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# THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION BETWEEN THE LISBON STRATEGY AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

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## INTRODUCTION

Changes of the last 60 years in Europe and in the whole world have affected education both in theory and in practice. One of the most important changes was initiated by the Bologna Declaration. This running process presented and is still posing many challenges for higher education at the level of the national education systems. Another important element of the reform process of higher education area is the Lisbon Strategy, but this regards only the member states of the EU. The Implementation of the European Dimension in higher education is an objective of the Bologna Process, but how can/should one implement it following the concepts/policies in these two contexts? And first, what is the meaning of the phrase European dimension of education, and especially of higher education? What should be implemented?

I suggest recognising different contexts—a global one (outside of the EC/EU) within the context of the Bologna Process, and the EC/EU context within the Lisbon Strategy—to try and outline the parameters of a debate about the definition of this concept.

### **A global context—What does the European dimension of education mean within the context of educational policy co-operation outside of the EU?**

After the Second World War many Europeans from different geographical points of the continent pronounced their wish to act against the possible repetition of a catastrophe like this. The result of this “hard lesson of history” was the foundation of many international organisations, whose common point was the trauma caused by the War, which formed objectives like economical rehabilitation, peace-keeping and the development of an education for democracy and for peace. Included among

such organisations are the UNESCO, the OECD, and the Council of Europe, whose educational profiles I would like to briefly present.

UNESCO<sup>1</sup> functions today as a laboratory of ideas and a standard-setter that forges universal agreements on emerging ethical issues, and helps its 192 Member States and six Associate Members to build their human and institutional capacities in various fields.

The Organisation supports governments and institutions worldwide in building capacity and formulating educational policies and strategies. The activities of UNESCO-CEPES<sup>2</sup> are focused foremost on higher education in Central and Eastern Europe. Since September 2003, UNESCO-CEPES has been a consultative member of a Follow-up Group of the Bologna Process (BFUG), which is tasked with the implementation of the Bologna Process goals.

The mission of OECD<sup>3</sup> is to help its member countries to achieve sustainable economic growth and employment and to raise the standard of living in member countries while maintaining financial stability—all this in order to contribute to the development of the world economy. Its Directorate for Education helps member countries achieve high-quality learning for contributions to personal development, sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. It focuses on how to evaluate and improve outcomes of education; to promote quality teaching and to build social cohesion through education. It also works on the adjustment needed by tertiary education in a global economy as well as on the future of education and strategies for promoting lifelong learning.

Inside the *Council of Europe*<sup>4</sup>, *Education*, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport are also coordinated by the department *Education for Europe*, which has the mission of

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, which was founded on 16 November 1945 with the goal “to build peace in the minds of men” through means like Education, Social and Natural Science, Culture and Communication. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=3328&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.htm](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3328&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.htm), 29.09.2007.

<sup>2</sup> European Centre for Higher Education/Centre Européen pour l’Enseignement Supérieur was established in September 1972 with a view to promoting co-operation in higher education among Member States of the Europe Region (the countries of Europe, North America, and Israel). At present, the Director of UNESCO-CEPES is the Representative of UNESCO in Romania.

<sup>3</sup> The forerunner of the OECD was the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which was formed in 1947 to administer American and Canadian aid under the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. The OECD took over from the OEEC in 1961. [www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en\\_36734052\\_36734103\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_36734052_36734103_1_1_1_1_1,00.html), 29.09.2007.

<sup>4</sup> The Council of Europe was founded in 1949, to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. [http://www.coe.int/T/e/Com/about\\_coe/](http://www.coe.int/T/e/Com/about_coe/), 29.09.2007.

*“helping to incorporate the principles of human rights, democracy, tolerance and mutual respect, the rule of law and peaceful resolution of conflicts into the daily practice of teaching and learning”*<sup>5</sup>... To name only a few programmes and trainings run by this department, they include Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights, Intercultural Education, Language Policy, Partnerships for Educational Renewal, and the Training Programme for Education Professionals.

Regarding the educational profiles of the above-mentioned international organisations, it can be concluded that the European dimension of education is defined through the activities and programmes of these organisations, meaning universal agreements on emerging ethical issues, international collaborations to sustain economic growth and social cohesion through promotion of quality teaching, education for democratic citizenship and human rights, intercultural education, promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning.

This superficial contour of the European dimension of education is important in order to see its common elements with the European dimension of higher education as defined in the context of the Bologna process.

