



Study to examine the impact of the National Teams of Bologna Experts on the implementation of the Bologna Process

Final Report – Case studies

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1 Estonia

1.1 Introduction

Estonia signed the Bologna declaration along with 29 other European countries in 1999. As a candidate country, at the time, belonging to the EHEA was a crucial step forward in terms of harmonisation and adaptation at many levels. Estonia was in a good position to modernise its higher education system having adopted its own Act of Universities in 1995. The Act already incorporated a credit system based on the actual workload of the students (which is now the ECTS system in Estonia), the accreditation of study programmes involving external experts, the wide autonomy of the universities and the involvement of student representatives in the decision making process of the universities. In subsequent years, it was clear that Estonia had made the right decisions in its own modernisation of higher education, enabling the smooth implementation of Bologna objectives. The only other significant change for Estonia, which was not foreseen in existing legislation, was the 3+2 academic system.

Looking back over the last 16 years, the system of Higher Education in Estonia is judged to be working well. First, the quality of higher education (HE) as well as the number of students has improved and increased and there are increasing numbers of PhD and foreign students. In addition there are more foreign lecturers and professors in the Estonian university system. Student mobility is also on the increase. During the last 16 years there have been a number of political decisions and additional programmes put in place in order to support the development of higher education. This includes increasing the volume of scholarships of national scholarship programme Kristjan Jaak, and increasing national co-financing of the Erasmus programme and additional support for PhD students' studies abroad. No less important is the increased state budget allocation to education, (11.6 per cent in 2011).

There are of course less well developed areas in higher education where more attention needs to be given: this includes the students' social dimension. Internal and international mobility of students could also be higher and more attention should be paid to ensuring that PhD study programmes are better aligned to market needs.

Estonia first applied to the National Teams of Bologna Experts (NTBE) in 2004. Therefore it covered the first period of implementation of 2004-2006. This has continued and today, the third NTBE team is working in Estonia to support HEIs and other stakeholders. The aim of Bologna experts in Estonia is to support the implementation of Bologna objectives in the following Bologna topics: recognition, three cycles, quality assurance, mobility and recently added topics like HE Modernisation agenda or Youth on the Move. Since the beginning, the size of the NTBE in Estonia has been pretty small – all the work has been done with around three to five experts per NTBE period. So far, the number of experts has been enough to implement the Bologna objectives in Estonia which is a small country. The experts perform their NTBE related tasks part-time in parallel or in addition to their full-time obligations. This makes the evaluation of real NTBE impact difficult, as it is not always clear where the tasks of Bologna experts stop and start in relation to the experts' other tasks. Nevertheless, this case study shows that the performance of NTBE has been relevant and important for Estonia to fully comply with the objectives of Bologna process in the timescale set out.

1.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The task of Bologna Experts (BE) is to introduce and support the implementation of the objectives of Bologna Declaration. In general, the thematic areas have been:

- Readable and comparable degrees (including Diploma Supplement)
- Undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries (3+2 academic system)
- ECTS-compatible credit systems
- Quality assurance in higher education
- Free mobility of students and teachers

Recently, two more topics were added: Modernisation agenda and Youth on the Move.

During the period of 2008-2010 and the current project implementation period (2011-2013) the BE have made an effort to cover all the topics in range. As the number of BE is limited, it has been important for the BE to work in collaboration and therefore the total coverage of the topics has been reached in collaboration with the BE, the National Authority (the Ministry of Education and Research) and the National Agency (NA, Archimedes Foundation).

Although the BE have continually supported the development and modernisation of HE in Estonia, throughout the period under evaluation, there are clear trends in topics across the time period. In 2004 more attention was paid to the comparable degrees and diplomas, ECTS system and undergraduate and postgraduate levels implementation (the 3 cycles). Even through the transition to the 3+2 academic system in Estonia had started in 2002, the Bologna experts concentrated most on the changes needed to implement the 3+2 academic system. This transition was probably the most difficult part of the exercise as the existing academic system became obsolete and a completely new one built from scratch. As time progressed and the new system became embedded, the topics of quality assurance and free mobility have moved to the fore.

The main target-group of the NTBE is the 34 higher education institutions (HEI) in Estonia. Within the framework of the NTBE, different target groups, which are involved in the Bologna process (policy-makers at the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), vice-rectors of academic affairs of HEI-s, other senior officials responsible for HEI, international offices of the HEI, students and academic staff, Higher Education Quality Agency, Estonian ENIC/NARIC, Academy of Young Scientists, Estonian Student Union, Erasmus Student Network etc.), meet and discuss different European Higher Education Area (EHEA) issues.

So far, the activity of BE has been mainly focused on the public universities, which have been their main partners. One of the BE admitted that less attention is paid to the universities of applied sciences and private universities, not because they are out of scope but rather caused by the low level of HEI's awareness. Another reason may be the MoER has not actively supported the involvement of private universities. For the universities of applied sciences one can speculate that the reduced attention may be due to the lack of human resources both in the NA as well as among the BE.

There is one other target group which definitely needs more attention and this is employers' organisations. The employers' view has generally been put forward through the activities of the MoER as a policy maker, but no employers' organisations have had any long term contact with the NTBE. Employers' representatives we contacted for this case study were not aware who are the BE and what are their objectives. As a

consequence, it was not possible to interview employers' representatives for this case study – as none are involved. Employers therefore need to be more involved in the BE activities in the future.

Furthermore, The NTBE has begun to work more thoroughly with the employers during the 2009-2011 NTBE period and will continue to do so in the current project period. As part of the 2009-2011 NTBE a seminar "Recognition and the Bologna Process – Engagement with Employers" for employers' representatives, was organised in co-operation with Germany, Finland, Slovakia, Italy, and the UK. A series of seminars was initiated by the ENIC/NARIC centre on the topic "Understanding of qualifications and their evaluation", which will be continued during 2011-2013 NTBE period.

The BE are carefully chosen by the National Authority in cooperation with the National Agency. In the first instance, the previous BE is given the opportunity to continue. If a new BE is required this is usually undertaken through head-hunting – as the Estonian population is only about 1.3m people, the possible range of thematic experts is very narrow and they are usually well-known in the higher education community. The small range of possible candidates and high requirements narrow the range of suitable candidates even more, which explains the low number of experts in Estonia. On the other hand, as the BE are carefully chosen, their profile has been well matched with the issues they need to cover. All the interviewees were satisfied with the BE profile, know-how and experience, the BE have always provided the input which has been expected.

Also, the interviewees were satisfied with the format of BE activities – the target group can easily be reached and influenced through seminars, conferences, training and direct/personal advice. The strength of the current format is the flexibility of the BE. At the same time this is also a weakness - the BE have not been given a clear mandate and they perform the tasks part-time, meaning they manage their time themselves and the outputs and impact of the BE work depends only on their time and commitment. This does not guarantee the delivery of the Bologna process or information about EHEA to all the target groups at the same level.

For implementing higher education reform there are many national and international programmes running in Estonia. Erasmus and Primus are two examples where the BE participate and make a difference. The BE also have many international contacts that have mainly been created through their cooperation in international programmes, seminars, conferences or training. The involvement of the BE depends on the exact topic – sometimes they participate just as experts in their fields and not as BE, but the know-how is delivered or taken on board anyway. They also participate in strategic planning processes and advise on legislation and programme planning. Their advice is taken into account when planning higher education strategies (incl. European Social Fund measures) and, on the other hand, BE become the voice of HEIs to the policy makers.

1.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Within the NTBE the tasks of the BE are defined in collaboration with the NA and BE and approved by the National Authority. For detail planning the BE compile the annual action plans, which are also subject to the approval of the National Authority. The action plans of BE in Estonia cover all typical BE activities.

During the 2008-2010 period the approach of BE regarding the type of BE activities has been rather traditional – a number of roundtables, seminars, conferences, training events

and consultations were organised. In implementing different project activities other budget sources were also used in order to improve effectiveness and aim for wider impact: Life long Learning Programme Erasmus budget; the European Social Fund funded programme Primus, Estonian national co-funding for implementing higher education programmes etc.

According to the annual report of the BE project, the majority of activities were implemented as originally planned. There were some deviations in the action plans: some planned activities were not provided due to the insufficient interest from the target group (Student conference – recognition of mobility), but on the other hand many activities, where the interest and need was higher, were organised instead (seminar "Doctoral studies in the light of Bologna Process" or training for the employers "Understanding of qualifications and their evaluation").

The BE in cooperation with the NA have made efforts to encourage a public dialogue on Bologna issues using media channels. In addition to the activities of BE, the NA has also contributed to the dissemination of the promotional materials of the NTBE during Bologna public events, and always labelled them with Bologna logo.

The BE in Estonia perform their tasks in parallel with their full-time assignments and therefore can commit as BE only part-time. This is the biggest barrier the NA and National Authority found in increasing the impact of NTBE. Hence, the BE often transfer their knowledge just as experts in their fields without labelling the knowledge as 'Bologna experts'. Their impact would be much greater were they to have more time committed as BE.

Nevertheless, all the interviewed parties were very satisfied with the quality of the work of BE – they said the BE do the best they can, taking into account the available time and funds.

The annual report of the NTBE also supports these findings and includes the feedback of the participants on the seminars, conferences and training, which have always been positive. For improvement, the time allocated for the BE should be increased in the future or more BE should be engaged. Apart from that, there is no national monitoring system in place in Estonia to monitor or measure the quality or impact of BE. The main reason is the small size of the country, where everybody involved in the higher education knows everyone involved and the experts in the field can be counted on one hand. Also, as the management of the NTBE is relatively simple – no multilevel tasks, no large numbers of people responsible – the NA has everyday communication with BE, they arrange regular meetings and the NA participates in the most events organised by the NTBE. The NA gets the immediate feedback on the NTBE activities and has no need for an additional monitoring system. In the end, the interim and annual reports are compiled in cooperation by the NA and BE. Neither National Authority nor BE or target groups have so far had any complaints on the implementation of the NTBE or the quality of the BE. While the NA and National Authority get their feedback on the performance of the BE, the experts themselves feel there is a lack of feedback to them. The BE interviewed ideally would like to get feedback from all counterparts with regard to their performance in order to be able to learn and offer better services. The feedback could be given by the National Authority or by target groups (universities) on the initiative of the National Authority or NA.

On the opinion of the NA and the National Authority the full impact is gathered from the joint efforts of the BE, the NA and National Authority. This view was also supported by

the representatives of the HEIs. Again, the small size of Estonia plays its role here – for fulfilling the political (Bologna) objectives there are many measures and programmes running, with NTBE as just one part of the whole package.

All the interviewees admitted that communication with BE has always been very smooth and quick. Despite to their tight time schedule, the BE are always available, if needed – they can be contacted by phone, and they give feedback on e-mails within one working day.

1.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The impacts of the activities of BE are often hidden and direct connections between activities and results or impact are difficult to identify. The main reason is the difficulty to distinguish between the work undertaken as a BE and that of their full time jobs. There are blurred boundaries as their expertise is such that much of their activity will have some impact on the Bologna objectives. Also, there are other domestic programmes serving the Bologna objectives (even if indirectly), such as seminars or conferences organised and financed by Erasmus or Primus. Another example is given in the NTBE 2009-2011, when one BE worked for an HEI where her areas were the European dimension in HE and lifelong learning issues. According to the Annual Report, she was involved in developing the guidelines of learning outcome based study programmes and later provided training seminars on higher education policy for the heads of departments of the HEIs. However, both of these activities were fully financed by the European Social Fund Primus programme. The BE performed as an expert delivering her knowledge in both her capacities. In these cases all the HEIs however benefited from her knowledge. Furthermore, she was also involved in the preparation of the Self Certification Report of the National Qualifications Framework, where she contributed with her knowledge as a representative of HEI as well as an expert in her field. It also shows that the link between the BE role and their other activities is important.

However, all the interviewees were in agreement, that the BE in Estonia have definitely had positive and visible impact, but the size of the impact is rather difficult to assess. The BE feel that the main impact can be seen in the change of people's mind-set and behaviour. The activities of BE have made the implementation of the higher education reform easier and faster.

The activities of BE have significantly raised awareness of the national and European initiatives within the framework of Bologna follow-up process. The BE together with Bologna seminars (like the training for employers "Understanding of qualifications and their evaluation" in 2010, or the annual HE conference "Estonia in the European Higher Education Area – what's next?" in 2009) have given a new impetus to the domestic debate on the Bologna issues. But besides the influence on the Higher Education Area Bologna activities influence the labour market in general and the whole of society as well. The mobility of students and teachers boosts the transfer of knowledge, the diploma recognition and common credit transfer and accumulation system should better enable the free movement of people in EU. Also the HE quality assurance should motivate foreign students and teachers to study and teach in Estonia. Besides these visible effects, there are invisible benefits like a shift in the overall way of thinking or changes in labour market behaviour. As an example, students as well as the employers have started to value learning outcomes and the quality of education, rather than just having higher education. On the one hand, this has raised the level of professional quality and

knowledge among employers. This in turn requires students to make more effort to get good positions in the labour market. On the other hand, implementing lifelong learning principles has launched career planning already in secondary education and at the same time brought many people aged 50 and over back in to the labour market.

Impacts of the Estonian National Team of Bologna Experts (I)

The representatives of HEIs highlighted in the interviews that BE brought the knowledge closer and helped them to implement the processes without making any substantial mistakes. Although it was difficult to provide specific examples, it smoothed the pathway in new policy implementation. The advice was always timely and has enabled them to avoid significant issues in reorganising and modernising the HE in Estonia. Without the support of the NTBE, Estonia would have taken a substantially longer period of time to implement the Bologna objectives. In the opinion of the representatives of HEIs, the BE have helped them to avoid major mistakes in the process of modernisation of HE, as illustrated below:

- the implementation of the ECTS system in HEIs has been easier than without the knowhow of BE as the knowledge on how to take the ECTS system over was delivered before any action was taken.
- the support given to the recognition of Estonian and European HE documents and diplomas in Estonia would have been much more difficult and time-consuming without the support of BE. Again, the relevant information was there on time.
- A BE was involved in launching of the Higher Education Quality Agency from 1 January 2009 and provided a number of information seminars on the transition from accreditation of study programmes to the evaluation of study programme groups of HEIs. The already mentioned guidelines of learning outcome based study programmes helped the HEIs to shift their way of thinking towards valuing learning outcomes instead of quantitative measurements.

Impacts of the Estonian National Team of Bologna Experts (II)

The implementation of new study programmes (three cycle system) in the Estonian HEIs took place in the academic year of 2002/2003. The new system of higher education had two main cycles, following the bachelor-master model of the European Higher Education Area. The study programmes of some fields have been integrated into a single long cycle. Today, the three cycle system has been in place for almost ten years. Since 2004 the Bologna experts have been actively involved in introducing the three cycle system in Estonia. Hence, this has been the most difficult area of operation, as the new academic system replaced the existing one and built up the completely new system. In addition, HE reform was implemented in hurry, which did not leave the HEIs and students enough time for proper adoption. These are the main reasons the implementation of the new study system has been complicated and gained much criticism. The study on the functionalities of the study programmes in Estonia, provided in 2007, showed clearly both the HEIs and students felt the implementation of the

three cycle system is a pressure from policy makers. At the same time the three cycle system should be a tool for HEI to guarantee the sustainability, quality and competitiveness of the HEI (or a discipline) rather than being an objective in itself. Ultimately, it may be seen that the new three cycle system has also influenced industry and the labour market, creating on the one hand more possibilities for young people to find the right jobs, and on the other hand enabling industries to train in the qualifications they need. The three cycle system has had more impacts and the part of the Bologna Experts cannot be underestimated.

Here the role of Bologna Experts is to raise the awareness about the benefits of the three cycle system. In awareness-raising the Bologna Experts have remarkable advantage – they are taken as EU messengers, not local officials, which adds weight to their message. Throughout the ten year period the number of seminars and training as well as consultations provided have shifted the way of thinking of the heads of HEIs. Normally, everything new causes uncertainty and suspicion in the beginning, but sooner or later the heads of HEIs have to be asked - how long would the old HE system have survived, being surrounded with the new academic system in neighbouring countries? Also, the economic development and changes in the economic structure set its demands on the HEIs. The Bologna Experts had to convince the HEIs of the benefits of the new system, such as new possibilities to find cooperation partners and test facilities, as well as new opportunities for flexible study programmes, increasing academic quality, and offering better added value for the students, which in turn would create further possibilities for student mobility. Bologna Experts have to be there in order to pick up the benefits and help to solve the problems.

There are no significant barriers to providing even more impact of NTBE in Estonia, but there are definitely possibilities for improvement. One main obstacle the NA mentioned is the lack of time of the BE (as they perform BE tasks part-time) and lack of funds. The need for investment into human resources was also mentioned by the BE as they would like to do more but they have their time limits. Therefore, there is space for a larger number of BE. Doubling the number of BE and increasing the budget by 80 per cent (the management costs would remain the same) would enable the provision of more activities and increase the awareness about the BE. The whole enlarged package would be able to have greater impact. In some cases the NA and BE also mentioned the low interest of universities in the activities of BE. Here the awareness and publicity measures about the existence and impact of the BE in Estonia can be a challenge for the NA. Also, the National Authority felt the need for closer cooperation with the NA in order to better agree the objectives, activities and impact of BE.

1.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The NTBE is managed by the NA. In the NA there are two part time people responsible for the NTBE (one project coordinator and one financial officer). The 2009-2011 implementation period was affected by the high staff turnover – the NTBE had three different coordinators in the NA. In spite of the high mobility of human resources, the

work has always been done and the NTBE has successfully been coordinated. No major problems have been identified from the side of National Authority or BE or other stakeholders, and the European Commission has always approved all the reports.

The National Authority and HEIs also view the implementation of the NTBE rather positively. The NTBE has been very convenient for BE – the level of bureaucracy has been very low, which has enabled the BE concentrate on their work. Administration is usually done by the NA. At the same time the BE mentioned that some aspects have remained unclear – the eligibility rules for seminars and conferences abroad (which events are eligible and which not) and the real need (meaning) for applying for BE project (is there any possibility the EC might not fund the NTBE and what happens then?). As these are EC rules and most likely are not a subject for the NA to change, the least the NA can do is better explain these rules to the BE.

The overall Bologna process is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research. There is a Bologna National Steering Committee, which advises the implementation of Bologna topics and which is led by the MoER department of higher education. The committee discusses the national opinions of Bologna topics and advises the BFUG. There are members from universities (students and rectors), the MoER (National Authority) and Archimedes (National Agency). In addition, the NA as a BE project manager, can organise roundtables for BE in order to create common understanding through exchanging information and discussing critical issues.

During the period under evaluation there have not been any major problems in the implementation of the NTBE. The only issue raised by the NA is the lack of human and financial resources. In spite of this, the Bologna topics have always been covered, the target groups somewhat reached, and the Bologna objectives implemented. This has all been achieved with the minimum human resources. Any increase in resources and capacity could be used to improve reach into the universities of applied sciences, private universities and employers. In order to reach also these target groups, the NA should strengthen their capacity with more human resources.

If the number of BE could be doubled and the project budget could be increased by 80 per cent - all target groups would be equally addressed and the impact would be greater.

1.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

The NA and BE found the Information project on higher education reform extremely important and relevant, especially for new BE. Besides the aim of sharing information, the international seminars are also excellent places for meeting colleagues, exchanging experience and networking. These events definitely have to be continued; maybe some specialisation would be an advantage in order to attract the more experienced BE. The added value of these information seminars is the knowledge given in addition to the materials the BE can read - the topics are explained and discussed, different opinions are shared and interpretation is given.

The participants in these events are chosen in cooperation with the NA and the BE. The NA receives the information and shares it with the BE depending on his/her profile. Normally, one BE participates in two such seminars during the NTBE period. Sometimes also a representative from the NA participates.

The BE found the Virtual Community an important information source but overall it depends on the topic and the nature of the full-time job of the expert. The BE who is day to day deeply involved in the issues of HE, does not use the Virtual Community as often as the BE who is less involved with HE issues every day. The added value of the Virtual Community is the existence of one place, where all relevant materials and documents can be found, as well as the forums and discussions on relevant topics. For supporting the work of national BE, this platform should definitely continue.

If the information projects were not to be provided in the future, the BE would maintain their activities but their additional sources of knowledge would be more limited, and the BE would need to seek extra materials for updating their knowledge - it would take extra time. They would have to screen the websites and studies as well as tighten their communication with colleagues. There are no perfect alternatives which could be suggested. For making the information seminars more useful and efficient, they could be more focused or specialised in order to ensure the well experienced BE can also have an opportunity to get new knowledge.

1.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The whole budget of NTBE for 2009-2011 was €23,000 including 10% of co-financing from the MoER. The share of the budget was divided between:

- Management costs - about 20% of the total budget
- Training the experts (e.g. participation in IPHER seminars) - about 45%, and
- Bologna Experts core activities (visits to HEIs, organisation of training, participation in promotional activities, etc.) - about 35%

Around two thirds of the activities are carried out at the national level; and one third internationally. The connections of Estonian HEIs with BE of other countries are minimal – there have been some international seminars and conferences, but as the foreign BE have not been labelled as 'Bologna Experts' on these events, it is difficult to evaluate the level of added value of the contacts. The National Authority indicated the BE could act more internationally bringing Estonian experiences to the international level.

Under the NTBE, only activities eligible from the project were financed. In addition, the national programmes (including national funds and Structural Funds) also finance activities having direct or indirect impact on the Bologna process (like mobility of PhD students and professors, R&D, knowledge transfer and other). In reality, Estonia commits between 5 and 10 per cent more than just the NTBE budget.

Today, the larger countries have higher number of students benefiting more from the current distribution of EU funding (based on the number of students per country). To move towards a more equal distribution of funds, performance criteria can be used.

Also, when financing the NTBE activities, the number of BE per country has to be taken into account. At the same time if the EU funding were to be stopped, there would be no extra activities in favour of the implementation of the Bologna objectives – the objectives would be reached using the country's own resources and within a longer period.

In implementing the activities, the BE have been paid only by the NTBE, with no extra charges ever requested.

1.8 Future of the initiative

All the interviewees agreed that the activities of BE have to be continued. If there is no support from the EU side, then no extra activities will be provided. The main value added of NTBE is knowledge transfer. In future, for HEIs the added value of BE can be in recognition of documents and diplomas in some fields, also in student mobility and networking at the European level. There is also interest towards preparations for an occupational qualifications framework, where strong cooperation with employers needs to be established.

The current format is acceptable and should be kept, with an enlarged number of BE. In increasing the number of experts, the scope of activities will be enlarged, with greater impact – more target groups covered, more activities provided and more commitment made. Hiring one full-time BE should guarantee the sustainable implementation of Bologna objectives. The full-time BE could be supported by 6-8 part-time BE. To support the national BE in their work, and to offer them a source of information, the EC information seminars should continue to be organised.

In future, the activities of BE and possibilities for target groups have to be more visible. Some publicity or information measures should be taken by NA in order to introduce the BE and their activities, as well as showing the benefits to the target groups. The webpage of the NA (and National Authority) as the main source of information should be updated and include information about the BE, their objectives and activities, the benefit and impact - everything, which helps BE bring closer to their target groups.

As Estonia has recently launched its own national reform of higher education, the future developments depend on the national higher education reform, but also the overall economic situation. The latter is the reason why many universities in Europe are on 'stand by' mode in order to see where the economic trends are moving, and they rather try to maintain the current level. The BE can have their impact in sharing the information about the new knowledge and trends, as well as being involved in decision making processes.

2 France

2.1 Introduction

France has a long history with the Bologna process as one of the first signatory countries, together with Germany, Italy and the UK which started designing the basic precepts of the Bologna Process in the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998. Adjustments to the French higher education (HE) system started in 1999 whilst first regulations date back in 2002. The decree of 8 April 2002 aimed to adapt the French HE system to the development of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) was aimed at implementing the reform of the licence-master-doctorate (LMD, or Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) system. This decree also promoted the use of ECTS and Diploma Supplement as recognition tools.

The implementation of the LMD reform started as from 2006-2007 academic year. The main objective was to get it effectively applied in all HEIs and most of their programmes by 2010.

The 2007 Act on the freedom and responsibilities of universities (LRU) was another major reform of the HE sector. The Act defines new public service missions for universities targeting:

- participation in the construction of the EHEA and student guidance and professional integration. The LRU aims to foster universities autonomy for e.g. enabling them to implement a development strategy
- human resources and budgets. To make this possible, increased investment has been allocated to the HE sector to improve living and working conditions in universities, the quality of training and the attractiveness of careers in university teaching and research

The Act should apply to all universities by 1 January 2013.

On the whole, considerable progress has been made in the sector over past decade and the majority of HE stakeholders accept the process without objection.

In a fragmented context where HEIs have a wide variety of legal statuses and needs, future challenges notably include completing the modernisation of higher education with the three-cycle system; reform of doctoral studies; development of joint diplomas; the increased autonomy of universities and the new rules of governance.

All interviewees acknowledged that reforms undertaken in the HE have fully complied with Bologna objectives. Whilst the structural LMD reform has been widely applied to university level and short HE cycles progressively adjusted to Bologna priority actions, challenges are still encountered for ensuring a proper implementation of more technical aspects such as:

- ECTS: not always adequately used
- DS : still little known and applied
- Learning outcomes: their evaluation and recognition pose problem to several HE actors
- Quality assurance

Issues relating to the European dimension of HE programmes (i.e. joint degrees and related curriculum development, etc.) and to the social dimension were also mentioned.

Several interviewees reported that the fragmented nature of French HEIs (wide variety of HEI profiles, status and activities) as well as their level of experience with Bologna action lines are so diverse that areas of concern may greatly vary depending on individual institutions.

