

Chapter 5

EMERGENT EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES UNDER SCRUTINY

The Bologna Process from a Central European Perspective

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1. REDEFINING ROLES, MISSIONS, TASKS, AND OBLIGATIONS

The Bologna Process — creating a European Higher Education Area and the gradual, simultaneous emergence of a European Research Area — can be viewed as two sides of the same coin: that of the redefinition of the roles, missions, tasks, and obligations of the institution of the university in rapidly changing and increasingly market-driven and knowledge-based European societies and economies. Both teaching and research are undergoing substantial transformation today, and the institution of the university, until fairly recently the almost exclusive host of the two interrelated activities, in all probability will be unable to avoid the process of substantial, partly planned and partly chaotic, transformation of its functioning.

Whatever view we hold on the two parallel processes, they are already relatively well advanced in some countries and are promoted all over Europe, including in Central and East European accession countries and the Balkans (called here most often the ‘transition countries’ or ‘the region’ for the sake of brevity). Whilst the effects of the emergence of the European Research Area are basically restricted to the beneficiaries of research funds available from the EU, the Bologna Process could potentially influence the course of reform in national higher education systems in 40 countries. The Sorbonne Declaration (Declaration 1998) was signed by the Ministers of Education of the four biggest EU countries—France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The Bologna Declaration (Declaration 1999), however, was

signed by ministers from 29 countries, and at the Berlin conference in September 2003 the following newcomers were accepted: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Some may call the process a truly European integration of various higher education systems, regardless of the huge differences between them — official publications usually refer to ‘diversity’ among the countries and institutions involved — but one thing is certain: the Bologna Process in its present geographical, economic and political composition faces a tremendous challenge in maintaining an even pace for change across all the countries involved. The experience of well over a decade of social and economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans indicates that this will be the case. If the reform is not going to be a theoretical exercise in numerous countries of the region, it is likely in the years ahead that further developments of the process will require separate tracks to be accompanied by descriptions of the most essential parts of reforms, individual detailing of challenges and, most importantly, separate sets of policy recommendations for clusters of countries implementing reforms at different speeds.

Although there were separate lines of thought about the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), there has been clear convergence between them recently. There are three discernible tracks in recent developments: firstly, the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, signed in Bologna in 1988 by the rectors of European universities, initiated the track for higher education institutions, along with the Salamanca and Graz Conventions in 2001 and 2003; secondly, the Sorbonne, Bologna, Prague and Berlin meetings all concerned the track for national Ministers of Education and governments; thirdly, the EU track that consists of subsequent communiqués of the European Commission and other publications: from the first in 2000, *Towards a European Research Area*, to the two most recent in 2003, *The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge* and *Researchers in the European Research Area: One Profession, Multiple Careers*.

Recently, the supranational, intergovernmental and inter-institutional levels have become increasingly mixed. As Pavel Zgaga stresses in his recent report, in the light of EU enlargement the convergence between the Bologna Process and EU educational policy-making will become even more apparent (Zgaga 2003).

The European Commission, European governments and the vast majority of rectors of European higher education institutions seem determined to implement the ideas agreed on during subsequent ministerial summits. The least interest and determination is shown by the academic profession, i.e. those who are most directly involved. The *Trends III* report formulated the issue thus:

Four years have passed since the Bologna Declaration and it seems that the Bologna Process is now viewed by a majority of higher education representatives in most European countries as a reform agenda which cannot be ignored, but which should be dealt with proactively if universities are not to be overtaken by unwanted interpretations of what Bologna should mean at institutional level. The ongoing challenge faced by participants in the process, be they enthusiasts or sceptics, is to make sense of the Bologna objectives in each institutional context (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 25, [my italics]).

The ‘institutional contexts’ in question are all the higher education institutions in each of the signatory countries—with their students and faculty. The report states this *expressis verbis*,

deliberations on the implementation of the Bologna reforms currently involve heads of institutions more than academics. Hence, interpreting Bologna in the light of its goals and the whole context of its objectives at departmental level, i.e. rethinking current teaching structures, units, methods, evaluation and the permeability between disciplines and institutions, is a task that still lies ahead for a majority of academics at European universities (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 9).

Consequently, it seems that the actors most directly involved in the actual implementation of the Bologna ideas in the future are still largely unaware of its consequences or are unwilling to discuss them in more detail. But without clear support from the academic faculty (as complementary to ministers and rectors), both for the general reform agenda and for the details of implementation going down to departmental level, the Bologna Process may fail, particularly in the countries beyond the 15 pre-2004 members of the European Union. The whole process may come to a halt if the academic profession is neither convinced of the new opportunities it provides nor supported by new incentives to implement it. On the other hand, I have to agree with Amaral and Magalhaes’s warning signal that

if the Bologna’s convergence process gets out of the control of academics and becomes a feud of European bureaucracy, then one may well see a process of homogenisation, and this represents another factor endangering the traditional role of the European universities [sic!] (Amaral and Magalhaes 2002, p. 9).

There is a danger of the Bologna Process becoming a theoretical exercise in the region. However, the two parallel processes of creating a common European higher education area and a common European research area, the exercises in ‘core’ European countries, are not theoretical at all: what already occurs is the re-channelling of European research funds, the modification of

research and development policies, as well as the recognition of diplomas for educational and professional purposes and for mobility for academic and professional purposes on the increasingly integrated European labour market. The danger is that there may be some who are a part of it (and may be winners) and some who may potentially not be (and may be losers), especially as far as EU funding for research activities (as a consequence of the emergence of the ERA) are concerned. As Neave puts it in his thought-provoking paper on European integration in higher education,

the ‘Bologna Process’ has now reached the stage when principles begin to assume institutional form (Neave 2001, p. 2).

What he meant, I believe, was that it was high time to review the Bologna Process before practical decisions are made.

2. AVOIDING PAPER REFORM, A COLOSSAL CHALLENGE

On reading the publications and reports, the Bologna Process in its present form seems relatively closed to global developments in higher education: it may be perceived as largely inward-looking, focused mostly on European regional problems and European regional solutions in the relative absence of references to global changes in higher education and the huge political and economic transformations underlying them (for a broader perspective, see Enders 2002c; Burbules and Torres 2000; Currie and Newson 1998).

