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## **Principles of the Bologna Process and their Implementation in Poland**

### **The background and context of changes**

For nine hundred years of their history, universities played predominantly social functions, including formation of intellectual elites, culture and society. Focused on universal values, such as good and truth, they were at the same time a measure of civilisational progress. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century universities have played an increasingly utilitarian role, educating labour force for the modern economy and providing solutions to social problems. Currently, higher education and academic research are perceived as a source of innovation, contributing to economic growth. In the so-called knowledge-based economy, innovation has replaced traditional development factors, such as financial capital, labour or material resources, becoming the key measure of competitiveness.<sup>1</sup>

Current changes in higher education involve a departure from the model of general education, leading towards increasing specialisation. At various stages of its development, the idea of university focused on different functions and its history can thus be divided into three major periods: ‘the old university’, ‘the university of the liberal nation-state’ and ‘multiversity’.<sup>2</sup> To a certain extent, the liberal university functioned along the German model of the University of Berlin, developed by its founder Wilhelm von Humboldt. Financed and controlled mostly by the state, it had academic autonomy and was characterised by quite a loose connection between its activity and the current social needs. Such a model had a considerable influence on shaping the system of higher education in Poland.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the mission of multiversity is focused on the applicability of academic research and

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<sup>1</sup> K. Denek, ‘Sterowny czynnik rozwoju społeczeństwa wiedzy’, in K. Denek et al. (eds.), *Edukacja jutra. Edukacja w społeczeństwie wiedzy* (The Education of tomorrow. Education in the knowledge society), (Sosnowiec: Humanitas, 2010), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> K. Leja, *Koncepcje zarządzania współczesnym uniwersytetem* (Approaches to university management), (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Gdańskiej, 2011), pp. 13–18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

stresses connections between educational institutions and economy. Institutions of this kind pursue their activity in education, research and public service, understood in terms of fostering cooperation and relations with their environment through making a contribution to social and economic development of their region and country.<sup>4</sup>

Both academic education and research are subject to constant change induced by local, European and global processes. In the era of globalisation, transformation is not only unavoidable, but also desirable. Apart from globalisation and increasing social mobility, both horizontal and vertical, there are also other social and demographic phenomena, such as the ageing of the European population, increasing individualisation of lifestyle, and denationalisation of the economy.<sup>5</sup> Another factor at play has been the growing institutional potential of third-level education, conducive to increasing its popularity and market orientation. Although processes shaping today's universities are essentially quite similar regardless of their geographical location, there are certainly some phenomena affecting the system of higher education which are limited to particular countries or regions.

Poland has recently experienced a broad-ranging, sometimes radical, change involving, additionally, such factors as a systemic transformation, European integration and rapid progress in science and technology.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenon of mass third-level education was particularly noticeable, as it coincided with the transformation of the entire social system. Higher education was perceived in terms of an opportunity for social advancement and improvement of the financial situation, resulting in a high level of educational aspirations among members of the younger generation. However, the ensuing expansion of the educational system has also produced problems which are becoming apparent today, when the number of students is progressively falling due to demographic changes. While in 1990 there were 400,000 students in Poland, in 2010 the figure peaked to reach 1,954,000 (with the 1980s baby boom generation turning 19–24 years of age), only to fall down to 1,764,000 in 2012.<sup>7</sup> Since projections indicate a further decline to 1,254,000 in 2025,<sup>8</sup> institutions of higher

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<sup>4</sup> J. Józwiak, R. Z. Morawski, 'Społeczna rola szkolnictwa wyższego i jego misja publiczna w perspektywie dekady 2010–2020' (The social role and public mission of higher education: Prospects for 2010–2020), in *Polskie szkolnictwo wyższe. Stan, uwarunkowania i perspektywy* (Polish higher education: Current state, conditions, prospects), (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009), pp. 52–3.

<sup>5</sup> M. Kwiek, 'Uniwersytet a państwo w epoce globalnej. Renegocjacja tradycyjnego kontraktu społecznego' (The university and the state in a global age. Renegotiating the traditional social contract), *Principia. Pisma koncepcyjne z filozofii i socjologii teoretycznej* vol. 43–44 (2005–2006), pp. 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> M.J. Szymański, 'Zmiana społeczna i zmiana edukacyjna' (Social change and educational change), in J. Kostkiewicz et al. (eds.), *Szkoła Wyższa w toku zmian* (Institutions of higher education in the process of change), vol. 1 (Kraków: Impuls, 2011), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Polsce 2013*, Raport Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego (Higher Education in Poland 2013, Report, Ministry of Science and Higher Education), p. 5.

education will face increasing competition for candidates, leading to reduced entry requirements.

