
Equitable Access and Completion: Challenges

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Summary

- Political framework in Europe
- Situation of students in Europe
- University contribution



How Come?

- Massification of Higher Education
- Low efficiency of the HE system in Europe (1999)
- Increasing social needs of an ageing population
- Adverse demography
- Slow down of economic performance
- Increasing competitiveness of new rapidly growing economies



Bologna Reform of HE and The Lisbon Strategy (Europe should become the most developed knowledge and innovation based economy by 2010.)



The Bologna Process (1)

- Restructuration of HE into a system of three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctor), combined with a credit system for accumulation and transfer.
- **Teacher centered into student centered approach to teaching and learning.**
- Increase the mobility of students, staff and graduates across Europe.
- Creation of the European Higher Education Area



Ministerial Summits. Action lines

Bologna Declaration of 1999:

- *System Reform*

Prague Ministerial summit of 2001:

- Focus on lifelong learning
- Inclusion of higher education institutions and students
- Quality Assurance

Berlin Ministerial summit of 2003:

- **Doctoral studies** and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the **European Research Area**
- **Setting up of E4 Group** (ENQA, EUA, ESIB and EURASHE) for the development of mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance.



Ministerial Summits. Foccus

Bergen 2005:

- **Doctoral Programs.**
- **Modernisation Agenda. Autonomous Universities**

London 2007:

- **Global Dimension**
- **LLL**
- **European Register of QA Agencies**

Leuven 2009:

- **The social dimension. Equitable Access and Completion**
- **Mobility benchmarks. 20% by 2020**



Widening Access: From London to Leuven (1)

- *London Communiqué (2007) "We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations."*
- *Given the: "considerable differences and challenges in relation to the social dimension of higher education between the participating countries..."*
- *Each country to develop a strategy, including national action plans, to ensure a country specific approach*

Widening Access: From London to Leuven (2)

- This was not very successful
 - National reports showed a great variety in national policies some action in order to enhance participative equity, but only a few have set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on this issue
 - Even fewer have made efforts to create an integrated strategy by considering synergies between government actions and institutional practices
- Second attempt: Leuven communiqué (2009):

The Bologna Process 2020

- “Faced with the challenge of an ageing population, Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximizes the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in **lifelong learning** as well as in **widening participation in higher education** ” *The economic view*

- **Equitable access and completion:** *(The social dimension)*

“The student body of higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations.....Each country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups, to be reached by the end of the next decade”



LLL (1)

- Lifelong learning as a response to economic & social challenges generated by:
 - The demographic transformation of Europe
 - The increasing speed of globalisation & the pace of technological change
- Widening access and expanding participation – underpinned by strong economic arguments
- Systems & HEIs need to cater for a greater diversity of learners

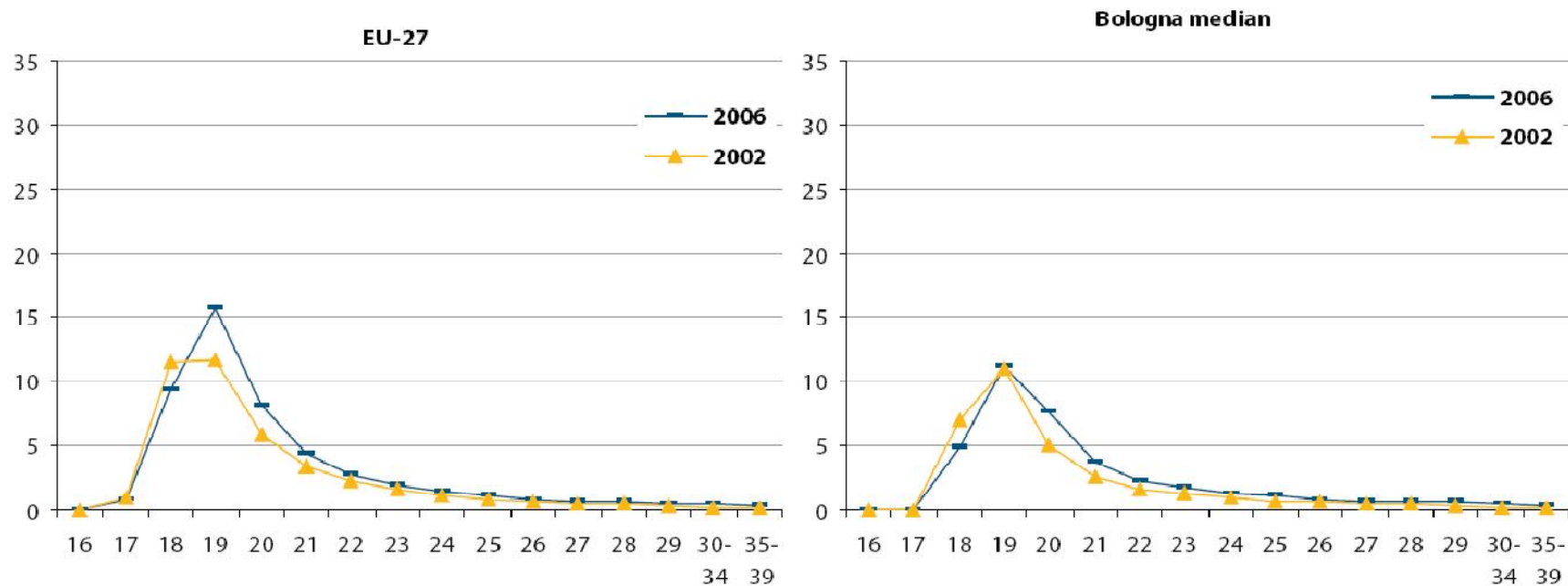


LLL (2)

