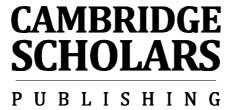# Reforming Social Sciences, Humanities and Higher Education in Eastern Europe and CIS after 1991

Reforming Social Sciences, Humanities and Higher Education in Eastern Europe and CIS after 1991

Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

ANATOLI MIKHAILOV

After more than twenty years since the collapse of the totalitarian system in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there is a great current need to reflect on recent developments in these countries in the area of higher education.

It is widely acknowledged that the results of efforts to introduce societal changes in the post-Soviet epoch are much less impressive than the sometimes too illusionary expectations of the beginning of the 1990s. Economic difficulties, ethnic conflicts, ideological tensions, negative migration and disintegration of the basic infrastructures of social life still indicate the existence of serious obstacles to the way of integrating these countries in the global family of established democracies.

It is time to recognize that the dramatic transformations that have taken place over this time have not always been accompanied with the necessary vision or adequate intellectual potential needed for the challenging processes of transformation in post-totalitarian reality. Indeed, in too many cases a mood of wishful thinking has prevailed and abstract formulae have been implemented that are little related to reality. There has also been a strong deterministic belief that positive results would be inevitable with any effort to change the system.

It is no wonder that often the results were not only ineffective, but as in the case of Belarus and some other countries, they were even counterproductive.

A general understanding of the importance of transforming the educational system as a necessary prerequisite for societal changes was widespread from the beginning. However, what is important to note is that *the way* the transformations have been done raises major concerns and stimulates serious reflections for those of us whose work in higher education has aimed to improve upon the Soviet model for the next generations.

The present volume provides only a partial overview of the existing state of affairs in post-Soviet higher education in Eastern and Central Europe. It will hopefully provoke readers to explore new possibilities for

transformation and raise a much needed demand for more detailed and careful analysis and reflection upon the phenomena of higher education in various countries.

The commonly recognized need of transformation in post-totalitarian reality and the shared understanding of possibilities to create a new critical mass of differently educated youth have resulted in the creation of numerous new institutions of higher learning. At the same time, the old ones have simply received more attractive names. As a consequence of this dramatic expansion, thousands of universities and academic institutions, both public and private, presently exist in the region.

The situation is pressing today especially in the fields of social sciences and humanities, where due to the long term domination of ideological control, the intellectual potential was barely existent and almost unavailable. In the early post-Soviet years, there was a boom in educational proposals that resulted in the overproduction of alleged professionals in fields such as business, economics, law, management, etc. These fields of study were enthusiastically supported through major Western programs of cooperation, with the expectation that they would stimulate much needed economic transition of countries from socialism to capitalism.

Various factors have contributed to the failures to achieve the expected results.

First, a great majority of the so-called local specialists who enthusiastically promised to deliver attractive and effective higher education had previously profited from promoting the values of totalitarian ideology and in reality tried to convert themselves into professionals in a field they knew very little about.

Second, too often those who were involved in activities that sided with Western cooperation naively believed in the existence of fixed recipes in each particular field that were needed independently of the specific local and national cultural and historical traditions. The way and the manner of "transplanting" experiences that have developed as a result of specific long-term historical and intellectual traditions of Western civilization were not properly accompanied by the vitally important activity of transmitting appropriate basic values to Central and Eastern Europe.

Not enough proper attention was paid to the importance of so-called liberal arts and humanities education, even though we believe it can create a backbone in the formation of students' personalities and can potentially replace what was previously called a "communist upbringing". In the present social conditions, we are witnessing dramatic changes in the collapse of the former educational system, though it has still not been

replaced with a better one. We see major changes in social infrastructure and unemployment, broken families, the spread of mass culture and patterns of violent behavior among the young generation. At the same time, improper or insufficient attention has been paid to the issue of transmitting values which contribute to the formation of personality, which is an important staple of the humanities and liberal arts.

The issue of finding ways to introduce basic values to today's youth is of vital importance in this time of globalization. Even in those cultures and nations where established mechanisms of educational practices were generally functioning not so long ago, there is now a more or less growing mood that acknowledges the new challenges for educational systems in this time of unprecedented dynamism in the present social reality.

