

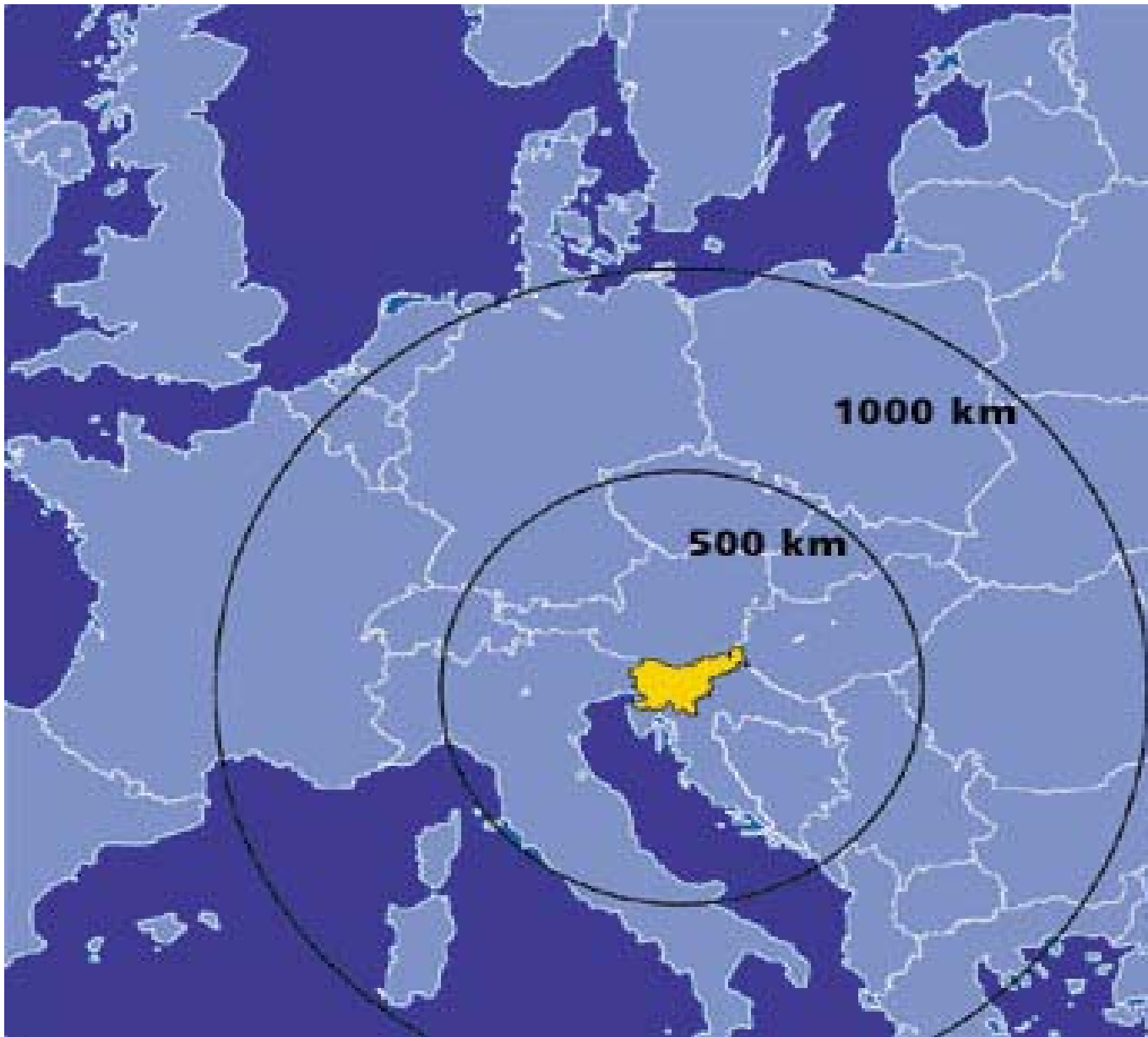
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***Four dimensions of the Bologna Process,
many challenges of the
European Higher Education Area***

