

EUROPEAN  
Higher Education Area



**BOLOGNA  
PROCESS  
MALTA**



Bologna Process Malta Seminars

# INTERNATIONAL OPENNESS AND THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION SEMINAR



A Report

NATIONAL TEAM OF BOLOGNA EXPERTS MALTA 2009-2011

***Bologna Process  
Seminars Malta***

***International Openness and  
the External Dimension  
Seminar***



**A Report**

**National Team of Bologna Experts (2009-2011)**

*A report prepared for the National Team of Bologna Experts (Malta) by Mr. Carl Grech, Bologna Expert, and edited by Ms Debbie Lora Dimech, Commission Officer (NCHE)*

*The Coordinator of the National Team of Bologna Experts Dr. James Calleja and the members of the National Team of Bologna Experts are: Dr. Roberta Avellino (MEEF Coordinator), Mr Ray Farrugia (Registrar, MCAST), Ms Veronica Grech (Registrar, University of Malta), Mr Carl Grech, (KSU President), Dr. Omar Grech (Lecturer, UoM), Mr Henry Mifsud (Senior Lecturer, ITS), Ms Bernie Mizzi (Director, St Martin's College), and Prof. Alfred Vella, Pro-Rector, (University of Malta).*

*All presentations referred to in this document, and further information regarding the seminars held in Malta can be found on: [www.llp.eupa.org.mt](http://www.llp.eupa.org.mt)*

*The preparation and publication of this report has been co-financed by the European Union.*

*© Copyright National Team of Bologna Experts (2009-2011) and the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) - 2011*

## Preface

### **Dr James Calleja, Coordinator of the National Team of Bologna Experts**



This document gives a detailed summary of a Bologna Seminar held as part of the Bologna Process activities for the 2009-2011 cycle. The seminars held and the reports written are a clear confirmation of Malta's commitment towards implementing the Bologna Process initiatives. Malta was one of the founding signatory countries of the Bologna Process back in 1999. Since then, Malta has been participating actively in both the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the Bologna Ministerial Meetings. One of the main contributions given to the Bologna Process in Malta was the setting up, in 2007, of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) for Lifelong Learning. In 2010, a Referencing Report was published by the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), which referenced the MQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA).

In 2010 and 2011 seven *Bologna* seminars have been organised as part of the 2009-2011 cycle. The response from all stakeholders in the Education sector has been encouraging even though a '*Bologna Culture*' still needs to be instilled. The seminars have served as a contact point between stakeholders and experts in the Higher Education field. Some of the topics addressed include: Quality Assurance in Higher Education, International Openness and the External Dimension, Employability and Learning Outcomes. Malta's efforts to adhere to the targets set by the Bologna Process have further enhanced Malta's attractiveness as a centre of excellence in Higher Education.

I take this opportunity to thank the EUPA for organising the seminars and all national and international Bologna Experts and speakers for their active participation. Moreover I wish to thank Mr. Carl Grech for the write-up of this report which serves as a follow-up to the seminar entitled: '*International Openness and the External Dimension: A Bologna Process International Seminar*'.

## Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Objectives of Activity</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1	Target Group/Stakeholders	6
<b>DAY 1: Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2011</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1	Introduction	8
2.2	Key Objectives of the Seminar	8
<b>3</b>	<b>Presentations and Informal Discussion</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1	International Openness and the External Dimension of the Bologna Process – History and the way forward – Ms. Ligia Deca, Head, BFUG Secretariat	12
3.2	Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator	15
3.3	Rediscovering the Universal Dimension of Higher Education – Mons. Bechina, Head of Department, International Relations, Vatican City	16
3.4	Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator	18
3.5	International Openness from a UK university point of view with special reference to research collaborations – Dr. Dilly Tawakkul, City University London	18
3.6	The International Openness and the Challenges of Mobility – Ms. Brikena Xhomaqi, European Students' Union (ESU)	19
3.7	International Openness: the role and perspective of a regional university association – Ms. Elizabeth Colucci, European University Association (EUA)	20
3.8	International Openness and the External Dimension – Some questions raised and the experience of the University of Malta – Ms. Stefania Fabri, University of Malta	23
3.9	Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator	24
<b>DAY 2: Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2011</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Presentations and Informal Discussion</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1	The incorrect application of the Lisbon Recognition Convention – Mr. Virgilio Meira Soares, Council of Europe	26
4.2	Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator	27

4.3	ECTS User's Guide and Qualifications Frameworks – Prof. Volker Gehmlich	28
4.4	Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator	31
4.5	Participation of Ukrainian HEIs in Projects and Programmes aimed at promoting the EHEA – Mr. Volodymyr Kuzka, Ukraine	31
4.6	How to use internationalisation to improve the quality in Higher Education and Research – Ms. Toril Johansson, Norway	34
4.7	Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator	37
4.8	Exchange of good practise on what is being done at National/Institutional level to best improve Europe as a Higher Education Destination – Ms. Erzsébet Szlamka, Hungary	37
4.9	MCAST: Opening Windows – Mr. Anthony Saliba	38
<b>5</b>	<b>Closing Remarks - Dr. Philip von Brockdorff</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1	Outcomes of the meeting	40
5.2	Recommendations	40
<b>List of Seminars</b>		<b>42</b>
<b>List of Publications</b>		<b>42</b>
<b>List of Acronyms and Abbreviations</b>		<b>43</b>

# **International Openness and the External Dimension Seminar**

## **1. Objectives of the Activity**

The aim of this seminar was to bring together the international and local stakeholders to discuss the developments in the spheres of International Openness and the External Dimension, mostly within the context of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué. The participants of this seminar were encouraged to discuss how the partners in the Bologna Process can promote the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) beyond the borders of Europe in such a way to create possibilities of bridging the gap between the external policies of the participant countries.

### **1.1 Target Group/Stakeholders**

This seminar was aimed to cater for representatives from a number of European countries, as well as representatives from the European University Association (EUA), European Students' Union (ESU), Education International (EI), the Council of Europe (CoE) as well as the national stakeholders from the education sector and professionals from the Higher Education Sector. Student representatives from the University of Malta and MCAST, lecturers from the Institute of Tourism Studies, University of Malta and Malta College of Arts Science and Technology, doctoral students, retired educators, representatives from the National Commission for Higher Education, representatives from the Malta Qualifications Council, the National Team of Bologna Experts, representatives from the European Union Programmes Agency, Education officers, representatives from the Foundation for Educational Services, Heads and Assistant Heads of Schools, Guidance teachers, representatives from the industry and private providers were also present.





**Day 1: Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2011**

## **2. Welcome and Introduction**

### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **Dr. Philip von Brockdorff, Chairman, NCHE**

Dr. Philip von Brockdorff, Chairperson of the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE) delivered the opening speech for this seminar, stating that this conference was to serve as a contact point between Maltese and International experts. He stated that one particular aim was to look at how Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) can improve Higher Education in Malta whilst at the same time using the sector to promote the HEIs operating in Malta.

The aim was to look at how European HEIs could be promoted within and beyond Europe, through well and properly formulated external policies. Upon signing the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, Education Ministers declared that the EHEA shall be enhanced by joint EU programmes through further policy dialogue and partnership. This may only be carried out through close collaboration between academics, students and industry.

Furthermore, it was stated that frameworks should be harmonized and put in place so that trans-national education becomes the norm and not the exception in students' lives. Dr. von Brockdorff concluded by stating that collaboration between all national HEIs and feedback from all stakeholders involved in Higher Education is a must in order to come up with ideas that can shape a better future for the current students and for generations to come.

### **2.2. Key Objectives of the Seminar**

#### **Dr. James Calleja, Coordinator of the National Team of Bologna Experts**

Dr James Calleja, started his presentation by giving an overview of the Bologna Process starting with the Bologna Declaration in 1999, up until the most recent developments in the process being the Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area in March 2010, during which the European Higher Education Area was officially launched. The 1999 Bologna Declaration stated that the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the European system of Higher Education to ascertain that:

*...the European Higher Education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction...*

The above mentioned objective was subsequently revisited ten years later in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, during which the issue of International Openness was emphasized. Through this Communiqué, Higher Education Ministers declared:

*We call upon European Higher Education institutions to further internationalise their activities and to engage in global collaboration for sustainable development. The attractiveness and openness of European Higher Education will be highlighted by joint European actions. Competition on a global scale will be complemented by enhanced policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership with other regions of the world, in particular through the organisation of Bologna Policy Fora, involving a variety of stakeholders.*

It was moreover held that trans-national education should be governed by the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance that are applicable within the European Higher Education Area and that are also in line with the UNESCO/OECD *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education*.

Moreover, Education Ministers once again reinforced their commitments during the Bologna Policy Forum held in March 2010, in which Ministers stated:

*We focussed our debate on how Higher Education systems and institutions respond to growing demands and multiple expectations, discussed mobility of staff and students, including the challenges and opportunities of "brain circulation", and the balance between cooperation and competition in international Higher Education.*

In the 2007 publication entitled *European Higher Education in a Global setting: A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process*, it was stated that there are two core areas that need to be addressed. These include: the European Heritage and Values for autonomy and academic freedom, democracy and the respect for human rights and the rule of law; and stakeholder participation and the building of trust through active participation.

Further to this, five core policy areas were listed:

- 1) Improving information on the EHEA
- 2) Promotion of the EHEA to enhance its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness
- 3) Strengthening cooperation that is based on partnerships
- 4) Intensification of policy dialogues
- 5) Furthering the recognition of qualifications

Through these declarations, a number of changes have resulted in the EHEA. These include: Mobility, which is a contemporary phenomenon as a result of better transportation technologies; Transparency that is the necessary approach to the building of trust; Common tools such as the ECTS, Diploma Supplement and the Learning Outcomes Approach.

These declarations have also had a notable impact on the external dimension. Globalisation has led to a set of processes that embody the spatial transformations in social relations and transactions. Multilateralism is the preferred approach to international relations as opposed to bilateralism. Moreover, common values allow for the search of meaningful development that increases the well being of people through both identity and freedom.

The Bologna Process and the Copenhagen Process are currently the two most important challenges to Higher Education. In this context, the importance of the internationalisation of VET and VET Higher Education needs to be underlined. The national VET systems have to be connected to the wider world to remain up to date and competitive. An increasing effort should be made to remove the obstacles to mobility, particularly in VET. Moreover, better and targeted information provision and guidance are needed as some of the most important challenges for the future include the increase of trans-national mobility of VET learners and teachers, and the recognition of the knowledge, skills and competences that are acquired during a learning period abroad.

The Bruges Communiqué states that:

*A European Education and Training Area with transparent qualifications systems which enable the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes, as well as the recognition of qualifications and competences, and which facilitate transnational mobility.*

Dr. Calleja concluded by stating that today we are faced with both the European Higher Education Area as well as the European Area of Education & Training (including Higher Education). In this context one could ask

whether the two areas are competing or whether they are complementary. The objective of this seminar was to explore how international openness (as defined by the Bologna Process) could be extended to include all forms of Higher Education including VET/HE and to discuss how the external dimension process can transform HE into one overarching system that includes all HE scenarios.



## **3. Presentations and Informal Discussion**

### **3.1 International Openness and the External Dimension of the Bologna Process – History and the way forward**

#### **Ms. Ligia Deca, Head of the BFUG Secretariat**

Ms. Deca, provided an overview of the BFUG secretariat. It was explained that the main role of the secretariat is to offer neutral support to further the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area under the exclusive authority of the BFUG and its chairs and vice-chairs. Its main functions include the administrative and operational support for the BFUG and its sub-structures including the working groups and the networks, as well as the Board. It also aims to create and maintain the permanent website for the EHEA ([www.ehea.info](http://www.ehea.info)) and its electronic archives. The secretariat acts as an internal and external contact point for the EHEA, whilst ensuring the dissemination of information on behalf of the chairs.

