

CSC Report on the Future of European Higher Education¹

BACKGROUND

Whereas national governments continue to be responsible for the content and structure of their education and training systems and individual universities for their own curricula, European co-operation in higher education is deepening. Co-operation as such is not a novelty. First treaties in this area were agreed in the framework of the Council of Europe (CoE) in the 1950's and 60's and dealt with equivalence of diplomas, equivalence of periods of university study, recognition of university qualifications and scholarships to students studying abroad. After these initial steps, the co-operation took a substantial leap with the start of the Bologna Process in 1999. This Process led to the launch of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010. In 2011 the EHEA has 47 member states. It aims at promoting more compatible, comparable and competitive higher education systems, more attractive for Europeans and students from other continents.

In addition to the EHEA/Bologna Process, the 27 member states of the European Union (EU) pursue further co-operation in general education and vocational training. Also this development has its roots in late 1950's and stepped up a gear at the beginning of the millennium. Since 2010 the EU co-operation in the educational area happens as part of the EU's new grand strategy for the decade to come, the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. On 20 September 2011, the European Commission issued a new communication which sets out the specific priorities for higher education.

The cooperation within the EHEA and within the EU are closely intertwined. This paper first explains what has been achieved and what is to come in the Bologna/EHEA Process before it turns to exploring the latest developments in the EU co-operation.

WHY CO-OPERATION IS NEEDED?

European co-operation stems from the recognition that many of Europe's some 4000 higher education institutions do not fully realise their potential. It is argued that Europe must improve the quality and efficiency of its education and boost research and innovation in order to match the performance of the best performing systems in the world, notably the United States and Japan. Especially now, in the midst of the economic and financial crisis, modernisation of higher education is defended as a means to ensure Europe's long-term and short-term prosperity. EU's emphasis on science, technology, maths and engineering demonstrates that prosperity is particularly understood in economic terms. The current emphasis on the economic contribution of education – job and growth creation – is also a means to convince decision-makers not to cut funding from this sector.

¹ This paper was commissioned by the Church of Sweden. According to their request the focus is on the EU co-operation and from that perspective on the Bologna Process. When examining the co-operation in higher education in Europe more broadly, also the role of Council of Europe is to be recognized (see the link to its website in the section on further reading).

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

WHAT IT WANTED TO ACHIEVE AND HAS ACHIEVED?

The Bologna Process has promoted setting in place structures which make European higher education systems compatible and comparable with a view to increasing mobility and, through transparency, competitiveness.

A key element of this architecture is the degree reform already accomplished in which universities have adopted two-/three cycle degree systems (bachelor/master/doctorate). Another building block has been the establishment of a comparable system of credit to promote student mobility ('credit reform'). Higher education institutes in all EHEA countries now use the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and are in transition towards it or use ECTS-compatible system. A third measure to increase comparability has been the adoption of the Diploma Supplement (DS). This document accompanies a higher education diploma providing a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the education received. DS is now issued automatically and free of charge in most higher education institutions but awareness of its existence and meaning among learners and employers is not very high.

Another action point to increase comparability, transparency and - through pressure of public scrutiny - performance has been the development of quality assessment methods and "quality culture". Almost all EHEA countries now apply for internal and external quality assurance e.g. the European Standards and Guidelines (2003) and the Register of quality assurance agencies (2008) on a system-wide scale. An overarching framework of qualifications (QF-EHEA) was adopted in 2005 and it is expected that all EHEA countries will devise self-certified national qualifications frameworks by 2012. It is still to be seen whether the compatible quality assurance systems lead to the delivery of compatible quality of education.

The Bologna Process has also supported greater recognition of qualifications. At this stage almost all Bologna countries have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (a CoE treaty) which is a positive step, but its implementation remains a challenge in many countries.

According to the leaders and drivers of the Bologna Process these three areas of action - the degree reform and progress in furthering equality assurance and recognition - have been the main successes of the process this far.²

The Bologna Process has also sought to advance mobility but results are still wanting. There is not sufficient data available as to yet to assess the amount of credit mobility (student exchanges) but there are no signs of major increase. 'Degree mobility' (accomplishment of full degrees in foreign countries) has increased but only modestly. There is an east-west imbalance with far more students from Central and Eastern European countries studying in the West than the other way around. This said, the attractiveness of Europe as a place of study for foreign students has augmented.