### **What is meant by the European Dimension of Higher Education?—A definition in the actual context of the Bologna Process**

The European Dimension of education can be defined in the context of the Bologna Process. At the outset one is confronted by one of the aims of the Bologna Declaration: “Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, interinstitutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research” (Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Bologna, 1999: 4)

By the next meeting in *Prague 2001* the Ministers “called 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 degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree.” (Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague, 2001: 2)

<sup>5</sup> [www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural%5FCo%2Doperation/education/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural%5FCo%2Doperation/education/)

Two years later at the meeting *in Berlin* the Ministers reported that “initiatives have been taken by Higher Education Institutions in various European countries to pool their academic resources and cultural traditions in order to promote the development of integrated study programmes and joint degrees at first, secondary at tertiary level. Moreover, they stressed the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes as well as proper provision for *linguistic diversity and language learning, so that students may achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability.*”(Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin, 2003:6)

In the *Bergen Communiqué* (The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals), the promotion of the European dimension does not appear separately like an independent point in the paper, but the Ministers stress only the importance of mobility of students and staff, whose realisation will be facilitated and supported by them. “We reconfirm our commitment to facilitate the portability of grants and loans where appropriate through joint action... We shall intensify our efforts to lift obstacles to mobility by facilitating the delivery of visa and work permits and by encouraging participation in mobility programmes.”(Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 2005: 4)

At this year’s meeting, in the London Communiqué, the mobility of staff, students and graduates remains a core element of the process, “creating opportunities *for personal growth, developing international co-operation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.*” (Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, London, 2007: 2)

Summing up the elements of the above communiqués, the European Dimension of Higher Education can be defined by its goals, which are the following:

- Development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with a “*European*” *content, orientation or organisation,*
- development of the international co-operation between individuals and institutions and the joint degree recognition,
- development of the mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research,
- promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning,

- The achievement of full potential for *European identity, citizenship and employability of students, with mobility creating opportunities for their personal growth.*

We can conclude that the core goal of the European Dimension is the development of mobility, seeing that this can “give substance” to the European dimension, and that the realisation of the implementation of European Dimension of Education will happen at an institutional and an individual level. Regarding the implementation reports we have to mention that at this time the implementation of the European dimension is focused primarily on the goals that can be realised at the institutional level. The goals regarding European identity, citizenship and personal growth do not have enough “substance” to be implementable. They touch the individual level: the European identity can form on the stratification of a more local personal identities of individuals; the notion of citizenship (I think what is meant here is active citizenship) presupposes a European “state”, knowledge about this “state”, an understanding of democracy and of the importance of citizens in this form of government and of the form of life in a Deweyan<sup>6</sup> sense, and a personal intention to act. In the case of the non-EU member states it raises the question of what kind of European citizenship they need. What do they understand by “European citizenship” in the context of the Bologna Process?

Concerning the opportunities for the personal growth of students created by mobility, it is difficult to define exactly what it means and to find an adequate method to check the realisation of this goal. The development at all levels of modules, courses and curricula with “European” content, orientation or organisation can support the formation of an European identity and citizenship, of course only in the frame of institutional education, which has its limits. But what shall constitute this European content or orientation? Should it be oriented on common values or should it be on information and knowledge about the structures and function mode of the European Union? (This second option is more available for the EU member states).

Education for democracy and intercultural education (practiced in the form of different programmes of the Council of Europe) can help to find “European content” and its implementation methods, especially at the “individual level”.

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<sup>6</sup> John Dewey in his “The ethic of Democracy” makes the difference between democracy understood as a simple technique of the periodical election of leaders, and democracy as a “form of life”, which is present in all the units of society. It begins in the family and continues in increasingly larger contexts of society.

**The educational policy-context of the EC/EU—The European dimension of Higher Education between the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy**

The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental process which began formally with the signing of the Bologna Declaration on 19 June, 1999 by the ministers in charge of higher education from 29 European countries outside the political framework of the European Union. Today, the Process unites 46 countries, both members and non-members of the European Union, all party to the European Cultural Convention<sup>7</sup>, that co-operate in a flexible way, involving also international organisations and European associations representing higher education institutions, students, staff and employers. Regarding the history of the development of the co-operation in the higher education area for the last 40 years, it is important to mention that events like the foundation of the *European Universities Committee* and its activities culminating in conventions on equivalence like the *European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas* leading to Admission to Universities (1953); the *European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study* (1956) and the *European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications* (1959), the foundation of the *Council for Cultural Co-operation* (1962) and its aim to promote student and teacher mobility (1974-77) (*Council of Europe: Forty years of European Cultural Co-operation*) give the background for the Bologna Process of today.