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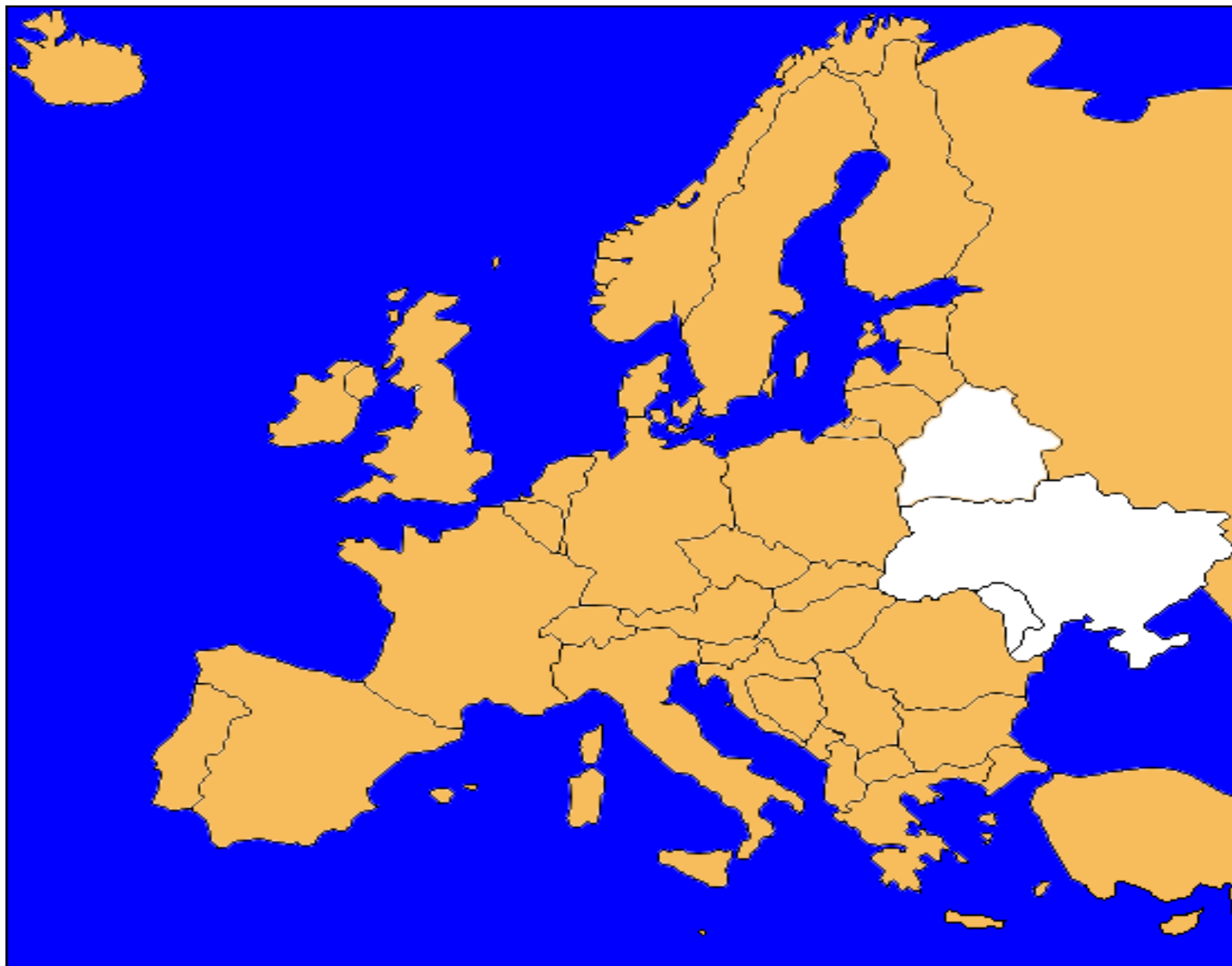


I am coming from Slovenia.