The Bologna Process has also over the last years advocated for a goal of ensuring that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education would reflect the diversity of populations. This aspiration, called the 'social dimension', has so far received little serious attention beyond lip-service.³

² Even those critical of the Process give it credit for having opened a discussion on the purpose and aim of higher education.

³ 39 out of 47 EHEA countries report underrepresentation of certain groups, most notably, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The Bologna Process has also sought to change the approach of university education from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. According to the Independent Assessment (see the link to this study), this aim is now widely shared.

Ms Ligia Deca, the coordinator of the Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat and former Chairwoman of the European Students' Union (ESU), describes mobility as a thermometer of the success of the Process. The increase in mobility would indicate that the quality assurance, transparency and recognition would have improved and the social dimension been better addressed. It would also hint at enhanced language capacities. At the moment, the greatest obstacles for mobility are the lack of recognition for studies done in other countries, the lack of financial support (cf. social dimension) and language barriers. In some countries far greater efforts have been put in place to attract foreign students than to enable own nationals to study abroad. This has been explained both by the fear of brain drain (especially Eastern Europe) and by the feeling of superiority of one's own system (UK).

CRITICISM AND COUNTERARGUMENTS⁴

The Bologna Process is not yet widely loved by students and academic staff.

Opposite results

The main criticism of substance concerning the Bologna Process is that whereas its objectives such as greater flexibility, mobility, quality and innovation are good, the action taken has yielded opposite results. The fact that some universities now detail the expected learning outcomes of specific study programmes has meant that education received in another institute is not accepted as meeting the set criteria and therefore, students who have followed studies elsewhere do not have their studies recognised and cannot move between the universities. In addition, students complain that universities have become more rigid, more school-like, which has strained academic freedom and is contrary to the objective of encouraging individual learning paths.

The drivers of the Bologna Process here invite the higher education institutes to better understand the spirit of the Process. Higher education institutes have been invited to describe their programmes for the sake of transparency, not to set rigid and strict criteria in order to allow them to refuse recognising any imperfectly matching studies done elsewhere. The decisions over recognition should be taken in the spirit of openness and with a focus on what the student is able to do with the received education. They should not be exercises of looking for exactly matching subjects, titles and study times.

The second criticism concerns the increased administrative burden (e.g. reporting and increased amount of exams to serve the credit-based system). Here the Bologna representatives explain that the Process sets objectives but it does not give detailed advice on how they are to be implemented at the national level. Countries are thus invited to ease the bureaucracy they have self-invented. That is not serving the reform in any way.

⁴ Besides its own priorities (see below), the EU shares and has explicitly and financially supported many of the Bologna objectives. However, given that few people are able to differentiate between the two processes and given the more participatory nature of the Bologna Process, any criticism against the modernisation measures tends to be directed, rightly or wrongly, against the Bologna Process. Some elements of the following "Bologna critique", therefore, equally apply to the European Union.

Time away from research

In addition to the increased bureaucracy, the academic staff complains that due to the emphasis put on the teaching mission of universities they have fewer possibilities to do research. Here the effect is intended. Currently, as the academic staff is rewarded on the basis of their output in terms of research, many higher education institutes make insufficient effort to provide quality teaching. Senior staff escapes from the teaching mission. The Bologna Process advocates for better quality of teaching and more credit for quality teaching.

Lack of substantial results

The technical goals of establishing the European Higher Education Area and legislation and mechanisms aiming at increased compatibility, comparability and competitiveness have been met or partly met. However, there is scarce evidence thus far that these architectural changes have resulted in greater mobility, quality and efficiency of higher education. In this question, the Bologna representatives point to the lack of understanding of the spirit of the Process (see example above).

Top-down process

Whereas the Bologna Declaration stated that the "European higher education institutions (...) have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education", both students and the academic staff have experienced Bologna too much as a top-down process. Unfortunately, the response to this criticism, expressed in the Budapest-Vienna Declaration, confirmed that this feeling was correct. While, welcoming the participation of staff and students in decision-making structures at European, national and institutional levels, the Budapest-Vienna (tenth Anniversary) Declaration makes it clear that the political leadership is not ready to question or change the objectives it has set. This Declaration writes: "Recent **protests** in some countries, partly directed against developments and measures not related to Bologna Process, have **reminded us that some of the Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented and explained**. We [Ministers] acknowledge and will listen to the critical voices raised among staff and students. [However,] We note that **adjustments and further work, involving staff and students, are necessary** at European, national and especially institutional levels **to achieve the European Higher Education Area as we [Ministers] envisage it.**"

This top-down approach, where academic staff and students are invited for co-operation as long as it aims at implementing the set objectives, seems to be at odds with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration's affirmation that the Ministers stay committed to the autonomy of higher education institutions.