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was described as a partnership of public authorities, HEIs, staff, students, employers, quality assurance agencies, European institutions and international organisations that were brought together through the Bologna Process. Throughout the years the Process focused on two main directions: intra-European cooperation (between 1999 and 2003) and international cooperation (from 2003 onwards).

This can be seen also from the Communiqués themselves. In the Berlin Communiqué (2003) it is stated that:

*Ministers welcome the interest shown by other regions of the world in the development of the European Higher Education Area and . . . encourage the cooperation with regions in other parts of the world by opening Bologna seminars and conferences to representatives of these regions.*

Whereas in the Bergen Communiqué of 2005, it is stated that:

*We see the EHEA as a partner of Higher Education systems in other regions of the world, stimulating balanced student and staff exchange and cooperation between Higher Education institutions.*

*We look forward to enhancing the understanding of the Bologna Process in other continents by sharing our experiences of reform processes with neighbouring regions. We stress the need for dialogue on issues of mutual interest.*

Moreover, the 2009 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué called upon HEIs to further internationalise their activities and to engage in global collaboration for sustainable development. The attractiveness and openness of the EHEA are to be highlighted by joint European actions. Moreover in the Communiqué it was also held that competition on a global scale shall be complemented by enhanced policy dialogue and cooperation that is based on partnership with other regions of the world, in particular through collaboration with a variety of stakeholders. This set the direction for the BFUG work-plan up to the upcoming Ministerial meeting which will be held in 2012. As part of this work-plan the working group on "International Openness: The EHEA in a Global context" and the "EHEA information and promotion network" (IPN) were set up.

Reference was made to the "EHEA in a Global Context Report: Recommendations for future action". On the point of Information provision it was stated that the Bologna Secretariat should be mandated to provide information on the EHEA specifically targeted at non-EHEA countries, which should include: providing appropriate information on the EHEA website; facilitating coordinated information visits to and from non-EHEA countries; and supporting embassies of EHEA countries. Moreover, each Bologna country should provide information for international students and staff in a common format. Those countries that do not yet provide structured information on scholarships

should set up national databases with a view to create an EHEA-wide online information system specifically on scholarships.

On the point of the promotion of the EHEA to enhance its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness, this report holds that each EHEA country should designate a contact point for information and promotion activities. The contact points will form a network fostering the exchange of best practice and knowledge transfer as well as peer learning in the field of national-level promotion of Higher Education. In addition to this the impact that the Bologna Process has on HEIs' promotion strategies and measures should also be measured. It is envisaged, that this should lead to the setting up of a round table convened by the Bologna Secretariat with the participation of the European Commission and other main actors in Higher Education promotion in Europe to devise a "road map" and to identify opportunities and actions for enhancing European-level promotion.

This report also mentions the strengthening of cooperation based on partnerships and the intensification of policy dialogue. This is to be achieved through balanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation based on partnership. Moreover, a Bologna policy forum should be set up with participants at ministerial, stakeholder or at civil servant level from the EHEA countries and other countries that are not part of the European Cultural Convention. This should involve policy dialogue on specific topics such as mobility, quality assurance, recognition and student involvement.

The final recommendation of this report is to further the recognition of qualifications. The ENIC/NARIC networks should: seek to establish dialogues on the recognition policy with other regions and explore the implications on recognition of overarching frameworks of qualifications of the EHEA, the EQF-LLL and compatible national frameworks. The importance of improving the publicly available information was also highlighted. The report suggested the use of CoE/UNESCO Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts as guides to good practice for the assessment of qualifications from countries that are not legally bound by the Convention.

Reference was also made to other established Higher Education spaces that include the Brisbane Communiqué and the Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Area (ENLACES). The ENLACES was based on the recommendations of the Lima Declaration (2009) and it is "an area of articulation, complementarity and synergy for Higher Education, oriented towards elevating its quality, equity and pertinence".

Feedback about the Bologna Process from other regions of the world demonstrates that it is becoming the yardstick against which other Higher Education systems will be compared internationally.<sup>1</sup> Moreover countries such as New Zealand have recognized that whilst it is not eligible to join the Bologna Process, it did recognize the importance to engage with these reforms, as they are likely to have a number of implications for the international acceptance of its qualifications and options for mobility. The Bologna Process was also hailed as the most far reaching and ambitious reform of Higher Education ever undertaken.<sup>2</sup>

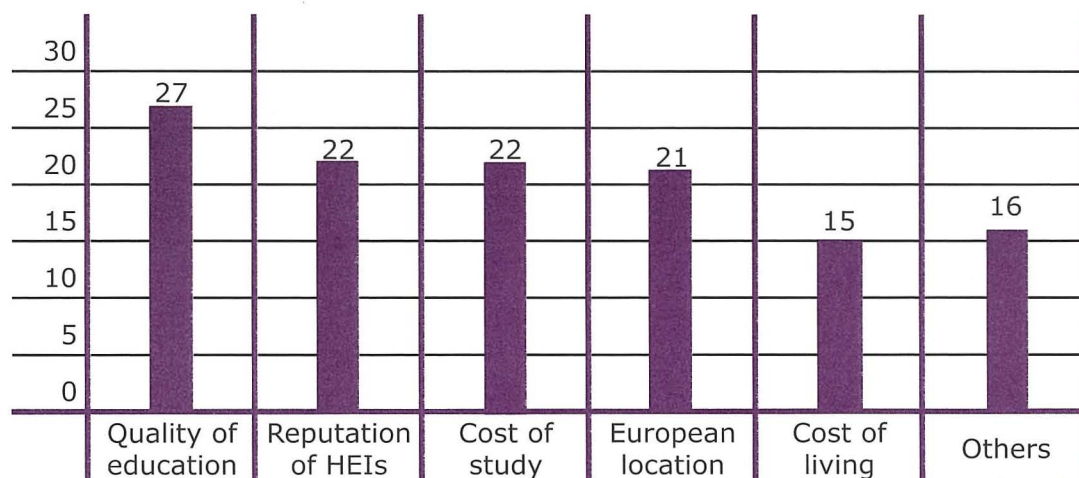
Reference was made to the 2010 DAAD Information and Promotion Survey that was done through a questionnaire sent out by the Bologna Secretariat to 47 Bologna Countries in November 2010. Results were compiled from the 37 responses received from the Bologna countries on their national HE information, promotion and marketing practices.

---

1 QA subcommittee of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, June 2008.

2 "The Bologna Club: What U.S. Higher Education can Learn from a Decade of European Reconstruction", Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Q 1.4 Which parameters play an important role in your country's international marketing endeavors? (Multiple answers possible, n=35)



The main promotion messages were varied and almost no immediate pattern could be drawn amongst the countries.

Q 6 When promoting the EHEA, what messages should be sent out?

- Belgium (French Community): \_\_\_\_\_ The main message should focus on the diversity, the richness and the inclusive dimension of the EHEA.
- Cyprus: \_\_\_\_\_ Quality in education, friendly, multicultural environment.
- Czech Republic: \_\_\_\_\_ International cooperation/environment, structured study system comparable to other EHEA countries (ECTS, Diploma Supplement) - opportunities for mobility, good quality education, great variety of education opportunities, cultural experience.
- Germany: \_\_\_\_\_ Europe stands for: cultural richness, excellent learning and research opportunities, high-quality education and interesting study opportunities at BA-, MA-and doctoral level, attractive European funding schemes for attracting students, graduates and staff for studying, teaching or research in the EU.
- Ireland: \_\_\_\_\_ High levels of choice available to students within each country and across Europe, Europe as a place to travel and work, Europe as a key world market for future contacts, Richness of cultural diversity.
- Montenegro: \_\_\_\_\_ EHEA ensures more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. It is an extraordinary tool to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education and to foster student mobility and employability through the introduction of a system based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies with easily readable programmes and degrees.
- Poland: \_\_\_\_\_ Excellence of teaching and research. Popularity of joint study programmes. Opportunities for intra-European mobility. Richness of cultural heritage. Diversity of cultures. Good student services.

Various countries mentioned a number of information gaps they would want the EHEA to fill, which included amongst others the availability of information in several languages, the legal framework conditions, the sharing of best practices and the recognition of Diploma Supplements.

Thus the key findings of this survey are as follows:

- 1) International marketing is widespread across the EHEA but it is done in different forms and has different focuses, and is present in varying degrees in different countries,
- 2) Most international marketing efforts are limited to a number of geographic targets,
- 3) Many EHEA countries now have national agencies or ministries that deal with the marketing of Higher Education,
- 4) A very broad range of marketing tools is being used by the HEIs,

- 5) There is a large degree of participation in pan-European marketing and promotional efforts,
- 6) There is a broad agreement on key messages about the EHEA,
- 7) There is less agreement about the benefit of EHEA-wide vs. the national/institutional marketing efforts,
- 8) There is no common language of marketing within the EHEA.

From these conclusions a number of recommendations emerge, one of which is the creation of a website to cater specifically for students coming from outside Europe. Moreover, information packages about the EHEA should be developed, along with the distribution of information and key messages on how to market the EHEA and HEI's. In addition to this, research should be conducted in key markets about the perception of Europe, and partnerships should be built across borders and organisations dealing with the marketing of Higher Education. The last important recommendation would be to provide funds for these marketing activities by accessing the existing funding resources, such as Erasmus Mundus A 3.

Thus there is still the need to demonstrate the benefits of information provided at EU level and marketing efforts to all the members of the EHEA. This should be coupled with increased focus on the internationalisation aspects on all levels. There exist clear benefits for the academic communities if all the ethical considerations are taken into account. These conclusions also highlight the need of coordinated efforts between the various BFUG structures, along with the fact that decreased levels of funding could lead to a significant slow-down of future common efforts of pursuing the international openness of the EHEA agenda.

### **3.2 Question Time and Discussion – Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

One of the speakers started the discussion by stating that there are many different ways in which countries are looking at the Bologna Process, with varying degrees of interest. What is really important is the solidarity that must exist between the different countries and at the different stages, along with the ever increasing importance of recognition. This however meant that the objectives of Europe 2020 are still far from being achieved.

One of the speakers in reply stated that one must not forget the adult education sector, which involves a number of factors that are common both in HE and VET. There have been developments in quality assurance. In addition to this, reference should also be made to the European Lifelong Learning Area, which brings about parallel processes. In the meantime, internationalization has been a concern amongst universities as the implementation of the Bologna Process is moving at different speeds. The speaker also enquired on whether there existed a risk of having different tiers within the EHEA. In reply it was held that different tiers of education do exist. There is an increased call for differentiation of missions. Some institutions will be better funded because they have a regional approach or a social dimension approach. Some will be rewarded for more internationally renowned types of programmes.

Internationalisation has a clear added value of diversifying the opinion, creating understanding of other cultures, and more diverse approaches which can lead to better quality. It is true that it is not without challenges due to the socio-political context of Higher Education however it is very difficult to face global challenges without internationalisation.

Many times the Bologna implementation has been criticised, however further promotion is needed for third countries that are not already members of the Bologna Process. The issues should not be about the different levels of implementation, but on more concrete measures such as ECTS which help achieve more harmonisation between the HEIs. From a pragmatic marketing perspective it should be acknowledged that there is still work in progress.



Reference was also made to the Bologna labels. Bologna labels were a topic discussed within the BFUG and were promoted by the Commission, not for diplomas, but rather for countries that are pursuing the action lines. It was however stated that the idea was not taken up because this is not a structure of forms, but it is about adherence to a cultural context. If the Diploma Supplement is implemented correctly it should be a good enough document for employers, however it is not necessarily widely known. There needs to be more awareness on what benefits the Bologna Process can bring to HE and the industry, and how Diploma Supplements and the LOs can be read and interpreted.

