

The background materials for study visit 'Role of Higher education in vocational training in Spain'

The purpose of this documentation is:

- a. to provide a summary of relevant European facts and data concerning the aforementioned issue, and
- b. to provide background documentation that will help to identify issues

1. Information on the Bologna Process:

In Short:

The Bologna Process aims to establish a **European Area of Higher Education (EHEA)** by 2010. The objectives are the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries, with first degrees no shorter than 3 years; a European Credit Transfer System; the elimination of remaining obstacles to the mobility of students and teachers.

QuickLinks

From Berlin to Bergen

<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

Bologna Process

<http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcmuri=tcm:29-117448-16&type=LinksDossier>

Discussing Bologna process

<http://web.aegeee.org/bologna/>

EU Commission web pages on Bologna Process

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html

Background:

The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted by national representatives meeting in **Lisbon on 8 - 11 April 1997**. Most European countries have since ratified this Council of Europe/ UNESCO Convention – usually referred to as the Lisbon Convention.

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region

<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/165.htm>

The Bologna process was launched after 29 Education Ministers signed a Declaration in **Bologna in June 1999** to reform the structures of their higher education systems. Each signatory country committed itself to reform its own higher education system in order to create overall convergence at European level.

The **following objectives have to be attained by 2010** in order to establish the European area of

higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide:

- **Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees**, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement;
- **a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate** ;
- **Establishment of a system of credits** - such as in the ECTS system The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)
- **Promotion of mobility** by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement.
- **Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance** with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;
- **Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education**, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

The Bologna Declaration

http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/bologna_declaration.pdf

In May 2001, 32 Education Ministers met in Prague to sign the **Prague Declaration** which added three key themes to the Bologna Process:

- **Lifelong Learning;**
- **involvement of students in establishment of European Higher Education Area;**
- **attractiveness and competitiveness** of the EHEA to other parts of the world.

The Prague Declaration

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/prague.pdf>

During their **summit meeting in Berlin on 19 September 2003**, the education ministers agreed that by 2005, all countries should :

- adopt a **system essentially based on two main cycles** (bachelor-master);
- issue the diploma supplement in a major language to all their graduates free of charge and automatically;
- have made a start on introducing a quality assurance system

Berlin Communiqué

http://www.bologna-berlin2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/030919Berlin_Communique.PDF

After the Berlin summit, **The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)** consist of 40 member countries and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO-CEPES as consultative members. This group will take stock of the situation and will prepare detailed reports on the progress and implementation in the three priority areas:

- quality assurance;
- the two cycle degree system and
- recognition of degrees and periods of study.

During the **Irish Presidency of the European Union** a conference entitled 'Towards 2010 - common themes and approaches in European policy development across higher education and vocational education and training' was held in Dublin Castle on 8 March 2004. The conference was timed to coincide with meetings of the Directors General for Higher Education, the Directors General for Vocational Education and Training, and the Bologna Follow-up Group, to enable participants in these meetings to come together and interact formally for the first time.

Quick Links:

'How close are higher education and vocational education and training?'

<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/download/Cinfo/Cinfo12004/C14B4EN.html>

'New and emerging models in vocational education and training and higher education'

<http://www.nqai.ie/eunote>

All the conference background papers and a report on the conference are available on the website of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

<http://www.nqai.ie/>

On **14 December 2004**, in **Maastricht**, the Ministers responsible for Vocational Education and Training of 32 European countries, the European Social Partners and the European Commission **agreed to strengthen their cooperation with a view to**

- modernising their vocational education and training systems in order for Europe to become the most competitive economy, and
- offering all Europeans, whether they are young people, older workers, unemployed or disadvantaged, the qualifications and competences they need to be fully integrated into the emerging knowledge based society, contributing to more and better jobs.

In the '**Communiqué on the Future Priorities of Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET)**', please find parts that are directly linked to the theme of Higher education in Europe

In page 2, '**Challenges in order to meet the Lisbon objectives**' [...] VET is increasingly taking place at all educational levels and, therefore, the parity of esteem and links between VET and general education, **in particular with higher education**, need to be fostered by innovative strategies and instruments at the national and European levels. This should include designing VET systems which attract more students **to higher qualifications**. This will contribute to innovation and competitiveness. [...]

In page 4, '**Priority should be given to**' . [...] the development of an open and flexible **European qualifications framework**, founded on transparency and mutual trust. The framework will provide a common reference to facilitate the recognition and transferability of qualifications covering both VET and general **(secondary and higher) education, based mainly on competences and learning outcomes**. [...] . the development and implementation of the **European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET)** in order to allow learners to build upon the achievements resulting from their learning pathways when moving between learning systems. ECVET will be based on competences and learning outcomes, taking account of their definition at national or sectoral levels. It will take into account the experience of the ECTS in the **field of higher education and the Europass framework**. [...]