Contrast between universities and other HEIs (e.g. those offering short cycles) were particularly noted. The latter tend to be less familiar with Bologna themes mainly because reforms were introduced at a later stage for most of them. These tend to consult the National Team of Bologna Experts (NTBE) for issues on ECTS in a large majority of cases ('these HEIs have not been effectively supported in this area and tend to act somehow randomly when it comes to convert their programmes into ECTS' suggested an interviewee).

On the whole, despite progress made in HE area over past years, it was felt that there is still room for improving HEIs' knowledge on Bologna-associated reforms.

2.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

All interviewees noted that themes supported by the NTBE are relevant. Reference to recognition tools (ECTS and DS) was made in all interviews. It was highlighted that though a strong focus has been put on these instruments over recent years, these should not be ruled out of the NTBE's priorities as their implementation is not yet satisfactory. Several interviews revealed that there is a strong demand from HEIs for ad hoc support in the area of ECTS, DS and related technical aspects (e.g. labels, learning outcomes, etc.).

Views were more nuanced on the shift towards the new missions of the NTBE (i.e. increasingly targeting promotional activities on EU initiatives or programmes – Youth on the Move, the Modernisation of Higher Education agenda, etc.). Whilst a minority of interviewees were positive ('These initiatives are e.g. aimed to promote mobility, and in the end Bologna supports mobility within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), so it seems relevant to expand NTBE's missions in this way) or had no opinion, several others were rather concerned. As a common trend, this shift was perceived as an issue in terms of Bologna Experts' (BE) mandate and legitimacy (i.e. are they agents of the European Commission, or of the 2e2f National Agency?). This was seen as somehow distorting the traditional intergovernmental nature of Bologna priority actions whilst BE's expertise to deal with this was questioned. A few interviewees noted in substance that promoting European programmes 'is certainly useful' but this 'should not be necessarily part of BE's mission as they do not have the expertise to do this in general'.

Regarding the format of NTBE's activities, all interviewees confirmed it as relevant. All agreed that the pedagogical (i.e. supplying general information on the Bologna process, its philosophy, participating in promotional activities, etc.) and counselling (e.g. providing ad hoc support and expertise to HEIs and other key stakeholders) roles played by the experts are very useful. Two interviewees however suggested that the BE's advisory role would be worth strengthening to better support decision-making at central level. In this regard, it was felt that despite valuable inputs that could feed into preparatory policy papers, support reforms, etc. the experts are too rarely consulted by the central level.

Their activities ranging from large national conferences, smaller events (e.g. regional workshops) to ad hoc support services to HE stakeholders (mostly HEIs) were rated positively. One interviewee reported that effort is made to ensure complementarity

among activities whilst events involving BE from different countries are encouraged to foster '*awareness raising and make sure that the EU dimension is not forgotten by stakeholders at national level*'. It was also found that several of these activities are regularly re-conducted as a result of demands from beneficiaries.

In principle, HEIs are the primary target group of the NTBE. The scope of the activities organised by the team is however wider as these are designed to be of interest for a range of target groups (including students, experts, policy makers, etc.). Local stakeholders are also targeted through regional meetings. Several interviewees revealed that employers are among those stakeholders who are insufficiently reached (mainly due to a lack of appropriate communication on NTBE). It was also found that closer cooperation with the national authority would be desired.

Regarding the profile of the team members, the renewal of 2 out of 3 members in 2011 ensures that the team now presents a more diverse range of profiles. The team consists of experts in Bologna reforms and of specialists of EU programmes (mainly Erasmus). This change was meant to reflect the above-mentioned shift towards promoting EU initiatives and programmes in the EHEA.

The profile of the experts was rated positively in general. Beneficiaries from tailored support services were particularly satisfied. Some interviewees however pointed that proper balance and interactions are not there yet among the team, as those experts who were part of it earlier are overloaded (i.e. more frequently consulted than others; involved in buddying tasks, etc.). This is seen as a learning process that should not last long.

Two interviewees indicated that despite punctual satisfactory support provided to HEIs specialised in short cycles, effort should be pursued in this area as there are still many gaps in knowledge there at both national and EU level.

Example - Towards more attention to HEIs offering short cycles

An interesting evolution that is worth being noted among the French NTBE regards increasing attention paid to address questions from and provide support to those HEIs that offer short cycle programmes. As noted above, most of these appear to be less familiar with Bologna themes and usually encounter difficulties when it comes to implementing recognition tools.

The new NTBE in place since early 2011 includes an expert who has thorough knowledge and practical experience in the area and the specific mission to provide information and support to those HEIs.

NTBE's activities are furthermore increasingly taking this dimension into account as the upcoming workshop on 'BTS (i.e. type of short cycle programme): ECTS credits and mobility optimisation' (Bordeaux, 19 June 2012) suggests. This event will be primarily addressed to practitioners in charge of BTS programmes and inspectors (inspecteurs d'académie).

It was also highlighted that despite its diversity the NTBE fails to fully represent the HE sector. There are for instance no experts representing HEIs delivering qualifications under the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Health, Culture, etc. The same applies to the private sector (e.g. Management/Business schools). This is crucial as these providers also implement Bologna-related reforms.

In a context where their role consists more and more in promoting EU programmes, the term 'expert' was furthermore questioned. An interviewee wondered whether they are really experts in EU programmes. Other interviewees questioned the term 'expert' suggesting that e.g. 'facilitators' would be more appropriate.

Lastly, issues regarding the selection (questions about the legitimacy of the national agency as it is only associated to the process when the team has been selected by the national authority) and the lack of visibility of the team were also reported.

2.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

A general consensus was found among interviewees about the quality of the outputs of the NTBE. All interviewees agreed that these outputs have been valuable for supporting the implementation of Bologna reforms over past years. Most relevant outputs were reported in the area of promotional activities. It was indicated that the national agency has organised a large number of such activities in the areas of ECTS labels, Erasmus, DS, learning outcomes, etc. Though the current strategy is to review the size of the workshops organised by the agency in order to target a wider audience, ensuring continuity among past and current NTBE and their deliverables is among the agency's priority actions.

Several interviewees were particularly enthusiastic about a few thematic events which recently took place (e.g. a conference in Lille on joint degrees and another in Strasbourg on learning outcomes). Regional workshops were also claimed to be well attended and very relevant. Steering committee meetings (*reunions de concertation*) which take place every 3 months and involve the NTBE, the national agency, the national authority and other key stakeholders such as CIEP, CPU, etc. were also rated positively.

Example – Conference on 'International joint programmes: challenges and practices in the EHEA'. Lille, 19-20 May 2011.

The National Agency (2e2f) jointly organised with the NTBE an international conference aimed to raise awareness and further exchange on the theme of joint programmes in May 2011. The event brought together 170 participants consisting of higher education experts, academics, project leaders, etc. from several EU but also non-EU countries (such as China, Cameroon ad Madagascar).

Its main purpose was to stimulate exchanges among participants about the implementation of joint programmes (i.e. their designing, technicalities and juridical aspects) in order to offer practical insights to higher education institutions (HEIs). Another complementary issue that was discussed was this of students' learning

outcomes and employability.

These themes were further explored within three workshops (each of them was animated/chaired by practice leaders and a member of the French NTBE):

- Workshop 1: From European comparisons to good practice examples
- Workshop 2: Joint programmes' technicalities and juridical framework
- Workshop 3: Expected skills and employability

The event resulted in a set of recommendations for (future) actions in the area at EU, national, HEIs and employers level.

On the national agency and BE side, positive feeling from beneficiaries was also largely perceived. It was indicated that beneficiaries were keen on dissemination events and ad hoc support services (focusing on ECTS and DS labels; supporting curricula conversion into learning outcomes at both university and short cycle provider's level, etc.).

At beneficiary level, the way the NTBE and the national agency supply and disseminate information was considered '*efficient, concise and accurate*'. As such, BE are often claimed to be good 'Bologna ambassadors'.

Regarding outputs monitoring, most interviewees felt that this is carried out efficiently. Each participant in NTBE's events is invited to fill in a questionnaire rating individual events. Completed questionnaires are stored and findings assembled by the national agency. Overall, it was said that satisfaction rate is high. Key trends are then discussed among the NTBE who meet within coordination meetings (involving the NTBE and the national agency).

Lack of time was however reported as one of the main barriers. A few interviewees reported that a team of 18 experts supposed to spread knowledge and expertise among the whole HE sector is a complex task for people who cannot dedicate much time to this, as they fulfil this mission in addition to regular professional activities. Their involvement as BE should be also better valued across their career, as they gain no recognition from their involvement in the NTBE at the moment.

It was also argued that coordinating a more heterogeneous NTBE is not always easy, as interaction among new and former BE greatly depends on their skills, personality, network, etc. As noted above, the NTBE and their activities suffer from a lack of visibility. As such, measuring the quality of their activities at HEI level on a systematic basis is not an obvious task. In this regard, need for improved coordination among the NTBE, the national authority and the national agency was suggested by several interviewees.

2.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

On the whole it was agreed that the team has successfully established a link between French and EU reforms, since its establishment in 2005.

Impacts were said to have increased over time. In 2006 Bologna was hardly known. Stakeholders were familiar with LMD but the link with Bologna was not clear.

Examples of impacts were given regarding recognition (ECTS and DS):

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- In 2010, there was a real turning point, concerning the Diploma Supplement, following a seminar organised by the team. The event was fully subscribed and followed by many requests from universities. There has been since then a real demand from HEIs to understand the tool, whilst the National authority clearly supports actions in this area.
 - Regional seminars on ECTS also played an important role whilst demands from key stakeholders (such as CPU, see further details in the example set out below) for BE's inputs to be fed into working documents have risen increasingly.

This said most interviewees considered that the impacts of NTBE are difficult to measure at HEI level, seeing the diversity of their profile, status and missions.

The lack of visibility of the NTBE also makes that BE might have been perceived as 'dogmatic' by HEIs. They are often (and mistakenly) seen as having a tendency to tell HEIs what they should do and how they should do it. According to an interviewee, '*to have a stronger impact on HEIs it is very important to explain the context/rationale of the tools promoted, e.g. what is the added value of the diploma supplement, how does it contribute to convergence, to mobility?*'.

Conversely, it was found that the impacts of the NTBE are more easily measured at national level. At this level, BE aim to make sure that the EU dimension is not forgotten in decisions or in projects (e.g. design of an education and training offer catalogue at national level). The added value of events such as thematic conferences held at national level was commonly reported. These events usually target all HEIs (but also students, policy makers and other interested parties) by themes of interest.

BE's difficulty in positioning themselves vis-à-vis the reforms they are supposed to promote was frequently reported as amongst the main obstacles. Several interviewees stressed that strengthening dialogue and cooperation between the NTBE, policy makers and key HEI management staff would be crucial. According to them, doing so would help reinforce the legitimacy, visibility and thus impact of the NTBE. Recent progress was however pointed in this area by an interviewee. Another difficulty hampering the impact of the team concerns the limited number of experts (i.e. such a small team cannot be expected to have impact upon hundreds of HEIs, including 82 universities).

2.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Roles relating to the management of the NTBE are distributed as follows in France:

- BE are selected by the National authority
- BE are appointed by the National authority and agency (once the proposal has been accepted by the EACEA)
- The Action Plan of the NTBE is jointly prepared by the National authority, the national agency (2e2f agency) and the BE and formally approved by the national authority
- Further organisational and monitoring tasks are carried out by the National agency

Considering the way NTBE's management is perceived, the following findings emerged from interviews:

Regarding the management of organisational and monitoring tasks undertaken by the national agency, it was felt that this works well. Several interviewees confirmed that

information supplied by the agency is clear, prompt, and up-to-date; activities are well organised and followed-up; no delays in payment/reimbursement to BE were reported. On this last point, an interviewee noted that progress was made since 2009 where such delays were regularly encountered. A need for improving visibility of the NTBE (through e.g. the 2e2f website and 'Soleo' newsletter, etc.) was however pointed out.

The organisation of coordination and steering (*reunions de concertation*) meetings which enable the NTBE to benefit from regular exchanges on topics of interest with its key partners (i.e. the national agency in the first case; the national agency, the national authority and other key stakeholders in the second) was also rated positively.

Considering approaches aimed to foster interaction among the new NTBE, it was felt that it is a time-consuming learning process seeing the diversity of profiles involved. The national buddy scheme (introduced in September 2011) consisting of a more structured system (i.e. getting former BE transferring knowledge to new ones) was considered relevant, though time-consuming for both former BE and the national agency. On the whole, it was said that this might help to build a more systematic, coherent discourse/approach in future. According to an interviewee '*the key issue is that whichever expert provides support to HEIs, the level of expertise and the discourse should be the same*'.

Main concerns were about the efficiency/relevance of the tripartite organisation (i.e. NTBE embedded between the national agency and authority). A few interviewees reported a lack of clarity with regard to NTBE's missions towards the national authority (i.e. how do BE position themselves vis-à-vis the political level? Are they accountable to anyone? Why aren't they more consulted by the national authority to support decision-making on themes of mutual interest?). It was however acknowledged that closer links have been built with the national authority for the past two years (i.e. the latter '*paying more attention to the NTBE*' than earlier).

Meanwhile, it was also revealed that since the designation of both a new head of the national agency and a new NTBE coordinator as from early 2011, the overall management process is changing. Though it is too early to comment on how things may evolve, a new cooperation process is clearly being put in place whilst the agency is taking a more voluntary approach to coordination, with a more prominent role.

In this regard, an interviewee questioned the legitimacy of the national agency for coordinating the NTBE arguing that '*this agency has no legitimacy in terms of HE reforms in the eye of many HEI stakeholders* (i.e. *the agency has no mandate to address HEIs' issues such as training and research, curriculum design, etc. which are at the core of their missions*). As such the agency is rather a body 'operationalising' European programmes, which is questionable in the context of Bologna-related reforms.

In the same vein, another interviewee pointed that the agency's coordinating staff members may suffer from a lack of legitimacy towards the BE as neither the actual NTBE coordinator nor the head of the agency have any specific expertise in the area of Bologna, as opposed to the former head of the agency who was a former BE.

2.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs) were positively rated by most interviewees. It was found that training seminars organised in this context are valuable as they allow the NTBE to identify and exchange with their peers in other EU countries on

success stories and challenges encountered. Whilst NBTE's activities are nationally-centred, those supplied through the IPHERs initiative are meant to foster knowledge and mutual learning on Bologna towards the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

As such, IPHERs' activities are perceived as necessary and complementary outputs for the NTBE. Whilst alternative evidence-base at European level is also regularly referred to by the NTBE (publications issued by EUA and ACA were most commonly reported) several interviewees were convinced of the added value of IPHERs and of the need to maintain them in the future. An interviewee noted that IPHER activities could take place more often; another was not supportive at all.

According to some interviewees, differences in terms of quality and level of knowledge were however found between IPHERs activities undertaken before and after 2007 (i.e. respectively contracted to EUA and UNICA). It was pointed that though suitable for newcomers, the level of expertise of organisers and speakers was not appropriate for more senior experts among participants. An interviewee reported to have learnt more from peers in his/her country than from recent IPHER training seminars. In this regard, it was suggested to establish a management committee (building upon the expertise of senior experts), such as in the Tuning projects, for IPHERs' developments in the future. It would also be worth encouraging more cross-country activities (such as team twinning) or thematic working groups.

These views were not reflected by the national agency's representative who was complimentary about IPHERs training seminars, indicating that the French NTBE actively participates in these events. It was mentioned that both the agency and a member of the NTBE keep the whole team regularly informed of activities carried out by IPHER. Decisions about who participates in each event are taken informally, but priority is given to new BEs. Two interviewees also suggested that the participation of BFUG representatives in IPHER seminars would merit further exploration.

2.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The funding available for managing the NTBE and its activities was considered sufficient by most interviewees. The agency reported that its staff members supporting the management of the NTBE (i.e. the coordinator – officially devoting 45% of her time to the NTBE – and an administrative assistant – working 50% for the NTBE) are civil servants, and as such paid by the central level. Other expenses are covered by LLP funding. No further details were obtained on how the budget is distributed.

Another interviewee noted that a shift was observed in the way decisions are taken to allocate budget. Between 2005 and 2011, decisions generally resulted from a joint consultation between the BE designated as coordinator of the team and the agency. Since 2011, these decisions are rather taken unilaterally by the agency.

As said above, lack of time - more than budget - was seen as a major constraint, as experts are overloaded. Though acknowledging that the funding available is suitable, an interviewee pointed that the per diem allocated to the BE should be revised as they are incredibly burdensome. Amounts allocated are also too low compared with the real costs incurred by experts: their missions often ending up costing them money.

On the whole, it was agreed that the NTBE would not work without LLP funding. It was felt that the EU added value is in the fact that it enables experts to meet with their peers in other countries, getting them aware of what is undertaken and how in other Member

States. This European identity is seen as essential as it gives legitimacy to experts in terms of the '*added value they can bring to HEIs*'.

2.8 Future of the initiative

As stated above, the value of the NTBE and their outputs was widely acknowledged by all interviewees.

Areas where progress is needed mainly consist of clarifying or improving NTBE's:

- mandate/positioning towards the national authority and national agency
- mission and profile (i.e. to better address the diversity of profiles among the current NTBE and the shift towards promoting EU programmes in addition to ensuring promotional activities and tailored support services on Bologna themes)
- communication, as the team suffers from a lack of visibility

With regard to redefining the mandate of the NTBE, several interviewees suggested that what BE are expected to do should be made explicit, as the competences needed are not the same if the experts are supposed to promote EU developments/reforms among national policy makers (i.e. europeanisation of national policies) or support the implementation of national reforms within HEIs. Once this role is clarified, their profile should be easier to determine. Their mission statement (*lettre de mission*), issued by the national authority, should be made clearer as well. Doing so would help avoid potential conflicts of interests. Cooperation with the national authority and key stakeholders (e.g. AERES, CPU, etc.) should be strengthened and the NTBE consulted more frequently to support decision-making.

It was also widely felt that the term 'expert' should be re-considered. In 2011, the Bologna process is beyond its initial stage where much was to be made in terms of promotion and awareness raising. Though promotional activities are still needed, the process has now reached the phase where practitioners need concrete tools to design qualifications, implement technical aspects, etc. whilst the European Commission has expanded its mission towards promoting EU programmes or initiatives of interest for the EHEA. As such, the current context raises the question of the legitimacy of the team of experts. In this regard, an interviewee suggested that BE should rather become "mediators" or "facilitators" who would bring high level of expertise on the content (technical aspects) of the process.

Regarding their profile, most interviewees supported the idea that BE experts should retain their professional position to keep their connection with the academic world and remain independent academic actors mainly serving the Bologna process. As noted above, time constraints should be also addressed to allow them better fulfil their mission. No interviewee was found to support the idea of professionalising the NTBE (i.e. who would work full-time acting as professional evaluators or administrators). Two interviewees noted that getting full-time BE would be not only more expensive but would also undermine BE's legitimacy (i.e. these would not be perceived as peers by universities). The option consisting of having an expert among the NTBE who would work part-time and be the main contact point for the whole team was however indicated by two interviewees. A few interviewees also pointed out that the profile of the NTBE might be further refined as there will be a need to be open to and aware of HE developments beyond Europe.

The visibility of the NTBE should be also improved as suggested above. Doing this should allow the NTBE act as real intermediaries between policy reforms and priority actions and developments at HEI level.

To the question on what the added value of the NTBE could be within next 5-10 years, most interviewees agreed that NTBE's activities should be maintained as there is both a real need for strengthening cooperation between European HEIs (especially in the context of international competition) and a scope for continuing to promote European values in the context of the construction of the EHEA.

3 Germany

3.1 Introduction

The German National Team of Bologna Experts (NTBE) currently consists of 18 Experts. DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) is in charge of the implementation of Bologna initiatives by the European Commission. The BMBF and the European Commission fund the initiative jointly. The German case study consisted of ten interviews. In addition to the National Agency, BEs, an employer representative, a national authority, stakeholders and representatives of HEI have been interviewed. The interviews have been conducted on the basis of a structured interview guide and are recorded in writing.

3.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

According to the National Agency, the BEs in Germany work in general on all topics covered by the measure. However, the main topics for BEs in Germany are the shift towards learning outcomes, recognition of study abroad results, and ECTS user guides.

In Germany, learning outcomes are hardly understood as a concept, as the main focus is on learning inputs. The National Agency organises international and bilateral events that show the difference in the perception of input vs. outcome orientation. This paradigm shift is hard to establish in German HEI, and in this respect German HEI in the view of some experts seem to be a bit behind other countries.

A second critical issue for BEs is recognition of study abroad results. German HEIs are fairly restrictive in recognising results gained in study abroad measures. Studies show that the majority of exchange students do not get their results recognised by national HEI, especially because of HEI and professors unwilling to recognise them.

ECTS user guides are another important issue. All questions related to the ECTS system like grading, modularisation etc. still need to be better explained to the HEIs. In particular the meaning of ECTS is hardly understood by a lot of German HEIs and professors. The Bologna Experts interviewed confirm this assessment of important topics, putting emphasis on the overall modernisation of the HEI sector, definition of learning outcomes and recognition. In contrast to international mobility, where BEs have no direct means of action, the consulted national authority also sees recognition as an important topic where BEs can be useful.

In the future, learning outcomes will become even more of a critical issue, as well as the recognition of dynamism in modern study programmes which need permanent quality assurance and adjustments of curricula. Additional important topics in the future are the facilitation of study exchanges, meaning the reduction of barriers in six semester bachelor programmes in order to extend the number of exchange students. According to interviewees German HEIs face a reduction in students participating in study abroad programmes with the introduction of the Bachelor – Master scheme.

Regarding the format of the NTBE, most interviewees see potential for enhancement. Although it is generally a good approach, the BEs work is based too much at the "grass roots" and too detailed to be able to influence the general discussion, and to reach out to

all of the HEI community. NTBE lacks the political recognition needed to really have an impact on the implementation of the Bologna process in Germany. Interviewees proposed that, in the future, an individual who is publicly known and visible could be chosen as director of NTBE and would be recognised by the public.

At the moment, target groups include a number of different stakeholders of the HEI community. The majority of interviewees suggest a strengthened focus on university professors, as they are frequently at the centre of Bologna opposition as well as on the real administrative decision makers in HEI, which are rarely sent to NTBE events. Policy makers could be another target group to focus on, but they often receive their information directly from the European Commission and it would thus be a waste of time to focus on them.

The current profile of the German BEs is generally considered well chosen and balanced. Nevertheless, interviewees note problems arising from inadequate communication skills, the participation of retired university staff (as they are no longer up-to-date and could therefore seem to be not credible enough to information recipients) as well as the fact that the German NTBE does not represent all disciplines. An increase of professionalism of the BEs in respect of consulting, methodology and adult-training approaches has been noted, however that conflicts with the interest in academia to maintain voluntary peer systems – a problem which could negatively affect the experts' credibility in academia. One possible solution to the involvement of retired BEs could be a policy that states that no expert should have been retired for longer than 5 years.

In Germany, a number of sources about higher education reform exist. Notably, the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK), which is the assembly of ministers for education of each Bundesland in Germany, the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK), which is the voluntary association of state and state-recognised HEIs in Germany and the Akkreditierungsrat, which is the national body in charge for the management of accreditations in Germany. According to interviewees, these organisations used to give information about Bologna, but their services are not comparable to NTBE.

3.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Interviewed BEs, approved by the representative of the National Agency, see their main output in providing impartial information about the Bologna process, with the majority of activities taking place at the micro level (for example consulting sessions) but also in the form of larger workshops. Although the advisory activities seemed to have a limited scope, they were effective in the respective cases, according to the BEs.

An independent judgement on output is difficult, as it is not quantitatively measured besides the reporting of the number of events conducted. Participant numbers are not recorded.

Three HEI used the German NTBE's services in order to conduct information activities at their institutions. Although they were generally satisfied with the services offered by the BEs, interviewees stated that the BE were rarely able to answer specific questions, such as in the area of mobility.

Other stakeholders report that they invite BEs, or have noticed that BEs were invited, to conferences or workshops relevant to higher education. The respective BEs showed competencies, and the status as a member of NTBE was an add-on of minor importance

in regard to competency proof. It was frequently stated that the BEs would have been invited to an event even had they not been an official BE.

Main barriers to the implementation of the NTBE work-plans that were identified by BEs, are the general feelings against the Bologna process, which in Germany is most of the time considered by HEI and students as a huge bureaucratic, useless reform; the lack of interest of administrative and political higher education bodies concerning NTBE as well as the general lack of publicity. Furthermore, BEs noted that the German NTBE does not promote itself as a group, but acts rather on an individual level, therefore diminishing the measures' effectiveness.

Suggestions for improvement include an increase in press relations efforts as well as selecting future NTBEs with regard to possible positions in higher education councils of future BEs.

Concerning the quality of BE activities, the interviewed BEs, as well as the national agency, think the quality of their efforts to be "generally good". Other stakeholders that participated in NTBE events also attribute "good quality", remarking that they were well planned, and experts provided substantial information, as well as recommending the general performance as information providers.

Nevertheless, problems can arise when a BE is currently focusing on a specific topic of the Bologna process that might take a stronger focus position than adequate. Additionally, if the level of knowledge in the audience of an NTBE event differs, its effectiveness can be diminished.

Main barriers to the delivery of high-quality support on the Bologna process that BEs encounter are on one hand of an external nature, such as lecturers or other HEI staff blocking information on Bologna, and on the other hand of an internal nature, for example slow realisation of decisions made at regular meetings between BEs in respect to future activities.

As is confirmed by the National Agency, there is no systematic quality or impact measurement of BE activities in Germany. The National Agency only collects reports (for example feedback forms, documentation of activities) from BEs individually, and then those reports are discussed at BE meetings.

The main challenge in quality monitoring is therefore that no substantial quality monitoring exists. Individual evaluation is opposed by the National Agency, because it would lead to a kind of grading of their respective activities. Also, the heterogeneous quality of the individual BEs is a direct outcome of their different profiles. Nevertheless, BEs note that this form of quality management also has its deficiencies, because it is difficult to objectively assess behaviour of all BEs.