It would seem that under the circumstances there is a need to develop a mechanism which would secure the quality of education and enable its diversification to meet the expectations of students. The Bologna Process is an attempt to face the current problems, systematise the changes in European third-level education and put European universities on a new course. In Poland, problematic issues involve the expansion of private higher education, largely blamed for diminishing the educational standards and devaluation of third-level diplomas as a result of their ‘excessively client-oriented’ approach.<sup>9</sup> Such criticism certainly does not apply to those private educational institutions which have built their position on high quality educational offer.

In the European context, the need for change stems from the position of European institutions of higher education in comparison with their counterparts in the United States and Asia. Indeed, global rankings and statistics of patents granted reveal that European educational and research performance is relatively low. Implementation of a common strategy aims to improve the competitiveness of European higher education on the global educational market and create a competitive, knowledge-based European economy. This is to be achieved by increased mobility of European Union citizens, particularly students and academics, exchange of experiences, ideas, know-how, and by building a common European identity.

Discussion on the future of European higher education has continued for a few decades and involved most European countries. The process of modernisation was launched as a result of an increasing awareness of the need for change in the absence of adequate reforms. Although the idea of university had been born and developed in Europe, recent comparative studies reveal that the American model is more effective. In order to bridge the gap, Europe decided to take joint action aiming to promote and improve third-level education, and the Polish educational system was included in the scheme. It is worth noting that the process stems from the idea of ‘the European project’ and is largely politically motivated as it aims to ‘develop a common European response to problems encountered by most countries’.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, however, the changes are also considered as a natural necessity rather than

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> M. Flis, ‘Szkoła Wyższa w toku zmiany a wewnętrzny system zapewniania jakości kształcenia’ (Institutions of higher education in the process of change and the internal quality assurance system), in J. Kostkiewicz et al. (eds.), *Szkoła Wyższa w toku zmian* (Institutions of higher education in the process of change), vol. 1 (Kraków: Impuls, 2011), p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> A. Kraśniewski, *Proces Boloński – to już 10 lat* (A decade of the Bologna Process in Poland), (Warszawa: Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2009), p. 7.

a political move: a reformulated strategy of higher education is a functional necessity in a modern social system, whose old structures are not able to cope with new challenges. Indeed, as Maria Flis observes ‘you cannot fill an old form with a new content’.<sup>11</sup>

The changes are assumed to be implemented without affecting the autonomy of education systems operating at the level of nation states. According to common rules for the conduct of European Union policies, EU directives, once agreed, lay down certain end results, and national authorities have to adapt their laws to achieve them, but are free to decide how to do so.<sup>12</sup> However, it has to be stressed that higher education is not subject to EU legal regulations.<sup>13</sup> Even so, the network of political and economic relationships between EU countries is so strong that it entails the need to adapt to current standards in other dimensions, including education. Strengthening the position of Poland in Europe is one of the major goals of Polish foreign policy and the international standing of the country depends on the gradual assimilation of European rules applicable also to higher education. Adjustment of Polish reforms to European standards is to secure a stable development of the system of education and research. Consequently, Poland cannot afford to ignore the objectives of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy, as this would result not only in the lack of funding from the EU, but also, more importantly, in a lowered standing among European and global educational institutions.

### **The main stages of change**

In 1988, the rectors of universities from EU member states and associated countries signed the Magna Charta Universitatum in Bologna.<sup>14</sup> As the document was signed only by members of the academic community, it had no political dimension, and as such was different in nature from documents in the later framework of the Bologna Process. Magna Charta Universitatum emphasised the role of the university as a guardian of values and stressed the

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<sup>11</sup> M. Flis, ‘O filozofii krajowych Ram Kwalifikacji’ (On the philosophy underlying the National Qualifications Framework), *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 4/2011, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> T. Szapiro, ‘Proces Boloński: nowe szanse, czy nieznane zagrożenia’ (The Bologna Process: New opportunities or new threats?), in E. Drogosz-Zabłocka and B. Minkiewicz (eds.), *Ekonomiczne studia licencjackie z perspektywy absolwenta i władz uczelni* (Undergraduate studies in economics from the perspective of graduates and authorities of institutions of higher education), (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, Centrum Badań Polityki Naukowej i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, 2008); <http://akson.sgh.waw.pl/~tszapiro/zwiad/SzapiroBologna.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> M. Kwiek, ‘Integracja europejska a europejska integracja szkolnictwa wyższego (European integration and the integration of European higher education), *Centre for Public Policy Research Paper Series* vol. 17 (2010), pp.3–4.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Magna Charta Universitatum’, Bologna, 18 September 1988, [http://www.magna-charta.org/library/userfiles/file/mc\\_english.pdf](http://www.magna-charta.org/library/userfiles/file/mc_english.pdf).

importance of freedom to pursue academic research. As stated, 'its research and teaching must be ... independent of all political authority and economic power'.<sup>15</sup> Characterised as autotelic and conducted along the principle of autonomy, research and teaching was to serve the public; issues related to building a knowledge-based economy were not included in the document. Also, what was recognised as one of the main concerns of the university was the responsibility for the preservation and development of the European humanist tradition.