There are many issues in which sometimes, until recently, the Bologna Process has been relatively unconcerned, for example, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations and the role of ‘borderless’ education, the emerging private and for-profit sectors in higher education, the role of powerful market forces in higher education, the clearly diminishing public funds that governments are able and willing to spend on higher education, differences in the challenges faced by the EU-15 and the transition countries, etc. Some recommendations provided by the *Trends III* report seem abstract, especially with respect to the transition countries.

The general feeling one gets when reading the Bologna documentation is that it deals with relatively homogeneous higher education and research structures that have fairly similar problems and that are facing fairly similar challenges in the future. Despite numerous references to the ‘diversity’ of systems, cultural and linguistic differences, and varying degrees of implementation of the process in various countries so far, it is very difficult to see the Bologna publications as referring to the same degree to Germany or

France on the one hand, and Albania, Macedonia and Russia on the other, to give the most striking examples among the Bologna signatory countries. What level of generality is needed in describing challenges and making recommendations for action in order for them to refer to all the countries in question? What do these contrasted national systems of higher education have in common today from the point at which we leave the most generalised level of analysis? The relevant analysis encompassing both EU-15 and the transition countries is going to be an enormous challenge in the future.

Certainly, it is possible to introduce changes in these second tier countries at an official, and particularly a legislative level. It may be relatively easy, in comparison with other planes of action, to change laws on higher education and the accompanying legal context, especially if the Bologna Process arguments of catching up with the West are used for promotional purposes. Who in the region, at least declaratively, would not like to be integrating with (West) European universities in common higher education and research ‘areas’? But certainly changing laws is not the sole means of reaching the objectives of the Bologna Process, although many officials may see it in that way, especially at the governmental level. *Trends III* summarised this attitude,

before Bologna, everyone knew that national higher education systems were indeed as different and incompatible as they looked. Bologna must avoid the risk of producing seemingly converging and compatible structures that could turn out to be, in spite of common terminology, just as irreconcilable as the old ones (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 73).

Consequently, it is going to be another colossal challenge for Bologna to avoid a ‘paper reform’, and especially to move beyond national legislation in many transition countries.

3. CHANGING UNIVERSITIES—MOVING THE CEMETERY

The *Magna Charta Universitatum* that preceded the Bologna Process *per se* by a decade and is referred to in both the Bologna Declaration and the Salamanca Convention message, is a publication with a different register to any of the later declarations and communiqués; it is general and humanistic, and from the perspective of current global and European developments in higher education it is very vague indeed.

Being a general declaration, it obviously contains few details on how to proceed; but most of all, it is written in the vocabulary of the pre-knowledge

economy and the pre-globalisation era. Consequently, and unsurprisingly, there is no mention of globally competitive knowledge economies and societies, drivers of economic growth, more and better jobs, social cohesion and social exclusion/inclusion, external pressures on higher education, emerging market forces, changing European (or any other) labour market requirements, long-term risks for private investment in public research, etc., all of which are mentioned in later ERA and EHEA publications. Instead, there are some traditional ideas concerning the roles and tasks of universities. It is interesting to note how hard it is today to give a meaning to statements such as “centres of culture, knowledge and research” are “represented by *true* universities”. The idea that the university is an institution that “produces, examines, appraises and hands down *culture* by research and tradition” ([my italics], *Magna Charta* 1988) would find very few followers among promoters of either the ERA or the EHEA (a counterpoint in the new vocabulary comes to mind from a European Commission Communiqué on the role of universities:

the knowledge society depends for its growth on the production of new knowledge, its transmission through education and training, its dissemination through information and communication technologies, and on its use through new industrial processes or services (Commission 2003b, p. 2),

or from a World Bank framework policy paper on *Constructing Knowledge Societies*:

the ability of a society to produce, select, adapt, commercialise, and use knowledge is critical for sustained economic growth and improved living standards (World Bank 2002, p. 7).

From the perspective of developments in a recent decade, the *Magna Charta Universitatum* seems somehow to be a remembrance of things past. In the context of the ERA developments, it is hard to find the continuation of ideas about the university as an institution whose “constant care is to attain universal knowledge” and which is a “trustee of the European humanist tradition” in current discussions about the “Europe of Knowledge”.

It appears that not only can we no longer talk about European integration of higher education and research as exemplified by the Bologna Process and the ERA initiative in the language of the founders of the modern German research university (von Humboldt, Schelling, Fichte, Schleiermacher, and others), but neither is it possible now to solely use the language employed by the rectors of European universities 15 years ago to describe the recent course of events on both global and European planes. The working vocabulary used for debates on the future of the university—the vocabulary of the

ERA, EHEA and global accounts of higher education and research (including those provided by UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank)—has changed substantially since 1988, and the shift in vocabulary underlies the shift in the ways we account for the roles and tasks of our educational institutions in society.

The next publication along the track of declarations and responses by academic institutions was the Graz Declaration of 2003, which was concerned with the role of universities. It was a direct response to the European Commission's communiqué on the subject. Generally, it shows how the emphases of the association of universities moved away from *The Magna Charta Universitatum* and towards both EU (ERA) and governmental (Bologna) lines of thinking. Although the preamble sounds fairly traditional (cultivating European values and culture, European cultural and linguistic diversity, fostering a stronger civic society across Europe, etc.), as we move on through the text the problems discussed are those of Bologna and ERA, and with the same level of practicality. A good example is a new way of thinking about resources for universities:

universities should be encouraged to develop in different forms and to generate funds from a variety of sources. However, higher education remains first and foremost a public responsibility... (Declaration 2003).

The shift in vocabulary is also significant, to mention just “negotiated contracts of sufficient duration to allow and support innovation” between governments and universities. It is interesting to note how the specificity of EU and governmental publications brings about new concepts and a new level of specificity in university declarations. This in turn yields both good and bad consequences: good, since similar issues are discussed in similar language; bad, because universities begin to view their most sensitive issues from the perspective of their potential funding opportunities. Currently, the balance between long- and short-term perspectives in thinking about universities certainly has been shaken; the moment market vocabulary enters the discourse on the responsibilities of universities towards society any long-term perspective becomes hard to maintain on the part of the universities. Not surprisingly, in the final paragraphs concerning “universities at the centre of reforms”, universities declare full support for changes but make it implicitly conditional on acknowledging their current and future role. To quote *in extenso*:

The Bologna Process was initially politically driven. But it is now gaining momentum because of the active and voluntary participation of all interested partners: higher education institutions, governments, students and other stakeholders. Top down reforms are not sufficient to reach the ambitious goals set for 2010. The main challenge is now to

ensure that reforms are fully integrated into core institutional functions and development processes, to make them self-sustaining. Universities must have time to transform legislative changes into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities.