3.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The assessment of the impacts of the German NTBE differs substantially between the consulted actors. A majority of the consulted Bologna Experts thinks that they increased general understanding of the Bologna reform. Especially at university levels, NTBE had the strongest impact, according to one BE, because they are able to reach the actual "realisers" of higher education reform. There is a number of actors that regularly sign in at events and workshops with inputs given by BEs. The consulted national authority states that the exchange with BEs was very useful and had a good impact on him,

leading him to adopt suggestions of BEs in the political process concerning higher education reform.

"Internationalisation at home" - Germany

At the Technical University Braunschweig the NTBE activity "Internationalisation at home" aimed at offering information and advice about internationalisation for non-mobile students. The largest employer in the region, Volkswagen, recruits a large share of its employees from TU Braunschweig and being a multi-national, needs internationally focused Human Resources. Therefore, providing students who are not able to participate in exchange programmes with the possibility to integrate foreign language modules in their programmes as well as information sessions on other EU-countries is of great importance for the university and has since become an important topic with high resonance also in the student body.

"Bologna under scrutiny" - Germany

The activity "Bologna under scrutiny" consists of 3 or 5 experts "infiltrating" a higher education institution usually for a day and conducting workshops with stakeholders from universities, and BEs contributing with talks etc.

Nevertheless, on a national level the impact has been much less accentuated, as another BE confirms. Although it provides a "political corrective" to mainstream opinion of the Bologna process in Germany, the impact on modernisation of higher education has been limited in the last years. As another stakeholder puts it, BEs provide only generic information. The implementation of the Bologna reform was primarily discussed on structural and institutional issues, where the BEs could not contribute because of the heated political nature of the national debate.

Interviewed representatives of HEI that received consultancy from BEs stated that they find it difficult to judge whether there was a true impact. They rather seemed to have ignited discussions between academic and institutional HEI staff on the respective topics.

One of the reasons for the differences in impact cited by BEs is the non-existence of an official status of BEs. This has led in the past to situations where BEs were not invited to national conferences covering the Bologna process, because they were simply not deemed important enough. Furthermore, on an institutional level, the main barrier according to one BE is the low popularity of the German NTBE leading to a low demand for consulting activities by BEs. On a policy level, the popularity varied in the different Bundesländer and on the federal level, NTBE lacked assertiveness in order to pervade both public as well as professional debate on the Bologna process. Other stakeholders suggested that the lack of success of NTBE is not really connected to internal barriers but rather to the federal education system. If there were a central authority governing all universities in respect to higher education reform, it would be easier to inform it. Some suggest that the main barrier is the gap between the large scope of topics as well as the multitude of higher education actors and the relatively small number of experts. For example, two student BEs are not enough to effectively reach the whole student body.

The critique that demand for NTBE is too low is incorrect, according to the national authority, because the BEs have to be proactive. Another stakeholder suggests that the role of the BEs could be strengthened if they could gain acceptance as an official advisory body.

According to the majority of participants in the case study, the impact of NTBE in Germany has not substantially changed over time. As one BE notes, the fundamental critique of Bologna diminished over time and people seemed to accept the process and pursued more detailed questions about the reform, therefore allowing BEs to have a larger impact on the micro-scale; but again with a limited scope of outreach due to the small staff. Thus, NTBE's impact today can be more accurately described as fine-tuning, as the larger implications of the Bologna process are now known to HEIs.

3.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Management of NTBE in Germany is considered effective by the majority of consulted Bologna Experts. There was one complaint that information on existing allowance for special expenditures was not provided and therefore the BE had to pay these costs.

The national agency sees its efficiency hindered by the exigencies of the Commission in regard to proposal writing and reports, deeming it too detailed and too extended. Furthermore, cost reporting is burdensome, and lump sum payments would be much easier to handle.

Barriers to more effective management are identified in opaque process flows, as BEs for example are not getting information about reports to the Commission. Another barrier to effective management mentioned by BEs consists of the different treatment of student experts and professor experts. The agency identifies a main barrier in the high personal administrative cost, which is not at all covered by the Commission's contribution, but in Germany is fortunately covered by BMBF co-funds to DAAD.

In order to overcome these barriers, the national agency suggests that the Commission ought to cover higher personal costs, especially for countries where other commitments such as that of BMBF are not available. In respect to the other barriers, the BEs suggest that the level of information provision inside the NTBE, including the national agency, should be brought to the same level in addition to more transparent reporting procedures.

Concerning other formal or informal National Bologna Committees in Germany, case study participants uniformly referred to the "Hochschul-Begleiter", jointly chaired by KMK and BMBF. BEs suggested it would be advantageous to participate in their activities as NTBE.

3.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

According to the national agency, there is no link between the IPHERs and the activities of the NTBE. Although there are attempts to realise a link with UNICA seminars, this is hardly effective. The concept does not work, and there is only informal exchange among the involved actors. The seminars showed that TEMPUS actors prefer to work rather internally than to get an exchange with NTBEs.

BEs seldom participate in IPHER seminars due to their basic quality. The national agency tried to send 2 to 3 BEs per seminar, but at the end most of the BEs show no interest in participating. This is contrary to a statement of a consulted BE who said that each BE is allowed to participate in a workshop only once a year and for this reason generally only one German BE visits each workshop. The BE thinks that budget considerations are the reason for this "workshop limitation". Another BE criticised the limitation of 3 BEs for each event, hinting at the fact that usually more than three BEs show interest in participating at these events. Nevertheless, the national agency is in favour of splitting IPHER from NTBEs activities and believes that NTBEs in other countries think the same.

Representatives of the national agency occasionally take part in those seminars and for two years they have held a meeting of members of the national agency ahead of the seminars.

The national agency states that other stakeholders have their own platforms. However, BEs suggest that student representatives, professors or stakeholders such as a KMK or HRK representative should also be allowed to be invited to the seminars.

The German NTBE, according to the national agency, does not use Virtual Community. A reason for this is that the whole process is not subject to moderation or organisation. Furthermore, it is not transparent who has access to the platform, keeping BEs from using it.

German NTBE makes more use of the Commission's materials than of IPHER materials.

Suggestions for improvement of IPHER support to NTBE include earlier publication of conference dates, as well as the transmission of recent policy debates to the BEs.

In consequence to the apparent little use of IPHERs, most consulted BEs, as well as the national agency (which even favours a split), think that the German NTBE could manage without the support of IPHERs. However, one BE thinks that the added value of the workshop is significant. In order to be attractive in the future, IPHERs would have to be less complex, and workshops should be divided in different country groups according to their structures. Also, International exchange between national teams of BE among themselves and with the commission should be coordinated at the national level. It would be better to have several bi- or trilateral meetings instead of huge conferences.

As an alternative to the IPHERs for information on European developments in higher education, BEs cite the bilateral meetings as well as material from European Commission, HRK, KMK, European Students Union, EUA, and communication with people working at the Bologna secretariat and the scientific discourse in general.

3.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

According to the national agency the majority of the total budget dedicated to management activities has to be seen in the total funding of the agency. They use about 5 per cent of the EU budget for management whilst most of the management cost is covered by a separate BMBF project. So in total about 25 per cent of the budget by EU and BMBF is used for project management affairs. Accordingly 75 per cent is used for core activities (about 70 per cent) as well as training the experts (about 5 per cent).

The national agency is co-funded by BMBF, slightly more than 50 per cent. Regarding future criteria for funding allocation, financing of the German NTBE is always higher from co-funding plus synergy effects that come from other national measures. Thus the total

funding is a mixture from a variety of sources. The national agency prefers LLP funding, meaning that it could be difficult to continue without it.

German BEs seldom act in other countries. However, all consulted BEs suggest a prioritisation of international activities, meaning that NTBEs could learn from each other on a bi-national basis.

Asked about whether they would pay for NTBE services, HEIs report that this depends on the quality complexity of the services. However one representative stated that his HEI would not pay for NTBE services.

3.8 Future of the initiative

With the exception of one consulted stakeholder all participants in the case study oppose a professionalised model for Bologna Experts. The national agency for instance argues that the current profile of BEs is accepted by HEI. The current mode therefore enhances their recognition by HEIs. A part-time personnel budget in order to allow for a teaching load reduction would be preferable. The BEs argue in the same direction, adding that full-time professionals would also not have the current affiliations such as student and employer representatives. Other stakeholders add that with the current budget only 1-2 staff could be financed. The national authority agrees that it would be difficult to reach the same scope of BEs. The part-time nature allows them to network and to act as multipliers. It even suggests that more BEs should be added to the NTBE. Only one consulted stakeholder is in favour of the professional model, arguing that the impact of BEs would be much stronger with such a profile. Nevertheless the stakeholder admits that this would increase entrance barriers in the HEI world.

Asked about the possible added value of the NTBE initiative over the next 5-10 years, the national agency suggests a system where events are planned and managed on a European level, for example an event that presents the results of this evaluation and opens a discussion on the future of measures to take. The BEs think that securing the provision of information should be a priority. Dissemination of information at all levels – both institutional as well as policy - would provide an added value of NTBE. One BE would consider it a huge mistake to prematurely regard the Bologna process as completed. As the representative of the national authority puts it, the main difficulty is not the realisation of Bologna but rather the implementation, and to guarantee the quality of Bologna implementation. That is a factor where BEs could be helpful. Another stakeholder sees the evaluation of the performance and impact of quality assurance actions in HEI in compliance with the Bologna reform as a future field for transnational teams of BEs.

4 Hungary

4.1 Introduction

Hungarian higher education institutions are autonomous and recognised by the State. The system is made of around 70 universities and colleges, financed by the state, and private organisations or religious institutions. Before Bologna, the duration of college programmes was usually shorter (3-4 years) than universities' (4-6 years). Since December 2004, when the Bologna three cycle degree structure was adopted, all main fields of study have been implemented in accordance with this new system, with exceptions for medicine, pharmacy, and a few other programmes that are organised according to the previous longer single-cycle structure of 5-6 years.¹ In 2008, Bologna and pre-Bologna type programmes were still running in parallel. Both universities and colleges may offer courses in all three cycles within the Bologna system. Universities are expected to carry out scientific research, offer Master courses in minimum two fields of study, and offer Doctorate courses as well as to grant Doctoral degrees.² Colleges are expected to organise more than one training course in a sub-section of science or in a field of the arts. For Bachelor and Master Degree holders, Hungarian higher education institutions may offer postgraduate specialised training resulting in a 60-120 ECTS credits specialised qualification. The ECTS credit system was initially implemented in Hungary in the academic year of 2003/2004 and since then has been the only existing credit system for higher education in Hungary.³ Knowledge assessment is usually undertaken according to a five-grade scale, where (5) signifies excellent and (1) signifies fail. In some cases other comparable systems are used.

In Hungary, there has been a national team of Bologna experts since 2004. The main objectives of the team has been to support the implementation of the Bologna process in Hungarian higher education institutions, as well as to disseminate information and promote activities related to the Bologna process in the framework for the European Higher Education Area.⁴

4.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The National Team of Bologna Experts is overall and on a basic level highly relevant in Hungary, as there is not enough knowledge about the Bologna higher education reform in higher education institutions (HEIs), and as Hungary is at the moment undergoing important reforms/changes in the higher education sector.

¹ LLP National Agency – Tempus public foundation, Higher Education: http://english.tpf.hu/pages/content/index.php?page_id=94

² Ministry of National Resources, The Bologna System: <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/english/the-hungarian-higher/the-bologna-system>

³ LLP National Agency – Tempus public foundation, Higher Education: http://english.tpf.hu/pages/content/index.php?page_id=94

⁴ LLP-DG EAC, EACEA: Final reporting of the National Teams of Bologna Experts in Hungary 2009-2011: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/project_reports/documents/bologna_experts/2011/bas/HU_BAS.pdf

The Hungarian case shows, however, that there are various perceptions among the respondents about the work undertaken by the Hungarian Team of Bologna Experts, as well as of the profiles and professional background of the Bologna Experts (BEs).

The professional background and profiles of the BEs are considered appropriate as the Hungarian expert group contains people from HEI management, the Ministry of National Resources, as well as academics, student representatives and other stakeholders. Moreover, the composition of the group is regularly revised to assure coverage of different topics. The experts usually have a very good reputation in their respective fields, although it is not clear whether they are known as Bologna experts or simply just well known.

While higher education stakeholders in general, and especially students enrolled in higher education, have heard about the Bologna process, there is extremely little information in the public media about the NTBE initiative and very few people know about the existence of both the initiative and the specific objectives of the BEs. Most people outside of the LLP National Agency do not know what the NTBE initiative is, and the initiative is generally not covered in the public media. Students at HEIs who are familiar with the Erasmus programme might have heard about the NTBE or might even have been in contact with a BE, but not necessarily. Even in higher education institutions information about the BEs is usually very scarce. Generally, people who are not familiar with or in some way connected to the LLP National Agency do not have any knowledge about the NTBE. However, publications and other results of the work of the NTBE are according to some of the interviewees relatively well disseminated, although people do generally not know that these are outputs from the NTBE. Instead, as the brand of Bologna Experts is not known, they are considered simply to be the result of the work of the LLP National Agency,

Modernisation in higher education is according to the interviewees regarded in the context of the need to keep up with international developments and to continue being involved in and also strengthen international cooperation in the framework for the higher education reform.

Generally, mobility is the theme that is currently prioritised and mentioned by most of the interviewees – both within and outside of academia – as being a crucial priority for the NTBE now and in the future. More specifically, respondents have mainly referred to the Erasmus Programme with regards to mobility. The priority at the LLP National Agency is also mobility, and although few Hungarian students are going abroad for studies (only around 2 % of the students in Hungary make use of the Erasmus programme⁵, partly because of a lack of funding), mobility towards Hungary is even less frequent. The fundament of the Erasmus programme is considered to be good, and two interviewees mentioned the Youth on the Move programme as well in this context. The interviewees agreed on that the awareness of the Erasmus programme is not solely a result of the NTBE; HEIs in Hungary have since many years been aware of this programme and students interested in international cooperation and studies abroad have often searched for information themselves independent of the BEs. One interviewee mentioned that there are some problems still with the transferability and recognition of foreign studies in Hungary, and that this results in fewer Hungarian students studying abroad through the Erasmus programme. Thus, recognition issues should be a prioritised theme in the future.

⁵ Data provided by one interviewee

To work with quality assurance is considered to be of high importance and is done to a large extent today. One interviewee mentioned that there is a need for Master programmes to be evaluated by BEs in order to ensure that the structure and implementation of the degree is in line with the higher education reform regulations. Also, the implementation and internationalisation of the European and national qualifications frameworks (EQF/NQF) should be developed more. However, this is not fully in line with the current Government's priorities. According to the interviewees there are mainly three problems facing the current development of the NTBE initiative in Hungary:

1. There is a gap between the Bologna experts and the politicians in the sense that expert recommendations are very rarely taken into account before passing and implementing new laws that concern the higher education reform. This contributes to the policy side lacking understanding of the needs of the higher education sector, as well as a lack of awareness of national and international developments in the field. There is a new HE law that has been introduced by the Government without involving HE institutions on every level. The new law states that all Hungarian students who study at Hungarian universities have to stay and work in Hungary after having finished the studies for twice the time of the study programme. This impedes international movement, and the law is in direct conflict with the whole idea of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), for example. The new law will be implemented as from September 2012 and it furthermore cuts the number of places in all state universities in any university programme.
2. The Bologna experts are often too far away from the HEIs in the sense that their activities mostly take place outside of higher education institutions where their expertise, advice and assistance would be needed.

In the beginning of the introduction of the NTBE initiative, there was a NTBE work programme developed by the LLP National Agency, containing visits to higher education institutions, organising workshops and seminars on the mobilisation theme, and questionnaires were provided to seminar participants on what themes to cover in these events. According to one interviewee, today the NTBE cannot work as proactively anymore, because government financial support continuously decreases.

The LLP National Agency regularly organises workshops, seminars and trainings about the developments in the Bologna reform, to which Bologna experts, academics and other stakeholders are invited both as participants and as speakers. Various people are also invited to participate in focus groups, such as quality assurance bodies, Erasmus organisers, and regional groups with people involved in mobility programmes and exchange programmes (from Austria, Czech Republic, and Slovakia). There are, however, not enough meetings for the Bologna experts to meet separately.

There has been a clear change of attitude among those students and other participants that have taken part in these kinds of workshops and seminars; after having participated they understood the Bologna Process better than before. Therefore, these awareness raising workshops have been effective and should be prioritised also in the future. Several interviewees suggested, however, that the organisation of the trainings,

seminars and meetings needs to be even more powerful and structured for a better dissemination of information. One HEI suggested that information about the work of the Bologna experts should be spread through digital sources to higher education institutions as a form of awareness raising activity. Several interviewees have had positive experience with getting assistance from a BE on specific relevant issues directly in their HE institution, and they suggest that this type of close relationship with the BEs would be more adequate both from the perspective of the whole NTBE initiative and also considering the benefits that the HEIs gain from a closer collaboration and direct advice.

The main target groups of the Hungarian NTBE are decision makers, HEI staff and management, and the accreditation committee, but according to an interviewee the little information that is provided reaches only students and university teachers, while those who would really need to be more aware of the developments of the higher education reform are the institution leaders and policy makers. Also Carrier Centre leaders and Alumni Network leaders should be target groups of the initiative.

Other sources of information about higher education reform are EHEA initiatives and initiatives run by EHEA and ERA together consisting of working groups focusing on the Bologna process and its implementation. There are Hungarian experts in the EHEA working group on harmonisation.⁶ At the ELTE university in Budapest there is a working group that is focusing specifically on the situation of PhD and Master students. The EUA also organises similar initiatives. Also, one of the HEIs mentioned that there are a few doctoral schools on Bologna process topics. Additionally, the former Hungarian Credit Council that is closed down since November 2011 was a good source of information about higher education reform, and more specifically about the introduction of the ECTS.

4.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

There are several types of outputs mentioned by the interviewees:

- An international working group seminar series. One of the meetings took place in Budapest.
- Participation of HE staff in international events on Bologna topics. This was considered to be an exceptionally important output as participation in these kinds of events would not have been paid for by the university, and as no such funding is available from the government.
- Translation of the ECTS users' guide into Hungarian
- Two universities in Budapest (Corvinus and ELTE) have had workshops together with ELTE on student mobility and quality assurance.
- Research about the use of learning outcomes in higher education in Hungary.
- Research on student services in Hungary.
- Research on internationalisation of higher education in Hungary.
- LLP National Agency workshops and EU-funded research on validation/recognition issues.
- Internal disseminations at a HEI to which colleagues from other higher education institutions were invited.
- A Master Programme in film studies that was developed and created directly with the help of a BE.

⁶ IPHER

There has been confusion around what is the work of the NTBE and about activities that would have taken place regardless of the NTBE initiative. The lack of a clear brand for the BEs in Hungary and an often invisible separation of the NTBE from the LLP National Agency might be a source of confusion considering the work of the NTBE and that of other actors.

The so-called Bologna Books are visible outcomes. These are a series of research reports/publications produced mainly by researchers at HEIs, other stakeholders and BEs together, and published digitally by the LLP National Agency on their web-site. The Bologna books discuss issues related to how the Bologna Process has been and is implemented in Hungarian HEIs, how the process is perceived; advantages, disadvantages, obstacles, and opinions about the implementation. So far, the LLP National Agency has published 8 such reports. However, only two of the people interviewed for this study mentioned the Bologna Books, thus they do not seem to be known broadly.

More generally, one of the main contributions of the NTBE was their assistance in translating and adapting the concepts from the Bologna process into the Hungarian context, and in that way contributing to an improved understanding of these issues in Hungary. Another output was said to be the BEs interactions with HEIs on Bologna process matters. However, a majority of the interviewees did not share this view but rather meant that BE interaction with HEIs is rather limited.

One of the main barriers to the successful implementation of the NTBE work-plans has been the fact that the group does not have an official mandate and that its work does not reflect an official position. The group of experts does not fit into the policy making process. This means that the work of the group cannot and does not influence the official policy, and that the official policy in turn does not support the work of the group. Another barrier is that the scope of the activities and project funding are fairly limited and therefore they cannot reach enough people.

Another output that was mentioned was a BE who showed great flexibility in terms of giving advice to a HEI on how to implement international (EU/Erasmus) regulations on a somewhat inflexible national legislative foundation. The BE knew more about these regulations than the institution in question, and was a great asset in finding a flexible solution.

Most of the participants of this study had a positive view on the quality of the work of the NTBE, but they could not provide concrete information on how quality is monitored. Seminar and event organisers usually provide questionnaires to be filled out after the event, and the various events are generally evaluated very positively by participants. Collecting feedback from events is the only quality monitoring method that was mentioned by the interviewees. An indicator of the good quality of events organised by the LLP National Agency and the BEs is that there is generally a higher interest in activities and events than places offered: for 60 places in an event there are around 80 applicants. The applicants are usually people involved in such research in the HE sector to which the event relates; grant officers, Erasmus coordinators, and teaching and administrative staff.

4.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

It is difficult to point out tangible evidence of impacts at institutional or policy level generated by the NTBE, partly because the NTBE has not worked isolated from other possible sources of influence. It is hence problematic to identify whether changes that have occurred are because of the BEs activities or if these changes would have happened even without the work of the NTBE. Whether or not impact has evolved over time is also a complicated issue, firstly because strong or apparent impacts have not been identified, and secondly because it is clear that although the BEs were more important messengers in the introduction of the Bologna process than they are today, the extent to which this can be interpreted in terms of a variation of the influence made is highly uncertain.

Seemingly, most of the interviewees agree on that the activities of the NTBE have been essential for raising awareness among HEIs about the Bologna reform, even though not all desired target groups seem to have been reached by the information. Policy makers who to some extent have been involved in conferences, seminars or workshops on the higher education reform and the Bologna process organised by the LLP National Agency and the BEs, have shown little or no interest in developing and implementing new laws and regulations in line with the interests of the Hungarian HEI sector. The interviewees discussed possible impacts in terms of that the BEs have had positive influence in certain HEIs, being a source of information about the Bologna process and its contextualisation in Hungary. This can be seen, as a new and stronger awareness of current international higher education reforms. One interviewee, a Bologna expert, cited anecdotal evidence of results of the work of the NTBE, such as a conference on the NQF that he attended. On the conference he collected materials that he further disseminates in particular in his own university. Some universities are by their rectors and senates required to develop internationalisation strategies, and according to one interviewee these universities use the reports published by the LLP National Agency as a basis for this type of work. This is, however, rather speculation than evidence-based fact. Another similar initiative occurs at the higher education research institute at the Corvinus University of Budapest, which organises 2-3 yearly conferences on Bologna related themes, among others on Bologna action lines and the modernisation agenda for higher education. BEs are always invited to these events as lecturers/speakers. With the presence of the BEs, discussions are always interesting and professional. However, the NTBE can in spite of this not reach a real impact because of the previously described problematic standpoint of the government, and because of the fact that the NTBE in Hungary does not have an official mandate.

Moreover, the credit council's role was to support implementation of HE reforms within HEIs, by being an interface between the then Ministry of Education and the HEIs. The body ceased to exist as of November 2011, under the new HE regulation adopted by the current government. As one of the first objectives of the credit council was to introduce ECTS into university curricula; members of the credit council visited HEIs to provide direct assistance. This may be one explanation to why the NTBE initiative has not focused on delivering similar training activities to HEIs (to avoid overlap).

If one impact can be described as a positive change in perception of external experts assisting HEIs, the BEs under the coordination and management of the LLP National Agency were more positively received at the HEIs than their former equivalents from the credit council – the ECTS counsellors – during the time that they were active: 2002-2003. Taking this into account, it is difficult to distinguish between the work of the credit council and the work of the BEs, in terms of impacts and which actor generated the assumed impacts.

Two barriers to reach higher impacts regarding student mobility were put forward by one of the interviewees. As a first obstacle, budgetary issues were mentioned. The government does not allocate enough money to student mobility. Students who would like to go abroad through the Erasmus programme feel a financial insecurity and therefore choose to stay in Hungary. This lesser interest in participation of international study exchange is used by the government as data legitimizing the lack of financial priority given to EU initiated exchange programmes. . The second main obstacle was suggested to be the inflexibility that still dominates recognition and validation of credits and diplomas in Hungary. There is a fear among students that their credit points acquired abroad will not properly be translated into the Hungarian HE system.

The NTBE initiative has become too decentralised and too loose: more EU leadership would be needed in order to build up a more influential group of Bologna experts.

Finally, an internal hierarchy within Hungarian HEIs and conservative viewpoints within HEI management are potential additional barriers for the BEs to achieving an impact. The hierarchy impedes the BEs to move freely and be creative, as every step they take has to be approved by someone. The conservative views among HEI management appeals to the government and gives more reason also on the policy level to “keep things the way they have always been” and oppose any form of external influence or change.

4.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

There are around two or three people at the LLP National Agency who are managing the NTBE in Hungary. The respondents were not aware of any available data or evidence about the effectiveness of the management of the NTBE. Although the conferences and seminars that they offer keep high quality according to participants, there seems to be lacking a strategic plan to base leadership/management upon. Also in this context respondents mentioned the lack of a good relationship between politicians and experts as an inhibiting factor for the creation of a better political leadership in the higher education sector.

The Hungarian Bologna Committee has a role of a professional advisory board and its main task is to coordinate, with the relevant actors, activities that relate to the Bologna process both on a national and international level. Also, it provides a platform for exchange of information for the institutions and groups involved. Ruling under the State Secretariat for Higher Education, it was until two years ago a large and influential body. It used to have 3 sub-committees providing numerous activities. It was never clear though which expert recommendations politicians would take into account when the Committee communicated suggestions from the BEs to the policy makers: implementing recommendations seemed to have happened on an ad-hoc basis lacking a clear strategy or structure. Since a few years ago the Bologna Committee is considerably smaller than it used to be; it has 15 members in total and no sub-committees.

