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THE EMERGENT EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES UNDER SCRUTINY. THE BOLOGNA PROCESS FROM A CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

[Forthcoming in: *The Bologna Process – Voices from the Peripheries*, Voldemar Tomusk (ed.), Kluwer Scientific Publishers, 2004]

1.

The Bologna process of creating the European Higher Education Area and the simultaneous, gradual emergence of the European Research Area can be viewed as the two sides of the same coin: that of the redefinition of the roles, missions, tasks, and obligations of the institution of the university in rapidly changing and increasingly market-driven and knowledge-based European societies and economies. Both teaching and research are undergoing substantial transformations today and the institution of the university that until fairly recently had been almost an exclusive site in hosting the two interrelated activities in all probability will not be able to avoid the process of substantial, partly planned and partly chaotic, transformation of its functioning.

Whatever view we share on the two parallel processes, they are already relatively well advanced in some countries and promoted all over Europe, including Central and East European accession countries and the Balkans (called here most often, for the sake of brevity, the "transition countries" or "the region"). While the effects of the emergence of the European Research Area are basically restricted to the beneficiaries of research funds available from the EU, the Bologna process may potentially influence the course of reforming national higher education systems in 40 countries. While the Sorbonne

Declaration (1998) was signed by ministers of education of the four biggest EU countries – France, Italy, United Kingdom, and Germany, the Bologna Declaration (1999) was signed already by ministers from 29 countries, and at the Berlin conference in September 2003 the following newcomers were accepted: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Some may call the process a really European integration of various higher education systems, regardless of their huge differences; official documents usually refer to the "diversity" of countries and institutions involved – but one thing is certain: the Bologna process in its present geographical, economic and political composition faces a tremendous challenge of keeping a single pace of changes for all the countries involved. Judging from the experience of well over a decade of social and economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, to keep the process going at one speed is going to be very difficult; most probably, in the coming years, further developments of the process will require separate tracks accompanied by descriptions of the most required parts of reforms, separate descriptions of challenges and, most importantly, separate sets of policy recommendations for clusters of countries implementing reforms at different paces – if the reform is not going to be a theoretical exercise in numerous countries of the region.

Even though there were separate tracks in thinking about the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), there has been clear convergence between them recently. (We can distinguish between three tracks in recent developments: the Magna Charta Universitatum signed in Bologna 1988 by rectors of European universities initiated the track of higher education institutions, with the Salamanca and Graz Conventions in 2001 and 2003; Sorbonne – Bologna – Prague and Berlin meetings have been all on the track of national ministers of education/governments; and the last track was that of the EU level and consisted of subsequent communiqués of the European Commission and other documents, from the first *Towards a European Research Area* of 2000 to the two most recent: *The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge* and *Researchers in the European Research Area: One Profession, Multiple Careers*, both of 2003). Recently, the supranational,

intergovernmental and inter-institutional levels are being increasingly mixed. As Pavel Zgaga stresses in his recent report, in the light of the EU enlargement, the convergence between the Bologna process and EU educational policy-making will be even more visible (Zgaga 2003: 7).

The European Commission, European governments and the vast majority of rectors of European higher education institutions seem determined to implement the ideas agreed on during subsequent ministerial summits. The least interest and determination is shown by the academic profession i.e. those who are most directly involved. As *Trends III* report formulated the issue:

> four years have passed since the Bologna Declaration and it seems that the Bologna Process is now viewed by a majority of higher education representatives in most European countries as a *reform agenda* which cannot be ignored, but which should be dealt with proactively if universities are not to be overtaken by unwanted interpretations of what Bologna should mean at institutional level. The ongoing challenge faced by participants in the process, be they enthusiasts or skeptics, is to make sense of the Bologna objectives *in each institutional context* (Reichert and Tauch 2003:25, emphasis mine).

The "institutional context" in question is each higher education institution in each of the signatory countries – with its students and its faculty. As the report puts it *expressis verbis*, "deliberations on the implementation of Bologna reforms currently involve heads of institutions more than academics. Hence, interpreting Bologna in the light of its goals and the whole context of its objectives at departmental level, i.e. rethinking current teaching structures, units, methods, evaluation and the permeability between disciplines and institutions, is a task that still lies ahead for a majority of academics at European universities" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 9).

Consequently, it seems that the actors most directly involved in the actual implementation of the Bologna ideas in the future are still mostly unaware of its consequences or unwilling to discuss them in more detail. But without clear support both for the general reform agenda and for the details of implementation that go down

to the level of each department on the part of the academic faculty (as complementary to ministers and rectors), the Bologna process may fail, especially in the countries other than current EU-15. The whole process might be put at a halt if the academic profession is not convinced of new opportunities it provides, and is not supported by new incentives to implement it. On the other hand, I have to agree with Albert Amaral and António Magalhaes's warning signal that "if the Bologna's convergence process gets out of control of academics and becomes a feud of European bureaucracy, then one may well see a process of homogenization, and this represents another factor endangering the traditional role of the European universities" (Amaral and Magalhaes 2002: 9). There is a danger that the Bologna process may turn in the region to be a theoretical exercise. But the two parallel processes of creating common European higher education area and common European research area, the exercises in "core" European countries, are not theoretical at all: what already occurs is the rechanelling of European research funds, changing research and development policies, as well as the recognition of diplomas for educational and professional purposes and mobility for academic and professional purposes on the increasingly integrated European labor market. The danger is that there may those who are in it (and may be winners) and those who will potentially be out of it (and may be losers), especially as far as EU funding for research activities (as a consequence of the emergence of the ERA) are concerned. As Guy Neave put it in his thought-provoking paper on the European integration in higher education, "the 'Bologna process' has now reached the stage when principles begin to assume institutional form" (Neave 2001a: 2). What he meant, I believe, was that it had been high time to review the Bologna process before practical decisions are made.

2.

On reading documents and reports, the Bologna process in its present form seems relatively closed to global developments in higher education: it may be perceived as largely inward-looking, focused mostly on European regional problems and European regional solutions, in the relative absence of references to global changes in higher education and huge political and economic transformations underlying them (for

broader views, see Enders 2002c; Burbules and Torres 2000; Currie and Newson 1998).