High priority is usually ascribed to promoting democratic changes in politics and restructuring economic life. Yet in most cases, educational priorities have ignored the problem of finding efficient ways of influencing young minds of the next generations within the framework of progressive pedagogical practices. The activity of transmitting basic norms and values created in different cultural traditions may appear to have little meaning or power of appeal. Nevertheless, transferring new ideas and methods to the current circumstances in Central and Eastern Europe and applying new educational approaches where the historical reality and corresponding state of mind are rooted in different backgrounds and system of notions has been a risky endeavour, oftentimes worth the efforts. In the case of proclaiming a monologue of reform, even of undoubtedly impeccable ideas, it sometimes turns out to be merely abstract verbosity that is ineffective and bearing little distinction from the former failed communist propaganda.

In the existing circumstances, an adequate evaluation of the ways and methods of realising Western educational projects in countries of this region is of vital importance. Above all, there is a need to recognize how underestimated the significance of support for particular innovative institutions of higher learning has been. Sporadic or scattered activity does not enhance the concentration of proper attention on institutions which can be regarded as strategic strongholds able to demonstrate principally new paradigms of educational activity. It has been our mission now over 20 years to build a new vision of higher education based on the global humanities and liberal arts tradition that can help young people make sense of the post-Soviet situation and that provides new opportunities for students in the region.

One of the possible ways of overcoming the existing shortcomings is to create regional projects and subsequently coordinate activities between

various educational institutions in particular fields. This mutual work can be established on the basis of carefully selected higher education institutions in the region and forming such a network can greatly benefit from urgently needed long-term established activities in cooperation with Western institutions. Combined with a system of independent evaluation and expertise within the region, a modified educational policy from the West might help to significantly improve the chances for positive social transformation in our societies and to neutralize the negative impacts of still widely spread superficial educational reform activities.

There is a growing understanding that the processes of European integration for Central and Eastern Europeans still have to be accompanied by a clearly defined strategy of greater cooperation among educational institutions. After adopting the Sorbonne (1998) and Bologna (1999) declarations aimed at harmonising national policies in the field of higher education, this is becoming more and more evident. With this volume, we therefore add to the voices that are working together towards promoting more properly coordinated efforts not only in matters of vital concern for each particular nation, but also in finding effective solutions for higher education development and its consequences for global affairs.

PART I

HIGHER EDUCATION IN EASTERN EUROPE IN SEARCH FOR GROUNDS OF MODERNIZATION AND REFORMS

CHAPTER ONE

THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA BETWEEN TRAINING AND *BILDUNG*

SJUR BERGAN

Introduction[1]

After asking why we have higher education, this article will seek to outline the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), look at some of its characteristics, and examine some of its challenges as they relate to our vision of education—or, as the title of this essay would have it, of training and *Bildung*. Written on the basis of a presentation on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the European Humanities University (EHU), the article will also briefly visit the relationship between the EHEA and Belarus and it will conclude by returning to the issue of what kind of education we want and need.

Why higher education?

If the proverbial man in the street were asked to say why we have education, it is likely that his answer would focus on the need to get skills so that, as individuals, we can get good jobs and that, as societies, we can develop our economies. As I just phrased the question, I deliberately put it as "why we have" to avoid giving away whether those who ask the question think education has several purposes or just one. However, it is doubtful whether a singular or a plural in the question would have made any difference to the answer. It is also significant that the reply is likely to refer to "skills" rather than "competences," in other words emphasizing training over *Bildung*.

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[1] The author would like to thank Ligia Deca, Head of the Bologna Secretariat 2010-12 and Chair of the European Students Union 2008-10, for valuable comments to this article.

Governments have long experience in developing education policy and employ highly qualified civil servants for whom education policy is a full time occupation. Even here, however, an insistence that education has more than one purpose does not seem to be very prominent. Judging from public debate in Europe, one gets the impression that public authorities answer the question about why we have education in the same way as the "man in the street": it's about the economy, stupid.

However, other answers are possible, as EHU shows. This university was established in Minsk and then transferred to Vilnius for reasons that had nothing to do with the strategic planning of the university or with a desire to position itself better in the market. Both had everything to do with democratic citizenship and the lack of it in Belarus. The setting up of EHU was possible because of the wide-ranging political changes in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall and bringing down old regimes in many countries. The fact that EHU was forced to close down in Minsk was due to the fact that democratization was incomplete and that in Belarus, the Lukashenka regime was very much of the old school. However, EHU found a new home in Vilnius, only 200 kilometers, but almost a world away. Finding a new and free home in neighboring Lithuania would also not have been possible without the political changes a short generation ago. And these changes would not have been possible without education.