A potential complication in the development of the LLP National Agency and consequently the management of the NTBE is that apart from the Ministry of National Resources three other ministries are involved in setting the budget for the LLP National Agency. The lack of communication between policy makers and the Bologna experts also impedes improvement of the NTBE management. The lack of official mandate also hinders an effective management of the expert group, according to one of the respondents.

Only one of the interviewees was knowledgeable about the transfer of management of the NTBE initiative from the European Commission (EC) to the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The respondent considered that the management by EACEA is good and that the time laps between sending a query and getting a response, as well as receiving payments on time are satisfactory. The LLP National Agency has a rule to pay within 30 days of receiving an invoice, and respond to queries within 72 hours and both rules are respected. The executive agency's communications with the Bologna experts, through the LLP National Agency is generally good. On the whole, administration is generally well managed by the EACEA, even though the agency's understanding of its content could be further improved.

4.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

The contribution of the Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs) to the activities of the NTBE in Hungary is highly unclear. From what one interviewee mentioned, it seems like Hungary is not taking part in many international working groups in which for example the NTBE of various countries come together to share experiences and best practices. The interviewee expressed a high interest and demand for such collaborations.

One interviewee attended an IPHER seminar in 2011, with a theme that was considered to have high relevance. The seminar programme was well prepared covering the main issues on higher education reforms.

In general, participants attending IPHER seminars are often dissatisfied with the training provided as its professional level is considered average. There is a significant repetition of content and topics and in general participants have a feeling that they already know what is being presented in the seminars. The seminars were of better quality when managed by the previous contractor. The content and running of the trainings are reasonable for people with little understanding of issues at stake but not for specialists. The IPHER could better support the National Teams of Bologna Experts by renewing the content of the seminars and trainings provided, and by tackling current and relevant issues more in-depth. Also, working methods should be renewed. Participation in these types of seminars is decided in advance based on the topics, as well as the expertise and interests of the members of the BE team. It would also be useful to invite other stakeholders to these seminars, according to one respondent.

Other sources of information are web-sites, professional conferences and information from Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) and similar bodies.

4.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Interviewees agree that without the LLP funding, the initiative of the NTBEs would not be able to exist in Hungary. The persons involved in the NTBE initiative would probably continue their professional careers but the extent to which they would work on or be involved in Bologna related matters cannot be predicted. Only the compulsory 10 per cent of the national annual budget is allocated to the NTBE initiative,⁷ hence LLP funding is crucial.

⁷ Number given by the LLP National Agency.

Regarding the current distribution of EU-funding based on the number of students per country one interviewee mentioned that there are regional economic differences when it comes to movement of students. As it is costly to study abroad many students cannot afford it. The interviewee suggests that these regional differences should be taken into consideration to a larger extent when allocating funding for student mobility and exchange programmes. Another interviewee suggested that the distribution of EU funding should be based on the quality of applications rather than number of students.

Bologna experts who have participated in seminars, workshops and other events organised by the LLP National Agency or by the NTBE, stated that when they presented material in these events they were offered a small symbolic sum rather than a real payment, and travel expenses could be claimed from the LLP National Agency.

The LLP National Agency is financed both nationally and internationally (EU) and seminars and conferences are usually free of charge for the participants. The agency is, according to one interviewee, in recent years undergoing economic difficulties because the national part of the funding is steadily decreasing. This has caused that current projects run by the agency are more superficial than similar projects in the past.

Another difficulty, in the view of a respondent, is that administration of the NTBE is relatively expensive with rather high associated staff costs of which not all are claimed from EACEA, and training of the experts is also costly. It would be better to fund the NTBE with grants for higher amounts, but to fewer agencies and based on the quality of their action plans.

Most of the participants of this study have never worked with another country's Bologna expert team. One respondent, however, had had extensive cooperation with institutions in the Baltic countries, on accreditation topics, and the cooperation consisted of going to the Baltic countries to provide information. The same respondent has also participated in workshops in Brussels organised by the Hungarian Accreditation Office.

Most of the activities undertaken by the Hungarian NTBE are carried out at national level, and this is seen as a priority also in the future.

4.8 Future of the initiative

The current format of the BEs is by most of the respondents considered optimal. Several part-time experts per country seem to be efficient as their work is closer to national interests. A few interviewees suggest that the BEs should work full time within the HEIs because it is crucial that they are close to and aware of what is going on in the HEI sector. Also, if the BEs were linked to one institution each they could provide more valuable expertise than if they are invited as an external source of information. One respondent proposed that there should be small BE units in HEIs and a body that coordinates their work. This would, however, require more financial support than the amount available today. Another opinion is that the experts, by having a thorough knowledge of related international issues, could add value to the initiative. The current number of the experts is by several respondents regarded as good: more people would be hard to coordinate, and a smaller number would represent too much work.

Most of the interviewees agreed on that the Bologna experts should in the future focus on student and staff mobility and focus on the promotion of international cooperation, but they realised that for this further financial support is needed. One interviewee mentioned that in terms of topics to prioritise in the future the development and use of

the NQF in Hungary as well as improving and understanding what it is, is of high importance.

In terms of general suggestions on added value for the future of the NTBE initiative a number of recommendations were outlined:

- Sharing of best practice with colleagues abroad
- The creation of a national strategy for the effective management and internal efficiency of the Bologna expert group
- Better relationships between politicians and experts
- More systematic training for HEI staff on matters related to the Bologna process
- A better overview of different sources on the Bologna process in English and Hungarian; a type of secretariat for the NTBE
- A newsletter in Hungarian for HEIs about developments related to the Bologna process
- The BEs should be more visible in Hungarian public media
- Better and stronger communication between HEIs and BEs
- Strengthen the role of the LLP National Agency in terms of providing information and reaching out to more people.
- Influence the government to create a national mobility strategy
- Train students about Bologna related issues and in particular mobility opportunities and scholarship schemes under the EU funded programmes. Focus should be on high school students who are about to start university studies.

Finally, one interviewee suggested that the Bologna experts should openly support international- and EU-cooperation in Hungary. This active role as pro-EU messengers or campaigners could also perhaps change the somewhat inflexible and conservative behaviour and views among some HEI directors.

5 Norway

5.1 Introduction

This report is based on interviews undertaken in February 2012 with Bologna Experts (BE), including the Coordinator, current and former members of the BE Group, a student representative, the National Authority and senior managers from higher education institutions (HEIs). In total, eight interviews were completed, of which some were telephone interviews and the rest conducted on site in Bergen and Oslo.

Norway was an early adopter of the Bologna process ideas and reforms, which were closely related to the Norwegian national reform agenda known as the Quality Reform. The Bologna process ministerial meeting was held in Bergen, to underline that fact. This is an important precondition, when examining the relevance of the BE. The implementation of reforms started very early, compared to other countries.

One challenge, frequently mentioned in the interviews, has been the geography. Norway is a vast country and the HE system serves some large and in part sparsely populated regions, meaning that the implementation of the Bologna process could not be done from Oslo. It was necessary to engage people in different parts of the country. When ECTS was introduced different practices were developed at different HEIs. HEIs which develop their own practices lead to a need for national coordination. Bologna itself, the three cycle system, has not been controversial.

5.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Generally speaking, the themes covered by BEs have been regarded as relevant. In particular, Norway has been keen to tackle the issues of recognition. It has been emphasised in interviews that most academics have the ambition to recognise education from other countries. Regarding recognition, the Nordplus Programme has been a valuable experience. Another important theme has been the introduction of the ECTS grading system.

Overall, the initiative was more useful in its earlier phase, e.g. regarding the implementation of ECTS and Diploma Supplement. Later developments, including promotion of EU exchange programmes, seem to have been met with less enthusiasm. One remark in the interviews was that there had been too much focus on technical issues, both from the EU and from the BE themselves. The BE are perceived to have focused on certain themes, such as recognition, rather than on the Bologna process as a whole.

The BE have organised and participated in seminars, of which the overall quality has been good and useful. However, the BE have not been consulted by HEIs to any high degree, probably because they are not well known as a group. HEIs are likely to turn rather to UHR (Rectors' Conference) or the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). There are also some related research environments, especially the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) and at the University of Oslo. Other actors include NOKUT and the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU). Individual BE have been consulted, but not

necessarily because of their status as BE. It is also clear that the BE status has been useful for those particular people, in terms of legitimacy.

The main target group for Norwegian BE is the HEIs, while BE are also expected to advise the Ministry of Education and Research. The contacts between the Ministry and the BE seem not to have been very frequent. Regular meetings (1.5 hours) are held in relation to the BFUG meetings but there appears to be room for improvement regarding communication and discussion about mutual expectations. The role and position of BE in the system could be clearer. Interviewees mentioned that there are several actors in the Bologna process field, but there is a lack of coordination.

BE activities are quite strongly connected to other international HE related activities, such as the Erasmus Programme and the Tuning Project, basically because the same people and the same organisations are involved in different activities. There are, however, no formal links; instead these connections are rather informal.

Overall, interviewees state that there should be a balance between different categories of staff, e.g. on the basis of gender and geography, and BE should be internationally recognised experts in their respective field. It has been mentioned that there has been an imbalance between academics and administrators in the group, suggesting that the group should contain more academic staff. Academics tend to discuss with their peers rather than BE in general or indeed with the Ministry. BE are nominated by the Rectors' Conference and very few nominations have concerned academic staff. It has also been mentioned that some of those academics have not been as committed as one might expect. Obviously, people have to invest some time in the project. While being a vast country in terms of distance, Norway is a small country in terms of the size of the HE sector. Most people know each other.

The group has included student representatives. Generally speaking, they have been active and interested, but the full potential of students has not been realised. There are two national student organisations, which have nominated representatives every second year. The short term has been a problem as such. It takes some time to reach the expert level and the term has been too short for most of the student representatives. There has also been a lack of specific student related tasks to tackle. Some of the students have taken their own initiatives and, for instance, arranged seminars and workshops with other students. Interviewees have stressed the importance of targeting the students more strategically. Students should have more priority in the future work.

5.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The seminars and workshops arranged by the Bologna Experts have been well attended and, as mentioned, successful. Feedback from attendees has been generally positive. There has been a Nordic project with the aim to exchange experiences and contribute to mutual learning. Pressure has been put on quality issues in the implementation of the Bologna process; it is implemented on paper, but there are some concerns whether quality is sufficient. Monitoring seems to focus on the quality challenges in the system, as shown e.g. in the Diploma Supplements. There is a great variety in terms of content, language, structure etc.

Some of the BE have had an advisory role towards HEIs. As mentioned, BE have been less used by the Ministry, which has struggled to find the added value of BE.

One of the challenges has been the level of expertise expected from BE. In order to be requested by people in the HE sector, experts have to have a high level of expertise and deep knowledge about the different parts of the Bologna process, regarding both technical issues and the process as a whole. This can only be obtained through more training for BE.

Another challenge has been to reach all the relevant people at HEIs. The seminars have mainly been attended by administrative staff, not least from the international offices, whereas the academic staff and senior managers have been absent to a high degree. BE have also experienced sceptical views from academic staff at seminars and presentations. Such negative attitudes can partly be explained by a more general EU-scepticism, but also by resistance to, as experienced, top-down initiatives.

There has been a lack of money to visit institutions across Norway. HEIs have had to pay for the activities themselves and they do not necessarily prioritise participation.

5.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The most important impact is the implementation of reforms at the HEI level. At some institutions, the BE seem to have played important roles, for instance regarding the three cycle system. It is striking though that senior managers at HEIs which have not had any BE contact, are neither aware of the work being done by BE, nor aware who they are.

The impact of BE was higher in the beginning, as the three cycle system, the ECTS system and, in particular, the Diploma Supplement were introduced.

One interviewee described the role of BE as facilitators who can advise and also disseminate information about developments and initiatives at EU level. There seems to be a great need for such knowledge in HEIs, but it is also evident that they rather turn to other sources of information at the moment.

The overall impression is that the impact of BE in the Norwegian system could have been higher. There is very little information available about the BE and their specific knowledge, and both academic staff and senior management seem to go to other sources for information. Some of the BE played an important role at some of the HEIs in the beginning of the Bologna Process, when new reforms were to be implemented. The impact at the national level, in relation to the Ministry, is low.

Example – Study time

BE have been active showing how to examine the amount of work expected by students and the time it takes for students to do it. There is a tendency to under-report study time.

A student representative has taken the initiative to set up a network of students.

5.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The coordination of BE activities is based at SIU, which is a public Norwegian agency that promotes international cooperation in education and research.

The management of BE seems to have worked well, and there have been very few critical remarks. On the contrary, a service-minded attitude and helpfulness have characterised the work. The role of the coordinator seems to have been more administrative than managerial. Some interviewees have mentioned the role of the Rectors' Conference in the system. Currently, the rectors nominate BE but the contacts between SIU and the Rectors' Conference could be more developed, especially in relation to the national subject committees (fagråd). Some interviewees noted a certain lack of leadership and strategy in the group. The work has been based almost entirely on initiatives from individual members.

5.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

This part seems to have worked quite well; BE have for instance been offered to go to seminars. The seminar attendance has varied among BE both because of time and of commitment.

At international meetings, some of the BE from Norway have had a feeling of starting from zero again and again, when meeting people from other countries. It has been suggested in the interviews that there should be more clustering with countries with a similar history and a similar status regarding the implementation of the Bologna Process.

5.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The BE budget (€ 340 000 over two years) is distributed as follows (estimation):

- Management 15%
- Training the experts 45%
- Bologna Experts core activities 40%

The LLP funding is based on the number of students, which is not an advantage in a country like Norway with vast areas and a small student population. The travel costs for meetings have been high. It has been suggested that the funding system based on the number of students might be combined with some recognition of the cost level in respective country.

The BE have been de facto co-funded by the respective institution. This goes especially for the coordination at SIU which is heavily subsidised by the agency itself. The Ministry did co-fund BE in an earlier phase, described as seed funding to get started. The team would probably not exist without LLP funding. Also, students do the work as BE on top of everything else.

BE themselves have mentioned lack of time as the main challenge towards reaching out to the system. More funding would enable BE to visit HEIs to a higher degree than today.

5.8 Future of the initiative

Obviously, the future of BE in Norway depends on what the next period of the Bologna process will have as its aims. At the moment, there seems to be more need for

information about the ideas behind the process, "the philosophy of BP", as an interviewee put it. The different parts of the process have been implemented, but the development at the European level should be revisited. Most of the practical issues have already been solved in Norway.

In the future, more focus should be on qualification frameworks and learning exchange and this should to a higher degree be done in the academic environments. Quality assurance is another important theme, and probably increasingly so, in terms of making sure that the students' learning experience is a good as it should be. The crucial step from having quality assurance processes in place to creating a genuine quality culture must be taken. In addition, there seems to be more room for discussion about the Bologna Process as a whole and also the HE Modernisation Agenda.

The most important aim for the future, from the Norwegian perspective, would be to spread the information and experiences to the newer members of the Bologna process. This could also be interesting for other parts of the world, such as South America or the US.

In terms of BE there is a need for more academics in the group, preferably professors or other seniors with a stronger legitimacy in the sector. These people would have a better opportunity to reach out to staff and students.

There were different opinions whether the current model is the best possible or if BE should be full time, professionalised staff with cross-country expertise. Most interviewees thought the current model is feasible, if the right people are on board and, certainly, if they devote time to the project. The peer learning model is all in all relatively well functioning. Having a professionalised model would possibly increase the gap between the BE and the shop floor level. It has however been suggested that the BE leadership could be clearer and more academically oriented.

6 Poland

6.1 Introduction

In 2004, in cooperation with the European Commission, the Minister for National Education and Sport in Poland appointed the first team of Bologna Promoters (11) to support and promote the objectives of the Bologna Process in Poland.

Since its beginning, the Polish team grew to 22 members who are supported by the Foundation for the Development of Education System (once the National Agency for Socrates-Erasmus), which acts as the administrator of the Team's activities.⁸ The NTBE composition can be found at <http://ekspercibolonscy.org.pl/sklad-zespolu>.

6.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The themes covered by the NTBE changed over time in order to grasp the current needs of the Polish HE sector. In the past, the implementation of the two-cycle degree system and the ECTS-compatible credit systems were a priority.⁹ More recently, the weight has shifted towards the implementation of the NQF, which is one of the main pillars of the HE reform in Poland. These themes are also indirectly related to other aspects of the reform, such as learning outcomes, quality of education through internal quality assurance systems, and planning studies in the context of HEIs greater autonomy. Given the initial stage of the NQF implementation in Poland, there is a high demand for further training and advisory services provided by the experts in this area, in particular in terms of reformulation of curricula into the learning outcomes.

The revision of the 2005 Law on Higher Education¹⁰ in 2011 introduces the obligation for HEIs to cooperate research and business. Since there is almost no tradition of HEIs-business collaboration in Poland, and no tools designed specifically to develop it, the support for such partnerships is among future priorities for the sector.

As for other important themes to be addressed in the immediate future as a part of modernisation process, the following have been identified:

- the lifelong learning approach to education, which receives inadequate attention in Poland
- the internationalisation of HEIs caused by insufficient openness to foreign students/lecturers¹¹
- building a new model of doctoral studies
- flexibility of studies, multi-field studies, and macro-field studies
- more specialised assistance on the NQF implementation in the area of regulated professions

⁸ Ministry of Science and Higher Education, <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/szkolnictwo-wyzsze/sprawy-miedzynarodowe/proces-bolonski/realizacja/realizacja/artykul/zespol-promotorow-bolonskich-20052007/>

⁹ diploma supplement is not discussed here as it is an administrative obligation reflecting the changes that have been already taking place.

¹⁰ Journal of Laws No. 84, pos. 455 with amendments.

¹¹ Despite the trend towards growing internationalisation, Poland has the fewest number of international students among the OECD and the EU countries (OECD 2007).

- advice on practices that allow measuring the learning outcomes achieved by a particular student in the process of student progress assessment (particularly in the context of mark inflation)
- continuing focus on the quality in education and the internal systems of quality assurance
- Regarding new European Commission initiatives, such as Youth on the Move, interviewees expressed doubts about whether the NTBE are well positioned promote these initiatives.

The range of future themes depends to a large extent on the priorities set by the Conference of Ministers of the European Higher Education Area taking place in 2012 and the overall development of the sector.

There are various formats currently used when implementing the NTBE's activities. These include above all:

- thematic Bologna Days (instead of general seminars on Bologna process, meetings address a chosen topic, with a prevalence of workshops)
- advisory visits requested by HEIs to consult on particular problems
- meetings with upper secondary schools and regional education offices
- translation of the most important international publications on the subject
- publications and guides (e.g. Student Centred Learning Guide)
- writing articles for HEIs' newspapers
- organising sessions for editors of HEIs' newspapers once a year
- other initiatives (e.g. websites, newsletters) in forms that are adjusted to reach relevant groups

Overall, all formats are considered as adequate but special emphasis is placed on providing advice to HEIs and organisation of training and information meetings in the form of seminars. Whereas it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of these events, this method was perceived as suitable to attract academic circles by encouraging reflection and debate.

Interviewees also referred to the so-called "reversed conference" format: the HEIs, which implement changes to the extent allowed by their autonomy, invite experts to provide them with guidance on specific issues, playing a more pro-active role in the activities of the Bologna Experts.

The capacity on the part of the NTBE to offer new formats remains limited. At the moment, however, all requests are being accepted due to their manageable number.¹²

Other formats suggested that could be offered in the future include:

- visits abroad to participate in fairs to represent Polish HEIs, as ambassadors of national HEIs, among foreign students and foreign HEIs (increasing mobility)
- Dissemination of good practice examples on the NQF implementation

It has been pointed out that in individual cases the form of presentation (communication) and the language used by Bologna Experts could be better adjusted to the target audience, such as students or employers, so as to improve the effectiveness of message provision and reception.

¹² It has been noted that advisory visits are often perceived by HEIs as a form of control and assessment and therefore their popularity remains restricted.

The target groups as currently defined are relevant to meet the NTBE objectives and include:

- academics (e.g. HEI authorities, scientific and didactic cadres, administration), which is a dominating group with a special emphasis on rectors (e.g. good cooperation with the Rectors' Conferences)
- students (e.g. Student Parliament, student self-governments), with a representation of three students in the NTBE (two are PhD students, one is the Parliament's representative). Some interviewees suggested a stronger emphasis on this
- upper secondary schools (e.g. pupils from final and pre-final classes, teachers, school heads, pedagogues working in the teacher training centres) and regional education offices (pl. *kuratoria*)

Other groups have been identified as difficult to reach and/or targets for the future. These include:

- State authorities responsible for the HE sector
- HEIs educating students in regulated fields (e.g. medical universities)
- Academic teachers from lower levels of the HEI structure
- Employers
- Local self-governments
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

The team's composition and its preparation to fulfil the assigned role are perceived as adequate. However, the expertise level of individual team members depends on their background and the history of their involvement in NTBE activities. According to some stakeholders contacted throughout this study, experts' involvement depends on their individual skills and competences (e.g. communication skills).

In order to maintain an active involvement of Bologna Experts as well as to secure a good representation of the HE sector, the team's composition is changing: some members are temporarily appointed and others are permanent. This is important as new members are needed in specialised fields and diverse practical experience (e.g. in implementation of legal order at HEIs).

Suggestions of potential improvements that would be welcomed in the NTBE profile include the ability to depart from the academic approach in order to better adjust to cooperate with representatives of different non-HEI environments (e.g. ministerial circles); employer's experience; and more experts experienced in working/teaching in regulated fields.

It has been pointed out that inviting experts to the NTBE can become problematic. One reason for this is rather unattractive financial offer for their work. Another reason is variety of functions fulfilled by the most experienced HEI staff, who - apart from institutional obligations - are often engaged in other bodies such as the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP), General Council of Higher Education (pl. *Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyższego*), and various European advisory groups.

A number of other bodies and institutions have also been contributing to the Bologna Process implementation in Poland. It is therefore difficult to assign the full responsibility for the realisation of its particular elements. Groups of Bologna and non-Bologna experts amalgamate under various organisational umbrellas and a flow of professionals between decision-making and advisory bodies opens the opportunity to achieve greater impact on current reforms.

Alongside the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, a number of bodies listed below complement the NTBE initiatives:

- Polish State Accreditation Committee (PKA)
- Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP)
- Conference of Rectors of Vocational Schools in Poland (KRePSZ)
- General Council of Higher Education

These bodies decide upon, stimulate, and promote the reform *ex cathedra*, while the NTBE acts as an informal group (from a legal point of view) that provides advice on changes and actively transmits the reformative impulse to HEIs. The NTBE are often invited to their projects *ad personam* and offer expertise in their works.

Among other sources of reform, various projects are being carried out with support from the structural funds and from the state budget. Intensified cooperation with the NTBE at a stage of planning priorities for financing HEI activities have been suggested to achieve better efficiency in channelling those resources to the HEIs.

6.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The NTBE activity in recent years is rich and reflects the team's engagement and dedication to pro-EHEA work. The main outputs of the NTBE activity pointed out by the stakeholders contacted in this study include:

- a number of people who participated in seminars and improved their knowledge and competences
- growing understanding and awareness of changes that are taking place in the European HE among academia
- growing demand for the NTBE seminars
- key instruments for dissemination of knowledge about the Bologna process
- involvement of wider expert circles from outside the team in activities targeting HE reform

Among the main barriers to the successful implementation of the NTBE work-plans are:

- time limitations – Bologna Experts are usually, well-known academics and their busy calendars pose a barrier for organisation of more seminars
- financial limitations - more resources would allow to prepare more experts, while higher daily rates would trigger higher motivation
- limited coordination of activities with the Ministry responsible for HE in Poland – while a degree of cooperation can be observed, some initiatives are not consulted and take place in parallel
- lack of adequate Polish edition of Bologna Follow-up Group – an active expert-policy-makers group should be established to interpret subsequent communications and present the strategy of their implementation

The quality and the impact of NTBE's activities are not being measured. The only forms identified are the evaluation forms distributed among participants of Bologna seminars. Respondents interviewed during this study describe the quality of the NTBE as high. The team belongs to the core of the progressive thinking about changes in the HE sector.

It has been pointed out that a quality/impact assessment could be beneficial in terms of selecting the best team of experts and eliminating those who are less suitable to carry

out this activity. Among the tools that could be used in this process, a peer-review system has been indicated as one potential solution to consider.

There were some attempts to assess the effectiveness of Bologna process implementation in Poland. However, such a study was difficult to implement in methodological and financial terms.

6.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The points listed below present some attempts that have been made to describe the nature of their impact on the implementation of the higher education reform in Poland.

- Bologna experts became an indispensable advisory element of the Polish HE system as promoters of reforms and new culture in the education process. They are often considered as one of the best informed groups in terms of the status of Polish legislation after the reform
- Dissemination of knowledge instigated by the NTBE makes the transition towards learning outcomes-based system more acceptable for academia. This process requires not only a new approach to education but also a cultural change in the sector
- There is a growing understanding of the Bologna process and a more positive attitude towards it among Polish academia, as opposed to initial scepticism towards the ECTS, 2-cycle studies, and NQF-related ideas. At the moment, there is a strong support for the NQF from the Conference of Rectors (KRASP) and increased understanding of benefits that can be obtained from greater openness to reasonable vertical mobility and the quality assurance systems in education.

In addition, the NTBE efforts - combined with the involvement of other bodies in the sector – have already brought a number of tangible results, which include:

- cooperation between higher education and upper secondary institutions during work on the development and implementation of the NQF, which limited the probability of prolonged disputes and disagreements over assigning titles to certain educational levels

The NQF development - Poland

Work on the NQF and its implementation resulted in crucial amendments to the Act of 27 July 2005 - Law on Higher Education¹³ introduced in March, 2011, by the new legislation - Act of 18 March 2011 amending the Act - Law on Higher Education, in force from 1 October 2011. The creation of the NQF and its implementation into the new act, with a general support from the HEI authorities (the Conference of Rectors – KRASP), are considered as one of the main outcomes of the NTBEs activity. The new law implements the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning and removes the obligation to create study programmes in line with the so-called master content (or curriculum content) of education (pl. *ramowe treści kształcenia*), perceived as a barrier

¹³ Journal of Laws No. 84, pos. 455 with amendments.

to vertical mobility in the HE system. The NTBE representatives have been engaged in major bodies involved in projects that aimed at the NQF design.