Governments and other stakeholders need to acknowledge the extent of institutional innovation and the crucial contribution universities do and must make to the European Research Area and the longer term-development of the European knowledge society as outlined in the Lisbon declaration of the European Union. By united action, European higher education — which now touches the lives of more than half the population of Europe — can improve the entire continent (Declaration 2003).

It is possible to read the declaration in the following way: there will be no reforms without the support of universities (to recall Clark Kerr's oft-quoted comment: "Changing a university is difficult. It is like moving a cemetery; hard work and there is no internal support"); universities need time to introduce changes in each institution; they are eager to do this but the condition is that their role in the ERA and, more generally, in emerging knowledge-based economies, will be fully acknowledged and adequately funded with public national and supra-national resources. Thus power and knowledge (to use the traditional parlance) already seem to speak the same language; the time has come for mutual guarantees for the future (by the way, I am not entirely sure that under present conditions there is any other option possible in the long run, especially in the region in the focus of this chapter). It may be concluded that today, and perhaps especially today, the struggle between the "idea of the university" and the possible cuts in financial support, including public support, is fought on very uneven terms indeed. This is clear to all stakeholders, which is one of the reasons for the changes in tone, vocabulary and emphases in university declarations and communications between *The Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 and today.

4. ACADEMIC CAPITALISM OR PROTECTIONISM—BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

One of my tasks in the present chapter is to analyse how and if the Bologna Process could affect national higher education systems in the region. The Bologna Process occurs on interrelated planes: the official level

of ministers of education and governments, conferences of rectors and university associations, and accompanying legislative changes concerning higher education, for-profit activities, educational and other non-profit associations, research funds, etc; the official stratum of particular higher education institutions, i.e. that of senior university management; and finally the practical plane of particular institutions and their faculty. There is a huge gap between good will (and good intents) on the part of ministers of education in the majority of those official Bologna Process member countries in the region Bologna Process and the reality of the functioning of higher education systems in those countries. There is an enormous gap between intentions expressed by officials and the capability for action that they and the institutions themselves can currently offer the integration project (as well as the motivation for joining the Bologna Process often seeming more political than educational, see Tomusk 2002b).

Generally higher education in the region, with a few exceptions, has been in a state of permanent crisis since the fall of Communism (for case studies of success stories, see Marga 1997; UNESCO-CEPES 2000): from the paralysis of substantial research functions, steadily decreasing public funds and the mushrooming of both public and private diploma mills to corruption and the lowering of professional ethos and morale, with the mix of the above depending on the country in question. There has not been enough general reflection on transformations of higher education systems in the region over the recent decade; as Marga remarked sadly in his paper *Reforming the Postcommunist University*,

politics and law, macroeconomics and finance, civil rights and liberties, the church and the family have all been objects of consideration. But universities – despite the vital roles they play in providing research and expertise and in selecting and forming the leaders of tomorrow – have not (Marga 1997, p. 159).

Reforming higher education in post-communist Europe, with some notable exceptions, has not been sufficiently analysed either locally or by Western scholars.

Paradoxically, in the majority of countries in question the situation of universities—in areas other than academic freedom, institutional autonomy and international mobility of students and faculty—has severely deteriorated in the last decade. Even though it may be quite possible to go on with the Bologna Process in these countries in terms of legislation, it is much more difficult to go on with it in terms of implementing the ideas at an institutional level (leaving aside for the moment the whole idea of to what extent it is beneficial to the countries in question to follow *all* recommendations of the process).

Let us remember once again that the Bologna Process is based on the underlying assumptions (not really formulated in a single place) that both Europe and the world are entering a new era of knowledge-based and market-driven economies competing against each other. Europe as a region has to struggle with its two main competitors in higher education and also research and development: the USA and Japan (Australasia). The knowledge society depends for its growth on the production, transmission, dissemination, and use of new knowledge. The underlying goal behind current transformations of educational systems and research and development, whether expressed directly (in ERA publications) or indirectly (in EHEA documentation accompanied by the ‘social dimension’), is more or less to meet the target set out by the European Council in Lisbon (in 2000) that by 2010 Europe must become

the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

Furthermore, the creation of the European Higher Education Area must be completed by 2010 (how benchmarks of success are to be developed and what will happen after the deadline are separate issues). Europe is at the crossroads; it is trying to combine higher competitiveness and social cohesion in an increasingly globalised world, and it is in the process of transition towards a “knowledge society”. Thus knowledge becomes the key issue in the years to come.

The Bologna Process seems to be somehow inward-looking: while the impact of globalisation on higher education policies is widely acknowledged all over the world, none of the official publications, from Sorbonne, Bologna, Prague or Berlin, nor the accompanying declarations of Salamanca and Graz uses the word ‘globalisation’ even once (while the *Trends III* report prepared for the Berlin summit does mention globalisation no less than five times in total, reflecting its descriptive rather than analytical ambitions, it states overtly that ministers and higher education institutions should “ride the tiger of globalisation rather than hope it will disappear” (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 57). In general, however, the underlying assumptions are not developed in more detail in any of its documentation or reports. Nonetheless, globalisation is unquestionably one of the main driving forces behind current transformations in public sector, welfare state model and educational policies world-wide (for strong supporters of the view, see Mishra 1999, Teeple 1995; less so, see Pierson 2001b, Esping-Andersen 2001, United Nations 2001); globalisation is also one of the main reference points in the EU’s overall Lisbon Strategy.

