

## **THE BOLOGNA PROCESS IN UKRAINE: THE DECADE ANNIVERSARY**

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**Abstract:** The article presents the results of the analysis of achievements and shortcomings of Ukraine in joining the European Higher Education Area. For the research implementation the ten-year period of the Bologna process in Ukraine is divided into four stages (steps): step 1 – from Bergen to London; step 2 – from London to Leuven; step 3 – from Leuven to Bucharest; step 4 – from Bucharest to Yerevan. Within each of the stages the appropriate investigation methods are used. In general, the following techniques are applied: review of documents and publications; survey of students, PhD students and professors; observation of the educational process and reflection; testing of bachelors, masters and PhD students, data collection; overview of the official sites of Ukrainian universities. For each of the stages identified pros and cons are considered. It has been concluded that per decade Ukraine has achieved a lot, but many of the key issues need solution.

**Keywords:** Bologna Process, Higher Education Area, Ukraine, quality assurance, degree structure, promotion of mobility, system of credits, lifelong learning.

### **Introduction**

Ukraine joined the Bologna Process in 2005 at the Bergen Conference and signed the Bergen Declaration. That it has committed itself to defining the direction and contours of the reform of the higher education system. Ukraine has adjusted itself to Western European trends, and as one of its most important steps it has decided to adopt the structural model and accept the Bologna Declaration and the basic principles declared at the follow-up conferences.

As it is laid down on the Bologna Process official site, The Bologna Declaration in 1999 set out a vision for 2010 of an internationally competitive and attractive European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where higher education institutions can fulfill their diverse missions in the knowledge society; and where students can find the best suited educational pathways. As the main objective of the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999, the EHEA

was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. Between 1999–2010, all the efforts of the Bologna Process members were targeted to creating the EHEA, that became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of March, 2010. According to the Bologna Process documents the next decade (2010–2020) will be aimed at consolidating the EHEA.

With that, Ukraine became a Bologna Process participating country in 2005. This year, 2015, is the tenth anniversary (a decade). The ten-year period of the European recommendations implementation should be divided, from the authors' point of view, into several stages (steps) according to the conferences held and communiqué adopted: step 1 – from Bergen to London; step 2 – from London to Leuven; step 3 – from Leuven to Bucharest; step 4 – from Bucharest to Yerevan.

This paper analyses the impact of the Bologna Process reforms in Ukrainian higher education under these steps. It aims to find

out if the recommendations already implemented and those under realization have been successful, without considering political and economic problems.

### Step 1 – from Bergen (2005) to London (2007)

The main method of investigation used at the stage is documents and publications [1] review. With regard to Ukraine it is rightly to speak about two phases of the Bologna Process recommendations implementation within this step: before 2005 (preparatory) and after (basic). Consider these phases in more detail.

#### *The preparatory phase (2002 – 2005)*

First of all, it is necessary to call to memory, what was happening in the Bologna Process during that period of time. *The Sorbonne declaration* of 25<sup>th</sup> May 1998 emphasized the creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development [2]. A year later *the Bologna Declaration* of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1999 was adopted. The European Ministers of Education engaged to reach in the short term, and in any case within the first decade of the third millennium, the following objectives, which they considered to be of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide adoption of a system of *easily readable and comparable degrees*; adoption of a system essentially based on *two main cycles*, undergraduate and graduate; establishment of *a system of credits* – such as in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement; promotion of *European cooperation in quality assurance*; promotion of *the necessary European dimensions in higher education* [3]. Two years after signing the Bologna Declaration, in 2001, European Ministers met in Prague in order to review the progress achieved and to set directions and priorities for the coming years of the process. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the objective of establishing the European Higher Education Area by 2010. In *Prague Communiqué* on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2001 Ministers commented on the further process as follows:

adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees and of a system essentially based on two main cycles; establishment of a system of credits; promotion of mobility, European cooperation in quality assurance, the European dimensions in higher education. Furthermore, Ministers emphasized the following points: lifelong learning, higher education institutions and students, promoting the attractiveness of the EHEA [4].

