

27 October 2011

DRAFT MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the role of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna process

The European Parliament

- having regard to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Sorbonne joint Declaration of Paris 1998 on harmonisation of the architecture of the European Higher Education System by the four Education Ministers of France-Germany- Italy and United Kingdom ,
- having regard to the Bologna Declaration of 1999 by the Education Ministers from 29 European countries,
- having regard to the Leuven- Louvain-la-Neuve 2009 Communiqué of the Conference of the European Ministers responsible for Higher Education,
- having regard to the Budapest- Vienna Declaration of 2010 adopted by the Education Ministers of 47 countries that officially launched the EHEA,
- having regard to the Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European parliament of 28 September 2005 to facilitate the issue by the member States of uniform short-stay for researchers from third countries travelling within the Community for the purpose of carrying out scientific research
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on further European Cooperation in quality assurance in higher education;
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 January 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF-LLL),
- having regard to Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020"),
- having regard to Council Conclusions of 20 October 2009 on developing the role of education in a fully functioning knowledge triangle,
- having regard to Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education,
- having regard to Council recommendation of 7 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving,
- having regard to Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on Youth on the move: promoting the learning mobility of young people,
- having regard to Commission communication of 10 May 2006 on delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: education, research and innovation,
- having regard to Commission communication of 3 March 2010 on Europe 2020 a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,
- having regard to Commission Communication of 19 May 2010 on a digital Agenda for Europe,

- having regard to Commission communication of 20 September 2011 on Supporting growth and jobs- an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems",
- having regard to the report entitled "Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna process (Eurydice, European Commission, 2009),
- having regard to the report entitled "Focus on Higher education in Europe 2010: the impact of the Bologna process (Eurydice, European Commission, 2010),
- having regard to the 2007 Eurobarometer survey on higher education reform among teaching professionals,
- having regard to the 2009 Eurobarometer survey on higher education reform among students
- having regard to the Eurostat publication of April 2009 on the "Bologna process in Higher Education in Europe- key indicators on the social dimension and mobility"
- having regard to its resolution of 23 September 2008 on the Bologna process and student mobility,
- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection,

A. Whereas the goal of the Bologna process to enable compatible systems of Higher Education in Europe is still valid and its strengthening is serving the goals of growth based on knowledge and innovation within the Europe 2020 strategy, particularly in this economic crisis;

B. Whereas the three-degree structure is applied - in some cases successfully - in most of the Bologna countries despite the difficulties encountered;

C. Whereas the commitment to push forward the reform should not proceed through fragmented action and without adequate financial support;

D Whereas mobility has to be available to all and is the cornerstone of the higher education reform,

F. Whereas social dimension has to be strengthened as a necessary condition to the development of the Bologna Process;

G. Whereas universities, public administrations and enterprises must ensure a strong commitment on the issue of employability;

H. Whereas education is a public responsibility of the Member States, the EU institutions and other key actors;

Relevance of the Process

1. Calls for the strengthening at EU level of support to the Bologna process; in particular as regards the recognition of academic qualifications, the promotion of mobility and employability;

2. Notes that the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a major achievement that must be enhanced through the use of appropriate tools and procedures;

3. Highlights that the priorities of the Bologna Process are the conditions necessary to guarantee that every student enrolled in a European university is able to obtain a qualification degree, valid in any EU country, in furtherance of the goal of creating a true European University Citizenship;

Governance

4. Calls for the development of an effective, bottom-up approach, fully involving all key actors, such as universities, trade unions, business sector and first of all teachers and students;

5. Calls for a commitment of universities to new teaching and training strategies aimed at a learning-centred university system;

6. Calls for the development of the universities' "third mission" to society;

7. Calls for the identification of new, targeted and flexible funding mechanisms in order to support growth, excellence and the particular and diverse vocations of universities;

Consolidation

8. Calls on the EU, Member States, and universities to improve information for students, academic and staff in order to foster structured mobility flows; calls for a strengthening of the services of Erasmus through better funding, improved credits recognition and larger flexibility of the timeframe allowed;

9. Asks the EU, in order to guarantee mutual trust, to consolidate a system of quality assurance both at the European and Member States' level; asks Member States to implement their national qualification assurance systems; calls on Member States to apply to the European Quality Assurance Register;

10. Urges all the Bologna countries to implement national qualification frameworks linked to the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA and to develop and financially support mutual recognition;

