

ACA Annual Conference 2014: Europe in the World: Higher Education Developments Across the Globe

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**“Assessing the Attractiveness of European Higher Education: A
View from the Outside**

“Beauty (Attractiveness) is in the eye of the beholder.” Margaret Wolfe Hungerford

*We might ask who are the beholders of European Higher Education and do they see “the cup half full or half empty”¹ when they see the accomplishments of the goals of the Bologna Process in the creation of the European Higher Area (EHEA) because “increasing the attractiveness of EHEA a **for the rest of the world** has been a driving force of the Bologna process since its inception”. (Crosier, Purser, and Smidt, 2007)²*

The Continuous Evolution of Education Systems Worldwide and the Forces Driving The Adaptive Changes³

The evolution of complex systems, like higher education systems, with many component processes, involve continual adaptation to the changing environment of a globalized world that include the:

- political
- socio-economic and other societal
- technological
- economically competitive
- cultural
- educational (e.g. The Bologna Process as a Model)
- resistance from unchanging conservative forces

Some Higher Educational Systems evolve more slowly than others and as is in other evolving systems, some original **Features of the Process** will change or die out and conservative forces of resistance will co-exist with the new outcomes from adaptation required for existence³

What Types of Evidence Should One Observe that Would Indicate the Degree of Attractiveness of European Higher Education?: Questions To Ask

*Have the European Higher Education reforms brought about by the Bologna Process creating the EHEA influenced education policy makers and institutions beyond Europe **to adopt and adapt** similar models and processes?* There is significant evidence of this: examples include,

- Ongoing initiatives to create a South-East Asian Higher Education Space by the Education Ministers of the Southeastern Asian Regional Center for Higher Education, that includes research centers, a credit transfer system, a quality assurance organization, and a diploma supplement.⁴
- Similar initiatives are ongoing in Latin America to establish a Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education area and in Africa.⁴
- The Brisbane process initiated by the Brisbane communiqué in Australia 2006, to establish similar processes in higher education.⁴

Are there *adoptions* and *adaptations* of the tools and processes of The Bologna Process by other countries to achieve similar education reform goals?

In the U.S., international higher education researchers have proposed to policymakers, institutions, higher education associations, and the U.S. Department of Education that The Bologna Process and its tools and great value for education reform in the United States(25 references upon request and Adelman⁵ ; Gaston¹ ; Yopp^{6,7,8})

Major examples include the establishment of the **Tuning USA pilot project**, now well-established, involving a number of states, academic associations, and consortia-based on ***Tuning Educational Structures*** in Europe⁹ and funded by the **Lumina Foundation**¹⁰. The operational partner, funded by Lumina, is the **Institute for Evidence-based Change**. (IEBC)^{10,11}

The full description of **Tuning USA** and how it was adopted and adapted from Tuning European Educational Structures is found on the IEBC website:
Yopp, J.H. and Marshall, D. 2014, Tuning USA: Meeting the Challenges of U.S. Higher Education Webinar.
<http://www.iebcnow.org>

AND

The **Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)** of the Lumina Foundation, modeled after the European Qualification Frameworks (EQF). **The DQP**.^{4,12,13}
www.luminafoundation.org

Tuning European Structures has been **adopted** and **adapted** in many large, multi-national regions of the world. Examples include:

- **Tuning Latin America** (in 2005)– 12 disciplines, 180 universities; now expanded 2011) www.tuninigla.org
- **Tuning Russia** (2011–present) www.russia.org
- **Tuning Africa** (2011–present) 5 Regions www.Africa.org
- **Pilot in Australia** (started 2010-2011)
- **Pilot in China** (started 2012-2013)

Tuning European Structures now has established the **Meta-profile concept** and its attendant processes that facilitate and enrich “the dialogue between the European Tuning Community and Tuning Processes around the world, notably Latin America, Russia, and Africa.”^{9,10,11}

Are there more educational and research partnerships between universities in Europe and those of other countries? These would include double and joint degrees, exchanges, tuning agreements, and research cooperation?

