

UNESCO

EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
(UNESCO-CEPES)

**Higher
Education
in Europe**

In this issue:

**The External Dimension of the Bologna Process: Higher
Education in South East Europe and the European Higher
Education Area in a Global World**

Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, 2003

Higher Education in Europe

Volume XXVIII Number 3 2003

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From the Editors

The main theme of this issue of *Higher Education in Europe* was inspired by a major international conference that was held at UNESCO-CEPES, in Bucharest, from 6 to 8 March 2003. Its topic was “The External Dimension of the Bologna Process: South-East European Higher Education and the European Higher Education Area in a Global World”. The Conference itself, which was jointly organized by UNESCO-CEPES and the European University Association (EUA), had been inspired as part of an ongoing UNESCO-CEPES-managed and European Union-funded programme, the “Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro”. The idea of the Conference was to monitor the extent to which selected countries and universities of South East Europe, particularly the members of the network cited above, are adapting to the requirements of the Bologna Process and how well the Bologna Process copes with globalization.

The task of the Conference was to address the following four major topics and to explore them in a detailed way on the basis of the papers prepared for the meeting:

- (i) the reform and development of South East European systems and institutions of higher education from the perspective of their integration into the Bologna Process;
- (ii) challenges, trends, and consequences of certain global developments on academic values and on the organization of academic work;
- (iii) “Higher education as a public good”, relating it to the GATS debate and trying to map out alternative means and forms of defining/providing higher education as a public good;
- (iv) analysis of three regulatory mechanisms of the European Higher Education Area: quality assurance, accreditation, and recognition.

We are publishing six long articles, five of them derived from major presentations, that underpinned the sessions of the Conference, and eight shorter pieces derived from the discussions of specific major presentations. The articles, although reflecting the Conference, developed their own set of leitmotifs: (i) the external dimension of the Bologna Process; (ii) globalization; (iii) the quality assurance agenda; and (iv) the social dimension of higher education.

The first three articles, which deal with the external dimension of the Bologna Process, are by distinguished South East European scholars. They discuss aspects of the reforms needed and the successes achieved by their countries in meeting the requirements of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area.

The first article, by Pavel Zgaga of Slovenia, who serves as Rapporteur of the Bologna Follow Up Group, presents the point of view of a small country, a former component of Yugoslavia, wishing to be fully European while maintaining its individuality. Thus the author stresses the built-in safeguards of the Bologna Process for diversity and cultural protection for a small country.

The following author, Mircea Miclea, General Chancellor of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, takes a look that is both broad and specific at a set of reforms which specific universities in South East Europe have adopted or are in the process of adopting. The universities, nine in all, were each the subject of a standardized case study that

examined such questions as adoption of a common framework of readable and comparable degrees and diploma supplements, adoption of ECTS, introduction of quality assurance mechanisms, and intensity and type of student mobility. The case study universities are progressing at different speeds but are all committed to Bologna Process-type reforms.

A broader definition of what constitutes South East Europe is provided by Acad. Mircea Malitza, a Member of the Romanian Academy, who analyzes the response and the adaptation to the Bologna Process of the Black Sea countries, specifically those that are members of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation—BSEC, which includes Armenia and Azerbaijan. He analyzes their progress in achieving the goals set in the context of the Bologna Process in much the same terms as Mircea Miclea does in regard to his case study universities.

The main themes of the second leitmotiv-globalization and its challenge to the European Higher Education Area in the making and to traditional academic values and the organization of academic work—are introduced by Peter Scott, Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University in the United Kingdom. For him, globalization is indeed very challenging to traditional academic values and to academic work in very many ways. He gives a short *aperçu* of contemporary globalization, explaining why it “feels” different from the older, more traditional forms of globalization, *i.e.*, the expansion of Euro-American culture, stressing the role of the new information technologies and the globalized, neo-liberal world economy. Thus, higher education becomes part of a larger “knowledge industry”, disciplinary approaches to problems break down in favour of so-called Mode 2 inquiry, and the different functions of university teaching and research are decoupled. At the same time, countries, like those of Central and Eastern Europe, will be more likely to defend traditional academic values having only recently recovered them following fifty years of totalitarianism. Still, globalization is challenging higher education more than it has ever been challenged in the past and at every level and in terms of every function.

The three articles that follow respond to Scott’s analysis.

First, Germana Verri of the Ministry for Education, University, and Research of Italy attempts to refute any idea that globalization is bound to erode traditional academic values, even though it will try to do so. Rather, societies and universities must confront and tame globalization by stressing general education that has time value, unlike the case of over-specialization. They must nurture basic research, the strength of any country, impose strict quality control measures of transnational education, and take measures to guarantee that higher education will remain a public good.