Consequently, thus far the Bologna Process seems relatively weak at an analytical level. It may be worrying that the principle and supporting publications of a colossal intellectual and institutional undertaking, which aims to change the way our universities function, does not attempt to present a wholesale analytical approach to current challenges and solutions based on perspectives wider than the European ones. As Berndtson rightly remarks in a paper on the EHEA,

the goals of the Bologna Declaration (and of the Prague Communiqué) have been presented as solutions to problems that have never been outlined systematically. This may have been one of the reasons for the rapid development of the process, but without systematic analysis of the problems and challenges that the European Higher Education Area faces today, there is a danger that the cosmetic features of the reform will be strengthened (Berndtson 2003, p. 10).

The ambivalence of the Bologna Process concerns the process of globalisation itself: roughly, following Van Damme, there are at least two contrasting (and simplified) global views of Bologna. The first view could present it as being merely an introduction to a much further-reaching integration of national educational systems in the future; that is, a result of competitive pressures from other parts of the world that are in turn a consequence of global liberalisation of operations of higher education institutions world-wide (especially in the two biggest ‘exporters’ of educational services, North America and Australasia). The second, contrasting view could present Bologna as a large-scale defensive mechanism to avoid the pitfalls of globalisation as seen (and mostly disliked) around the world today, in which Europe can stand together against the global odds. Thus the first view might imply a strong convergence between Bologna and globalisation processes on a regional scale, especially in the future. The second might imply an attempt to make national educational systems stronger to withstand the forces of globalisation and whatever is seen as its excesses in higher education, especially the processes of privatisation, commercialisation, commodification, etc. Due to the ambivalence of the process, I find it difficult to say which of the views would be a more adequate description of it today. The two threads are certainly very much interwoven in the Bologna documentation. One can find both ‘protectionist’ threads at the European level (especially in references to education as a public “good and responsibility”—which largely means calls for public funding from national states in the future) and ‘expansionist’ threads (in attracting foreign students and researchers in the global competition for talent). As Van Damme put it convincingly, “Europe is seeking its own way

out between the Scylla of academic capitalism and the Charybdis of protectionism" (Van Damme 2003, p. 6).

5. PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE—A DUAL CHALLENGE

Concerns can be raised about 'cosmetic' changes to be introduced by the EHEA; but others, including myself, are more concerned about potentially misguided policy decisions that might be taken in some transition countries based on either regionally-irrelevant analyses or recommendations. There may also be concerns about the various senses of 'harmonisation' of higher education, some of which might potentially lead to some still unspecified core (European) curricula, as evidenced by such pilot projects as "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" (now in the second phase). There are strong semantic differences between 'convergence', 'harmonisation' and finally 'uniformity', but at the same time there are concerns that traditional semantic differences might become increasingly blurred as the Bologna Process progresses.

Another issue is the following: are the problems facing most of old EU-15 countries and their higher education systems the same as problems facing the countries in transition? I believe the important aspect of the Bologna Process in its current geographical, economic and social scope is analytical (and consequently practical) negligence of some most pressing problems in transition countries today. The analytical flaw of publications and reports may be the lack of description of old challenges that the transition countries still face, and consequently the lack of clear recommendations on how to proceed in countries that are plagued by two different sets of challenges at the same time, old and new ones.

To put it in a nutshell, while the affluent European countries merely face the new challenges brought about by the emergence of the knowledge-based economy, globalisation pressures on higher education and research activities, life-long learning, etc, almost a dozen transition countries, to varying degrees, face old challenges as well. A recent report by the World Bank rightly says that developing and transition countries are confronted with a 'dual task':

a key concern is whether developing and transition countries can adapt and shape their tertiary education systems to confront successfully this combination of old and new challenges (World Bank 2002, p. 2).

The report states that tertiary education can indeed play a catalytic role in developing and transition countries in rising to the challenges of the knowledge-based economy but

this is conditional on these countries' ability to overcome the serious problems that have plagued tertiary education systems and have pushed some systems into a situation of severe crisis (World Bank 2002, p. 45).

The Bologna Process seems to focus on new challenges and new problems (i.e. the problems of Western countries); the countries of the region, in contrast, are still embedded in challenges and problems of the old type mostly generated in a recent decade by the process of shifting from elite to mass higher education under severe resource constraints (see Kwiek 2001a, 2001c). Even though the way in which Western Europe has dealt with the passage from elite to mass higher education is well documented, the global environment in which the process took place will not recur since it took place under different political, economic and social constraints. Both higher education and research and development had totally different reference points because the universities were still national treasures lavishly funded by nation-states in a period of consolidation of the expanded welfare state model, politics still mattered more than economy, and national prestige often more than particular decisions about resource allocations.

But those days are gone. It is a real challenge for some European transition countries today to undergo the passage from elite to mass higher education; to have steadily declining public funds almost year on year; to develop higher education systems towards the 'Bologna goals' that have to be met by "knowledge-based economies" all without external funds and with, on average, virtually no government funds. The *Trends III* report makes it clear that it is unrealistic to believe that the Bologna reforms will not entail cost: public funds are expected to come if reforms are to succeed. For the countries of the region, again on average, it is a near certainty that the funds will not arrive from any source. The chronic underfunding of higher education (widely documented by any form of statistical data one might care to choose, taken in any way one might care to take it, as a percentage of GDP devoted to higher education, as a percentage of GDP devoted to research, as funding per student, etc., with reference to the USA, EU-15 or OECD) makes it very difficult to implement the Bologna recommendations in anything but a theoretical way. This makes it difficult to face both old and new challenges. There are no specific recommendations or prescriptions for the transition countries on how to proceed on the basis of experiences that the EU-15 or OECD countries had with the same process of passing from elite to expanded models of higher education two-three decades ago.

The question of how to combine educational reforms pressed from two types of challenges, old and new, traditional and knowledge economy, as well as globalisation-related, is a crucial point in educational policy for the countries in transition. How should their relevance be weighed today? Should transition countries look at past or current experiences of other advanced and affluent countries when thinking about their higher education systems? How can they move forward with basic reforms related to much higher demand and consequent massification of higher education if the material basis for these reforms, the welfare state, is either already dismantled or in the process of decomposition, or never even had a chance to come into existence. Tomusk captures the point:

with the decline of the welfare state and massification of higher education in the West, the Eastern vision of the resource abundant University has become a mere dream. The simple truth about the current higher education reform is that the only thing we know for sure is that we want our Universities to have considerably more resources; ... Looking at the resources available in the particular countries one can easily conclude that this is absolutely impossible. It is an empirical fact different from many unrealistic growth programmes developed to attract foreign matching funds (Tomusk 2000, p. 55).

