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**BOLOGNA SEMINAR ON RECOGNITION AND CREDIT
SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG
LEARNING**

Praha, June 5 – 7, 2003

REPORT BY THE GENERAL RAPPORTEUR

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Let us make a golden rule: to show everything to all the senses as far as possible. In other words, to show visible things to the eyes and audible things to the ears. And if something can be perceived by other senses, then it should also be presented to those senses.

(Comenius' Golden Rule, displayed outside of the room in which the seminar was held)

INTRODUCTION

The starting point for the Bologna Seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning organized by the Czech authorities in cooperation with the Czech Technical University is that higher education is no longer a once in a lifetime experience, if it ever was.

While this may seem obvious, it is worth underlining the fact, since our everyday language abounds with expressions and images that point in the opposite direction. Graduation may not be a part of everyday vocabulary, but the much more definite (and definitive) sounding “finish university” and “finish school” are. If people finish their education at age 25 or even 18, what do they do for the rest of their lives? Certainly, imagining that at 18, people will have all the knowledge or skill they will need until the end of their existence is wildly optimistic. I would even be tempted to say it is wildly pessimistic, if we consider what such a view implies in terms of lack of development and intellectual stimulation.

Yet, expressions like these are found in many languages. In my native language we talk about a person who is *ferdig utdannet* or *utlært*, and both expressions imply that there is no need for further education. As often when trying to translate from Norwegian, the German equivalent comes most readily to mind, in this case as *fertig ausgebildet* or *ausgelehrt*. In Spanish, someone who *ha terminado la carrera* is not ready for retirement, but rather for starting his or her professional career, the idea being that the person in question has – once again – completed his or her education. So as not to leave out the third large European branch of the Indo-European language family, the Slavic, the Russian *Я кончил(а) школу* also does not exactly leave the doors of learning wide open, as it were.

AIM OF THIS REPORT

The program of the Bologna seminar organized by the Czech authorities in cooperation with the Czech Technical University is a complete one, and it covers the main issues relating to recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning. Sessions focusing on transferability in the tertiary sphere, qualifications frameworks in the context of lifelong learning, transparency instruments, validation of prior learning and the recognition of non-traditional qualifications bear witness to the

complexity of the seminar and the variety of issues addressed. Add to this intensive group discussions as well as plenary presentations and comments by stakeholders representing students (ESIB), higher education institutions (the European University Association), a higher education institution with very close links to an employer (Škoda Auto College), the Czech Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Czech Accreditation Commission and networks and projects working in the field (ENIC and NARIC Networks¹, TELL, Transfine²), and the reader will further appreciate the complexity of the discussion, which was completed by the presentation of national case studies.

The complexity of the issue, which was so well reflected in the conference program, has in a sense also structured the ambitions and scope of this report. Providing anything close to a thorough and faithful synthesis of the various presentations would not only be verging on *hubris* – and we know what happened to those who, in Greek mythology, overstepped this line - but it would also in a sense be superfluous. Conference participants heard the original presentations, which are of an infinitely higher quality than any attempt to summarize them in a late hour of the night could possibly be, and those who were not at the conference, will have an opportunity to read the various contributions in the publication to be prepared by our Czech hosts.

I see my function as Rapporteur, therefore, rather to attempt an analysis of the issues that have been raised, to try to put the various bits and pieces together in something like a coherent whole and, not least, on the basis of the presentations and the discussion at the seminar, to seek to identify some issues that warrant further consideration. It is also my belief that addressing the various issues raised at the seminar will be of importance in establishing a European Higher Education Area that by 2010 will encompass all kinds of higher education.

