



THE BOLOGNA PROCESS OR HOW TO RESHAPE THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Workshop "Creating the Mediterranean Higher Education Area"

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Introduction and content

- The Bologna process:
 - For Europe: a revolution? (deep or only superficial changes?)
 - For the rest of the World:
 - An initiative to fear (fortress Europe?)
 - A model to imitate?

- Content:
 - I Europe and the changing environment of Higher education and research
 - II The Bologna process: history, objectives, main features and realization
 - III Challenging realization issues
 - By way of conclusion: the Bologna process is an open process

An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range. The terrain is rugged with deep valleys and sharp ridges. In the lower right foreground, a small, dark-colored building with a red roof is visible, surrounded by a few other smaller structures and what appears to be a parking area. The overall scene is bright and wintry.

PART I

Europe and the changing environment of Higher education and research

The cultural, institutional and economic diversity of Europe

- Nearly 50 sovereign countries (46 members of the Council of Europe),
 - Some very small, some very big
 - Great disparities of GNP per head
 - Overwhelming majority are democracies
 - National rules are inward focused, therefore creating barriers to competition and mobility
 - The EU (25 countries): unified market for goods, services and labor, one currency (12 countries), uniform rules





■ **Characteristics of European HE&R**

- Binary and unified systems
- Nearly exclusively public institutions in the west; more than 1000 private institutions in east and central Europe
- Basic research in universities and/or research centers
- Size from 100 to more than 100'000 students
- Teaching in more than 20 different languages
- Numerous barriers to mobility (rigidity of programs, differing lengths of studies, heterogeneous system of grades, etc....)

The changing environment is a challenge

■ General factors of change

- Globalization and emergence of gigantic economic powers
- Exponential growth of knowledge (the frequency of revolutionary impacts is increasing)
- Move into a post-industrial knowledge-based society: the creation of wealth depends upon advanced education, research and innovation (the closer to the “technology frontier”, the more profitable it is to invest into knowledge)
- Knowledge has become a factor of survival for “old” countries



■ Factors of change **specific to HE&R**

- Still increasing participation rate of traditional students
- Increasing diversity of demands on HE institutions
- Necessity to develop life long learning
- Increasing cost of research and teaching
- Increasing competition and necessity to cooperate
- Overstretched public finance

An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range. The terrain is rugged with numerous ridges and valleys, all blanketed in white snow. In the lower right foreground, a small, multi-story red building with a dark roof stands out against the white landscape. The overall scene is serene and desolate.

Part II

The Bologna process:
history, objectives, main
features and realization

History

- **Launched** in 1998 in Paris (La Sorbonne) by the Ministers of 4 countries (F, UK, D and I)
- **Confirmed** in 1999 with the Bologna Declaration (29-30 countries)
- **Follow-up** ministerial conferences (and communiqués) in:
 - Prague, 2001, enlarged to 33 countries, and
 - Berlin, Sept. 2003, enlarged to 40 countries)
 - Bergen, May 2005, enlarged to 45 countries
 - London, May 2007

Objectives

- Mobilizing the cultural diversity to strengthen Europe
- Create a **transparent and open** higher education space
- Promote the **mobility** of students and teachers
- Develop the **European identity**
- Improve the **attractiveness** of Europe for “overseas” students

Main features (tools)

- Creation of a **transparent system** based on a “bachelors” and “masters” system and, since Berlin (2003), doctorates (PhD)
 - **Bachelor**: preparation to a professional career and to further university studies
 - **Master**: specialization (academic and vocational)
 - **Doctorate (PhD)** (link between EHEA and ERA)

- Generalized introduction of a **credit transfer** and **accumulation** system (improvement of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)): BA 180-240 credits, MA 90-120 credits, with a total of 300 ECTS for the MA; PhD level still open
- Development of the **Diploma supplement**
- Promotion of the “**Recognition convention**” of UNESCO-COE)
- Introduction of an overarching **qualification framework** which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile (implies a “Master plan” for the HE&R sector)

