

EUROPE'S NEW HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

How the Bologna Process is shaping the future of higher education in 46 European countries

European higher education is currently going through a major transformation involving more than 5600 institutions and 31 million students on the Continent.

Aimed at supporting mobility within Europe and with the rest of the world, the *Bologna Process* will create by 2010 a vast area where common principles apply everywhere, making it easier and more transparent for outside partners to cooperate with European universities.

This ambitious reform process also attempts to answer some of Europe's social and economic challenges by enhancing the quality of its education, research capacity and graduate employability.

Objective 2010



TOWARDS A COMMON EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Launched as the Bologna Process in 1999 by the Ministers of Education and university leaders of 29 countries, the creation of a *European Higher Education Area* has developed into a major reform encompassing officially 46 countries. Taking part in the Bologna Process is a voluntary decision made by each country and its higher education community to endorse the principles underlined by what is called the European Higher Education Area, and therefore there is no legally binding treaty or regulation. All stakeholders (national administrations, universities and professional higher education institutions, students, quality agencies, etc.) are involved in the decision-making process and committed to the success of its implementation.

The reforms are based on ten simple objectives which governments and institutions are currently

implementing. Most importantly, all participating countries have agreed on a comparable three cycle degree system for undergraduates (Bachelor degrees) and graduates (Master and PhD degrees).

The Bologna Process does not aim to harmonise national educational systems but rather to provide tools to connect them. The intention is to allow the diversity of national systems and universities – in terms of culture, language(s) and mission – to be maintained while the European Higher Education Area improves transparency between higher education systems, as well as implements tools to facilitate recognition of degrees and academic qualifications, mobility, and exchanges between institutions.

The reform process is also an outward looking one, linked to the development of international education trends and to the essential goal of remaining competitive in a global society.

1998 - SORBONNE DECLARATION

FRANCE, ITALY, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND GERMANY SIGN A DECLARATION ON THE "HARMONISATION OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM" AT THE SORBONNE UNIVERSITY IN PARIS.

1999 - BOLOGNA DECLARATION

TWENTY EUROPEAN MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LAY THE BASIS FOR ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA BY 2010: IT BECOMES KNOWN AS THE BOLOGNA PROCESS.

2001-PRAGUE COMMUNIQUÉ

FOUR ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES JOIN THE PROCESS.

MENTION IS MADE OF SOCIAL ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM.

2003 - BERLIN COMMUNIQUÉ

FORTY COUNTRIES ARE NOW INVOLVED, INCLUDING RUSSIA AND SOUTHEAST EUROPE.

PHD DEGREES ARE INCLUDED IN THE SCOPE OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA.

A MORE TRANSPARENT SYSTEM BASED ON A THREE DEGREE CYCLE

Prior to the Bologna Process, each European country had developed over time various types of degrees and its own approach to evaluate student achievement, with variations of focus and length. With the development of student exchanges within Europe and worldwide over the last twenty years, it became clear that adequate recognition of study periods in academic degrees was very difficult to define without any “translation” system. Also while international student mobility was fast developing, the complexity of each national system made it difficult to attract foreign students with a clear idea of what they would receive when studying in Europe.

Two basic degrees, Bachelor and Master, were defined first and have been adopted now by every participating country; sometimes in parallel to existing degrees during a transition period, sometimes replacing them completely. European universities are currently in the imple-

mentation phase, with each institution moving at a different pace on the basis of the national situation, and an increasing number of graduates have now been awarded these new degrees.

Typically, a Bachelor degree requires 180-240 ECTS credits and a Master programme between 90-120 ECTS credits with a minimum of 60, depending on the discipline. This allows for a flexible approach in defining the length of both Bachelor and Master programmes.

Many participating countries have made substantial changes to their systems in response to the Bologna Process. Introducing the new degrees has required a tremendous effort in reviewing curricula and expectations toward students. Already over half of European universities have reviewed their curricula entirely, using the Bologna reforms to implement a more student-focused approach and new quality procedures.

In the third cycle, European PhD programmes are not defined by ECTS credits; however, common principles are currently under discussion.

2005 - BERGEN COMMUNIQUÉ

5 MORE COUNTRIES ARE ACCEPTED.

EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION ADOPT AN OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND AGREE ON A SET OF EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE.

2007 - LONDON CONFERENCE

THE NEXT MINISTERIAL MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON 16-18 MAY.

2009 - LEUVEN CONFERENCE

THE LAST MINISTERIAL MEETING WILL BE HOSTED BY THE BENELUX COUNTRIES.

2010 - THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA OPENS

NEW TOOLS FOR MEASURING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

While a common framework has now been implemented in the 46 participating countries through the introduction of the three cycles, diversity of degrees and programmes will remain an important feature of European higher education. Therefore, commonly accepted and reliable tools are crucial to measure student achievement in a transparent way and allow for adequate recognition of their degrees between institutions and between countries.

The Diploma Supplement

This document is compulsory for every graduate (since 2005). Attached to a higher education diploma, the Diploma Supplement describes the degree's qualification in an easily understandable way, as well as relating it to the higher education system in which it was issued. It is designed to provide a standardized description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the graduate. It is not a resume or a substitute for the original credential but rather a way of providing detailed information about any academic or professional qualification.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and learning outcomes

Used for credit transfer and accumulation, ECTS plays now an important part in curriculum design and in validating a range of learning achievements (academic or not). In this system, credits reflect the total workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme – objectives which are specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competences to be acquired – and not just through lecture hours. It makes study programmes easy to read and compare for all students, local and foreign, and therefore facilitates mobility and academic recognition.