In order to understand the changes taking place in European higher education, it is worth introducing and explaining the origins of the Bologna Declaration and the ensuing set of reforms of higher education referred to as the Bologna process. The basic principles of the Bologna process stem from the Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education, signed in May 1998 at the Sorbonne in Paris by the education ministers of four countries: France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.<sup>16</sup> The Sorbonne Declaration focused on improving international transparency and comparability of studies, including the recognition of qualifications through the introduction of a common framework of qualifications and consistent levels of study. It also aimed to promote the mobility of students and teachers across Europe and their integration into the European labour market, and addressed the issue of creating a common system of titles and degrees for undergraduate and graduate cycles (bachelor's degree and master's and doctor's degree, respectively).

An important point of departure for considering changes taking place in higher education was the Bologna Declaration, signed by the ministers responsible for higher education from twenty-nine countries on 19 June 1999.<sup>17</sup> The document provided the Bologna Process with the initial sense of direction. At that stage, the final form in which the institutions of higher education were to operate at the level of associated countries was not specified and the idea was to be developed with each subsequent meeting at the ministerial level to include additional goals. In Poland, the changes stemming from the country's participation in the Bologna Process are implemented by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego) in the form of laws and regulations. The current shape of the legislation takes into account the objectives of the process, but the guidelines for its implementation are set at the ministry level and reflect the objectives of Polish educational policy.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Sorbonne Declaration, 'Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system', Paris, the Sorbonne, 25 May 1998, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/SORBONNE\\_DECLARATION1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/SORBONNE_DECLARATION1.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Bologna Declaration, 'Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education', 19 June 1998, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA\\_DECLARATION1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf).

The Bologna Declaration became the founding document used by the signatory states to establish the general framework for the modernisation and reform of European higher education. In later documents, subsequent reforms in higher education came to be referred to as the Bologna Process. In the Bologna Declaration, the ministers committed their countries to introduce changes in their educational systems with a view to attaining the following objectives: the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees; the adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles (undergraduate and graduate); the establishment of a European system of credits based on the student workload required to achieve the course outcomes (ECTS) as a means of accumulation and transfer of credits; promotion of staff and student mobility; cooperation in quality assurance; promotion of a European dimension in higher education.

The progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process recommendations is regularly monitored at conferences of ministers responsible for higher education meeting every two years, which conclude with a communiqué summarizing the achievements and defining further action. Originally, the principal objective of the Bologna Process was to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Once this aim was accomplished, the agenda of the process has been broadened to include such goals as the current development of National Qualifications Frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) as a means to increase mobility.

The most important documents defining the area of influence of the Bologna Process are declarations and communiqués signed by the ministers responsible for higher education. The number of countries is steadily increasing, from twenty-nine in 1999 to forty-six in 2013, and so is the number of tasks. In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the ministers added new elements: promotion of lifelong learning, cooperation with higher education institutions and students, and promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area in Europe and other parts of the world.<sup>18</sup> The Berlin Communiqué (2003) assessed the progress made so far and stressed the significance of a link between higher education and research. In this context, it was considered important that the two-cycle study system should be modified to include the doctoral level as the third cycle.<sup>19</sup> The Bergen Conference (2005) set the priorities for the Bologna Process for the following years: the development of doctoral studies

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<sup>18</sup> Prague Communiqué, 'Towards the European Higher Education Area', 19 May 2001, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/PRAGUE\\_COMMUNIQUE.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/PRAGUE_COMMUNIQUE.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Berlin Communiqué, 'Realising the European Higher Education Area', 19 September 2003, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Berlin\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Berlin_Communique1.pdf).

and linking higher education with research. It also stressed the social dimension of the Bologna Process, involving access to studies for students from socially disadvantaged groups and removing obstacles to student and staff mobility.<sup>20</sup>

