



Bologna: beyond 2010 and over the Ocean – but where to? On new Bologna reports and C. Adelman's last essay

May 11, 2009 by [globalhighered](#) [Kris Olds ed.]

Editor's note: this guest entry is by **Pavel Zgaga**, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Pavel began his academic career at the University of Ljubljana in 1978. In 1990-92 and 2001-2004 he was a member of the University Senate; in 2001-2004 he was Dean of the Faculty of Education. He is Director of the Centre for Education Policy Studies, a R&D institute of the University of Ljubljana established in 2000. In the 1990s, in the period after political changes in Slovenia, he was engaged for several years in the Slovenian Government. In 1992-1999 he was State Secretary for Higher Education. In 1999-2000 he was Minister of Education and Sports. He was also the head of the working group "Education, Training and Youth" in the negotiation process for Slovenian accession to the EU (1998-1999). On behalf of Slovenia, he signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention (April 1997) and the Bologna Declaration (June 1999). After his return to university he has remained closely connected to the Bologna process. In the period 2002 – 2003 he was the general rapporteur of the Bologna Follow-up Group (Berlin Report) while in the period June 2004 – June 2005 he was a member of the Board of the Bologna Follow-up Group. He also the author of *Looking out: The Bologna Process in a Global Setting* (2006) and *Higher Education in Transition: Reconsiderations on Higher Education in Europe at the Turn of the Millenium* (2007).

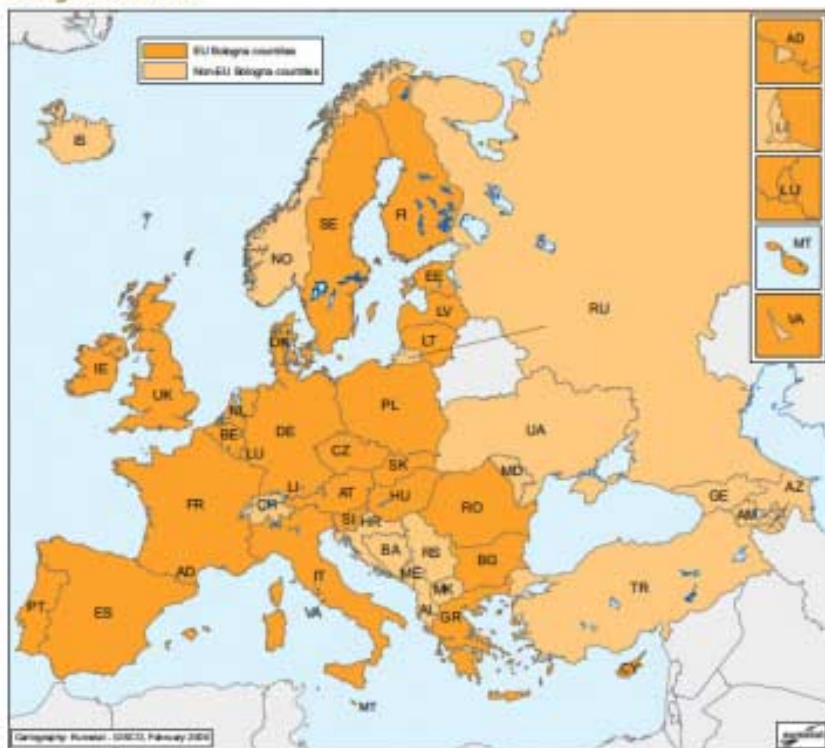


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The end of April was again very important for the emerging European Higher Education Area (EHEA): the sixth ministerial conference of the 46 Bologna countries was held in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. Yet, we are not going to discuss its outcomes (though we will briefly

discuss the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué later), but the “background” lead-up to the conference. In this context, April was not only an important but also a productive month: productive in terms of reports, surveys and analyses on the Bologna Process and higher education in Europe in general which really deserve some attention. Most of them are available at the official Bologna website.

