



BOLOGNA AT THE FINISH LINE - SUMMARY

Bologna at the Finish Line (BAFL) is ESU's broadest publication thus far in the context of the Bologna process, and is going to present a holistic picture on how the process has been implemented over the past decade, and on where the process is going now that the European Higher Education Area will be ceremoniously proclaimed at the Budapest/Vienna ministerial conference.

The publication follows in the footpath of ESU's own Bologna stocktaking exercises from 2005 to 2009 called Bologna With Student Eyes (BWSE), but is broader in both scope and extent. The publication is both critical of Bologna implementation and analytic in trying to bring together various views in a comprehensive view on the whole evolution of the process. It will also try to reflect the experiences of some of the people who have stayed close to the political decision-making process surrounding Bologna and have had the chance to witness the development of the process over time.

The structure of the publication includes a broad review of Bologna broken down into 13 chapters that correspond to Bologna action lines and implementation aspects. These review the results of past ESU publications and try to correlate them to see, according to the students' perception, which are the trends in Bologna process implementation. This part of the publication focuses on centralizing and following up on the results of the BWSE questionnaires prepared for 2005, 2007 and 2009.

A. What is 'Bologna at the Finish Line' (BAFL)?

1. Opening words
2. Executive summary
3. Introduction
4. Methodology

B. Bologna at the Finish Line? (order according to appearance in the Bologna communiqués)

1. Mobility
2. Cycles and ECTS
3. Recognition
4. Quality Assurance

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 37 countries and through these members represent over 11 million students. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. ESU was formerly known as ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe.



5. Governance and student participation

6. Qualification frameworks

7. Life long learning

8. Social dimension

9. Employability

10. Student centered learning

11. Transparency

12. Financing of Higher Education

C. Major Challenges until the next Finish Line

17 Major Challenges until the next Finish Line

But how is BAFL different from, say, the past Bologna With Student Eyes publications and what does it bring new? BAFL, as a concept, will feature a set of new characteristics:

1. It is the first ESU publication to try to measure the evolution of educational policy development and implementation in Europe in a temporal evolution, as opposed to taking a “snapshot” at one specific moment in time.
2. It is the first ESU publication whose methodology features interviews among people who have actively taken part in shaping the Bologna process.
3. It is both reflective and self-reflective, and tries to identify “why” as opposed to only “what” in its chapters. One entire chapter is devoted to analyzing the influences of other transnational processes on Bologna, and the analysis will also focus on prior ESU work on the main topics.
4. The publication is the first ESU publication that is largely pro-active on a number of issues. While past publications were tackling various areas in the Bologna framework after they had started having effect at national level, BAFL tackles with issues that are only now emerging as important at a European and at national level, issues which include student centered learning and “transparency tools”, among others.
5. BAFL includes segments in every chapter that express ESU opinions on how Bologna is likely to evolve, given the current state of its implementation, per different action lines.

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6. The methodology for BWSE was always only questionnaires to the national union of students. For BAFL we have multiple information sources and methodologies which shall guarantee a broader and more qualitative data basis:
 - a. Questionnaires to the National Unions of Students for the newer, emerging topics in the Bologna context
 - b. Interviews with alumni and externals for the more traditional topics and the influence of other processes on the Bologna Process
 - c. Desk research (content analysis) for all the issues

Among the **conclusions** of the publication, we can recount a few:

1. Bologna has seen major changes made to educational policies across Europe. Europe, in terms of higher education systems, is very different as compared to 2010, and much more integrated.
2. Bologna is being implemented in a wide array of national contexts in a very different way. Hence, the effects often differ and are even opposite between two or more countries that are party to the process.
3. Student participation is still problematic in several Bologna action lines.
4. Bologna has been and still is influenced by other processes and pan-European strategies, as well as national political priorities.

Of course, for every action line in Bologna, the conclusions are quite different. Some have accelerated in the past few years, while others have stagnated after a period of initial progress has created the feeling that “things are done”.

For more on these individual conclusions, as well as for a view on the considerations ESU has for the future of most Bologna process components, we invite you to have read our Bologna at the Finish Line publication, which will be available in Vienna in less than three weeks' time.



“FACES OF BOLOGNA” – DOCUMENTARY

General context and considerations

After 3 months of work on both the content and on the taping of a plethora of personal stories, ESU has managed to come out with a documentary that tries to combine various viewpoints and to offer a compelling presentation of the individuals who are being affected by the Bologna process on the grassroots level. These are, of course, primarily students from universities across several European countries.

The documentary features both the views and opinions of students, structured in a general frame that is created by ESU findings in its student-centered stocktaking exercises.

General outlines:

DURATION: 14 minutes

LANGUAGE: English

CAST:

7. Students from diverse European higher education institutions feature heavily and form the bulk of the people being interviewed. Their input takes the form of life stories and personal situations, and there is a degree of coherence in following their “lives” in the academic environment, to give the story feel.
8. Active student organisation’s members, in a small number, but not those who were at the time of filming part of a national-level movement, but rather grassroots activists.
9. Academics and policymakers, presenting the facts as they see it.

What were the main findings of the documentary?

The results of interviews among the bulk of students determined us to group them into a couple of clusters that will be featured in the documentary. Among these:

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Example of findings - Quality (not QA)

Outcomes:

1. Poor pedagogical methods and systemic failures
 - Being fed tones of information. “We have to do too much, and it is often useless.”
 - Poor teaching methods. Improvements are only formal - “boring PPT is not Student Centered Learning”.
 - Expectations are not often met, and giving teachers feedback is difficult.
 - The average student is not employable after a bachelor degree.
2. Poor access to information and feedback
 - There is not enough information on what you should attain as a result of your studies.
 - Students are not receiving enough feedback from teachers.
 - Lack of adequate courses for student's specialization needs.
3. Poor infrastructure
 - Lab materials are not up to date. Libraries are often not continuously updated or have insufficient materials.
 - Not enough reading spaces.
 - Not enough access to laboratories and facilities. Only teachers get to lock themselves up in those.
4. Some positive points made by students. There are actually good cases in which students see an improvement, primarily by increasingly student centered approaches by some teachers. Good practices were also mentioned in the increased access to mobility, which has improved the prospects of the use of innovative teaching/learning methods.

For the rest of the dimensions, we invite you to view a copy of the documentary that you will receive during the Budapest-Vienna ministerial conference. The bulk of the other findings tackled mobility problems, social dimension and lack of information, among others. However, we do want to keep your curiosity for the actual launch. Also, to get a preview on the best opinions expressed in the documentary, we welcome you for a feature of the trailer in Vienna.

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