One of the postulates was to develop mechanisms which would enable comparing the equivalence of skills acquired by students and their educational achievement, with European and National Qualifications Frameworks as tools for the implementation of this goal. The London Communiqué (2007) assessed the level of achievement of the previously set objectives and stressed the need for implementation of the new approach to education focused on student needs and learning outcomes.<sup>21</sup> The conference in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) re-emphasised the social dimension of higher education (providing equal opportunities for education and adequate conditions for the completion of studies), links between institutions of higher education and the labour market, links between education and research and innovation, and increasing mobility of students and staff. Another issue addressed was the need to create databases in order to efficiently monitor progress made in the areas of mobility, social dimension and employability, as well as to provide a basis for stocktaking and benchmarking (including classification and ranking of institutions of higher education).<sup>22</sup> 2010 saw the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) officially launched at the Budapest and Vienna Conference.<sup>23</sup> In Bucharest (2012), providing quality higher education in order to enhance employability of graduates and strengthening mobility for better learning were identified as important elements of further action.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Bergen Communiqué, 'The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals', 19–20 May 2005, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen_Communique1.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> London Communiqué, 'Towards the European Higher Education Area: Responding to challenges in a globalised world', 18 May 2007, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/London\\_Communique18May2007.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/London_Communique18May2007.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 'The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the new decade', 28–29 April 2009, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven\\_Louvain-la-Neuve\\_Communique%2028%20April\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique%2028%20April_2009.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> 'Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area', 12 March 2010, [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Budapest-Vienna\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Bucharest Communiqué, 'Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area', 26–27 April 2012, <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20Communique%202012%281%29.pdf>.

Table 1: The Bologna Process: Major stages

Conference of ministers responsible for higher education	Declaration/ communiqué date	Number of countries participating in the conference	Priority action
Bologna	19 June 1999	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement</li> <li>• adoption of a higher education system based on two/three main cycles</li> <li>• establishment of a European system of credits (European Credit Transfer System, ECTS)</li> <li>• promotion of student, teachers, researchers and administrative staff mobility</li> <li>• promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance</li> <li>• promotion of a European dimension in higher education, particularly with regard to curricular development, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research</li> </ul>
Prague	19 May 2001	33	<p>New elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion of lifelong learning</li> <li>• stress on involvement of higher education institutions and students</li> <li>• promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area in Europe and other parts of the world</li> </ul>
Berlin	19 September 2003	40	<p>New elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modification of the two-cycle study system to include the doctoral level as the third cycle</li> <li>• development of interdisciplinary education.</li> </ul>
Bergen	19–20 May 2005	45	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intensification of links between education and research e.g. by improving cooperation between the higher education sector and other research sectors</li> <li>• increasing access to studies for students from all social groups, including those in difficult financial and economic situation</li> <li>• removing obstacles to student and staff mobility</li> </ul>
London	18 May 2007	46	<p>Further action focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• removing obstacles to student and staff mobility</li> <li>• securing equal access to studies;</li> <li>• improving employability of graduates of the three-cycle degree system</li> <li>• promoting the principles of the Bologna Process in other regions of the world</li> </ul>
Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve	28–29 April 2009	47	<p>Further aims and priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing equal opportunities for education and adequate conditions for the completion of studies</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing lifelong learning, with a particular focus on the development of national qualifications frameworks</li> <li>• promoting employability of graduates and links between institutions of higher education and the labour market</li> <li>• empowering students in the educational process and in the process of curricular reform of higher education</li> <li>• internationalisation of studies</li> <li>• guaranteeing funding</li> </ul>
Budapest and Vienna	12 March 2010	47	Official launch of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and an assessment of the first decade of the Bologna Process
Bucharest	26–27 April 2012	47	Main priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing quality higher education for all</li> <li>• enhancing employability of graduates</li> <li>• strengthening mobility</li> </ul>

Data compiled by the authors on the basis of declarations and communiqués from the conferences of ministers responsible for higher education.<sup>25</sup>

So far, the strategic objectives adopted in the Bologna Declaration have been implemented in most EHEA countries, including Poland. An assessment of the process prior to 2010 was provided in a report *Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process*<sup>26</sup> and the latest data are included in *The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report*.<sup>27</sup> Both of them were based on data from the Eurostat, Eurostudent project and Eurydice network and were supervised by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). The 2012 report reveals that the European systems of higher education have transformed as set out in the principles of the Bologna Process. It has been observed that a high proportion of students continue their education having completed their first cycle with bachelor's degree (or its equivalent). In view of the fact that some countries still do not recognise the degree of bachelor as a professional qualification, it is suggested that further action should be taken to transform the traditional system towards a system based on learning outcomes. Although practically all countries have established external systems of

<sup>25</sup> Bologna Process, European Higher Education Area, <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=3>;  
Proces boloński: tworzenie europejskiego obszaru szkolnictwa wyższego (The Bologna process: Setting up the European Higher Education Area), European Commission, [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/education\\_training\\_youth/lifelong\\_learning/c11088\\_pl.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11088_pl.htm).