On 19<sup>th</sup> September 2003 Ministers responsible for higher education from 33 European countries met in Berlin in order to review the progress achieved and to set priorities and new objectives for the coming years, with a view to speeding up the realization of the EHEA. The fundamental considerations, principles and priorities were concretized and agreed: national quality assurance systems should be designed by 2005; the implementation of the two-cycle system should be started by 2005; mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a EHEA; the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system; every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge; additional modules, courses and curricula with European content, orientation or organization are being developed; integrated study programs and joint degrees at first, second and third levels are being worked out; qualifications frameworks for the EHEA are to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits.

As a whole, the basic provisions of **the Berlin communiqué** "Realizing the European Higher Education Area" were considering objectives expansion, in terms of union the EHEA relations into the European Research Area, as well as measures to facilitate the quality education obtaining. Another important issue discussed in the Communiqué was the creation of new structures to support the process initiated within the framework of two ministerial conferences. In this Communiqué the ministers also agreed that appropriate national structures in each participating country should be set up [5].

Review of the state documents and publications of the time allows speaking about the following.

***The major achievements in Ukraine within the preparatory phase***

Ukraine views its development within the context of integration into Europe, orienting itself to the fundamental values of the Western culture, first of all, parliamentarism, human rights, liberalization, freedom of travel, equal access to quality education of any level etc. Ukraine is striving to be a full-fledged participant to the process of European integration.

The legal basis for reforming higher education during the preparatory stage was the 2002 Law on Higher Education [6] aimed to facilitate the processes of democratizing relationships at all levels of education functioning. It delineated the powers and rights of all subjects of higher education, the principles of the higher education institutions autonomy, governed relations in the spheres of teaching, acculturation, and professional training, and created conditions for personality self-realization, catering for the society need in qualified specialists. The Association of Rectors of Ukrainian Universities supported the approaches to the accession of Ukraine to the Bologna process. In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine approved and implemented the programme “The System of Higher Education in Ukraine and the Bologna Process” [7]. Top-priority approaches to accession of Ukraine to the Bologna process were widely discussed at the international scientific-practice conferences in the country regions with a ramified network of universities in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Lviv. Besides, the Law “On Research and Technical-Scientific Activities” [8], and executive acts by the President and the Cabinet of Ministers in the sphere of higher education were adopted. The implementation of the above-mentioned Laws was obligatory for all higher education institutions.

In addition, for implementing the ideas of the Bologna declaration, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine approved the Action Program, which incorporated activities till 2005. In particular, as well as to the main requirements of the Bologna Declaration implementation and the Berlin Communiqué of the Ministers of Education of European countries the following was planned:

- to improve the quality of education monitoring system by means of implementing the effective mechanism of educational

institution public rating;

- to expand the use of expert and testing methods of knowledge and competence assessment;
- to disseminate to the public on the results of education quality monitoring;
- to create data base of the educational programs of national and foreign universities with the purpose of their further concordance and assessment in the process of national educational accreditation [9].

Thus, as it can be seen from what has been said, in Ukraine a little was done up to 2005 but the foundation was laid down.

***The main phase (2005 – 2007)***

This phase began with the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education, which took place in Bergen, 19–20 May 2005. The Ministers met for a mid-term review and for setting goals and priorities towards 2010. In *Bergen Communiqué* “The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals”, which was signed by the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, in short the following was underlined: the Ministers are to continue and intensify their efforts to establish the EHEA; the two-cycle degree system is being implemented on a large scale, with more than half of the students being enrolled in it; the development of national and European frameworks for qualifications is an opportunity to further embed lifelong learning in higher education; Doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA overarching framework for qualifications using the outcomes-based approach; appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background are needed; mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process; stocktaking is to be based on the appropriate methodology and to continue in the fields of the degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods [10].

***The major achievements in Ukraine within the main phase***

Reviewing the state documents, scientists’ publications [11], findings of students and

professors surveying as well as our personal experience allow us to speak about the next.