There are many issues in which Bologna has been (sometimes until recently) relatively uninterested, to mention the GATS negotiations and the role of "borderless" education, the emerging private and for-profit sectors in higher education, the role of powerful market forces in higher education, clearly declining public funds which governments are able and willing to spend on higher education, differences in challenges faced by EU-15 and the transition countries etc. Some recommendations provided by the *Trends III* report seem abstract, especially with respect to the transition countries.

The general feeling one gets while reading the Bologna documents is that they treat about relatively homogeneous higher education and research structures with fairly similar problems and facing fairly similar challenges for the future. Despite numerous references to the "diversity" of systems, cultural and linguistic differences, varying degrees of the implementation of the process in various countries so far, it is very difficult to read the Bologna documents as if referring to the same degree to Germany or France on the one hand, and Albania, Macedonia and Russia on the other, to give most striking examples of Bologna signatory countries. What level of generality in describing challenges and providing recommendations for actions is needed if they are to refer to the countries in question? What do these contrasted national systems of higher education have in common today the moment we leave the most general level of analysis? The relevant analysis comprising both EU-15 and the transition countries is going to be a huge challenge in the future.

Certainly, it is possible to introduce changes in these second tier countries on an official, especially legislative level. It may be relatively easy, compared with other planes of action, to change laws on higher education and the accompanying legal context, especially if the Bologna process arguments of catching up with the West are used for promotional purposes. Who from the region, at least declaratively, would not like to be integrating with (West) European universities in common higher education

and research "areas"? But certainly changing laws is not the sole way to reach the objectives of the Bologna process although it may be understood in this way by many officials, especially on the governmental level. As *Trends III* summarized this attitude, „before Bologna, everyone knew that national higher education systems were indeed as different and incompatible as they looked. Bologna must avoid the risk of producing seemingly converging and compatible structures that could turn out to be, in spite of common terminology, just as irreconcilable as the old ones" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 73). Consequently, it is going to be another huge challenge for Bologna to avoid the reform on paper, especially to go beyond the national laws, in many transition countries.

3.

The Magna Charta Universitatum (signed by European university rectors in Bologna in 1988) which precedes the Bologna process *per se* by a decade and is referred to in both the Bologna Declaration and the Salamanca Convention message, is a document from a different register than that of all later declarations and communiqués; it is general and humanistic, and from the perspective of current global and European developments in higher education it is very vague indeed.

Being a general declaration, it obviously contains few details on how to proceed; but most of all, it is written in the vocabulary of a pre-knowledge economy and pre-globalization era. Consequently, and not surprisingly, there are no mentions about globally competitive knowledge economies and societies, drivers of economic growth, more and better jobs, social cohesion and social exclusion/inclusion, external pressures on higher education, emerging market forces, changing European (or any other) labor market requirements, long-term risks for private investment in public research etc – all of which are mentioned in later ERA and EHEA documents. Instead, there are some traditional ideas of universities' roles and tasks. It is interesting to note how hard it is today to give a meaning to such statements as e.g. "centres of culture, knowledge and research" are "represented by *true* universities". The idea that the university is an institution which "produces, examines, appraises and hands down *culture* by research

and tradition" (Magna Charta 1988: 1, emphases mine) would find very few followers among promoters of either the ERA or the EHEA (a counterpoint in the new vocabulary comes to mind from European Commission's Communiqué on the role of universities: "the knowledge society depends for its growth on the production of new knowledge, its transmission through education and training, its dissemination through information and communication technologies, and on its use through new industrial processes or services" (European Commission 2003b: 2), or from a World Bank framework policy paper on *Constructing Knowledge Societies*: "the ability of a society to produce, select, adapt, commercialize, and use knowledge is critical for sustained economic growth and improved living standards" (World Bank 2002: 7). From the perspective of developments of a recent decade, the Magna Charta Universitatum comes somehow as a remembrance of things past. In the context of the ERA developments, it is hard to find the continuation of ideas about the university as an institution whose "constant care is to attain universal knowledge" and which is a "trustee of the European humanist tradition" in current discussions about the "Europe of Knowledge".

It looks like it is not only no longer possible to talk about European integration of higher education and research as exemplified by the Bologna process and the ERA initiative in the language of the founders of modern German research university (von Humboldt, Schelling, Fichte, Schleiermacher and others) but it is also no longer possible to use solely the language used by rectors of European universities 15 years ago for the description of recent course of events on both global and European planes. The working vocabulary used for debates on the future of the university – the vocabulary of the ERA, EHEA and global accounts of higher education and research (including those provided by UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank) – has changed substantially since 1988, and the shift in vocabulary underlies the shift in the ways we account for the roles and tasks of our educational institutions in society.

The next document along the track of academic institutions' declarations and responses is the Graz Declaration on the role of universities of 2003. It is a direct

response to the European Commission's communiqué on the subject. Generally, it shows how the emphases of the association of universities move away from *The Magna Charta Universitatum* and toward both EU (ERA) and governmental (Bologna) lines of thinking. Although the preamble sounds fairly traditional (cultivating European values and culture, European cultural and linguistic diversity, fostering a stronger civic society across Europe etc), as we move on in the text, the problems discussed are those of Bologna and ERA, with the same level of practicality. A good example is a new way of thinking about resources for universities: "universities should be encouraged to develop in different forms and to generate funds from a variety of sources. However, higher education remains first and foremost a public responsibility… " (Graz Declaration 2003: 2). The shift in vocabulary is also significant, just to mention "negotiated contracts of sufficient duration to allow and support innovation" between governments and universities. It is interesting to note how the specificity of EU and governmental documents bring about new concepts and a new level of specificity in university declarations. This brings about both good and bad consequences; good, as similar issues are discussed in similar language; bad, as the university begins to view its most sensitive issues from the perspective of its potential funding opportunities. The balance between long- and short-term perspectives in thinking about universities is currently certainly shaken; the moment the market vocabulary enters the discourse on universities' responsibilities towards the society, any long-term perspective is hard to maintain on the part of the universities. Not surprisingly, in the final paragraphs about "universities at the centre of reforms", universities declare full support for changes but make it implicitly conditional on acknowledging their current and future role. To quote it *in extenso*:

> the Bologna process was initially politically driven. But it is now gaining momentum because of the active and voluntary participation of all interested partners: higher education institutions, governments, students and other stakeholders. Top down reforms are not sufficient to reach the ambitious goals set for 2010. The main challenge is now to ensure that reforms are fully integrated into core institutional functions and development processes, to make them self-sustaining. Universities must have time to transform legislative changes into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities. Governments and other stakeholders need to

> acknowledge the extent of institutional innovation and the crucial contribution universities do an must make to the European Research Area and the longer term-development of the European knowledge society as outlined in the Lisbon declaration of the European Union. By united action, European higher education – which now touches the lives of more than half the population of Europe – can improve the entire continent (Graz Declaration 2003: 5).

It is possible to read the declaration in the following way: there will be no reforms without the support of universities (to remind Clark Kerr's oft-quoted saying: "Changing a university is difficult. It is like moving a cemetery; hard work and there is no internal support"); universities need time to introduce changes in each institution; they are eager to do this but the condition is that their role in the ERA and, more generally, in emerging knowledge-based economies, will be fully acknowledged and adequately funded with public national (and EU) resources. Thus power and knowledge (to use this traditional parlance) already seem to speak the same language; the time has come for mutual guarantees for the future (by the way, I am not entirely sure that under present conditions there is any other option possible in the long run, especially in the region). It may be concluded that today, and maybe especially today, the struggle between the "idea of the university" and the possible cuts in financial support, including public support, is fought on very uneven terms indeed. It is clear to all stakeholders, and that is one of the reasons of changes in the tone, vocabulary and emphases in university declarations and communications between *The Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 and today.

4.

One of my tasks in the present paper is to analyze whether and how the Bologna process may affect national higher education systems in the region. The Bologna process occurs on interrelated planes: the official plane of ministers of education/governments, conferences of rectors and university associations, and accompanying changes in laws on higher education, laws on for-profits, laws on (educational and other) non-profit associations, on research funds etc; the official plane of particular higher education institutions i.e. that of senior university

management; and finally the practical plane of particular institutions and their faculty. There is a huge gap between good will (and good intents) on the part of ministers of education in the majority of those countries of the region which are official members of the Bologna process and the reality of the functioning of higher education systems in these countries. There is a huge gap between intentions expressed by the officials and capabilities to act they – and institutions themselves – can currently offer for the integration project (also the motivation for joining the Bologna process seems often more "political" than "educational", see Tomusk 2002b).

Higher education in the region, generally and with a few exceptions, is in a state of permanent crisis since the fall of Communism (for case studies of success stories, see Marga 1997; *Ten Years After* 2000): from the paralysis of substantial research functions to steady decreasing public funds to the mushrooming of both public and private diploma mills to corruption to lowering of the professional ethos and morale, with the combination of the above depending on the country. There has not been enough general reflection on transformations of higher education systems in the Region in recent decade; as Andrei Marga sadly remarked in a paper about "reforming the postcommunist university", "politics and law, macroeconomics and finance, civil rights and liberties, the church and the family, have all been objects of consideration. But universities – despite the vital roles they play in providing research and expertise and in selecting and forming the leaders of tomorrow – have not" (Marga 1997: 159). Reforming higher education in postcommunist Europe, with some notable exceptions, has not been sufficiently analyzed either locally or by Western scholars.

Paradoxically enough, in the majority of countries in question the situation of the universities, in the areas other than academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and international mobility of students and faculty, has severely decreased in the last decade. Even though it may be quite possible to go on with the Bologna process in these countries in terms of legislation, it is much more difficult to go on with it in terms of implementing the ideas at the institutional level (leaving aside for the moment

the whole idea of to what extent it is beneficial to the countries in question to follow *all* recommendations of the process).

Let us remind again that the Bologna process is based on the underlying assumptions (not really formulated in a single place) that both Europe and the world are entering a new era of knowledge-based and market-driven economies competing against each other; Europe as a region has to struggle with its two main competitors in higher education and research and development: the USA and Japan (Australasia); the knowledge society depends for its growth on the production, transmission, dissemination, and use of new knowledge; the underlying goal behind current transformations of educational systems and research and development, whether expressed directly (in ERA documents) or indirectly (accompanied by the "social dimension", in EHEA documents), is more or less to meet the target set out by the European Council in Lisbon (in 2000): Europe by 2010 must become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". Also the creation of the European Higher Education Area must be completed by 2010 (how to develop benchmarks of success and what is going to happen after the deadline are other issues). Europe is at the crossroads; it is trying to combine higher competitiveness and social cohesion in an increasingly globalized world and it is in the process of transition towards a "knowledge society". Thus knowledge becomes the key issue in the years to come.

The Bologna process seems somehow inward-looking: while globally, the impact of globalization on higher education policies is widely acknowledged, none of the official documents – from Sorbonne to Bologna to Prague to Berlin, and none of the accompanying declarations (Salamanca and Graz) – even once uses the word "globalization". (Even though the *Trends III* report prepared for the Berlin summit mentions "globalization" no more than five times in total, which is a reflection of its descriptive rather than analytical ambitions, it states overtly that ministers and higher education institutions should "ride the tiger of globalisation rather than hope it will

disappear" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 57). In general, though, the underlying assumptions are not developed in more detail in any of its documents or reports. Unquestionably, though, globalization is one of the main driving forces behind current transformations of the public sector, welfare state model and educational policies worldwide (strong supporters of the view, see Mishra 1999, Teeple 1995; much weaker, see Pierson 2001b, Esping-Andersen 2001, United Nations 2001); globalization is also one of the main reference points in the EU overall Lisbon strategy.