The Independent Assessment about the first decade suggests that the greater involvement of academic staff is crucial for the success of the process and that also other non-state actors ought to be involved.

The Bologna representatives respond to this critique by saying that they have consistently favoured wider participation. At the European level, students and academic staff are represented through their European networks. At the national level, each member state is invited set up national Bologna Follow-Up Groups to involve stakeholders. The responsibility to ensure that the grassroots are heard is at the national level.

Interestingly, while many criticise the Bologna Process for the lack of stakeholder involvement, from the EU's perspective Bologna is *the* inclusive process.

WHAT NEXT?

The Ministerial Conference in Leuven 2009 appraised the achievements of the Bologna Process and defined the following ten priorities for the decade to come.

1. Increasing the equitable access to quality education ('social dimension'). This is the top priority. Success in this field requires both a mentality change and positive measures.
2. Promoting lifelong learning: obtaining qualifications, skills and competences and the development of national qualifications frameworks for lifelong learning.
3. Increasing employability: higher education should equip students with the advanced knowledge, skills and competences they need throughout their professional life, more employment related guidance services are needed.
4. Promoting student-centred learning which empowers individual learners and the importance of the teaching mission of higher education.
5. Higher education should foster education and creativity in society: the number of people with research competences should increase; doctoral programmes should provide high quality disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research.
6. European higher education institutions should further internationalise their activities ('International openness').
7. Increasing mobility by means of funding, recognition, by changing visa and work permit regulations.
8. Enhancing data collection in order to help monitoring the progress made, e.g. in the social dimension, employability and mobility agendas.
9. Providing more detailed and comparable information about higher education institutions ('Multidimensional transparency tools').
10. Ensuring adequate public funding and seeking new funding sources.

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) took the process forward by adopting a respective Work Plan for the years 2009-2012. The BFUG also established seven working groups: Social dimension, Qualifications, International openness, Mobility, Recognition, Reporting on the implementation of the Bologna Process and Transparency mechanism. The Work Plan provides information on the tasks and composition of the working groups as well as on planned peer-learning activities and seminars.⁵

AND HOW DOES IT ACTUALLY FUNCTION?

In the Bologna Process ministers responsible for higher education meet every second year⁶ to measure progress and set priorities for action. In between the Process is accompanied by the Bologna Follow-up Group, the Board and the Bologna Secretariat. In addition to the Ministerial Conferences, broader participation has been ensured since 2009 under Bologna Policy Fora. These meetings coupled with the EHEA Ministerial Conferences gather the 47 full members, the European Commission, the eight consultative members (the CoE, UNESCO-CEPES, European University Association (EUA), ESU, European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Education International and BUSINESSEUROPE), third countries and NGOs. The first two Bologna Policy Fora took place in Leuven (2009) and in Vienna (2010). The next Ministerial Meeting will take place in Bucharest, Romania, on 26-27 April 2012. The third Bologna Policy Forum will be connected to this ministerial meeting.

⁵ The following networks accompany the process: EHEA Information and Promotion Network, Network for Experts in Student Support in Europe (NESSIE) and the Network for National Qualifications Frameworks Correspondents.

⁶ The Ministerial meetings have been held in Bologna (1999), Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007) and Leuven (2009). A special meeting was held in Budapest and Vienna on 11-12 March 2010 to officially launch the European Higher Education Area.

Each country is encouraged to appoint a contact person for better flow of information and for the organisation of joint activities and national Bologna Process Follow-Up Groups. Churches wishing to get engaged in the process should inquire about this possibility from their national authorities.

EU CO-OPERATION

In the area of education the EU has a supporting competence. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, the role of the EU is defined in article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as follows:

“The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.”

“..Union action shall be aimed at: developing the European dimension of education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States; encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study; promoting cooperation between educational establishments; developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States; (...) encouraging the development of distance education.”

“The Union and Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the field of education and sport, in particular the Council of Europe.”