- implementation of the two-degree studies in Poland (out of more than a hundred fields from the central list less than 10% were allowed to keep a unified structure)
- implementation of Diploma Supplements, development of language education, and mobility programmes for Polish youth
- improved pace of information exchange between the NTBE and the Ministry responsible for the HE sector through the appointment of NTBE Presidium
- translation of Bologna process action lines into legal provisions (e.g. incorporation of the NQF in to the Act of 18 March 2011 amending the Act - Law on Higher Education)
- development and implementation of a model of preparing HEI staff for the implementation of the amended act based on a cascade training of decision-makers and academic cadres
- leading position of their home institutions in constructing internal quality assurance systems and preparation for change based on reformulating the education process into learning outcomes
- increased understanding of the Bologna process reflected in a change of the HE system and the attitudes of HEI staff

The NTBE impact has been changing over time. At the beginning (2004-2006), the themes of their activity (as promoters) were a novelty in Poland and the format of their work was based mainly on dissemination of general information, encouraging internationalisation, publication of first guides, and establishing the team's position in the sector.

The future impact of the NTBE will depend on the type of activities undertaken. It is expected that themes related to the lifelong learning process in education, benchmarks, statistics, empirical research, scientific work (e.g. mobility aspects), or the social dimension of the Bologna process, might appear as elements of NTBE activity. According to stakeholders consulted, the NTBE will continue to play an essential role in the HEI environment alongside other influential actors.

The main barriers faced by BE in achieving greater impact are as follows:

- Institutional level
 - Rigidity of the system
 - Perception of innovation/reform as a source of additional workload
 - Insufficient legitimisation of the NTBE activities
 - Time availability
- Policy level
 - Limited exchange of information and coordination between various bodies working in the HE sector
 - Fragmentation of activities and lack of strategy towards the implementation of Bologna process elements (with exceptions, such as the NQF);
 - Financial issues

6.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The management of the NTBE in Poland has been described as very efficient in the context of a number of initiatives undertaken by the team. Particular emphasis has been placed on the reliability of the team administering the NTBE activity. According to the NTBE member, the experts' work is arranged very thoroughly, which adds "comfort and a feel of security" to the NTBE activities. According to state officials, the exchange of information is good and features continuous improvement.

As for the management of the initiative on the European level, following the transfer of the initiative from the European Commission to the EACEA, the cooperation between the National and Executive Agencies is partnership-based and more effective in terms of the timing of correspondence and receiving financial resources after signing the agreement.

The main barriers to more effective management of the NTBE include:

- a) Communication with Executive Agency: The current system in place in Poland for approving experts' participation in international seminars involves consultation with EACEA. It has been suggested that such decisions could be taken at national level instead of contacting the Executive Agency each time. This would improve the administrative team's work and eliminate the Executive Agency's burdens related to responding a number of e-mails on this subject.
- b) The application of a stable EUR rate during the conversion of Polish currency. It has been proposed to respect the principles of exchange rate policy of a particular institution (National Agency). Such an approach would allow for less time-consuming and more transparent preparation of final reports.¹⁴
- c) No permanent participation of state authorities' representative in activities related to the NTBE initiative. According to policy-makers, consistent involvement in such events and better information about the EC-NTBE contacts would add to understanding of the Commission's expectations of the NTBE in Poland

In October 2004, the Council for the Bologna Process was appointed by the Minister of National Education and Sport (Ordinance No 7 of 26 October 2004, Official Journal MNEiS No 4, pos. 24). The Council acts as a formal consultative/advisory body that assists the Minister on issues related to Bologna Process. Renewed in October 2006, the Council includes 15 members who represent the ministries and the following institutions and organisations who should meet twice every year:

- the State Accreditation Committee
- the General Council of Higher Education
- the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
- the Conference of Rectors of Vocational Schools in Poland

¹⁴ For example, using the EUR rate from mid-2011 at the end of 2013 leads to considerable differences when calculating the final amounts

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- the Parliament of Students of the Republic of Poland
 - Bologna Follow-up Group
 - the NTBE
 - the Office for Academic Recognition and International Exchange
 - the Foundation for the Development of the Education System and the Socrates / Erasmus Programme
 - the National Science Section of the independent self-governing "Solidarity" Trade Union.

To some extent, the Council acts as a national Bologna follow-up group, similar to those operating in some countries.¹⁵ However, it has been indicated that this body is not active enough, lacking clear goals and expertise adequate to issue opinions on the Bologna process. This problem has been acknowledged by the Ministry responsible for HE, which stated its intention to reinvigorate the Council's activity by instigating discussions and exchange opinions on specific subjects proposed by experts in the field (the NTBE).

The absence of a vigorous strategic body with decision-making powers that sets priorities and designs tools to implement Bologna Process is perceived as a systemic drawback by the NTBE members and some HEIs authorities. The main weight of reform is often placed on the NTBE, which indicates that the information about their role and functions is inadequate or misunderstood.

6.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

The IPHERs are considered a desirable tool that requires some modifications. The contribution of the IPHER to the NTBE activities varies, depending on experts' experience and themes being addressed:

- for new BE, training seminars provide a good overview and an opportunity to meet teams from other countries
- for experienced BE, the participation in some seminars/discussion groups is perceived as having limited added value because they are not differentiated according to level of expertise

It is suggested to introduce differentiation in terms of 1) level of an expert's advancement, 2) representation of speakers from various countries, and 3) the seminar length (not necessarily two-days long). Also, the joint training for BE and Tempus experts is not perceived as an optimal solution. Instead, it has been proposed to invite experts specialising in certain fields - not necessarily from the BE community - to present and take part in discussion groups on narrowly defined themes of modernisation (e.g. employers' representatives, specialists in quality assurance in education). Leading seminar themes could be decided by consulting the NTBE through a survey investigating their training needs.

It is suggested to revisit some topics by presenting the results of policies implemented in those areas by other countries. Thematic seminars could be also introduced, as participating countries are too different to apply a standardised approach. An alternative solution could be a platform for meetings between two or three countries at a similar level of reform implementation. The resources could be then transferred to the NTBE to

¹⁵ Kraśniewski, A. (2009) Bologna Process: it's 10 years already. Warsaw: the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, http://www.up.krakow.pl/main/bolonski/htmlarea/uploaded/Publikacje/proces_bolonski_FINAL.pdf

finance the organisation of in-country seminars on specific themes for all interested BE, and from other countries.

The IPHER creates opportunities to exchange experience and information on approaches/solutions to similar problems in different countries. Due to budget limitations, each expert can participate in one seminar per year. However, there is some flexibility when applying this rule, as places of those experts, who cannot take a part in such an event¹⁶, can be used by other interested team members.

Also the National Agency representatives participate in the IPHERs. They attend meetings for National Agencies' representatives to discuss various issues with their foreign counterparts. When combined with a BE seminar, the Agency staff can also improve their own knowledge in specific areas.

The use Virtual Community is rather limited and the Open Space at each seminar appears to have no added value.

6.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The current distribution of EU funding (based on the number of students per country) is generally perceived as adequate. Yet, there is a strong conviction that even more initiatives could be undertaken if the financing is higher. There is a substantial scale of needs in the Polish HE sector that should be addressed.

According to the 2-year agreement for 2009-2011 (additional and basic activity), the NTBE budget was divided as follows:

- management – 13%
- experts training - 9% (visits abroad),
- NTBE core activities – 30% (visits to HEIs)
- conferences and seminars - 34%
- equipment and materials - 9%
- other direct costs (acquisitions of publications, fees for non-BE experts, bank fees etc.)

Overall, 98.5 per cent of the budget has been used, with about 92 per cent being allocated for national activity of the National Agency and the NTBE. The amount assigned to international activities did not exceed the contracted limit (less than 10%). The NTBE dynamic activity and increasing influence can be perceived as soft pointers of efficient allocation of financial resources.

There is a general agreement that without the LLP funding the NTBE activity would neither reach the current intensity nor might it hardly be possible. This is partially related to the fact that various needs have to be addressed by the state authorities, which are not always reflecting the Bologna process priorities. Moreover, financing the team on an individual basis could hinder European cooperation and give precedence to fulfilling only national needs, leaving the less prosperous countries on the margins of Bologna process.

¹⁶ That is, when they are not interested in a particular theme or not available at the time of a seminar.

Modifications have been suggested in relation to eligible day rates of the NTBE to reduce the disproportion between sums applied in different countries.¹⁷ These include focusing above all on the type and the amount of work being delivered by the NTBE when calculating such fees. The current level poses a barrier for attracting the highest class experts and representatives of younger generation.

6.8 Future of the initiative

The NTBE's activity can be defined as the "creation of the future". It means that it will bring benefits for some stakeholder groups, such as employers, in a longer time perspective, if properly implemented. Its impact is therefore difficult to be seen at the moment. The current format is perceived as attractive because the NTBE members enjoy the authority in the academic environment and their effectiveness is shaped by their on-going contact with academia (also as members of other educational bodies). It is a success factor and a key strength of the team.

If a professionalised model is to be introduced, a certain dissonance could emerge between the NTBE group and the circle of other reformers in the sector. In the current format, people from outside the NTBE community are willing to join them in the implementation of the Bologna process in Poland. Having a team that operates and is remunerated on full-time basis could become a discouraging factor for people who do not expect financial gains for their pro-active involvement. Full professionalisation could lead to rigidity, routine, and limitations of the group of experts currently flourishing in Poland. On the other hand, the idea of implementing a professionalised model could be efficient if the NTBE develops towards an independent and flexible organisation that secures diversity of its team members. The key attribute of full-time experts should be the ability to transfer their knowledge efficiently to stimulate others to create changes and achieve feasible results. In other words, the BEs' input should be translatable into economic and social values that bring benefits to other stakeholders (e.g. employers) and this way their services become a desired commodity.

The ultimate conception is the balancing of the two above mentioned models: a group of professionalised, more experienced BEs who are available on full-time basis and non-full time representativeness of the HE environment as well as representatives of other groups.

The recommendations for the NTNE in Poland are as follows:

- National level:
 - Disseminating good practice examples for humanities and regulated professions. More and detailed publications relating to particular issues, such as the implementation of specific elements of Bologna Process in particular areas, e.g. humanities and regulated professions
 - Widening the target group and adjusting the communication to the specifics of the group of message recipients
 - Strengthening the NTBE in terms of the number of experts, financing, organisational base (National Agency) to fulfil the demand for more dynamic activity

¹⁷ Disparities in terms of fees (daily rates) between experts' teams from various Member States have been highlighted. This poses a problem for attracting new experts to the national group. Given that potential experts usually hold high positions, it is hard to compete for their interest with the business offer.

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- Preparing a group of experts to support the implementation of Bologna Process on a regional level (e.g. to carry out trainings on development of learning outcomes matrix, assigning programmes to the new NQF formula).
 - Forming a BFUG on a national level to act as a strategic body that develops new directions of reforms, implements the Bologna process, links it with the HE development strategy, and assesses on-going changes.
 - Developing a vision of the cooperation between the NTBE and the Ministry responsible for HE to avoid the parallelism of action and impression of interference
 - Improving communication and information about the NTBE purpose and activity in Poland outside academia, promoting the team in the media
 - Developing a form of honouring the most active BEs to express appreciation for their pro-European integration activity (for instance, by a gala gathering in their honour)
 - European level:
 - Revisiting some IPHERs' topics by presenting the results of policies implemented in various areas by other countries.
 - Introducing thematic seminars as participating countries are too different to apply standardised approach.
 - An alternative solution could be a platform for meetings between two or three countries on a similar level of reform implementation. The resources could be then transferred to the NTBE to finance the organisation of in-country seminars on specific themes for all interested BEs, also from other countries.

7 Portugal

7.1 Introduction

Portugal was one of the signatory states of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. When the first call for Bologna Promoters was launched in 2004, the implementation of the Bologna-related reform in Portugal was already advanced¹⁸ regarding most aspects of Quality assurance, and some aspects of recognition. The area where most changes to the Portuguese systems were required to be in line with Bologna was the structure of the higher education system (cycle degree structure). The activities of the Portuguese Team of Bologna Experts started in 2004 when the first National Team of Bologna Promoters was appointed.

The National Team in Portugal has operated in a context affected by the following elements:

- **Absence of a National Team of Bologna Expert for the period 2011-2013**

The team was fully operational until 2009, and has carried out some activities without having been formally appointed in 2010 and 2011. The Portuguese national Agency did not submit a proposal in response to the invitation for "National Teams of Bologna Experts" 2011-2013 grant applications. As a result, there is currently no Portuguese Team of Bologna Experts.

- **Implementation of Bologna**

The official launch of the EHEA in 2010 did not mean that the implementation of the Bologna Process is complete. Interviewees in Portugal were unanimous that progress has been made towards the implementation of the Bologna-related reforms in the country. In the last Bologna stocktaking report, Portugal received the highest grade in all aspects of recognition and most aspects of the degree system and structure, and the second highest grade for the implementation of quality assurance-related measures. However, interviewees all recognised that many issues regarding the implementation of the reform remain. For instance, the DS is not widely used and is seen as too bureaucratic by its potential users. Recognition- and mobility-related issues are more relevant than ever, in particular as mobility is increasing (short degree mobility).

- **Perception of the higher education reform**

The higher education reform linked to the Bologna Process substantially changed the Portuguese higher education system. Interviewees have systematically depicted the depreciative Portuguese context in respect of the Bologna reforms and the practical consequences, e.g. resistance to the reforms, recognition issues, etc.

During this case study it was reported that Bologna has created many debates and conflicts in Portugal because of the way reforms have been implemented. Academic staff had the impression that Bologna was shortening courses of 5 years to 3 years. This perception was reinforced with the fact that the terminology used for the Bologna degree was the similar to the former higher education system, but used at a different level. The most cited example is the fact that a *Licenciatura* after the implementation of the higher education reform corresponded to a three-year course, while a *Licenciatura* before Bologna corresponded to a four- to six-year course. Both professors and students (in

¹⁸ Sources: Bologna scorecards 2005

particular former students, holders of a pre-Bologna *Licenciatura*) felt that the curriculum was being devalued in general when transferred to the ECTS scale. It was also mentioned that HEIs and their administrative bodies, feeling they were losing power with the harmonised reforms, expressed strong resistance. Employers were also reported to have expressed concerns regarding the new curricula, fearing they were of a lower quality than previous ones and that new graduates would not have the necessary competences for the job market, having studied a shorter period of time to get what was perceived to be an equivalent degree.

In addition, interviewees have observed that many teachers are still hindering the process of recognition for mobile students. It was reported by the great majority of interviewees that Erasmus students regularly complain about their credits not being recognised, and about the contempt of teachers for the courses they undertook abroad. Teachers seem to be often reluctant in recognising the credits of Erasmus students.

According to some interviewees, the added value of the higher education reform was still not clear to some HEIs and other stakeholders in the country.

- **Economic and political context**

In April 2011, Portugal requested financial assistance from the EU (through the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism), the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This agreement was adopted mid-May 2011. This resulted in a policy of financial rigour in the country, with significant cuts in public funding to higher education, referred to by many interviewees, and in student social support.

In parallel, the President was re-elected in January 2011, but the majority changed at the Parliament after the legislative elections in June 2011. As a consequence, a new government was appointed with a major re-organisation of Ministries and staff.

The sections below summarise the findings of the case study in Portugal.

7.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

This sub-section covers the relevance of the initiative with regard to the themes covered by the activities of the experts, the format of the activities, target groups of the teams, composition of the teams and profile of the experts, as well as coherence with other initiatives and the position compared to other sources of information about higher education in Europe.

During the interviews the main themes identified as priorities were the three Bologna priority themes: Quality, recognition (in particular DS) and three cycle system (in particular NQF). Activities also focused on monitoring the implementation of the reform at national level. Modernisation of teaching methods and the national qualifications framework were considered priorities for the near future.

Recognition issues were identified as a major problem in Portugal. The Diploma Supplement (DS) was also said to be under-promoted by HEIs among their students; students therefore not being sufficiently aware of it. When going abroad, many students do not request the DS and consequently might face considerable problems for recognition. Interviewees considered it essential to further develop the monitoring of the implementation of the reform in Portugal in order to analyse to what extent HEIs have attained the objectives of Bologna for each cycle of studies (i.e. BA, MA, PhD).

Interviews reported that the format used for the activities of the Portuguese team (i.e. mainly seminars in Portugal) was appropriate. The main activities of the National Teams 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 were two series of four seminars organised in different cities in Portugal, each seminar focusing on one of the three Bologna priority themes (Quality, Recognition and three-cycle system), the last one closing the cycle with a state of play of the implementation of the process in the country. However, they considered that the mere organisation of seminars was not sufficient to support the implementation of the process in Portugal effectively. Bologna Experts among interviewees said the main objective of their action was to raise awareness about the Bologna Process and that they have successfully achieved these objectives with the organisation of training seminars. For the future, they said that they would need to complement these promotional activities with workshops aiming to support the concrete implementation of the reform and the use of Bologna-related tools (e.g. a workshop about how to use and express learning outcomes would be welcome). This need for more implementation- (vs. policy) oriented activities was confirmed in interviews with those stakeholders who benefit from Bologna Experts activities. They said that in order to overcome resistance about the reforms, the experts should visit HEIs and their teaching staff, promoting good practice and success stories of the Bologna process (e.g. inviting Erasmus students to share their experience), and offer customised support services (e.g. identifying HEIs' needs and helping HEIs to define the new curricula). According to these interviewees, the next phase should focus 'less in theory and more in practice'. Interviews highlighted the need for NTBE to be more 'forward looking'. According to the interviewees, the national team should 'go local' (e.g. make study visits to HEIs) and be more pro-active.

The target group of the NTBE activities has been predominantly HEIs. Interviewees mentioned that employers and students (especially with regard to the DS) could also be possible target groups for the future. Moreover, interviews highlighted the overall need for the NTBE to raise awareness among teachers of the importance of the mobility of students and effectiveness in recognition. The National Team should focus on raising awareness about the Bologna process in this particular group in order to better explain to teachers the global stakes of Bologna and the importance in following the European standards (many HEIs were said to still be too much rooted in the local context). Other interviewees mentioned that the National Team should target employers as well as bodies representing regulated professions (doctors, engineers, etc.). One interviewee also mentioned the fact that the experts should also promote the Bologna Process outside Europe.

Interviewees perceived the profile and composition of previous teams as adequate given that it gathered nationally and internationally recognised professionals from the academic sector. However, interviewees mentioned that the teams should be more mixed, e.g. include more staff from International Relations Offices. Their hands-on knowledge and day-to-day experience with mobility and recognition issues could add value to the team. Some interviewees reported that the communications skills are essential to the effectiveness of the Bologna Experts. This may not be emphasised enough in the calls and selection. Interviewees acknowledge the fact that the team should also include newcomers in order to ensure smooth renewal of the team once the most experienced experts retire. One interviewee recommended that approximately 1/3 of the team should be renewed at each call.

Stakeholders reported that the main source of information about the Bologna Process has been the National Agency, more than the Bologna Experts, who are not considered very

active in Portugal. Other sources included official Bologna website, EC website, EHEA website, and the Erasmus Students Network (mainly for students). Some interviewees mentioned European professional associations as their main source of information.

Overall, the interviewees find the initiative of the NTBE relevant in particular regarding the aspects of the reform that still need to be implemented in the HE sector in Portugal.

7.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Interviews showed mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the National Teams.

Bologna Experts said they always received positive (informal) feedback about the activities they organised. They acknowledged the fact that monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the activities could have been improved. Interviewees reported that there is no process in place to monitor Bologna Experts activities in Portugal. Consequently, there are no data available about the quality of the activities. Bologna Experts among interviewees also said they encountered difficulties in mobilising HEI staff to participate in seminars. They considered this was due to HEIs' staff resistance to the reform.

Those stakeholders who are intended beneficiaries of the activities of the Bologna Experts among interviewees said that resistance from HEIs often arises from the difficulties linked to implementation rather than a resistance to the higher education reform and Bologna as such.

These interviewees reported that they did not consider the team efficient with regard to the activities organised. Interviewees found difficulty in identifying concrete outputs. The main activity of the experts was the organisation of seminars, which involved policy discussion rather than concrete recommendations to support HEIs in their implementation of the reform, and where the role of the participants is mainly passive. Those stakeholders who attended the seminars found them useful overall, though too theoretical, often repeating what HEIs already knew. Interviewees perceived that the objective of the seminars was more to convince HEIs that they should implement the reform rather than to help them on how to do it (promotion rather than technical assistance). This was confirmed by an assessment of the seminar conclusions, which showed that these seminars can be valuable from a policy point of view, and they may be an effective way to overtake resistance at HEI management level, but they bring little added value in terms of concrete implementation and how to support HEIs.

These interviewees also said that the European Commission (and EACEA) should have been more demanding regarding the Activity Plan. As mentioned previously, it was felt that the next phase should focus 'less in theory and more in practice', sharing best practices and offering consultancy services to HEIs.

Some interviewees reported missing events because they had not been informed about them in the first place. From the point of view of both Bologna Experts and stakeholders, poor communication and information around the National teams of Bologna Experts represents an important barrier to effectiveness of the National Team and should be improved in the future. Some interviewees recommended that Bologna Experts should better target their communication in terms of channel (phone) and target (contact directly the International Relations Office rather than the rector's office).

Apart from the lack of visibility of the NTBE and its work-plan and HEIs' resistance to the reforms, some interviewees mentioned the small number of experts allocated to the whole country as one barrier that could have hindered the effectiveness of the activities.

7.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Identifying direct impacts of the activities was difficult for the interviewees. The first reaction was often to talk about the effects of the Bologna Process in Portugal, without being able to provide examples of a direct link between these effects and the activities of the National Team of Bologna Experts in the country. Even if more HEIs are implementing the reform, this could not be directly linked to the NTBE initiative, perhaps because reforms were said to have been implemented mainly at the departmental level of HEIs, not taking into account what was at stake at the overall university level and national/European level.

When asked to give examples of positive impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts activities in Portugal, Bologna Experts among interviewees mostly referred to examples in institutions which had had a Bologna Expert among their staff members. In these cases, the interviewees said they saw a direct link between the activities of the experts and the situation observed in the institution. Some interviewees (Bologna Experts) also mentioned the role of the Bologna Experts in helping polytechnics and private HEIs to get on-board and join the reform, but the study team did not find evidence of this impact.

Apart from these examples, the study team did not identify any example of concrete impact of the National Team's activities in the country apart from a general awareness raising, though this was not documented. This reinforces the finding from the previous section about the absence of monitoring – the activities of the experts are not monitored effectively at national level, neither regarding the quality of the activities nor their impact. Nevertheless, it was reported that the culture of the impacts is starting to emerge in Portugal (official evaluations are being undertaken) and this should facilitate the design and acceptance of a monitoring system for the activity.

The great majority of stakeholders had the feeling that the impact of the NTBE initiative was weak, mainly due to the lack of visibility of the initiative and its work-plan (passive seminars). Those not directly involved in the activities had little knowledge of what the NTBE entailed or were aware of any direct impacts. Even in the case of those directly involved in the activities, only one stakeholder has acknowledged that seminars had made a positive contribution in raising awareness about the Bologna process, particularly when the legislative changes were taking place. There was also the impression that the National Agency has been much more active than the NTBE in disseminating information, e.g. about the ECTS/DS labels.

Given the situation of Portugal – without a National Team since 2009 – one interviewee could provide an example of the "negative" impact of the absence of National Team of Bologna Experts. Bologna Experts may assist HEIs in the preparation of ECTS and DS labels applications and contribute to their assessment (pre-selection before the application has sent by the National Agency to the EACEA). Bologna Experts reported that they expect the number and quality of the applications for ECTS and DS labels to drop if there is no team of Bologna Experts in the future. Bologna Experts among interviewees reported that they still carried out their ECTS/DS-related activities in 2011, despite the fact that they had not been formally nominated by the National Authority.

7.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Interviewees did not report any management issues at EU level. They said that the overall management of the initiative had improved with its transfer to the EACEA. One interviewee (Bologna Expert) said that the administrative burden linked of the initiative increased with the transfer of the management to the EACEA. Most negative comments regarding this transfer related to the selection process. Some interviewees challenged the selection process leading to the nomination of the experts. They said that the fact that experts are selected at national level by the National Authority opens the door to the nomination of experts as a reward, rather than because of their expertise. Having said that, none of the interviewees said that it happened in Portugal, or contested the expertise of the members of the National teams since 2004-2011 – they just said that the process did not prevent “complaisance” nominations. Some recommended that the selection should give a greater role to the EU level (DG EAC or EACEA), taking into account the opinion of the national Agency and National Authority. Interviewees felt it was the case when the initiative was managed by DG EAC, which often commented on the composition of the teams proposed by the national level (calls covering the periods 2004-2008), while EACEA validates the teams proposed by the National Authority (since 2008). One interviewee provided the example of the EC networks such as NESSE (now NESET¹⁹) and said the selection of experts should be done under a similar format.