During 2005–2007 the important steps in realization of the Bologna Process regulations were implemented in the system of higher education of Ukraine; the Action Plan of their implementation till 2010 was developed. In 2006, according to the instruction of the Ministry of Education and Science the ministerial Bologna Follow Up working group and the National Team of Bologna Promoters interagency working group consisting of the leading universities specialists were established. They participated in training seminars on actual problems in higher education in European Education Area and further organized the training seminars in Ukraine on basic issues of quality assurance, three-cycle system, recognition of degrees and study periods.

Ukrainian Council of Students, organized within the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, became the candidate to the members of European Students' Union (ESU). During the 2006/07 academic year almost all the universities established the ECTS.

The corresponding sets of the innovative legislative documents and recommendations were carried out; a draft of the Diploma Supplement and its implementation procedure were elaborated. Two seminars concerning the convergence problems on the way to EHEA initiated by Magna Charta Council were held in 2006. The contacts with the European Union working groups were established [12].

#### ***Main challenges for higher education in Ukraine till 2007***

Comparative analysis of the *Bergen Communiqué* recommendations and the real achievements of Ukraine in the field of entry into EHEA give grounds for the conclusion that until 2007 it was desirable to solve the following key problems:

- to elaborate the standards and guidelines for quality assurance as proposed in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) report;
- to design the national frameworks for qualifications;
- to award and recognize joint degrees, including at the doctorate level;
- to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning;

- to improve the Bachelors employment – graduates of the first cycle;
- to increase the students and staff mobility among participating countries;
- to extend the social higher education institutions partnership with employers, citizens and public associations and involve them in the decision elaboration process on higher education issues.

**To summarize** what has been said above, it is reasonable to assert that during the reviewed period some of the theoretical and practical issues were resolved, but a significant part waited for its implementation.

#### **Step 2 – from London (2007) to Leuven (2009)**

The research methods used at the stage are: review of documents and publications, survey of students and professors, observation of the educational process and reflection.

The Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process met in London on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2007. In *London Communiqué* “Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalized world” it was emphasized that developments over the last two years had brought a significant step closer to the realization of the EHEA. It was stated that building on the rich and diverse European cultural heritage, an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles would facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe’s attractiveness and competitiveness.

*Action priorities* for 2009 were broadened: promoting at national level the mobility of students and staff, including measures for future evaluation: developing national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness; developing comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries; improving employability in relation to each of the three-cycle degree system as well as in the context of lifelong learning; further developing of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension [13].

### ***The major achievements in Ukraine***

The results of the collected data analysis have been generalized below.

Beginning from London 2007 a number of main developments relating to the Bologna process took place in the system of higher education of Ukraine [9; 12]. An Action Plan on quality assurance for higher education of Ukraine and its integration into the European and world educational community for the period until 2010 was approved by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No.162 of July 13, 2007. A draft of the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine on Higher Education” was developed according to the Bologna provisions and recommendations. A system of ranking the national higher education institutions (HEIs) was implemented in September 2007. Ukraine became a governmental member of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) in April 2008. Ukrainian Association of Student Self-government (UASS) became a member of ESU in December 2007. Under the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No.602 of July 03, 2008 a working group on the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for higher education was established. Consultations on the designing its profile, level descriptors, credit ranges were held. The two-cycle system was implemented at all higher education institutions except for training students in the fields of medicine and veterinary medicine. Instruments of the third cycle implantation were elaborated. A state target research and technical and social program “Research at Universities” for 2008–2012 was developed. Funding for doctoral students was provided by the state budget. All qualifications of the first cycle gave access to several programs of the second cycle; all qualifications of the second cycle gave access to at least one program of the third cycle. The employment data for graduates of all cycles in the 2007/08 academic year increased: Bachelors – to 14.4%, Masters – to 57%.

As we can see, achievements of Ukraine in joining the EHEA were significant, but some of the London Communiqué recommendations remained unfulfilled.