- *Joint and double degree programs between the U.S. and European universities have increased significantly since the mid-years of The Bologna Process.^{14,15}*
- *These would have been very difficult to create had it not been for the creation of the three-cycle degree structure (bachelors, masters, and doctoral) by The Bologna Process, which is one of its most significant achievements.⁴*

It is Agreed by Both Types of Outside Beholders of the Current EHEA That One of its Most Attractive Features is its Three-Cycle Degree Structure (Bachelor-type; Master's-type, and Doctoral-type)

WHY?^{1,4,16}

- *It makes possible a much more transparent and much more equivalent degree structure for comparison and award and transfer of credit in U.S. Study Abroad and Student Exchange Programs.*
- *It facilitates the creation of double and joint degrees between Europe and the U.S. and other countries.¹⁵*
- *Its relationship to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) additionally facilitates determination of **equivalency and credit transfer** for the above two types of programs.¹⁷*
- *It provides the educational structure for the Tuning Process to define **degree profiles** in the various disciplines of study.^{9,10}*

**Have The Bologna Signatory
Countries maintained their
historical share of Mobile
International Students, or increased
it (2001-2012)?**

International Student Mobility Worldwide:

2001, 2.1 million students versus 2012, 4.3 million students, IIE Open Doors, 2013¹⁸

Western Europe is the largest host region for international students, receiving more than 33% of all globally mobile students. The UK, France, and Germany alone receive 25% of the worldwide globally mobile students (2012).¹⁸

Top Host Countries Globally Mobile Students By Percentage Of Total

2001		2012	
U.S.	28%	U.S.	19%
UK	11%	UK	11%
Germany	9%	China	8%
France	7%	France	7%
Australia	4%	Germany	6%
Japan	3%	Australia	6%
Spain	2%	Canada	5%
Belgium	2%	Japan	3%
All others	34%	All Others	35%

“Does not capture the full range of educational activities that students undertake I when they go abroad, example credit and non-credit bearing activities.”¹⁸

“European countries remain the dominant choice of U.S. students (studying abroad)” for Academic Credit. IIE Open Doors, 2013¹⁸

The ranking European countries among the top 25 destinations for the US study abroad are:

In 2011/12 over 151,000 of the total record 283,332 U.S. students **chose European countries** for their study abroad experience, even with strong competition from other countries increasingly providing new locations and English language instruction.

Ranking	Country	% of Total	% Change
1	United Kingdom	12.2	3.4
2	Italy	10.5	-2.4
3	Spain	9.3	2.0
4	France	6.1	0.9
6	Germany	3.3	3.9
9	Ireland	2.7	9.0
17	Czech Republic	1.2	5.7
21	Denmark	1.0	16.1
22	Greece	1.0	-21.2
25	Austria	0.9	-2.9

Global Student Mobility: Top Host Countries' International Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Higher Education Enrollment (IIE Open Doors 2013)

Host Country	2010 Total Int'l Students	2012 Total Int'l Students	Int'l Enrollment as a % of Total Higher Education Enrollment 2012
Australia	230,595	245,531	26.4%
United Kingdom	455,600	488,380	19.0%
France	283,621	289,274	12.1%
Germany	244,766	265,292	11.1%
U.S.	723,277	819,644	3.9%
China	265,090	328,330	1.0%

Is there evidence that The Bologna Process has developed effective Quality Assurance mechanisms required give comfort users of, and partnerships with institutions and countries in EHEA?

Given the rapid and often unregulated proliferation of providers of higher education-traditional, virtual, MOOCS, private, and non-institutional-a common description of this changing environment by those of us in the U.S. is:

“It’s the ‘Wild West’ Out There”

YES

The establishment of national quality assurance agencies has been significant over the past decade, with 13 countries in the EHEA having agencies that are recognized by the **European Quality Assurance Register For Higher Education** (EQAR) that was established by The Bologna Process. ^{1,2,3,4}

Do New Processes Continue to Arise Within the EHEA to Respond to the Changing Environments in Support and Enhance the Goals of the EHEA and Bologna Process?

YES?

*How can European and International Student mobility be facilitated when student data is sequestered within national data repositories, often still in **paper form**, and sometimes **fraudulent**?*

***The Groningen Declaration (2012) within the EHEA proposes a technologically-based adaptive response.**^{19,20}*

GRONINGEN DECLARATION: Digital Student Data Portability, History, Why Needed, and Coming Presentations²⁰

- In April 2012 a seminar “**Digital Student Depositories Worldwide**” was held in Groningen, The Netherlands attended by high-level representatives from centralized digital data systems in the Netherlands, US, Russian Federation, S. Africa, Norway, Spain, UK, China, and India.
- **The Groningen Declaration:** The EAIE President was one of the eleven first representatives to sign the declaration which calls for making current systems internationally compatible, data easily comparable, and digital data acceptable. EAIE has been a prime initiator.
- **Why Needed:** to respond and adapt to the **great increase in global student mobility** during which students may earn credentials from more than one institution, often in different countries. In addition, fraud especially document falsification is an increasing problem worldwide.
- The Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (DUO) is the Secretariat.
- Three International conferences have been held in Groningen (2012) , Beijing (2013), and Washington, D.C. (2014), the latter sponsored by AACRAO, DUO, National Student Clearinghouse.