Of course, those who brought down the Wall, who left the DDR through Hungary and started making the first breaches in the Wall, who made Solidarność a potent force for democracy, or who worked for Baltic independence did not all have higher education qualifications. Political courage and political wisdom neither require nor necessarily come with a higher education degree (Bergan 2011). Nevertheless, without the participation of students and academics, the democratic changes in Central and Eastern Europe would most likely have taken a different course and they may not have happened at all. Academics were also very present in the governments that took office in the aftermath of the changes, as they were in the first government after the fall of the Milošević regime in Serbia. Here, the Alternative Academic Education Network[2] and other academic groups played an important role in preparing the terrain and in reflecting on what a new democratic society should look like. At the very least, it would be difficult for anyone with a memory of the events around 1990 to maintain that education is only about developing the economy.

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[2] For a brief overview, see the web site of the Center for Education Policy http://www.cep.edu.rs/en/about-cep/history, accessed on December 2, 2013.

The Council of Europe has defined four major purposes of higher education, of equal value:

- preparation for sustainable employment;
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning
- and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base (Bergan 2005, Council of Europe 2007).

These purposes are not contradictory but complementary: many of the qualities and competences that make us attractive on the labor market also help us be active democratic citizens and contribute to our personal development. There are likely to be different views of whether the four purposes outlined capture the essence of higher education and whether other purposes should be added or substituted. I hope, however, that there will be no serious resistance to the proposition that higher education has a variety of purposes.

Setting the scene for the European Higher Education Area

At least in an indirect sense, the developments around 1990 made possible the development of a higher education area that is truly European. Where Europe starts and ends is a question that can give rise to endless discussions, not least because there is no single "correct" answer. While we have some sense of where the geographical boundaries of Europe may run, Europe is not only a continent but a community of culture and politics, of history and art, of people and philosophy. As an example, while a large part of Russia lies to the east of the Ural mountains, there is also no doubt that Russia is a European country. One way of seeing Europe is as a unique balance of what we have in common and what is particular to each of us.

The EHEA developed against a background that is at least threefold. Politically, the fall of the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe were important not only in the countries that changed regimes but also elsewhere in Europe. For the first time in decades, a truly European, i.e. pan-European, cooperation became possible. Maybe this was even possible for the first time because technological and other developments meant that travel as well as long distance contacts were now a real possibility.

At the same time, the regime changes in the region raised another question: democratic institutions—and then what? On the one hand, democracy did not bring prosperity overnight and many people were materially worse off than they had been before. On the other hand, while democratic institutions are a necessary precondition for democracy on the national level, they are not a *sufficient* precondition. Democratic institutions will work only if they are rooted in a democratic culture, i.e. a set of attitudes and behaviors that work to resolve conflict through dialogue and that recognize that while issues are decided by a majority, minorities also have rights. Such a culture holds that individuals should engage for the common good; in brief, the set of attitudes and behaviors that make democratic institutions work in practice.

In economic terms, new opportunities have opened through the process of globalization, but these opportunities also brought risks. Globalization was not an entirely new phenomenon, but its impact has very likely been greater than at any other time. Globalization has had winners and losers and one of the dividing lines between them was often—but far from always—education. There was also a perceived mismatch between the skills available in Europe and the skills European political and business leaders thought Europe required. It was not just a question of the level of education, but also of the areas of study where the needs were perceived to be greatest. European higher education was accused of not providing its graduates with the skills Europe, and in particular the European labor market, needed—even if such needs are notoriously difficult to predict.

Then there was higher education itself. We had moved from elite to mass higher education over the last generation or so (Usher 2009), and some of the countries whose regimes had changed had yet to fully make that transition. There was a feeling that European higher education was no longer as attractive to students from other continents as it had once been, that European students took too long to obtain their degrees and that our higher education was not well adapted to the challenges we were facing as one millennium was about to blend into the next.