### ***3.3 Rediscovering the Universal Dimension of Higher Education***

#### **Mons. Bechina, Head of Department of International Relations, Vatican City**

Mons. Bechina started his presentation by asking about the reasons why people take certain decisions and not others. International openness is a unique phenomenon in European and international policy as it is looking beyond Europe. The Bologna Process did not look at this policy area from the beginning. The Process in fact starting looking at the issue of internationalisation as more countries started joining the Process. Thus one finds the evolution of the concept from the external dimension to international openness.

The Bologna Declaration (1999) states that:

*We need to ensure that the European Higher Education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions.*

This poses a question as to how Europe's extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions are defined and whether this statement is the pure promotion of simple words or whether there is actual content to it.

The Bergen Communiqué (2005) states that:

*...the European Higher Education Area must be open and should be attractive other parts of the world.*

This again poses another question, that of what it means to be open and attractive. It must be stated that the BFUG was mandated to develop strategies to attract countries and to elaborate and agree on a strategy for the external dimension.

The strategy for 2007 – 2009 focussed on improving information on the EHEA and promoting the European Higher Education to enhance its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness. It also focussed on strengthening the cooperation based on partnership and policy dialogue, to enable more harmonisation and recognition of qualifications.

The concept of openness itself was also considered as this poses some further questions. One has to figure out whether the latter refers to being open to getting the best brains from all over the world, to becoming more competitive through the use of dynamic knowledge based commonly in the world, or whether it refers to being open for dialogue and collaboration.

#### ***Initiatives on the Global Scale***

A number of initiatives are available which promote the mobility of University Students. In the EU this is done through the Erasmus Programme (launched in 1987) and the Tempus Programme (1990). In the EHEA the goal is set for achieving at least 20% of those graduating from an EHEA country having had a study or training period abroad by 2020.

#### ***UNESCO Regional Recognition Conventions***

There are various Recognition Conventions. The first in date was Latin American and Caribbean Recognition

Convention (Mexico City, 1974). The second was the Africa (Arusha, 1981) convention. There is also one for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 1983). It was reported that the latter is the one that seems to function the most and every 3 years a committee meeting of the convention is held. The Lisbon Recognition Convention however is the one that works best. The latter incorporates 53 countries. It has an operational centre which provides information and serves as a platform for the achievement of stronger recognition initiatives. The convention however does not guarantee that recognition will take place.

Various Bologna Policy Fora were held in 2009, 2010. Another one will be held in 2012 entitled: "Beyond the Bologna Process: Creating and connecting national, regional, and global Higher Education spaces". As per the decision of the BFUG (18/03/2011) an agreement for mobility and quality assurance was reached amongst the BFUG members, but also for a combination of social dimension and international public responsibility and a combination of employability and transparency.

Mons. Bechina explained that recognition is not a new phenomenon. In the Middle Ages, degrees were fully mobile, and universally recognized. Normally it was the Pope or his delegate who granted for a degree and approved it, making it recognized in another country. No such authority exists nowadays and one must question whether there is a need for such an authority that can grant for a degree that is equally recognized globally.

At the time of Thomas Aquinas, a professor was allowed to teach for two years in Paris and then he had to move on to another institution. This was a means to foster mobility. At the time in fact, there were many exchanges between schools and universities. People went from one to the other, and studied in different places.

The principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are the basic building blocks of what can be called a university. It was the decree issued by the pope who took out the university school from the legislation of the secular powers into the ecclesiastical powers which lead the way for autonomy. Academic freedom has to do with a certain end. The end at the time was the conviction that the university cannot search for truth if it is not free – freedom of thought and expression.

Having said that, there were many threats to the universal dimension of universities which emerged throughout the years:

- 1) *Nationalisation* – the problems of the Bologna Process can be said to date back to the times after the progress of the national states that began to train public administrators through Higher Education. Closing universities within national contexts had its negative impacts.
- 2) *Ideologies* – a university always has the intention to make the universal ideology. It is the tasks of universities to challenge ideologies and never lose the Universal dimension in this endeavour.
- 3) *Relativism*

### **Rediscovering the Universal dimension of Higher Education**

The academic heritage is of great importance to the Bologna Process both because of its intrinsic value and because it provides a broader perspective on Higher Education reform. Reform is part and parcel with our heritage: the universities along with the church and parliament are the oldest continuously existing institutions in Europe. It is important to underline that universities have survived precisely because they have been able to reform. Yet, universities have not just adapted their form: they have at the same time conserved their essence and their core values. It is this combination of adapting their form and preserving their core values that make universities relevant to modern societies.<sup>3</sup>

The question however remains as to whether there is anything new in the Bologna Process or whether this is simply a way back to the essence of universities. In the end it is concluded that there shall not be international openness without rediscovering the universal dimension at the core of European Universities.

<sup>3</sup> Bergan S., 2006.

Both society and Universities are in need of universal values as in essence they are not dependant on structures, organisations or strategies, but rather on the individual people. The University seems to be in essence a place for communication and circulation of thought by means of personal interaction. Thus Universities are the place where intellect may safely range and speculate since it is there where it can find its equal in some antagonist

activity. Universities are the place where inquiry is pushed forward and discoveries are verified and perfected and error exposed.<sup>4</sup> The EHEA is thus about a living academic community and true to the society that it is part of.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the importance of the EHEA and the European dimension of Higher Education, it is fair to say that the international dimension is equally important because it is an open window towards other parts of the world.

### **3.4 Question Time and Discussion – Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

During the discussion it was argued that the threats to universities do include ideologies, nationalism and relativism. Moreover, it was pointed out that there is another important threat that emerges from territorial bureaucracy, which was one of the reasons why the Bologna Process was initially embarked upon. Once universities have their own function, they would have established their own barriers to ensure that the university remains outside of external influence. The message that comes from the Bologna Process is quite opposite because it focuses on enabling people to be part of what was referred to as the universal search for truth.

It was stated that global education should be a goal of Higher Education. Nevertheless it also depends on teachers to combine the practical work of ethical work, and working with other people, to achieve the satisfaction and solidarity and other principles.

The issue of language diversity was also mentioned. It was held that learning another language does not only refer to being able to communicate with other people but also learning a different way of thinking. However, at high levels of education students have shown that they are able to carry out at least part of their research in a foreign language, which is also another positive side of mobility.

### **3.5 International Openness from a UK university point of view with special reference to research collaborations**

#### **Dr. Dilly Tawakkul, City University London**

On the point of internationalisation at City University, the main strategic priority is to offer an international learning environment with balanced number of undergraduate and post-graduate student and a diverse body of academic staff. The current priority initiatives include the intensification of City's international focus including the internationalisation of its processes. It is also undergoing the internationalisation of its curricula and the running of programmes such as "*Global Citizenship*" and "*World Cities Week*". These also serve as platforms for promoting international collaborations in both education and research.

An overview was also given of some facts and figures regarding City University. The latter accommodates 21,727 students from 160 different countries and 1,842 academic staff from 70 different countries. About 20% of students and 25% of staff come from outside the UK. The university has also 40 formal partnerships with other institutions. At present there are over 6,000 student following short courses. In 2010 it awarded 3,446 post-graduate and 2,408 undergraduate Degrees/Diplomas.

<sup>4</sup> Newman J.H, The idea of a University.

<sup>5</sup> Bergan S., 2006.

The university also has a number of different forms of international cooperation, including:

- 1) Student/staff exchange
- 2) Research collaborations
- 3) Joint and dual-award degrees
- 4) Partnerships for delivering programmes and modules abroad

An overview was given of the World Cities World Class University Network. This is an example of an international collaboration of universities from different cities worldwide as a way of adding value to the external dimension. The themes on which this collaboration is built include: transport, business, cultural and creative industries, sustainability, and global health. These are also identified as priority areas by the EU. Some other institutions in this network include the Technische Universität of Berlin, University of Sao Paulo, Seoul National University and the University of Delhi.

At City University, the international research activities are administered by the Deputy Vice-chancellor who is supported by the University Research Committee and the University Internationalisation Committee. Some of the supported activities include the research and internationalisation strategies, the university research fellowships and studentships, as well as staff research prizes and research competitions.

The university also has a number of Interdisciplinary Centres for which the university provides grants which cover part of the costs incurred by the students. An overview of the funding opportunities available to the university was also given. There are UK funding councils that fund different types of activities. But the main funding is given for European programmes – the current framework has been committed to by the government and this is the only source that seems to be a guarantee. In the future, since a reduction in the availability of funding is prospected, the focus will be on larger scale projects and multidisciplinary school projects.

A description of the centrally or internally provided support was given. These measures vary from: obtaining and sharing of information; discussing ideas face to face; identifying opportunities, application and proposal development; advice on costing and finance, partner finding; developing and managing consortium (pre-award); and building and managing external relations. An example was given with the current running projects. These include EU FP7 funded research projects in the areas of ICT, Social Sciences, Health and Engineering, UK organisation funded research projects as well as international organisation funded research projects. Reference was also made to the EU lifelong learning programme.

Some of the key issues with internationalisation projects include that a top-down approach is being adopted rather than a bottom up approach. Moreover there are the competing interests of the institutional profiles as opposed to international ranking. Some other issues include partner finding to consortium management and furthering support for networking. These issues could be tackled by raising awareness, developing ownership, building up relationships and searching for new sources. Moreover such administrative assistance to limit the administrative burden such as the creation of templates could also be used to facilitate the necessary changes needed.

### **3.6 The International Openness and the Challenges of Mobility**

#### **Ms. Brikena Xhomaqi, European Students' Union (ESU)**

Ms. Xhomaqi started her presentation by giving an overview of what the European Student's Union (formerly ESIB) does. She stated that this union is made up of 45 national unions of students coming from 38 countries (from the EHEA). Its aims are to promote educational, economic, cultural, social and political interests of European students.

There exists a relationship between mobility and international openness and this poses the question as to whether mobility is to be seen as a tool for international openness or whether international openness is a tool for better mobility. The mobility will provide HEIs with the international students to bring experience from other countries,

and will enable HEIs to bring more openness at the local level. At the same time the openness is useful for mobility: HEIs will invest in such openness and they will inform other countries about their values and services. Nevertheless, even if there is a widespread recognition of the need for international openness, there are still a number of challenges to mobility that have to be tackled. These challenges are not only faced by students, but also by HEIs, teachers and staff.

The most important challenges were listed as follows:

- 1) Financing
- 2) Recognition
- 3) Language and Cultural Differences
- 4) Lack of information
- 5) Administrative barriers
- 6) Quality of study period
- 7) Flexibility
- 8) Brain Drain

Funding, language barriers and cultural differences as well as administrative barriers were highlighted as the three most important challenges that are faced by students who try to undertake study periods abroad. Reference was made to an OECD report stating that the global market needs graduates with an international qualification and soft transversal skills.

Language barriers pose a meaningful obstacle to mobility. When the language abilities of students are not good enough, the chances of successfully completing a said course can be hindered. Therefore, the issue of providing courses also in a language which is widely understood worldwide needs to be raised in order to increase mobility rates.

Lack of information was also pointed out as another obstacle, along with administrative issues which may also be a problem for those trying to be seeking mobility possibilities within Europe. Therefore it is important to ensure that such internal problems are addressed before focussing on international openness.

In conclusion it was stated that a strategy with more concrete action lines was needed. Ideally, this should be one that takes into consideration the challenges of mobility and informs HEIs of the consequences of international openness. Promoting HEIs only is not enough. The role of HEIs is crucial in this process since they have to be prepared to face the social and economic consequences of international openness. Moreover, issues such as the lack of balanced mobility in Europe also need to be addressed. At present the UK, France and Germany are the three countries attracting the majority of students from outside Europe. Therefore, measures need to be put in place to attract students to all countries within the EHEA.