Signatories to the Groningen Declaration include Universities Australia, Belgium, China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center (CHESICC), France, Eunis, EAIE, DUO, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Romania, S. Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, AACRAO and National Student Clearing House²⁰

Next presentations: At EAIE 2014, Prague: “Mobile Students need mobile data”; Secure documentation transmission; A U.S.-China project and Scratch cards, databases, barcodes: credential authentication made easy” (EAIE Website). Annual conference of the COIMBRA Group in Groningen, June 12, 2014.

<http://www.groningendeclaration.org/2014-groningen-declaration-meeting>

Whether the Views of the Beholders from the Outside Hold that the “Glass of Current European Higher Education Reforms” Is Half Full or Half Empty, It is Generally Agreed that their Accomplishments Only Fill Half The Glass.

What do the Beholders of European Higher Education Who believe that the Glass is Half Empty See as Evidence of this Belief? ^{1,21}

Does this make European Higher Education less attractive?

Recent reports while praising the Bologna reforms and the EHEA, contain observations and analyses that could be interpreted as making European Higher Education less attractive. These include:

- Bologna with Student Eyes (2012);²²
- The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report²³;
- Funding of Education in Europe 2000-2012. The Impact of the Economic Crisis” Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency²⁴

These, and other observations from the U.S.¹ and Europe include^{4,16}:

There are concerns in Europe and the U.S. that **since the global economic crisis**, starting in 2008, and the rise in representation of political parties opposed to the goals of Bologna and the EHEA, there will be less financial capability and political will to sustain these goals. ^{1,4,22,23,24}

The latest (2012) Bologna Implementation Report and other reports, acknowledge that there has been an **overall significant decline in higher education expenditures** for the EHEA. ^{1,4,23,24}

Regarding the pledges and separate strategies of the Bologna signatories “to achieve the goals of **Bologna social dimension**” (London Communique, 2007) “very few appear to have actually linked this concern to the commitment of raising the participation of under-represented groups to the point where the **distribution of the higher education population mirrors that of the overall population.**”⁴

But also see references 1 and 22.

Observations exist that some Bologna Signatory countries are treating the inter-related and synergistic Bologna reform components as a smorgasbord rather than a complete menu.^{1,4,25}

The EUA Trends Reports and U.S. observers often implied that the ideals and goals of The Bologna Process faced continuing roadblocks from conservative resistance forces that would significantly extend the timelines for their accomplishments. This is particularly seen in completion of the **National Qualifications Frameworks**.^{1,4,25}

While all Bologna Signatory countries have adopted the 3-cycle degree system, in many countries, there has not been the necessary accompanying curricular reforms (and SLOs), with the co-existence of traditional longer first degrees.^{1,25,26}

Also of concern is that “some observers (including many European students and academics) continue to portray the Bologna Process as an instrument of a neo-liberal political agenda for European Higher Education, others are acting to use it as a barrier and restraint to such an agenda.”⁴

Finally, even after 15 years, many of the societies in the EHEA, “including the key stakeholders, have received, scanty, biased, or incorrect information about the nature of the process.” These are the risks in a very diverse, politically active, open, and democratic process.⁴

A Conclusion from an Outside Beholder

“Whatever the future for Bologna and European Higher Education, two things seem clear. **First** *the process has created a dynamic that will not be stopped.* **Second** the Bologna Process, like higher education institutions themselves, has *shown itself capable of adapting to changing reality.*”

“...it seems a safe bet that cooperation and dialogue through the Bologna Process will not only continue but will be a vital means for European Higher Education to face the challenges of this changing world.” (Crosier and Paveva 2013. UNESCO Report)⁴

I agree, in my opinion as a long-time observer and U.S. evaluator of the Bologna Process and the EHEA, both are still evolving to adapt to these rapidly changing political, socio-economic, technological, cultural, and resistant environments.

Evolution of any system **is not an neat, linear process**, in fact, it is quite messy as all of us have observed.

Yet, the evidence for the attractiveness of European Higher Education is quite strong that it will continue to serve as an attractive model for the effective ideals, tools, and processes for educators, education policy makers, and the other relevant stakeholders of other countries and regions to adopt and adapt as we have seen so frequently over the past decade.

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