Toward a European Higher Education Area[3]

The ambiguous use of the term 'Europe,' in a smaller or broader, more limited or pan-European sense is also reflected in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It may even be argued that its

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[3] The most comprehensive site for information on the EHEA is http://www. ehea.info/, accessed on December 2, 2013.

beginnings were not really European in any reasonable sense of the term, since to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Sorbonne in 1998, the French Minister of Education invited only his colleagues from the three other largest EU countries: Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. There was nevertheless a sense that the Sorbonne Declaration adopted by the four ministers was important and that other EU education ministers were unhappy about having been left out. At the same time, the Italian Minister felt that reforming higher education in Italy would be a less difficult undertaking if he could place the reforms in a broader European context. Inviting European Ministers to a conference in Italy allowed him to do just that while at the same time involving the ministers who had felt left out by the Sorbonne Declaration. Hence, Ministers from 29 European countries adopted the Bologna Declaration in June 1999 and the idea of a European Higher Education Area by 2010 was born.

Describing the road from Sorbonne and Bologna to the establishment of the EHEA in 2010 and then its further development in detail clearly lies beyond the scope of this article. I will rather limit the description to outlining the main characteristics of the EHEA as well as to giving our view of some of the main steps in the development of the EHEA.

Characteristics of the EHEA

The EHEA is an intergovernmental process, but it is an unusual one for at least two reasons. Firstly, while European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission participate in it and are among the main contributors to its policy development, the EHEA is an independent process. The Chair of the EHEA rotates among members every six months[4] and until fall 2003, the chairmanship also provided any secretariat support needed. Since fall 2003, there has been a Bologna Secretariat provided by the next host of the Ministerial conference: Norway in the period 2003-05, the United Kingdom in 2005-07; a joint Secretariat provided by the Benelux countries Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 2007-10, Romania in 2010-12, and now Armenia from 2012 until 2015.

The second reason the EHEA is an unusual intergovernmental process is that it is not made up of governments alone. Higher education cannot be

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[4] Until mid-2010, the Chairmanship was held by the country holding the EU Presidency. Since mid-2010, the EHEA has had a co-chairmanship composed of the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country, the latter holding the co-chairmanship in alphabetical order. The country hosting the upcoming ministerial country—currently Armenia—serves as Vice Chair.

reformed only from ministerial offices. Therefore students, staff and higher education institutions as well as, somewhat later, employers and the quality assurance community also became consultative members of the EHEA[5].

Phases of development

Let us then look at how the EHEA has developed. In my analysis, the first phase runs from 1998 or 1999, depending on what status one gives the meeting at the Sorbonne, through 2001. This was the launching period. The Sorbonne meeting in 1998 was the precursor, where 4 ministers, as we saw, adopted a declaration that spelled out many of the challenges facing European higher education and emphasized academic mobility, qualifications and the need to undertake joint action.

The meeting in Bologna in June 1999 launched the Bologna Process, although it is worth noting that the notion of a follow up process between ministerial meetings was born only after this conference, during the Finnish EU Presidency in fall 1999. In Bologna, Ministers committed to developing a two-tier qualifications system of bachelors and masters degrees[6], emphasized the need for European higher education to become more competitive and also underlined the importance of mobility and joint action.

The ministerial meeting in Praha in May 2001 was the first one after the launching conference in Bologna. The conference was important also because it was held in a non-EU country—the Czech Republic would join the EU in 2004—and because it admitted three new countries to the Bologna Process: Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey, bringing the membership to 33[7]. All three countries had a relationship with the EU by being candidates for accession and/or by participating in relevant EU programs. There were also new elements in terms of content: for the first time, ministers emphasized what has come to be called the social dimension of higher education, they stated that higher education is a public good and a public

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[5] The now 47 EHEA countries and the European Commission are members, while the Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, EURASHE, Education International, ENQA, Business Europe and UNESCO are consultative members.

[6] Turned into a three tier system by including the doctoral qualifications in the Berlin Communiqué of 2003.

[7] 29 countries signed in Bologna and 3 joined the Bologna Process in Praha. The situation of the 33rd country, Liechtenstein, remains unclear: it should have been invited to sign the Bologna Declaration but somehow was not and it was retroactively considered to have joined the Bologna Process.

responsibility and they emphasized the importance of students as members of the academic community. This was a very significant development. Students were present in Bologna but largely because they had invited themselves. In Praha, the president of the European Student Union[8] was among the main speakers and by then the students were consultative members of the Bologna Follow Up Group. Quality assurance was also emphasized more strongly than in the Bologna Declaration.