At national level, issues in the management of the initiative have led to the situation where the activities of the National Team have been interrupted since 2011. The team of experts proposed by the National Authority and selected following the call 2009-2011 has never been formally appointed by the National Authority, despite reminders from the experts themselves as well as the European Commission. The National Authority has not proposed any expert for the call 2011-2013 and, as a result, the National Agency did not submit any proposal under this call. When asked about this situation, interviewees (none of them representing the National Authority²⁰) blamed this situation on the fact that the experts proposed by the National Authority in the 2009-2011 application criticised the orientation of the National Authority in public on several occasions. When the experts understood the National Authority might not want to nominate a team of experts they have had issues with, they asked the National Authority to nominate a team, perhaps composed of experts other than those who were part of the previous team. The National Authority had not reacted to this request nor to the request from the EACEA to nominate a team, and Portugal did not submit an application for the call covering 2011-2013. The National Agency was more inclined towards the National Authority than the former experts, and they said they expected the issue to be solved for the next call, in particular as the nomination of a new government in Portugal in June 2011 changed the orientation of the team in charge of the Bologna Experts initiative at the Ministry.

Apart from this major issue, most interviewees considered the overall management of the initiative by the National Agency to be rather effective. However, some experts mentioned delays in payment from the National Agency (one said he had a request pending for two years). Some interviewees said the management of the team would be improved if the team coordinator could be supported by an administrative assistant (e.g.

¹⁹ <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/neset/index.html>

²⁰ The study team contacted the personnel in charge of the Bologna Process in the Ministry in charge of higher education for an interview. The Ministry and was redirected towards the National Agency and the BFUG member.

the initiative could cover part of the overheard costs linked the administrative support to the team coordinator), which was the case in the past. Some experts recommended that such support should be ensured in the future.

The strategy of the team is established by the team itself and its coordinator rather than the National Authority and the National Agency.

7.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

As in Portugal has no national organisation to provide training for the experts, interviewees considered the IPHERs were essential to guarantee training for the NTBE. It is the National Agency that selects, according to their profile, which experts will attend a training seminar. The Bologna Experts among interviewees (all experienced) said that the benefit of the training seminars is limited for experienced experts, the level being more appropriate for new experts.

Most said that they found the training more effective when the IPHER contract was managed by EUA (IPHER I). They said EUA organised events where participants could effectively share good practice as well as issues. Under the IPHER II and III, the training seminars focus on conceptual discussion about Bologna aspects, which are interesting, but not in line with what Bologna Experts need to carry out their activities.

In terms of sources of information, none of the experts interviewed said they had ever used material produced under the IPHERs (except the seminar readers occasionally). Interviewees mentioned that it would be useful to develop information sources such as thematic publications, compendiums, reports of meetings/seminars, bibliographic recommendations, contact details of experts for each theme, etc.

A small number of experts said they actively use the Virtual Community. Those who used it found it of good quality.

The provision of promotional materials is planned in the specifications of the IPHER contracts, though Portuguese experts said they did not know the plan existed and did not need such documents, as there is already enough quality reliable information about the Bologna Process available from other sources including the Europa website and the EHEA website). If such documents were to be produced anyway, the authors should ensure that they are of good quality, consistent with official Bologna documents and add value to what is already available.

7.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Some interviewees challenged the reasoning behind the funding allocation for the national teams (fixed amount + variable amount depending on the student population). They said it did not reflect the baseline situation in participating countries, i.e. did not take into account the effort needed to implement the reform. According to some interviewees, a country where the implementation of Bologna is well advanced should receive less funding than countries where a lot is till to be achieved. However, none could recommend any way to calculate the allocation per country in practice (difficult considering the fact that there are no satisfactory data about the implementation of Bologna in practice on which this new method of funding allocation could be based).

The national contribution was said to be important, especially in terms of staff. It was reported that with the EU funding it is not possible to allocate additional staff for some projects, or transfer staff between projects.

No stakeholder was ever asked to pay for an activity and no one has ever worked with a foreign team. Interviewees mentioned that they would pay for an activity as long as there is a clear advantage in asking for Bologna Experts services.

Some experts commented on the fact that the financial rules applicable to the initiative are too restrictive, as is their interpretation by the National Agency.

7.8 Future of the initiative

All interviewees said the National Team initiative should be continued after 2013 in order to keep expertise and knowledge as well as commitment and motivation of the experts at national level.

Regarding the form the initiative should take, the interviewees expressed different views:

When discussing the possibility of having a professionalised model for the NTBE, stakeholders were divided. All agreed that there was a need for a considerably more active involvement of the NTBE, which made some (half) of the interviewees argue for a full-time experts model. For the other half, they considered it important for the experts to maintain contact with the academic field. It gives them the contextual knowledge for the reforms and reinforces the leverage experts can have, i.e. peers more easily convince other peers. One interviewee proposed a full-time administrative support to the national team.

Although interviewees value the access to expertise from other countries, they were not in favour of a cross-country approach. They stressed the importance for experts to be familiar with the national context (including resistance to the reform) and be in contact with peers at national level.

Over the next 5-10 years, interviewees foresee that the NTBE initiative will enable a harmonisation of recognition systems at the EU-level. In order for the National team to have a higher impact, interviewees formulated the following recommendations for the future of the initiative in Portugal:

- Acknowledge that resistance to the reforms is a fact and therefore the NTBE should be prepared to face it;
- Consequently, cooperate with successful HEIs in order to disseminate good and successful national (and European) practices in order to convince sceptical HEIs;
- Offer less theory and more practical advice to support implementation: 'going local', visiting HEIs, identifying their needs, explaining the advantages of Bologna, and providing them with advice and solutions;
- Raise awareness about the global European context of the reforms as many HEIs were said to be too much rooted in the local context;
- Monitor the reforms undertaken by HEIs and identify whether there is still the need to implement reforms. Accordingly, develop benchmarks to assess the quality of the implementation of reforms;
- Ensure collaboration with other stakeholders, such as the NARIC, the ESN, and so forth;

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- Create incentives for HEIs to implement the reforms, distributing, for instance, more funds to HEIs that have successfully implemented the reforms;
 - Create an independent structure at the EU-level that centrally coordinates and monitors the initiative of the BE;
 - Promote the Diploma Supplement among HEIs and students, ensuring transparency in its use.

8 Spain

8.1 Introduction

The process of incorporating the Spanish Higher Education System into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) started with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The Academic year 2010-2011 was stated as the date for the adaptation to the three-cycle curricular reform but this is considered by a number of interviewees as an on-going process that will require further actions²¹.

Since the signing of the Bologna declaration, Spain has seen a number of higher education reforms geared towards increasing transparency, comparability and compatibility. Spanish universities have had to undertake significant changes to achieve greater autonomy and responsibility. Interviewees highlighted the positive effort made by the higher education institutions (HEI) to adapt to the process in response to continuous legislative changes.

At National level some key regulatory developments identified are:

- The Universities Act (2001) that provided the basis for the adoption of the Bologna Process
- Two Royal Decrees (both issued in 2003) for the establishment of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement
- Two Royal Decrees (January 2005) created regulations for the bachelor and master studies
- The Universities Act 2007 (LOMLOU), modifying the previous act, increased university autonomy and set up the official degree registry that replaces the official degree catalogue
- Royal Decree in 2010 established the guidelines for the university teaching officials developing a new structure and procedure to design degrees

The establishment of the Spanish Bologna Experts Team (BET) addressed the need to support Spanish HEIs to undertake the necessary reforms to adapt to the EHEA requirements and foster cooperation and interaction amongst the key stakeholders in the Bologna process. The objectives of the expert group are described in the recently launched '*University Strategy 2015*', as "*improving exam quality (...) in regard to the European Degree Supplement for universities and its relation to the Spanish Qualification Framework (MECES) as well the promotion of university-based teaching quality control systems, the correct use of ECTS and lifelong learning*". These objectives are regarded as a relevant impulse for Spanish universities in the final phase of the implementation of the Bologna Process. The support and advice offered by the BET is expected to consolidate over time as the curricular reform is regarded as the first step in the process of continuous improvement of HE in all aspects (recognition, mobility, employability, quality assurance).

²¹ This argument is also reflected in the '*University Strategy 2015*', an initiative directed towards the modernisation of the Spanish Universities.

8.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Most of the interviewees agreed that the required structural reforms have already taken place, but the crucial issue is to ensure a correct implementation and for those reforms to permeate all levels within the HEI, from rectors to teaching staff and students. The interviews revealed the challenges faced by the current HE system, such as the:

- Inadequate use of the ECTS
- Insufficient focus on fostering employability
- 'too many degrees' and 'too similar'
- Evaluation of learning outcomes
- Recognition of academic and professional qualifications
- Embedding lifelong learning
- Insufficient innovation in teaching methods

During the interviews the main themes (Internal and external quality assurance; curricular reform and recognition aspects (implementation of ECTS, Diploma Supplement and mobility issues)) were considered relevant but topics such as employability, social dimension and governance are acquiring increasing importance in the Spanish context.

However a number of interviews highlighted the need for the experts to be more forward looking, not only to focus on the action lines but also to open new debates (for example, creativity associated with employability). Interviewees felt that the next phase should focus '*less on theory and more on practice*'. Several interviews highlighted the potential of the team to support mutual learning, not only in Spain but across Europe. The dissemination of good practice was considered essential to support the effective implementation of Bologna.

The target group of the BET activities has been predominantly universities. This focus has been conditioned by the Spanish context, the pace of the reforms and the identified demand for advice and support. Recently there has been an attempt to engage other groups such as employers thorough the implementation of pilot projects looking at good practice for introducing work placements into the new degrees and incorporating the employability aspect when defining and implementing study programmes. Meetings and working groups were organised in different geographical areas across Spain. These initiatives brought together employers, vice-chancellors, students and other stakeholders. The feedback from some organisers was very positive although employer participation and contribution from public administrations responsible for labour market integration appeared to have remained limited. The main lessons learned relate to the need to communicate with employers in 'their own language' and 'selling to them the benefits of taking part'. It is also essential to collaborate with other organisations (Confederation of Employers and Industries (CEOE), Confederation of Small and Medium-size enterprises (CEPYME) etc.) that could improve reach and participation. The institutional backing of the Ministry was recognised as an important 'pull' factor with HEI, but it is not considered enough for other stakeholders. In general, there is an identified need to undertake more awareness-raising activities with employers, particularly SMEs.

Regarding the format of the activities, some interviewees consider that it responds to the classic approach favoured by universities. However, in general they would prefer

more interactive and practical formats that would foster participation and improve reach. For example, the web-based forum created to offer students and the wider public the opportunity to pose questions about Bologna and practical workshops to share good practices and design the assessment of learning outcomes that were then tested within the participating universities. The possibility of organising study visits and exchanges with other countries to share experiences and learning was also suggested. Several interviewees raised the issue that financing new formats could incur additional costs, but this claim could not be substantiated.

During the interviews it became clear that the composition of the team was not widely known by HEI staff and other stakeholders, as this information does not seem to be widely available. This lack of visibility makes the role of interacting with HEI and key stakeholders and disseminating information more challenging. Those with knowledge of the team felt that the profile seems adequate, although it would be preferable to include employer representatives, increase the number of students and achieve a better balance between rectors/vice-rectors and teaching staff. In the case of students, the student representative insisted on the need to ensure that those students who joined the team are representative of the student community (belonging to relevant student organisations and knowledgeable about actions being undertaken by those organisations) in order to disseminate information and give students a voice. However the main issue for student participation in the delivery of the work is the lack of time, given the pressures of their own studies. It was suggested that improvements in the format of the activities, adding more flexibility could increase participation. The need to make students active players in the educational process, ensuring participation and representation has been a priority in the last couple of years. This process has culminated in the drafting of the University Student Charter, which began in 2009. The Charter contains the agreement reached by all stakeholders establishing the composition of the National Council of University Students. It provides a body with institutional visibility that acts as a direct representation channel between students. The BET has already conducted meetings with student representatives through the new Students' Council. These opportunities should be further exploited in the future.

A better balance between decision-makers (in HEI) and teaching staff is becoming more important when it comes to deepen the implementation of Bologna action lines, as it requires the team to focus more on practical advice rather than the theoretical. For some, as the emphasis is now on effective implementation, it was suggested that the expert profile might need to be reviewed to ensure that the people involved have experienced on implementing Bologna in their own Universities.

Despite the links with the Ministry, some key stakeholders considered that there should be a better coordination with the Ministry to ensure that the BET activities are disseminated more widely within the relevant departments and are being used to provide an evidence-base. For example, there is a recently created (July 2009) Sub-directorate General for the Modernisation and Internationalisation of Spanish Universities within the Spanish Ministry of Education that could benefit from the BET activities, particularly for the implementation of the "University Strategy 2015". However the knowledge about the team was very limited.

It was suggested that the team will benefit from the participation of representatives from the Third sector as a way of involving wider society, improving reach and understanding of Bologna.

The composition of the team has changed over time. These changes are normal and beneficial as they provide new ideas and fresh approaches but in some cases they have affected the dynamic of the group, particularly with the loss of members with a particular expertise. There was also mentioned that establishing a team spirit takes time, and failing to do that could affect the coordination of the work programme, with activities being done in isolation and making it difficult to arrive at joint opinions on issues. Interviewees felt that it is important to bring new people on board but there is a need for continuity in the team. Some key individuals have left the team and this has affected the visibility of the activities. In the past it appears that some experts in their individual capacity were more actively involved in different Advisory groups and Committees. For example, in the 2004 application, 9 promoters were members or secretaries of the Working Group for the European Higher Education area at the Spanish Rectors' Conference. The main criticism is not only about the lack of knowledge of who the experts are but whether or not those experts are regarded as leading experts by the Universities.

The interviews revealed the lack of knowledge about BET activities being funded within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme from non-Bologna experts and the importance of coordinating BET activities with other ERASMUS actions. Anecdotally, when a couple of interviewees were asked about the links, they identified those links as implicit through their work on mobility (in the words of one interviewee 'mobility in HE is ERASMUS'). However, the final report 2009-2010 reports that BET was invited to collaborate in the elaboration of new calls for national funding for national and international mobility programmes, although no further information was provided on this regard during the interviews. It is also worth noting that in the 'University Strategy 2015' there is a section introducing the role of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and the OAPEE (National Agency) but no direct reference to, or mention of, the BET activities.

8.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

During the interviews the following examples of deliverables identified were:

- The BET website (www.encuentrosbet.es). This web page is updated by the BET with relevant information from the activities and other sources. The BET also collaborates with other Bologna websites created to provide basic information on the Bologna process (www.queesbolonia.es) or for the implementation of Bologna in different educational levels (www.boloniasecundaria.es)
- Database of Bologna related questions: it contains 4000 entries of Questions and Answers from three internet fora, compiled in one year and classified by frequent subjects
- Translation of the ECTS guide: The guide is published on the BET site, DG EAC's site and the National Agency site. 10,000 copies of the guide were printed: 8,000 were sent to HEIs with the rest is being used for events
- Examples of basic competences
- Seminars organised and papers produced

Although not a direct deliverable from the BET, the BE were actively involved in the preparation of the 'White books'²² of degrees. This work was undertaken by a network of universities supported by ANECA (Quality Assurance Agency) with the objective of carrying out studies and practical examples to design degrees adapted to the EHEA.

Those interviewees who were aware of the BET activities rated those activities as good quality. The general perception of the organisers is that the feedback was positive and the activities were well attended, particularly by HEI staff (rectors/vice-rectors). But there is no systematic collection of feedback after each activity. This limits the capacity to reflect on issues such as format and content from the participants' point of view.

It was noted that reports/conclusions have not been produced for all the seminars/workshops. Anecdotally, one interviewee who actively contributed to the preparation of a seminar with employers did not know if anything was done with those conclusions. It was suggested that getting some response or reflection from the National Authority on those conclusions would be a positive way of promoting engagement and participation.

Regarding monitoring, it appears that this is based on regular communication between the coordinator(s) and the leading expert for each activity strand and updates on general meetings. It does not appear to follow a particular monitoring process with a set of indicators to assess performance.

Example – Relevant activities outside the BET

It is worth noting that Spain did not submit an application for the Bologna Experts grant covering 2007-2008. Instead the General Directorate for Universities set up a Follow-up Group of the Bologna process (Grupo de Seguimiento del Proceso de Bolonia (GSPB)) at National level. Created on 16 September 2008 is made up of students, representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), unions and university experts.

This group was set up in response to the need to increase the knowledge of the EHEA and to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Bologna Process in Spain in the absence of the funded BET. The group was composed of university experts on mobility, recognition, qualification frameworks, employability, quality assurance, doctorates, and social dimension of HE etc. It is understood that many of these experts were former BET.

The work programme planned the organisation of 10 workshops targeting the 72 Spanish Universities from November 2007 to July 2008. The workshops aimed at addressing the challenges from the design and implementation of the new study programmes. It was stated that the workshops were of a practical nature requiring the proactive participation of the audience. Questionnaires were sent in advance to help organise the working groups by themes. The format was as follows:

²² <http://www.aneca.es/Documentos-y-publicaciones/Libros-Blancos>

- Intervention from 1 or 2 European experts on the topic
- Showcases of good practices
- Working group discussions
- Presentation of the conclusions from each group
- Discussion and preparation of final conclusions to feed into recommendations and protocols for action

In addition the Ministry funded the creation of the website, later transferred to BET, and the three fora open to students and the general public to pose questions about the process. These initiatives were organised in response to the perceived negative views on Bologna at the time when the study programmes started to change. There was huge opposition from the student community so these measures were put in place to improve communication and interaction with the students and the wider community. Those involved in the initiatives rated them as a success, including the student representatives, who consider the Q&A a good example of engaging students. These initiatives were not carried out within the framework of BET but the BE contributed to the delivery.

This group has been transformed into the Commission of the European Higher Education Area. This Commission will address aspects of the 'University Strategy 2015', maintaining the university community and society informed of the Ministry's activities and progress regarding Bologna Process. It is unclear what the relationship is between this Commission of EHEA and the BET. Clear links and collaboration should be sought in the future.

8.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Identifying direct results and impacts of the activities was difficult for the interviewees. They agreed that the BET activities had made a positive contribution in undertaking the action lines of the Bologna process, in terms of awareness-raising and advice provided to the HEIs. However it was clear that there was no systematic evaluation of the extent and value of that contribution.

Below we provide some examples of direct contributions indicated as part of the interviews and reported in the activity reports:

Example – Impacts of the National Team of Bologna Experts in Spain

At institutional level: BET members considered that their work with Vice-rectors has been instrumental in improving the communication between the National Authority and HEIs, particularly during the legislative process. Interviewees highlighted the positive effort made by the HEIs to adapt to the process in response

to continuous legislative changes. To explain the intense strategy followed in the first couple of years, it was reported that the team visited all the regions and organised sessions with up to 200 participants to explain Bologna and support Universities in adapting to the requirements. It was mentioned that there was such a close collaboration with Vice-rectors that, for instance, the representatives of the Vice-rectors of Academic Management (Ordenacion academica) accompanied the team in their advice sessions to Universities.

At policy level: In the early years of the BET, the team took part in a number of working groups to support the drafting of the legislation and the discussions with the Vice-rectors. The team provided advice to the Ministry and acted as a conduit between the Ministry and the Universities.

More recently, the BET discussed the draft of the Royal Decree for Doctoral studies with the Rectors in order to provide some initial feedback and reactions to the Ministry of Education. It was considered that this contributed positively to the approval of the proposed Decree.

The BET was consulted on the elaboration of the Royal Decree on admission procedures to universities and collaborated in the elaboration of a new Royal Decree on the University Student Statute.

BE were invited to participate in the Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES) stakeholders group created to define the framework. MECES informs society and students of learning requirements and employers of future employees' skills. The framework also encourages mobility and international recognition of qualifications and training.

It was perceived that the impact has changed over time, being slightly higher in the past, particularly when the legislative changes were taking place. The team appeared to have been more involved in policy-making process, through participation in the drafting of proposals and acting as a sounding board.

The main barrier faced by BET to achieving greater impact is the lack of visibility of their work. Those not directly involved in the activities had little knowledge of what they entailed or were aware of any direct outputs. Even in the case of those directly involved in the activities, the knowledge was limited to that particular activity. Some considered that, although the institutional backing (for example, invitations to the seminars being sent by the Ministry) is important, it creates a problem of attribution, with many participants not realising that those are BET activities.

It was also mentioned that the origin of the BE was the ECTS councillors nominated by the EC. The move to experts being nominated by Member States was criticised by one interviewee as it was felt that selection was not always based on the expertise (national and international) of the individuals.

Interviewees recognised the challenges in a regionalised country with devolved competencies. The Spanish context requires a more active dissemination and a

'marketing' strategy for other stakeholders (i.e. employers). There is also a need to rethink if the current efforts could be improved. For example, there was recently a presentation of the BET activities at the Conference of Presidents and Vice-presidents of Social Councils but there was no debate afterwards or opportunity to ask questions. This would have made it more interactive and raised interest with the target audience.

The current national context has proved challenging as Universities have been central in the verification process for the new Bologna first degrees that have been intensively designed and evaluated during 2009 and 2010. Therefore the priority for the HEI decision-makers has been the degree design more than deepening the implementation of other Bologna aspects. The economic crisis has had an important effect in the willingness to cooperate from other stakeholders such as employers. It is expected that despite the interest of the HEIs in BET activities, the participation on the activities and more generally the implementation of the Bologna reforms will be adversely affect by the spending cuts at national and regional level.

At the policy level, greater involvement of other relevant sub-directorates would contribute to raising the profile of the BET and ensuring relevance. For example, at proposal stage the proposal should be circulated and discussed with the relevant sub-directorates within the Ministry. This is not currently the case and it limits the opportunities for other relevant sub-directorates to capitalise on the work of BET and for the BET to strengthen its position and role. This is crucial in times of uncertainty brought about by the economic downturn and changes in government.

8.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Formal activities are discussed at the general BET meeting and further refined by a small subgroup set up by the coordinator and, since September 2010, the co-coordinator and the expert who has taken responsibility for the particular stream of activity. The nominated BET expert is then responsible for the implementation of the work and liaison with other organisations, with the support of at least one other expert. In the case of more informal activities, these have a more ad-hoc nature and are carried out by individual experts depending on the expertise/profile and/or availability.

For historical reasons, the coordination of the team has been undertaken by 'Advisors' normally HEI staff seconded to the Ministry of Education. This in theory ensures a good strategic fit between the activities of the team and the national policies, provides institutional backing and fosters a good working relationship with the National Authority. However, it is worth reflecting on the location of this coordination within the structure of the Ministry and, in particular, the General Secretariat for Universities. The team is currently coordinated from the General Directorate for Attention, Participation and Employability of University Students, instead of the General Directorate for University Policy, responsible for the academic coordination, recognition, training and mobility of teaching staff and innovation in teaching. This decision appears to respond more to the allocation of the responsibility to specific individuals in that particular unit than to a strategic decision.

Financial management is undertaken by the National Agency (OAPEE). There are regular meetings and communication between the coordinator(s) and the National Agency staff. Despite the good collaboration between the National Agency and the

coordinator(s), some difficulties were experienced for the monitoring of the project covering the period July 2009 - June 2011 as the initial application did not contain any financial provision for the National Agency. The monitoring was undertaken but it had implications for the participation of the National Agency staff in the actual activities.

It was also reported that there are regular meetings and communication with the General Director for Training and University Guidance to harmonise the activities with the policy priorities.

The cooperation between the National Authority, coordinator(s) and National Agency was rated positively, but it was also agreed that there is room for better coordination. It appears that the team requires a greater leadership role to ensure that the activities are not delivered in isolation and there is a clear steer. The role of the coordinator is key to ensuring not only the effective delivery of the work programme but also the achievement of the objectives set.

8.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

In general, there was little knowledge on the IPHERs by the BET. The perception from the BET members interviewed is that the training sessions and meetings organised within the framework of IPHER were of low quality, in comparison with level of expertise of the BET members attending, bureaucratic and with no room for interaction. This has a knock on effect on the participation levels, with many experts considering that, given the pressures on their time, they do not see the value of taking part. As a general recommendation, they would like to see changes in the format of the sessions, limiting plenary session and allowing room for discussion and exchange, particularly for the experts to share their experiences and provide updates on the work undertaken in each country. There is a shared view from the BE that IPHERs should focus more on peer learning activities, where the focus is the exchange and mutual learning.

A couple of interviewees commented that given the nature of the activities, these should be delivered by an organisation more representative and knowledgeable about the HE community such as the European University Association (EUA).

For those with knowledge of the Virtual Community, they thought it was positive and had potential but they were disappointed with the type of information available and the fact that it was not up to date.

8.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

For the coordinator(s) the main difficulty for effective delivery is the fact that the financial management is separate from the coordination of the activities. They also commented on the lack of flexibility in the budget to accommodate changes during the implementation of the project. For instance, the 2009-2011 project experienced some difficulties in implementation that resulted in an underspend. The work programme was quite ambitious with 13 actions, and the changes within the team affected the timely delivery of the work. The BET made efforts to deliver the planned work within the timeframe, for instance instead of having two meetings there was one meeting over two days. This meant that a lot of activity was concentrated over one year. It is understood that the National Agency suggested a request for a modification but this

was not supported by the National Authority. At the end, some funds had to be returned. In addition it was reported some costs could not be claimed as they could not be justified.

Concern was raised about the bureaucratisation of the programme. This appears to be one of the contentious issues, with the BE feeling that the programme requirements are constraining their capacity to decide on how to deliver the activities and respond to changes in implementation and new developments. The main source of tension is regarding the claims, as they perceive the checks as excessive and inflexible resulting in many costs deemed not eligible and delays in payment. Many experts compared it with their experience with the Research Framework projects, which are regarded as more positive and flexible. However as pointed out by one interviewee: '*This is a dissemination project, not a research one*'. Given the fact that the delivery of the activities is led by the experts, it would be advisable to undertake some specific training in eligible costs to inform the effective management of the activities and avoid situations where the work has been undertaken but the costs cannot be claimed. This will also support and facilitate the work of the National Agency in dealing with the individual claims.

In general, the funding available was considered sufficient. The only issue raised was that the maximum number of hours that could be claimed by experts was not considered sufficient to encourage involvement and improve performance. But there was no further elaboration on this point.