Consequently, the Bologna process so far seems relatively weak on analytical level. It may be worrying that main and supporting documents of a huge intellectual and institutional undertaking which aims at changing the way our universities function do not attempt to present a wholesale analytical approach to current challenges and solutions based on perspectives wider than European ones. As Erkki Berndtson in a paper on the EHEA rightly remarks, "the goals of the Bologna Declaration (and of the Prague communiqué) have been presented as solutions to the problems which have never been outlined systematically. This may have been one of the reasons for the fast development of the process, but without a systematic analysis of problems and challenges which the European Higher Education Area faces today, there is a danger that the cosmetic features of the reform will be strengthened" (Berndtson 2003: 10).

The ambivalence of the Bologna process concerns the process of globalization itself: roughly, following Dirk Van Damme, there may be at least two contrasting (and simplified) global views of Bologna. The first view may present it as a merely introduction to a much further-reaching integration of national educational systems in the future, resulting from competitive pressures from other parts of the world resulting in turn from global liberalization of operations of higher education institutions worldwide (especially in two biggest "exporters" of educational services, North America and Australasia). The second, contrasting, view may present Bologna as a large-scale defensive mechanism to avoid the pitfalls of globalization as seen (and mostly disliked) globally today and to stay together in Europe against the global odds.

Thus the first view may imply a strong convergence between Bologna and globalisation processes on a regional scale, especially in the future, while the second may imply an attempt to make national educational systems stronger against the forces of globalization and to stay away from whatever is seen as its excesses in higher education, especially the processes of privatization, commercialization, commodification etc. Due to the ambivalence of the process, I find it difficult to say which of the views would be a more adequate description of it today. The two threads are certainly very much interwoven in Bologna documents. Both "protectionist" threads for the European level (especially in referrals to education as a public "good and responsibility" which means mostly calls for public funding from national states in the future) and "expansionist" threads of attracting foreign students and researchers in a global competition for talent can be found . As Van Damme put it convincingly, "Europe is seeking its own way out between the Scylla of academic capitalism and the Charybdis of protectionism" (Van Damme 2003: 6).

5.

Concerns may be raised about "cosmetic" changes to be introduced by the EHEA; but others, including myself, are more concerned about potentially misguided policy decisions which might be taken in some transition countries based on either regionally-irrelevant analyses or recommendations. There may be also concerns about various senses of "harmonization" o higher education, some of which may potentially lead to some still unspecified core (European) curricula, as evidenced by such pilot projects as "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" (now in the second phase). There are strong semantic differences between "convergence", "harmonization" and finally "uniformity" but at the same time there are concerns that traditional semantic differences might get increasingly blurred as Bologna progresses.

Another issue is the following: are problems facing most of current EU-15 countries and their higher education systems the same as problems facing the countries in transition? I believe the important aspect of the Bologna process in its current geographical, economic and social scope is analytical (and consequently practical)

negligence of some most pressing problems in transition countries today. The analytical flaw of documents and reports may be the lack of description of old challenges that the transition countries still face, and consequently the lack of clear recommendations on how to proceed in these countries plagued by two different sets of challenges at the same time, old and new ones.

To put it in a nutshell, while the affluent European countries face merely new challenges brought about by the emergence of the knowledge-based economy, globalization pressures on higher education and research activities, life-long learning etc, almost a dozen of transition countries, to varying degrees, face old challenges as well. A recent report by the World Bank (*Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*) rightly says that developing and transition countries are confronted with a "dual task": "a key concern is whether developing and transition countries can adapt and shape their tertiary education systems to confront successfully this combination of old and new challenges" (World Bank 2002: 2). The report states that tertiary education can indeed play in developing and transition countries a catalytic role in rising to challenges of the knowledge-based economy but

> this is conditional on these countries' ability to overcome the serious problems that have plagued tertiary education systems and have pushed some systems into a situation of severe crisis (World Bank 2002: 45).

The Bologna process seems to focus on new challenges and new problems (i.e. problems of Western countries); the countries of the region, in contrast, are still embedded in challenges and problems of the old type generated mostly in a recent decade by the process of shifting from elite to mass higher education under severe resource constraints (see Kwiek 2001a, 2001c). Even though the way Western Europe has dealt with the passage from elite to mass higher education is well documented, the global environment in which the process took place will not recur. It was a process which was taking place under different political, economic, and social constraints. Both higher education and research and development had totally different reference points; the universities were still national treasures lavishly funded by nation-states in the

period of the consolidation of the expanded welfare state model, politics still mattered more than economy, national prestige often more than particular decisions about resource allocations.

But this time is over. It is a real challenge in some European transition countries today to undergo the passage from elite to mass higher education, to have steadily declining public funds almost each consecutive year and develop higher education systems towards the "Bologna goals" which have to be met by "knowledge-based economies"; with no external funds, and virtually no, on average, government funds. *Trends III* report makes it clear that it is unrealistic to believe that Bologna reforms are costless: public funds are expected to come if reforms are to succeed. For the countries of the Region, it is almost guaranteed, again on average, that the funds will not come from any source. The chronic underfunding of higher education, widely documented by any statistical data we want, taken in any way we want (as the percentage of GDP devoted to higher education, as the percentage of GDP devoted to research, as funding per student etc, referred to the USA, EU-15 or OECD) makes it very difficult to implement Bologna recommendations in any other than theoretical way. It makes it difficult to face old and new challenges. There are no specific recommendations or prescriptions for the transition countries how to proceed based on experiences that EU-15 or OECD countries had had with the same process of passing from elite to expanded models of higher education two-three decades ago.

It is a crucial point in educational policy for the countries in transition: how to combine educational reforms pressed from two types of challenges, old and new, traditional and knowledge economy- and globalization-related? How to weigh their relevance today – should transition countries look for past or for current experiences of other advanced and affluent countries in thinking about their higher education systems? How to progress in basic reforms related to much higher demand and consequent massification of higher education if the material basis for these reforms, the welfare state, is either already dismantled or in the process of decomposition or even never had had a chance to exist? As Voldemar Tomusk captures the point,

> with the decline of the welfare state and massification of higher education in the West, the Eastern vision on the resource abundant University has become mere dream. The simple truth about the current higher education reform is that the only thing we know for sure is that we want our Universities to have considerably more resources; … Looking at the resources available in the particular countries one can easily conclude that this is absolutely impossible. It is an empirical fact different form many unrealistic growth programs developed to attract foreign matching funds (Tomusk 2000: 55).