In my analysis, the next phase runs from the preparation of the Berlin ministerial conference in 2003 through the one in Bergen in 2005. This was a dynamic period of developing the EHEA and these two ministerial conferences marked some fundamental changes. Firstly, this is the period when the EHEA went from a process whose membership was linked to the EU—through EU membership, EU accession negotiations or participation in relevant EU programs—to a pan-European process. All states party to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe[9] were now potential members of the Bologna Process but at the same time a second criterion was introduced: the competent authorities of applicant countries needed to commit to the values, goals and policies of the EHEA in writing and they needed to submit a national report. The decision to modify the membership criteria opened accession to 7 new countries in 2003 and another 5 in 2005, so that within the space of two years, the EHEA became truly European. By the end of the Bergen conference, 45 of the by now 47 member states had acceded.

Content wise, there were also significant developments in this relatively short period. One was a realization that if the Bologna Process were to reach its policy objectives and be in a position to launch the EHEA in 2010, as stipulated in the Bologna Declaration, it was necessary to look at whether sufficient progress was made along the road, which is how the idea of stocktaking was born. There were long discussions about details, but the basic idea was that in order to reach key EHEA policy goals, countries needed to provide information on how they were progressing in implementing these goals so that action could be taken if implementation was lagging far behind. It was a significant step forward that even if the stocktaking to a considerable extent would need to rely on information provided by the competent national authorities, ministers accepted that their fellow ministers would play a role in assessing whether

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[8] Then ESIB, the National Unions of Students in Europe, its name has now been changed to the European Students Union (ESU) but the organization is the same.
[9] The text of the Cultural Convention as well as an updated list of ratifications and signatures may be found at http://conventions.coe.int/, accessed on December 2, 2013: search for ETS 018.

or not their country was making sufficient progress in implementing their joint policy goals.

In two structural reform areas, important decisions were also made in 2003 and 2005. In Berlin, ministers decided to launch the development of a qualifications framework along with standards for quality assurance. And in Bergen, they adopted two key EHEA documents: the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the EHEA[10] and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area[11].

The third phase, running from the preparations to the London ministerial conference in 2007 through the conferences in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009 and Budapest and Wien in 2010, is one of consolidation. There were important developments in this period also. Both the social and international dimensions of the EHEA had been emphasized in Bergen. In London, ministers adopted a strategy for the EHEA in a global setting[12] and in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve they held the first Bologna Policy Forum, which is a platform for discussion with high level representatives of non-EHEA countries from around the world. Both bear witness to the strong interest in the development of the EHEA also from countries that are not potential candidates for membership. In 2009, ministers also adopted the goal of 20 per cent mobility by 2020.

Nevertheless, the pace of development was less rapid and ministers focused more on consolidating the EHEA before it was officially launched in Budapest and Wien than on developing new policies. The pace of accession also slowed, although a good part of the explanation was that there were few potential candidates left: most States party to the European Cultural Convention had already acceded to the EHEA. In this period, there were 2 new accessions. Montenegro acceded in 2007, but in a sense re-acceded since it had been part of the EHEA from 2003 until its declaration of independence in 2006. Kazakhstan acceded in 2010 and was the first example of a country that sought and gained accession to the European Cultural Convention with subsequent accession to the EHEA as a clear goal.

We are now in the fourth phase, that of continuing to develop the EHEA after its formal launch. The Bologna Process was a process toward

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[10] http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/QF-EHEA-May2005.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2013.

[11] http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-QA.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2013.

[12] http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2013.

the goal of establishing the EHEA by 2010, but the EHEA is not static. It needs to continue to develop. This it will do through ministerial conferences, even if the conferences will now mostly be held at three year intervals, as well as through continued policy development and implementation.

The first ministerial conference after the formal launch of the EHEA was held in Bucureşti in April 2012 and the following one will be held in Yerevan in 2015. The Bucureşti conference was held on the background of economic crisis and attracted significantly fewer ministers than previous conferences. This can perhaps be read as a sign to the effect that the EHEA has now reached a phase of "normalcy." But it could also give rise to concern that the EHEA is seen as less politically relevant or at least less urgent now that it has been formally established. There is perhaps greater political interest in developing something new than in consolidating what has already been developed. On the other hand, the Romanian Bologna Secretariat did a remarkable job during its two years of existence and ministers in Bucureşti adopted an important mobility strategy[13] and made several important policy commitments in the Bucureşti Communiqué[14], which should pave the way for the full and proper implementation of EHEA action lines.

