



Partnerships and associations between universities and institutions of professional Higher Education

**Networking in the Open European
Higher Education Area**

14th Annual EURASHE Conference, 6 - 7 May, Cyprus

The Challenges (1)



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A) Changes in society and economy

- More globalisation
- More competition
- Demography: adverse demographic trends at HE institutions make it more important for many to attract graduates from other countries and world regions.



B) A New Framework of Networking

The Lisbon Agenda → Strategic goal agreed at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000

« to 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 »

In the field of Higher Education, this requires

- a) to build a European Higher Education Area (Bologna process)
- b) to make European HE institutions a world reference (Barcelona agenda)



a) Building a European Education Area

Two important contributions in achieving the strategic goal set at Lisbon have been the Bologna Declaration and the European Area of Lifelong Learning

European HE institutions must, with the help of the Member States and in a European context, face an imperative need to adapt to profound changes such as:

- ⇒ Increased demand for higher education.
- ⇒ The internationalisation of education and research.
- ⇒ To develop effective and close co-operation between universities and industry.
- ⇒ The proliferation of places where knowledge is produced.
- ⇒ The reorganisation of knowledge.
- ⇒ The emergence of new expectations.

The Challenges (4)



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Aim of Bologna = as much convergence as necessary while respecting as much diversity as possible.

This does not mean “standardisation” or “uniformity”. Universities and other institutions of Higher education should be entitled to keep their own profiles.

They should however pool their resources in order to:

- achieve a greater degree of excellence
- enhance the visibility and the comparability of the degrees they offer
- foster Europe’ s potential of innovation and social development.

The creation of a coherent European Higher Education Area will enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European education system world-wide.

The Challenges (5)



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Bologna declaration → a common framework of reference for qualifications.

➤ Bologna focuses on qualifications, not degrees (strong inclination toward employment and the labour market dimension rather than towards the more academic aspects).

➤ Bologna focuses on qualifications, not institutions. What matters is not where a qualification was acquired but what skills and competencies it guarantees.

= Only the qualifications acquired and their adaptation to the needs of the labour market matter.

The Challenges (6)



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b) Making European Higher Education Institutions a World Reference

European Higher Education institutions can only release their potential by undergoing the radical changes needed to make the European system a genuine world reference.

There are **three objectives** to be pursued simultaneously to achieve this:

- ⇒ Ensuring that European universities have sufficient and sustainable resources and use them efficiently.
- ⇒ Consolidating their excellence in research and in teaching, particularly through networking.
- ⇒ Opening up universities to a greater extent to the outside and increasing their international attractiveness.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (1)

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I - Types of partnerships and associations

A) Exchange of students / staff / researchers (doctoral candidates)

- Students will follow more theoretically or practically orientated courses / modules during their academic “career. Students should get a “student tutor” in order to help them adapt to the new system.

- Staff exchanges:

Educational staff following a traineeship in the other partner institution in order compare teaching methods.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (2)

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Educational staff teaching in the other partner institution: students of the institutions involved will get a view of the other academic training methods and learning possibilities.

- Berlin 2003: Increase the co-operation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers.

Interdisciplinary and “cross-border” work is necessary and universities and Professional HE institutions should be flexible in their organisation.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (3)

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B) Creation of a system of bridges

1) Overlapping bridges for students who would like to switch after their first or second year of studies to the other Higher Education system better adapted to their talents and needs.

Convenient transits from field to field and from level to level should be established. Students often experience difficulties if they want to combine their studies in a non-classical way.

Creation of “intermediate programmes” for students who would like to switch after their first, second or third year of University / Professional Higher education to the parallel programme.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (4)

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The content of the “switching programmes” should be defined by working groups (representatives from Professional Higher Education and Universities).

e.g.: First year university (bachelor) / second year intermediate programme / third year Professional Higher education.

e.g.: First year Professional Higher Education (bachelor) / second year intermediate programme / third year University.

2) Facilitate the transition to the second tier of HE: bachelor degree / master degree from one system to another.

Professional Higher education (bachelor) degree > University Master.
University (bachelor) degree > Professional Higher Education Master.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (5)

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C) Development of integrated projects leading to joint or double degrees

- 1) Set up the courses by organising working groups: gather representatives of Higher Professional education + representatives of universities + representatives of the labour market in order to:
 - define the courses leading to qualifications which meet the need of the labour market.
 - discuss sources of funding: as the labour market will be one of the main beneficiaries of such partnerships, sources of private funding should be taken into account.
- 2) Apply under a “Curriculum Development” proposal: High priority will be given to projects involving the new member countries or candidate countries.

Partnerships and associations are regional and national level (6)

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- 3) Implement these integrated programmes in education areas which could address new / urgent needs of certain areas of the labour market lacking in qualified staff.
- 4) Create an overarching framework of partnerships (regional, national and international).

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (7)

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II – Conditions of effective partnerships and associations

A) Full recognition of mobility and transfers

1) Use of the **ECTS system**

ECTS will be used not only as a transfer but also as an accumulation system. It will enhance the mobility of students from one system to another.

2) Use of the **Diploma Supplement**

It will describe the content of the degree in terms of qualifications, workload, level, learning outcomes, profile and competences and enhance the visibility of the diploma.