11. Calls for a strong financial support for agreements on common core curricula, which guarantee well-defined learning outcomes, also by exploring the methodology approach developed by Tuning; particular attention should be paid to specific problems of humanities curricula;

12. Asks for further support of national and European measures to guarantee equitable inclusion and fair access to students from underrepresented groups;

13. Draws attention to the particular needs of the Bachelor's degree, its curricula and its employability, stresses in this respect the need for specific actions and for more effective cooperation between universities and the labour market for developing more relevant curricula and enhancing employability;

14. Calls on national governments and on the European Commission to develop a system of structured cooperation in order to deliver joint degrees, within clusters of disciplines, with recognition across the EU by improving the performance and the financial support of Erasmus Mundus and the future education and training programme,

15. Considers academic PhD degrees, including those carried out in enterprises, as a key link between higher education and research, and recalls their potential as a key component in the creation of knowledge-based innovation and economic growth;

16. Calls for a stronger synergy between EHEA and the European Research Area,

17. Calls to set up a valuable strategy for the support of Lifelong learning programmes;

European action

18. Welcomes the proposal of the European Commission to significantly increase the funds devoted to European education and training programmes; calls on the European Commission to devote a significant proportion of these funds to supporting the modernisation of higher education in accordance with the objectives of the Bologna Process and the EU modernisation agenda;

19. Proposes that the recognition of study credits should be a compulsory element in all student exchanges supported by EU funding;

20. Invites the European Commission, within the new education and training programme, to encourage cooperation, including through financial incentives, on transnational curricula, joint degrees and mutual recognition;

21. Calls on Member States and the EU to provide updated and comparable data to monitor the implementation of the EHEA;

22. Encourages the establishment of an effective Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area, following the example of the Bologna Process; calls on the European Commission to support Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI);

23. Points out that the Bologna Process 2012 Biannual Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest must take into account that the creation of EHEA has determined the conditions for a joint competence of the EU and the Member States on the issue of higher education;

24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and Parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

BERLINGUER report on the role of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna process

The creation of an open European Higher Education Area has been a major achievement and it represents the wide institutional framework for the implementation of the ambitious process set in motion by the Bologna Process. Intergovernmental cooperation and the strategies set out by the European Institutions have been the stimulus for a wide, structural reform of the European higher education system. European universities have not only deeply revised and reorganized their teaching activities in the three level framework established by the Bologna Process, but they have also strengthened their social role with activities better suited to the so-called 'Third Mission' of the university system. It must be noted that the connection between this system and the labour market has not been always successful. Thus, the statement in the Lisbon document ('European universities, despite a reasonably good teaching quality, are unable to express their full potential in order to promote economic growth, social cohesion and the improvement in the quality and quantity *of jobs*') still holds. This statement is particularly worrying in this period of global economic crisis and requires further attention in view of the EU goal, '*to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*'.

In this respect, the strengthening of the whole Bologna Process is functional to the growth objectives established in Europe 2020 strategy: it is a requirement for the full integration of the internal EU market and an indispensable tool for tackling the challenges provided by the economic and financial crisis.

The first goal of the Bologna Process remains a fundamental requirement: a student enrolled in a European university has the right to graduate and to see his qualification recognized throughout the EU.

Governance

One of the factors that has slowed down progress in terms of results is the top-down nature of the process. The process was first created by the political will of national governments; only in the second phase did it progressively involve leaders of academic institutions within the EUA, European University Association, and the process has yet to be fully integrated into European Universities, students and families. A radical change and more complete involvement of all the stakeholders in the management of its goals, and in identifying new measures to support it, are therefore required.

Another aspect of the "unfinished governance" of the Process is the fragmented actions taken by individual Member States. The small budget provided for achieving the objectives is one reason for part of that same criticism: the illusion that the Bologna Process could be achieved at no cost. The current financial crisis is likely to entail a further reduction in financial resources available across the entire Education sector. The economic context, however, should compel us to encourage acceleration in the process, and to study new formats and financial frameworks which allow for a more effective implementation of the objectives of growth and excellence of European universities. Alongside the Member States, the European Institutions also play an essential role in the process, especially in the recognition of qualification and

mobility policies. At this stage the EHEA is not yet fully developed and it is essential to maximise its potential and address a number of open issues, including government regulation, budgetary constraints, quality control, and national accreditation.