<sup>26</sup> *Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process* (Eurydice, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2009), <http://www.eurydice.org.pl/sites/eurydice.org.pl/files/099EN.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> *The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report* (Eurydice, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012), <http://www.eurydice.org.pl/sites/eurydice.org.pl/files/138EN.pdf>.

quality assurance, their agencies greatly differ in their purpose and approach: while the majority are primarily supervisory, some of them have only an advisory role. Furthermore, the systems of quality assurance still require greater involvement on the part of students, academic staff and employers. It is worth noting that despite the development of the European Quality Assurance Register, many countries still do not allow their higher education institutions to be evaluated by agencies from outside their country.

Another point of evaluation of the Bologna Process considers the implementation of lifelong learning. Although most countries have recognized this idea as one of their priorities and modified their study offer accordingly, the level of implementation is considerably different, owing to such factors as the level of financing available for the purpose. By contrast, the promotion of student and staff mobility has boosted as a result of the Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, specifying that by 2020 at least 20% of graduates should have completed a study or training period abroad. However, the evaluation of the current figures is not yet possible at this stage.<sup>28</sup>

New aims and objectives defined after 2010 can prove to be more difficult to implement than the previous ones. They include such elements as the introduction of flexible learning pathways, learning in the work environment and recognition of non-formal education and informal learning, which are a part of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL), mostly related to the field of vocational training. Another strategic task is to adjust the educational sector to the needs of the labour market. A significant number of countries have not yet taken all the steps to modernize their system of vocational training in accordance with the new guidelines. In Poland, work on the development of validation schemes is at a preparatory stage. Although current legal regulations already give higher education institutions an opportunity to recognise learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education, this practice has been limited to only few isolated cases. As indicated in the materials made available so far, it can be assumed that institutions of higher education will have a considerable level of autonomy in shaping their validation schemes (for example, the validation of qualifications by one higher education

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<sup>28</sup> 'Europejski Obszar Szkolnictwa Wyższego w roku 2012: Raport z wdrażania Procesu Bolońskiego, Briefing prasowy' (The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report, Press Briefing) [http://www.eurydice.org.pl/sites/eurydice.org.pl/files/EHEA\\_PL.pdf](http://www.eurydice.org.pl/sites/eurydice.org.pl/files/EHEA_PL.pdf).

institution can be autonomously accepted or rejected by another institution actually admitting the student).<sup>29</sup>

In their activity related to the Bologna Process, the ministers responsible for higher education are assisted by three official-level groups which supervise work, facilitate communication and assist in the decision-making process: the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG, established in 2003 and responsible for planning and implementation of activity stemming from ministerial decisions), the Bologna Process Board (supervising the activity of BFUG and responsible for action between BFUG meetings) and the Bologna Secretariat, supporting the work of BFUG and providing information about the Bologna Process.

Apart from states, the process also includes the European Commission as a full member, the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES (European Centre for Higher Education) as consultative members, and a range of stakeholder organisations also as consultative members. In this way, there is full and active partnership with higher education institutions, represented by the European University Association (EUA) and EURASHE, students, represented by the European Students' Union (ESU), academics represented by Education International (EI) and other stakeholder organisations such as the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and Business Europe representing employer organisations.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Bologna Process is an inter-governmental process of higher education reform within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the European Commission has become involved as a full member,<sup>31</sup> increasingly important due to the level of its financial contribution. This is related to the development of the European Research Area (ERA) and to the fact that the Bologna Process is a tool in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. According to some specialists, the role of the European Commission has grown so considerably that the Bologna Process has become subordinated to the Lisbon Strategy, particularly to the measures adopted to ensure economic growth and increasing employment.<sup>32</sup> It is also Europe 2020, a new European strategy to replace its Lisbon

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<sup>29</sup> Z. Marciniak (ed.), *Raport samopotwierdzenia Krajowych Ram Kwalifikacji dla Szkolnictwa Wyższego/ Self-Certification Report of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, 2013; English edition, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Europie 2009: postęp w realizacji Procesu Bolońskiego (Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process*, EACEA, 2009), (Warszawa: Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2010), [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education%20/Eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/099PL.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education%20/Eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/099PL.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> *Szkolnictwo wyższe w Europie 2010: wpływ Procesu Bolońskiego (Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010. The Impact of the Bologna Process*, EACEA, 2010), (Warszawa: Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2011), p. 3; [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education%20/Eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/122PL.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education%20/Eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/122PL.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> M. Kwiek, *Integracja europejska a europejska integracja szkolnictwa wyższego*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

predecessor, that emphasises the so-called smart growth, based on investments in education, research and innovation, as the main source of economic growth as such.<sup>33</sup> This comes as an indication of a further increase in expectations from the higher education sector.