PAST DEVELOPMENTS

European countries have had some co-operation in the area of education in the framework of EU (or here European Economic Communities) from the very beginning, 1957. Until the turn of the millennium, co-operation was mainly programme-orientated. The Action programme for co-operation in the education area was set up in 1976, for instance, to improve education of foreign languages and to foster exchange of information on national educational systems. The first pilot projects for student exchange exist since 1980 and led to the establishment of the Erasmus programme in 1987. On the legal side, education was first mentioned in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. Policy cooperation began with the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda in 2000⁷. With regard to higher education, the key documents of this first decade included the European Commission Communication “Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy” (2005) and moreover, the Communication “Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities” (2006).

WHAT IS AT STAKE NOW?

On 20 September 2011, the European Commission issued a new Communication “Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe’s higher education systems” which revisits the priorities set in the 2006 Communication. This new Communication follows on the adoption the Europe 2020 Strategy as well as the sector

⁷ The Lisbon Agenda served as the EU’s grand strategy between the years 2000 and 2010.

specific Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training, 'ET 2020', adopted by the Council in May 2009.

According to the Commission⁸, European higher education currently faces the following challenges: untapped potential to contribute to Europe's prosperity; lack of excellence⁹ and financial investment in comparison to international rivals; the increasing need for higher education qualifications – it is estimated that 35% of all jobs in the EU by 2020 require this level of knowledge; and mismatch between skills¹⁰ and jobs. As a response, the Commission suggests that the EU member states focus on achieving reforms in four key areas:

1. to increase the quantity of higher education graduates at all levels (40% of young people should successfully complete higher education or equivalent studies by 2020).

To achieve this goal "Europe needs to attract a broader cross-section of society into higher education and deploy the resources to meet this challenge" (cf. social dimension). Attention should be given, for example, to reducing school and higher education drop-out rates.

2. to enhance the quality and relevance of human capital development in higher education.

Here emphasis is put on matching skills and jobs. The Commission suggests involving employers and labour market institutions in the design and delivery of programmes, supporting staff exchanges and including practical experience in studies in order to foster employability and entrepreneurship. The Commission also encourages the member states to consider a greater variety of study modes (e.g. part-time, distance and modular learning, continuing education for adult learners and e-learning). The Commission also proposes to introduce incentives for higher education institutions to invest in continuous professional development for their staff, and to reward excellence in teaching.

3. to create effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence.

The Commission argues that legal, financial and administrative restrictions limit institutional freedom of higher education institutions to define strategies and structures and to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Greater autonomy would pave the way for specialisation and, thereby, excellence. With regard to funding, the Commission stresses that public investment must remain the basis for sustainable higher education but encourages member states to diversify funding resources.

4. to strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and business

The Commission wants to further cooperation between education, research and business – the three sides of the knowledge triangle. In this point the Commission advocates in particular for local and regional specialisation with the aim of driving local economic development.

In addition to the policy proposals clearly linked with the four key areas, the Commission encourages creating conditions for better research and for more research jobs: "The Union will need an estimated one million new research jobs." The Commission also

⁸ The following chapters introduce some of the key elements and proposals of the Communication. For more complete information visit the official document.

⁹ For instance, only around 200 of Europe's 4000 higher education institutions are included in the top 500, and only 3 in the top 20, according to the latest Academic Ranking of World Universities.

¹⁰ "The knowledge economy needs people with the right mix of skills: transversal competences, e-skills for the digital era, creativity and flexibility and a solid understanding of their chosen field (such as in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths."

promotes mobility believing that it increases individuals' professional, social and intercultural skills and employability. The Communication endorses the EHEA goal of doubling the proportion of students completing a study or training period abroad to 20% by 2020. In this area, greater recognition of previous studies and greater portability of grants and loans are needed. Finally, in order to attract the best students, academics and researchers from outside the EU, change is needed to provide more attractive working conditions, greater academic recognition and to improve access to visas to study and work.

After having stated the general objectives and offered guidance on what could be achieved at the national level (see above), the Communication moves on to explain what the Commission intends to do. The Commission will, firstly, support transparency and excellence through evidence-based policy analysis. Concrete action includes, inter alia, launching of the U-Multirank, a new performance-based ranking and information tool for profiling higher education institutions, and improving data on European higher education learning mobility and employment outcomes. The Commission will also issue a Communication on Rethinking Skill in 2012, which provides specific guidance and recommendations on raising basic and transversal skills and overcoming skills mismatches.

Secondly, the Commission will continue supporting mobility of learners, teachers and researchers, for example, by proposing a European-level student loan guarantee facility and by the European Framework for Research Careers, a new transparency tool. Thirdly, it will promote the "knowledge triangle", e.g. by facilitating the creation of knowledge alliances and by – through the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) – disseminating good examples of integrated partnerships, new governance and funding models. Fourthly, the Commission will, through the development of internationalisation strategies and promoting mobility and recognition, support the interaction of European higher education with the rest of the world.