In page 5, '**Implementation and follow-up**' [...] A coherent approach and **closer cooperation** should be developed, both at national and European level, **with Higher Education**, including developments under the Bologna process. [...]

Maastricht Communiqué on the Future Priorities of Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET)

http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/HomePages/Front_page_news/maastricht_com_en.pdf

The Bergen summit on 19-20 May brought together European education ministers and the Commission as well as consultative members to the Bologna Process to assess progress following the last summit in Berlin and set the priorities for the next two years.

The Education International (EI) Pan-European Structure [a co-operation of university teachers and staff], the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations (UNICE) are new consultative members of the process. The existing members the European University Association, the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. European education ministers meeting at the Bergen summit on 19-20 **May urged universities to ensure that their PhD programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills**, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market.

Bergen Communiqué The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals

http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf

Next Steps:

By the time of the London summit in 2007, ministers said they would be looking for progress in: **implementation of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance** as proposed in the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) report; **implementation of the national frameworks for qualifications**; **the awarding and recognition of joint degrees**, including at the doctorate level; creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the **recognition of prior learning**.

2. The following proposals for **further reading** might be useful

Eurydice report : Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2004/05 – National Trends in the Bologna Process

This publication, which was prepared for the meeting of the ministers of higher education, in Bergen in May 2005, reports on how the organisation of higher education is evolving in the 40 countries signatory to the Bologna Declaration. It assesses progress towards the aims of the Bologna Process.

<http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/FocHE2005/en/FrameSet.htm>

European credits transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET) – Principles and reference framework for implementation

http://www.na-bibb.de/uploads/leo/ecvet_eu-kommission_principles.pdf

Higher education policy issues and trends - An update on higher education policy issues in 11 Western countries

<http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/documenten/engreport03monitorupdatereport.pdf>

Can university survive the Bologna Process?

http://www.boku.ac.at/wpr/wpr_dp/dp-02-2004.pdf

The emergent European policies under scrutiny. The Bologna Process from a Central European Perspective

<http://www.genie-tn.net/BolognaKluwerPaper.pdf>

Proposals for the organisation of a common framework for higher education in Europe, particularly for vocational education

by George Asseraf

Introduction

This article traces the links and associations (complementarities) between the results of the "sustainable professionalisation" project to develop common occupational specifications and the other work being done under the Bruges Process on transparency, quality and credit transfers. The occupational specifications reflect a transnational labour market and form part of a common certificate structure which takes subsidiarity into account.

Proposals for the organisation of a common framework for higher education in Europe, particularly for vocational education

General European framework

There is no common European policy on education at any level. Responsibility for course content and organisation resides at the national level.

Article 149 of the Treaty of Amsterdam nonetheless provides that the Community may help to improve the quality of education by encouraging cooperation between Member States through a range of initiatives and schemes.

One of those which may have the greatest impact on education systems themselves is commonly called the Bologna Process.

The main purpose of this process is to enhance the employability of European citizens and the competitiveness of the European higher education system. The employability of citizens means that they are able to find (or return to) work on account of their formal qualifications, skills or experience, in a labour market that incorporates a European dimension – that is to say, a European labour market.

One of the main ways of achieving this is by defining course grades that are easily understandable and comparable between different national systems. The methods adopted, primarily for higher education but also strongly influencing the vocational education and training initiative via the Bruges Process[1], comprise a series of tools:

- the organisation of two major sets of 'undergraduate and graduate' courses aimed at harmonising grades in higher education, the first of these being regarded as an appropriate level of qualification for the European labour market, and the second as leading to a Master's degree or a doctorate;
- the aim of the Bologna Process, it should be remembered, is to harmonise the grades rather than the content of certificates;
- a system of credits known as ECVET (drawing its inspiration from the ECTS[2] system) which encourages student mobility while respecting national competence in the organisation of courses;
- a common framework which facilitates transparency and mutual recognition of systems through a 'quality dynamic', providing the basis for mutual trust, and sets out to establish a link between quality assurance and recognition of qualifications.

Other more technical tools complement this approach, such as the 'descriptive certificate supplement' (in the case of vocational education and training), the 'certificate supplement' (in the case of academic higher education), the European CV and of course the Socrates / Erasmus Programme.

All these tools are intended to help build a European area of education and training.

But are these initiatives enough to support the primary objective driving the Bologna and Bruges Processes, namely the employability of citizens in the European labour market?

Proposals

In the case of vocational education and training, all the contributions made by national education systems to the definition of occupational profiles (the content of occupations and qualifications) have been written from the point of view of the national labour market.

Does this national basis provide any guarantee of international recognition and therefore of employability, regardless of the content of the training, the way in which courses and examinations are organised, the methods of evaluation, and the quality and performance of the education system?