Ever since the Bologna Declaration, there has been an increasing interest of other countries in the process, resulting in an expanding impact of the initiative. Some of its meetings can be attended not only by ministers of the European Higher Education Area member states but also by representatives of the European Commission, delegations of states which are outside the EHEA and several international organisations involved in the field of higher education. The first so-called Bologna Policy Forum (2009) was attended by the EHEA ministers responsible for higher education and by their counterparts from fifteen non-European countries interested in the achievements of the Bologna Process (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Tunisia and the United States). There were as many as twenty-five such countries represented in the Second Bologna Policy Forum (2010), including: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, Malaysia, Israel, Japan, Senegal, South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Tunisia and the United States. The third such forum was organised in conjunction with the ministerial meeting in Bucharest (2012).<sup>34</sup>

### **Implementation of the Bologna Process in Poland**

Marek Kwiek observes that ‘Polish participation in the process of formulation and reformulation of the Lisbon Strategy was practically non-existent, or, at best, very limited indeed, just as in the case of the Bologna Process’.<sup>35</sup> In Poland, the Bologna Declaration is implemented by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. While the process does not require substantial expenditure, it is demanding in an organisational and institutional sense, and involves a considerable number of official bodies, such as: the Central Council of Higher Education (Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyższego, RGSW), the State Accreditation Commission (Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna, PKA), the Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange (Biuro Uznawalności Wykształcenia i Wymiany Międzynarodowej, BUWiWM), the Foundation for the Development of the Education System

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<sup>33</sup> Europa 2020 w skrócie (Europe 2020 in a nutshell), European Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/index\\_pl.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/index_pl.htm).

<sup>34</sup> Proces Boloński (The Bologna Process), Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego (Ministry of Science and Education), <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/proces-bolonski/proces-bolonski.html>.

<sup>35</sup> M. Kwiek, *Integracja europejska a europejska integracja szkolnictwa wyższego*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

(Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, FRSE), the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich, KRASP) and the Polish Student Parliament (Parlament Studentów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej).<sup>36</sup>

Having decided to take part in the Bologna Process, Poland undertook to implement the measures aiming at the internationalisation of studies. Indeed, the country introduced the diploma supplement, a three-cycle system of studies, the ECTS credit system, established the State Accreditation Commission and promoted mobility (e.g. the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes, bilateral international agreements). It has to be noted that since the early 1990s the implementation of the mobility postulates of the Bologna Declaration has been facilitated by such international programmes as Jean Monnet, Tempus, Socrates, Erasmus and Leonardo. At the national level, student mobility has improved as a result of the MOST and MOSTUM programmes. In addition, basing on the experience of the Tempus and Socrates programmes, Polish institutions of higher education introduced study programmes with English as the language of instruction. The Erasmus programme has proved that student mobility and changes in the curriculum and organisation of studies which are induced by such practice are not only possible but can also be successfully accommodated in the educational system. Thus, the continuity of education in conjunction with mobility is no longer a problem today and brings considerable benefits to the individual participants of the programme.

Activity aiming at the implementation of the Bologna Process in Poland was conducted mainly by members of the Bologna Experts Team (Zespół Ekspertów Bolońskich), nominated by the Minister of Science and Higher Education.<sup>37</sup> Their task was to promote the principles of the process and provide support in their implementation at the level of institutions of higher education. As characterised, Poland's progress in this area is 'above the European average' and is similar to that of Germany, France and Great Britain. While those ranked higher include Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Latvia, the countries below the average are Italy and Spain.<sup>38</sup> At the national level, further work is required to implement the National Qualification Framework and the recognition schemes of various forms of learning (also those outside the system of higher education), to address the

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<sup>36</sup> A. Kraśniewski, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> Zespół Ekspertów Bolońskich, Bologna Experts Team in Poland, <http://ekspercibolonscy.org.pl>.

<sup>38</sup> A. Kraśniewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 98–9.

issues of structure of the three-cycle system of studies, and to enable participation of foreign experts in quality assurance procedures.<sup>39</sup>

The legal framework implementing the Bologna Process was introduced in the new High Education Act 2005 (Ustawa z dnia 27 lipca 2005, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym) and subsequent ministerial regulations. In 2011, the act was substantially amended to fully comply with the Bologna requirements. Further changes introduced in 2014 included an important distinction between academic and practice-oriented study profiles, with the latter focused on professional skills, acquired largely in the workplace. Also, the new provisions facilitate validation of learning outcomes achieved outside formal education, and enable diversification of research funding and commercialisation of research outcomes. In another development, institutions of higher education are no longer required to monitor the professional career of their graduates, and the task will be performed by a ministerial body.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 2: Regulations implementing the Bologna Process in Poland**