Realization

- The process is extremely **decentralized**, as it is now applied in 45 sovereign countries by 3-4 thousands more or less autonomous universities
- There is **no leader**: succession of leading countries and uneasy role for the EU
- Each country is drafting its **own rules** and each university, even each department, has to **interpret** the Bologna declaration and the national rules
- Many universities do not realize that it is a fantastic opportunity to revise their programs in depth as well as the pedagogy: in particular move from teaching to learning

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Part III

Challenging realization issues

Profiling of study programs

- The changing environment and the Bologna process are increasing
 - the competition for students and funds
 - the necessity to cooperate to reach an optimal size
- HE institutions should strategically position themselves. This is in particular the case for MA and PhD programs. This implies:
 - Providing programs only in selected strong domains (specializations)
 - Developing joint programs with other institutions

Conditions of access to MA (and PhD) programs

- What is the end of a normal study period? BA or MA?
- What are the entry conditions to the MA after a BA
 - Same discipline? Automatic or selection?
 - Other disciplines? Only selection?
 - Students from another university? Automatic or selection?
 - Students from a professional college? No access or conditional access?
- How many types of masters are necessary?
“normal” disciplinary, advanced, pluri-disciplinary

Problems of transition

- Which solution for students who have already done 1, 2, 3 or even 4, years in the framework of the old system?
- Which grade for those who graduated just before the introduction of the new system
-

Mobility between institutions of different levels of quality

- Whatever the efforts in quality assurance, there will always be institutions and programs of different quality level!
- Should the entry conditions in one university depend on the quality level of the university of origin or not?
 - According to the recognition convention, in principle no
 - One should also trust the students' ability to make a special effort
 - Probability: creation of networks of institutions alike

Students mobility

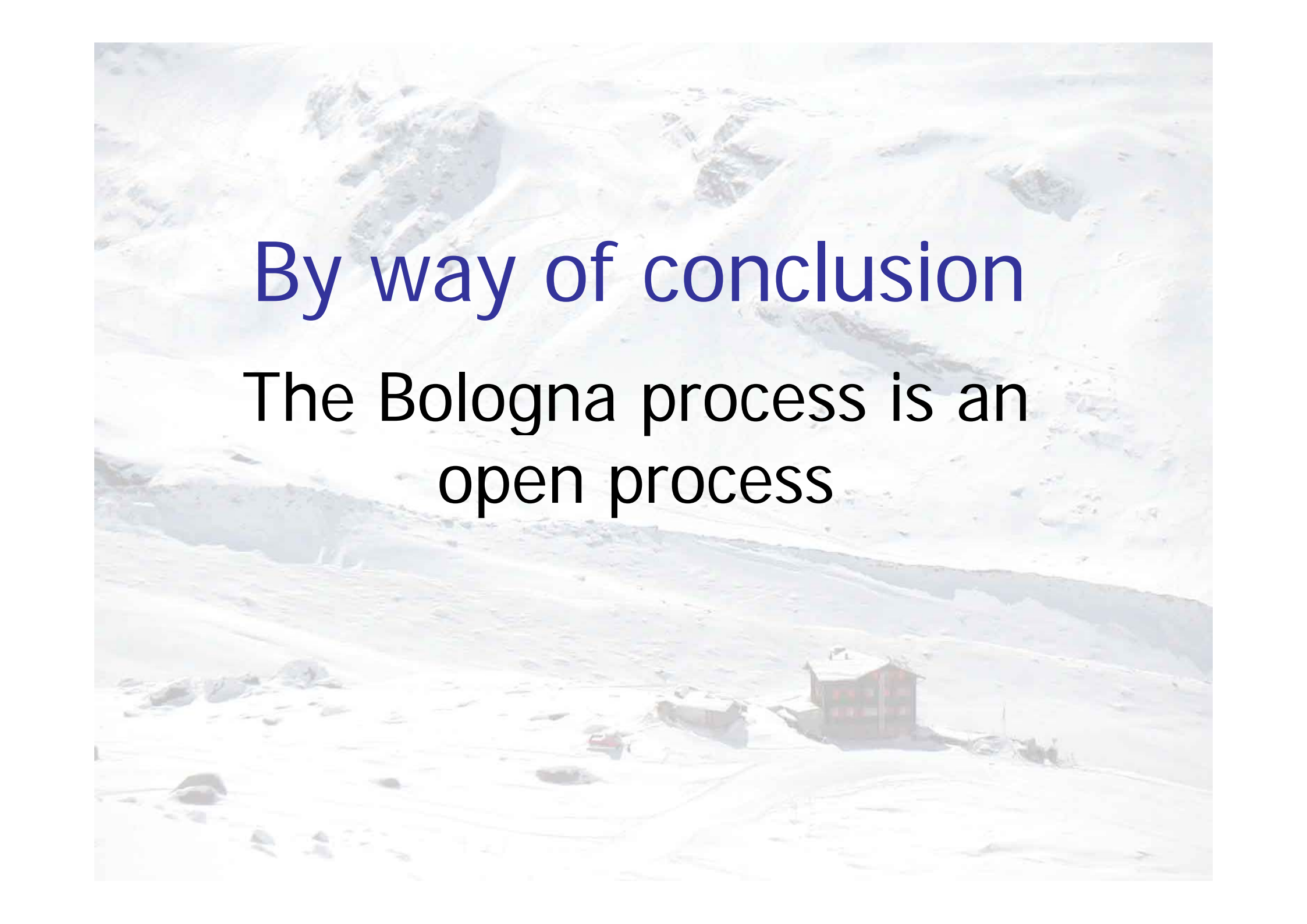
- When (or) how should the students be mobile?
 - Within a cycle?
 - At the end of a BA or MA?
- Should mobility be compulsory, financially encouraged or free (own decision of students)
- Numerous administrative barriers to mobility
 - Lack of information
 - Visa
 - Grants often do not follow students