European Union > 1st May 2004



The 'Bologna countries' > before Bergen 2005



1.0 What is the Bologna Process?

Traditionally, European systems of higher education have been *extremely diverse*.

The process of gradual *European re-integration after 1990* hasn't affected only politics, economy and trade but also *(higher) education, research and culture*. There is a common need to 'tune' educational structures and make them 'easy readable' and compatible.

In June 1999, ministers of education from 29 countries signed the *Bologna Declaration*; their *initiative* (= *the Bologna Process*) aims at creating a common *European Higher Education Area* (= *EHEA*) until 2010 in order to promote *broad mobility* of students and graduates as well as teachers and researchers *across European countries*.

However, the context and the history of this initiative are much broader.

2.0 The Bologna Process: its historical context

- 1987** *Socrates Erasmus* program was established in EU
- 1988** *Magna Charta Universitatum* signed in Bologna
- 1989** The *European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)* was launched as a *pilot scheme* within *Erasmus*
- 1990** EU-*Tempus* program was established (Central and Eastern European countries; broadened later)
- 1992** *Maastricht Treaty*: EU integration vs. *education*
- 1997** *Lisbon Recognition Convention* (Council of Europe and Unesco; 46 countries); *Diploma Supplement*
- 1998** *Sorbonne Declaration* (4 countries)
- 1999** *Bologna Declaration* (29 countries)
- 2001** *Prague Communiqué* (33 countries)
- 2003** *Berlin Communiqué* (40 countries)
- 2003** EU-*Erasmus Mundus* program was established

3.0 Ten ‘Bologna’ action lines

Bologna 1999:

- (1) A system of easily readable and comparable degrees
- (2) A system essentially based on two main cycles (*Ba/Ma*)
- (3) A system of credits (*ECTS*; 60 points per one year)
- (4) Promotion of mobility (e.g. *Erasmus* program)
- (5) European co-operation in quality assurance
- (6) ‘European dimension’ in higher education

Prague 2001:

- (7) *Lifelong learning (and ICT) in higher education*
- (8) *The role of higher education institutions and students*
- (9) *Attractiveness of the EHEA for other world regions*

Berlin 2003:

- (10) EHEA connected to ERA (*European Research Area*);
doctoral studies as the third ‘Bologna’ cycle

4.0 Four ‘Bologna’ dimensions

In general, ‘Bologna’ is understood in Europe of today primarily as a change (‘harmonization’; ‘tuning’) of the national *degree structures* towards two / three cycles system (*Bachelor, Master, PhD*).

Debates in the framework of the Bologna Process made clear that *structural changes* in systems of higher education are closely related to *social and cultural issues*.

Broader *European* and *external effects* of the proposed reforms are also envisaged. Therefore -- and for purposes of a comprehensive presentation -- ‘Bologna’ could be classified into four ‘dimensions’:

- (1) *the European dimension,*
- (2) *the structural dimension,*
- (3) *the social dimension,*
- (4) *the external dimension.*

4.1.0 The European Dimension

The term ‘*European dimension in higher education*’ is used frequently in the Bologna Process (its 6th action line!) – but fuzzy: it is used differently in different contexts.

In a rather narrow meaning, it usually refers to *common development and delivery of modules / courses / studies* (e.g. ‘*European joint degrees*’).

At another hand, it refers to *much broader agenda(s)*: not only to an increasing mobility, using advantages of diversities in learning, teaching and research environments and academic traditions but also practicing multilingualism and multiculturalism, constructing a new European identity / citizenship / employability etc., etc.

Thus, this term is connected to some basic issues of the process of *European integration*.

4.1.1 Diversity, harmonization, subsidiarity

Diversity as an obstacle: Does the imminent process of integration allow such huge diversity of systems, standards, symbols, contents, etc. as European countries have developed in their particular histories?