How are the differences between challenges facing higher education in transition countries and in EU-15 countries viewed in the Berlin communiqué? And how is the issue of new members in the Bologna Process seen? The problem in question is basically neglected, no further analysis or description of the current situation is provided and no recommendations on how to proceed are given. As the problem is pressing, I believe it should be dealt with as soon as possible.

Let us remind ourselves very briefly of some key figures that show the gap between EU candidate countries and the EU-15. Firstly, the percentage of GDP spent on research and development: none of the candidate countries reaches the level of the EU-average of 1.9 per cent, although Slovenia (1.5 per cent) and the Czech Republic (1.2 per cent) have relatively high levels of research and development expenditure in relation to their GDP; Estonia, Poland, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic invest in R&D at the same level as the EU countries with the lowest R&D intensities (such as Greece and Portugal); all the other candidate countries (as well as all remaining Bologna signatory countries) from the region have very low R&D intensity. However, the above figures need to be viewed from the perspective of GDP and the differences are still enormous. While per capita GDP in the European Union in 2001 was 23,200 in PPS (purchasing power standards) at current prices, it was in the 5,000 to 10,000 range in Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia,

Lithuania, Poland and Estonia, with the top level reached by two small countries (Cyprus 18,460 and Slovenia 15,970) and the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Slovak Republic in the range of 11,000-13,000 (Commission 2002a: 18). If we look at other Bologna signatory countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia or Russia) the gap becomes dramatically wider (World Bank 1999, p. 60).

The share of research and development activities financed by the business sector is lower than the EU average in almost all candidate countries (and all other Bologna signatory countries from the region) with the exception of Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Romania. The current distribution of researchers (government, business, higher education) is very different in candidate countries compared to the EU—the business sector share is much lower than the EU average of 50 per cent (except for Romania). In terms of patents applied for per million population, the difference is huge, with a range of between 1 and 12 for most candidate countries, 22 for Slovenia, against an EU average of 126 (Commission 2002a, p. 72). Spending on higher education is also generally considerably lower in the region, as are current enrolment rates in higher education (World Bank 2000a).

This data cannot be neglected when thinking about the emergent European Higher Education Area: we are talking about mostly diverse societies and economies, which have generally different standards of living, and substantially variant higher education systems that still face major structural reforms, especially if we go beyond EU and current EU candidate countries. If knowledge economy—the point of reference for both the EHEA and ERA—is emerging from two defining forces, the “rise in knowledge intensity of economic activities” and the “increasing globalisation of economic affairs” (Houghton and Sheehan 2000, p. 2), then the region is far behind indeed, and the chances of converging on current EU countries are very low in at least short and medium term (for more data, see OECD 1999).

6. A LONG AND PRIVATE ROAD

Surprisingly enough, the private sector in higher education has so far been absent from the scope of interest of the Bologna Process (for the need to compare the *privateness* and *publicness* of higher education, see Levy 1986). From the very beginning, the Sorbonne Declaration, through Bologna, Prague and Berlin, as well as in the Salamanca and Graz Declarations of higher education institutions, the private sector has not been discussed. What may have been understandable in the *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 can hardly be explained well in 2003 if one takes into

account both global developments in higher education and the explosion in the private sector in many Central and East European countries participating in the Bologna Process. In the official documentation and accompanying reports the private sector does not exist. While the declarations and communiqués of the Bologna Process do not make a single reference to private higher education, not even once in the past six years, the 150 page long *Trends III* report mentions the term half a dozen times but then only in connection with the GATS negotiations, as if the issue of the emergent private sector both globally and in many signatory countries was somehow insignificant.

I would like to assert the contrary here: the rapid development of the private sector in some countries of the region is of crucial importance, and its omission creates a severe analytical and operational flaw in the Bologna Process when referred to the region. It also goes against global trends in which the role of the private sector in teaching and research is increasingly significant. As Altbach puts it

“private higher education is one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing segments of post-secondary education at the turn of the twenty-first century. A combination on unprecedented demand for access to higher education and the inability or unwillingness of governments to provide the necessary support has brought private higher education to the forefront” (Altbach 1999, p. 1).

Both globally and in the region, private higher education is part of the problem and part of the solution; no matter how we view the problem and the solution, we certainly should not disregard the phenomenon itself.

In 1994 enrolment in private higher education had reached 25 per cent in Portugal (World Bank 2000, p. 30). The share in Central and Eastern Europe is increasing considerably: the number of private higher education providers has been sky-rocketing in recent years. In 2000/2001, in countries such as Poland and Romania, the number of students enrolled in the private sector had reached a level of 30 per cent. In others, such as Estonia or Moldova, it was almost 25 per cent. At the lower end is the Czech Republic with 1.0 per cent, Albania 0.0 per cent, and Slovakia 0.7 per cent, with Russia at mid scale with 10 per cent, Belarus with 13 per cent, Bulgaria with 11.5 per cent and Hungary with 14 per cent. From among these Poland, Romania, and Estonia from the upper end and Russia, Bulgaria and Hungary from the middle are all signatories of the Bologna Process (Kwiek 2003b, 2003c).

Apparently, the issue of the private sector is not problematic for the Bologna Process. But it certainly is a huge problem (problem/solution) for several transition countries. The majority of the international literature in the field of higher education policy and research deals with reforming *public*

higher education. The role of the private sector in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—considering its ability to adapt to the new societal needs and new market conditions, combined with the drastically underfunded and still unreformed public institutions—is bound to grow. East European private universities represent a wide variety of missions, organisational frameworks, legal status and relations to the established institutional order (see Tomusk 2003). There are significant differences between the particular countries of the region, too.

Generally, the triumph of the market economy has contributed to the emergence of the private sector and its huge social (and tacit political) acceptance in many countries of the region. From the perspective of changing societal needs and relative decline in the public support of higher education, as well as rapidly increasing demand for access combined with the institutional and financial paralysis of the public sector generally, there is a growing need for clear policies and thoughtful legislation (especially given that what we are facing in the region is what Johnstone calls “*creeping austerity*” from a global perspective:

a slow but unrelenting worsening of the financial condition of most universities and other institutions of higher education, particularly as they are dependent on governmental, or tax-generated, revenue (Johnstone 2003, p. 2).