- *A national but also a European challenge:*
 - increased mobility of students, researchers & migration of workers seeking employment
- *The Bologna Process:*
 - new academic structures, flexible learning paths, new tools enabling the recognition of prior learning
 - LLL already a priority but requires further attention
- *The Lisbon Process & the 'modernisation' agenda:*
 - focus on LLL
 - university autonomy & adequate governance structures

Students in Europe: Access* (1)

Figure A.1b: Net entry rate, ISCED 5A — 2002 and 2006



* Data: **Higher education in Europe and the Bologna Process**, Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility, Eurostat and Eurostudent (2009)



Students in Europe: Access* (2)

- One third of the population is expected to enter higher education between 18 and 20 years old;
People over 25 rarely embark on higher education (less than 6%);
- Gender gap has been basically bridged – in half of Bologna countries, more than 56% of new entrants are women;
Feminisation not even – women represent only one third of entrants in science;
- Most new entrants follow traditional routes – they represent at least 89% of secondary school graduates in half of the Bologna countries;
From Eurostudent, non-traditional routes of accreditation amounted to less than 12% of students in most countries;

* Data: **Higher education in Europe and the Bologna Process**, Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility, Eurostat and Eurostudent (2009)

Students in Europe: Access and Funding (1)

- People whose parents have a high educational level have better chances of accessing and completing tertiary education than others;
 - 17% of persons with parents with only primary education manage to access and complete higher education, while 63% of those with parents with higher education manage to do so;
- Half of Bologna countries spend more than 1.1% of GDP on higher education, and 2.8% of total public expenditure;
 - Between 2001 and 2005, public expenditure on tertiary education increased at the same pace as GDP;
- A “typical” Bologna country spent EUR 8 300 PPS per year per student, of which nearly 30% was devoted to R&D and ancillary services;
 - Spending on core educational goods and services per student was twice as high in the US as in most Bologna countries;
- Students spend up to 25% of their monthly budgets on fees;

Students in Europe: Access and Funding (2)

- Importance of sources of students income depend largely on the country;
 - State support (NL, FI, SE, UK);
 - Family or partner (IE, PT, RO, SI);
 - Paid job (CZ, EE, ES, LV, SK);
 - Equally family/partner and paid job (LT, AT, CH);
- Proportion of public expenditure on tertiary education dedicated to grants and loans ranged from less than 5% to more than 20%;

* Data: **Higher education in Europe and the Bologna Process**, Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility, Eurostat and Eurostudent (2009)

Understanding the LLL concept (1)

- Various activities, one philosophy:
 - retraining & skills updating for those with prior training
 - Reaching out to those who have missed out on initial (higher) education
 - cultural enrichment for ageing populations
 - continuing education for specific needs: personal fulfilment, tailor-made course for retraining, reaching out to primary students, etc.
- Balancing economic productivity & self fulfilment
 - >universities must reconsider their role & their approach, taking account of their specific missions & profiles

Understanding the LLL concept (2)

- LLL means changing mindsets – creating a culture
- What does a 'Lifelong Learning University' look like?
 - Knows its audience
 - Cooperates with stakeholders
 - Provides internal incentives for reaching new audiences
 - Creates communities of learners
 - Supports diversity of practices
 - Enhances quality and competitiveness
 - Supports interaction between education, research and innovation

University Contribution (1)

- European universities with their 3 core missions:
 - Teaching & Learning
 - Research & Innovation
 - Knowledge Transfer & Service to Society
- After a decade of major reforms on Bologna and Governance the time has come (back) to focus more specifically on lifelong learning, building on existing achievements

University Contribution (2)

- The European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning
- 10 commitments from universities and 10 requests to governments
- Provides European framework for discussion
- Defines lifelong learning in a broad sense (including access and retention)

European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning

Universities call on governments to commit to:

1. Recognising the university contribution to LLL as a major benefit to individuals & society
2. Promoting social equity & an inclusive learning society
3. Including LLL objectives in their national QA systems
4. Supporting the development of appropriate guidance/counselling
5. Recognising prior learning
6. Removing legal obstacles that prevent potential learners from responding to LLL opportunities
7. Ensuring the necessary autonomy & incentives
8. Encouraging partnerships, especially at regional level
9. Informing and encouraging citizens to take advantage of LLL opportunities offered by universities
10. Similarly acting as role models in relation to their own employees.

European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning

European Universities commit to...

1. Embedding concepts of widening access & LLL in their strategies
2. Providing education & learning to a diversified student population
3. Adapting study programmes to enhance widening participation
4. Providing appropriate guidance & counselling service
5. Recognising prior learning
6. Embracing LLL in quality culture
7. Strengthening the research/teaching links in a perspective of LLL
8. Consolidating Bologna reforms designed to promote flexible learning environments
9. Developing partnerships at all levels to provide relevant programmes
10. Acting as role models of LLL institutions

The Challenges

- The goal needs to be successful participation and not access only
 - Student centered approach to learning
 - Offering a variety of flexible learning pathways for entry and exit
 - Offering a variety of delivery modes
 - Provide academic, social and financial support

BUT

Student diversity is not perceived as an asset but as a challenge, at the best.



Equitable Access and Completion

Thank You

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