Having a larger number of experts than other countries was justified on the basis of the devolved responsibilities to the regional level.

It was reported that in the past the of EU funding ranged between 75 and 78 per cent. The current project has very limited contribution from the Ministry. Despite the experience in 2007-2008 when the activities were fully funded by the Ministry, most interviewees agreed that this will not be possible nowadays, due to the economic downturn and spending cuts.

The in-kind contribution of the BE to the activities, and the support of the HEI, for example, providing venues and catering, were acknowledged as important.

8.8 Future of the initiative

When discussing the possibility of having a professionalised model for BE, the clear message from the interviews was of the importance of having a direct link with HEI to provide the contextual knowledge and overview of the implementation process. Therefore, most of the interviewees consider that, although a more active involvement is needed from the experts on a part-time basis, there was no support for an expert role on a full-time basis. Some interviewees were supportive of the idea of cross-country teams. This was considered particularly useful in the current stage of the process when the emphasis should be on practical implementation and this will benefit from the sharing of practices and approaches across Bologna countries.

One interviewee challenged the current structure of National teams as contradicting the supranational character of Bologna. This person favoured improved coordination and the establishment of multinational teams by topic.

As part of the interviews, reference was made to the approach followed in the Tuning project with a team of experts for areas and with international experience.

The following priorities were identified as key in achieving greater impact and ensuring added value:

- Focusing on raising the visibility of the BET activities to increase impact
- Dissemination of both good practice and examples also from other countries
- Less theory and more practical advice to support implementation
- Stronger leadership in the coordination of the activities
- Opening up the process to key groups such as teaching staff, employers and students
- A better application of impact indicators and identification of problems. This will allow the development of recommendations for the different target groups
- Establishing better synergies and links with key organisations such as the Sectoral Commissions within the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), the Commission for Internationalisation (CICUE) and employers
- Extending the support to other HEI (non-universities) that are currently experiencing the challenges of implementing Bologna with fewer resources than Universities
- Universities or the organisations representing the Universities to be consulted on the nomination of experts as a way of ensuring greater visibility of the team and recognition of their expertise with key target audience
- Regular updates to be sent to Universities about the BET activities and the experts involved

9 Turkey

9.1 Introduction

The National Team of Bologna Experts (NTBE) Project has been operational in Turkey since 2004, launched with an initial team of 12 Bologna promoters. The 2011-2013 period is the sixth phase of the project, where the number of experts reached 16. The Turkish National Team of Bologna Experts for 2011-2013 period is composed of eight lecturers, three deans, one advisor to rector, one head of department, one international relations coordinator, and one student from different universities in Turkey, as well as the Head of the EU and International Relations Unit of the Council of Higher Education (YOK). The Team functions under the direction of the YOK (National Authority). The activity plan and its budget are drafted by the Centre for EU Education and Youth Programmes (National Agency).

Selected highlights from the activities of the Team are as follows:

- Meetings with the National Agency (NA), Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), to increase the coordination among these institutions generally on emerging EU initiatives, with a special focus on Bologna process.
- National coordination meetings with Bologna Coordination Committees (BEKs) which were established in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), to inform them about the development of the implementation of the Bologna Process in the Turkish Higher Education (HE) system, as well as the new initiatives of EU in education and training
- Regional site visits to a number of selected universities and evaluation of their Bologna implementations
- Regional meetings and implementation workshops with students, to raise awareness about their roles and rights in the Bologna process, to ensure increased student involvement in the process, and to create better understanding on the other related issues
- Meetings with national stakeholders for raising awareness raising and ensure their active participation and involvement in the process

In addition to those activities, the experts take part in the training designed by the European Commission. Participation in the coordination meetings is also crucial for the experts in order to evaluate the Project timetable and work plan, and for the preparation of forthcoming events throughout the Project.

Target groups of the NTBE's activities are mainly composed of the management team and academic and administrative staff of HEIs. Students and other stakeholders, such as related ministries and governmental bodies (Ministry of National Education, Vocational Qualification Authority (for NQF issues), National Agency (for mobility, recognition and emerging EU initiatives), related public bodies, NGOs and organisations are also regarded as a target group of NTBE activities.

The NTBE activities are expected to contribute to the improvements in Quality Assurance (QA), National Qualifications Framework (NQF), European Credit Accumulation and Transfer system (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement (DS)

implementations in HEIs, as well as the competency of HEIs in the proper implementation of the Bologna Process.

9.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Quality Assurance (QA), National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and correct implementation of European Credit Accumulation and Transfer system (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement (DS) are the main themes covered by Bologna experts in the latest phase (2011-2013) of the Project. The Bologna Experts also give emphasis to awareness raising on Bologna in newly founded HEIs. A certain degree of improvement was achieved in the previous phases of the Project. The main target is defined as the sustainability of the previous achievements and improvements on the above-mentioned areas in the current phase. The Project also prioritises raising awareness on emerging EU initiatives and programmes in the field of HE, such as Youth on the Move and the Education and Training 2020 Agenda. These projects are crucial for enhanced mobility.

The interviewees suggested the following points to be taken into account by NTBE while carrying out their activities.

- NQF is developed for higher education. However, a bridge is needed between primary, secondary and higher education in order to build up the NQF. In this respect, the Project is recommended to ensure close cooperation with related ministries (e.g. Ministry of National Education) and public bodies (Vocational Qualification Authority) for the establishment of the NQF covering all levels of education
- The development of programme qualifications and learning outcomes is essential for recognition and quality of HEIs, employability of graduates and mobility of students. Because of this, it is suggested that the universities give special emphasis to this issue. It is recommended that Programme qualifications be developed on the basis of vocational needs
- The improvement of education in English is another issue that is essential for the enhancement of mobility. Both students and academics need to enhance their competence in English for higher mobility ratios
- An increase in the number of external quality assurance agencies is essential under the QA theme. For effective quality assurance, independent quality assurance agencies should be founded in every discipline and operate in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

NTBE carries out many activities under the Project. The main ones are the meetings that target the Bologna Coordination Committees (BEKs) and the deans of universities. These meetings are generally held regionally by bringing together university representatives from the same region. Bologna Experts also conduct site visits to the universities selected. They evaluate the Bologna activities of the universities and consult them on implementation during these visits. They also provide consultancy support via phone or e-mail. The team organises stakeholder meetings and regional meetings with students for awareness raising and to ensure their involvement in the process. Bologna Experts also attend the Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHER) training for updated information on the Bologna process and practices

in Europe. The coordination between the team members is ensured by regular meetings, phone and e-mail.

The interviewees identified the following suggestions to ensure the Bologna process continue more effectively:

- The seminars targeting HEIs should be more practical and interactive. The number of practical activities such as workshops and discussion with peers can be increased. Simulations of some Bologna implementations can be carried out in these workshops in order to make the universities internalise the process
- The team could produce academic papers on Bologna and publish periodicals on specific themes of the Bologna process. NTBE should also develop a guideline on the Bologna process and send it to all HEIs. This would be possible if the Bologna Experts could devote more time to this Project
- There should be an exchange between the members of different countries' teams in order to make the HEIs also benefit from the other countries' experts
- In addition to the regional meetings with HEIs, more training and workshops should be carried out on the needs of each university. The Bologna Experts should reach every university, since each of them has different needs and is at a different level in the Bologna process
- Best practice in Europe should be shared more frequently and effectively in the NTBE events. The experts should also share the HE practice of countries outside the Bologna process
- The NTBE should give emphasis to vocational schools as well as universities. Activities of the team are recommended to cover not just universities but all kinds of HEIs.
- The communication between the experts and the institutions should be improved. Sub-groups constructed under the NTBE should regularly and systematically inform the institutions on Bologna implementation
- Activities to foster industry and university cooperation should be prioritised. The importance of vocational standards for the Bologna process and its benefits to the business sector should be promoted more effectively in these activities. The trade and labour unions should be targeted in these events
- In addition to these activities, considering the difficulty in reaching every university, it is now crucial to use audio-visual and digital communication in NTBE activities. Hence, some of the activities should be carried out online

In order to realise the main aims of the Project, NTBE primarily targets HEI management teams, academic and administrative staff and students. Relevant ministries and governmental bodies (Ministry of National Education, Vocational Qualification Authority, National Agency, and various related public bodies, NGOs and organisations are also involved in the Project as stakeholders.

The interviewees suggest that NTBE's coverage of stakeholders such as business organisations, NGOs (e.g. TEGEV) and Vocational Qualification Authority needs improvement. The connections between the HEIs and business sector should be tightened to encourage the universities to shape their curricula in cooperation with the

business sector and to acquaint business people with the universities' aims and processes. In this way the curricula would better meet the business sector's needs and the employability of the HEI graduates would increase.

According to the interviewees, students have difficulties in adapting to the student-centred higher education system due to knowledge deficiencies about the Bologna process. In order to make the process more feasible for students and to gain their involvement, the interviewees recommend that the students should be covered better by the NTBE.

Although NTBE intends to reach all academic and management staff at HEIs, it is mostly the staff of Erasmus offices, the leading people holding the responsibility for Bologna process, at universities who regularly attend the NTBE activities. This is mentioned as a particular drawback for the adoption of the process by the universities, since raising awareness of HEI management on the significance and rationale of Bologna is crucial. It is also claimed that the management staff have limited knowledge of the main ideas forming the Bologna process. However, internalisation of the Bologna process will only be possible by ensuring that Bologna perspective is fully understood by the management staff. It will also accelerate the Bologna process in HEIs remarkably.

NTBE is composed of academic staff such as deans, advisors to rector, heads of department, lecturers and also a student representative. Since the main concern of the Project is full implementation of various Bologna dimensions, priority is attached to members' experience on different instruments of implementation of the Bologna Process. Geographic distribution and gender balance is also taken into account in the selection of the team members.

The interviewees find the NTBE qualified, to a large extent, to meet the objectives of the Project. Recommendations suggested by the interviewees for the improvement of the Team are:

- The qualification of each team member is not at the same level. While some experts are well informed about the process and work actively, some experts do not show the desired performance and are not very visible in the NTBE events. In order to prevent absenteeism and improve the team's efficiency, performance and involvement of the experts should be evaluated at the end of each Project phase; and failing members should be removed from the Team. Individual skills, competencies and background should be the primary criteria for the selection of experts.
- Although most team members are well informed on the Bologna process, they have deficiencies on some detailed issues. In order to ensure that all team members provide aid to HEIs on every matter they need, the experts are recommended to follow the literature on Bologna process consistently and devote more time to the Project.
- The members are qualified in terms of academic knowledge but have no expertise in the business sector. In order to create a more heterogeneous team, members from labour and employer unions and chambers of commerce and industry could be included. In this way the team could reach the business sector more effectively, and the sector could have a better view of the process.

NTBE activities focus on the current European Union Initiatives and Programmes in the field of HE such as the Youth on the Move Initiative, The Education and Training 2020 Agenda and exchange programmes such as Erasmus. In this respect, the NTBE activities are envisaged to raise awareness on emerging EU initiatives and programmes in the field of HE. The experts provide knowledge to HEIs about the Youth on the Move Initiative and 2020 Agenda. In addition, an advisory report will be prepared in the current phase of the project (2011-2013) by a working group under NTBE, for the revision of internationalisation policy in the field of education, in line with the emerging EU initiatives. The initiatives are also subject to the meetings of NTBE with National Agency, MoNE and VQA in this phase. All these activities are expected to contribute to the overall mobility of students, and the modernisation of HE.

Apart from the relations of NTBE with international HE initiatives, both members and the managing body of the Team are engaged in activities at international level. Some Bologna Experts are also the chairs of International Relations Departments at universities, and are members of various international institutions and bodies. In addition, Bologna Coordination Committees (BEKs) at each university consists of the Vice President responsible for international relations, Bologna Expert (if any), International Relations Coordinator and Erasmus Institutional Coordinator. The National Agency is also responsible for the Lifelong Learning Programme, as well as other European initiatives.

The Council of Higher Education (YOK) is the main body responsible for higher education policy. It is a fully autonomous supreme corporate public body responsible for the planning, coordination, governance and supervision of higher education within the provisions set forth in the Constitution and the Higher Education Law. YOK prioritises the mobility of students and academics, internationalisation of HEIs, modernisation of universities and the enhancement of the social side of universities. As a consequence, some reforms are initiated by YOK, such as the Farabi Exchange Programme, which stimulates university students and teaching staff members to continue their education and training at an institution of higher education other than their own during a period of one or two semesters. The "Regulation on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement at Higher Education Institutions" which makes it mandatory for all HEIs to set up procedures to ensure quality, is also an initiative of the YOK. Therefore, the reforms initiated by the YOK tally with the Bologna process in many respects, and support the process.

Structural funds are sources for Higher Education Reform in addition other national resources. The Improvement of Human Resources Through Vocational Training Project (IKMEP) is an example of the initiatives financed under IPA 2006. The academic programme of the vocational schools and course contents are reconstituted on the base of vocational standards and the business sector's needs. This project is complementary to the NQF of the Bologna process.

9.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Many outputs are developed in the Bologna process with the contribution of NTBE. First, Bologna Coordination Committees (BEKs) were founded in each university. BEKs

are structures which work on the realisation, dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of Bologna reforms in higher education institutions in coordination with other structured units established within HEIs.

Another output to which NTBE has contributed can be counted under the heading of QA. The "Regulation on Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement at Higher Education Institutions" of 20 September 2005 was prepared in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Under the Regulation, all HEIs are required to set up procedures to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of the standards of their programmes and awards. All universities are required to establish an "Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Board (ADEK)", which is responsible for internal and external quality procedures within their institutions. As for external evaluation, some independent national quality agencies started to work on acquiring accredited status of external quality assurance agency. The Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Engineering Programmes (MUDEK) was awarded the licence for external assessment of engineering programmes on 15 November 2007 and acquired accredited status as an independent external QA agency.

The other outputs are the developments under ECTS and DS. According to the decision adopted by the YOK on March 11, 2005, DS has been mandatory at all the universities since the end of 2005-2006 academic year. Since then all universities issue the DS in one of the three main languages of the EU, English or German or French, to all graduates at first, second and short cycle levels, with the first copy being free of charge. In addition to the DS, ECTS activities have been one of the main areas of work of the Bologna process implementation in Turkey. In many universities, teams of ECTS/DS Coordinators have been formed to carry out the ECTS/DS activities at departmental, faculty and university levels to reflect the student workload, learning outcomes, competences and skills in ECTS.²³ As a consequence of these attempts, 3 universities from 12 applications and 14 universities from 55 applications were awarded the ECTS label and DS label respectively by EC in 2011. By 2011 Turkey had the highest number of DS and ECTS label awarded universities in Bologna countries.

The other output is the NQF, which is developed in line with the vocational standards and with the contribution of the business sector. The priority is now on the development of programme qualifications and learning outcomes. Mobility has also increased to a great extent.

NTBE has contributed to these achievements with its activities from the beginning of the Project. Although NTBE has no direct influence on the starting-up of these initiatives, it has been working to extend their influence by its promotional and consultancy activities. Conferences and seminars for target groups and site visits to HEIs have been held by the team in order to raise the awareness and level of information at target groups on the themes of Bologna, and to extend the Bologna implementation. The outputs are improving since the awareness in universities on the subject and the adaption to the process are increasing over time.

Although the interviewees appreciate the efforts of Bologna Experts, the managerial and academic responsibilities of the NTBE members are viewed as barriers to NTBE's activities. According the NTBE plan, the Bologna Experts should devote 30 days per annum to the Bologna process. This workload is found very heavy and challenging by

²³ Bologna Process, 2007-2009 National Report of Turkey

most interviewees. It is recommended that the work plan be structured taking into account the workload on the experts. The other alternatives suggested are an increase in the number of team members or the use of online tools that enable Bologna Experts to support target groups from a distance.

Bologna Experts are expected to report on a quarterly basis about their activities. According to these reports, feedback surveys are handed out to the participants at the end of each activity. The survey results are documented and reported systematically. The evaluation results vary in line with the participants' profile. The participants who are not well informed on the Bologna process generally find the activities very useful. On the other hand, the participants who have already been familiar with the Bologna process underline repetition of the activities. The participants generally recommend receiving the presentation materials beforehand. They also request presentations that do not duplicate one another, but are on different themes of Bologna and have more visual materials.

In addition to the feedback surveys, some other monitoring methods are recommended by interviewees. HEI based monitoring is suggested in order to trace each institution's progress in the Bologna process and to take action towards institutions that lag behind others in implementing the process.

9.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

NTBE has contributed to the achievements in the Bologna process nationwide. One of the fields to which the team contributed is ECTS and DS labelling. NTBE organised conferences and workshops for academic staff, students and external stakeholders, giving guidance and advice on how to calculate the ECTS credits. NTBE also devoted efforts to promoting the awareness of DS among students, universities and employers, and a better understanding of the DS usage, aiming to achieve transparency and recognition of qualifications, thus facilitating mobility. National information conferences and regional meetings were organised by NTBE with this aim. The achievements in DS and ECTS would have been more difficult without the help of the Bologna Experts. The implementation of ECTS and DS in all HEIs is expected to improve with the help of the NTBE's site visits to HEIs.

NTBE activities are shown in the NQF (see the box below) and QA (internal and external) implementation. HEIs are expected to adapt their internal QA systems to ESG with the support of NTBE. The number of external QA agencies is expected to increase with the help of NTBE's informative and supportive activities regarding QA. Enhanced mobility is a concrete impact of the Bologna process and other EU and national higher education initiatives. Students are now aware of the opportunities of studying abroad, and set it as a criterion in their university choices. Each university also has an international relations department and connections with universities abroad.

While NTBE activities have contributed to the above-mentioned achievements, it is not possible to draw direct connections between the NTBE activities and the improvements in the Bologna process. The initiatives of YOK toward the Bologna process and the NTBE activities are integrated, and it is difficult to distinguish the impact of each activity separately. The lack of evaluation on the impacts of domestic programmes and regulations initiated by YOK is one of the reasons for these indefinite boundaries.

Moreover, some interviewees from HEIs assert that the main factors that provided their universities' progress in the Bologna process are their own efforts. They suggest their research on various Bologna topics and own studies are the main determinants of the universities' Bologna outputs. Therefore the joint efforts of the national authorities, NTBE and the universities have an integrated impact on the Bologna process.

Although significant progress has been achieved towards realising the objectives of the Bologna process at national level, some concerns were expressed by interviewees towards the impact of NTBEs at institutional level. The NTBE is seen as contributing to raising awareness about Bologna process at national level, but has some weaknesses in meeting the specific needs of HEIs and consulting them on implementation problems. There is a need to improve the activities of NTBE to reach every single HEI. Interviewees highlighted the necessity for better communication between the team members and HEIs.

While NTBE's impact at national and institutional level is accepted to some degree by the interviewees, nearly all of them agree on the lack of NTBE's impact in policy development. BEs are seen as the implementers of HE system but not as the stakeholders. The lack of sanction power is seen by the interviewees as the main reason for NTBE's ineffectiveness on policy level.

National Qualifications Framework – Turkey

Significant progress has been achieved towards realising the Bologna process objectives, one of which is the development in the implementation of the NQF implementations. Turkey has made important progress in the field of QF since 2006. Now the priority is on the determination of NQF based programme qualifications (e.g. learning outcomes).

"On April 28th 2006, the Commission of Qualifications for Higher Education was founded on the Decision of YOK, which were composed of the higher education institutions' representatives, and continued its studies until February 4th, 2008. As a result of works done between these dates, the commission defined NQF for higher education according to the knowledge, skills and competencies to be gained minimally at the end of each degree of higher education (associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees) mostly using the level descriptors within Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). Within this framework, it presented the first outline of "National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey", which were expressed as learning outcomes, for the relevant stakeholders' ideas and contributions. Besides, Working Groups for Qualifications for Higher Art Education and Higher Vocational Education were founded on 2009, thanks to the participation of experienced academicians of different universities and disciplines to support the Commission's works. The Commission for National Qualifications and the Working Groups have identified the

levels of NQF and educational qualifications, profiles degrees, credits (ECTS) and student workload for each NQF level.

It is planned that the qualifications given by higher education institutions should be included in NQF within national quality assurance system between the years of 2010-2015 and that the documentation of the compatibility of the framework with European Upper Qualifications Framework should be completed between the years of 2010-2012.²⁴ HEIs are started to develop their programme qualifications in the last few years and this progress is expected to pace up during 2012.

The establishment and implementation of a national higher education qualifications framework system is expected to contribute to the employability of university graduates, as all stakeholders including representatives from business world and trade associations, are taking part in the consultation process. The cooperation between YOK (the only responsible body for academic qualifications) and Vocational Qualifications Authority (responsible for vocational qualifications) is envisaged to contribute to a better understanding between employers and graduates both in the public and private sector.

The NTBE has promoted and encouraged the representatives and the academic staff of HEIs to redesign the curricula based on learning outcomes. In the 2011-2013 period, the priority of NTBE is given to NQF implementations in the HEIs. In the NTBE's site visits, selected universities are evaluated on their works about learning outcomes and advised for more proper implementation of this process.

9.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The NTBE is coordinated by two organisations in Turkey: the Council of Higher Education (YOK-National Authority) and the Ministry for EU Affairs the Centre for EU Education and Youth Programmes (National Agency). There is no National Bologna Committee in Turkey, either formal or informal.

The European Union and International Relations Office under the authority of YOK, which consists of 9 personnel, is in charge of the coordination of the NTBE. This team organises the coordination meetings of the NTBE and carries out all the administrative work on the national authority. In NTBE coordination meetings, the implementation of the Project is monitored and working groups are set up to organise different types of activities. Since the Bologna Experts are also busy with their own academic agenda, not all of them are able to attend all the meetings. Not all of the proposed meetings can be held due to the same reason. Hence most of the coordination is carried out via e-mail. According to the interviews conducted, in order to make the coordination meetings more efficient and fruitful, it is proposed that the National Authority define an agenda before the meetings and disseminate it to all Bologna

²⁴ <http://tyyc.yok.gov.tr>

Experts. In this way the experts should attend the meetings better informed, making meetings more rewarding.

The NTBE members are selected and appointed by the National Authority. YOK does not designate the members through an open call but according to some pre-defined criteria from the experienced candidates. In the selection process, YOK puts emphasis on maintaining the gender, regional and professional balance in the team. In the last selection period, YOK also selected some members from managerial staff of HEIs. Since an open call is not used in the selection process, some degree of bias appears in the target audience towards the selection of Bologna Experts. To make the selection process more transparent, many interviewees propose the open call method.

The other coordinating organisation, the National Agency, prepares the activity plan and budget and submits them to EACEA, implements the activity plan and prepares the final report. There are four personnel in charge of the NTBE coordination including the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) Coordinator and Erasmus Coordinator in the National Agency. The National Agency coordinates the NTBE procedures smoothly and without any problems. However, the administrative workload of the project is considered heavy due to the bureaucracy and procedures, such as procurement procedures or the detailed budget plan.

The Bologna process is promoted basically through the YOK website <http://bologna.yok.gov.tr/>, which is constantly updated in Turkish and English. The leading reports and publications produced under the Bologna process, seminar programmes and presentations are available on this website. All the target groups can use this website in implementing the Bologna process.

The experts are satisfied to a large extent with the coordination of both of the National Agency and the National Authority. However, the dual structure of the management sometimes creates complexity for the target groups.

9.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

IPHERs are intended to assist the national teams of Bologna Experts and of the Higher Education Reform Experts (Tempus partner countries) through the provision of information, training, communication and coordination.

The specific objectives of the current Phase III (2010-2011) of the Project are²⁵

- to raise awareness about EU higher education policies and to promote reforms related to the Lisbon agenda and the Bologna process
- to provide updated information and targeted training regarding EU higher education policies to the national teams of Bologna and higher education reform experts, taking into account different needs between countries
- to support networking between all experts
- to raise awareness about the EU programmes connected to higher education, namely Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, and Tempus

YOK (the National Authority) decides on the Bologna Experts that should participate in IPHER events in line with the theme addressed. The National Authority takes into

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/calls/2509/annex1_en.pdf

consideration the experts' specialisation while appointing them for each specific event. The selected experts are informed about the related event via e-mail beforehand. At most four or five Bologna Experts participate in a specific event.

The Bologna Experts find the IPHERs activities crucial and consider that they provide the NTBE with updated information about EU higher education policies. The IPHER events provide the opportunity to the Bologna Experts to meet with their colleagues in other countries and share knowledge and experience. Although the NTBE mostly designs and produces information materials about Bologna, they also use the materials provided by the IPHERs. The experts support the continuation of these activities.

While Bologna Experts are content with the IPHER activities to a large extent, they also express concerns and provide suggestions on the following issues:

- The contribution of IPHER activities is not consistent and varies between events. While some events address the needs of Bologna Experts who have in-depth knowledge about the process, in some events only basic level information is covered. Since the level of the presentation is not announced beforehand, all experts relevant to the specific theme are informed about the event. As a result of this, the events cannot appeal to the needs of all participants at the same time. The IPHER activities could be classified considering the level they address, such as basic, intermediate, proficient, as well as the themes
- The selection criteria for speakers in IPHER events are not clear. While some speakers' presentations are found very useful, some of the speakers do not present much expertise or relevant information for the participants
- The examples of good practices from different countries on the Bologna process are not shared at the desired level. Since one of the aims of IPHER activities is the exchange of good practice, the solid best practice examples from different countries could be promoted more effectively
- The IPHER training could be more applied and interactive. The participants can simulate good practices from different countries in the training. This would help the participants to absorb the practice and apply it in their home country
- The IPHER's activity schedule is not known to the experts. Some experts express a demand to be aware of all activities under IPHER and to have the right to choose the activity they would like to participate in. They would like to be informed about the IPHER event schedule at the beginning of each period. In this way, they would have a chance to get an insight on all activities and select the ones that best suit their own schedule and expertise

The Virtual Community is occasionally used by the experts in order to get information and documents on specific topics. The experts are involved in the forums to share their experience and knowledge. The Virtual Community is aimed to be used more effectively in the near future.