An analytical report is as much indebted to the presentations and discussions at the conference as a synthesis report would have been. This report therefore relies on the presentations and prepared comments of Ivan Wilhelm, Josef Beneš, Věra Šťastná, Stephen Adam, Peter van der Hijden, Volker Gemlich, Michel Feutrie, Jindra Divis, Štěpánka Skuhrová, Birgit Lao, Sylvie Brochu, Eva Münsterová, Milan Sojka, Alena Chromcová, Hana Slámová, Elisabeth Tosti, Andrew Cubie and Pavel Zgaga, as well as on the opening remarks of the Vice-Minister for research and higher education, Petr Kolář and Professor Miroslav Vlček, Vice Rector of the Czech Technical University.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON LIFELONG LEARNING

It is difficult to provide a short and snappy definition of lifelong learning that would meet with the approval of most of those directly concerned or who have otherwise given some thought to the issue. As the Trends III report³ shows, definitions vary greatly throughout Europe. Lifelong learning may simply be another one of those

¹ <http://www.enic-naric.net>

² <http://www.transfine.net>

³ Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch: *Trends in Learning Structures in European Higher Education III. Bologna four years after: Steps towards sustainable reform of higher education in Europe*. Draft summary – EUA Graz Convention 29 – 31 May 2003

ubiquitous relatives of the duck, whose common denominator is that we cannot provide an adequate definition, but we instantly recognize them when we see them.

Nevertheless, Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná in their presentation not only reminded us that lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area; but also that it can be defined as a concept and as a “continuous learning process enabling individuals to acquire and update knowledge, skills and competencies at different stages of their lives and in a variety of learning environments, both formal and informal”. This definition follows the one given in the Council of Europe’s recommendation on lifelong learning in higher education⁴, arising from the project on Lifelong Learning for Equity and Social Cohesion: a Challenge to Universities. Stephen Adam referred to the definition offered by the European Commission where lifelong learning is seen as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”. However, one of the participants, in a comment from the floor, felt that a working definition rather than a political definition was needed. There is also considerable truth in Andrew Cubie’s definition of learning as being about not reinventing the wheel.

On this background, it may be worth exploring some characteristics of lifelong learning. The one that first comes to mind, simply because it is the one emphasized by the term itself, is that lifelong learning is situated in a different timeframe than traditional learning. One could perhaps paraphrase Henry David Thoreau and say that lifelong learners march to the beat of a different drummer. Given the brevity of human life, saying that lifelong learning, unlike the traditional concept of “standard learning”, is indefinite and therefore has no beginning and no end, is perhaps something of an exaggeration. However, within the time frame of the life of an individual, lifelong learning emphasizes that one is never done with absorbing new knowledge, skills and competence. Nobody can talk about lifelong learning with the authority of someone who has completed it all. In this sense, lifelong learning should be a model for all learning, at whatever level, and indeed for all human existence. As Volker Gemlich rightly said, lifelong learning can also be described as a culture, and Elisabeth Tosti argued the importance of life experience..

Often, though, discussions of lifelong learning betray an assumption – implicit as often as explicit – of alternative learning paths and contents. More often than not, lifelong learners are thought of not as persons undergoing traditional education at a more mature age than the classical student population, but as mature learners learning in different ways and perhaps also acquiring alternative knowledge and skills.

Such implicit assumptions have an impact on the topic of this seminar, in that if learning paths and contents differ from those of classical students, one may ask whether lifelong learners should not also be guided toward alternative qualifications.

It is worth dwelling on the assumption that lifelong learning should lead to alternative qualifications, not because it is universally held, but because those that hold it may not make the assumption explicit.

⁴ Recommendation R (2002) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on higher education policies in lifelong learning.

Lifelong learners have a variety of motives, ranging from personal fulfillment to earning qualifications that are immediately tradable on the labor market. In the words of Andrew Cubie, a key goal of the Scottish Qualifications Framework is to “help people of all ages and circumstances access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfill their personal, social and economic potential”.

These motivations and potentials are of course not mutually exclusive; rather, they very often reinforce each other and a learning path that will increase a person’s value on the labor market may equally provide him or her with deep personal satisfaction. In this, lifelong learning may well contribute to all the major functions of higher education:

- preparation for the labor market;
- life as an active citizen in democratic society;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge base.

Underlining that lifelong learners often follow other learning paths than “traditional” learners is certainly a valid point. This almost always applies to the aspect of time, and it often applies to the contents and combinations of study programs as well as the way in which qualifications are earned.

WHAT IS IN A QUALIFICATION?

Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether lifelong learning paths necessarily have to lead to non-traditional qualifications. In a deeper sense, this amounts to arguing that we should review the ways in which we define and measure educational achievements. Where traditionally we have been concerned with the formal ways in which a given qualifications could be achieved and how long it would take to earn it, there is now much discussion of whether it would not be better to seek to assess what a person has learned; what he or she knows and is able to do with a given qualification. In the words of Volker Gemlich, we need to identify the “can do levels”.

This emphasis on learning outcomes is not unproblematic, but it has been put on the agenda both of the recognition community, through the ENIC and NARIC Networks and their individual member centers, and of universities. A university driven project, the TUNING project coordinated by the Universities of Deusto and Groningen⁵ and covering a variety of subject areas, has done pioneering work in this area, showing how difficult it is to define learning outcomes that go beyond stating the obvious but also that this can actually be done. In particular, the TUNING project makes a highly useful distinction between subject specific and transversal competence, reminding us that higher education is not just a question of learning facts but also of developing a number of skills like the ability to reason in abstract terms, capacity for analysis and

⁵ Cf. <http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/>

synthesis, problem solving, adaptability, leadership, ability to work autonomously as well as part of a team⁶.

Thus, lifelong learning is one of several elements that should lead us to reexamine what we mean by qualifications. Here, Sylvie Brochu emphasized the paradigm shift from teaching to learning, while Volker Gemlich underlined the need to look at lifelong learning provision from the learner's perspective. In this way, the issue of lifelong learning links directly with another issue that has been pioneered in a few countries like the United Kingdom⁷, Ireland and Denmark, namely that of defining a qualifications framework. In commenting on this, I draw not only on the present seminar, but also on the Bologna seminar on Qualifications Structures in European Higher Education organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 – 28, 2003⁸. Not least, I draw on Stephen Adam's presentations to both seminars.

Essentially, a qualifications framework is a system for describing all qualifications offered within a given education system and how they relate to each other. Not least, elaborating a qualifications framework helps us refine our concept of a qualification, and here much has happened lately. As described by Andrew Cubie, a key function of qualifications frameworks is to guide individuals and help them reach their educational goals with as few complications as possible. The traditional concepts of workload and level have been refined and are no longer expressed only in terms of "years of study". Rather, ECTS credits have largely won acceptance as units measuring the workload required to earn a specific qualification, and these can be earned fast or slowly, depending on the learner. If the ECTS is developed into a credit accumulation and not only a credit transfer system, this would also help with the definition of level.

The concept of level is, however, being refined beyond the insistence of the Bologna Declaration on a two-tier system consisting of a first and a second degree, and the existing national qualifications frameworks are relatively explicit in their level descriptors.

However, when assessing a qualification, we not only need to know something about its workload and level. We also need to know something about the quality of the qualification. While the concern for quality is not new, the widespread acceptance of the need for formal systems assessing the quality of higher education is a fairly recent development. It may be worth recalling that as late as 1997, when the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention was adopted, there was still discussion of whether a formal quality assurance system was necessary or not. Today, the discussion focuses on what such a system should look like.

Learning outcomes, referred to above, are also an integral part of the discussion of qualifications frameworks. Less discussed is the issue of the profile of a qualification, even though it will often not be sufficient for someone assessing a qualification to know that it is of adequate level. Whether assessing a qualification for employment purposes or for the purpose of further study, an evaluator will often need to know the

⁶ The list has essentially been taken from the TUNING project.

⁷ Where the qualifications framework for Scotland is distinct from that for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

⁸ Cf. . http://www.vtu.dk/fsk/div/bologna/Koebenhavn_Bologna_Reprot_final.pdf

specific profile of a qualification. While all second degrees will probably provide the learner with a good number of transversal competences, the subject specific competences will also be of importance for someone looking to hire a historian with good knowledge of Czech or considering applications for admission to a doctoral program in information science.

LIFELONG LEARNING - SEPARATE BUT EQUAL?

If we develop a more sophisticated view of what qualifications actually constitute and how different qualifications relate to each other, a safe assumption would also be that we would more readily accept that different learning paths may lead to the same qualification. This is of immediate relevance to the discussion of qualifications, recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning.

