas between the two concepts, which are getting increasingly important. The workshop tried to find answers to the following questions:

Are students to be seen as partners or consumers in Higher Education Institutions?

The workshop found that many aspects of students' participation in higher education reflect a role that is both partnership and consumer based. In reality it may not be possible to reach a situation where a student is only a partner or only a consumer.

Feeling like a partner or just as a consumer depends very much on the relationship between the staff and students of the institution. The massification of higher education presents challenges on practicing the concept of partnership.

Clearly students can be described in many ways: consumers, partners, participants, learners. The important debate is around which of these descriptors is used to define the relationship between the student and their time in higher education.

The workshop accepted that students at times have some characteristics of consumers, but this should not define their role within the higher education community. The workshop agreed that students, teachers and researchers are colleagues with different but equal status within higher education institutions

What does the notion of a student as a partner imply with regards to student participation in governing structures and what are the implications of considering students as consumers?

Having students as partners implies the existence of an interactive relationship based on mutual trust and equal treatment. For students it also implies bigger responsibilities shared with the other stakeholders, the obligation to perceive the long-term perspective and the necessity to deal with information gathering and dissemination and with the transmission of knowledge among the students' body.

Students have good knowledge of their Higher Education "environment" and are interested on being partners. This gives them a possibility to change the organisation from the inside, motivating them and preventing conflicts. It makes Higher Education more democratic and also adds up the societal skills of the student involved. Questions regarding further motivation, time availability, access to information and knowledge loss between transitions were points of concern.

Seeing students just as consumers can reduce their internal participation in decision-making and lower their feedback. It can make them more individualistic and narrow-minded. If from one side it could increase managerial decision making it could also increase the use of legal tools to resolve disputes, this could prove more time and resource consuming than the partnership approach.

There is a role for student organisations and other participatory structures in both approaches to students' involvement. In a partner approach democratic structures such as students' unions and programme/department/faculty representative structures can be used to facilitate governance. It can also help to shorten distances in between the academic community. While one academic may not be able to actively engage in a deep partnership based relationship with every student it is possible to collect and communicate students' opinions through these organisations. From a consumer perspective student structures could become consumer protection organisations, outside the higher education institutions working with the legal instruments available to influence decision-making and problem solving.

It was clear for the participants that in a partnership based approach it should be recognised that this creates both rights and responsibilities for all stakeholders.

Can students be considered consumers of a service? In what way are students consuming services offered by the university and what impact do they have on the process of production of these (consumer protection)? How do these concepts

apply to adult learners or people participating in a lifelong learning arrangement besides work who are upgrading their professional capacity?

Higher education is more than just a product or service because it has an important role in the practical development of society. The role of the consumer is very individually focused on a personal benefit whereas higher education as an entity has wider benefits to society and the economy as a whole. The student often contributes to the collective knowledge and innovation as a whole through the development of new thinking such as the writing of a thesis.

If higher education is to be regarded as a consumable product or service this opens up the possibility of the sector being market driven and therefore the provision of courses and qualifications may become demand driven and may restrict free choice. Seeing Education as a service could influence negatively quality and demand standards.

The workshop didn't conclude on the two last items of this question.

<u>Workshop 2</u>
<u>Impact of Internationalisation on student participation</u>

Internationalisation of Higher Education implies an increasing number of international students in many Higher Education Institutions throughout Europe as well as activities of Higher Education Institutions abroad in Trans-national Education (TNE) arrangements. The second workshop discussed the impact of those trends on students' participation. The following questions were addressed:

How can a participation of international students in structure of Higher Education governance and student unions be ensured?

International Students should have access to information about their general and participatory rights; the Erasmus Student Charta was seen as a good practice in this case with space for improvements. Local and national student organisations should be "aware" of international students, creating mechanisms for communication and involving them on their regular decision making processes. The creation of specific representation bodies for international students was seen apprehensively in the sense that this could take them apart of the normal governance processes and diminishing their full academic and cultural integration. Student organisations should be pro-active and visionary in the representation of international students because sometimes problems have to be solved before the student actually enrols in the institution.

It was noted that sometimes bureaucratic and legal problems (residency laws, work permits) take away precious time for studies and participation

Internationalisation poses new challenges for traditional representation. Mobile student involvement in education governance is not yet a practice with some examples of students participating in special bodies that still lack a regulatory framework. They should be more motivated to participate in student bodies. Students involved in Vertical and Horizontal mobility have some different needs. Language should not be an obstacle to full participation. Every student should have the same possibilities concerning voting and running for office.

How can the rights of students in trans-national programmes be guaranteed? What do TNE arrangements have as a consequence for the student unions of the home country?

Representation structures should be available in the host country. Student representatives at the home institution or country could make sure that the same criteria on participation applies abroad and thus ensuring participation. They should also cooperate with existing organisations in the host countries or other stakeholders when they don't exist.