Any ambition of European education must surely set at least the following two objectives:

- to enable learners to attain the highest degree of skills and citizenship so that everyone has the ability to adapt to technical and/or occupational developments. This is the only guarantee of finding a job in the European area and of meeting European requirements for democracy;
- to respond to skills requirements in a labour market extending beyond the Member State.

It is therefore appropriate, while strictly observing the principle of subsidiarity, to argue that certificates aimed at European employability must contain a common vocational element based on shared European occupational specifications.

This common section concerns neither the content of training nor the way in which courses and examinations are organised, which must remain a national and/or regional responsibility, depending on the Member State.

On the other hand, if the intention is that the requirements of a given level of skills and mastery of an occupation should create an entitlement to transnational recognition, not only by institutions but also by employers, it is essential that the objectives certified or verified are the same. The 'how' and the 'by whom' of verification, certification and recognition would nonetheless remain a matter for national and/or regional responsibility.

The structure of the certificates aimed at European employability would thus be made up of two sections:

- a common section relating to occupational specifications [3] and the objectives of certification;
- the national and/or regional section relating to content and the way in which courses and examinations are organised.

The European sustainable professionalisation pilot project, in which nine partner countries took part, led towards such a structure and made it possible for an agreed method to be developed for the common section. They proceeded from the drawing up of occupational specifications to the development of certification objectives.

The partners also suggested that the national and/or regional responsibility section might be the subject of exchanges of good practice.

Furthermore, in the terms of reference which they set themselves, the partners designed the common structure so that it offered channels of obtaining certificates (recognising a level of skills or mastery of an occupation) either through initial or lifelong training, or indeed through validation of experience-based learning.

Can this common occupational specifications approach satisfy all the questions raised by the creation of a European area of vocational education and training ?

In the case of transparency, the descriptive supplement to the certificate is extremely valuable because it provides an explanation of the unfamiliar national responsibility section (organisation and content of courses and examinations) and of the skills acquired.

In respect of quality, the visibility of certification, and the resulting mutual trust, will be enhanced by the establishment of common objectives of certification in a way inspired chiefly by 'quality methods'[4]. It should be borne in mind that certification is a step which allows authentication of an individual's skills and practical knowledge by reference to a formal standard. It therefore enables mastery of an occupation to be attested. It is of concern to all the stakeholders for whom a good system of certification is a guarantee of quality of training and of the ability of the work force to meet the needs of the economy: individuals (learners and salaried employees), employers looking to recruit, and the education system.

It has three elements: what is to be certified (the requirements), how it should be done, and who should do it. Only the first of these is governed by the common approach to sustainable professionalisation, while the other two remain a national and/or regional responsibility.

This approach should therefore be a useful adjunct to the Community work on methods of evaluation, that is, the 'how' and the 'who'. This raises in particular the issue of identifying and measuring the quality of those who carry out the evaluation (individuals and/or institutions), whether in a formal, non-formal or informal context.

The design of objectives of certification according to the sustainable professionalisation approach results in two sets of objectives (known as certification units) corresponding to the homogeneous complementary sections which make up an occupation.

These units comprise in themselves blocks of credits which can be transferred from one place of training to another without affecting mastery of the entire content of the common occupational specifications and the national and/or regional responsibility section. They can therefore serve as a medium for the operational implementation of an ECVET system.

So far, two common European specifications have been drawn up and put into practice in a number of countries.

Other specifications with which the social partners have been associated (at the appropriate national and European levels) were launched under the Greek and Italian Presidencies and are undergoing development. They will be designed to link the different tools developed in the Community context [5].

For further information:

www.trainingvillage.gr/etv

under the heading 'common certificates' or 'diplômes communs'

[1] The 'Bruges Process' aims to encourage European co-operation in vocational education and training. The ways in which it is to be implemented are set out in the 'Copenhagen Declaration' of November 2002.

[2] The ECTS system is a system of credits acquired by students during an academic course of training, which can be transferred between establishments as a means of encouraging as much mobility as possible among students. (180 credits for a Bachelor's degree, 120 for a Master's and 180 for a doctorate).

[3] The method lays down a 'common grammar' for defining and recording vocational activities, tasks and skills.

[4] The design of the certification objectives was inspired by 'quality' work on cause and effect relationships developed by Ishikawa.

[5] The virtual community devoted to non-academic post-secondary education launched by the Italian Presidency will serve as the means to disseminate and exchange practices relating to the follow-up and implementation of the sustainable professionalisation process. This community can be accessed via the Cedefop website.

Keywords: common certificates, transparency, quality, credit transfers

The paper was ordered by the Study visit Programme in January 2004.

To know more about this project, please refer to the article published in Cedefop Info 2/2002:

<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/download/Cinfo/Cinfo22002/C22B4EN.html>