### ***3.7 International Openness: The role and perspective of a regional university association***

#### **Ms. Elizabeth Colucci, European University Association (EUA)**

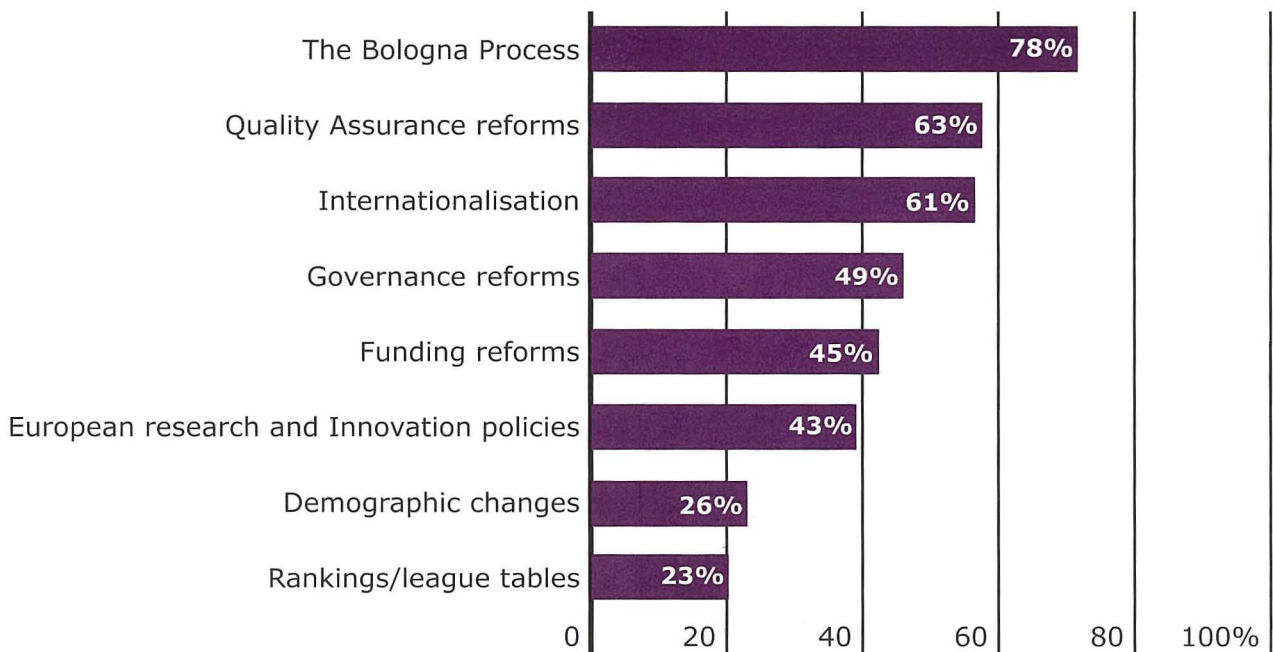
An overview was given of the core tasks of the EUA, namely that of strengthening European Universities. In its work, the organisation aims at institutional development and the dissemination of good practices in reform. Moreover, it also serves as a platform for policy development and advocacy at a European Level, focussing mostly on the Bologna Process and the EHEA, the Lisbon Agenda and the EU 2020 as well as the European Research Area. The EUA plays an active role for internationalisation and international openness through its activities and policy development.

Regarding the internationalisation of the Bologna Process one could pose the question of whether or not the two concepts are synonymous or mutually exclusive. The creation of knowledge is international at its core, but in

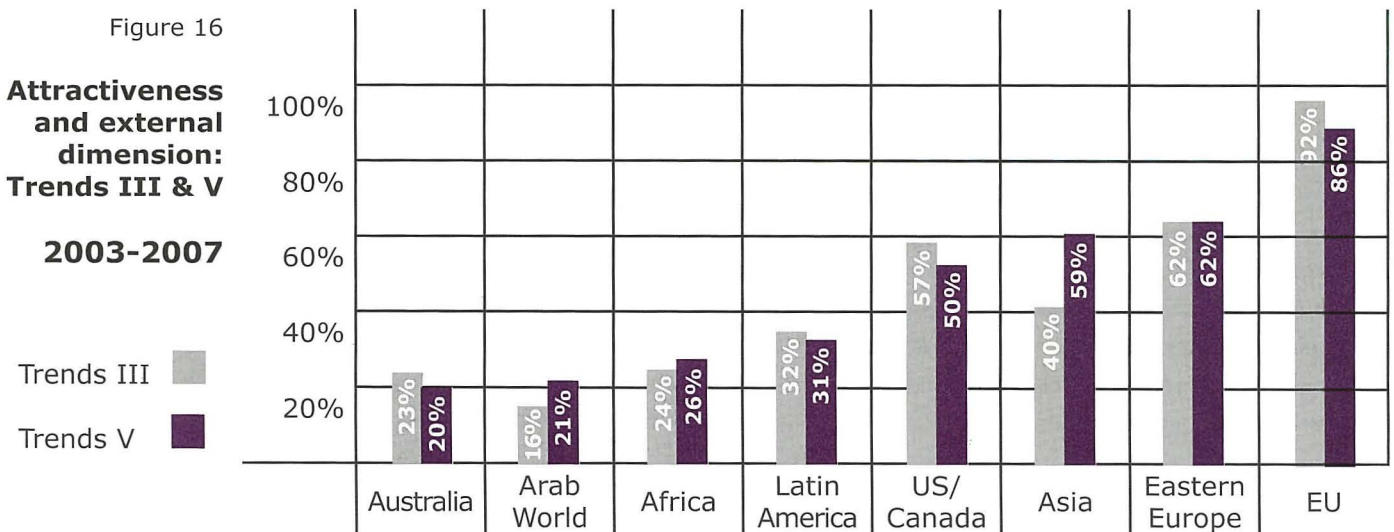
the past few years, there was a far more structured internationalisation and evolution of the concept. Bologna could be described as Europe's first internationalisation as the first years were more focussed on the internal structural reforms needed to accommodate the project. However growing interest from other countries puts the core focus of Bologna back to the fore – that the project was initially intended to render European Higher Education competitive globally. Thus there is a growing interest around the globe in regional Higher Education harmonisation.

A study conducted by the EUA, *Trends 2010* tried to show the strategic policies adopted by universities. 78% of respondents stated that the Bologna Process was the single most important development that brought change within and to the institutions.

*Q7a. Over the past three years, how important have the following developments been for your institutional strategy (high importance)?*



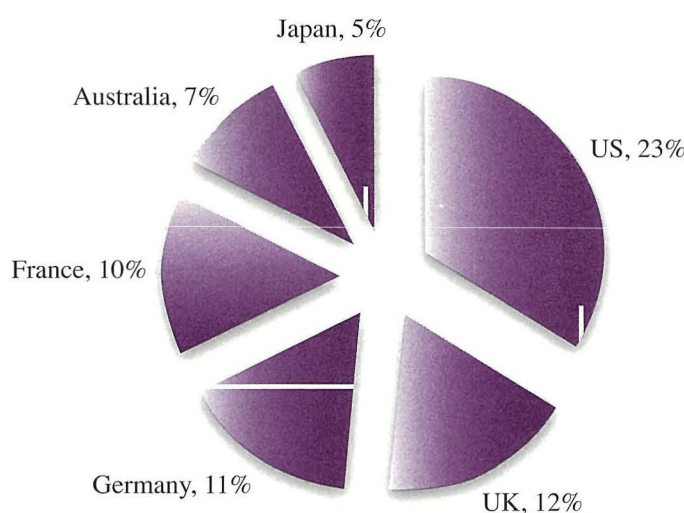
Moreover in terms of attractiveness and the external dimension, a comparison can be drawn between the Trends study that was carried out in 2003 and that which was carried out in 2007:



Nowadays, the concept of internationalisation has increased in complexity, mostly due to the need to accommodate the requirements of a more globalised world. This in itself has brought about a number of changes, including internationalising the curricula and preparing students for the global market. This generally requires an element of language training and course provision, resulting in more English proliferation. One can also point out that there has been an increase in mobility for non-EU students. The efforts in this direction need to be more focused especially with reference to the marketing of institutions and student enrolment. Institutions have to be able to provide services for foreign students. International openness also creates questions regarding the financing of internationalisation as well as the fees that can and should be imposed on foreign students. The drive towards internationalisation is also motivating institutions towards the joint delivery of courses, offshore ventures and distance delivery.

One can also note an increase of terms that refer to the internationalisation process in the last 15 years, with more reference being made to terms such as *globalisation* and *borderless education*, and specific terms such as *virtual universities*, *branch campus* and *Global Education Index (GEI)* being used in international education terminology<sup>6</sup>. This shows the increased importance that is given to the internationalisation of Higher Education.

Nowadays, the process of internationalisation is shaped by the global student market. One can note an increase in tertiary education enrolment. There is also an increase in the number of mobile students. In 2007, 2.8 million students were enrolled in a HEI outside of their country of origin – a 53% increase since 1999. However student mobility is not balanced. 6 countries host 67% of the world's foreign and mobile students. These are listed as follows:



Moreover, at present, a number of phenomena can be observed such as the emergence of trans-national education and the diversification of destinations. This situation however causes a heightened potential for brain drain, which in return should be turned into opportunity through brain circulation. Moreover the economic considerations of the 'education export' should not be ignored. As a matter of fact, these resulted in 5.6% of the total exports for Australia in 2007, surpassed only by Coal (9.5%) and Iron Ore (7.5%), showing an increase of almost 5 percentage points over a period of twenty years.

Internationalisation is also a requirement to address 'global challenges' such as the catastrophes and opportunities caused by climate change, globalisation, demographic developments as well as the urbanisation of cities and regions. This is to be achieved via national and regional competitiveness agendas such as the Lisbon Strategy, the EU 2020 and the Bologna Process.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the EHEA and the wider world are becoming increasingly interdependent. This creates the need for European HE stakeholders to support and promote international openness.

<sup>6</sup> Evolution of international education terminology, Knight 2008.

When referring to the EUA's agenda, one can find that a number of objectives have been set. These include: improving the understanding of the relationship between the EHEA and the wider world, namely where the different agendas can be interlinked (research excellence); the provision of information on development trends in other regions; and the better understanding of global imbalances. Moreover, mobility beyond Europe and equitable exchanges should be given full support whilst responding to the interest in regional HE convergence processes.

The EUA's international agenda (2006) mentions a number of core actions to be pursued:

- 1) *Global Dialogue* – structured dialogue with like partners in the wider world
- 2) *Advocacy and the promotion of the European Research Area and the EHEA in a global context* – through European level policies and programmes for international exchange and cooperation
- 3) *Supporting the internationalisation of European Universities* – setting European good practices for strategic internationalisation

In terms of the Global Policy Dialogue this refers to the transatlantic dialogue where annual meetings with Canadian and US-American University associations (AUCC, ACE) are held. In addition, the EU-Asia Higher Education platform was created to foster bi-regional workshops and roundtables. With reference to its international projects, the EUA is capitalising on EU funding programmes that support various global cooperation projects in Higher Education such as Erasmus Mundus, ALFA, and Edu-link, amongst others. EUA thus aims to work with partners within and outside of Europe, including university associations and regional organisations.

The EUA also has an important role in institutional development and it fosters a growing interest in the Institutional Evaluation Programme abroad. For this reason, Institutional Quality Evaluations are conducted from Colombia to Japan and even in Africa. Another role performed by EUA is that of translating international activities into input for bi-regional and global policy agendas. This is carried out under 3 policy frameworks:

- 1) ASEM Education Process and ASEM rectors' conferences
- 2) Africa-EU Strategic Partnership
- 3) EU-LAC process and EU-LAC Summits

The common aim of all three is to promote Higher Education collaboration and the role of Higher Education in social and economic development. EUA aims to promote the Bologna Process beyond the borders of Europe. This is based on the fact that there is a gradual acknowledgement that Europe's internal Higher Education processes mean something to the rest of the world, placing Bologna in a Global setting. This is fuelled by increasing curiosity of other regions, especially Latin America, Australia and North America. Nevertheless, this Process cannot be carried out without the appreciation of the challenges that still lie ahead in the implementation of all the Bologna action lines. The underlying concept that the EUA aims to achieve is the mainstreaming of internationalisation by making it an institutional thread rather than simply the task appointed to a particular department.