How does the Berlin communiqué see the differences between challenges facing higher education in transition countries and in EU-15 countries and how does it see the issue of new members in the Bologna process? The problem in question is basically neglected, no further analysis or description of current situation is provided and no recommendations how to proceed given. As the problem is pressing, I believe it should be dealt with as soon as possible.

And let us remind very briefly some key figures to show the gap between EU candidate countries and EU-15. First, percentage of GDP spent on research and development: none of the candidate countries reaches the level of the EU-average of 1.9%, even though Slovenia (1.5%) and the Czech Republic (1.2%) have relatively high levels of research and development expenditure in relation to their GDP. Estonia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovak Republic invest in R&D at the same level as the EU countries with the lowest R&D intensities (such as Greece and Portugal). All other candidate countries (as well as all remaining Bologna signatory countries) from the region have very low R&D intensity. The above figures need to be viewed from the perspective of GDP, though, and the differences are still huge. While GDP per capita in the European Union in 2001 was 23 200 in PPS (purchasing power standards) at current prices, it was in the range of 5 000 to 10 000 in Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia, with the top level reached by the two small countries (Cyprus 18 460 and Slovenia 15 970) and the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovak Republic in the range of 11 000-13 000 (European Commission 2002a: 18). If we look at other Bologna signatory countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia or Russia) the gap gets drastically wider (World Bank 1999: 60).

The share of research and development activities financed by the business sector is lower than the EU average in almost all candidate countries (and all other Bologna signatory countries from the region), except for Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Romania. The current distribution of researchers (government, business, higher education) is much different in candidate countries than in EU – the share of the business sector is much lower than the average EU 50% (except for Romania). In terms of patents applied for per million population, the difference is huge, with the range between 1 and 12 for almost all candidate countries (and 22 for Slovenia), with 126 as the EU average (European Commission 2002a: 72). Also spending on higher education is generally considerably lower in the Region, as are current enrollment rates in higher education (World Bank 2000a: 122).

These data cannot be neglected in thinking about the emergent European Higher Education Area: we are talking about mostly different societies and economies, with mostly different standards of living, and substantially different higher education systems still facing large structural reforms, especially if we go beyond EU and current EU candidate countries. If knowledge economy, the point of reference for both the EHEA and ERA, is emerging from two defining forces – the "rise in knowledge intensity of economic activities" and the "increasing globalisation of economic affairs" (Houghton and Sheehan 2000: 2), the Region is far behind indeed, and the chances to get closer to current EU countries are very low in at least short and medium run (for more data, see OECD 1999).

6.

Surprisingly enough, the private sector in higher education has so far been absent from the scope of interest of the Bologna process (for the need to compare *privatness* and *publicness* of higher education, see Levy 1986). From the very beginning, the Sorbonne Declaration, through Bologna – Prague – Berlin, as well as from Salamanca

to Graz declarations of higher education institutions, the private sector has not been discussed. What may have been understandable in *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988, can hardly find a good explanation in 2003, taking into account both global developments in higher education and the explosion of the private sector in many Central and East European countries participating in the Bologna process. For the official documents and accompanying reports, the private sector does not exist. While declarations and communiqués of the Bologna process do not make a single reference to private higher education – not even once in recent six years, *Trends III* report of 150 pages mentions the term half a dozen times but only in connection with GATS negotiations, as if the issue of the emergent private sector both globally and in many signatory countries was somehow insignificant.

I would like to claim here the contrary: the rapid development of the private sector in some countries of the Region is of crucial importance and its omission creates a severe analytical and operational flaw in the Bologna process referred to the region. It also goes against global trends according to which the role of the private sector in teaching and research is becoming increasingly significant. As Philip G. Altbach put it, "private higher education is one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing segments of postsecondary education at the turn of the 21st century. A combination on unprecedented demand for access to higher education and the inability or unwillingness of governments to provide the necessary support has brought private higher education to the forefront" (Altbach 1999: 1). Both globally and in the region, private higher education is part of the problem and part of the solution; no matter how we view the problem and the solution, we certainly should not disregard the phenomenon itself.

Already in 1994 the percentage share of enrolment in private higher education was over 60 in Belgium and over 50 in the Netherlands (almost entirely subsidized by the state, though) and 25 in Portugal (World Bank 2000: 30), with the share in Central and Eastern Europe increasing considerably: the number of private higher education providers has been sky-rocketing in recent years and the number of students enrolled

in the private sector is reaching (in some countries, like Poland and Romania) the level of 30 per cent, and in others (like Estonia or Moldova) almost 25 per cent, in the 2000/2001 (with the lower end of the Czech Republic with 1.0, Albania 0.0, Slovakia 0.7; and Russia with 10, Belarus with 13, Bulgaria with 11.5 and Hungary with 14 percent staying in the middle). Poland, Romania, and Estonia from the higher end and Russia, Bulgaria and Hungary from the middle are all signatory countries of the Bologna process (Kwiek 2003b, 2003c).

Apparently, the issue of the private sector is not problematic for the Bologna process. But it certainly is a huge problem (problem/solution) for several transition countries. The majority of international literature in the field of higher education policy and research deals with reforming *public* higher education. The role of the private sector in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – considering its ability to adapt to the new societal needs and new market conditions combined with the drastically underfunded and still unreformed public institutions – is bound to grow. East European private universities represent a wide variety of missions, organizational frameworks, legal status and relations to the established institutional order (see Tomusk 2003). There are significant difference between the particular countries of the region, too.

Generally, the triumph of the market economy has contributed to the emergence of the private sector and its huge social (and tacit political) acceptance in many countries of the region. From the perspective of changing societal needs and relatively declining public support for higher education, rapidly increasing demand for access combined with the institutional and financial paralysis of the public sector generally, there is a growing need for clear policies and thoughtful legislation (especially that what we are facing in the region is what D. Bruce Johnstone calls *creeping austerity* from a global perspective: "a slow but unrelenting worsening of the financial condition of most universities and other institutions of higher education, particularly as they are dependent on governmental, or tax-generated, revenue" (Johnstone 2003: 2). The Bologna process should, I believe, provide clear guidance on how to proceed with the

private sector/public sector relations in transition countries.

