



Report

On the thematic Seminar "The Bologna Process after Bergen: the challenges of implementation" Bucharest, 1-2 July 2005

In accordance with the 2005 working programme, the ERI SEE Secretariat in partnership with the European University Association (EUA) and UNESCO-European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES) has organised in Bucharest, on 1-2 July 2005, the thematic seminar "***The Bologna Process after Bergen: the challenges of implementation***".

The topics of the seminar have been designed for the representatives of the ministries and higher education institutions from the South Eastern European countries, aiming to examine the forthcoming challenges faced by the higher education community in this region.

The topics proposed for discussion:

- Bergen Declaration
- Bologna Process and the status of implementation
- Study case: Croatia and Moldova
- Quality assurance
- European and National Qualifications Framework
- Doctoral Programmes and Research
- The social dimension in the EHEA

Invitations have been addressed to the ministries of education and rector's conferences. Participants from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro and Romania, experts from EUA, UNESCO-CEPES, Task Force Education and Youth and ESIB attended the meeting.

The discussions during the seminar were organised in plenary session and working groups. It was commonly agreed to use the working groups in order to have in-depth discussion on the topics proposed. Moderation of the plenary

sessions was done by **Ms. Luminita Matei, the executive director of the ERI SEE Secretariat.**

During the plenary session, **the representative of the TFEY, Mr. Mihaylo Milovanovitch** has strengthened the need for regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe and the importance of higher education for reforming education and connecting with the current European debates.

The Romanian representative, **Mr. Miron Dumitru, State Secretary for higher education and European Affairs** introduced the main aspects of the reform undertaken in Romania for implementing objectives established within Bologna process and stressed the need for peer review in order to find the best solution to common problems (speech attached).

Ms. Lesley Wilson, the Secretary General of the European University Association (EUA) indicated that the emphasis in Bergen was on continuing implementation of the three cycle's structure, quality assurance and recognition, research and the need for concrete actions on the social dimension in education. As concluded at Bergen ministerial conference, progress across countries has been registered, but now very important is the correct implementation, sharing of expertise and pushing for more consistent progress. For 2010, it is important to focus the activities on public responsibility, strengthening of institutional autonomy and sustainable funding for higher education (presentation attached).

Ms. Vanja Ivosevic, the ESIB 2005 chairperson, presented the perspective of Bologna process in the SEE from the student's view- and their implication in the currently debates organised in Europe. With the exception of Moldova, all the other SEE countries have students organisations as members of ESIB. The need for correct implementation of the objectives established within the Bologna process is considered of utmost importance for the higher education systems in the region.

Two countries have been invited to share their experiences in implementing Bologna objectives: **Croatia and Moldova.** The representatives of the ministries of education and higher education have introduced the main aspects of the reform, from the legislative to institutional measures, challenges they are facing and the expected results.

The working groups were designed as being framework for discussion on current situation in different countries, problems facing and solutions promoted. The issue of **quality assurance in higher education** is a sensitive one all over Europe and common definition and benchmarks are important for further developments in this area. One of particular issue the SEE countries is facing is the legal and financial autonomy of the faculties. **Prof. Lazar Vlasceanu,** the deputy director of **UNESCO-CEPES** stressed that there are two ways for changing the system of higher education: investing more and ensuring quality (as being understood as having minimum standards, being a pool of excellence and responding to the employers needs).

The participants agreed that the way in which quality assurance is implemented is crucial for a higher education institution. Quality is more than harmonizing

structures is a complex, social transformation of the higher education system and institutions.

As regards the **European and national qualification framework**, discussions facilitated by **Mr. David Crosier, EUA**, indicated the need for defining the national qualifications having as reference points the developments registered at European level and with wide consultation and dialogue with employers, institutions, students and ministries. The development of the national qualification framework can be very useful tool for addressing lifelong learning and national development plans.

The discussions on **Doctoral studies and enhancing research** in higher education were facilitated by Ms. **Lesley Wilson, the secretary general of EUA**. These issues represent challenges both for systems and institutions. The discussions were based on the recommendation made by the participants to the seminar on Doctoral studies, Salzburg, February 2005. There are several problems that institutions face in the region, such as: regulations, access, new dimension on research, employment conditions. There is a huge diversity in Europe as regards doctoral and post doctoral studies but the most important is to ensure quality and ethics of the programmes developed.

The **social dimension of higher education** is one of the key objectives, the ministers agreed to promote within the framework of Bologna process. The discussions were facilitated by **Ms. Vanja Ivosevic, the ESIB 2005 chairperson**, focusing on the current developments and regulation existing into the SEE and strengthening the importance of ensuring equal access to education and efficient use of existing financial funds allotted to education.

The **conclusions** of the thematic seminar:

general

- It is important that ministries and higher education institutions from the SEE to be active in Bologna follow-up process
- There is a need to ensure support to the newly entered countries-such as Moldova
- It is advisable to increase cooperation in the region with the aim as bringing common problems and solutions in the discussion that are organised across Europe
- Monitoring of change and following implementation, due to governmental changes in the region
- Encouraging a broader debate on education, seen as an investment in the society

specific

- Importance of quality assurance enhancement
- Promoting the active debates on qualification framework
- Exchanging good practices on research training
- Other questions to be added to Trends V' exercise
- Developing social national policies

Drafted by Luminita Matei, director of ERI SEE secretariat, 7 July 2005