Quality assurance/accreditation

- Necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for students mobility
- Main issues are
 - Evaluation vs accreditation?
 - Formative vs summative?
 - Qualitative vs quantitative?
 - Institutions vs programs?
 - Criteria fixed according to the mission statement or pre-determined?
 - Teaching or research or both?
- Organisations responsible for evaluation
 - Universities for their subdivisions (departments, etc..)
 - Agencies (national or international) for universities
 - Register (?) for agencies
- Exception: specific agencies for specific institutions or programs (Business, public administration, engineering, ...)

Institutions' governance, leadership and management

- The implementation of the Bologna process has revealed serious weaknesses: bias in favour of the status quo
- Universities should develop their capacity for change thanks to
 - A better governance
 - Strong leadership
 - Professional management
- Forthcoming: EUA-Raabe Handbook

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By way of conclusion
The Bologna process is an
open process

Extra European curiosity, interest and fear

- The Bologna process give rise to a lot of interest in Latin America, Asia, even Northern America and, obviously, around the Mediterranean sea
- There is also a fear that the process will contribute to exclude extra-European students (fortress Europe!?)
- Concrete steps to develop something in Latin America
 - EUALC
 - 6X4
 - Extension of tuning

Simple rules for “outsiders” to become “Bologna compatible” and first steps towards a “Bologna-like” system

- Introduction of ECTS and diploma supplements according to the European system (or easily transferable)
- Develop effective quality assurance mechanisms and take the follow-up seriously
- Frame the HE&R system with a clear vision of the qualification which should be promoted in different types of HE institutions (master plan and possibly BA, MA and PhD framework)

An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range. The terrain is rugged with numerous ridges and valleys, all blanketed in white snow. In the lower right quadrant, a small, multi-story wooden building with a dark roof is visible, surrounded by a few smaller structures and a red car. The overall scene is serene and desolate.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION

References

- Bologna process websites. Until may 2005: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>; since summer 2005: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna>
- Dublin descriptors: <http://www.uji.es/bin/organs/vices/vqehe/ddublin.pdf>
- Tuning Website: http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/index.php?option=com_weblinks&Itemid=4&catid=27/