



Degrees, Curricula and Qualifications in the Bologna Process:

Some results from an assessment of 46
European higher education systems

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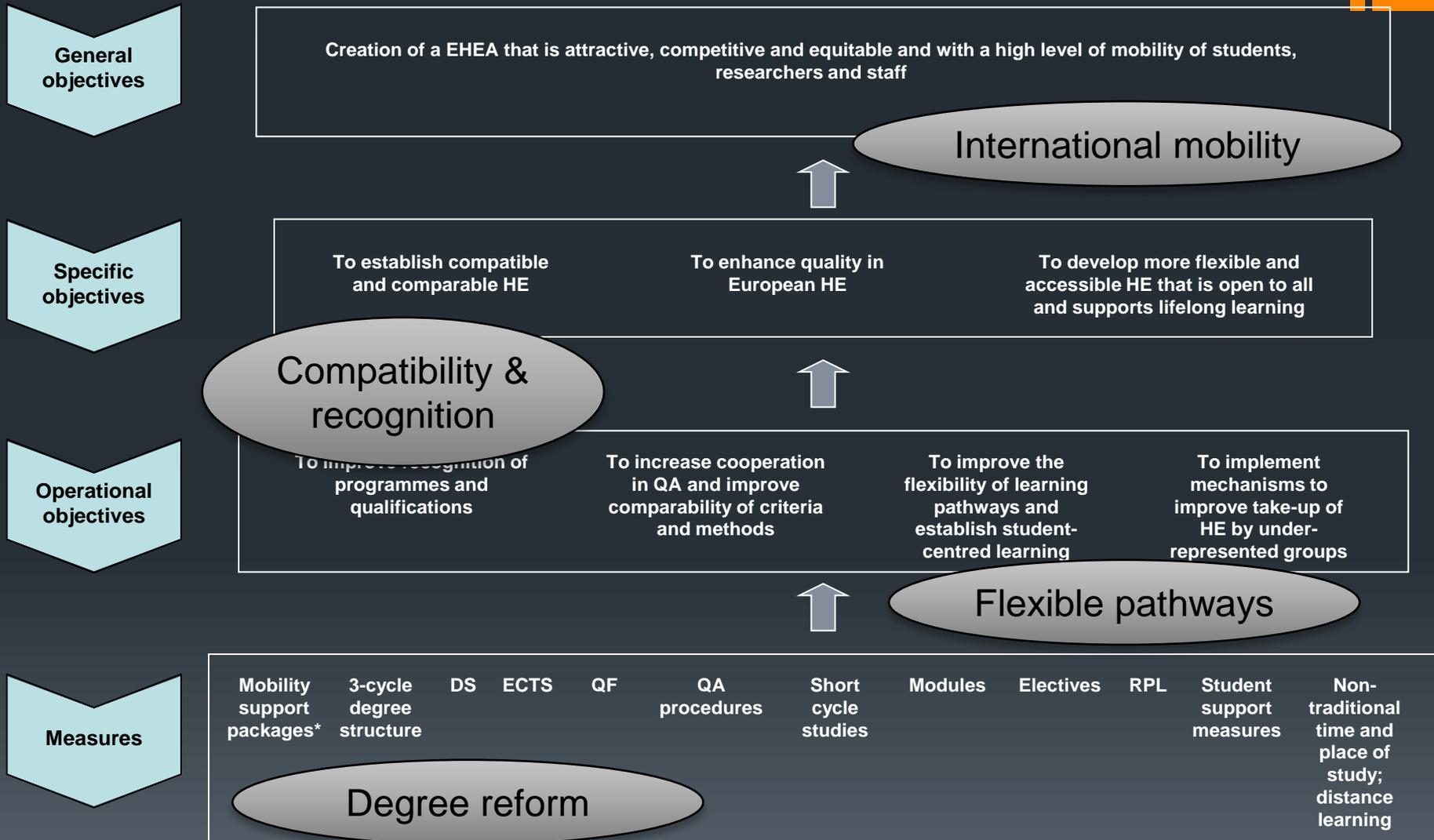
**Der Bologna-Prozess aus Sicht der Hochschulforschung –
Analysen und Impulse**

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Independent Assessment

- 2009 Independent Assessment on impact of Bologna Process, focused on national implementation
- But what does it tell us about the effect of Bologna on learners?
 - Here, we re-interpret some findings from the study from the perspective of their effects on students
- What we know is still massively outweighed by what we don't know

What are Bologna's objectives?



Main impact indicator: International mobility

Findings

- Major rise in degree mobility within EHEA
- Yet, a tiny % of students benefit from mobility
- Much greater increase in mobility from outside, to EHEA
- Major variations between countries: significant east-west difference; success of individual countries' policies

Issues

- Lack of data on systematic mobility data for EHEA, differentiated by credit and degree mobility, both programme and free movers
- Quality of mobility: recognition of credits, degrees → QF-EHEA

Degree Reform

Findings

- Since 1999 over 1/3 of countries have put in place completely new degree structures
- 2/3 have been going through various degrees and types of reform
- 3+2 years (180+120 credits) most common, but various models are used (from 3+1 to 4+2, ... several per country ...)
 - Total of 300 ECTS is neither a norm, nor common practice
- In 6 systems, less than 50% of students were enrolled in 'new-style' programmes in 2008

Issues

- To what degree do students use new flexibilities?
 - mobility Bachelor → Masters (fields; national + international)
 - labour market entry with Bachelor
 - LLL Masters etc.

Compatibility, comparability and recognition – ECTS

Findings

- All HE systems now use ECTS or a comparable system in broad scale, or are in transition towards it
- But six systems use it in less than 75% of non-doctoral programmes
- 12 systems use both student workload and learning outcomes,
13 use neither

Issues

- Should workload or learning outcomes be pre-eminent?
- Does ECTS really serve student mobility? How are different module sizes, approaches, contents and levels dealt with?
- How is the student experience affected by different approaches? What actually are student preferences?

Flexible pathways

Findings

- Area suffers from under-conceptualisation: unclear which measures included and useful, not in focus of reforms
- Regarding short-cycle degrees, modules and electives, patchy picture:
 - short-cycle degrees exist in 26 countries
 - in 13 systems, 90%+ of study programmes are modularised
 - 21 systems typically have 25%+ electives in a programme

Issues

- Under-conceptualisation → clearer goal formulation
- To what extent have measures actually facilitated flexibility, what (other) measures are needed?

Compatibility and Recognition

Findings

- See mobility: recognition is not 'easy'
 - Note: recognition should never become 'automatic'!
- Degree reform was not enough to achieve compatible degrees
- Nor was cooperation among quality assurance agencies
- Hope is now that qualifications frameworks will bring compatible standards of learning outcomes
 - EHEA/EU frameworks → national → discipline → study programme

Issues

- Qualifications frameworks are abstract; will they be connected to the reality of education in different disciplines, at different cycles' levels?
 - Can *Tuning* be a useful example of 'bottom-up' involvement of academics? (<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/>)

Conclusions

- Qualifications frameworks are crucial to make Bologna a success
- Large variation in Bologna-related reforms since 1999
 - Bologna was effective if connected to national reform agendas
 - National reform agendas changed interpretation of ‘Bologna’
 - Often, other reforms were called ‘Bologna’ to overcome resistance—which led to more resistance in some countries
- Overall, most national laws and regulations are in place
 - Implementation by higher education institutions of national frameworks introduces another layer of interpretation, leading to more diversity
 - More diversity within systems, but maybe less so across systems?
 - Available data mean we know much more about formal (legal) changes than about real changes affecting students

Thank you for your attention

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