Challenges

Today, we have a European Higher Education Area of 47 countries, built on cooperation between public authorities, institutions, academic faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders and with international organizations as important contributors. It is based on key values like academic freedom and institutional autonomy as well as student participation in higher education governance and the belief that academic mobility must be an essential part of the EHEA. It is a framework in which the overall policy goals are agreed at the European level, but implemented mostly at national and institutional levels.

In its first decade, the EHEA focused fairly strongly on reforming higher education structures even if some other policy areas were also important. In each of the three main structural reform areas, the EHEA has an important reference text:

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[13] http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/2012%20EHEA%20Mobility%20Strategy.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2013.
[14] http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20Communique%202012% 281%29.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2013.

− Qualifications frameworks: the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the EHEA (2005);

− Quality assurance: European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005);

− Recognition of qualifications: the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in the European Region (adopted in 1997, before the Bologna Process and in a different framework, but later made a key text of the EHEA).

Carrying out these structural reforms was necessary and they have been important to the early success of the EHEA. They also mean, however, that the next phase of developing the EHEA will be more challenging. Establishing structures is difficult enough, but it is far less difficult than making the structures work in practice. As shown by the example of qualifications frameworks[15], some countries are still in the process of carrying out the required structural reforms on the national level. However, most countries are reasonably close to getting the structures in place and the main challenge over the coming years will be to implement the structures. This is difficult because it takes time to develop people's attitudes, because actual implementation is more difficult to assess than structures and also because an emphasis on implementation will shift the relationship between the European, national and institutional levels. The overall structures could be developed at the European and partly at the national level, but implementation is above all local with some national measures. Two important challenges will be to develop a common understanding of the structures and to find ways of implementing them that take account of local and national specificities while keeping overall coherence. Having a common overarching structure will be of limited value if implementation is incoherent throughout the EHEA. Incoherent implementation can undo coherent structures.

Another important challenge is to link higher education reforms more clearly to a consideration of the purposes of higher education. The successive communiqués, at least from 2007 onward, indicate that ministers consider higher education to have a variety of purposes and the Bucureşti Communiqué states that "[w]e will support our institutions in the education of creative, innovative, critically thinking and responsible

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[15] See the report by the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Framework, which I had the honor to chair, at http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/ Qualifications%20Frameworks%20Working%20Group%20Report.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2013.

graduates needed for economic growth and the sustainable development of our democracies". Nevertheless, there has been little explicit consideration of the variety of purposes of higher education in discussions about qualifications frameworks or quality assurance. The unspoken assumptions in many of the discussions, however, have been to focus more on training and less on *Bildung*. The current economic crisis is unlikely to shift that particular focus, even if many employers underline the importance of generic competences.

Regardless of when they acceded to the EHEA, members face a set of common challenges; those described above as well as many that cannot be explored within the scope of this article. Newer members of the EHEA, and in particular those that acceded from 2003 onward, however, also face some specific challenges. Partly, this is a question of time: not all members got on the train at the same time, but the underlying assumption is that all would reach the destination at the same time and in the same conditions. Therefore, newer members have had less time to implement reforms and their traditions and starting points may often be different. Developing, describing and implementing learning outcomes as well as promoting student-centered learning is a challenge for most countries and institutions, but it may be particularly challenging for those that have had a long tradition of centralized systems with limited academic freedom and institutional autonomy. At least two newer members—Russia and Ukraine—face the added challenge of having very large and diverse higher education systems in which carrying out "Bologna style" reforms is more difficult than it is in smaller systems. The fact that English is the main language of the EHEA is not a challenge to newer members only, but a working knowledge of English may be less common among faculty in some newer members than in many members that acceded earlier.

The report on implementing the EHEA submitted to the Bucureşti ministerial conference (EURYDICE 2012) also points to some areas in which newer members face challenges even if, again, they are not alone in facing these challenges. There are examples of regulations being too rigid, such as cases where holders of a first degree are generally required to take exams or additional courses to access second cycle programs (ibid., 35-38); of uneven implementation of the Diploma Supplement (ibid., 53-54), which ministers had committed to issuing automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken language by 2005 (Bologna Process 2003, 5); of centralized systems for the recognition of qualifications (ibid., 55-57), and of limited availability of alternative learning paths within national education systems (ibid., 109-110 and 127-131).