The Bologna Process should, I believe, provide clear guidance on how to proceed with private sector/public sector relations in transition countries.

Emerging market forces in higher education combined with increasing competitiveness in the field and a significant growth in size of the private sector definitely mean increased access, new learning options and improved productivity; but the phenomenon also raises important questions about affordability, quality control, the need for new regulations and accreditation bodies, the social responsibilities of the private sector, as well as about the very fundamental attributes of higher education so far, for example, civic commitment, disinterested research, its dual role as a vehicle of social mobility and a locus of critical thought (Altbach 1999). Concerns are raised about the social role (or rather roles—see Levy 2002) of private higher education in the Region. How can the principles of the European Research Area and requirements of the Bologna Process be accommodated to the local conditions of those EU accession countries where the private sector has recently grown surprisingly strong? Unfortunately, the Bologna Process in general remains indifferent to these developments, even though their appearance may prefigure many future options which the governments of Western European countries may face if the dismantling of the welfare state

is to be as radical as some sociologists and political scientists present it (Clayton and Pontusson 1998, Pierson 1996, 2001a).

Not surprisingly, both the *Trends III* report and official publications from the Sorbonne to Berlin generally disregard market forces in higher education; whenever reports use the word ‘market’, it is almost always in ‘labour market’. Not only in its descriptions but also in its projections and recommendations for the future. The GATS negotiations are a different and complicated issue which I am not going to develop here. What I would like to stress, however, is the fact that the exclusive passage in the *Trends III* report in which the possible market orientation of (segments of) higher education and research are mentioned, is a short passage on GATS. Among threats concerning the inclusion of higher education into GATS, it mentions:

increased competition and commercialisation in order to secure market advantage might undermine the Bologna Process which depends on co-operation and exchange of good practice. ... The increased market orientation of higher education may run counter to core academic values, the recognition of students as partners rather than customers and the commitment to widened access as a mechanism for social, political and economic inclusion. ... Finally, the increase of private providers and for-profit activities of public higher education institutions would result in further decreases in state funding and state protection (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 56).

I concur with the above criticism, but the fact will not cause the emergence of market forces in higher education to slow down or stop; neither will it annul global trends with respect to the relations between the state and the market, nor stop public sector reforms already undertaken world-wide (see Kwiek 2003a; Weiler 2000).

It is especially interesting to note the omission of market forces in higher education in the context of the reference point for the Bologna Process (as well as for the ERA), the USA, “the prime competitor” where market forces are increasingly important. Evidently, market-driven and market-oriented higher education does not go hand-in-hand with the European social model, but in such an overarching integrating initiative as the EHEA, with the objectives of the ERA behind it and the plain political and economic goal of making the European Union “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy (and society) in the world” (Lisbon Council 2000), it is a mistake to disregard the theme altogether.

The EU-15 form one of the last places on earth that is relatively resistant to market forces in education and research. Again, some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, for a variety of institutional, political and economic reasons, are much more influenced by market forces, and their higher

education institutions are already operating in highly competitive, market- and customer-driven environments. At the same time, from a global perspective, there are no doubts about the direction of changes. My guess is that whether or not the Bologna Process requires it, or the Bologna Process documents and analyses mention the phenomenon, the change is taking place everywhere and market forces will come, and in numerous places have already come, to European higher education institutions. It is a fact, whether we like it or not. The world today is too strongly interrelated (globalisation!) to assume that although market forces are affecting higher education globally, the last bastion of resistance will be the signatory countries of the Bologna Process (especially given that market forces have already come as part of a much wider package of institutional changes in the welfare state model, and they will not go away). We may not care about the market; but we have to care about universities increasingly exposed to its forces. An underlying assumption of any large-scale transformation (and the Bologna Process is certainly a huge undertaking with far-reaching goals) is that it should not disregard the world outside; it should not disregard social and economic trends at home and abroad. In the case of a vast restructuring project of national higher education systems in Europe, home is Europe, and abroad is certainly the global dimension of the issue.

It may prove difficult to “ride the tiger of globalisation” in the European higher education of the future, recalling the *Trends III* recommendation (Reichert and Tauch 2003), while forgetting about market forces. I am in agreement with van der Wende when she states that

the fact that present and future students already live in a global world is simply forgotten, although an important part of their culture, fashion and music, or numerous products they wish to buy, or the ways in which they intend to communicate, are all defined and marketed globally. This should help shape the universities’ response to globalisation. Our customers expect their lifestyles to be taken into account and higher education to prepare them adequately for life and work in a global world (van der Wende 1999, p. 64).

And the emergent influence of market forces in all aspects of our social life is what globalisation is about, amongst other things (Kwiek 2000a). Yet another issue is the increasing precedence of economy over politics. I believe the Bologna Process is one of those instances of political actions which, if they are to be successful, will have to be easily translatable into economic terms (as is the case with the ERA). And in these terms, market forces figure prominently. The British higher education system alone is briefly discussed to counterbalance developments in Continental Europe. It is difficult, however, in the long run, to combine the analytical position in

which the dominant model is the one in which there is “a sustained emphasis on higher education as a public good and responsibility” and which at the same time clearly acknowledges that “public funding is in the process of undermining it” (Reichert and Tauch 2003, pp. 143-144). Is the model not being undermined by a constellation of factors among which the invasion of market forces in the public sector generally comes to the fore?

To sum up, both the private sector in European (and especially Central and East European) higher education systems and the emergence of powerful market forces in the educational and research landscape in Europe will have to be further analysed, discussed and incorporated into the Bologna Process if it is not to turn into a ‘theoretical’ exercise—especially but not exclusively—in the region. Knowing the high stakes of both EHEA and ERA initiatives, I am sure this omission will soon be corrected.

7. LOOKING FOR COMMON GROUND

One of the most sceptical views on the Bologna Process was presented in 2001 by Neave (2001a). I, too, am unsure about the end (and ends) of such a new European construction but my attitude towards Bologna is more ambivalent.