### **3.8 International Openness and the External Dimension - Some questions raised and the experience of the University of Malta**

**Ms. Stefania Fabri, University of Malta**

The underlying theme in this regard is improving the attractiveness of the EHEA as a Higher Education Destination and attempting to bridge the gap between the participant countries' external policies. This is a process that is made more difficult by the uniqueness of the European Higher Education Area. A number of challenges are posed by the fact that the EHEA is made up of already established universities, which already have their international policy somewhat set in stone.



Most of the time one would be addressing universities that have re-invented themselves to keep abreast with the new market demands, cuts in funding as well as competition. Many a time one finds that most universities have unique academic offerings particularly at post-graduate levels. Thus the EHEA should be a celebration of the multi-national reality these institutions operate in.

A distinction exists between openness and rigid structures. The question was asked whether there was one common mind set towards achieving this goal. Some of the measures that could be implemented in this regard include the establishment of joint programmes and dual degree programmes. Moreover, institutions should not be considered in isolation, but rather put into context with respect to their countries. Immigration and visa requirements should not be ignored when discussing this process and the current challenges that it faces. Nevertheless, the targets towards increased international openness cannot be achieved without harmonisation between the aims of the different HEIs, national interests and European external policy.

There exist a multitude of reasons why institutions should aim to attract students from outside of Europe. These include: increased profits from tuition fees; having an internationalisation policy; national interest or established national targets. Nevertheless, the institutions should first consider whether they are prepared and open for this change and whether they already have the necessary structures and adequately trained personnel to address these changes.

Regardless of the reasons for internationalisation, there is still a requirement for structured investment in the marketing of the EHEA. This can be achieved through national support based on both external policy and financial investment. In addition to this, participation in EHEA fairs and other promotional activities and initiatives such as ERASMUS MUNDUS should be encouraged.

The Bologna's success has been based on its wide-ranging support at national and institutional level. The future trends that the EHEA should be aiming for include the reverse brain-drain where non-EU nationals will return to their home countries (such as India and China).

### **3.9 Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

During the discussion it was pointed out that the experiences and knowledge that students acquire while learning in the EU are very important. Moreover it was stated that it is very important that HEIs provide up to standard and high quality education with which foreign students can find employment in their home country



**Day 2: Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

## **4. Presentations and Informal Discussion**

### **4.1 *The incorrect application of the Lisbon Recognition Convention***

#### **Mr. Virgilio Meira Soares, Council of Europe**

The Lisbon Recognition convention was approved by the CDESR which is made up of governmental representatives and a number of academics. It was also approved by UNESCO which gave it considerable weight. Its importance lies in the fact that it was ratified by almost all the countries of the EHEA.

The convention was built on a number of fundamental concepts, including the mutual trust that must exist between the participating countries. The process of recognition is generally considered as the normal procedure and the denial of recognition is generally the result of a number of substantial differences. It must be pointed out that access to Higher Education must take into account the recognition of secondary education as well.

The current situation is one that is built around the autonomy of recognition by the different institutions as opposed to national and international legislation that adequately regulates the matter. The main problem lies in the fact that governments generally have little or no remedies and thus do not interfere when the HEIs do not follow action and policy lines that have been agreed upon and approved. In most cases, governments and HEIs tend to prefer equivalence. This explains why 'nostrification' occurs in many cases.

However, it must be pointed out that very sparsely are denials based only on substantial differences. Many a times, the mutual trust that is required is not followed by the element of reciprocity. The requirements of access to Higher Education are not being followed in some countries. This is done through a variety of ways, such as through particular restrictions for students coming from specific countries, or changes in application deadlines to avoid or delay access of foreign students.

In addition to this, the recognition of study periods abroad may also be used in a fraudulent way, or where recognition is given to study periods and does not reflect the reality of that particular situation. Discrepancies also arise between the EU and other members of the EHEA where a number of recognition issues may emerge due to underlying political or other reasons that are and should be extraneous to the recognition process itself. It may also be a question of the accreditation and evaluation agencies not properly handling the situation in some cases.

A number of measures can be taken to avoid this situation such as more efforts to convince HEIs that their autonomy has to be understood within the limits of legislation and that their autonomy is not free and unhindered independence, nor does the autonomy of institutions make them above the rule of law.

In addition to this, a process of training HEI officers in the fields of recognition could lead to the reduction in the problems that are currently being faced in this field. Moreover, as in other international matters, reciprocity should be the fundamental rule to be followed. Where the recognition becomes the responsibility of national bodies, these have a duty to adequately train their officers. In addition to this, the bold step of automatic recognition should be adopted where this is justified.

Further steps should be taken to convince governments to create accreditation and evaluation agencies that follow the ESG and have the necessary conditions to be accepted by EQAR. Moreover, increased importance should be given to the ENIC/NARIC network on recognition issues. Rankings, in whichever way they may be called should be avoided as these make the process of recognition more complicated.

If concrete action is not taken on these recognition measures, it may have serious implications on the workability of the EHEA project to be reached by 2020. The EHEA should be looked at as a space of real and equal opportunities and thus these challenges should be tackled as soon as possible in order for all the stakeholders to reap the most benefit from it.

## **4.2 Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

It was claimed that there is a controversy between mutual trust and reciprocity. There is a degree of ambivalence between the concepts of equivalence and comparability. It is impossible to ask that any two qualifications will be identical. Thus what one has to look for is the level of comparability that can be identified between these qualifications. In addition to this it was inquired as to what extent autonomy can be framed within binding obligations.

There exists an obvious and evident conflict between authentic and fraudulent qualifications. Moreover it was asked which authority, if any, should be in charge of the training to be provided to accreditation agencies. The issue of automatic recognition was also raised. Nevertheless, it was held that at some point the EHEA should establish the principle of automatic recognition.

National standards and tools of recognition are different from one country to another and from one agency to another. There should be some form of identification of degrees that fall within the Bologna Process which will then allow for similar tools rather than different standards and tools for recognition.

One of the participants claimed that excessive bureaucracy is also a problem particularly in Malta. Nevertheless, unless there is agreement that there are no substantial differences between the countries and the HEIs, there cannot be the successful application of the Lisbon Convention. It is important to look at recognition for the transformation of the internal dimension of the Bologna Process. NQFs should serve to facilitate the recognition of the Bologna Process.

Another participant questioned whether there is sufficient enforcement of recognition from Member states and also whether this could be attributed to politics or rather to action paralysis. In reply it was stated that Bologna Process is expected to make things easier, even if in many countries these requirements are not yet defined.

One of the speakers stated that when reference is made to access in principle, there must be equal conditions. There may be problems of language and even of titles that can easily be sorted out by the ministries or HEIs concerned by looking at the content in question. Thus there are a number of ways to create equal opportunities and it is mostly a matter of how willing the particular agency or HEI is to achieve that equality of opportunity. In a country where recognition exists, it is their choice to go for equivalence.

Universities will always set their own standards and their own conditions – to what extent could one discuss comparability between institutions will always remain subject to interpretation and one cannot have all the information to be able to make the fairest judgement possible. Thus there should be respect for autonomy, but all the stakeholders involved should be open to the various forms of learning in the different institutions.

### **4.3 ECTS Users' Guide and Qualifications Frameworks**

#### **Professor Volker Gehmlich**

An overview was given of the key features of the ECTS which emerged out of the "Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students" conference organised by the EUA in collaboration with the Swiss Confederation in October 2002. This was a bottom-up development that was supported by the Tuning-Project and that was incorporated into the Berlin Conference in 2003. The first Users' Guide was published by the EU Commission in 2005.

In February 2009, the European Commission published a new ECTS Users' Guide that was based on the support of many stakeholders. The key features of the ECTS were identified as follows:

- Learner-Centred approach
- Learning Outcomes
- Levels and descriptors
- Credits and Workload
- Implementation of ECTS

ECTS linked the fundamental pillars of the EHEA. The compatibility of structures could be determined through qualifications frameworks. Quality could be validated internally, through governance measures as well as externally through accreditation agencies. These helped to foster mutual trust within the EHEA culture.

The Process can be understood in terms of the goals that are listed in the declarations. These include wide ranging aims such as Social Dimension, European Citizenship, Employability and Lifelong Learning. These are measurable through the 3 cycle system, student-centred learning and quality assurance and enhancement.

The tools to achieve the 3 cycles are the Qualifications Frameworks, learning outcomes as well as the different levels. Reference can be made through the EHEA-QFR, the various NQFs, institutional qualifications frameworks as well as module descriptors. The objective of student-centred learning can be obtained through ECTS, Diploma supplements and the various credits and grades. In the creation of these tools, reference can be made to national grading systems and rating templates. Quality Assurance and Enhancement can be achieved through standards and guidelines, that have to be evaluated both internally and externally, as well as through external accreditation and peer review.

In order to put the above mentioned into practise a change of paradigm is required that necessitates a re-evaluation of the modular structure, learning outcomes, assessment, credits and learning and teaching materials. These are to be determined according to both the learner's profile, determining whether General or VET would be more adequate, as well as the programme profile in terms of the needs of the labour market, the qualifications framework and other overarching national strategies. Such a system needs to be evaluated through internal quality management and external quality assurance measures, even for the specific credits. Moreover, in order for the system to remain relevant, there should be constant communication between the so called learner's profile and the learning outcomes that will be obtained through particular programmes. Competences are abilities that the students acquire, but the learning outcomes are the competences that can be assessed and that the student knows and is able to do at the end of the study programme.

With this kind of programme one has to be aware who the learner is and how that learner can go through the whole process and achieve the requisite learning outcomes. The challenge here is making sure that those who join a university will actually succeed.

In several countries, ECTS has become a part of HE law. It is important that HEIs understand the philosophy behind ECTS and that this is a culture, with the allocation of credits being a part of that culture. Having said

this, one must point out that transparency and easy access to accreditation and recognition are key issues of students and teachers. In addition to this, the Lisbon strategy "Europe 2020" states that the further development focuses directly and indirectly on recognition and permeability.

Quality assurance should be all pervasive in the system, arching from learning modules, learning programmes, the organisational and sectoral levels, the national level and even the EQF. These have to be based on qualitatively related learning outcomes and quantitatively related credits. The final aim for this is to achieve one credit system for all education and training having at least a level of comparability between the ECTS and ECVET. This is particularly relevant due to the fact that the EHEA comprises more countries than the Copenhagen Process (VET).

Such a system should enable a degree of knowledge transfer between VET institutions and HE institutions, based around credits. Eventually this should lead to the integration of qualifications that are credit based.

The ECTS Users' Guide and Qualifications Frameworks have a number of principles that are in common. These include:

- Open Access
- Mobility
- Quality
- Employability
- Recognition
- Lifelong Learning

Nevertheless, both initiatives mandated the need for a paradigm shift towards student centred learning. The focus in this case is put on the learner or the student, rather than the professor or the academic. Such a shift will cause a number of fundamental changes in Higher Education due to the changes in the taught processes involved. The paradigm shift is built around the need for increased transparency, better defined learning outcomes that allow the student to carry out more work on his own, the increased possibilities given through greater flexibility and choices for students. Nevertheless, this system needs to remain reliable, whilst ensuring the employability of learners and still providing them with the necessary support, even if contact hours with staff should be reduced. A truly student centred education should also comprise elements of formal, informal and non-formal education.

The learning outcomes are at the basis of the paradigm shift since they allow student and academic to identify the workload and to allocate credits. The learning outcomes have to be linked to the assessment of the individual study units and also to the teaching and learning methods that are adopted. The way Learning outcomes are designed serve to characterise the profile of the programme and its educational component.