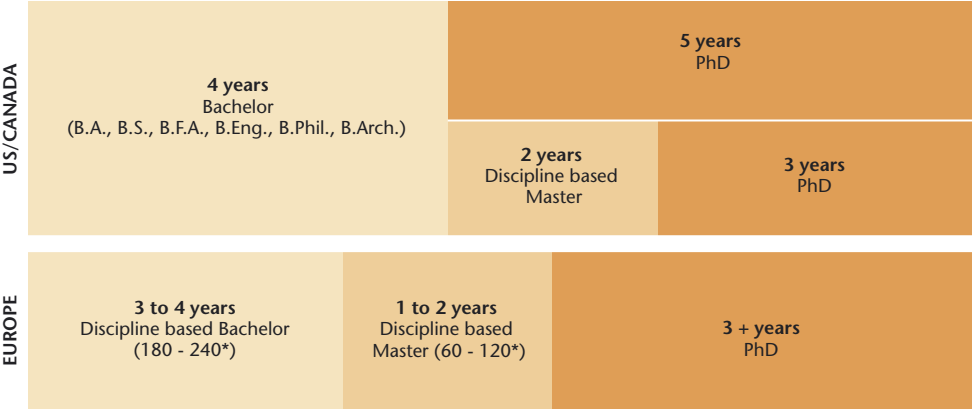
Due to its different logic, an automatic conversion of ECTS credits based on learning outcomes into a credit system based on lecture hours is not possible. However, the information contained in the Diploma Supplement and the number of credits attained reflects accurately the achievements of the graduate and can be used in a systematic way to evaluate what a student has achieved during his/her studies stay at a European university.

*Each **Diploma Supplement** includes eight sections or "fields" containing information about: (1) the degree holder, (2) the qualification, (3) the level of the qualification, (4) contents and results gained, (5) the function, (6) additional information, (7) certification, and (8) the context of the awarded degree in the form of a description of the higher education system itself.*

ECTS credit principles

- 60 ECTS credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year.
- A full time student workload amounts may range from 1200 to 1800 hours per year (attending lectures, seminars, independent and private study, preparation of projects and examinations).
- Credits can only be obtained after successful completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved.

Average Timeline of the Three Cycle System in Europe vs. US/Canada (full-time student)



* ECTS credits

There is no discrimination between countries that have a different elementary and secondary school education length. Whether compulsory education lasts eleven, twelve or thirteen years, it is considered as providing the general education necessary to follow a university programme, which in Europe is discipline-based.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

In addition to defining a common framework for degrees and tools, the Bologna Process is encouraging the development of a quality culture within European universities. Universities, which are primarily responsible for maintaining and improving their quality, perceive the current structural and curriculum reform as an opportunity to reflect upon their management practices and to review their programmes and teaching methods.

In parallel, the past decade has seen the rapid development of national quality assurance systems in Europe, and as a result, common requirements for national systems have been defined at European level to improve the consistency of quality assurance schemes across Europe. European standards have also been developed for internal and external quality assurance in order to provide universities and quality assurance agencies with common reference points.

All stakeholders (universities, students, quality assurance agencies and governments) have agreed on the following actions which are currently under construction:

- Quality assurance agencies in Europe will be expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years
- A European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced to make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies
- A European register committee will act as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register
- A forum for quality assurance agencies, universities and other stakeholders will take place every year to discuss the latest developments in the field.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Since 1999

Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

Since 2001

Croatia
Cyprus
Liechtenstein
Turkey

Since 2003

Albania
Andorra
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Holy See
Russian Federation
Serbia (and Montenegro)
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Since 2005

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Georgia
Moldova
Ukraine

Since 2006

Montenegro*

* As an independant State

10 ACTION LINES TO ESTABLISH A EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA BY 2010

1. ADOPTION OF A SYSTEM OF EASILY READABLE AND COMPARABLE DEGREES
2. ADOPTION OF A SYSTEM ESSENTIALLY BASED ON TWO CYCLES
3. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM OF CREDITS
4. PROMOTION OF MOBILITY
5. PROMOTION OF EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION IN QUALITY ASSURANCE
6. PROMOTION OF THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
7. FOCUS ON LIFELONG LEARNING
8. INCLUSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENTS
9. PROMOTION OF THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
10. DOCTORAL STUDIES AND THE SYNERGY BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA AND THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

BOLOGNA PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

What will have changed by 2010

- A European Higher Education Area with three cycles (Bachelor, Master, PhD)
All European universities deliver degrees based on a three cycle structure with generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes, competencies and credits for qualifications within the first and second cycles.
- A shift from a degree structure based on years of study to a credit and a term system
- From a teaching to a student-centred approach
- From an input-based approach to learning outcomes

Figures

- Over 5600 higher education institutions and 31 millions students involved
- More than 50% of students already studying in a Bologna Process reform programme

Who is involved

The main actors in the Bologna Process are:

- The Education Ministers of countries that signed the Bologna Declaration
- The representatives of European universities (EUA), professional higher education institutions (EURASHE), students (ESIB), quality assurance agencies (ENQA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES)
- The Process is also supported by the European Commission of the European Union and the Council of Europe

All actors are involved in the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) which meets regularly to further elaborate on the 10 action lines and supports the implementation of the Bologna Declaration.

A ministerial meeting is held every two years to take stock of the latest implementation stage and review its course. Decisions are reached by consensus.





The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 46 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.

For more information, visit:
www.Bolognaprocess.net

EUA asbl

Rue d'Egmont, 13
1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel. + 32 2 230 55 44
Fax + 32 2 230 57 51
www.EUA.be