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**Stanowisko Prezydium KRASP
z dnia 16 maja 2008 r.
w sprawie przyszłości Procesu Bolońskiego
oraz projektu OECD badania efektów kształcenia w szkolnictwie wyższym**

Prezydium Konferencji Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich, odpowiadając na zaproszenie *European University Association* do zabrania głosu w toczącej się obecnie w europejskim środowisku akademickim dyskusji na temat przyszłości Procesu Bolońskiego oraz projektu OECD badania efektów kształcenia w szkolnictwie wyższym, przyjmuje stanowisko zawarte w załączniku do niniejszego dokumentu.

Przewodniczący KRASP

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Comments on the future of the Bologna Process

The Bologna process has created a number of actions and instruments, especially in the area of mobility, recognition and quality assurance that have contributed to the development of Polish universities and their capability to cooperate with foreign institutions for the benefit of the students, other members of academic community and the society at large.

The main argument for the continuation of the formal Bologna process (meetings of ministers, stocktaking exercises, etc.) lies in that it sets specific goals and deadlines to implement them. This mobilises the ministers who take necessary actions not to stay behind (and see their countries in red or orange on the Bologna stocktaking scorecard). Similarly, this has also a positive impact on universities, which - being afraid of 'lagging behind Europe' - reform their structures and education process (and then can make use of the achievements in the implementation of the Bologna process in their marketing campaigns).

If the Bologna process (as a structured dialogue) continues after 2010, its goals should be both:

- to continue the implementation/consolidation of the present reforms, and
- to set new policy goals in response to new challenges facing European higher education.

The present Bologna reforms should continue after 2010 mainly because not all the goals stated for 2010 will have been reached by that time. Although large differences can be observed between institutions and between disciplines, generally, the implementation of the following actions and ideas in the Polish HE system will surely extend beyond 2010:

- introduction of the national qualification framework,
- ubiquitous usage of learning outcomes (in developing and modernising curricula, in accreditation procedures, etc.),
- shifting to student-centred education and focus on the learning process,
- recognition of informal learning by HEIs,
- full recognition of bachelor degrees by the labour market.

At the same time, new policy goals must be set in response to new challenges facing European higher education. The key issues that should be addressed are:

- Dealing with extremely diversified student population. With high participation rates (in Poland, it will soon exceed 50%), growing differences in capabilities of the students will be observed. The question arises whether and, if so, how to deal with this at the system level and at the institutional level. For HEIs, a possible solution would be ensuring greater flexibility of learning paths and customising the educational offer.

- The need for a new strategy for LLL. This new strategy should account for:
 - demography (growing average age of the population),
 - massification of higher education (rapidly growing percentage of population with HE diplomas),
 - rapid advances in knowledge and technology that make predictions of the needs of the labour market increasingly difficult.

In this new LLL strategy, the role of HEIs should be enhanced because an increasing percentage of the population will be prepared to take and will ask for training at the level of higher education.
- Viability of the concept of research-based education. In some disciplines, research requires an enormous concentration of resources. Therefore, the number of 'truly' research institutions, especially HEIs, will be quite limited. The question arises how this affects the concept of research-based education.
- Balancing the developments in various disciplines. The drive towards the commercialisation of research leads to the concentration of resources in some fields, such as technology, while neglecting humanities, social sciences, non-technological natural sciences, and fundamental research in general. The question arises how to counteract this trend.
- Finding a good balance between employability as the main goal of higher education and education for active and responsible citizenship.
- Dealing with new players and diversification at the market of educational services. With the growing number of private HEIs and other private providers of educational services, the role of public authorities in the development of a coherent system of higher education comprising different types of institutions should be discussed.
- Fostering structural changes in HEIs. The most innovative solutions to key economic and social problems are developed at the crossroads of different scientific disciplines. At the same time, the faculty structure of universities reflects the traditional classification of science established in the 19th century. This has a negative impact not only on research but also on education. The question arises how to stimulate appropriate reforms at the system and institutional level, so that HEIs could better respond to the needs of society.

The continuation of the Bologna process and its ultimate success will critically depend on the effectiveness of solving implementation problems at the institutional level. This is why the role of HEIs, in particular universities where the integration of EHEA and ERA takes place, is absolutely crucial. For that reason, EUA representing the European universities is entitled to take a leading role in the process of shaping the future of the Bologna process.

Comments on the next steps in relation to the OECD project to develop a feasibility study on learning outcomes in higher education

The goal of the project (“to undertake a comparable survey of the skills and abilities of graduates that might measure learning outcomes in higher education and help families, businesses, and governments develop an evidence-based understanding of where and how higher education systems are meeting their expectations of quality, and where they are not”) should be fully supported.

The principles of the feasibility study, i.e.

- to assess generic, high-order competencies (critical thinking, analytic reasoning, etc.) that would be combined with data on prior learning,
- to assess discipline-related competencies, appear reasonable.

It is worth emphasizing that such a project might speed up institutional reforms, being an incentive for HEIs

- to focus on learning outcomes when developing curricula and internal quality assurance systems,
- to recognise the value transferable skills in university education (in some institutions, narrow-minded concepts of narrow specialisation of graduates still dominate).

Potential difficulties (both conceptual and technical) and even negative political consequences of the project, raised in discussions that took place at the EUA Council meetings, are relevant and cannot be ignored. However, the actual threats and problems cannot be properly identified unless a pilot study is carried out.

Therefore, the idea of running a feasibility study, developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including EUA, should be supported.