The European Commission, representing the European Union, became an active participant of the Process only in 2001, at the Prague Summit on Higher Education on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2001. Here it was decided that the hosts of the evaluating summits of the Process will be the countries of the presidencies of the European Union, and they will manoeuvre the monitoring professional corpus.

One argument for the later participation of the European Union in the Bologna Process is the development of its own strategy in politics of education at the level of Higher Education, which is the Lisbon Strategy. The two processes do not weaken but fortify each other; their aims are more complementary than concurrent. (Halász, 2007: 3)

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<sup>7</sup> Founded after the Second World War, the European Cultural Convention is considered the earliest instrument on multilateral and European cultural matters. Its drafting in 1952 by the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee of Cultural Experts, was responsible for the conduct of multilateral cultural projects, and was approved and signed in September 1954 by the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly.

The objectives of the Convention are: 1. to support to further understanding of one another among the peoples of Europe and mutual appreciation of their diverse cultural traits, particularly by facilitating the movement of persons and cultural objects. 2. to aim to encourage national contributions to the common cultural heritage of Europe. 3. to seek to promote cultural activities of European interest so as to preserve European culture. See more 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the European Cultural Convention, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/culturalconvention/Origines\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/culturalconvention/Origines_en.asp), 29.09.2007.

To better understand the importance of these two processes and their role in the development of the concept of European Dimension it is necessary to briefly present *the development of the educational policies of the EC and European Union*.

The development of the educational policies of the EC since the 1960s has had a programme-oriented, distributive character. A clear presentation of this development is given by Aristotelis Zmas, who presents it in its chronological phases (Zmas, 2002).

The first period, between 1957 and 1967, was a period of preparation of the common education law, and began degree recognition (in the 6 countries) for medical, dental, pharmaceutical and architectural studies.

The second period began with the Conference at the Hague in 1969 (at which the 6 countries participated) when they recognised that education could have an important role in European Integration. 1976 marked the start of the “Actions program for co-operation in the education area” with goals like the deepening of common actions in the area of Higher Education, the perfection of the education of foreign languages, the intensification of reciprocal information and the co-operation of the national educational systems. In 1975 the *Cedefop* (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) was established to help, promote and develop vocational education and training in the EC (European Community) and presently in the European Union (EU). And four years later, in 1980, the European Commission and Member States established Eurydice (the information network on education in Europe) to boost co-operation by improving understanding of systems and policies. Since 1995 *Eurydice* has also been an integral part of Socrates, the Community action programme in education.

The third period had the motto “The Europe of citizens”, and focused on the developing of different programmes to bring the United Europe into the everyday life of its citizens. A few of these programmes are Comett, Erasmus/Socrates, Petra, Lingua, Tempus, and Youth for Europe, etc.

The fourth period began with the Maastricht treaty in 1992, in which Articles 126, 127 and 128 define education, vocational training and youth, as well as the culture of the new European Union. It defines educational policy as something with limited reach, because education and culture are managed on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, meaning that the member states take responsibility for decisions about the content of education and the forming of the educational systems, and manage the multiplicity of cultures and languages (Zmas, 2002: 81-90).

A consideration of this short presentation of the development of European educational policies allows us to conclude that education from the beginning was considered as a part of economical and employment policies and that harmonisation (if we can speak about such a thing) has primarily been concerned with vocational training, general education and the diploma agreement in certain sciences. Another important point is that parallel with the economical character a “European dimension” has developed as well. Here the programmes of the “Europe of citizens” period come to mind, which have the aim to form, to make people aware in the public sphere of a common European background of everyday life which can sustain a forming European identity. Today this political slogan gives the name to a larger programme, the “Europe for citizens” 2007-2013<sup>8</sup>, which provides the Union with instruments to promote active European citizenship. It responds to the need to improve citizen’s participation in the construction of Europe and it focuses on the European political foundations, civil society organisations, town twinning, etc.

As a continuation of this chronology we can interpret the Lisbon Strategy as a fifth period of the development of European educational policies, which brings important changes with it. In 2000 at the summit in Lisbon educational policy was considered not only a part of employment policy as it had done earlier, but even more common political aims for Higher Education were decided upon as well and a bigger budget was allocated for this.