### ***Main challenges for higher education in Ukraine till 2009***

A comparison of the London Communiqué provisions and our research results leads to the conclusion that the main challenges at the next stage for Ukraine are the following:

- to develop the NQF compatible with the EHEA qualifications framework;
- to introduce the innovative institutional structure, three-cycle system, new fields of study and training specialists with higher education, that are compatible with the EHEA;
- to design university study programmes according to the Bologna provisions;
- to introduce joint degrees and courses (programmes) for foreign students;
- to develop the NQF for lifelong learning;
- to create the up-to-date instruments of recognition of prior learning (formal, informal, non-formal);
- to implement the Diploma Supplement of the European Union (EU) / Council of Europe (CoE) / the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO format);
- to create the national quality assurance agency for higher education in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, its full ENQA ( the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) membership and inclusion to the EQAR ( the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education);
- to establish the agency for academic recognition and international exchange as the national ENIC (European Network of Information Centers in the European Region) /NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centers in the European Union) center;
- to initiate higher education institutions ranking system that would comply with Berlin principles of ranking;
- to increase outward and inward mobility of students and academic and administrative staff of higher education institutions;
- to assure portability of student grants and loans;
- to provide equal access to higher education;
- to prepare research and educational staff, improve their competencies according to modern requirements with a view to ensuring sustainable development of the country and its system of higher education;
- to develop and introduce new educational

standards (curriculum reform) with a view to the improvement of quality of the content of vocational/professional education and training and its adjustment to the needs of employers;

- to create the up-to-date instruments of taking into account labor market demands by higher education institutions to facilitate employability of graduates;

- to promote the development of Ukrainian and World cultural values, orientation towards the ideals of democracy and humanism essential for the existence and development of a civil society.

Thus, the progress of Ukraine in joining the EHEA was substantial, but much remained to be done.

### **Step 3 – from Leuven/Louvain- la-Neuve (2009) to Bucharest (2012)**

The research methods applied at the stage are as follows: review of documents and publications; survey of students and professors; observation of the educational process and reflection; testing of Bachelors and Masters, data collection.

The meeting took place in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, on April 28–29, 2009. *Communiqué of the Conference* “The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the new decade” was adopted. The document mandated that in the decade up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realizing a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative. European higher education also faces the major challenge and the ensuing opportunities of globalization and accelerated technological developments with new providers, new learners and new types of learning.

The next key provisions were recorded: higher education is being modernized with the adoption of a three-cycle structure including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications linked to the first cycle and with the adoption of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance; access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies; higher education institutions, together with governments, government agencies and

employers shall improve the provision, accessibility and quality of their careers and employment related guidance services to students and alumni; raising initial qualifications as well as maintaining and renewing a skilled workforce through close cooperation between governments, higher education institutions, social partners and students; the higher education institutions should pay particular attention to improving the teaching quality of their study programs at all levels; doctoral programs should provide high quality disciplinary research and increasingly be complemented by inter-disciplinary and inter-sectorial programs; transnational education should be governed by the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance; each country should increase mobility, ensure its high quality and diversify its types and scope; improved and enhanced data collection will help monitor progress made in the attainment of the objectives set out in the social dimension, employability and mobility agendas, as well as in other policy areas; the transparency tools need to relate closely to the principles of the Bologna Process; greater attention should be paid to seeking new and diversified funding sources and methods [14].

At the **Bologna anniversary conference** jointly hosted by Austria and Hungary in Budapest and Vienna on March 11–12, 2010 the European Higher Education Area was launched.

#### *The major achievements in Ukraine*

Research and collating the relevant information allow authors to state the following. Beginning from London 2007 the following main developments relating to the Bologna process took place in the system of higher education of Ukraine [9, 12]. The order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on Introduction of the European Credit Transfer System in Higher Education Institutions was published in 2009. The Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” was approved in 2010 (the Bologna provisions and recommendations were partially taken into account). The resolution by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the “List of Specialties Trained in Higher Education Institutions at Educational Qualification Levels of Specialist and Master” was adopted in 2010. The National

Qualifications Framework was passed in 2011. The cooperation between employers, students and higher education institutions was achieved. Lifelong learning was becoming one of the important factors in meeting the needs of a changing labor market. Higher education started to ensure a stronger link between research, teaching and learning at all levels. Second cycle programmes became a necessary precondition for the success of linking teaching, learning and research; learning outcomes were under development. Learning mobility gradually intensified. Data collection was improved.