One may of course take the view that earning one's qualifications off the beaten track, as it were, constitutes an additional value that should be recognized through a separate qualification. However, the opposite view is equally plausible: that any qualification deviating from the traditional ones may easily be considered second rate, even if the justification for reaching such a conclusion may be entirely lacking. An additional consideration is that, in the interest of transparency, which is another major concern of the European Higher Education Area, a balance has to be struck between allowing learners to define study programs that fit their own profiles and interests and providing a framework for describing the qualifications earned through these programs in a way that is understandable to informed outsiders. Variety has many advantages, but increased transparency is not one of them.

I would therefore argue that lifelong learning should primarily be seen as alternative learning paths toward qualifications described in the qualifications framework of a given education system. This is not to say that all lifelong learning experiences have to end up with a traditional qualifications, but I would be even more concerned if they *a priori* had to end up with a qualification marked "LLL", say a Master of Science LLL. Separate learning paths may be seen as equal, but the chances of gaining acceptance for separate but equal lifelong learning qualifications is not something I would put a lot of money on if I were a gambler. There is even historical precedent for considering that "separate but equal" will easily end up as anything but⁹.

Saying that there should be room for earning traditional qualifications through lifelong learning experiences does, however, amount to saying that we must take a broader view of how qualifications may be earned and which elements may go into any given qualification. This is no small challenge for a qualifications framework.

⁹ In 1896, a US Supreme Court decision, known as *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, approved segregation in schools by accepting the formula "separate but equal". This decision was not overturned until 1954, when the Supreme Court, in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ordered the integration of American schools. The implementation of this decision was a central element of the Civil Rights struggle of the 1950s and early 1960s.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná remind us that an important part of the background for the discussion about lifelong learning is an increased demand for qualifications at all levels combined with an increasingly diverse student population. This is matched by a diversity of provision, including post-secondary or tertiary programs not considered a part of higher education, at least not in all countries, as well as different kinds and levels of higher education programs and a diversity of study forms, ranging from the classical full time student in his or her early 20's through the increasingly common part time student, encompassing a considerably broader age group, to distance learners.

All of this implies that qualifications may be obtained in different ways, at different speeds and at different ages. We may refer to different learning paths leading to the same qualifications, and in some countries, public authorities responsible for the higher education framework have begun to see the various qualifications of their higher education system as a coherent whole. Therefore, they have set out to describe these qualifications, the way they relate to each other, and the competencies, knowledge and skills they certify in terms of what is often referred to as “new style” qualifications frameworks¹⁰. This concept was explored in detail at the Bologna seminar organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 - 28 this year, and I will therefore not attempt to give anything like a full description of the concept.

Nevertheless, as Stephen Adam demonstrated in his presentation, the concept of qualifications frameworks is highly relevant also to lifelong learning. Indeed, one could say the concept helps “demystify” lifelong learning by showing that various learning paths may lead to the same goal. Lifelong learning is one among several possible paths, it is as valuable as the more classical paths. Most likely, a given qualification can be earned by several lifelong learning paths as well as several more traditional paths.

It may be worth recalling the functions of national qualifications frameworks, as outlined in Stephen Adam's presentation. These include:

- making explicit the purposes of qualifications;
- delineate points of access and overlap;
- identify alternative routes;
- position qualifications in relation to one another;
- show routes for progression as well as barriers.

Stephen Adam underlined that lifelong learning is an all-inclusive concept in need of deconstruction. Indeed, he jokingly referred to lifelong learning as suffering from a multiple personality disorder. I think he is right in his assertion, and it may be that lifelong learning is not sufficiently well integrated into higher education policies in

¹⁰ The point being that all education systems by definition have a qualifications framework but that, traditionally, the description of the qualifications and not least the relationship and interaction between them leaves much to be desired. The “new style” framework therefore represent a significant step forward.

part because it has been thought of as something entirely different from standard higher education policies and therefore something to be left to those with a special interest in the issue. The not uncommon assumption that there are separate “lifelong learning qualifications” may also in part arise from this. In my view, the focus on qualifications frameworks and the place of lifelong learning paths within them will help deconstruct lifelong learning and put it in its proper context as an important part of overall higher education policies.