Finally, it will strengthen the long-term impact and complementarity of EU funding through more streamlined funding mechanisms for the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The new mechanisms, which replace the old ones, are **Education Europe**, a single programme for education, training and youth; **Horizon 2020**, the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation; and **Cohesion Policy instruments** including the European Regional Development Fund which finances e.g. building and renovation of higher education institutions and digitalisation, and the European Social Fund, which seeks to increase the access of under-represented groups to education, enhance educational content and match skills and jobs.

Whereas the Communication acknowledges the role education plays in individual and societal advancement, the emphasis is clearly on its importance with regard to economic delivery. The weight put on the economic side should not be criticised sketchily. It is said that it was precisely for its convincing case - "education is a growth enhancing investment par excellence" - that the EC Directorate-General ("department" or "ministry") on education convinced the other Commission DGs to allocate it the single biggest increase in the future MFF. The European Commission suggests an increase of 73% to the education budget in comparison to the MFF 2007-2013 and 46% increase in research budget. In the case of education this would mean a jump from 8.8 billion Euros to 15.2 Euros. This proposal is to be supported. At this stage, the use of this amount is not defined in more detail.

The Communication was informed by a public consultation. It will now be discussed among the civil servants representing national governments and by the European Parliament. According to the current plans the Education Committee (Council) will meet on 22-23 October for a presentation and initial comments on the Communication, on 4-5 October for a discussion on the first draft of the eventual Council Conclusions, on 20

October for the second reading and on 28 October for the third reading. If there are no major hiccups, the issue will be tackled at the ambassadorial level (COREPER I) in early November. If the European Parliament and the Council come to an agreement on the future priorities, the agenda will furthermore be adopted this autumn. On the Council side, the decision could be taken at the Education Council meeting on 28 November 2011. At this stage, the assumption is that there will not be any major objections concerning the strategy and that the main criticism is levelled against its focus on growth.

HOW IS THE CO-OPERATION CONDUCTED?

EU has adopted a twin-track approach. Firstly, it promotes policy co-operation within the membership in a form of an Open Method of Coordination. In this process, Commission undertakes policy analysis, highlights where problems exist and proposes solutions. The Commission also promotes the existing objectives, reports on progress and supports the dissemination of examples of good practice. Member states (Council) and the European Parliament take the decisions. The member states are expected to deliver.

Secondly, the countries through their joint EU programmes provide funding in support of mobility actions (i.e. Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo and Grundtvig, Erasmus Mundus), for lifelong learning (current Lifelong Learning Programme) and research (currently through the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research). The sector is also financed through the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme as well as the Structural Funds and loans from the European Investment Bank. Besides supporting the educational development in the EU, the EU supports modernisation of higher education in its 28 neighbouring countries as well as globally.

The so called **incentive measures** in education-related matters require the approval of both the member states and the European Parliament (codecision, now considered the ordinary legislative procedure). The EU's two advisory bodies, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, are heard. The Education, Youth and Culture (EYC) Council, which brings together the relevant ministers, meets around three or four times a year and takes its decision by a qualified majority. The EU also makes **recommendations**. Here the decision is taken by the Council (alone), on a proposal from the Commission.

Since 2008, the EU has gathered relevant stakeholders for a meeting once a year. The next meeting is on 26-27 September¹¹. This Annual Stakeholders' Forum might be a place for churches to get engaged. In general, even with this annual gathering and some consultations, higher education institutions are far more listened to by the 'Bologna people' than by the EU officials or by the national EU units. This does not mean that active citizens could not make their views heard.

With regard to the modernisation agenda, the new Communication foresees the establishment of a high-level group with a rolling mandate to analyse different key topics. Its first assignment will be to look at the promotion of excellence in teaching and reporting.

¹¹ Official Website of the Annual Stakeholders' Forum: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1339_en.htm The event is organised together with the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning: <http://www.eucis-lll.eu/pages/> The website of EUCIS-LLL actually provides more information on the event than the EC website. Take a look at: <http://www.eucis-lll.eu/pages/events/stakeholders-forums>

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS, THE EU AND THE CoE

Both the EU and Bologna officials believe that the co-operation between the EU and the EHEA functions rather well. The processes are parallel and in most cases mutually reinforcing. Both sides influence one another. The EU is credited for taking the agenda forward and for the money it brings in. The Bologna representatives do also have understanding for the EU's growth-oriented approach. For them, it is natural "due to EU's nature as an economic co-operation".