**Bologna countries**



|                                     |           |               |    |                                           |      |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|----|-------------------------------------------|------|
| Albania                             | AL        | France        | FR | Norway                                    | NO   |
| Andorra                             | AD        | Georgia       | GE | Poland                                    | PL   |
| Armenia                             | AM        | Germany       | DE | Portugal                                  | PT   |
| Austria                             | AT        | Greece        | EL | Romania                                   | RO   |
| Azerbaijan                          | AZ        | Holy See      | VA | Russian Federation                        | RU   |
| Belgium                             | BE        | Hungary       | HU | Serbia                                    | RS   |
| Belgium (Flemish Community)         | BE<br>fl* | Iceland       | IS | Slovakia                                  | SK   |
| Belgium (French Community)          | BE<br>fr* | Ireland       | IE | Slovenia                                  | SI   |
| Belgium (German-speaking Community) | BE<br>de* | Italy         | IT | Spain                                     | ES   |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina              | BA        | Latvia        | LV | Sweden                                    | SE   |
| Bulgaria                            | BG        | Liechtenstein | LI | Switzerland                               | CH   |
| Croatia                             | HR        | Lithuania     | LT | The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | MK** |
| Cyprus                              | CY        | Luxembourg    | LU | Turkey                                    | TR   |
| Czech Republic                      | CZ        | Malta         | MT | Ukraine                                   | UA   |
| Denmark                             | DK        | Moldova       | MD | United Kingdom                            | UK   |
| Estonia                             | EE        | Montenegro    | ME | United Kingdom (England and Wales)        | E/W* |
| Finland                             | FI        | Netherlands   | NL | United Kingdom (Scotland)                 | SCO* |

\* Arbitrary code; no official code (ISO 3166 – alpha2) for these communities or countries.

First of all, there is a traditional – and official – 2009 Stocktaking Report (the third in line since 2005), this time on 100+ pages and focusing on progression of the new degree system implementation across Europe, quality assurance, recognition and mobility issues as well as at the “EHEA in a global context” and Bologna “beyond 2010”.

The Stocktaking Report is again accompanied by a Eurydice study *Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process*.

Within a package of “official Bologna” reports we can also find – now for the first time – a comprehensive study with *Key Indicators on the Social Dimension and Mobility* provided by Eurostat and Eurostudent (commissioned at the previous London 2007 Conference, and the source of the map pasted on right).

There are a number of other interesting reports, mainly from various Bologna working parties but we simply can’t check all of them at once. Perhaps we should add a new Eurobarometer Survey (No. 260) on

*Students and Higher Education Reform* which provides very interesting insights on basis of responses from 15,000 randomly-selected students from 31 European countries.

With previous Bologna biannual conferences we learnt that reports and surveys provided by two leading “Bologna partner organizations” – the European University Association (EUA) and the European Students’ Union (ESU) – are always very instructive and may also bring very critical comments. Yet, this year there is no “Trends” report. The fifth one was presented at the London Conference in 2007 and the sixth is planned only for the next conference (to be hosted jointly by Vienna and Budapest in 2010) which will officially declare that the Bologna train has reached its main station and that the EHEA is “finally constructed”. However, in April EUA published another survey, *Survey of Master Degrees in Europe* (by Howard Davies) which is extremely interesting with its findings about the implementation of the Bologna “second cycle”. On the other hand, a new volume of the *Bologna With Student Eyes 2009* report – a presentation of student views on ongoing European higher education reforms – was produced again by ESU.

At this point, a list of new publications is not exhausted at all. We will mention only one more – a monograph which fully deserves not only to be mentioned here but to be taken into a serious consideration. There is a special reason: it is a non-Bologna Bologna study. It is not the “independent review” which the Process put on its agenda for the next year; in Europe it was received in a rather unexpected way. As its author says openly, the title of his monograph “is a deliberate play on the title of the biennial reports on the progress of Bologna produced by the European Students’ Union”: it is *The Bologna Process for U.S. Eyes* by Clifford Adelman (2009, IHEP) which has been already discussed in *GlobalHigherEd* by Anne Corbett (see ‘A European view of the new Adelman report on the Bologna Process’).