Harmonization as a danger: What risks would we expose the process of integration if we demanded ‘*harmonization*’ of all these contents, symbols and systems?

Subsidiarity as the principle: Each country should keep responsibilities in (higher) education matters *without* ‘*supranational harmonization*’ in legislation; however, in a dialogue and co-operation they all seek for more compatibility and common structures; they promote co-operation on a higher level.

4.1.2 EU Amsterdam Treaty 1999, Article 149

Chapter 3: Education, Vocational Education and Youth

- »1. The Community *shall contribute to the development of quality education* by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, *while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.*«
- »4. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council [...] shall adopt *incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States* [...].«.
- (There is a similar provision on *vocational training* in the **Article 150** of the Treaty.)

4.1.3 ‘Open Method of Co-ordination’

The Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) » will be applied as an instrument for the development of a coherent and comprehensive strategy in education and training within the framework of Art. 149 and 150 of the Treaty.

The Lisbon Conclusions defined the OMC as a means of *spreading best practice* and *achieving greater convergence* towards the main EU goals and indicated that it would be *a fully decentralised approach* using variable forms of partnerships and designed to help Member States to develop their own policies progressively.

The OMC will draw on *tools* such as indicators and benchmarks as well as on comparing best practice, periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review etc. organised as *mutual learning processes*.« - Council of the EU on *education and training systems*, 20 February 2002.

4.2.0 The Structural Dimension

In the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) ministers engaged **»in co-ordinating our policies** to reach in the short term, and in any case ***within the first decade of the third millennium***, the following objectives, which we consider to be of primary relevance in order ***to establish the European area of higher education*** and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide:«

- Adoption of *a system of easily readable and comparable degrees*,
- of a system essentially *based on two main cycles*,
- establishment of the *system of credits* (like ECTS),
- promotion of *mobility* by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of *free movement*,
- promotion of European co-operation in *quality assurance*,
- promotion of the necessary *European dimensions*.

4.2.1 A Common Qualifications Framework

Six years later: in the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (Copenhagen, January 2005) *three main cycles* (with descriptors of learning outcomes and competences; workload expressed in ECTS credits) have been proposed:

» *Short cycle* (within the first cycle) qualifications may typically include / be represented by approximately 120 ECTS credits;

First cycle qualifications may typically include / be represented by 180-240 ECTS credits;

Second cycle qualifications may typically include / be represented by 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of 2nd cycle;

Third cycle qualifications do not necessarily have credits associated with them.«

4.2.2 European Standards in QA

Six years later: in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (report from the 'E-4 Group', February 2005) proposals have been agreed for:

- European standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance (QA) of higher education;
- European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies;
- peer review system for quality assurance agencies (cyclical reviews);
- a 'register' of external QA agencies operating in Europe,
- the European Consultative Forum for QA in higher education.

4.3.0 The Social Dimension

In the *Berlin Communiqué* (2003), ministers reaffirmed »the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The need to *increase competitiveness* must be balanced with the objective of *improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area*, aiming at strengthening *social cohesion* and *reducing social and gender inequalities* both at national and at European level.

In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that *higher education is a public good and a public responsibility*. They emphasize that in international academic cooperation and exchanges, academic values should prevail.«

4.3.1 The Social Dimension vs. the Lisbon Strategy

Social dimension = a set of mechanisms aiming to ensure *equality of opportunities* and *social cohesion* in order to lead majority of (young) people to best fulfillment of their *potential*: access to quality HE, counseling, financial and material support, care for special needs, promoting of (European) mobility, etc.

Participants of the official Bologna seminar on the social dimension of the EHEA (Paris, January 2005) »admit that *strengthening the social dimension* of higher education is one of the conditions for making real a knowledge society, *a core objective of the Lisbon strategy*, which implies increasing the number of graduates from higher education«. (*Recommendations from the Seminar.*)

4.4.0 The External Dimension

Gradual '*Bologna*' expanding: from 29 to 45 (?) countries.