The above reflects both the significant achievements of Ukraine and certain flaw in joining the EHEA.

#### ***Main challenges for higher education in Ukraine till 2012***

A comparison of the *Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué* provisions and our research results gives grounds to assert that the next stage should focus on the following:

- to perfect cooperation between governments, higher education institutions, students, staff, employers and other stakeholders;
- to create the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels;
- to improve the learning environment;
- to support lifelong learning by adequate organizational structures and funding;
- to raise initial qualifications as well as maintain and renew a skilled workforce through close cooperation between governments, higher education institutions, social partners and students;
- to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for subject areas;
- to improve the teaching quality of study programmes at all levels;
- to increase the number of people with research competences;
- to rethink Doctoral programs;
- to increase mobility, to ensure its high quality and to diversify its types and scope;
- to pay greater attention to seeking new and diversified funding sources and methods.

The analysis of the achievements and shortcomings of this period suggests that a large part of the way was passed, but there is still a lot of problems.

#### **Step 4 – from Bucharest (2012) to Yerevan (2015)**

The research methods applied at the stage are as follows: review of documents and publications; survey of students, PhD students and professors; observation of the educational process and reflection; testing of Bachelors, Masters and PhD students, data collection; overview of the official sites of Ukrainian universities.

The next Ministerial Meeting took place in Bucharest, on 26 and 27 April 2012. The Ministers took stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process and agreed on the future priorities of the EHEA. **In the Bucharest Communiqué** “Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area” [15] the following was stated: higher education structures in Europe are now more compatible and comparable; quality assurance systems contribute to building trust; higher education qualifications are more recognizable across borders and participation in higher education has widened.

#### ***The following key priorities for action by 2015 are set out:***

- to establish conditions that foster student-centered learning, innovative teaching methods and a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment, while continuing to involve students and staff in governance structures at all levels;
- to allow EQAR-registered (the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements;
- to work to enhance employability, lifelong learning, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills through improved cooperation with employers, especially in the development of educational programs;
- to ensure that qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation is based on learning outcomes;
- to invite countries that cannot finalize the implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with QF-EHEA by the end of 2012 to redouble their efforts and submit a revised roadmap for this task;
- to implement the recommendations of the strategy “Mobility for better learning” and work towards full portability of national grants

and loans across the EHEA;  
- to review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices;  
- to encourage knowledge-based alliances in the EHEA, focusing on research and technology.

### ***The major achievements in Ukraine ( before September)***

Studies have shown the main achievements of Ukraine. Some professional standards are designed [8]. Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” was approved in July 2014 (the Bologna provisions and recommendations have been taken into account) [16]. A number of higher education institutions was reduced (60 universities). The resolution on information disclosure of the higher education institutions activities was adopted in February 2015. The recommendations for 2015/16 academic year curricular development were designed in March 2015. Forms of the higher education documents were approved in March 2015. Instruments for graduates employment were refined in April 2015. The resolution “On the List of Knowledge Areas and Specialties for Higher Education Applicants Training” was adopted in April 2015. Diploma Supplement forms were adopted in May 2015. Institute of Education Analytics and Institute of Educational Content Modernization were created in June 2015. The decision on improving quality of the learning outcomes external independent assessment was taken in June 2015. European model Diploma

Supplement was issued to all graduates in July 2015. The resolution about laying out the theses and the official opponents reviews on the university sites was accepted (August 2015).

All of the above materials are freely available on the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine official website [12].

A list of the documents presented shows a significant intensification of efforts of Ukraine in joining the EHEA.

### **Conclusions**

Over the last decade, Ukraine has passed a complicated and responsible way to join the EHEA. Much has been done. Something succeeded, something needs to be improved and implemented. According to *the Yerevan Communiqué* (May 2015) by 2020 Ukraine should focus on the following key issues: enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching; fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives; making the systems more inclusive; implementing agreed structural reforms [17].

From authors' point of view, special attention should be paid to the following:

- to harmonize the relevant national documents with the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) [18]; the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs [19] and the revised ECTS Users' Guide [20], as an official EHEA document.

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