By showing how different qualifications relate to each other, qualifications frameworks should also facilitate the transfer of qualifications between different parts of the system. The need for facilitating such transfer was underlined by several speakers. It is also worth bearing in mind the timely reminder by Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná: broad transferability does not mean automatic transferability. Therefore, systems and methods must be developed to facilitate transfer, and one example from the Czech Republic is the transfer between the higher professional and university sectors described by Hana Slámová.

DESCRIPTION OF QUALIFICATIONS EARNED THROUGH LIFELONG LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES

As the variety of qualifications and learning paths increases, developing tools to describe these qualifications and learning paths in a way that makes them understandable to informed - and, sometimes, less informed - outsiders is of great importance. Two such tools have been developed and are in quite wide use today, and both have their place within the Bologna Process.

The Diploma Supplement, developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, aims at describing a qualification in terms of the education system within which it was earned. The Diploma Supplement can also be adapted to qualifications - such as joint degrees - earned within two or more higher education systems. The Diploma Supplement, which is an addition to and not a substitute for the original diploma, contains information on the student, the institution and program, the competencies earned and the higher education system. In many countries, institutions are now obliged by law to issue Diploma Supplements to their students once these earn their degrees.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), developed by the European Commission, facilitates the transfer of competence earned at one institution or within one higher education system to another institution and/or system. It has achieved this by developing a standard unit expressing workload - the ECTS credit, 60 of which constitute an average workload for an academic year - as well as a standardized grading scheme. There is also discussion of broadening the ECTS to a credit accumulation as well as a credit transfer system. As emphasized by the Bologna seminar on credit transfer, organized by the EUA and the Swiss authorities in Zürich in October 2002, the ECTS must be developed to include the concept of level.

Peter van der Hijden raised the issue of whether credits have absolute or relative value, i.e. whether the value of credits may depend in part on the use to which they will be put. His question was perhaps not quite answered by the participants in the seminar, but a reasonable assumption seems to be that while for many purposes, a credit is a credit, some study programs will have limits on the amount of credits that can be earned in a given area. Whether this is assigning relative value to credits or emphasizing the profile of a given qualification is perhaps a debate worth pursuing.

The two transparency instruments are complementary, and an ECTS transcript can easily be incorporated into a Diploma Supplement. In this context, it is well worth remembering Michel Feutrie's reference to ECTS as a transferable model combining

- formal learning in higher and vocational education, for the purpose of certification;
- non-formal learning in companies or organizations, for the purpose of employability;
- informal learning in the voluntary sector, for the purpose of professionalization.

To the extent that the various kinds of educational experiences could not be readily described through the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, these transparency instruments could be brought together with the remaining elements in a portfolio, describing all the relevant experience, skills and competencies that constitute the person's overall achievements. One possible model could be the European Language Portfolio, developed by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division to describe a person's competencies in foreign languages, whether formally certified or not, according to a list of well established criteria of fluency. In the case of computing skills, the EU has developed a European Driving License. In the case of many lifelong learning experiences, it is an important part that candidates are closely involved in constituting their own portfolios, as underlined by Jindra Divis.

The point was made by several speakers that recognition, quality assurance, certification and documentation procedures must be kept as "light" as possible. They specifically warned against creating too heavy a bureaucracy. It is easy to agree with this view in general terms, but since "bureaucracy" has become a catchword for all that is wrong with public administration, it may be worth recalling that a key characteristic of bureaucracy is that it provides for predictable decisions based on the merits of the case and taken by professional employees in the sense that they derive their income from their administrative post¹¹. Therefore, decisions are not based on arbitrary factors such as who examines the files, at what time of day this happens or on the payment of direct fees or provision of other services to the individual bureaucrat, commonly referred to as corruption. Bureaucracy should be kept at a reasonable level, but it is as much of an illusion to believe that modern, complex societies can function without an element of public administration as to believe they can be governed without politics.

¹¹ Cf. Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922); the reference here is to a Norwegian edition of Weber's writings: *Makt og byråkrati* (Oslo 1982: Gyldendals Studiefakler), pp. 105 - 157).

LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE LISBOA RECOGNITION CONVENTION

The Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, adopted in Lisboa in April 1997 and hence referred to as the Lisboa Recognition Convention, provides the legal framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications in Europe. At the time of writing, it has been ratified by 31 states and signed by a further 12¹². The main point of the Lisboa Recognition Convention will be found in Appendix 1, suffice it here to underline the following aspects:

Among the main points of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention are the following:

- Adequate access to an assessment of foreign qualifications.
- Non-discrimination.
- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Recognition unless the competent authority can demonstrate a substantial difference.
- All parties shall provide information on the institutions and programs they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.

In a legal sense, the Convention is only applicable to the parties, i.e. the countries that have ratified the Convention or otherwise declared themselves bound by it, and for qualifications belonging to their higher education systems. However, the Convention also has a second function: that of serving as a guide to good practice. In this sense, its provisions can equally well be applied in other contexts and to other kinds of qualifications.

If national qualifications frameworks – and possibly a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area – are construed so as to include different learning paths to the same educational achievements and qualifications, there should be no formal reason why the provisions of the Lisboa Recognition Convention could not be applied to qualifications earned through a lifelong learning path. If these paths were not to be recognized as belonging to the higher education qualifications of a Party, the Convention could still be applied *de facto* and its principles be applied to lifelong learning at higher education level.

¹² An updated list of ratifications and signatures, as well as the text of the Convention and its Explanatory Report, may be found at <http://conventions.coe.int>, search for ETS 165.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

If recognition aims at taking due account of a person's competence, skills and knowledge without regard to how these have been attained, the question of recognition of non-traditional qualifications - or at least of qualifications earned in non-traditional ways - arises. Again, it is good to keep in mind the context of diversification of higher education, including the development of transnational education and virtual learning, in which this discussion takes place. This is not a concern only for lifelong learners, but since they tend to follow more varied paths than traditional higher education graduates, the issue of recognition of prior learning takes on a special importance in discussions of lifelong learning.

As presented by Jindra Divis and Štěpanká Skuhrová, a project on prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)¹³, carried out by the ENICs/NARICs of the Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden and led by the Dutch ENIC/NARIC, has sought to develop a methodology for the recognition of non-formal or informal learning or, in broader terms, any kind of competence at higher education level that cannot be documented by traditional means. Through different forms of assessment, including interviews, simulations and tests as well as the candidate's portfolio, the PLAR methodology seeks to establish the candidate's actual competencies, whether for the purpose of access to higher education (at whatever level appropriate) or for employment. In the Netherlands, which has pioneered this form of assessment, the PLAR methodology has not least played an important role in assessing immigrants' teacher qualifications.

LIFELONG LEARNING AS A PART OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Lifelong learning policies, as well as the broader issue of the European Higher Education Area, are discussed in a context marked by globalization, massification of higher education, decreasing demographic curves, an increasingly heterogenous student body, an emphasis on the need for quality education and increasing pressures as concerns employability and the competitiveness of students on the labor market, as Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná so usefully reminded us. Sylvie Brochu as well as one of the working groups usefully emphasized that higher education institutions have to satisfy a double agenda: one the one hand, they have to be competitive economically, while on the other hand they also have to fulfill their social responsibility. She also reminded us that in addition, higher education institutions have to reconcile the need for a market orientation with the need to keep a certain distance in order to discern longer term trends. The classical university model was of course not devoid of market orientation, but the shape of the market has changed quite dramatically since the day of the Medieval university. As we have put it in another context, one of the dilemmas facing modern universities is how, in the age of the sound bite, one can

¹³ <http://ice-plar.net>

develop an understanding of the importance of an institution that by its nature takes the longer view¹⁴.

As Stephen Adam emphasized, this context also includes the fact that only half of the EU member states have strategies for lifelong learning, even if the recently published Trends III report indicates that most Bologna countries are now planning to develop lifelong learning strategies or already in the process of doing so. Of the 11 Bologna countries that already have established such policies, north western Europe is clearly overrepresented¹⁵.