The European Higher Education Area and Belarus

Belarus is one of three States party to the European Cultural Convention that is not a member of the EHEA. However, the two other non-members, Monaco and San Marino, have very small higher education systems and have so far shown limited interest in membership. Belarus is in a different category both because it has a fully-fledged higher education system and because it made informal enquiries about possibilities for membership as early as in the run-up to the Bergen ministerial conference in May 2005. In preparation for the 2012 conference, Belarus took one step further and submitted a formal application. It then gained the distinction of becoming the first state party to the European Cultural Convention to have its application for membership rejected.

An important part of that background is of course to be found in the political situation of Belarus. One may even note that both the informal approach prior to the Bergen conference and the formal application in 2012 came at times when the political situation in Belarus was particularly tense and which included measures taken against members of the academic community who had worked openly in favor of democracy. In 2005, the background was that of the forced closing of the European Humanities University in Minsk and its relocation to Vilnius as well as the expulsion of students for political reasons, in particular the case of Tatsiana Khoma, who was expelled from her university shortly after she had been elected to office in the European Students Union (ESIB at the time). In 2012, the background was the repression against many of those in higher education who had demonstrated against the way in which the presidential election in December 2010 had been carried out. This repression, which was roundly condemned by many European governments, included the arrest and expulsion of students and faculty. The EU established a blacklist of more than 200 Belarusian officials considered to have played a particularly important role in the repression and this list included several higher education leaders. In early 2011, several European ministers responsible for higher education wrote to their Belarusian colleague to protest against these measures. In these circumstances, it was impossible to admit Belarus to an intergovernmental process of higher education reform based on fundamental values like academic freedom, institutional autonomy and student participation. At the same time, parts of the national report submitted by the Belarusian authorities gave rise to serious doubts about their real commitment to key EHEA goals that would have been raised even if the political circumstances had been more favorable.

In rejecting the application by Belarus, the EHEA of course faced a serous dilemma. It was clear enough that the Belarusian authorities were very far from respecting the fundamental values of the EHEA and there was thus no real question of approving the application. At the same time, however, rejecting it could mean that those within the Belarusian higher education community committed to democracy and working in favor of real reform could be even more isolated and perhaps even exposed to repression, since an independent Bologna committee, organized as an NGO, had submitted an alternative and critical report.

Higher education is a part of civil society and may help promote democracy even under repressive regimes, as shown by the example of the Alternative Academic Education Network under the Milošević regime in Serbia. However, the application was for membership in an intergovernmental process in which Belarus would have been represented by the competent public authority. Also, there seems to be less scope for civil society organizations in Belarus today than there was even during the most repressive periods of the Milošević regime[16]. The EHEA is committed to assisting civil society in Belarus, including the Belarusian higher education community to the extent that it is independent from the regime, and this point was made by the Bologna Secretariat in its communication with the Belarusian authorities after the application had been rejected. In the current situation, however, it is difficult to see how such assistance can be provided efficiently.

Conclusion

The EHEA has largely been successful in reforming the structures of higher education in Europe as well as in focusing on policy areas like the social as well as the global dimensions of European higher education. The EHEA has developed an overarching qualifications framework, standards and guidelines for quality assurance and, recently, a mobility strategy. Bringing together 47 countries into relatively informal yet efficient cooperation in which policies are broadly agreed upon at the European level and then implemented mainly at national and institutional levels is no small achievement. And the EHEA has as a result been met with great interest from other parts of the world.

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[16] This point has also been made to me in private conversations with Serbian friends who were involved in civil society organizations during the Milošević years.

Some of the main challenges of the EHEA are linked to its success: from developing structures, attention must now focus on making them work in practice. In addition, however, discussions about structures need to be linked more explicitly to considerations of the various purposes of higher education. After all, structures have little intrinsic value: they exist to further specific purposes.

My image of higher education is that of a tower but not an ivory tower. Even if the ivory tower is a much used image of higher education, I do not think universities would have survived for some nine centuries if the image had been anywhere near reality. Rather, my image of higher education is of a lighthouse. Lighthouses show the way. They are normally set somewhat apart from society, but they are nevertheless crucial. Universities must work in and for the societies of which they are a part, but they must at the same time keep some distance so as to be able to apply a longer term perspective than what is done by those whose main framework of reference is the next election, the next financial report or the next newspaper edition.