Marenglen Spiro, former Rector of the University of Tirana of Albania, argues that the universities of South East Europe must first reform themselves in the direction of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area before they can profit in any way from globalization. In particular, higher education institutions must make sure that their commitment to and practice of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are secure and practiced responsibly. Certainly, academic freedom is not professorial freedom from management.

Finally, Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić of UNESCO cites a positive aspect of globalization, namely, as Peter Scott observed, the burgeoning of the information technologies that she feels can provide a remedy to the brain drain phenomenon in South East Europe. They will enable out-migrated intellectuals-members of diasporas-to keep in touch with their home countries, perhaps to teach virtual courses. She also cites examples of how certain characteristics and achievements of the Bologna process, the Bologna Declaration itself, ECTS, and the Diploma Supplement are becoming household words in a country such as Serbia.

The third leitmotiv, the quality assurance agenda, explores the links between the Bologna Process and quality assurance, accreditation, and recognition-regulatory mechanisms in the European Higher Education Area. The lead article, by Jürgen Kohler of the University of Greifswald in Germany, is a detailed and intricate discussion of the role and methods of application of quality assurance, accreditation, and academic recognition in the European Higher Education area and as integral parts of the Bologna Process. These procedures have evolved and are evolving along with, and will be increasingly confronted by, challenges by entrepreneurial universities and GATS as applied to higher education. Quality, of course, is difficult to define, but it must be defined in ways that will enable it to be recognized and measured.

The two authors who follow, Fuada Stanković and Zoran Milenković, are both rectors of Serbian universities—Novi Sad and Niš—respectively. Both institutions are instituting quality assurance procedures; however, Stanković points out that quality at macro level has always been good at Yugoslav universities, as proven by the success of Yugoslav graduates in American and Western European postgraduate programmes. Both rectors, however, consider that modern institutional quality assurance systems are a must for their respective universities.

The final leitmotiv, the social dimension of higher education, particularly the question of whether or not higher education is a public good and all that ensues from one answer to that question or another, is introduced by Klaus Hüfner of Germany, Chairman of the UNESCO-CEPES Advisory Board, and discussed by Srbijanka Turajlić, Deputy Minister of Education of Serbia, Dionyssi Kladis, Secretary of Higher Education in the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs of Greece, and Per Nyborg, Chairman of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR) of the Council of Europe.

Hüfner examines the question of whether or not higher education is a public or a private good from three perspectives: the economic perspective, the legal perspective, and the normative/political perspective. He concludes that because the three perspectives overlap, higher education is a mixed good. Its efficiency, he argues, would be improved if it were somewhat marketized. *i.e.*, if higher education institutions charged tuition fees and competed among themselves for students.

Turajlić, who follows, argues strongly that proposals of the sort that consider that higher education should be fully supported by the public purse, that it is a human right, are meaningless if the country in question cannot afford to offer higher education as a public good free of tuition charges to all qualified persons. Her conclusion is that higher education cannot improve in a poor country until the general economic situation improves. Thus, in fact, she views higher education as a *de facto* mixed good.

Kladis, reflecting on the Bologna Follow Up seminar that took place in Athens in February 2003 and on the discussion that emerged from the Prague Communiqué of May 2001, argues strongly that higher education is a public good, that access to it must be broadened, and that there should be no tuition fees. Higher education, he says, is a value in itself.

Per Nyborg expresses similar views. For him, the public authorities must have exclusive responsibility for laying down the framework of higher education as well as for quality assurance. Public responsibility must remain a pillar of European higher education policies when facing the global marketplace.

We have placed two articles in the “Tribune” section of this issue. These, in a sense, evoke the questions of diversity and of access as reflected in some of the articles on the Bologna Process, for they deal with the access of minority students to higher education in the Netherlands. Looking specifically at the University of Utrecht, P. G. P. Herfs, the Deputy Director of the International Relations Office of that university, argues, on the basis of statistical surveys, that although certain minority students have certain problems, minority

students taken as a whole are not problem students. Given targeted support, they will perform as well as native Dutch students.

On the other hand, Adriaan Hofman and Muriel van den Berg, of the Rotterdam Institute for Social Policy Research, who take a broader look at the minority student situation throughout the Netherlands, conclude that ethnic-specific differences in achievement among university students in the Netherlands do exist.

Owing to the number of articles included in the topic and the “Tribune” sections of this issue of *Higher Education in Europe*, we are not including a “Book Reviews and Studies” section. Our next issue, No. 4, 2003, will feature as its topic, “Public Relations: An Instrument for the Transformation and Development of Higher Education”.

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