It is true that those who shout loudest about a European higher education system come either from the European Commission or from Central and Eastern Europe, as Neave states,

it may be the shape of things to come. But it is not the way the French, Belgians, Dutch, and, least of all, the British, view matters. Rather, we tend to be abominably sensitive to our differences and sing the praise of our exceptionalism—perhaps never more so when we feel they are under severe pressure (Neave 2002, p. 20-21).

Academics in Central and Eastern Europe, from the countries that are almost all (with a few small exceptions) involved in the Bologna Process, are sensitive to the state of near-collapse of (some of) their national systems of higher education. They are sensitive to differences between them but view them as basically irrelevant in the face of the gravity of the problems—higher education systems in the region have been in a state of permanent crisis for well over a decade now (see Tomusk 2000). It is very difficult to avoid a feeling of nostalgia for the good old days of Western European higher education that were a major point of reference in the region for several decades. We certainly could have compared our systems with those in developing countries—we would have felt much better—but we insisted on using European higher education as our point of reference, despite the

huge differences. From our perspective differences remain, even today, largely irrelevant (except perhaps for the major UK/Continent differences). That is one of the reasons the idea of a European higher education area has quite a few (ambivalent) supporters in the region. There is an irreconcilable difference in perspectives between the academic world of affluent Western European democracies and the chronically underfunded, near-collapse of the academic world of (some) post-communist countries in Central and (South-) Eastern Europe. This difference in perspectives translates easily into differences in viewing the Bologna Process, especially in viewing its advantages and sometimes downplaying its potential dangers.

Therefore my concern about Bologna is rather that it is not trying to raise the conceptual levels that would be required to assist higher education systems in the region in integrating with Western European systems within the EHEA. My perspective is that the EHEA might be a good opportunity—a useful policy agenda—to assist in reforming those national higher education systems in the region which need reform most. It might provide clear recommendations on what to do and how, presenting almost a blueprint for reforms, even though their scope would be quite different in different countries. In this respect, however, Bologna does not meet expectations of the academic world in the region; it is still unclear in its visions and recommendations for action with respect to the region. At the same time, which is understandable, there is no way to use it as a lever for external, additional funds for educational reforms. Although the success of the process is conditional on public funding of the project, it is obvious to many that no public funding will follow further steps in the process, as is expressed in the following quote by Reichert and Tauch (2003, p. 29) “the Bologna reforms cannot be realised without additional funding”. The question is, what should be done?

Today, there are crucial differences in thinking about reforms in Western Europe and in transition countries generally. Reforms to be undertaken in Western Europe are much more functional (fine-tuning, slight changes, etc.); reforms to be undertaken in some Central and Eastern European and Balkan countries of, by contrast, should be much more substantial (or structural). There is little common ground between the two sets of reforms except for technical details, and the Bologna Process in its official documentation so far has not drawn a clear distinction between functional and structural reforms, nor the regions of their future implementation. The differences between the conditions of higher education systems in these parts of Europe are very substantial indeed; as should probably be the analyses, descriptions, and policy recommendations. Problems and challenges, and consequently the depth of reforms required, are different in the transition countries. Fine-tuning and small adjustments undertaken within the Bologna Process,

perfectly befitting for many Western institutions, unless accompanied by structural transformations in East and Central European institutions may lead to merely theoretical or cosmetic changes, while what is actually needed is the transformation of the underlying structures of higher education systems, at least in some countries of the region.

8. AMBIVALENT BOLOGNA, CO-OPERATION, SOLIDARITY AND COMPETITION

My concerns about Bologna are both general and specific, and they refer to the process as a whole and to its potential impact in the region. They are based on theoretical assumptions (such as the traditional idea of the university and the universal role of the university, see Sadlak 2000) on the one hand and practical knowledge of the functioning of higher education in many countries of the region on the other. Some concerns derive from traditional notions of sovereignty of nation-states and the sovereignty of their educational policies (see Enders 2002a), some from irreconcilable differences between educational systems deriving from different cultures, languages, traditions and inheritances from the past; but other concerns come from a more technical and pragmatic understanding of the global picture of changes in higher education, the role of which is downplayed in Bologna. Still other concerns derive directly from an awareness of the budgetary situation of the public sector in many countries of the region, and trends that have emerged there over the last decade or so (often towards the retrenchment of the welfare state rather than towards the 'European Social Model' emphasised in the EU Lisbon Strategy).

Carnoy draws a very useful distinction between the three factors that in practice are crucial to the approach governments take in educational reform; hence in educational responses to globalisation:

Their objective financial situation, their interpretation of that situation, and their ideological position regarding the role of public sector in education. These three elements are expressed through the way that countries 'structurally adjust' their economies to the new globalised environment (Carnoy 1999, p. 47).

Even though, as we have emphasised here, the dimension of globalisation challenges in higher education is certainly severely underestimated in the Bologna documentation, the phenomenon is one of underlying factors behind the wider Lisbon strategy of the European Union: its role is crucial for understanding the whole package of reforms, including those in the education and R&D sectors. It is interesting to refer the above distinction to

transition countries involved in Bologna and draw comparisons with the EU-15. All the three parameters are drastically different: the objective financial situation does not require any statistical data, it may be taken for granted in the majority of transition countries; as a consequence of generally objectively disastrous financial situations, the interpretations of the differences in objective financial situations may be even more dramatic; finally, in a number of transition countries escaping the model of command-driven economies, the ideological position regarding the role of the state in the public sector differs considerably from the position taken, with few national exceptions, on a European level: the ideal of the state about to emerge once the chaos of the transition period is over is the American model of cost-effectiveness and self-restraint rather than the European social model of the EU-15—which, by the way, is also attested to by subsequent EU progress reports on accession countries. There are several determinants of this, but certainly a general dissatisfaction with the inefficiency and incompetence of state bureaucratic bodies is one of them, another being the increased role of market mechanisms in public sector reforms already undertaken (ranging from healthcare to pension systems to decentralisation of primary and secondary education) and the role of the private sector in the economy in general. Again, it would be interesting to see how the Bologna Process publications are going to conceptualise these crucial differences.