Reading Adelman “essay”, as he also calls it, we soon notice that it is more than just a play on the title “intended to pay tribute to student involvement in the massive undertaking that is Bologna”. It is obviously also “a purposeful slap at both former U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings’ Commission on the Future of Higher Education and the U.S. higher education community in its response to the report of that commission— neither of which involved students in visible and substantive ways, if at all.” Even more than that, no attention whatsoever was paid in the Spellings’ initiative to developments in European higher education and the Adelman’s conclusion is simple: “Such purblind stances are unforgivable in a world without borders”. Therefore, there is a clear “polemic side of this essay” as we can read in the concluding part of his essay.

This side is, most probably, intended “for U.S. eyes” only. However, when reading Adelman’s essay in the atmosphere of the last Bologna Conference I was really surprised how gentle its melody may sound to “European ears”. One should not forget that both the Sorbonne and the Bologna Declaration contain – besides other important elements – some hidden resentment about the global standing of American higher education, indicative in comments like “Universities were born in Europe”, the stressing of “a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions” and a continuous call that European higher education should increase its “international competitiveness”.

Ten years after the Bologna initiative was raised it is really fantastic for European ears to listen to sentences like this one: “While still a work in progress, parts of the Bologna Process have already been imitated in Latin America, North Africa, and Australia. The core features of the Bologna Process have sufficient momentum to become the dominant global higher education

model within the next two decades.” It is not a matter of politeness; there are arguments for such a statement.

In fact, it is indeed surprising that such a long time was needed to receive a real response from across the Ocean, from the US. In 2006 when I was working on a study on the “External Dimension” of the Bologna Process (see *Looking out: The Bologna Process in a Global Setting*) it was already obvious that “echoes” were emerging from all over the world – but not from the US. Referring to Margaret Spellings’ Commission Draft Report I wrote: “Surprisingly, from a European perspective, and probably from a non-American perspective in general, the document does not make any detailed reference to the issue of internationalisation and globalisation of higher education, which is high on agendas in other world regions!” However, on the other side it was already possible to listen to first warnings coming from academic people. I remember Catharine Stimpson who said at the ACA Hamburg conference (Germany) in Autumn 2004: “Ignorance is always dangerous, but the United States ignorance of the Bologna Process – outside of some educational experts – may be particularly dangerous.”



Much has changed within only one year (not only in higher education) – and this change should be now reflected upon, including on this side of the Ocean. We remember Adelman’s previous study (*The Bologna Club: What U.S. Higher Education Can Learn from a Decade of European Reconstruction*, May 2008) which perhaps already made Bologna more popular in US, but what came as really surprising news for many people in Europe was information about Lumina Foundation plans (in association with the states of Indiana, Minnesota, and Utah) to establish study groups to examine the Tuning process (see Susan Robertson’s entry ‘Tuning USA’: reforming higher education in the US, Europe style’ on this issue, as well as this Lumina press release).

I have been personally involved in the “European” Tuning process: it has been a truly excellent experience in international collaboration. Adelman is right: if you are working in a group of, say, 15 colleagues who speak 12 different languages and are coming from 15 different academic, cultural, political, economic, etc., environments, then you are really privileged. This has been an extremely productive way of modernizing our institutions, our courses and our work with students. Since colleagues from Latin America and Caribbean joined Tuning, since Tuning was spread also to Central Asia etc., our common privilege has been only increasing. But it should be made clear: the success of Tuning is not because of a supposed “European win” in the “international competitiveness game”; this would be too simplistic a conclusion. In the globalising higher education of today we need partners, as many as possible. Not only to learn

new ideas from them but also to watch your own face in mirrors they can offer you. Therefore: Indiana, Minnesota, and Utah – welcome!

Adelman aims at clarifying “for North American readers, what Bologna is and what it is not”; however, it seems to me that results of his work are broader and that they can generate new ideas not only with American but also with European and, hopefully, global readers as well. (Last but not least: it could be read as a useful ‘textbook’ also for Europeans.) Yet, not in the same line for all; contexts are obviously different. He urges Americans “to learn something from beyond our own borders that just might help us rethink our higher education enterprise” but also gives a mirror to Europeans enabling them to leave working on implementation aside for a moment and to reflect upon what they have been doing so far and where are they going now.