Emerging market forces in higher education combined with increasing competitiveness in the field, significant growth in size of the private sector definitely mean increased access, new learning options and improved productivity; but the phenomenon also raises important questions about affordability, quality control, need for new regulations and accreditation bodies, social responsibilities of the private sector as well as about the very fundamental attributes of higher education so far – such as civic commitment, disinterested research, its double role of the vehicle of social mobility and a locus of critical thought (Altbach 1999). Concerns are raised about the social role (or rather roles – see Levy 2002) of private higher education in the Region. How to accommodate principles of the "European Research Area" and requirements of the Bologna process to local conditions of those EU accession countries where the private sector has recently grown surprisingly strong? Unfortunately, the Bologna process in general remains indifferent to these developments even though their appearance may prefigure many future options which governments of Western European countries may face if the dismantling of the welfare state will be as radical as some sociologists and political scientists present it (Clayton and Pontusson 1998, Pierson 1996, 2001a).

Not surprisingly, both *Trends III* report and official documents from Sorbonne to Berlin generally disregard market forces in higher education; whenever the reports uses the word "market", it is almost always "labor market". Not only in its descriptions but also in its projections and recommendations for the future. GATS negotiations is a different and complicated issue which I am not going to develop here. What I want to stress, though, is the fact that the exclusive passage in *Trends III* report where possible market orientation of (segments of) higher education and research are mentioned, is a short passage on GATS. Among threats that the inclusion of higher education in the GATS, it mentions

> increased competition and commercialisation in order to secure market

> advantage might undermine the Bologna Process which depends on cooperation and exchange of good practice. … The increased market orientation of higher education may run counter to core academic values, the recognition of students as partners rather than customers and the commitment to widened access as a mechanism for social, political and economic inclusion. … Finally, the increase of private providers and for-profit activities of public higher education institutions would result in further decreases in state funding and state protection (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 56).

I am in agreement with the above criticism but the fact will not make the emergence of market forces in higher education slow down or stop; it will not annul global trends with respect to the relations between the state and the market and will not stop public sector reforms already undertaken worldwide (see Kwiek 2003a, Weiler 2000).

It is especially interesting to note the omission of market forces in higher education in the context of the reference point for the Bologna process (as well as for the ERA) being the USA, "the prime competitor", where market forces are increasingly important. Obviously market-driven and market-oriented higher education does not go in pair with the European social model but in such an overarching integrating initiative as the EHEA, with the objectives of the ERA behind it – plain political and economic goal of making the European Union "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy (and society) in the world" (EU Lisbon Council 2000) – it is a flaw to disregard the theme altogether.

EU-15 is one of the last places in the world which are relatively resistant to market forces in education and research; again, some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, for a variety of institutional, political and economic reasons, are much more influenced by market forces and their higher education institutions are already operating in highly competitive, market-driven and customer-driven environments. At the same time, from a global perspective, there are no doubts about the direction of changes. My guess is that no matter if the Bologna process wants it or not, or Bologna process documents and analyses mention the phenomenon or not, the change is taking place everywhere and market forces will come, and in numerous places have already come, to European

higher education institutions. It is a fact, whether we like it or not. The world today is too strongly interrelated (globalization!) to assume that although market forces are affecting higher education globally, the last bastion of resistance will be the signatory countries of the Bologna process (especially that the market forces have already come as part of a much wider package of institutional changes of the welfare state model and they will not go away). We may not care about the market; but we have to care about universities increasingly exposed to its forces. An underlying assumption of any large-scale transformation (and the Bologna process is certainly a huge undertaking with far-reaching goals) is that it should not disregard the world outside; it should not disregard social and economic trends at home and abroad. In the case of a vast restructuring project of national higher education systems in Europe, home is Europe, and abroad is certainly the global dimension of the issue.

It may prove difficult to "ride the tiger of globalisation" in the European higher education of the future, to remind the *Trends III* recommendation (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 57) while forgetting about market forces. I am in agreement with Marijk van der Wende when she states that "the fact that present and future students already live in a global world is simply forgotten, although important part of their culture, fashion and music, or numerous products they wish to buy, or the ways in which they intend to communicate, are all defined and marketed globally. This should help shape the universities' response to globalisation. Our customers expect their lifestyles to be taken into account and higher education to prepare them adequately for life and work in a global work" (van der Wende 1999: 64). And the emergent influence of market forces in all aspects of our social life is what globalization is about, among other things (Kwiek 2000a). Still another is the increasing priority of economy to politics. I believe the Bologna process is one of those instances of political actions which, if they are to be successful, they will have to be easily translatable into economic terms (as is the case with the ERA). And in these terms, market forces figure prominently. Only British higher education system is briefly discussed to counterbalance developments in Continental Europe. It is difficult, though, in the long run, to combine the analytical position in which the dominant model is the one in which there is "a sustained emphasis

on higher education as a public good and responsibility" and which at the same time clearly acknowledges that "public funding is in the process of undermining it" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 143-144). Is not the model being undermined by a constellation of factors among which the invasion of market forces in the public sector generally comes to the fore?

To sum up, both the private sector in European (and especially Central and East European) higher education systems and the emergence of powerful market forces in the educational and research landscape in Europe will have to be further analyzed, discussed and incorporated into the Bologna process if it is not to turn into a "theoretical" exercise, especially but not exclusively in the region. Knowing the high stakes of both EHEA and ERA initiatives, I am sure this omission will soon be corrected.

7.

One of the most skeptical views on the Bologna process was presented already in 2001 by Guy Neave (Neave 2001a). I am also unsure about the end (and ends) of such a new European construction but my attitude towards Bologna is more ambivalent.