It is not always possible to regulate students' participation in TNE because of legal limitations in private law; therefore a way to assure it could be making it part of accreditation mechanisms. Students' participation could become part of UNESCO/CoE Code of good practice. There should be student participation in quality assurance mechanisms in TNE. There should not be TNE where students' participation cannot be guaranteed.

What is the responsibility of governments and Higher Education Institutions to strengthen the participation of international students in Higher Education Institution governing structures?

They should provide better study, social and legal conditions, so that international students can use their right regarding representation and participation. They should prevent the abuse of marketing techniques for attracting students with false or misleading information

How can an appropriate representation of students in international governmental organisations be ensured?

Students' participation and representation should be a prerequisite at all levels and in all issues concerning higher education. Student Organisations at this level should be representative and accountable. Decisions at the European Level should include European level organisations. The participation of students should be among the participation of other stakeholders in Higher Education.

What consequences does global trade in education services have on the participation of students in governance?

Trade in education by lack or inadequate regulation can prevent students' participation even in countries were that is a common practice.

Workshop 3
In which issues of HE governance should students be involved and how can they motivated to participate

Students and student unions should have legally guaranteed rights for participation in the governance of Higher Education Institutions. The question remains disputed however in which areas of Higher Education governance students should be involved and how students can be motivated to participate in structures of governance of Higher Education. The workshop addressed the following questions:

Which are the areas of Higher Education governance in which student unions should be involved?

Students' participation can have three levels of involvement: advising, monitoring and decision-making. Students usually are involved in governance for four complementary reasons: Advocating the students' interests, participating in the development of the institution, learning democratic citizenship and personal development.

There was a consensus that students should be necessarily involved in decision-making. The essence of this is that democracy does not necessarily have expertise as a prerequisite. It is not possible to distinguish clearly between student issues and academic issues so therefore students should be involved in all areas of decision making at all levels of the institution, faculty/department and national level. Participating means the right to vote on all matters and sometimes stronger rights.

How can student participation in these structures be organised? Are laws necessary or can other means be devised?

Legal provisions should exist ensuring that students have to be involved in all decision making organs, however and respecting institutional autonomy and diversity they shouldn't have too many specifications. A normative framework for students' participation in governance with regards to specific issues, i.e. budgeting, appointment of staff, etc could be established.

How can an increasing number of students be motivated to participate in Higher Education governance? Should participation in such structures be officially recognised (e.g. through official papers issued by the Higher Education Institutions or ECTS points for extracurricular activities)?

The capacity for students to participate in decision making could be enhanced more effectively by giving student unions means and information to educate the students to participate and funding expertise input (research within student unions). Leadership trainings organised by students and HEIs together to promote a better understanding of topics under discussion is also a good solution, but this should be free of policies as such but deal with technical matters, this should generally also be done for other groups in HEIs.

The use of mechanisms of accreditation of prior learning and the inclusion of relevant information in the Diploma Supplement could be used to recognise students' involvement. The potential awarding of ECTS credits was seen as less relevant that the first two suggestions.

Students who participate in decision-making shouldn't be economically disadvantaged. Therefore there is a need to extend grants for this period or prolong study and exam periods. There was a consensus that students in decision making should not have to privately pay extra costs of their involvement.

How can Higher Education Institutions and governments stimulate participation of students and which structures can motivate more students to participate in those?

There was a general consensus on the necessity to increase voter turnout and participation, this could be achieved by active promotion activity of student unions but also by the involvement of the HEIs and governments on the motivation to participate and vote.

HEIs are sites of citizenship, where students can experience the values of democracy and develop into responsible citizens. Students' Participation is also a good opportunity for personal growth. Student's participation should be promoted as a valuable extra qualification by governing authorities (HEIs, Ministries) towards employers.

Participation has to be made more relevant but rights come with responsibilities. There must exist information feedback, increased transparency and accountability of student representatives.

Workshop 4
The support of the international community for students' participation

This workshop focussed on the participation of students in international processes of Higher Education governance. Several IGOs such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the EU Commission as well as Higher Education NGOs such as the EUA have in recent years been establishing structures to facilitate exchange with student organisations and increase their input into international processes. However, other institutions are largely closed for student organisations and their participation and input. How can IGOs with their long-term processes make it easier for student organisations, which have a quick turnover of people, to get involved in international processes on Higher Education. The following questions were addressed:

1. How can IGOs devise structural involvement of student organisations into their processes?

Students' participation should not depend on the "good will" of the different stakeholders. Students should be included from the beginning. Clear and transparent procedures are necessary, on all levels and on all relevant issues. Information on the topic and procedures should be easily accessible and understandable. The formalisation of procedures is necessary since that ensures students' participation.

2. Which good practices are existing?
The system of working parties (CoE) and collective consultation (UNESCO) are seen as good examples. The Council of Europe assures students' participation on its internal procedures and also promotes the idea of students' participation when helping countries to join and participate in the Bologna Process. UNESCO is including NGOs (students' organisations) into the discussions from the very beginning and in preparation of the meetings. They even grant resources for interregional student meetings.

