Where does Germany stand in international comparison?

Der Bologna-Prozess aus Sicht der Hochschulforschung –
Analysen und Impulse.

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1. Introduction

In international comparisons Germany often has a non-remarkable position in the middle of the field, sometimes even being seen as lagging behind.

What are the reasons for this?

The implementation of Bologna reform goals in Germany had a good head start, insofar as experimental clauses in the Framework Law for Higher Education had made it possible to introduce a two cycle structure already in 1998.

In addition, the comprehensive universities – a reform model of the 1970s – always had an equivalent to the two cycle structure.

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However, a widespread change to the new structure was then delayed by the fact that guidelines from the Standing Conference of Ministers for Cultural and Educational Affairs were not published until 2004.

In contrast to quite a number of other Bologna signatory countries which claimed to have finished implementation early, the change to the two cycle structure in Germany was bottlenecked by accreditation procedures and slower due to integrated (and not sequential) curricular reforms.

Furthermore, all students had the right to finish their studies under the same conditions as they had started them so that traditional programmes and programmes in the two cycle structure had to be offered in parallel.

2. Comparison

For reasons of comparison not all Bologna signatory countries will be included since some joined late and others do not necessarily constitute a proper benchmark.

The following countries will be included in the comparison:

Sweden, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway, Finland, France.

Two Cycle Structure

In 2010 altogether 80.5 percent of all students in Germany study in the two cycle structure.

State regulated professions (medicine, law teacher training) are (still) exempt from the two cycle structure, although some experiments are ongoing.

At the time of the independent assessment with data from 2008 only Austria (41 %) had less students in the two cycle structure than Germany (43 %).

According to official data all other countries of comparison had between 85 and 100 percent students in the two cycle structure by 2008.

Sweden and the French community of Belgium were the only countries in which no subject was exempt from the two cycle structure.

Mobility

It has become more common to distinguish between credit mobility and degree mobility and between incoming students from the EU/EHEA and from without the EU/EHEA.

The newest EURODATA report (to appear early 2011) has come to the conclusion that there are no reliable statistical data on temporary student mobility (credit mobility).

According to EUROSTUDENT III, Germany is second in Europe (after Norway) with regard to mobility rates of its students (Germany 17%, Norway 19%).

According to the newest EURODATA II calculations Germany has reached and far surpassed the mobility goal for 2020 (20 %) already in 2007 (37%).

Almost 50 percent of mobile students from Germany are free movers.

There is a major trend towards Master degree mobility abroad after the Bachelor.

The other countries of comparison have mobility rates varying between 6 percent (Italy) and 16 percent (Finland).

The average proportion of mobile students from all countries included in this comparison is 13.3 percent.

Attractiveness

German higher education institutions have an increasing proportion of international students from within as well as from without Europe.

Germany is among the top group of countries attracting EHEA and non-EHEA students in the framework of degree mobility,

-         surpassed only by Sweden, Switzerland, and France (as well as Ireland, UK, Luxemburg) with respect to non-EHEA students and

- by Austria (as well as the Czech republic, UK, Denmark, Lithuania, and   Luxemburg) with respect to EHEA students.

(Source: Independent Assessment 2010)

Example based on conceptual clarifications of "mobility" and "foreign students"

Different proportions of international/mobile students 2003
(in percent)

	CH	UK	AT	DE	ES
a. Foreign mobile students	14.1	13.0	10.6	8.5	1.7
b. Home country mobile students	2.0	0.6	1.3	1.5	0.1
All mobile students (a, b)	16.1	13.6	11.9	10.0	1.8
c. Foreign non-mobile students	5.4	4.6	2.7	3.4	1.0
All foreign students (a, c)	19.5	17.6	13.3	11.9	2.7

Source: Kelo, Teichler, Wächter EURODATA 2006

Quality Assurance

A system of accreditation was established in Germany at the beginning of the Bologna process to replace the previous ministerial approval procedure.

All eight accreditation agencies existing in Germany are ENQA members, five of them also members of EQAR.

Accreditation procedures in Germany rather strict also using external experts.

Evaluation of teaching in Germany mostly internal and considerably less strict.

Comparative table

Membership Accreditation Agencies

	Membership ENQA	Membership EQAR
Austria	3	1
Belgium (fr)	1	0
Belgium (fl)	3	3
Finland	1	0
France	2	0
Germany	8	5
Italy	1	0
Netherlands	3	1
Norway	1	0
Spain	4	3
Sweden	1	0
Switzerland	1	?

Source: EURYDICE (2010): Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010.

3. Conclusions and Some Hypotheses

(1) The cycle structure of study programmes in the EHEA is attractive for students from other regions of the world.

(2) The cycle structure of study programmes is not highly important for student mobility within Europe.

(3) Recent studies have shown that there is a declining professional value of mobility (more horizontal, i.e. work task related and vertical, i.e. income related).

(4) If there is benchmarking at all among countries indicators should be well conceptualised and carefully chosen otherwise results are not sufficiently valid.

(5) There are many examples in the Bologna literature in which indicators and comparisons are generated on the basis of questionable, simplified or incomplete data.

(6) For politicians it is important to know whether Germany is in the top, middle or low group, for higher education researchers it is more important to produce results on the basis of clearly defined and shared indicators and conceptualisations. This might sometimes take longer but the results are better.

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Thank you for your attention.