Bologna Declaration postulates	National regulations	Regulations at the level of higher education institutions
Diploma Supplement	Higher Education Act 2005*	Resolutions of the Academic Senate
Two-cycle system of studies	Higher Education Act 2005*	Resolutions of the Academic Senate
ECTS system of credits	Higher Education Act 2005*	Resolutions of the Academic Senate introduced as of 1999 to facilitate the Erasmus and Tempus international student exchange programmes
Quality assurance in higher education	1997: University Accreditation Commission (Uniwersytecka Komisja Akredytacyjna, UKA)  2002: State Accreditation Commission (Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna, PKA), a state organ responsible for mandatory quality assessment of study courses offered by Polish higher education institutions and expressing opinion on applications to open new programmes of study	Resolutions of the Academic Senate
Promoting student and staff	Regulation of the Minister of Science	Resolutions of the Academic

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>40</sup> Ustawa z dnia 27 lipca 2005, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym, Dz.U. z 2012 poz. 572 z późn. zm. (Act of 27 July 2005, Law on Higher Education, *Journal of Law*, 2012, item 572 as amended by subsequent legislation).

mobility	and Higher Education on research, teaching and study placements abroad (10 October 2006)	Senate
National Qualification Framework	Amendment to the Higher Education Act 2005* (18 March 2011)	Resolutions of the Academic Senate

\*Ustawa z dnia 27 lipca 2005, Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym (Act of 27 July 2005, Law on Higher Education)

In June 2013, the Educational Research Institute (Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych) published the *Self-Certification Report of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education* (English edition, 2014), providing an assessment of its implementation in Poland and concluding that the process had been successful. In the opinion of foreign experts, Professor Mile Dželalija and Professor Ruth Whittaker, the NQF for Higher Education in Poland is compatible with both overarching frameworks: the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL), and consistent with the OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO science and technology classification. Apart from this, the Polish framework is well-suited for the situation of higher education in the country and reflects the needs of higher education stakeholders in Poland. In this context, the idea of introducing two profiles of study programmes (academic and practice-oriented) has been particularly appreciated. So have been extensive social consultations in the course of development and implementation of the NQF for Higher Education in Poland.<sup>41</sup>

### **Prospects for change and obstacles to the process**

Although all the participants of the Bologna Process follow a set of uniform objectives, the practice of their implementation varies from one country to another, depending on the historical and cultural context. In this way, the process seeks to harmonise higher education activity rather than foster uniformity. Indeed, ‘... universities do not look for uniformity in their degree programmes or any sort of unified, prescriptive or definitive European curricula but simply for points of reference, convergence and common understanding. The protection of the rich diversity of European education has been paramount

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<sup>41</sup> Z. Marciniak (ed.), *op. cit.*

... from the very start ...'.<sup>42</sup> However, it also has to be noted that the Bologna Process is a reform which is still in much dispute, not least over the balance of its ideological and practical dimension.<sup>43</sup> The unprecedented scale of change has affected the educational system in a number of aspects over a relatively short period of time, transforming such elements as its legal and organisational framework or financing.

The implementation of the Bologna Process has had its problems and raised some doubts. Sceptical about the reforms, the academic community has been particularly concerned about introducing a link between the higher education and the labour market, reducing the role of academic institutions to training workforce.<sup>44</sup> The very principles of the changes have also been criticised. In his analysis of the current situation, Michael Burawoy identifies regulation and commodification as two major forms of pressure 'turning the university into a means for someone else's end'.<sup>45</sup> In his opinion, the Bologna Process has introduced an excessive regulatory framework of higher education (manifested in such areas as attempted measurement of productivity using a set of quantitative indicators) and an excessive focus on the need to introduce the logic of neoliberal economy to the academic world, which is a threat to university autonomy and undermines the idea of independent search for the truth.

Similar opinions can be found also among Polish authors. Maria Czerepniak-Walczak observes that '[w]hat can be lost in the pursuit of adjusting the university to the needs of the modern world in general, and to the idea of neoliberal order in particular, is the attributes which for the last two centuries have shaped its nature, its role and its impact on reality. One of such values under threat is its autonomy'.<sup>46</sup> Although Czerepniak-Walczak does not question the need of reforming higher education as such, she points to the risk involved in excessive bureaucracy of the educational process, stripping it of its 'emancipatory and

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<sup>42</sup> Tuning. *Harmonizacja struktur kształcenia w Europie. Wkład uczelni w Proces Boloński (Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process)*, (Warszawa: Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2008), p. 3. (English quotation: J. Gonzalez and R. Wagenaar (eds.), *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process* (Bilbao: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, 2008), p. 6).