It is true that those who speak most loudly about a "European" higher education system come either from the European Commission or from Central and Eastern Europe, as Neave says. And I fully agree that "it may be the shape of things to come. But it is not the way French, Belgians, Dutch, and, least of all, British, view matters. Rather, we tend to be abominably sensitive to our differences and sing the praise of our exceptionalism – perhaps never more so when we feel they are under severe pressure" (Neave 2002: 20-21). Academics in Central and Eastern Europe, from the countries which are almost all (with a few small exceptions) involved in the Bologna process, are sensitive to the near-collapse state of (some of) their national systems of higher education. They are sensitive to differences between them but view them as basically irrelevant in the face of the gravity of problems – higher education systems in the region have been in a state of permanent crisis for well over a decade now (which

is portrayed by Voldemar Tomusk whose first-rate knowledge of Central and East European higher education systems comes from analytical tools applied to excellent first-hand experience, see Tomusk 2002). It is very difficult to avoid the feeling of nostalgia to old good times of Western European higher education which had been a major point of reference in the region for several decades. We certainly could have compared our systems with those in developing countries – we would have felt much better – but we insisted on having European higher education as our points of reference, despite huge differences between them. From our perspective, differences are still even today, largely irrelevant (except perhaps for the major UK/Continent differences). That is one of the reasons the idea of a "European" higher education area has quite a few (ambivalent) supporters in the region. There is an irreconcilable difference in perspectives between the academic world of affluent Western European democracies and the chronically underfunded, near-collapsing academic world of (some) postcommunist countries in Central and (South-) Eastern Europe. This difference in perspectives translates easily into differences in viewing the Bologna process, especially in viewing its advantages and sometimes downplaying its potential dangers.

Therefore my concern about Bologna is rather that it is not trying to raise to conceptual level which would be required to assist higher education systems in the region with integrating with Western European systems within the EHEA. My perspective is that the EHEA might be a good chance – a useful policy agenda – to assist with reforming those national higher education systems in the region which need reforms most; it might provide clear recommendations what to do and how, presenting almost a blueprint for reforms, even though their scope would be quite different in different countries. In this respect, Bologna does not meet expectations of the academic world in the region, though; it is still unclear in its visions and recommendations for actions with respect to the region. At the same time, which is understandable, there is no way to use it as a lever for external, additional funds for educational reforms. Although the success of the process is conditional on public funding of the project, it is obvious to many that no public funding will follow further

steps in the process ("the Bologna reforms cannot be realised without additional funding" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 29). So what should be done, that is the question.

Today, there are crucial differences in thinking about reforms in Western Europe and in transition countries generally. Reforms to be undertaken in Western Europe are much more functional (fine-tuning, slight changes etc); reforms to be undertaken in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe and of the Balkans, by contrast, should be much more substantial (or structural). There is little common ground between the two sets of reforms except for technical details and the Bologna process in its official documents so far has not drawn a clear distinction between functional and structural reforms, and the regions of their future implementation. The differences between the condition of higher education systems in these parts of Europe are very substantial indeed; and so should probably be analyses, descriptions, and policy recommendations. Problems and challenges, and consequently the depth of reforms required, are different in the transition countries; fine-tuning and small adjustments undertaken within the Bologna process, perfectly suitable for many Western institutions, without accompanying structural transformations in East and Central European institution may lead to merely theoretical or cosmetic changes while what is needed is the transformation of underlying structures of higher education systems, at least in some countries of the region.

8.

My concerns about Bologna are both general and specific and they refer to the process as a whole and to its potential impact in the region. They are based on theoretical assumptions (such as e.g. the traditional "idea of the university" and the universal role of the university, see Sadlak 2000) on the one hand and practical knowledge of functioning of higher education in many countries of the region on the other. Some concerns derive from traditional notions of sovereignty of nation-states and sovereignty of their educational policies (see Enders 2002a), from irreconcilable differences between educational systems deriving from different cultures, languages, traditions and inheritance from the past; but other concerns derive from more technical

and pragmatic understanding of the global picture of changes in higher education whose role is downplayed in Bologna. Still other concerns derive directly from the awareness of the budgetary situation of the public sector in many countries of the region, and trends that have emerged there over the last decade or so (often towards welfare state retrenchment rather than towards a "European Social Model" emphasized in the EU Lisbon Strategy).

Martin Carnoy draws a very useful distinction between the three factors that in practice are crucial to the approach governments take in educational reform and hence in educational responses to globalization:

> Their *objective* financial situation, their *interpretation* of that situation, and their *ideological* position regarding the role of public sector in education. These three elements are expressed through the way that countries "structurally adjust" their economies to the new globalized environment (Carnoy 1999: 47).

Even though, as we emphasized here, the dimension of globalization challenges in higher education is certainly severely underestimated in Bologna documents, the phenomenon is one of underlying factors behind the wider Lisbon strategy of the European Union: its role is crucial for understanding the whole package of reforms, including those in the education and R&D sectors. It is interesting to refer the above distinction to transition countries involved in Bologna and make comparisons with EU-15. All the three parameters are drastically different: the objective financial situation does not require any statistical data, it may be taken for granted in the majority of transition countries; as a consequence of mostly objectively disastrous financial situation, the interpretations of the differences in objective financial situations may be even more dramatic; finally, in a number of transition countries escaping the model of command-driven economies, the ideological position regarding the role of the state in public sector differs considerably from the position taken, with few national exceptions, on a European level: the ideal of the state about to emerge once the chaos of the transition period is over is the American model of cost-effectiveness and self-restraint rather than the "European social model" of the current

EU-15 – which, by the way, is also testified by subsequent EU progress reports about accession countries. There are several determinants of this but certainly a general dissatisfaction with the inefficiency and incompetence of state bureaucratic bodies is one of them, another being the increased role of market mechanisms in public sector reforms already undertaken (ranging from healthcare to pension systems to decentralization of primary and secondary education) and the role of the private sector in economy in general. Again, it would be interesting to see how the Bologna process documents are going to conceptualize these crucial differences.