In addition to this, in order for greater impetus to be given to the paradigm shift towards student-centred learning, an indelible link is to be created between ECTS and learning outcomes. In writing learning outcomes, academics should use active verbs that describe activities and not situations. Thus the learning outcomes should be expressed in an active mode (rather than a passive mode). One must also keep in mind that the standard and threshold of particular learning outcomes should be comparable to the levels of the particular study units in such a way that these would be compatible.

An explanation was also given of the cycle structure wherein each cycle leads to a particular degree. Each cycle has to be built around a stipulated range of credits that holistically demonstrate and allow for the progress of learning. The cycle structure allows for a number of possible sub-degrees. Every degree has to be specifically related to a subject/discipline/field and area of study. Thus even if a student should be able to progress from one cycle to the next, every cycle exists independently of the one before or after it.

The comparability should exist on three levels – horizontally, vertically and laterally. Horizontal comparability, this refers to two programmes at a particular level, which have been defined according to the National Qualifications Framework. Since these programmes are at the same level, regardless of the fact that they could be delivered by different institutions, then these should be comparable.

Vertical comparability refers to when a student progresses from one level to the next, generally within the same area or sector. On the other hand lateral comparability refers to the situation where the units followed from a particular programme could be used to allow for the student to progress to a higher level, and to obtain a different qualification in a different area or sector altogether.

The different cycles also determine the number of years over which a programme in a particular level should be delivered. The cycle structure allows for some flexibility in that a degree programme could be offered in a 3+2 or 4+1 years, at the end of which the student would be at postgraduate level. At Bachelor level, students need to follow a minimum of 180 credits and a maximum 240 credits. Once a student completes 300 credits or more, then he should be considered to be at Master's level. A number of exclusions may also however apply.

Recognition of degrees, can occur at a number of levels, namely the regional, national, EU and even global level. The internationalisation process requires that degrees obtained in a particular cycle and at a particular level should be comparable to those that are offered at the same cycle and level but at another institution, possibly in another country altogether. The same also applies for the progression between levels.

In terms of the recognition requirements, the learning outcomes could serve one of 4 purposes:

- **Additional** – refer to any module and could be used as an add-on (ex. 7<sup>th</sup> semester)
- **Substitutive** – These refer to particular or identified modules where neutral subject areas on an ad hoc basis
- **Complementary** – these again refer to identified modules but which allow for the learner to acquire a different insight into the subject area. These necessitate block agreements and are generally a part of integrated programmes
- **Synergetic** – These learning outcomes allow for the acquisition of an altogether new insight into a subject area through joint teaching and learning methods. These can be used either in joint degrees or else in flexible programmes that allow for a number of options.

With regards to the weighting to be given to particular credits, two generic formats can be adopted, either that of any size or that of having a fixed size. The latter has the advantage of creating a standardised system but which seems to impose a top down approach on the members of the HEI where the academics have to restrict the content on the basis of the credits available. If the weighting is allowed to be freely determined, this would have the advantage of allowing for open discussions, however it could also allow for a number of elements not strictly related to ECTS to effect the discussions. The weighting allocated to particular study units should be evaluated on a period basis, ideally before, during and after implementation.

One must keep in mind that ECTS were created mainly to protect the interests of students, thus the workload per particular study unit has to be adequate. Any student may decide to keep on studying for a longer period, or may even possibly increase the number of study units followed but the institutions have to give evidence that a student can finish if he or she wants to.

The grading scale for ECTS has been removed, however grading and assessment should be as fair as possible. It is important to point out that there should be no penalisation whatsoever for students who would have had a study period abroad. Thus credits are awarded to the student for a defined performance and the awarding of the credit indicates that the student was successful in that particular task. Grades have to be part of the national grading system and also depend on the respective study unit and examination regulations.

#### **4.4 Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

Stakeholders present stated that ECTS are measurable tools that give an element of transparency whilst allowing the credits themselves to give an element of success. In Malta there will not be two credit systems, but one credit system for VET and HEI. This direction should allow for lesser ambiguity in the interpretation of the success of the learners.

#### **4.5 Participation of Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions in Projects and Programmes aimed at promoting the European Higher Education Area**

**Mr. Volodymyr Kuzka, National Academy of Public Administration, Ukraine**

This presentation was revolved around the main characteristics of the Bologna Process in Ukraine which are currently the major driving forces of change within HE.

The creation of the EHEA presupposes a number of elements, including the:

- Three-cycle system of higher and vocational education
- Introduction of the Diploma Supplement
- Academic Mobility of students and teachers
- A strategy for the internationalisation of Higher Education through the implementation of vocational education programmes offered in different languages
- Better student services
- Specialisation of international university services
- Conducting marketing researches in the field of Higher Education
- Organisation of the education market
- Recognition of qualifications of graduates
- Comparability of requirements of the European system of quality assurance of education institutions
- Development of internal university education quality control systems
- Involvement of students and employers in the external evaluation of universities

It was stated that in Ukraine, the understanding of the Bologna Process is distorted and it is often used as a justification for educational reform, or the lack thereof. Ukraine joined the Bologna Process in 2005, spurred by the European aspirations of the Orange Revolution. To date, some of the most important developments include the approval of an action plan on the QA in Higher Education and its integration into the European and global educational community. In addition to this, there have been a number of amendments to the law on Higher Education that were inspired by the Bologna principles and recommendations. Ukraine has been included as a governmental member of the EQAR and there was the establishment of a working group to develop a NQRF for Higher Education.

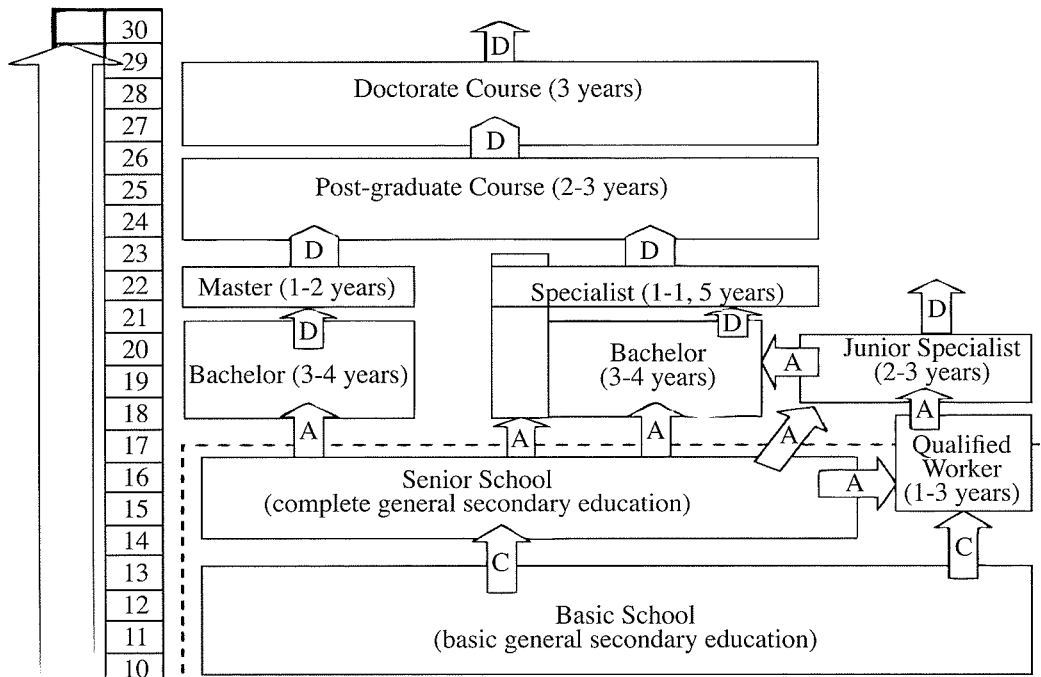
Progress has been registered in the implementation of the two-cycle system, the implementation of quality assurance in the field of Higher Education, and the recognition of diplomas and previous study periods. There has also been the pilot implementation of the ECTS that have been completed in the first and second cycles. The Ministry of Education of Ukraine has ordered the implementation of ECTS in 2009. Over 75% of institutions and programmes are in the process of introducing ECTS and around 5% have introduced ECTS for both transfer and accumulation purposes.



The implementation of the Diploma Supplement so far is partial and there is a gradual process of the introduction of the Bologna DS. With regards to the establishment of the NQF, Ukraine has arrived at the stage where the purpose of the NQF has been agreed and the process is underway.

Ukraine has also established a national quality assurance system within the Ministry of Education and Science. The ministry is also responsible for recognising foreign qualifications for the purpose of academic study or work in the country.

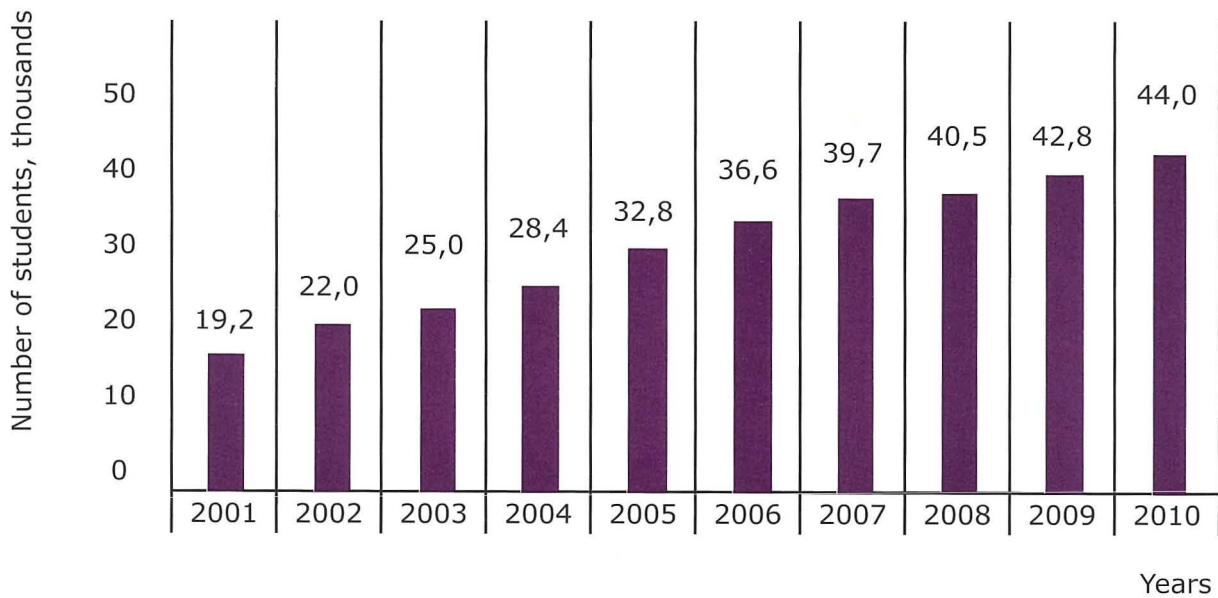
The educational progression in Ukraine can be described as follows:



There exist various types of Higher Education Institutions in Ukraine, including universities (level 4 accreditation), Academies (level 4 accreditation), institutes (level 3 accreditation), conservatories (level 3 accreditation), colleges (level 2 accreditation) and technical and vocational schools (level 1 accreditation).

Universities and academies are in charge of delivering a complete Higher Education, with students finishing either with specialist or masters degrees. Basic Higher Education is provided by institutes where students finish with Bachelor degrees after 4 years of study. Vocational schools and colleges provide junior specialist levels of education after 3 years of study.

An overview was given of the Ukrainian HEIs in the EHEA from the perspective of whether these are inclusive or not. It was stated that Ukrainian HEIs are inadequately funded and are quite insular as not a single HEI is affiliated to any European network for HEIs.