At this point we are back in post-April 2009 Europe. In their *Communiqué*, Ministers shifted the landmark from Bologna 2010 to Bologna 2020. Its very first sentence makes us realise that the story is not finished. “In the decade up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realising a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative.” Of course, “over the past decade we have developed the EHEA”; there is no doubt that “greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education” has been achieved and that “higher education is being modernized” but “not all the objectives have been completely achieved” and, therefore, “the full and proper implementation [...] will require increased momentum and commitment beyond 2010.”



## Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009

Report from working groups appointed by the  
Bologna Follow-up Group to the  
Ministerial Conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve  
28-29 April 2009

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission as part of the Erasmus+ programme. The publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Reports and surveys produced and presented in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve give additional insights. When one has to mark – in a complex situation like this one – a further way on, it is not so important to factor in has been already been left behind. The real question is a vague path and possible crossroads in the foreseeable future. The *2009 Stocktaking Report* openly admits that the deadline to have completed the implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks by 2010 “appears to have been too ambitious” (the Communiqué postponed this task “by 2012”) and that “there is not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS”. Similarly, “a learning outcomes-based culture across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010”. These deficiencies warn that tasks have been taken perhaps in too formal a manner and that there is quite a lot of further work which demands a conceptual and not only “technical” expertise.

On the other hand, there are a lot of concerns with the employability of new Bachelor graduates after the Bologna first cycle. With regard to the Master – i.e., the Bologna second cycle – and the issue of employability, Howard Davies (EUA) made another crucial comment in his *Survey of Master Degrees in Europe*: “The Bologna three-cycle system cannot be said to be in place until this process is complete. In other words, until all

46 countries have evolved beyond the position in which the Master is the sole point of initial entry into the market for high-skilled labour.” In short: “the definition of the Bologna Master awaits the full fleshing out of the Bologna Bachelor.”

Of course, students (i.e., ESU in their *Bologna With Student Eyes 2009*) raise this issue even more critically: “inadequate understanding of the purpose of these reforms has negatively affected students, pressuring them to follow longer periods of study in order to reach a position of sustainable employment”. They are “impatient” as students should be: “Although processes appear to be moving in the right direction, they are doing so at something of the pace of a snail.” They complain on “the level of ‘divergence’ in the perceptions of national ministries, higher education institutions and students themselves”. Their report starts with “Repetition is deeply dissatisfying” (meaning that there is often not much difference between their critical statements of this year and of previous reports) and this is good: students are still here to push rectors and ministers forward.

In their *Communiqué* Ministers strived to pour some new fuel for the next period. They decided to amend, a little, the organisational structure. In the future “the Bologna Process will be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country”. Thus, the first of the missing elements that Anne Corbett warned about just few days before the last conference (Bologna as “modelled on the EU Presidency system [...] excluded 19 countries”; *The Guardian*, 21 April) seems to be settled, at least partly. On the other hand, in the most ambitious sentence of the Communiqué they set a new mobility target: “In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad.” This is absolutely great; however, some more ambitious targets would not harm the future “beyond 2010”.

But it is necessary to warn also about new targets: “Repetition is deeply dissatisfying” students may say. “Action lines” in policy documents necessarily request implementation – and implementation is the really hard job. However, are the open questions about Bologna close to its goal line (2010) just about its “full implementation” – or are they more than that? I would opt for the later: implementation of a given principle always comes into trouble when it is taken just as a matter of a “technique”. What is needed for its “full implementation” – e.g. during the next decade – it is a strong momentum, a (new) vision which hits at the heart of reality. Do we have it?

Bologna has produced world-wide attention and, perhaps, its new momentum and its new vision could also start from this source. Forgetting this fact would be unforgivable in a world without borders: in Europe as well as in the US or any other global region.

**Pavel Zgaga**

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