FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION - BOLOGNA PROCESS RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE (FOHE-BPRC), THIRD EDITION

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Session 3: Twenty years of Bologna and a decade of EHEA: what's next?

1. **Multi-level, multi-actor and multi-issue dimensions of governance of the European Higher Education Area, and beyond,** *Martina Vukasovic (Ghent University, Belgium), Jens Jungblut (Stanford University, USA), Meng-Hsuan Chou (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) Mari Elken (Nordic Institute for Studies on Innovation, Research and Education, Norway) , Pauline Ravinet (CERAPS, Université Lille 2, France)*

In this chapter, three conceptually distinct dimensions of EHEA governance are presented. One, the *multi-level* dimension concerning distribution of authority across governance levels (e.g. European, regional and national). Two, the *multi-actor* dimension reflecting the involvement of non-state actors (e.g. stakeholder organizations) and the acknowledgement that state is also not a unitary actor. Third, the *multi-issue* dimension stemming from close relationship between higher education, research, and innovation in the knowledge society, and the ensuing spill-overs from and into higher education policy domain. The chapter argues that the complexity of EHEA governance can be better understood utilizing what we call the 'three multi-s' framework. This is exemplified by exploring how "the three multi-s" and interactions between them allow for a more nuanced analysis of EHEA governance, its changes and implications.

2. **Promoting the civic and democratic role of higher education: the next challenge for the EHEA?,** *Tony Gallagher (Queen's University Belfast, Ireland)*

Over two decades the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has developed reforms on higher education on the basis of the values of freedom of expression, institutional autonomy, independent students' unions, academic freedom, and free movement for students and staff. The challenge was not helped by the economic crisis which created challenges for public funding of higher education institutions, pressure for enhanced accountability, and pressure on institutions to directly respond to economic priorities. In recent years we have also been faced with a political crisis which has witnessed the growth of anti-establishment populist politics and a level of political volatility that has not been seen for generations. This has lead to a fear we are in the midst of 'post-truth' politics in which appeals are based on raw emotion amplified uncritically through social media.

Higher education institutions, from their cloistered origins to their current more public role, have always had knowledge at their heart, but that role now has to focus on more than the knowledge economy, and refocus on its civic and democratic role. The paper will argue that, in the face of current challenges, the EHEA should renew its commitment to its core principles by recognizing the importance of its civic and social role, and restating the importance of the free and informed exchange of ideas and knowledge that lie at the heart of democratic culture and society, and are central to the third mission of universities.

3. **Divergent paths? Academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the European Higher Education Area,** *Liviu Matei, Julia Iwinska (Central European University, Hungary)*

The paper provides a synopsis of the developments in Europe in the areas of institutional autonomy and academic freedom since the launch of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It points to evidence suggesting divergent paths of development within and between these two areas of university governance. The paper argues that institutional autonomy has attracted a lot more attention during this period and that there are multiple and significant, often divergent, developments in this area. The paper further argues that one of the most remarkable developments of this period is the emergence of a European notion of institutional autonomy. The significance of this development is discussed, for the EHEA and the larger world of higher education, its effects to date as well as anticipated impact for the near future. The paper maintains that the distinction between academic freedom and university autonomy is often misunderstood or simply overlooked, in EHEA and elsewhere. It discusses the negative consequences of this conceptual oversight for the higher education scholarship and for governance policies and practices at the system and institutional level.

4. **Future of European higher education in an age of demographic headwinds,** *Robert Santa (National University of Political Science and Public Administration, Romania)*

The proposed paper focuses on the impact of demographic decline on the way in which three Central and Eastern European (CEE) higher education systems have been engaging with social issues such as access and equity. The key premise of this paper is that governments, universities and national economies in the CEE region are faced with significant challenges brought about by dwindling numbers of students and graduates and are increasingly forced to reform existing policies and practices. Significantly, shrinking student numbers have put pressure on universities to enhance inclusion in order to better co-opt previously under-represented groups.

The paper will specifically look into the cases of Romania, Hungary and Poland, three of the largest countries in the region. It will build up on previous research and use semi-structured interviews with key actors in the three countries' higher education systems. It will employ the comparative approach of contrast of contexts.

The main research goals of the paper are:

- Mapping the impact of demographic decline on the three countries' higher education systems
- Identifying key reforms undertaken on access and other equity issues in the past few years
- Discussing the role of demographic change in shaping said reforms, and the nature of this role should a link be established
- Discussing similarities and differences between the three case countries.

The findings of the proposed paper would be important in the light of the expanding number of countries facing declining student populations due to demographic decline.