The number of foreign students in Ukraine has seen a gradual and steady rise over the past 9 years. The majority of incoming students come from China (6,258), Russia (3,886) and Turkmenistan (3,823). Other important sending countries include India, Jordan, Nigeria, Iran, Syria, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Ukrainian HEIs also participate in a number of EU programmes and projects, including TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus, the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Seventh Framework programme. Thirty HEIs from Ukraine have participated in the TEMPUS programme. Several institutions in Ukraine have been involved either as coordinators, contractors or partners in 80 Joint European Projects in TEMPUS III (2000-2006) and in 29 Structural and Complementary measures projects.

The impact of the TEMPUS programme has been notable in terms of improvement for university governance and management. It has served to upgrade curricula and develop new courses and programmes. It has also led to the professional development of teaching staff especially in particular areas (such as economics, foreign languages, social science and EU studies). This has led to an increased competitiveness of universities and the establishment of long-term partnerships with European counterparts. The tempus programme has also contributed to the introduction of a number of new research projects and exchange programmes and to strengthen the cooperation between universities and enterprises.

With regards to the Erasmus Mundus Programme, there has been an increase in the number of students and staff participating in the past years. On the other hand, the results for the Partnerships (External Cooperation Window, Action 2) were as follows:

<b>Year of Grant Allocation</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Undergraduate</b>	40	48	31
<b>Master</b>	26	29	31
<b>Doctorate</b>	28	29	24
<b>Post-Doctorate</b>	11	11	2
<b>Academic Staff</b>	17	11	11
<b>Total</b>	122	128	99

Under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, the success rate for applicants from Ukraine was of around 20% with the EC contributing financially to around 12% of those projects. The Ukrainian participation had one of the highest success ratios in terms of retained projects in this area. The most successful themes in terms of projects retained were those of Research Infrastructure, Science in Society and Nuclear Fission and Radiation Protection.

It was stated that HEIs still needed a framework for international mobility to attract foreign institutions and to create joint degrees as well as to foster international student exchange programmes. The future challenges for the strengthening of the EHEA project in Ukraine were listed as follows:

- completion of a three-cycle system;
- alignment of university curricula with the Bologna structure;
- curricula reform with a view to employers' needs;
- establishment of programmes for foreign students and further internationalisation of Ukraine's HE;
- creation of mechanisms for recognition of prior learning;
- development of a National Qualifications Framework compatible with the EHEA Qualification Framework;
- development of a National Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning;
- development of guidelines for the implementation of ECTS and of the Diploma Supplement of the EU/CoE/ UNESCO format;
- further development of the mechanism for equal access to HE;
- creation of the National Quality Assurance Agency for HE, in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, its full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR);
- introduction of an HEI ranking system;
- increasing the outward and inward mobility of students and academic and administrative staff of HEIs;
- assuring the portability of student grants and loans;
- professional development of research and educational staff according to modern requirements with a view to ensuring sustainable development of HE system;
- development and introduction of new educational standards (curricula reform) with a view to improving the quality of the content of education and in order to facilitate employability of graduates;
- development of academic and financial autonomy of HEIs;
- promotion of the development of Ukrainian and global cultural values, orientation towards the ideals of democratic ideas.

### ***4.6 How to use internationalisation to improve the quality in Higher Education and Research***

#### **Ms. Toril Johansson, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway**

In Norway, student mobility has become a tradition. The Norwegian HEIs are spread throughout the country and there are great differences between the various HEIs. In total there are 77 Norwegian HEIs, varying in size, academic profile, organisational structure and geographic location.

Due to Norway's geographic position, it is subject to an important level of insularity. Historically there have been strong international ties with an open economy. Today studies abroad are seen as a valuable supplement to Norway's education system as the students gain unique experience and intercultural and language skills.

Globally the number of immigrants in Norway goes up to 25% in Oslo. The origin of the immigrants is greatly varied. Primary schools in Oslo teach more than 120 languages, with some of the schools having up to 80 languages represented. A third of the pupils have a minority background and the number of immigrants is also increasing, especially from non Western-European countries. Nevertheless, the concept of internationalisation encompasses more than mobility. In Norway the concept of internationalisation was extended to include the whole education system, from primary education to research.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has published a white paper based on research literature and built around an open process with discussions and input from HEIs, student organisations, social partners and other stakeholders, as well as a number of study visits.

International cooperation is considered important for the development of Norwegian Higher Education and research. As a small country, a core point to keep in mind is that most of the world's knowledge production takes place outside Norway; which knowledge is nevertheless vital for the development and the future of the country. International cooperation is an instrument or a means to continuously increase the quality in Norwegian Higher Education and research as it is through cooperation that the advantages and the weakness of the system can be discovered.

Consequently, quality is a guiding principle for internationalisation of education in Norway. Attracting international students is a policy priority. Efforts are made to make Norwegian education institutions more attractive to foreign students and academics. Priority is given to the fact that programmes should be taught in English. The number of English-language Master's programmes (over 200), is increasing every year.

Quality is seen as a guiding principle for the entire institution. Internationalisation is a matter of interest to all students and academic staff in Norwegian education institutions, and not exclusively those who have the opportunity to go abroad. The administrative and technical staff must also be prepared and trained to deal with the internationalisation of their own institutions.

All students are encouraged to engage in intercultural dialogue and to have the ability to discuss academic matters in a foreign language. When institutions work on the implementation and qualifications frameworks they have a unique opportunity to formulate learning outcomes that take internationalisation into consideration. Having said that, it must be pointed out that without cultural awareness, the understanding of modern life and international trade and cooperation will be more difficult.

International perspectives, languages and cultural awareness are becoming increasingly important competences for those seeking employment. Internationalization of education, therefore, should not only focus on students and staff spending a certain number of semesters or years abroad. What is generally called '*internationalisation at home*' is also very important, meaning that the education provided should be international in character and competitive with respect to quality standards.

Traditionally, Norway has cooperated with the European, Nordic countries and North America. In the last couple of years, the Minister of Research and Higher Education has signed agreements, on Higher Education cooperation with new strategic partner countries, such as China, India, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Russia, and these countries are also important partners within research cooperation. To a certain extent this illustrates the change of perspectives and measures in our international relations is quite extensive.

In order to increase the attractiveness of the region, an increased focus must be placed on student centred learning. Academia is a competitive culture that is also built on cooperation as is the thinking regarding international openness of the Bologna Process. Student centred learning has a number of benefits for students as well as teachers. ESU and EI have in their report "Student-centred learning toolkit for students, staff and HE institutions" systematized and presented ideas that are helpful also in this context.

The massification of Higher Education as well as a more diverse student population will be better addressed when the different student needs are taken into consideration, especially when creating working models and different modes of delivery are chosen. In addition to this, student centred learning also allows for a wider number of benefits. As the challenges of the EHEA are global, with an increased focus on the learning outcomes rather than the teaching input, these tools allow for the embitterment of quality of Higher Education.

The intercultural dialogue also poses a challenge for Higher Education systems and the EHEA. These challenges include:

- Public responsibility
- The integration and value of students and staff hailing from different backgrounds
- Intercultural literacy and training
- The development of learning outcomes
- The need for more research

In Norway's case, the white paper also established the need to create pilot projects for the internationalisation of short professional degree studies, namely amongst which the study programmes for engineers, nurses and teachers. These were the most problematic for creating mobility exchanges. Projects will be initiated to show how to make the study programme more international.

The gathering of knowledge and experience of how both education and research can benefit from closer cooperation is also required. A group of experts was given the mandate to explore opportunities and models on this. One important issue is how students can be involved in research projects before they finish their Master degree. This is important in order to recruit more researchers, and at the same time - to show the students that a research career is an option. This could be a win-win situation. Involving the students in research cooperation will also give the students a valuable experience and a network for future cooperation.

Conducting research on effects, best practice and other issues in internationalisation of Higher Education is another priority line. The need is felt to acquire more information, whilst at the same time collect what is already available and making it available for common use. Institutions need to be encouraged to create closer collaborations and to share international experiences and best practices on internationalisation at home. Discrepancies may exist on the capacity of different HEIs to do this successfully. A number of institutions do not have the resources to be able to this, and generally these are the ones that would derive the greatest profit from closer collaboration with fellow national partners. In addition to this, smaller institutions might, through a division of labour, be attractive as a network to quality institutions abroad.

A number of other possible actions include increasing the mobility for students, academics, administrative and technical staff. This along with the development of the necessary indicators and the promotion of the Norwegian Higher Education and research abroad should serve to increase the attractiveness of the Norwegian Higher Education system. In addition to this, improving the practical arrangements for international students and academics should be sought to facilitate mobility.

One of the single most important problems that students encounter when going on a mobility period abroad is funding. Norway offers one of the best state funding possibilities for international student mobility. In Norway most Higher Education is public and free of charge for the students. Norwegian students are entitled to the same amount of money to cover living expenses whether they are studying in Norway or abroad. Since Norway is a high cost country, Norwegian students generally live well on the financial support they receive when they go abroad.

The students are free to choose whatever country, university or study programme they like – as long as the education is recognized and can be considered to be at the same level as Norwegian Higher Education. Moreover the state will give loans and grants to cover a fair part of any possible tuition fees and travel costs. Even extra grants might be granted to cover expenses in connection with studies at high quality institutions.

International student mobility should be based on quality. Therefore, it is a goal to increase the number of Norwegian participants in quality student exchange programmes and at prestigious foreign universities. This again presupposes a high standard of information and guidance about quality study abroad opportunities.

Study periods abroad will continue to have high priority, especially student exchange and degree studies at master's level (graduate students). The Norwegian government plans to adjust the financial support scheme for tuition fees in order to make it financially more attractive to study at foreign institutions of high quality. Basically, the government wants to give larger grants to cover tuition fees at institutions of high quality. It is a challenging task to develop a system that is fair and transparent, and that measures quality. Quality is a multidimensional benchmark and thus in order to be able to satisfactorily compare institutions, one must benchmark like with like.

#### **4.7 Question Time and Discussion - Chaired by Dr. James Calleja, NTBE Coordinator**

One participant stated that even if in some country the marketing language is not used, there is concern about the ethical dimension of internationalisation. In this regard, there are also initiatives for creating ethical charters for universities on what the principles of collaboration in HEIs should be, which would also be an interesting suggestion for the oncoming ministerial meeting.

It was moreover stated that the perspective on internationalisation is very different in the different countries, and can vary depending upon whether one comes from a country with a known language or from one of those countries that compete in the education market.

Another participant held that with regards to ethical concerns one had to look at how the concept of human beings was to be understood in terms of Higher Education. Systems should be adapted for people and not the other way around.

#### ***4.8 Exchange of Good Practice on what is being done at a National/Institutional level to best improve Europe as a Higher Education destination***

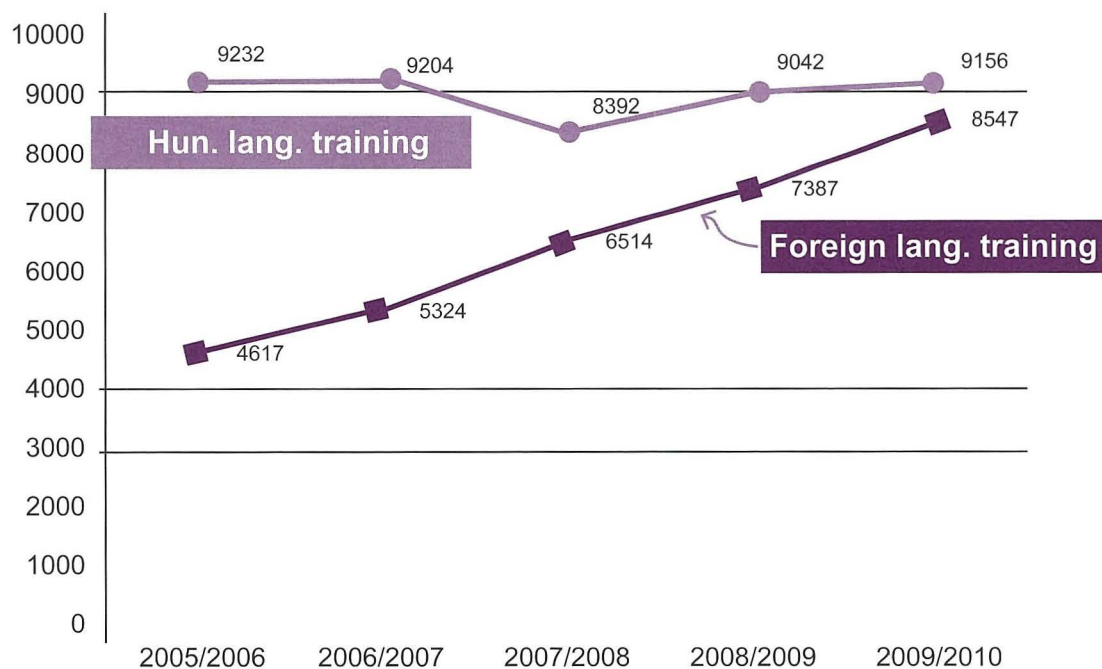
##### **Ms. Erzsébet Szlamka, Ministry of National Resources, Hungary**

An overview was given of the student mobility where it was held that whilst 21 countries had balanced mobility, 5 countries were predominantly receiving students whilst 11 were sending countries.