9.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

NTBE's 2011-2013 budget is €402,446, of which 89 per cent is financed by LLP and the rest is financed by national resources. The LLP grant is composed of two parts: a base amount (€15,000 for the period covered by the 2011 call) and a variable amount, which is calculated on the basis of the country's student numbers. As a result of this criterion, Turkey has the highest share (10.24 per cent) from the LLP budget, with €358,265. The budget allocation between NTBE activities is as follows:

- Management: 8 per cent
- Training the experts (e.g. participation in IPHER seminars): 10 per cent
- Bologna Experts core activities (visits to HEIs, organisation of training, participation in promotional activities, etc.): 82 per cent

Although the EC designates the daily rates for the experts, the National Agency sets an upper limit which is considerably lower than the EC designated rates, in line with the Turkish laws. Since tax is deducted from the daily rates and the tax rate increases throughout the year in accordance with the revenue increase, some Bologna Experts are not clear how much they are actually paid. Considering the amount they are paid as Bologna Experts and their own academic and administrative responsibilities, the Bologna Experts interviewed state that they carry out the Bologna activities voluntarily and with no thought of personal gain.

Around 90% of NTBE activities are at national level. The interviewees indicated that the scope of activities could be widened by attending more international events, exchanging experts with other countries and conducting site visits to foreign countries.

The significant portion of the NTBE budget is composed of LLP grant. Therefore, a cut in the EU funding would make it very difficult to carry out NTBE activities only with national resources. Accordingly, the scope and coverage of the activities would narrow down, and the effectiveness of the NTBE would decrease considerably.

9.8 Future of the initiative

In the future, the team is expected to accelerate the implementation of Bologna activities at HEIs, and the number of HEIs that adapt to the Bologna process is envisaged to increase. Involvement of stakeholders other than academics, such as NGOs, students and university management teams, in the Bologna process is also intended to be increased. The impact of NTBE on the themes of learning outcomes, QA, student mobility, and ECTS and DS labelling is planned to be more obvious.

Although the vitality of NTBE is reflected in the interviews, the following suggestions are made in order to take advantage of NTBE in the best way:

- The number of HEIs that need institution-based consultancy is high taking into account the work to be carried out by each university. The experts are recommended to conduct more site visits to institutions to see the current implementation in place, to evaluate the institution's performance and to recommend the actions that should be taken
- Since the team members are also busy with their own academic and administration responsibilities, some HEIs are hesitant to approach them. The communication between the universities and the experts is recommended to be improved. The experts are requested to be more

proactive in consulting with HEIs, by constantly informing them on updated information on practices in Europe and current developments

In order to allow the experts to devote more time to communication and information updates on Bologna, a modification is recommended in the structure of the team. This should enable the experts to have more in-depth and cross-country knowledge on Bologna practices and help institutions to carry out the Bologna process more actively. The number of experts should be increased for a better coverage of target groups, more effective activities and a higher impact. Considering the other responsibilities and roles of Bologna Experts, a number of full time experts is also recommended to be assigned.

In addition some concerns are expressed in the interviews about the universities' real intentions in carrying out these activities. Some universities are depicted as implementing the process mechanically without absorbing it. However the real intention of HEIs should be to take advantage of the Bologna process and improve the universities' functions. The universities' genuine intention in implementing Bologna activities is essential for the future of the HE system in the country.

To summarise, NTBE has a positive effect on the Bologna process at both national and European level and its activities should continue. The highlighted effect of NTBE at national level so far is the increased awareness of HEIs about the Bologna process. Interviewees also agree on the contribution of NTBE to the Bologna process through cross-country experience sharing at the European level. Enhanced mobility, cooperation and trust between countries and HEIs were indicated as the other outcomes of the NTBE activities.

10 United Kingdom

10.1 Introduction

The UK was one of the original signatories of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. While universities generally see the Bologna process positively, the impact of Bologna was limited until recently²⁶. Today, the importance of different aspects included under the Bologna process is still very varied. The UK, for instance, sees itself in a unique position in that, unlike other signatory countries, it already had a three-cycle degree structure in place at the start of the Bologna process. The UK also has a global reputation for high quality higher education provision, supported by a well-developed quality assurance (QA) system based on ongoing reviews of teaching and learning outcomes coordinated by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Yet, QA still is a much higher priority – in particular in the context of global competition for international students – and is the key Bologna issue for the UK. The aim of putting in place a framework of comparable higher education qualifications in order to achieve increased mobility, employability and competitiveness across the EHEA ‘can only take place if it is underpinned by robust and reliable QA systems in each country’²⁷. It should also be noted that fees drive the internationalisation agenda of UK higher education institutions (HEIs) at the expense of international relations and related aspects. Moreover, it is also necessary to keep in mind that the UK situation is complicated as differences exist between its constituent countries in relation to a number of key aspects in higher education.

This case study reports on the situation of the UK as a whole, but underlines some differences between England, Wales and Northern Ireland and Scotland as appropriate. The remainder of the case study covers aspects related to the relevance of the national team of Bologna Experts in the next section, followed by a review of its outputs and impact. Management arrangements are then analysed, before discussing the IPHER project, financial aspects, and the future of the initiative. Finally, a list of the interviewees approached for the production of the case study is provided.

10.2 Relevance of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The objectives of the Bologna Experts (BE) initiative, related to the provision of a pool of expertise in selected areas to promote and enhance progress towards higher education reform in their countries, were seen by most stakeholders as relevant to the needs of the higher education sector in the UK. The themes covered by the initiative were also largely seen as appropriate. On the whole, priority areas for the UK are QA and recognition. Regarding QA this is unlikely to become more important in the future in relation to the Bologna Process, as the interest of HEIs is now on QA regarding

²⁶ Reichert, S. and Tauch, C. (2005) *Trends IV: European universities implementing Bologna* Brussels: EUA. Universities UK/Europe Unit. (2005) UK position statement. Jakobi, A. P. & Rusconi, A. (2009) ‘Lifelong learning in the Bologna process: European developments in higher education’ *Compare*, vol. 39:1, pp. 51-65.

²⁷ House of Commons (2007). Bologna Process. Fourth Report of session 2006-07. London, The Stationery Office Ltd.

provision offered outside the UK – including but not restricted to China. Some non-university HEIs mentioned that QA was a pressing priority for them in particular because they do not have the same autonomy as universities to validate their courses or study periods abroad: they need QA for their students' Erasmus periods abroad through a university or other professional body, and they need assistance in relation to those processes. However, they also noted that this support tends to come from the awarding bodies with which they work (other HEIs or professional bodies) rather than from BEs.

According to the National Agency, Tuning-related work and employability are also important issues for the future. Moreover, ECTS remains a priority as institutions still face many interpretation problems regarding what an ECTS credit is, how it relates to credits that HEIs already had in the UK, and in relation to joint degrees. Non-university HEIs, which are sometimes new to participation in EU programmes, particularly require advice on credit transfer (from studies abroad to the UK) and how best to evaluate subject match/ equivalent to UK credit length for those periods.

Some recent developments have revitalised the relevance of the National Team of Bologna Experts (NTBE). Thus, for some of the HEIs interviewed, the Diploma Supplement (DS) was the highest priority at the moment given the introduction of a 'Higher Education Achievement Record' in the UK. The compatibility between these two instruments is a matter of concern for some institutions which are seeking for advice in this area. One HEI highlighted that an aspect in which it would require support are implementation issues, such as how different European initiatives should be incorporated into HEI's ICT systems, but this is not a strength of BE.

While some BE argued that modernisation should be a higher priority area for their work, some other interviewees held the view that this was not the case, because modernisation refers to a large extent to changing the relationship between HEIs and governments, and in the UK HEIs are already autonomous and flexible –so again this theme was seen as being of lower importance in the country. Outgoing mobility is still a challenge, but not a priority issue for UK HEIs. Nevertheless, some HEIs associated lack of outgoing mobility to factors related to the Bologna process, in particular recognition issues.

The main critical point in relation to the initiative's priority areas is that some interviewees believed that some of the themes covered by the remit of BE – such as modernisation - are not related to the Bologna Process, but are EU appointed, and that this was confusing for the initiative's target groups.

For 2013 the UK NTBE will look further afield to see what connections can be established in its work with other countries outside Europe (USA, NZ), and assess the possibilities that a further international dimension could be enhanced, which would most likely be of interest for many UK HEIs.

The format of the activities of the NTBE (advice to higher education institutions, organisation of training, participation in promotional and awareness raising activities, etc.) was generally seen as adequate. HEIs tended to value those activities that enable space to look for specific advice on particular issues that they find difficult rather than those that provide general information/ advice on the Bologna process.

Regarding the initiative's target groups, these are seen as appropriate by stakeholders. In particular, several interviewees highlighted the need to continue

prioritising HEIs as a target group, given that there cannot be a meaningful Bologna process without them: they are the key actors. This has been recognised by the National Agency, who has been placing particular emphasis on its work with academics over the last 2-3 years. The team of BE also has good connections with the other target groups for the initiative, except for employers - as there are no good means to connect to them – and, to some extent, students. The employer dimension should be worked out more, explaining the value of the Bologna process. Some student representatives are BE, so there are connections with that group. Yet, experts need to focus more on the student aspect of what they do, and their relationship with students.

Interviews also explored the current profile of BE in the UK. The overwhelming majority considered their profile adequate, including experts' communication skills. This is partly due to the selection process that takes place in the UK, whereby stakeholders play a crucial role in the appointment of BE. Experts' activities are also continuously monitored; they are required to write activity reports, and if they are not performing satisfactorily they are replaced. BE do not have a high profile (e.g. no Vice-Chancellors), but they are motivated and work with institutions. Moreover, some interviewees argued, the UK HE sector is so competitive that senior management from one organisation would not necessarily be heard in competitor organisations. Besides this, senior HEI management do not have time to be BEs. Interviewees also appreciated that BE came from different regions and from a variety of institutions, reflecting the diversity of the HE sector in the UK (one of the experts, for instance, works in particular with higher education colleges that are new to EU programmes and/ or need greater mobility flows).

In terms of the links with other international HE activities, such as the Erasmus programme, it is important to note that the British Council (UK NTBE national agency) also manages a range of other EU HE programmes in the UK (including Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus amongst others). Thus, BE have for instance participated in Erasmus Coordinators information days. Yet tangible links between BE and other international activities were perceived as weak by HEIs, except for some non-university HEIs as already outlined above. Buffer organisations, on the other hand, tended to be more positive in relation to this point. They argued that the activity of BEs is very closely tied in with the Erasmus programme, as BE support international offices within HEIs, for instance in relation to obtaining the Erasmus accreditation. More indirectly, the work of BE affects aspects related to Erasmus and other programmes – such as recognition, etc. Presentations by BEs can also publicise the potential of participation in EU programmes for marketing purposes, as noted by one HEI.

There are a number of other sources of information about higher education reform in the UK. HEIs use conferences and peer groups organised by buffer organisations such as the Quality Assurance Agency, the British Council, the EU unit or the European Higher Education Area website. These other sources of information are privately managed and require a fee for using their services. They provide a large amount of information. The added value of BEs is that they put that information in context and help HEIs draw out what they need, pointing them to the right resources. On the other hand, in some topics, what these organisations produce is sufficient. For instance, QAA brochures on QA were reported to be all institutions need to plan compliance with EU QA requirements. In general, between these initiatives and BEs, there is collaboration

rather than competition: BE take part in their activities and contribute to their work, while organisations direct some enquiries on the Bologna Process to BE and put them in contact with policy-makers.

10.3 Outputs and monitoring of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Regarding the **main outputs** of the work of the NTBE there are four main foci of activity:

Example – Relevant activities

- Visits to institutions (senior management), which are often practically oriented and whose value can vary from generally informative to very useful in relation to specific implementation aspects
- Regional Seminars for groups of HEIs. NTBE experience in selecting topics and seminars has increased and the management of BE now knows what attracts HEIs (DS, recognition, etc.)
- Invitation to other BE for international seminars. Documents produced as a result of the seminar are made available from the virtual community –VC and seminars are e working in synergy, also as VC discussions feed into the selection of the topics for international seminars. These seminars are useful given that participants are able to access instant views from outside their own country. At the time of writing, the UK is organising an international seminar on the European dimension in Higher Education with Ireland
- Written outputs: Contributions to briefings and reports on particular aspects for organisations in the sector, such as QAA (on ECTS, DS) or the Higher Education Academy. This work will grow in the future as new pieces have been commissioned from BEs. Publications have also been produced for the Journal of the European University Association and, more recently, in the form of scholarly articles. At policy level, BE provided responses to the House of Commons on the future of LLP and the House of Lords review of EU Communication on Modernisation of Higher Education – as did organisations in the sector and other interested stakeholders.

In terms of the themes covered, outputs relate to three aspects: first, the response to queries on the Bologna process from HEI and the public; second policy outputs and, third, general promotion of the Bologna process and the EU higher education area.

Some interviewees, on the other hand, were unclear as to whether BEs were receiving the same level of requests as in the past, as a result of their previous activity and the fact that institutions are now more familiar with the Bologna process. On the whole, the visibility of the NTBE remains low, although it varies by UK country; visibility is higher in Scotland, a small country with fewer HEIs than England.

The NTBE has faced a number of **barriers** to the implementation of its work-plan. BE underlined the lack of experts' time – even though experts currently put much more time than they are resourced for, which could be addressed through the allocation of additional days. Barriers also refer to not knowing how to engage with employers at national level, as there is no clear target organisation –no clear solutions in relation to this aspect were mentioned.

A range of systems for the **monitoring** of experts' activities is in place in the UK. Experts submit logs to the National Agency on a quarterly basis, detailing the activities they have carried out, the objectives to which they relate and the main outcomes produced. Monitoring is also achieved through questionnaires on the quality of services delivered. BE reports from activities are quality checked by experts and other stakeholders.

Regarding the **quality** of the outputs delivered, HEIs and intermediary organisations judged this as very good. Responses from BE were judged as being consistently prompt and detailed. One interviewee reported high levels of satisfaction from 80 per cent and 50 per cent of the attendees to two presentations made by BEs in his/her institution in the last two years. The regional seminars organised are seen as being of increasing quality as they have started to focus on much more specific issues.

There are fewer structures to measure the impact of BE activities – see also next section - or the **degree of deadweight effects** in the activities reported. For instance, some institutions mentioned that if they wanted to identify individuals who could talk about particular Bologna aspects, in the absence of the NTBE they would simply use search engines or referrals from buffer organisations. Some experts also mentioned that individual institutions, such as the University of Oxford, have done excellent documents on the Bologna process, without contributions from Bologna Experts.

10.4 Impacts of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

There is **little evidence** on the nature of the impact produced by the NTBE at institutional or national level. According to stakeholders and managers of the initiative, many participants in BE's activities report that these are valuable and that they will disseminate the results of the activities in their institutions. However, it is difficult to assess impact without a follow-up, and there are currently no resources to do this.

Bologna Experts tended to discuss impact in relation to cultural change in HEIs, so that institutions see more clearly their global role and their role as part of the EU HE area together. Their role therefore would be linked to a change of vision as much as to the use of tools.

More concretely, regarding institutional impact, HEIs reported this to be limited as it is up to HEIs to take things forward. The input of BEs mainly referred to one-off events and experts were sometimes geographically distant from the institutions they support, so it is difficult to rely on them to provide ongoing support on implementation issues. One organisation pointed out that impact had been small given the nature of the requests made to BEs: the expert informed people about various developments, but not much impact could be expected from this – just awareness of the context in which the HEI operates. Other examples of impact related to the provision of advice in

relation to University Charters on mobility or to the undertaking of a brief period of job-shadowing with a Bologna expert who is an Erasmus coordinator, which resulted in a different institution developing an interest in the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes.

Some intermediary organisations pointed out that Universities UK undertakes a HE UK survey which, among other aspects, enquires about engagement with the DS, and this shows that there is increasing engagement with it in the UK. While this cannot be attributed directly to the BE, very few other structures work in this area in the UK, which suggests that they may have had an impact. Also, the survey shows, more HEIs are now including the Bologna Process as part of their internationalisation strategies. However, most interviewees were unable to provide concrete examples of impact. Impact is also uncertain, in that other organisations have been developing activities related to the BP and its implementation (for QAA guidelines on compliance with EU QA requirements).

At the policy level there seems to have been no notable impact, as buffer organisations are those with which government consults. Some interviewees reported that policy impact in Scotland had been particularly higher, mentioning that the Scottish BE/ stakeholder group had persuaded Scottish Ministers to provide funding for participation in the Youth on the Move programme.

The evolution over time of the importance of BEs has not been noticeable - or had been negative - according to most interviewees. This is because the profile of the Bologna process itself has diminished somehow, as now is the time of 'mechanical' implementation, although some topics continue to be important. More generally, there was agreement that the impact of the Bologna Process in the UK had been less than in other European countries, which had had their HE systems turned around by a quick, and in some instances very radical departure, process of reform. But the UK was well positioned in relation to key aspects such as the three cycle structure, and naturally there has been less activity and impact. In other aspects, there has been moderate change. Some interviewees mentioned the low number of UK institutions that are DS label holders.

On the whole, impact could have been higher but the UK context is not favourable: there are well established traditions and regimes, a lack of understanding of the Bologna process and HEI preoccupations mainly revolve around income generation – in particular after recent changes in the fees structure - the role of private providers in UK HE and recent White Papers. Another barrier reported by stakeholders is that UK institutions are already very international, and EU aspects are less important because additional fee income comes from overseas students rather than EU students. The EU matters most in research, as the FP make substantial allocations of money.

A further barrier faced by BE refers to the staff in HEIs and UK students not willing to travel. This barrier could be overcome to some extent by making periods abroad shorter, according to an HEI: while 3 months (minimum period for participation in Erasmus) is not a long time, many students work part-time to support themselves and such a period abroad would involve leaving their jobs to participate in the mobility programmes.

A final point in this area relates to the nature of the UK HE sector and the autonomy of its institutions: HEIs set their own priorities and these are higher in their agendas than

compliance with Bologna. Some interviewees argued that changes can come only from national government policy through a carrot and stick approach, and that three cycles have been brought about in many countries as a result of government legislation. In the UK HEIs can be steered to bring about significant change (e.g. on recognition, learning outcomes, assessment methods, etc.) through funding, rather than through the activities of NTBEs.

One interviewee argued that greater impact is achieved in relation to Bologna themes through Erasmus projects, programmes such as Erasmus Mundus (for joint degrees or calls to work on specific areas) than through the activity of BEs.

10.5 Management of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

The British Council hosts the National Agency responsible for the management of the NTBE in the UK (call for applications, administrative processes, reporting, activity plan design and budget management, etc.) under the supervision of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The management of the NTBE was judged as being very effective by most stakeholders: the organisation of meetings and information for experts is considered excellent, although some experts reported delays in the reimbursement of expenses as an aspect for improvement. The British Council has facilitated the role of BEs by using its Erasmus-Tempus e-mail lists to gather relevant information, and uploads documents on the Virtual Community promptly. It was also noted that feedback from reporting to the Commission is that the effectiveness of the management of the initiative is very high in the UK. A positive trait in the link between management and implementation aspects is that the NTBE management team has very proactively built a team, rather than a collection of experts, by allowing opportunities for them to know one another. This was judged to be important for the satisfactory management of the initiative.

A second aspect to improve is that the British Council Bologna Experts website needs greater promotion, as more information could be provided on the NTBE members themselves, including their areas of expertise and their background, so that institutions can contact the best available expert in relation to their particular points of concern.

In terms of organisational setting, a formal National Bologna Committee exists in the UK, based around a BE stakeholder group including Bologna Experts, the national Quality Assurance Agency, the National Union of Students, NARIC, Universities UK, Government Departments and other organisations. The group meets 2-3 times per year and participates in the selection of BEs. The members of this group also inform each other during meetings in terms of new developments, planning discussions, providing feedback on plans and past developments, etc.

Experts find the meetings useful as they can ask questions of the QAA, NARIC and others and get an answer on the spot – e.g. in relation to recognition of degrees and other aspects. More generally, the HE sector organisations interviewed shared the view that their voices were heard in relation to the implementation of the initiative in the UK.

Additionally, in Scotland, there is a country-specific BE stakeholder group. Minutes from the UK meetings are shared with that group. The group has generated policy impacts for Scotland as noted above.

The transfer of the management of the initiative from the European Commission to the EACEA has had a positive effect, as responses are received more promptly, it is easier to talk to the EACEA team because it is more numerous, has a greater focus on the practical aspects of the programmes and their responses are informative. Reporting requirements to the European Commission were seen as adequate given the nature of the initiative – this included reporting on financial aspects. The new structure and reporting tools from the EU for financial and activity plans have helped the UK NA to manage the initiative effectively.

An interesting trend on increasing devolution of responsibilities to BEs was noted in the use of the Virtual Community. The Virtual Community has started to be exploited to shift management task to Bologna Experts.

Interviewees identified the departure of the current NTBE manager at the British Council as the main potential barrier to an effective management of the NTBE. It was also mentioned that barriers to more effective management of the initiative could relate to the uncertainties regarding the future of the programmes after 2013, and how National Agency contracts will be allocated.

10.6 Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs)

The contribution of the Information Projects on Higher Education Reform (IPHERs) to the activities of the NTBE in the UK relates to the opportunities IPHER opens up for the different national teams to come together, exchanging ideas and best practice.

In terms of usage, the national agency encourages all experts to attend at least one training seminar per year, but the extent of take-up varies, depending on their availability. Some experts have been working very closely with the organisers and have attended several consecutive seminars. A member of the NA usually attends IPHER seminars too. In the view of interviewees, other stakeholders should only be invited to IPHER training seminars if there is a specific role for them to play – for instance QAA or NARIC could attend to discuss and provide training in areas relevant to their remit. On the other hand, BE reported a very low level of usage of IPHER, except for the Virtual Community, in which UK experts show a high degree of activity and engagement, uploading and commenting on documents. Thus, one aspect to note is that members of the NTBE do not use the information materials provided by IPHER beyond their training, and they do not produce additional materials.

According to interviewees, IPHER could better support the NTBE by identifying targeted topics for in-depth discussion between national teams.

Example – Relevant activities

UK experts proposed the idea of a Virtual Community as part of the IPHER project and are active users of it. As an example, and making use of the Virtual Community,

the UK and Turkey teams started a discussion, which was then carried into the training event as part of the event programme. The discussion continued after the training seminar on the Virtual Community, until a conclusion was reached which was opened to all BE teams. This type of interaction is perceived as being really worthwhile and enables national teams to learn more about the different situations in each country as well as about the subject area more generally.

Interviewees tended to consider that the NTBE could continue their activities without the IPHERs. The BE interviewed had not used materials from IPHER for their activities; rather they compiled the information that they needed through research and discussions with colleagues.

10.7 Financial information of the National Teams of Bologna Experts

Most of the budget for the initiative is devoted to its core activities. The share of the NTBE budget going to management, training of expert and core activities is 10 per cent, 10 per cent and 80 per cent respectively. The overall volume of finance of the initiative, as well as its level of regulation, was judged as adequate – in fact the UK often sends some money back.

In terms of European cross-fertilisation, the vast majority of the NTBE activities are carried out at national level. None of the interviewees from HEIs had worked with BE from other European countries. On the other hand, UK BE has delivered training outside the UK in areas such as QA. This has been the case given the experience of the UK in particular key Bologna areas.

The current criteria for distribution of EU funding are seen as appropriate by all stakeholders involved. One organisation suggested that, additionally, the national level of compliance with the Bologna process should be added as another criterion for the allocation of funds.

None of the organisations interviewed had paid for the work BEs had undertaken for them –although some HE buffer organisations have contracted BEs independently for the provision of some services.

There was a widespread agreement that without EU funding, the NTBE would not undertake a similar level of activity, and even that it was likely that no activity would have taken place at all. Moreover, BE now aim to implement the Bologna process as interpreted by the Commission; if funding did not come from the Commission their brief would be different.

10.8 Future of the initiative

If BE did not exist institutions and buffer organisations would identify individuals within institutions with relevant expertise, but the service could be less solid. BE are currently asked to contribute to Bologna related activities because they are BEs. If they did not have that designation they would be less committed and institutions would have to rely much more on individual goodwill, creating uncertainty.

Regarding the possibility to change the current format of BE engagement from several part-time experts per country to fewer full-time experts with cross-country expertise, interviewees largely tended to prefer the current format. This is because the current format provides a wider range of contacts with different kinds of institutions in the UK, and because experts are not professional which enables (or forces) them to know the situation on the ground. Moreover, the current model also provides opportunities for the composition of the team to reflect shifting priorities more flexibly. Only one HEI would favour a change towards full-time experts, on the basis that those experts could be relied upon continuously. Another interviewee defended a mixed model combining full time and part time experts.

Interviewees saw the future added value of the initiative as being related to the clarification of the connections between the Bologna process and EU 2020, the provision of support to institutions when they apply for European labels and the screening of key documents on the Bologna process and the organisation of conferences on the main Bologna hurdles faced by HEIs and how to overcome them – some interviewees in fact saw greater engagement with research and reporting on EU issues as a point for further development by BEs.

There is also a number of areas that will require attention in the future. As an example, new ECTS methods incorporating learning outcomes are starting to spread; however the ECTS label does not look at the quality of that use so far. Moreover, there is further scope for countries that are more advanced in the Bologna process to provide advice to other countries (IPHER can be used for this): more could be done on the transfer of best practice.

Most HEIs interviewed mentioned that they will not make use of the NTBE in the short to medium term, as they know what they needed to do, and it was now all related to details (implementation, costs, IT systems) in relation to which BE help is limited. Yet, most interviewees from buffer organisations and HEIs would like the initiative to continue. Even though there is little in terms of tangible impact, they have found the NTBE a useful structure for the implementation of Bologna.

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