



2. Lifelong Learning

Working language:	English
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Lifelong learning was brought into the Bologna Process as an action line through the Prague Communiqué in 2001. It was the topic of a Bologna seminar on “Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning” in Prague in June 2003, but has not been highly profiled in the period between Berlin and Bergen.

The Prague seminar concluded, *inter alia*, that higher education institutions should:

- • adopt internal policies to promote the recognition of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning for access and study exemption;
- • integrate lifelong learning into their overall strategy, global development plan and mission.

Public authorities responsible for higher education should:

- • develop new style national qualifications frameworks that integrate forms of lifelong learning as possible paths leading to higher education qualifications, as well as access qualifications, within this qualifications framework;
- • ensure the right to fair recognition of qualifications acquired in different learning environments;
- • encourage higher education institutions to develop and implement lifelong learning policies and measures and support them in their endeavours;
- • apply appropriate methods for the evaluation and, where appropriate, accreditation of various forms of lifelong learning.

The Berlin Communiqué stated:

Ministers furthermore call those working on qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits.

To give the topic of lifelong learning a higher priority and relevance in line with the Berlin Communiqué, it is necessary to identify obstacles to the furtherance of LLL within the European Higher Education Area and to outline means to reach the targets set by the Ministers. One of the dilemmas that need to be addressed is the pressure which the higher education institutions face with regard to increased efficiency, often leading to more

closed, structured study programmes, versus the need for flexible and individually tailored programmes to enhance LLL.

1. What are the main barriers to implementation of LLL as an integrated part of policies and practice within the higher education institutions? Attitudes, legal framework, the structure of financial incentives?

The report from the Bologna working group on A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area states:

Regarding lifelong learning, any consensus for describing degrees and levels must have beneficial implications for qualification structures, other higher education qualifications, alternative pathways and degrees, and thus all stages and types of learning.

2. How can national qualifications frameworks play a vital role in the furtherance of LLL? What are the most important requirements that such a framework should meet to include relevant qualifications from non-formal and informal learning as elements in higher education programmes?

Most European countries have a legal framework enabling the higher education institutions to allow exemptions from parts of study programmes on the basis of former non- or informal learning. However, many institutions do not make use of this possibility, although the overall gain for the student and for society is obvious.

3. What is needed to encourage higher education institutions to implement means and tools for better assessing possible exemptions for the individual student on the basis of prior non- and informal learning?
How can relevant qualifications from non-formal and informal learning become elements in higher education programmes?

One of the conclusions of the Bologna seminar on “The employability and its links to the objectives of the Bologna Process” in Bled, Slovenia, in October 2004 was that the overall cooperation between industry and education in general, and in relation to lifelong learning in particular, is not satisfactory.

4. How can the dialogue between the higher education institutions and industry/employers regarding implementation of lifelong learning be improved?

Summing up the discussion: How should these issues and topics be brought forward for policy implementation, at the national level and at the institutional level?