The other actors in the Bologna Process (universities, students, teachers, trade unions, business sector) have a crucial responsibility to ensure the process is actually rooted in the social academic body. Poor compliance by some of the European universities with the process guidelines also demonstrates the need to implement new teaching strategies. Increasing attention should be paid to the establishment of a student-centred learning system, where universities and academic staff encourage the students to actively manage their higher education experience.

Bottlenecks

Mobility: Particular importance is attached to mobility as an essential characteristic of the EHEA, as defined in the recent Communication of the European Commission on the modernisation of the EHEA and in the last report of the European Parliament of 2008 on mobility of students (Pack report). Mobility is not only territorial (within and between countries), but also horizontal (between degree cycles) and vertical (within degree cycles). In order to enhance student mobility flows, we need more incentives at the level of funding policy, and the allocation of more financial resources, quality measures for the recognition of credits, and better transparency and information concerning mobility programmes.

Recognition of qualifications and qualifications framework: The reforms put in place by the Bologna process comprise a set of tools intended to encourage the recognition of qualifications, such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. At this stage most of the Bologna countries have not implemented national qualification frameworks linked to the qualifications framework of the EHEA. In order to be measurable, and to facilitate the comparability and recognition of formal, non-formal, and informal qualifications, these national qualifications should be based on learning outcomes. In that regard, it will be interesting to consider how further to develop the 2000 “Tuning” project, which was intended to provide a concrete approach to implementing the Bologna process and to identifying common reference points for generic and subject-specific competences of first and second cycle graduates in a series of subject areas.

Quality assurance: At present, the review of national quality assurance systems is still ongoing in most countries, where universities are working to develop uniform quality assurance systems to be backed up by external evaluation procedures.

The European Quality Assurance Register represents an important achievement, as do other instruments like the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance; national quality assurance measures need to be further adapted in this respect. It will be necessary to create incentives to encourage countries to join the register and to improve their self-evaluation systems. In particular a positive approach has been developed in Austria and in Denmark, where any quality assurance agency can operate as long as it has signed up for the register. In this way, any diploma with a quality assurance label should be recognised in all other EHEA countries.

Social dimension: The objective of social cohesion has become a central part of the EHEA, and it represents a condition which must be met for the EHEA to be consolidated. More importance should be attached to equitable access and to the completion of higher education at all levels. This would require further government support to put in place measures to widen access to students from underrepresented

groups and lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as to immigrants, cultural minorities, and students with disabilities.

Employability and BA: The lack of statistics makes it difficult to monitor graduate employment. In particular, employability could be increased also by getting employers involved in the integration of company traineeships as a part of academic curricula. An effective system of recognition at an EU level will also be essential in defining standards of competences and skills for the labour market (both for the public and private sector).

Better cooperation between EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA): The inclusion of the doctorate as a third cycle degree in the Bologna degree structure is the main link between higher education and research. It is now necessary to change the common perception that the doctorate is exclusively aimed at academic research. Indeed, PhDs have the potential to be a key component in the creation of knowledge-based innovation and economic growth, and can contribute to the progress and diffusion of knowledge and technology.

European action

European-level action to improve results and overcome the unresolved issues is more incisive. The task of modernizing and strengthening universities belongs to the Member States, to the European Institutions and to all the other stakeholders (businesses, universities, students). Europe has the means to ensure a more efficient system both through a policy of incentives as well as through links with the European area of research.

Quality assurance: We cannot proceed without mutual recognition of qualifications and mutual trust. The EU should deal with this through a policy of incentives.

Qualification framework: A European Qualifications Framework has been set up for all levels of education. EU Member States must set up their National Framework for LLL.

Core curricula: Emphasis has to be placed on agreements on common core curricula in programmes covering the same subject areas, to be structured in order to guarantee well-defined minimal Learning Outcomes.

Joint degrees: One of most important goals of the EHEA should be to establish and develop a system of European degrees with recognition everywhere in Europe so that any student who completes university in Europe will obtain a qualification recognized and valid throughout Europe.

Towards the Bucharest Summit

The ministerial conference of the Bologna Process will take place in April 2012. It is of paramount importance that the formulation of the new commitments for the three years that separate us from the next ministerial meeting would not be limited to the establishment of a list of benchmarks, but rather include concrete measures to promote the full realization of the goals of the Bologna Process in every university and Member State.