The workshop also discussed the role of some other stakeholders and was of the opinion that follow-up structures of the bologna process have to secure the participation of students at seminars and meetings between the conferences. It was also said that the European Commission could have more clear and transparent consultation procedure, avoiding "a posteriori" consultation of NGO's, defining better guidelines for the consultation processes and involving at all levels and sectors. The World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and OECD were classified has hard to reach players but with an increasing important role due to GATS and other commodification processes. On the other hand it was suggested, for example that UNESCO could have an important role in Quality Assurance under GATS.

3. What kind of support is needed from IGOs to empower students to effectively participate in their processes?
The question refers more to the financial and organisational issues. There should be support for the student presence at all meetings and seminars and equal treatment of students regarding other stakeholders. The participation in the bologna process was seen has a bad example because sometimes no support for students' participation is given and also there are preferential treatments of some stakeholders.

4. How can national governments make it easier for students to get involved into international processes on HE?
Participation at the international level must not exclude participation on the other levels; these should exist at the same time. There should be national support for international activities and also international support for national activities

6 – Seminar conclusions

The following paragraphs try to enhance the strong points raised during the seminar and constitute part of the message to be delivered towards the Bologna Follow-up Group.

1 - Further involvement of students is needed at all levels of decision making, this involvement should not only be legally permitted but effectively encouraged by providing the necessary means for active participation both in the formal and informal approaches.

2 - This encouragement could include mechanisms of recognition and certification of the experience and of the competences and skills acquired by being a student representative. It should also require effective involvement of other stakeholders in the motivation for students to become students' representatives and even for simply participate in elections and on the decision making process

3 - Further involvement brings further responsibilities and demands. Mechanisms of assuring accountability, transparency and the flow on information to other students should be prioritized.

4 - An ethical obligation of handing over the knowledge acquired while a student representative should exist independently of who is going to be the next legitimate student representative.

5 - Usually the higher the level of representation the higher the demand level also is. Students' Organizations should be supported on obtaining the financial, logistical and human resources necessary for creating a situation of equality on participation. Informed and motivated students are many times the driving force behind beneficial reforms instead of being the grain of sand in the clockwork.

6 - Definitely universities that assure students' participation and students' organisations that organise this participation must be seen as schools of citizenship and agents of development of society not only at the local level but also within an international responsibility of solidarity and co-operation. With an effective work on this level it will be the society that will emulate the Higher Educations Institutions environment and not the other way around. Having this in mind students cannot be considered simply consumers or clients.

Prepared by Paulo Fontes BPC-ESIB, Seminar Rapporteur.
Final Version, Aveiro, August 2003.

Summary & Conclusions

Bologna Follow-Up Seminar
"Students' Participation in Governance in Higher Education"
Oslo, Norway – 12/14 of June 2003

1 – Summary

In the Prague Ministerial Summit student involvement was singled out as one of the important topics for the future discussions within the Bologna Process and the call for a follow-up seminar on the topic was eagerly taken by the Norwegian Ministry. This is the reason why more than 100 representatives from the Ministries, institutions, European organisations and students' organisations gathered between the 12th and the 14th of June 2003 in Oslo in a seminar hosted by the Norwegian Royal Ministry for Education and Research and where ESIB, the Norwegian national unions of students (NSU and STL) and the Council of Europe were valuable co-organisers.

The seminar main theme was the role of students' participation in both national and international processes of governance in higher education. There was a focus, from various perspectives on how legislation may include and regulate student's participation in governance of higher education institutions and on the students' participation in the academic life. The Seminar consisted in a series of panel interventions, case studies presentations and 4 workshops.

A survey about students' participation was carried and later on used as the fundamental background information for the success of this seminar. The report was commissioned from the Council of Europe by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The survey focused on the issue of students' participation in the *governance* of higher education. The survey shows that there is a wide and positive attitude towards increased student influence in higher education governance.

During the first two days of this seminar, students, institutions and ministries had the opportunity to present their national practices concerning student participation. This was an effective way to means test the previously known results of the survey on students' participation.

The participants were generally critical of the fact that some levels of decision making are still not fully available to them and that sometimes the formal involvement is not a guarantee of actual participation as equal partners.

The workshops discussed the role of students being partners or Consumers; the impact of internationalisation on students' participation, the degree of involvement of students in Higher Education governance and how can they be motivated to participation and also the support of the international community for student participation

2 – Seminar conclusions

1 - Further involvement of students is needed at all levels of decision making, this involvement should not only be legally permitted but effectively encouraged by providing the means necessary for active participation both in the formal and informal approaches.

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6 - Definitely universities that assure student participation and student organisations that organise this participation must be seen as schools of citizenship and agents of development of society not only at the local level but also within an international responsibility of solidarity and co-operation.   With an effective work on this level it will be society that will emulate the Higher Educations Institutions environment and not the other way around. Having this in mind students cannot be considered simply consumers or clients.

Prepared by Paulo Fontes BPC-ESIB, Seminar Rapporteur.
Final Version, Athens, June 2003.