In reflecting on the role and place of lifelong learning within the Bologna Process, it may be worth emphasizing that lifelong learning should be considered a part of overall higher education policies rather than as a separate strand. The same would be true for policies directed at other levels or profiles of education, and Stephen Adam very usefully reminded us that the Bologna Process should interact with initiatives in other areas of education, such the Brugge-København Process. However, to borrow from Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná again, higher education is our “playground”.

The current work program of the Bologna Process, covering the period 2001 – 2003, is divided into 5 or 6 categories. However, it is also possible to read it differently. In my reading, this program consists of two broad areas, the first of which focuses on qualifications and degree structures, while the second has to do with the social dimension of higher education, which was in particular emphasized by Birgit Lao, but also by several other speakers like Sylvie Brochu and Stephen Adam. In my view, lifelong learning touches on both of these aspects within the Bologna Process. In his closing remarks, Pavel Zgaga also touched on this, and he emphasized that lifelong learning is such a general idea that it could be left happily to live its life in theories, but considerable effort is needed to translate these theories into practical policies and action.

As concerns the first, I believe the main issue for the further progress toward the European Higher Education Area is how lifelong learning can be integrated into qualifications frameworks at both national level and for the European Higher Education Area as entirely valid paths leading to the various qualifications making up these frameworks. In the terms of the Lisboa Recognition Convention, lifelong learning paths would then be a part of the higher education systems of States party, which also means that the qualifications thus earned would be considered for recognition on a par with the same qualifications earned through more traditional higher education learning paths. A second issue is how these learning paths could then be adequately described through transparency instruments like the Diploma Supplement, the ECTS and possibly a lifelong learning portfolio.

As concerns lifelong learning as a part of the social dimension of higher education, the issue is probably considerably easier to phrase than to solve: if lifelong learning paths are integrated into accepted qualifications frameworks, how can authorities and higher education institutions encourage people to actually follow those paths. This

¹⁴ For these and related issues, see Nuria Sanz and Sjur Bergan: *The Heritage of European Universities* (Strasbourg 2002: Council of Europe Publishing).

¹⁵ Cf. *Trends III*, pp. 12 - 13.

was not one of the main issues for the present conference, which focused on qualifications and credits, but it is worth underlining that it touches on issues like equitable access, student finance, motivating members of new or underrepresented groups to pursue higher education, adapting learning methods and institutional working schedules and certainly a host of other issues. Trends III also emphasizes that if the “competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets and not counterbalanced by government incentives, university provision of LLL may well be forced to let go of the more costly social agenda”, something that would be detrimental to the goal of an inclusive European Higher Education Area and that would not help us achieve the goal stipulated by the Ministers in their Praha Communiqué:

Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life.

Personally, I cannot conceive of quality of life without an opportunity to learn and broaden horizons, as I fully share Pavel Zgaga’s desire to “live a long life in learning”. I also cannot conceive of a developed society that would not offer its citizens an opportunity to develop their competencies, skills and knowledge. The choice in favor of lifelong learning should not be all that difficult if one contemplates the alternatives – is one of them lifelong ignorance? However, reaching a goal is generally more difficult than imagining it, so we still have work to do before this part of the Bologna Process will meet the two criteria for success defined by Ivan Wilhelm in his presentation:

- (1) making the right decisions;
- (2) convincing the majority of people that your decision is right.

Hopefully, the recommendations from this conference will help persuade higher education institutions, public authorities responsible for higher education, international organizations and institutions and the Ministers of the Bologna Process set out to consider lifelong learning as an integral part of higher education policies, as learning paths within higher education qualifications framework that will help broaden access to higher education and further equity and social cohesion. If so, the seminar will have been a successful one.

Lifelong learning, as life itself, is sometimes difficult. However, the alternatives are unappealing, and this should in itself constitute a strong incentive to success.

APPENDIX 1

MAIN POINTS OF THE LISBOA RECOGNITION CONVENTION

- Holders of qualifications issued in one party shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another party.
 - No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, color, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
 - The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
 - Each party shall recognize qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
 - Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another party shall have one or both of the following consequences:
 - a. access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
 - b. the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought.
- In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labor market.
- All parties shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfill the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence.
 - All parties shall provide information on the institutions and programs they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.
 - All parties shall appoint a national information center, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons.
 - All parties shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system within which it was issued.