European integration processes vs. higher education and research: what are the (geographic, political, cultural etc.) *limits of the EHEA*? – EU and non-EU countries vs. 'third countries'.

Berlin communiqué: »Countries party to the *European Cultural Convention* [1954; 46 countries] shall be eligible for membership of the European Higher Education Area provided that they at the same time declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education.«

What shall be the relation between the EHEA and 'third countries'?

4.4.1 The ‘Attractive’ EHEA

Bologna Declaration (1999): »We must look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European systems of HE. We need to ensure that the European HE system acquires a *world-wide degree of attraction*.«

Berlin communiqué (2003): »Ministers agree that the *attractiveness and openness* of the European HE should be reinforced. They confirm their readiness to further develop scholarship programs for students from third countries.

Ministers declare that *transnational exchanges* in HE should be governed on the basis of *academic quality and academic values*, and agree to work in all appropriate fora to that end. In all appropriate circumstances such fora should include the *social and economic partners*.

They encourage the *co-operation with regions in other parts of the world* by opening Bologna seminars and conferences to representatives of these regions.«

5.0 Bologna Follow-up

Ministerial conferences (biannual)

Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)

Board of the BFUG (and working groups)

Official Bologna Follow-up Seminars

Stocktaking (and national reports)

Trends reports (I. – IV.)

General Reports (2001, 2003, 2005)

Eurydice Focus on Structures

Academic and student conventions

Joint projects and networks

Surveys and studies

Involvement of stakeholders

Media

6.0 Main ‘Bologna’ concerns of today

The 4th Bologna Conference: 19-20 May 2005 / Bergen, Norway <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no>

The expected developments in 2005:

- Establishment of an agreed set of common standards, procedures and guidelines for *quality assurance*.
- Establishment of an *overarching framework of qualifications* for the European Higher Education Area.
- Mutual *recognition of degrees and study periods* on basis of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (ratifications).
- New members to be accepted.
- A common vision for 2010 to be set up.

6.1 The Process: movement vs. results

The Bologna Process is now already in the second half; what would be the final score?

Recent discussions produced a draft **»vision of the EHEA** in which learners and staff can **move freely** and avail themselves of **opportunities** based on their qualifications and experience, thus **enriching** the educational, cultural and social life of **Europe as a whole**. [...] It is an area where Governments are committed to using education policy as a key instrument not only to **enable learners to reach their personal potential**, but also to deliver **wider social and economic benefits**.«

Monitoring of the Bologna Process (stocktaking) shows that there are as developments as delays.

6.2 Towards 2010 – what scenario?

Gradual broadening of the ‘Bologna Club’ brings a danger of the ‘*two-speed Bologna*’. New questions:

- 2010: could we expect a need to reschedule the agenda or a need to define the next phase of reforms?
- What structures (governance) for the emerging EHEA? Minimum and maximum scenarios: **(a) *voluntary reform*** movement based on OMC vs. **(b) *binding structures***? A need for international (transnational) legal agreement?

A limitation of voluntary reforms in independent national HE systems and a call for a common legislative solution *the Dany Bidar Case*. Judgment of the *European Court of Justice* (15 March 2005): *Assistance covering maintenance costs of students falls within the scope of application of the EC Treaty for the purposes of the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality.*

6.2 Implementing Bologna: interpreting Bologna?

Despite obvious and important developments of last years, national and institutional particularities (could) cause *different approaches to implementation* and open the question: What is 'the genuine Bologna'?

Trends IV (25 March 2005): »introduction of the two or three cycles levels gives ample room for *different and at times conflicting interpretations* regarding the duration and orientation of programs«.

Running HE reforms are a huge challenge to all *national governments*; they are in the center of their problems and (future) developmental plans.

They are also a huge challenge to *institutions and their missions*, new types/forms of their (future) cooperation.

Lisbon Strategy five years later: *reforms in educational systems of Europe are even more urgent.*