5. **Unveiling the potential within the European Higher Education Area of the Professional Higher Education sector,** *Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education – EURASHE), Anthony F. Camilleri (Knowledge Innovation Malta, Malta), Stefan Delplace (EURASHE), Marek Frankowicz (State Higher Vocational School in Tarnow, Poland), Raimund Hudak (Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University Heilbronn, Germany), Michal Karpišek (EURASHE)*

This paper aims to discuss the potential added value of a greater focus from the European Higher Education Area on the Professional Higher Education (PHE) sector. Two methodological steps were taken in order to achieve the above aim: desk analysis and a European-wide qualitative survey. Input was gathered through desk research and large-scale surveys across Europe to identify relevant secondary data sources on PHE in Europe. At a later stage, a qualitative survey on PHE in Europe was

circulated among representatives of the associations of PHE or by education-system researchers in 15 countries (Belgium (Flemish Community), Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia). Respondents answered a range of open questions on the organisation and structure of PHE in their respective countries, defining elements, requirements for curriculum and teaching, requirements for research, etc. Overall, we received 671 responses from 18 countries. From this work, the paper first analyses the challenges of a common understanding of professional higher education sector. The next section aims at characterising the Professional Higher Education sector and identifying the main differences in Europe. The last section of the paper develops a framework for further growth and harmonisation of the PHE sector, as well as discuss the potential role of the Bologna Process and policy coordination at European level in some of the aspects that where not on the spotlight of the Bologna Process so far.

6. **Juridification of higher education governance in Europe: the case of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)**, *Adrienn Nyircsak (Central European University, Hungary)*

Without any formal mechanisms of compliance or looming sanctions, the EHEA is generally considered to be a "soft" political platform absent of legally binding effects. However, in the past few years, the follow-up of the Bologna process has re-defined its focus on pedagogical reforms (such as student-centered learning and quality) over macro-level structural ones. These developments generate a number of questions regarding the legal aspects of the EHEA. One of these is the unique institutional set-up of compliance structures in quality assurance and the associated role of the European Union in creating compliance mechanisms, which although "soft" in character, have much harder effects in reality.

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the incorporation of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* in national legislation across the 28 EU member states. The ESG are considered to be one of the most binding instruments of the EHEA. Its development has been largely endorsed by the EU in its capacity to support and supplement Member State action, and most notably through the establishment of transnational network associations (ENQA, EQAR). The paper rests on two core assumptions: a) that non-compliance with ESG standards can be implicitly sanctioned via these specialised organizations, through their compliance and monitoring mechanisms which are attached to membership; and b) that the ESG has contributed towards the quasi-juridical empowerment of non-state actors.

This study connects to the broader investigation of how the relationship of different legal entities affected by the Bologna standards interact in the unfolding and increasingly binding coordination framework. The paper presents a politico-legal analysis of the state of the art of the normative status of the ESG, relying on two concepts: *cognitive judicialization* (legal framing and creation of sense of obligation through administrative means) and *hybridity* (recognition of legal effects of soft law). Furthermore, the analysis reflects on the interpretation of the ESG through law in the context of national quality policies.

7. **Implementation of Key Commitments and the Future of the Bologna Process,** *Una Strand Viðarsdóttir (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland)*

The Bologna Process has brought radical change to Higher Education policy and practice at both the European and national level. It has built trust between systems, enabled mobility of students and staff, and the recognition of credits and degrees throughout the EHEA.

However, the Bologna Process and its philosophy can only function through effective commitment to its implementation. As a voluntary process with no legislative framework it relies on national policymakers, institutions, staff, students and stakeholders to effectively implement the strategic tools

of the process; as once countries have committed to it, it is arguably no longer voluntary to implement the commitments they signed up for.

In recent years there has been increasing concern about the level and nature of implementation of the Bologna commitments in many of its member countries. Incomplete implementation can easily undermine the entire system, destroy its credibility and might, in the end, bring about a two-tiered or even a multi-tiered EHEA, with a non-functioning Bologna Process at its empty core.

At the last EHEA Ministerial Conference these concerns were strongly expressed, and the current work program has put increased emphases on implementation of Bologna commitments, as well as the monitoring of the fundamental values of the Bologna Process. This presentation will discuss challenges faced in introducing increased monitoring to a collegiate collaboration, and how the success of this work may in the long run guarantee the eventual survival or extinction of both the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area.

8. **Unintended Outcomes of the EHEA and ASEAN: Peripheral Members and their Façade Conformity,** *Que Anh Dang (German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany)*

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Common Space for Higher Education are outstanding examples of regional cooperation. Each project has its own trajectories of development and model of regional governance, but both have encountered unintended outcomes which constitute the vulnerability, non-implementation and superficial conformity of newer member countries. This paper raises the questions as to what causes unintended outcomes in the regional processes and why the peripheral status of newer members continues to persist to the detriment of regional integration.

The analysis of some unintended outcomes including the emergence of sub-circuits for student mobility in the EHEA and ASEAN, the increase of private providers, and corruption in higher education, will be presented in an Asia-Europe comparative perspective. In many newer members, the dysfunction and transformation of the nation state and weak governance structure can be seen as causing these unintended outcomes.

Drawing on several new sub-regional economic projects, the paper further argues that influx of multiple and even conflicting international influences also causes façade conformity and complex reconfigurations of the newer members' higher education systems. Understanding unintended outcomes and their causes will help devise new priorities for the EHEA and ASEAN.