Recognition of all courses followed in the partner institution will thus be possible.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (8)

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B) Evaluation of the partnerships

A Quality Assurance System should guarantee the quality of co-operation.
Scenarios for mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation / certification mechanisms

1) Internal quality assurance:

- involve the beneficiaries of the partnerships (students and professors should be asked to fill in assessment forms after having participated to these pilot projects.
- involve ENQA to set up an agreed set of standards and guidelines on QA especially designed for these kinds of partnerships
- Partners to set up a series of benchmarks and performance indicators against which the newly created programmes can be evaluated.

2) External evaluations of regional, national and later international collaborative programmes

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (9)

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III - Expected outputs

- Mobility between universities and institutions of professional Higher Education should increase the students' qualifications, competences and skills (variety of courses and teaching methods).
- Failure and drop-out rates should decrease (possibility to switch).
- Better employability and reduction of the mismatches often existing between the qualifications acquired and those asked for by society.
- The society in general benefits from it: less unemployment, less social exclusion, less expenses related to these social costs for the taxpayers, might reduce the duration of studies. Savings in public funding will be reinvested more efficiently.

Partnerships and associations at regional and national level (10)

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IV - Dissemination

- ✓ through the organisation of **seminars and workshops / workgroups** enabling Counsellors having successfully implemented partnerships and associations between the various types of Higher Education Institutions involved to advise their colleagues on the same kind of project efficiency.
- ✓ through the **web-site of the partner institutions** involved.
- ✓ through the potential participation of **EURASHE, EUA and ENQUA** which may contribute to the large dissemination of partnership results. and finally
- ✓ via the organisation of conferences where the main stakeholders (universities and Professional Higher Education Institutions) should present the outcomes of the co-operation as such.

Partnerships and associations at international level (1)

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I - Increase of student and staff mobility between Universities and PHE institutions

- Objective of Erasmus: 3 millions students by 2010
- Priority (of ranking) could be given to students wishing to spend a term in the parallel system
- Develop the existing partnerships:

Each institution should increase its number of students / staff spending a term in the parallel education system.

Funding for this increased mobility should be sought after in the private sector, since the companies and firms will be the main beneficiaries of these projects.

Partnerships and associations at international level (2)

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Create new partnerships:

- Universities or PHE institutions should establish new partnerships with institutions from the parallel education system and they should primarily focus on fields of study which may prompt a positive effect on certain areas of the labour market where qualified and flexible staff is still missing / needed.
- Exchanges of students between Institutions of Professional Higher Education and universities, integrating the new member countries, are highly recommended.
- **Institution consortia and strategic alliances** are in a better position to compete with HE institutions from Third countries (marketing, high quality curricula and high profile teaching staff, better working and living conditions). They can also respond to learners' needs (flexibility) through virtual campuses.

Partnerships and associations at international level (3)

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II - Involvement of more PHE institutions in the Thematic Networks

- The number of institutions of Professional higher education involved in the Thematic Networks should increase in order to enhance co-operation in subject specific areas.
- Important with regard to the transfer of the Tuning methodology to TNs
- The results achieved and the recommendations made by the Erasmus TNs could help creating and developing new curricular projects between universities and Institutions of PHE.
- The Commission encourages synergies between curricular development projects and the results and outcomes of projects developed by networks.

Partnerships and associations at international level (4)

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III - Curriculum development at bachelor's level and at master's level (Erasmus Mundus)

Set up courses by organising working groups: gather representatives of PHE representatives of universities+ representatives of the labour market in order to:

- define courses leading to qualifications which meet the need of the labour market.
- discuss sources of funding: as the labour market will be one of the main beneficiaries of such partnerships, sources of private funding should be taken into account.

Partnerships and associations at international level (5)

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- As the Commission attaches particular importance to a reasonable geographical spread of the partnerships, these new curricula should involve the new member countries or the candidate countries.
- These courses should be set up at all levels (undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels) and cover all phases of the curriculum in order to facilitate the analysis of comparative aspects or elements relating to the content of a given discipline (taught in university and in institutions of PHE).

Partnerships and associations at international level (6)



- Joint masters could be elaborated between the parallel systems through Erasmus Mundus. The integrated and highly selective master's courses will seek “to respond to European shortages of highly qualified human resources by pooling trans-national expertise in the specialised field concerned”.
- Working groups should set up a needs analysis addressing the issue of a shortage of human resources at European level in the specialisation concerned and will set out how the proposed programme would respond to this shortage.
- The legislative framework of the countries involved should be adjusted in order to facilitate the implementation of these courses.



Conclusion

- The European HE landscape is characterised by a high degree of heterogeneity (organisation, governance, operating conditions of institutions).
- Profound societal and economic changes and the new development framework (Lisbon and Barcelona Agendas, Bologna Process) for major reforms to meet new challenges and expectations while it is necessary to maintain diversity and complementarity.
- Regional/national and international Partnerships between Professional HE institutions and universities can offer a real added value compared to partnerships of institutions from the same education sector.
- The Commission will support various forms of co-operation through existing programmes (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus) and the different Call for proposals (e.g. Bologna-Tempus Call).