To use another set of Carnoy's distinctions – between "competitiveness-driven reforms", "finance-driven reforms", and "equity-driven reforms" in higher education (Carnoy 1999: 37; see also Carnoy 1995) – it is possible to argue that not only two speeds of reforms are necessary (as some reforms required are merely functional, and others are structural), but also the current drivers of reforms are different: while in the EU-15 it is competitiveness (decentralization, improved standards and management of educational resources, improved teacher recruitment and training), in at least some transition countries, by contrast, it is mostly the wish to change the "business climate", to make use of structural adjustments and refer to the reduction of public spending on education (which results both from objective situation, its interpretation, and ideological stance governments take). These complications in the picture of "European" higher education systems are not evoked in Bologna documents, and I believe they should be.

Concerns may be raised about the potential bureaucratization of the process and the potential transfer of power concerning higher education policies to some supranational European body; but at the same time, the Bologna process provides opportunities for rethinking – and hopefully reforming – inefficient, outmoded, sometimes and in some places corrupted, institutions which should really play central role in the new "knowledge economy" to come to the region. Concerns may be raised about the break with traditional tasks and roles of higher education institutions as evidenced by roles and tasks suggested for them by both Bologna and the ERA (as

Jürgen Enders remarks, universities today are "rather vulnerable organizations that tend to be loaded with multiple expectations and growing demands about their role and functioning in our knowledge-driven societies", Enders 2002b: 71). But on the other hand, the traditional rhetoric may cover institutional or professional interests rather than genuine love for search for truth, disinterested research and other traditional ideals of the university.

The new vocabulary in which both higher education and research is cast in both EHEA and ERA initiatives may be worrying; but at the same time, especially in connection with the ERA, the vocabulary used, and concepts employed, are standard in current global discussions about higher education and research and development, from UNESCO to OECD to the World Bank. It is hard to use any other vocabulary today *and* be engaged in meaningful contemporary debates on the future of higher education and research. Concerns should be raised about apparently economic account of the role of higher education in the ERA discussions. Although the ideals behind the EHEA are cast in a slightly different vocabulary, the message is similar: we need practical results from our institutions; universities will change and the kind of research they do as well as teaching they have in their offers will have to be changed, too; the responsibility of universities is no longer the search for truth in research and for moral and civic constitution (*Bildung* of the traditional German model of the university) of students/citizens in teaching; it is much more, if not exclusively, competitiveness, mobility, and employability of graduates; the responsibility of universities is towards economic growth of Europe as a whole, supporting knowledge-based economy, contributing to new skills for the new emerging workforce of the emerging competitive, global age. Let us remind again in this context the three goals of the Bologna process: enhancing the employability of European higher education graduates, promotion of mobility in higher education, and the attractiveness of the EHEA to the rest of the world (Reicher and Tauch 2003: 36-60).

From a European perspective, the promotion of mobility in higher education is "clearly the most concrete, easily interpreted and uncontroversial" (Reichert and

Tauch 2003: 39). I can agree with that in general but at least one reservation has to be raised: thinking of the Bologna signatory countries (a group of EU-15 plus 10 candidate countries plus "other" countries), what the direction of mobility is likely to be in the future? Certainly towards those most affluent, generally Western countries; thus from a national perspective, there are gains and losses of such increasing movement of the best talent available and for the more "exporting" (transition) countries the issue is not going to be uncontroversial in the long run. Again, with no reference to the Bologna process, the World Bank reports rightly argues that the international mobility of skilled human resources will continue to present "long-term risks for tertiary investments in many nations" (World Bank 2002: 19). The intra-European mobility issue is uncontroversial in most affluent countries as the level of higher education there is very similar indeed and the incoming and outgoing mobility between them is relatively balanced, compared with EU accession countries; but in the case of the least advanced higher education systems, and the poorest countries in the region, increasing student mobility might become an easy escape route leading to permanent brain drain. This is not a theoretical issue: European Union is very much concerned about young researchers and PhD students leaving to the United States and (mostly) never coming back (OECD 2002, European Commission 2003c).

This brings us in turn to the critical issue of the bi-polar character of the Bologna process: it derives from the ideas of cooperation (or solidarity) and competition. *Trends III* report is very explicit about that while acknowledging that the initiation of the Bologna process has to do with "a sense of threatened competitiveness vis-à-vis prime competitors like the US, rather than from sheer enthusiasm for the increasing intensity of cooperation within European higher education" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 52). From my perspective, it is equally important to remember about a play of interests *within* the emergent EHEA, and the competition among European higher education institutions. Some countries are already global players in higher education; some are already exporters of higher education to Central and Eastern Europe in various, but mostly highly lucrative, disciplines. It is hard to combine the competitive spirit presented to the non-European global competitors and the solidarity spirit presented at

the same time to the (Central) European partners. Can we imagine sheer cooperation and solidarity as driving motives in contacts with the countries of the region on the part of institutions from the countries with strong market traditions and good share in global educational market (like e.g. UK or the Netherlands)? My guess is that the motive of cooperation may be stronger in the region and that of competition may be stronger in Western Europe. Finally, within national systems and between national institutions, the competition motive is bound to be on the rise, proportionately to the increasing competition for shrinking national (public) funds.

Commenting briefly on "ambivalent Bologna", *Trends III* notes two potentially conflicting agendas: the "competitiveness agenda" and the "social agenda", and rightly concludes, without much further discussion: "it would be naïve to assume that the EHEA is being built only on the latter agenda" (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 149). In the case of the region, it is the cooperation and solidarity motives as well as the social agenda that count much more than competitiveness today; it would be naïve to assume that institutions of the region are competing with the US and Japan…

9.

Finally, what I am concerned about is the potential use of the Bologna process in the region compared with its use in Western Europe. I am very much afraid that while Bologna may be quite successful in promoting its agenda in Western Europe (especially combined with funding and resources already available and additional incentives already included in the implementation of the European Research Area), it might fail in the transition countries. That would mean that the gap between higher education systems in the two would be getting even wider. While Western European institutions seem to be much more afraid of losing their autonomy, freedom to teach and do research in the way their national priorities and funding allocations still lavishly allow them to do, for educational institutions in several transition countries the Bologna process might be the last coherent reform agenda, should it be further developed to include this purpose. I wish the "transition" dimension would be developed in the future so that the countries of the region could use the Bologna

process for their benefit and the gap in question might finally at least stop getting wider.

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