Using another set of Carnoy's distinctions — between 'competitiveness-driven reforms', 'finance-driven reforms' and 'equity-driven reforms' in higher education (Carnoy 1999, p. 37; see also Carnoy 1995) — it is possible to argue that not only two speeds of reforms are necessary (as some of the required reforms are merely functional, while others are structural), but also the current drivers of reforms are different: while in the EU-15 it is competitiveness (decentralisation, improved standards and management of educational resources, improved teacher recruitment and training), in at least some transition countries, by contrast, it is mostly the wish to change the 'business climate', to make use of structural adjustments and refer to the reduction of public spending on education (which results both from the objective situation, its interpretation, and the ideological stance governments take). These complications in the picture of European higher education systems are not evoked in Bologna publications, and it is my belief that they should be.

Concerns may be raised about the potential bureaucratisation of the process and the potential transfer of power concerning higher education policies to some supranational European body; but at the same time, the Bologna Process provides opportunities for rethinking to come to the region — and hopefully reforming — of inefficient, outmoded, sometimes and in some places corrupt institutions that should really play a central role in the

new knowledge economy. Concerns may be raised about the break with traditional tasks and roles of higher education institutions as evidenced by the roles and tasks suggested for them by both Bologna and the ERA. As Enders remarks, universities today are

rather vulnerable organisations that tend to be loaded with multiple expectations and growing demands about their role and functioning in our knowledge-driven societies. (Enders 2002b, p. 71)

But on the other hand, the traditional rhetoric may cover institutional or professional interests rather than a genuine love for the search for truth, disinterested research and other traditional ideals of the university.

The new vocabulary in which both higher education and research is cast in both EHEA and ERA initiatives may be worrying; but at the same time, especially in connection with the ERA, the vocabulary used, and concepts employed are standard in current global discussions about higher education and research and development, from UNESCO to the OECD to the World Bank. It is hard to use any other vocabulary today *and* be engaged in meaningful contemporary debates on the future of higher education and research. Concerns should be raised about apparently economic accounts of the role of higher education in the ERA discussions. Although the ideals behind the EHEA are cast in a slightly different vocabulary, the message is similar: we need practical results from our institutions; universities will change and the kinds of research, as well as teaching they have to offer will have to be changed, too; the responsibility of universities is no longer the search for truth in research and for moral and civic constitution (the *Bildung* of the traditional German model of the university) of students/citizens in teaching; it is much more, if not exclusively, competitiveness, mobility, and employability of graduates; the responsibility of universities is towards the economic growth of Europe as a whole, supporting a knowledge-based economy, contributing to new skills for the new emerging workforce of the emerging competitive global age. Let us in this context remember once again the three goals of the Bologna Process: enhancing the employability of European higher education graduates, promotion of mobility in higher education, and the attractiveness of the EHEA to the rest of the world (Reichert and Tauch 2003).

From a European perspective, the promotion of mobility in higher education is “clearly the most concrete, easily interpreted and uncontroversial” (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 39). I can agree with that in general but at least one reservation has to be raised: thinking of the Bologna signatory countries (a group consisting of the EU-15 plus 10 new countries plus ‘other’ countries), what is the direction of mobility likely to be in the future? Certainly towards those most affluent, generally Western countries; thus

from a national perspective, there are gains and losses of such increasing movement of the best talent available and, for the more ‘exporting’ (transition) countries the issue is not going to be uncontroversial in the long run. Again, with no reference to the Bologna Process, the World Bank reports rightly argue that the international mobility of skilled human resources will continue to present “long-term risks for tertiary investments in many nations” (World Bank 2002, p. 19). The intra-European mobility issue is uncontroversial in most affluent countries as the level of higher education there is very similar indeed, and the incoming and outgoing mobility between them is relatively balanced when compared with EU accession countries; but in the case of the least advanced higher education systems and the poorest countries in the region, increasing student mobility might become an easy escape route leading to a permanent brain drain. This is not a theoretical issue: the European Union is very much concerned about young researchers and PhD students leaving to the United States and (mostly) never coming back (OECD 2002; Commission 2003c).

This brings us in turn to the critical issue of the bi-polar character of the Bologna Process: it derives from the ideas of co-operation (or solidarity) and competition. The *Trends III* report is very explicit about that; while acknowledging that the initiation of the Bologna Process has to do with

a sense of threatened competitiveness vis-à-vis prime competitors like the US, rather than from sheer enthusiasm for the increasing intensity of co-operation within European higher education (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 52).

From my perspective, it is equally important to remember about the play of interests *within* the emergent EHEA, and the competition among European higher education institutions. Some countries are already global players in higher education; some are already exporters of higher education to Central and Eastern Europe in various, but mostly highly lucrative disciplines. It is hard to combine the competitive spirit presented to the non-European global competitors and the solidarity spirit presented at the same time to the (Central) European partners. Can we imagine co-operation and solidarity alone as driving motives in contacts with the countries of the region on the part of institutions from the countries with strong market traditions and a good share (e.g. the UK or the Netherlands) in global educational market? My guess is that the motive of co-operation may be stronger in the region while that of competition may be stronger in Western Europe. Finally, within national systems and between national institutions, the competition motive is bound to be on the rise, proportionately to the increasing competition for shrinking national (public) funds.

Commenting briefly on ‘ambivalent Bologna’, *Trends III* notes two potentially conflicting agendas: the ‘competitiveness agenda’ and the ‘social agenda’, and rightly concludes, without much further discussion: “it would be naïve to assume that the EHEA is being built only on the latter agenda” (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 149). In the case of the region, it is the co-operation and solidarity motives, as well as the social agenda that count much more than competitiveness today; it would be naïve to assume that institutions of the region are competing with the USA and Japan.

9. THE TRANSITION DIMENSION NEEDS DEVELOPMENT

Finally, what I am concerned about is the potential use of the Bologna Process in the region compared with its use in Western Europe. I am very much afraid that while Bologna may be quite successful in promoting its agenda in Western Europe (especially combined with funding and resources already available and additional incentives already included in the implementation of the European Research Area), it might fail in the transition countries. That would mean that the gap between higher education systems in the two would grow even wider. While Western European institutions seem to be much more afraid of losing their autonomy, freedom to teach and to do research in the way their national priorities and funding allocations still lavishly allow them to do. For educational institutions in several transition countries, the Bologna Process might be the last coherent reform agenda were it to be further developed to include this purpose. I wish that the ‘transition’ dimension would be developed in the future in order that the countries of the region could use the Bologna Process for their benefit and the gap in question might, finally, at least stop getting wider.

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