The core document of the strategy is the Communication of the Commission *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy*, which has its roots in the consultation of stakeholders launched by the Commission’s 2003 Communication *The role of the Universities in the Europe of knowledge*. According to the communication, “Europe must strengthen the three poles of its knowledge triangle: education, research, innovation. Universities are essential in all three. Investing more and better in the modernisation and quality of universities is a direct investment in the future of Europe and Europeans” (Communication from the Commission, 2005: 2). The core modernisation agenda contains three elements: *attractiveness, governance and funding*. Attractiveness and its subordinate aims like differentiation of quality and excellence, better communication between universities

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<sup>8</sup> Its implementation is managed by the Citizenship team of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). EACEA operates under supervision from its two parent Directorates-General: DG Education and Culture (EAC) and DG Information Society and Media (INFOS). <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index.htm>, 29.09.2007.

and society concerning the “value of what they produce”, etc. is the closest to the aims of the Bologna Process; the other two aims are not common with the Bologna Process (Halász, 2007:6).

The implementation method is the open method of coordination (OMC)<sup>9</sup>, which rests on soft law mechanisms such as guidelines and indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practice, and its instruments are policy coordination, structural funds and educational programmes. The first two instruments can be used only by the member states of the EU, which brings with it a differentiation in the implementation of the Bologna Process among the implementing states. With the Lisbon Strategy, the EU member states have more chances so that the reforms within the Bologna Process to improve their Higher Education Systems so that in turn those would support economic competitiveness and society. In this reform process the EU member states must think about the implementation of both dimensions (Bologna and Lisbon). Halász asks how to implement the aims of the Lisbon Strategy and the concerned policies of the EU in the reform process of higher education that is developed within the framework of the Bologna process.

In the case of the implementation of the European Dimension—especially regarding those aims, whose implementation/realisation is at the individual level—the question can be inverted: how can we implement the sub-aims of promoting the European dimension of higher education of the Bologna Process within the framework of the educational policies of the EU, and may this take place within the Lisbon Strategy? Does the EU really need the European dimension of higher education in order to form a European identity?

What are the normative values that stay on the basis of a common identity of Europe? We can talk about differentiation of promoted values as conceived by the EU member states and non-EU member states (regarding the countries which implement the Lisbon strategy too) or about more general concepts (that can be accepted from the non-EU member states too).

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<sup>9</sup> OMC is a relatively new and intergovernmental means of governance in the European Union, based on the voluntary cooperation of its member states. This means that there are no official sanctions for laggards. The method's effectiveness relies on a form of peer pressure and naming and shaming, as no member state wants to be seen as the worst in a given policy area, and involves so-called “soft law” measures which are binding on the Member States in varying degrees but which never take the form of directives, regulations or decisions. Thus, in the context of the Lisbon strategy, the OMC requires the Member States to draw up national reform plans and to forward them to the Commission. [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open\\_method\\_coordination\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm), 29.09.2007.

The EU supports the European identity mobility programmes at different levels of education, higher education included, and other programmes that are focused on youth organisations, civil society organisation and political foundations. It is another question whether the mobility programmes by themselves can lead to the realisation of these goals.

If we search for the values that stand on the basis of a common European identity of a Higher Education Area, they are to be found in the university itself, as the values promoted by it. On September 18<sup>th</sup> 1988 eighty universities from all over the world signed a document, whose aims were to celebrate the deepest values of University traditions and to encourage strong bonds among European Universities. This document was the *Magna Charta Universitatum*. Underlining the vocation and the role of the university for the future, the document contains fundamental principles concerning the autonomy of the university, the inseparable bond of research and education and its freedom, and considers it “the trustee of the European humanist tradition”, whose “constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other” (*Magna Charta Universitatum*, 1988: 1).

This most traditional, Humboldtian view on the mission of the university is frequently criticised by the promoters of the new university models like entrepreneurial, research universities in the debate about what is/should be the mission of the university in its reform process. The Lisbon strategy promotes the establishing of a new relationship of the University with the society, which brings with it changes in many aspects for the university.

The university must meet the needs of the world around it, but from the point of view of the clarification of the concept of a European Dimension of higher education is important to keep the European humanistic tradition too, because in this tradition the development of individuality is rooted, a development that can support the forming of a European identity.

To clarify the concept of the European Dimension of higher education and to find the European content, orientation of modules, courses and curricula at all levels of education—what shall be implemented—we need to debate upon it, and this is a challenge for the future.

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