In the age of the sound bite, it is particularly important that we have institutions, research groups and study programs that take a longer view, that develop and maintain the ability to weigh short term and longer term priorities and that are able to ask critical questions as well as to find answers to those questions. We need education systems and institutions that take to heart Ambrose Bierce's definition of education as "that which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding" (Bierce 1983, 105) as well as Eugenio Tironi's assertion that the answer to the question: "what kind of education do we need?" lies in the answer to another question: "What kind of society do we want?"(Tironi 2005).

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CHAPTER TWO

FROM AUTONOMOUS TEACHERS TO AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITIES: WHERE UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY GETS ITS BIRTH

OLGA BRESKAYA AND OLEG BRESKY

The lack of University autonomy, academic freedom and students' participation in higher education governance are the main reasons why Belarus was rejected to join Bologna community and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2012, applying for membership in November 2011. This received different interpretations in Belarus. The Belarusian Minister of Education S. Maskevich explained that "Belarusian Universities have a high degree of autonomy; they don't ask to have greater autonomy"[1]. On the official website of Belarusian State University there are several comments around an article on the history of Belarus' participation in the Bologna Process. One of them explains that "this issue lies in the political axles and nothing more is here"[2]. The results of an expert analysis by prof. V. Dunaev, member of the non-state initiative group "Civil Bologna Committee" demonstrates that the level of University autonomy in Belarus[3] is rather low in comparison with other

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[1] Ministr Obrazovania: Belarusskie vuzy ne prosiat bol'shej avtonomii (Minister of Education: Belarusian Universities don't ask to have morer autonomy), 03.05.2013, Eurobelarus, accessed on June 28, 2013. http://eurobelarus.info/news/ society/2013/05/03/ministr-obrazovaniya-belarusskie-vuzy-ne-prosyat-bol-shey-avtonomii.html.
[2] E. Burdej, 17.01.2013 (02:16), commentarij k I. Titovu, "Istoria uchastija Belarusi v Bolonskom Prozesse" (comment on Titov, "History of participation of Belarus in Bologna Process"), website of Belarusian State University, accessed on June 28, 2013. http://www.bsu.by/main.aspx?guid=383793.
[3] V. Dunaev, Institutional autonomy of Belarusian Universities: four indicators.

European countries[4]. This can be evaluated at 24% in organizational autonomy, 26.5% in financial autonomy, 25% in staff autonomy, and less than 10% in academic autonomy. Dunaev introduces University autonomy as a significant precondition for realizing the mission of European Universities, not as a goal in itself[5].

These types of explorations clarify that the phenomenon of University autonomy in Belarus (as well as in all other regions) has a multidimensional character. It brings together University governance in organizational, financial, academic and staffing spheres[6] with more general political, historic, social regional circumstances. All together they constitute a definite type of educational system with its own vision on the importance of autonomy *per se*.

University autonomy *sui generis*

Diversity in types and levels of University autonomy in Europe presented in charts of the latest analysis of EUA brings us to the conclusion that autonomy is considered and practiced in a variety of ways in Europe; it is not something stable that is once and forever set. It is clear that University autonomy became a value of democratic societies, where the ideas of self-governing universities and subsidiarity are combined with trust and responsibility within academic society. Recent reforms in the French system of higher education, initiated in 2007, which were directed towards reducing State power towards the University system and strengthening University autonomy principles tell us about continuous changes within state-higher education system relations in Europe. They also demonstrate that University autonomy is a desirable principle which allows following the logic of internal institutional development along with taking into account public needs in societies and personal expectations.

University autonomy can hardly be reduced to a fixed number of constituents as the recent analysis of University autonomy in Europe demonstrated different combinations in its indicators. This fact raises the question of whether or not universal principles of University autonomy exist. As T. Estermann and T. Nokkalla conclude, "there is no ideal model of autonomy, but rather a set of basic principles that constitute crucial

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[4] The toolkit for measuring University autonomy in Europe suggested by the European University Association was applied in that analysis. The official website of the European University Association: http://www.University-autonomy.eu/, accessed on June 28, 2013.

[5] V. Dunaev, Ibid.

[6] According to EUA's Lisbon Declaration (2007).