An evaluation of the ratio of foreign to local students in Hungary was also given. In the past 5 years, although there has been a decrease in the global number of students studying in Hungary, the number of international students has been consistently on the rise, meaning therefore that the ratio is becoming increasingly stronger for foreign students. Thus whilst 3.4% of all students in 2001/02 were foreign, the ratio went up to 4.9% in 2009/10. If one had to consider only the full-time students, then this figure would go up further to 6.2% of all students.

It was stated that a strategy which adapts to the country-specific circumstances is required. Approximately 60% of the foreign students studying full time at HEIs in Hungary are Hungarians from neighbouring countries. The most important sending countries for Hungary are Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, in that order.

In the past few years, there has also been a steep rise in the number of students following degree programmes in a foreign language, whereas the number of students following programmes in Hungarian has remained mostly constant over the past few years.



A national strategy for student and staff mobility is being developed under the auspices of the National Ministry of Resources. This is being done in collaboration with the National Office for Research and Technology and the Balassi Institute. Funding for this strategy has been obtained from the TEMPUS Public Foundation.

A good practice example was also given with regards to the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. It was stated that this University is quite unique in that it has perfectly balanced student mobility – it is capable of receiving 250 students and it sends 250 students as well. This form of balanced mobility is important since it serves to mitigate the dangers of brain drain by balancing out the number of students which are actually sent abroad. In addition to this the University has a number of exchange programmes and is a member of a number of international networks that allows it to reach these forms of agreement.

One such form agreement is T.I.M.E (Top Industrial Managers for Europe) which is a programme upon the completion of which the student would have obtained 2 Diplomas by the end of the full 6 year duration. The students start their studies with a 2 year period in Hungary, spend the subsequent two years abroad and return to Hungary to complete the final 2 years of the programme and to obtain their Masters' degree. In addition to this, the students will only be capable of getting their foreign qualification if they finish their studies in Hungary, thus this gives the students the motivation to return and to continue studying in Hungary. This form of *sandwich* training is believed to mitigate the prevalence of brain-drain.

In addition to this it was stated that the state has also realised the importance of marketing. It is held that private enterprise and the state should work together on the marketing of Higher Education in that particular country. One such programme in Hungary was the Campus Hungary programme which was a study transfer programme where students could obtain information about where and how to study in Hungary.

### 4.9 MCAST: Opening Windows

#### Mr. Anthony Saliba

The presentation was started with an anonymous quote saying "Every time I close the door on reality it comes in through the window". On this note, Mr. Saliba gave an excerpt of his own experience as a headmaster at a church college in Malta which he believed was an important experience of him in terms of allowing him to feel part of a larger community and also by showing him the importance of the relevance of the broader dimension.

The theme of windows was carried on when an analysis of their use was carried out in that these allow people to communicate, meet others and form networks. This metaphor was used to show the efforts done by MCAST to enrich students & staff VET experiences at international level as well as to enhance collaboration with foreign institutions and partners.

The benefits of creating networks through a strong policy in favour of the internal dimension were also listed. Amongst these one finds the learning from the expertise and knowledge of foreign institutions and universities. This has led to enriching the MCAST VET courses through the adoption of Learning Outcomes, the Quality Assurance system, delivery and also making VET more attractive. Thus there are a number of benefits that can result from such partnerships and collaborations.

On the international level, MCAST has forged a number of collaborations with foreign partners, including BTEC, City & Guilds, the University of York, the University of Kent, Fraunhofer IAO and Lancaster University. Of fundamental importance to MCAST was the role of Fraunhofer since through this collaboration it had managed to launch 19 vocational degrees. MCAST had also applied for ESF funding and was still in the process of establishing a mobility and international office for staff and students.

The first batch of students that graduated from MCAST with vocational degrees did so in 2010. To date the areas in which vocational degrees are offered have increased to include:

- Art & Design
- Business & Commerce
- Electrical & Electronics Engineering
- IT
- Mechanical Engineering
- Biomedical Engineering
- Agricultural studies
- Marine Engineering
- Health and Care
- Building & Construction Engineering
- Media (moving image)

The theme of the Bologna Process was also used to describe the Bologna Process as a means to achieve an interactive international that is committed to sharing and pulling down the barriers to further and Higher Education set up by country borders. Referring to the Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, it must be stated that this refers to such concepts as Student-Centred learning, responding to the needs of society, equitable access and completion as well as lifelong learning and mobility. These are all key concepts on which MCAST is setting its targets of becoming more Bologna compliant and thereby increasing the attractiveness of the institution to both eventual foreign students, as well as other like institutions.

In conclusion it was stated that what happens in Higher Education depends mostly on the learning process students go through at lower levels as this would be nothing but the result of the previous years of education. Institutions were encouraged to be *more daring*.

In addition to this it was stated that a national strategic plan for fostering internationalisation with foreign VET institutions and colleges was needed and finally that VET should enjoy a parity of esteem at further and Higher Education levels.



## **5. Closing Remarks – Dr. Philip von Brockdorff**

Dr. von Brockdorff commented on the fact that whilst it was interesting and important that Maltese HEIs forge more links and ties with foreign institutions, it was equally important that it collaborated much further for the creation of not only these links, but also to share resources and avoid the duplication of efforts.

### **5.1 Outcomes of the meeting**

The objective of this seminar was to explore how international openness as defined by the Bologna Process could be extended to include all forms of Higher Education including VET/HE and to discuss how the external dimension process can transform HE into one overarching system that includes all HE systems.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the EHEA and the wider world are becoming increasingly interdependent. This creates the need for European HE stakeholders to support and promote international openness.

A stronger strategy is needed for EHEA to determine its approach towards non-EHEA countries as well as a clear definition of what International Openness means to the EHEA and what levels of international openness are participating member states ready to accept. Having said that, it is not only the political considerations that should be given importance, but of equal paramount are the ethical considerations that need to be taken into account in devising such a strategy.

The problem of quality vs. quantity was mentioned, as were the brain gain vs brain drain, studying locally vs. staying abroad, cooperation vs competition and the increase of mobility opportunities. New forms of mobility programmes such as joint modules, investing more in virtual mobility and achieving internationalisation at 'home' were proposed as possible remedies to these challenges.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

More coordinated efforts between the various BFUG structures, and increased levels of funding to avoid the potential slow-down of future common efforts of pursuing the international openness on the EHEA agenda are also required.

Regardless of the reasons for internationalisation, there is still a requirement for structured investment in the marketing of the EHEA. This can be achieved through national support based on both external policy and financial investment. In addition to this, participation in EHEF fairs and Erasmus Mundus should be encouraged. This is needed to show the benefits of EU level information and marketing efforts to all the members of the EHEA. This should be coupled with increased focus on the internationalisation aspects on all levels including raising awareness, developing ownership, building up relationships, searching for new sources and catering for the administrative assistance required to facilitate the necessary changes.

Guidelines and support should be provided for the implementation of the States' role to reach full commitment from the HEIs for the internationalization.

A programme to help Student Unions to motivate students should also be considered as this would be the single most important bottom up approach or measure that can be taken with regards to the external dimension and international openness.

Whilst all stakeholders are aware that a strategy with more concrete action lines was needed, this should take into consideration the challenges of mobility and should take measures to inform the HEIs of the consequences

of international openness. Just focussing on promoting HEIs is not enough for the institutions that are already facing a lot of barriers and that remain concrete obstacles for HEIs to open their windows. The mainstreaming of internationalisation is crucial; internationalisation needs to be made an institutional thread rather than simply a departmental task. The role of HEIs is of fundamental importance in this process since it is they who have to be prepared to face the social and economic consequences of international openness.

Institutions should not be considered in isolation, but rather in the realities that they exist in. Thus immigration and visa requirements should not be ignored when discussing this process and the current challenges that it faces.

Nevertheless, the targets towards increased international openness cannot be achieved without harmonisation between the aims of the different HEIs, national interests and European external policy. Moreover, as in other international matters, reciprocity should be the fundamental rule to be followed.

Universities will always set their own standards and their own conditions – to what extent could one discuss comparability between institutions will always remain subject to interpretation and one cannot have all the information to be able to make the fairest judgement possible. Thus there should be respect for autonomy, but all the stakeholders involved should be open to the various forms of learning in the different institutions.

## List of Seminars

### **2009-2011 Bologna cycle:**

- *Quality Assurance: A National Bologna Process Seminar, 19 November 2010.*
- *The Bologna Process: A National Bologna Expert Training Session, 14 December 2010.*
- *Employability: A National Bologna Process Seminar, 20 January 2011.*
- *Student-Centred Learning: A Bologna Process International Conference, 16-17 February 2011.*
- *Education, Research and Innovation: A National Bologna Process Seminar, 10 March 2011.*
- ***International Openness and the External Dimension: A Bologna Process International Seminar, 18-19 April 2011.***
- *Learning Outcomes: A Bologna Process Training Conference, 20 May 2011.*

## List of Publications

### **2009-2011 Bologna cycle:**

- *The Impact of the Bologna Process on Higher Education Institutions in Malta - An overview of the targets achieved and future challenges.*
- *Quality Assurance, Employability and Education, Research & Innovation - A Report.*
- *Bologna Expert Training Session & Learning Outcomes Seminar - A Report.*
- *Student-Centred Learning A Bologna Process International Conference - A Report.*
- ***International Openness and the External Dimension Seminar - A Report.***
- *Bologna Expert Training Session, Student-Centred Learning, International Openness & the External Dimension and Learning Outcomes - Information Booklet.*
- *Bologna Process Malta - At a Glance.*

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>BFUG</b>	Bologna Follow-up Group
<b>CDESR</b>	Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research
<b>EAET</b>	European Area of Education and Training
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>EHEA</b>	European Higher Education Area
<b>EI</b>	Education International
<b>ESG</b>	European Standards and Guidelines
<b>ESU</b>	European Students' Union
<b>EUA</b>	European University Association
<b>EUPA</b>	European Union Programmes Agency
<b>GEI</b>	Global Education Index
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HEIs</b>	Higher Education Institutions
<b>ITS</b>	Institute of Tourism Studies
<b>KSU</b>	Kunsill tal-iStudenti Universitarji (University Students' Council)
<b>MEEF</b>	Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family
<b>MCAST</b>	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
<b>MQC</b>	Malta Qualifications Council
<b>NCHE</b>	National Commission for Higher Education
<b>NQFs</b>	National Qualifications Frameworks
<b>NTBE</b>	National Team of Bologna Experts
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>UoM</b>	University of Malta
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training





This initiative is funded with support from the European Commission