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A decade of the Bologna Process: Major new EUA report underlines impact of Bologna reforms on Europe's universities

A new report published today by the European University Association (EUA) analyses the implementation of the Bologna Process and its impact over the last decade on higher education across 46 countries in Europe in the context of broader reform processes affecting European higher education.

The 'Trends 2010' report – based on questionnaire responses from 821 universities, 27 national university associations, and site visits to 16 countries – will be presented in Vienna this week to mark the official launch of the European Higher Education Area and the end of the first phase of the Bologna reform Process (that was started in 1999).

This major study (the sixth in the Trends series) analyses the implementation of the Bologna 'tools' in universities (e.g. new degree structures, credit transfer and accumulation systems, and the use of the diploma supplement) since the outset. Importantly, it also assesses progress towards the underlying aims of the Bologna Process, such as improving quality of teaching, graduate employability, and mobility of students and staff. Equally, it looks at some of the key challenges for policymakers as they look ahead to the next decade of higher education cooperation.

EUA President, Professor Jean-Marc Rapp, will present some of the key findings from the study at this week's Bologna Ministerial meeting. "We are now at a crucial point in the history of European higher education cooperation. This study shows that after ten years the 'Bologna architecture' is now firmly in place to build a strong common higher education area," he says. "However, it is crucial now that these reforms receive the necessary support from all stakeholders in order to create a flexible European Higher Education Area which provides graduates with all of the necessary skills to succeed in the 21st century," he adds.

These are just a selection of the key findings from the report:

- **Implementation of three degree cycles** (bachelor, master, doctorate): 95% of institutions have implemented the three cycle system (compared to 82% in last Trends report in 2007).
- **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)**: 90% of universities use the credit transfer system for all bachelors and masters (an increase from 75% in 2007). 88% also use ECTS as a credit accumulation system for all courses.
- **Use of the Diploma Supplement**: Two thirds (66%) of institutions issue a diploma supplement to all graduating students (and a further 14% do so 'on request'), a marked increase from 2007.
- **Universities' views about realisation of Bologna**: 58% of universities were 'very positive' about the realisation of the European Higher Education Area, while 38% said there had been 'mixed results'. Only 0.1% said it had been negative.
- **Implementation of degree structures in professional disciplines has been more difficult**: The implementation of bachelor/master structure in a wide variety of regulated professions such as medicine, law, engineering, dentistry has been challenging. Figures vary widely between the different professions.
- **Quality of teaching (Curricular change and student-centred learning)**: Bologna has acted as a catalyst to improve quality of teaching and move towards student-centred learning: 77% of universities have reviewed curricula in all departments under the Bologna Process (compared to 55% in 2007). 53% of universities said that learning outcomes have been developed for 'all courses' and a further 32% for 'some courses'.

- **Employability of graduates:** There are still problems linked to graduate employability particularly at the bachelor level in countries which have introduced the bachelor cycle for the first time (employers do not fully recognise this new qualification). The Master, in these countries tends to remain the basic entry standard to the labour market. In countries where the bachelor has been the basic qualification, the Master has added value to the CVs of graduates.
- **Mobility:** despite efforts to promote mobility, there is little robust data available on mobility flows and how this has progressed during Bologna.
- **Lifelong learning** continues to become strategically more important in universities. Nearly 40% of universities now have an overall strategy for lifelong learning and a further 34% are in the process of developing one. More than 80% of universities now offer professional development courses for adults, for example.
- Bologna has **stimulated moves to improve quality assurance (internal and external) in Europe:** 28 countries, for example, have already reviewed their quality assurance systems against the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance established in 2005 as part of Bologna.

The report also outlines challenges for the next decade (2010-2020) which include:

- **Improving communication** about the reforms so that all stakeholders (students, academic, employers, and society) understand the purpose and benefits of Bologna.
- **Completing implementation within universities and consolidating the qualitative changes** such as those outlined above.
- The Bologna Process must focus on a **vision of education** rather than on measurements or the more technical aspects of the tools. This requires the continuous engagement of students and institutions in the decision-making process.
- **Lack of additional public funding at national level to implement reforms:** this is particularly important in order to fully implement student-centred learning, which requires greater human and financial resources.
- The need for **closer link between the EHEA and the European Research Area** in order to ensure a coherent policy approach and achieve the goals of a Europe of knowledge.
- Policy makers and institutions need to do **more to promote mobility** and remove many of the obstacles that currently exist given the growing importance of internationalisation for universities.

Ends

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

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- Please click here to see the original Bologna Declaration from 1999:
http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/MDC/BOLOGNA_DECLARATI ON1.pdf
- All other declarations are available on this page:
http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/declarations_communiques.htm
- Download the EUA Bologna brochure to find out more about the Bologna Process:
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