<sup>43</sup> A. Buchner-Jeziorska, and A. Dziedziczak-Foltyn (eds.), *Proces boloński. Ideologia i praktyka edukacyjna (The Bologna Process. Ideology and educational practice)*, (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> A. Buchner-Jeziorska, 'Studia wyższe – bez szans na sukces?!' (Higher education: No chance for success?!), *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Sociologica* 39/2011, pp. 18–22.

<sup>45</sup> M. Burawoy, 'Redefinicja publicznego uniwersytetu: ramy analityczne' (Redefining the public university: Developing an analytical framework), trans. T. Leśniak, *Praktyka Teoretyczna* nr 1(7)/2013; (English quotation: M. Burawoy, 'Redefining the public university: Developing an analytical framework', Public Sphere, Institute for Public Knowledge, <http://publicsphere.ssrc.org/burawoy-redefining-the-public-university/> (accessed 20.11.2014).

<sup>46</sup> M. Czerepniak-Walczak, 'Autonomia w kolorze sepia w inkrustowanej ramie KRK' (Autonomy in a stylish sepia tone in the guilded frame of NQF), in M. Czerepniak-Walczak (ed.), *Fabryki dyplomów czy universitas? (Universitas or mass production of graduates?)*, (Kraków: Impuls, 2013), p. 36.



transgressive potential' by means of pre-planned outcomes coming from above.<sup>47</sup> Polish literature on the subject includes also opinions critical of the concept of qualifications framework. Commentators are particularly doubtful about poorly attempted differentiation between particular qualifications at different levels and about the very possibility of operationalization of some learning outcomes (mainly those relating to social competences).<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, however, surveys of student expectations clearly indicate that 97% of them think that higher education institutions should provide them with knowledge and skills required by the labour market.<sup>49</sup> Thus, it would seem that the reforms command increasingly more support among different social groups.<sup>50</sup> Also, many academics perceive the change in terms of opportunities rather than threats. Kazimierz Denek observes that the university should open to the challenges of today and find ways to successfully reconcile its universal mission with commercialisation and demands of the labour market.<sup>51</sup> In the Polish reality, it seems particularly important that the educational process should focus not only on knowledge and practical skills, but also on social competences, as a number of analyses indicate that the human capital of Poles (expressed by such indicators as the gross enrolment ratio) is not adequately used owing to the deficit of their social capital.<sup>52</sup> It is quite a challenge to compile a framework describing such competences, not to mention the effort required to implement and assess them at a later stage.

Change never comes easy and the implementation of the Bologna Process is no exception to the rule. In this case, problems stem from the rapid pace of the reforms coupled with their chaotic progress in many different areas at the same time. There has been no evolutionary transition in study programmes, in descriptions of the structure of competences or even in the organisation of studies. In addition, the introduction of a new element of the quality assurance system has not been conducive to a reflective approach to changes in study programmes. Furthermore, the Bologna Process, introduced without proper consultations and cooperation of the academic staff, has not been universally accepted by the academic community, and is widely regarded as an imposed system threatening its autonomy and the

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> A. Buchner-Jeziorska, 'Krajowe Ramy Kwalifikacji dla Szkolnictwa Wyższego: rewolucja czy face-lifting programów kształcenia?!' (National Qualifications Framework for higher education: A revolution or face-lifting of curriculum development?!), *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 4/2011, p. 118.

<sup>49</sup> *Students and higher education reform 2009*, (Flash Eurobarometer No 260, 2009), p. 5; [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_260\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_260_en.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> B. Banaszak, 'Proces boloński oczami studentów' (The Bologna Process as seen by students), *Forum Akademickie* 10/2009, [http://forumakad.pl/archiwum/2009/10/40\\_proces\\_bolonski\\_oczami\\_studentow.html](http://forumakad.pl/archiwum/2009/10/40_proces_bolonski_oczami_studentow.html).

<sup>51</sup> K. Denek, 'Ku uniwersytetowi jutra', in *Edukacja jutra*, *op. cit.* p. 35.

<sup>52</sup> Czapiński J., Panek. T (red.) *Diagnoza Społeczna 2013/ Social diagnosis 2013*, [www.diagnoza.com](http://www.diagnoza.com) (accessed: 26.10.2014).

local educational culture. Although the process aims to foster harmonisation and not uniformity of educational systems, its successful implementation requires time and awareness of cultural differences. None of these issues seem to have been adequately addressed. To conclude, it might be a good question to ask whether Burawoy is right in saying that the Bologna Process ‘homogenises and dilutes higher education across countries, all in the name of transferability of knowledge and mobility of students, making the university a tool rather than a motor of the knowledge economy’.<sup>53</sup>

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