The main lines of difference are that the EHEA highlights the importance of academic freedom, balanced mobility (cf. social dimension), stakeholder participation and all the four missions of learning: employability, input for research, input for societal development and personal development. The EU focuses on employability and, therefore, on issues such as labour market adaptation, excellence and matching skills with jobs.

It is worth noting that whereas the EU has more money and power to influence the educational agenda, even the EU side agrees that the voluntary nature of the Bologna Process has served its success. The member states have embraced the process. No one would have expected the Bologna Process to be so influential.

Whereas due to the disregard of the EU, the CoE-EU cooperation is meagre, the Council of Europe is highly valued in the Bologna Process. The Strasbourg-based organisation, which first initiated European co-operation in higher education, is today given credit for its substantial input in defining principles for higher education (e.g. public responsibility, institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and stakeholder participation). The Council of Europe has given a valuable contribution in setting standards in recognition and for promoting them. In addition, it has led the work on qualifications frameworks and is now helping countries to implement them.

INVOLVEMENT OF CHURCHES

Until now, the churches have taken little responsibility and a minor active role in the policy debates concerning Europeanization of (higher) education. When the churches have acted, they have normally acted in relation to imminent changes or discussed how they can adapt to the changes. The lack of proactive engagement is explained by the lack of personnel and instruments to do so as well as lack of importance given to this topic. The international arenas where the policy is developed and set, and which would need to be addressed, appear distant. Yet, for many reasons churches should take a more active role. For one, churches will be influenced by these changes starting with the quality of theological training. Instead of reacting to the changes, churches could take an active role in the policy development highlighting problems and proposing solutions to ensure that the EHEA and the EU will at the end really improve and not worsen higher education. Besides their own engagement, the churches could promote wider participation in general and bottom-up processes. Secondly, in the current economic and financial crisis churches are needed to remind decision-takers that even in these circumstances higher education should not be reduced to providing human capital for economic value.

The CSC Conference "Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Role for the Churches?" to be held in Strasbourg from 5 to 7 October 2011 will provide a forum to stimulate this engagement. The event has been organised in close cooperation with the CEC's Associated Organisations, the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS) and the International Association for Christian Education (IV) as well as with the Council of Europe and the European Commission. In the conference, delegates from CEC member churches and Associated Organisations will explore how "education for democratic citizenship", as understood and promoted by the European Institutions, relates to the views of churches and actors of religious education.

FURTHER READING

DOCUMENTS ON BOLOGNA PROCESS/EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA:

Bologna Declaration (1999):

http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf

Leuven Communiqué (2009):

http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communicu%C3%A9_April_2009.pdf

Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010):

http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf

Work Plan 2009-2012:

http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/about/Bologna_work_plan_2009-2012_07-02-2010.pdf

For more information on the process, on key documents and current issues (including upcoming events), visit the official website of the European Higher Education Area:

<http://www.ehea.info/>

The Bologna Process Independent Assessment (results of the first decade):

http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/bologna_process/independent_assessment_1_detailed_rept.pdf

More information on the results of the Bologna Process will be available next spring once the report of the Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent is issued ahead of the Ministerial Conference in April.

EU DOCUMENTS:

The Communication "Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems" COM(2011)567:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/com0911_en.pdf

For more background information related to the new strategy see also:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1043&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training 'ET 2020' (2009):

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:EN:PDF>

Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities COM(2006)208:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0208:FIN:EN:PDF>

Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy COM(2005)152:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0152:FIN:EN:PDF>

For further information, visit the official EU website for education:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.htm

All documents related to Europe 2020 Strategy are available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

Documents on the Multiannual Financial Framework including Commission's proposal:
<http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/>

OTHER SOURCES:

Council of Europe website on higher education:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/default_EN.asp?

Do not forget to visit the CSC Website on education at:
<http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/education/>

The website of the Eurydice Network provides excellent source information on and analyses of European education systems and policies:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

Church and Society Commission

Ecumenical Centre • Rue Joseph II, 174 • BE-1000 Brussels • Belgium
phone +32 2 230 17 32 • fax +32 2 231 14 13 • csc@cec-kek.be • <http://csc.ceceurope.org/>