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The Implementation of the Bologna Process - state of play and follow-up

European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2018 on the implementation of the Bologna Process – state of play and follow-up (2018/2571(RSP))

(2019/C 390/22)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2012 on the contribution of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna Process ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 25 and 26 November 2013 on the global dimension of European higher education ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 September 2011 entitled ‘Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe’s higher education systems’ (COM(2011)0567),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 28 and 29 November 2011 on the modernisation of higher education ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 November 2012 entitled ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ (COM(2012)0669),
- having regard to recommendation 2006/143/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Joint Declaration signed in Bologna on 19 June 1999 by the ministers of education of 29 European countries (Bologna Declaration),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2015 on follow-up on the implementation of the Bologna Process ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 November 2017 entitled ‘Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture’ (COM(2017)0673),
- having regard to the question to the Commission on the implementation of the Bologna Process – state of play and follow-up (O-000020/2018 – B8-0014/2018),
- having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Culture and Education,
- having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas the Bologna Process is an intergovernmental initiative with which countries aim to achieve with open and collaborative dialogue common goals through internationally agreed commitments, thus contributing to the construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA); whereas high-quality higher education is a key component in developing a broad and advanced, knowledge-based society, which ultimately contributes to building a stable, peaceful and tolerant community by ensuring equal opportunities and quality education that is accessible to all;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 251 E, 31.8.2013, p. 24.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 28, 31.1.2014, p. 2.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 36.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 64, 4.3.2006, p. 60.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 346, 21.9.2016, p. 2.

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- B. whereas the Bologna Process has promoted mobility by enhancing the internationalisation of higher education and improving the compatibility and comparability of standards of different higher education systems, while respecting the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and focusing on strengthening the quality of higher education and offering equal opportunities for citizens;
 - C. whereas the EHEA was launched with the aim of setting up a three-cycle system (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate) and of making European higher education systems more comparable and more attractive worldwide;
 - D. whereas education is one of the main pillars of our society and whereas higher education has an important role to play in fostering personal and skills development, boosting employability and competitiveness, strengthening civic engagement, active citizenship and intercultural understanding, promoting common values, and addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing world;
 - E. whereas the Commission has launched a renewed EU agenda for higher education with a view to supporting higher education institutions and national authorities responsible for higher education; whereas other countries in the EHEA could be gradually involved in this process through consultations and exchanges of best practice;
 - F. whereas the quest for an open and inclusive EHEA based on quality and mutual trust is the basis of the Bologna Process;
 - G. whereas the Bologna Process and the EHEA include 48 countries, including many important neighbours and partners of the EU; whereas the Bologna Process strengthens the effectiveness of partnerships with non-EU countries in higher education and provides incentives for reform in education and other areas in the respective countries;
 - H. whereas, taking into account the uneven progress in implementing the Bologna Process across the EHEA and difficulties in implementing agreed structural reforms in many cases, the increased and facilitated mobility of students and joint diplomas are the two great achievements of the Bologna Process so far;
 - I. whereas in 2015 Belarus was admitted to the EHEA on the condition that it comply with the requirements laid down in the Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform; whereas the Belarusian authorities failed to fulfil their obligations by the end of 2017 and should bring their reforms back on track;
- 1. Calls on participating countries to increase political engagement and foster mutual cooperation in the implementation of commonly agreed goals throughout the EHEA, developing, where necessary, appropriate legislative frameworks in order to consolidate its development, strengthen its credibility and become a point of reference for academic excellence worldwide, while strengthening opportunities for mobility with a view to ensuring that the largest possible numbers of students are involved;
 - 2. Calls on participating countries to ensure transparent, accessible and equitable mechanisms for the allocation of mobility grants and allowances; calls for the EU and the Member States to increase their education budgets in order to guarantee that public higher education is free and accessible to all, with a view to fostering lifelong learning (LLL);
 - 3. Invites the Commission and participating countries to facilitate the recognition of academic study periods and credits gained abroad, as well as qualifications for academic and professional purposes and prior learning, and to develop quality assurance systems; insists that the Union, Member States and universities should establish arrangements for providing financial and administrative support to students, academics and staff with disadvantaged backgrounds through appropriate funding, including to take part in mobility schemes, and to further open up access to higher education by expanding lifelong learning opportunities at academic level, to encourage complementary forms of learning such as non-formal and informal education and to build more open learning pathways by removing existing barriers between different levels of education;
 - 4. Invites the relevant stakeholders and institutions to provide a solution to the problem of short cycles where a qualification exam for entrance to university is required for access and admission to a Bachelor's degree programme;

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5. Calls on the EHEA countries to foster more inclusive mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff, as mobility contributes both to personal and professional development and to increased quality of learning, teaching, research and administration; advocates including mobility in education programmes and improving foreign language learning; calls on the Member States to provide adequate public funding and to make more efficient use of such funding to ensure that students and researchers have the necessary resources to study abroad, and that their social and economic background does not constitute a barrier;
 6. Highlights that the dissemination of knowledge, research and science across the EHEA countries is a key part of the EU strategy beyond 2020 and strongly contributes to fostering European citizenship;
 7. Invites the Commission to assess the implementation of the 2015 Yerevan Ministerial Conference goals regarding the quality of teaching and learning and fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives;
 8. Stresses the importance of improving the social dimension of higher education; calls on the EHEA countries to implement the EHEA social dimension strategy effectively and to provide concrete opportunities for access to and completion of higher education for students with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds;
 9. Calls on the EHEA countries to ensure that consultations and critical assessments of their higher education institutions are carried out at international level, and to work towards a better coordinated approach to implement commonly agreed reforms to achieve the goals of the Bologna Process, as well as effective recognition of non-formal education and informal learning to enhance students' employability and civic engagement;
 10. Underlines the need for increased access for underrepresented groups, specifically by setting defined quantitative objectives related to access and completion rates; stresses the importance of guaranteeing and promoting access for refugees and asylum seekers to all institutions in the EHEA, and recalls that the 'attractiveness' of higher education in Europe also lies in its capacity to cater for students without any discrimination;
 11. Calls on the Commission to monitor the progress of the social dimension goals of the Bologna Process, as well as wider inclusiveness goals;
 12. Calls for the Ministerial Conference that will take place this year in Paris to report on the implementation of the goal set by the last Ministerial Conference (Yerevan, May 2015) to complete the formation of the EHEA;
 13. Requests that the next 2018 EHEA Ministerial Conference in Paris provide a critical assessment of the Bologna Process with a view to a) identifying remaining obstacles, and potential solutions, and ensuring proper implementation of commitments, b) supporting countries lagging behind in implementing the key commitments of the Bologna Process through improved capacity-building, and developing specific mechanisms and procedures for addressing cases of non-compliance, and c) exploring new EHEA goals beyond 2020 and enhancing dialogue among governments, higher education institutions and research institutes, thus contributing to the construction of a more integrated, high-quality, inclusive, attractive and competitive EHEA;
 14. Calls on the EHEA countries to keep Belarus on the EHEA agenda; calls on the Commission to provide resources for the operations required for the implementation of the Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform;
 15. Calls on the Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat to monitor the reports that the same guidelines were implemented differently in different EHEA countries and that different backgrounds and levels of resources led to significant differences among EHEA institutions;
 16. Underlines the importance of strengthening and creating opportunities for social debate on the higher education sector and the challenges faced by stakeholders; emphasises the importance of fostering participation of students, researchers, teachers and non-teaching staff in higher education governance;
 17. Stresses the need to increase public funding in education and to respect the EU headline target of 3 % of Union GDP in R&D by 2020;
 18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
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