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# The role of academics in the Bologna process – a survey of participation and views

*Results from a survey among EI-member organisations in Europe*



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## Preface

This working paper reports from a study commissioned by Education International (EI) through the Norwegian Association of Research Workers. The study has been funded by the EI-member organisations in the Nordic countries. A main purpose of the study is to gather and analyse data on the perceptions and views on issues related to the Bologna Process from the point of view of academics in Europe. Addressing a core common European change process in higher education this study is also linked to a larger research effort at NIFU STEP, in particular the NIFU STEP's strategic institute programme on the internationalisation of research and higher education.

This study has been conducted by Åse Gornitzka and Liv Langfeldt. The working paper is written by Åse Gornitzka. Selected representatives of EI have commented on a draft version of this paper. NIFU STEP takes, however, the full responsibility for its content. We extend our thanks to the respondents that took the time and effort to be part of this study and provided us with their views and insights.

Oslo, February 2005

*Petter Aasen*

*Director*



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## Summary

This paper reports from a study commissioned by Education International, through the Norwegian Association of Research Workers and funded by the Nordic EI-member organisations. A main purpose of the study is to gather and analyse data on the perceptions and views on issues related to the Bologna Process from the point of view of academics in Europe. In December 2004 a questionnaire was sent to secretariats of EI-member organisations in Europe. 31 organisations from 20 countries completed and returned the questionnaire. The results of the survey show the following:

- The most common way of *interacting* with the government level on issues concerning the Bologna Process is for national authorities to inform the organisations and to invite them to meetings. More demanding forms such as being part of national committees for the implementation of Bologna, contributing to writing the national Bologna-reports or being part of national delegation to international meetings are less common. Seven of the responding EI-member organisations have had no interaction with government level in connection with the Bologna Process.
- 16 of the 31 respondents consider that their involvement has made an *impact* on the national implementation of the Bologna process. Most EI-member organisations report that they have been involved in *informing* academic staff about the Bologna process, through using their newsletters, organising seminars/conferences and in other ways. The respondents assess the *awareness* among their members to be moderate or low – whereas local union representatives are seen to be more aware of the Bologna Process.
- The survey gives a mixed picture of changes in the *working conditions* of academic staff. According to the respondents, the most converging development in working conditions of staff in European higher education is the increasing demands made on academic staff to participate in commercial activities and commissioned research. A significant share reports a decrease in the uninterrupted time for research among academic staff in their higher education system. A majority also reports an increase in the demands on academic staff to contribute to life-long learning activities. Respondents tend to see academic staff as having decreasing control over own working time and also decreasing freedom to pursue their own research interest. This is especially the case in some of the Western European countries. A majority see no *major change* with respect to legal protection over terms of employment, and similar issues. 63 Percent of the respondents report an increase in the use of *short term employment contracts* in their higher education system.
- Most of the changes in working conditions cannot be directly linked to possible effects of the Bologna Process. Yet the changes represent part of the context within which the Bologna Process takes place in national higher education systems. Changes in public funding (increased public funding in the case of some of the Central/Eastern European countries) and public responsibility of higher education are to some degree identified as linked to the Bologna Process. Some also report that the focus on restructuring of teaching and learning has as a side effect taken time and capacity away from research.
- Concerning the more specific items on the Bologna agenda, the most unproblematic aspect of the Bologna Process seems to be the introduction of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement.

Whereas the most problematic aspects refer to the adjustment of some study programmes to a two-cycle structure and also the issue of labour market relevancy of the first degree.

- There are highly differentiated assessments provided of the extent to which the Bologna Process and the implementation of Bologna have made a significant imprint on national higher education systems so far. The Bologna Process has represented varying degrees of adaptational pressure. In some countries implementation of Bologna and the possible consequences thereof are more expectations than realities.
- There are overall positive attitudes towards the Bologna Process reported in this study. Respondents tend to agree that the Bologna Process addresses important issues and that it has overall positive effects on higher education in their country. However, there is also a general sentiment that the goal of creating a European higher education area may be too ambitious to be realised. The respondents are split in their view of whether the Bologna Process represents a marketisation of higher education and also to some extent whether the time and efforts used on implementing Bologna exceed the benefits that can be derived from it.



# 1 Introduction: aims and methodology

## 1.1 Aim and background of this study

When European Ministers of Education signed the agreement in Bologna in 1999 as a commitment to create an “open space with common references in terms of learning structure, credit use, quality evaluation, curricular development and the mobility of people and ideas” it signalled the start of what in most likelihood is the most important reform and change process in European higher education to date. Reports have been written and numerous conferences and seminars have been organised as part of the Bologna process. Common European overviews have been made on a regular basis and surveys have been conducted. National ministries are responsible for writing national reports on progress towards the European Higher Education Area. However, the views and perspectives of the primary constituents in higher education – “rank and file” academic staff – have not been the dominant ones in overviews and assessments that have been made of the Bologna Process. That is the background of the survey that we report on in this paper. The aim is to “take the pulse of” of the academics with respect to their views and perceptions of the road national systems in Europe are taking towards an open higher education area.

In August 2004 Education International (EI), through the Norwegian Association of Research Workers, contacted NIFU STEP in order to commission a study of the EI’s members’ views on the Bologna Process based on a survey. The study is funded by the Nordic EI-member organisations. A main purpose of the study is to gather and analyse data on the perceptions and views on issues related to the Bologna Process from the point of view of academics in Europe. The idea was that the results of the study would serve as a background to the EI’s conference “From Bologna to Bergen – a mid-term review from the Academics’ point of view” in February 2005.

This is in no way meant to be a survey on the implementation of Bologna in Europe as is done in the national reports and the overviews of the state of the art of implementation across Europe on the various items on the Bologna agenda. Nor is it comparable to the comprehensive survey presented in *Trends 2003* (see Reichert and Tauch 2003). As such, this does not aim to paint an all-encompassing and in-depth picture, but it is an attempt to air the voice of the academic work force.

## 1.2 Methodology

### *Procedure*

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to tap the views of academics as perceived by their employees' organisations. It was developed in close cooperation with the EI secretariat and the Norwegian Association of Research Workers on the basis of an indicative list of topics to be included in the survey (see Appendix I for a copy of the questionnaire). As part of the testing of the questionnaire, a draft version was e-mailed to the secretariat of three national EI organisations. All three testers completed the questionnaire and gave substantial comments to it. After the necessary revisions were done, the final version of the questionnaire was in December 2004 e-mailed to all EI-member organisations on the basis of a list of e-mail addresses provided by the EI secretariat. The survey was administered entirely via electronic mail. The survey was addressed to the secretariat of each of the EI-members in Europe. It was left to the EI-member organisation itself to decide how the completion of the questionnaire would be organised.

### *Response rates*

The original list of addressees comprised 51 EI member organisations from 29 countries. 31 Organisations from 20 countries returned the questionnaire. This gives the survey a response rate of 61 percent in terms of number of responses from organisations and 69 percent of the countries that were approached. The response to the questionnaire according to country is presented in table 1. In the following "n" stands for each EI-member organisation that completed and returned the questionnaire.

**Table 1 Number of responses to survey according to country**

Country	Count	Percent
Belgium	1	3,2
Croatia	1	3,2
Denmark	1	3,2
Estonia	1	3,2
Finland	3	9,7
France	3	9,7
Germany	1	3,2
Italy	1	3,2
Latvia	1	3,2
Macedonia	1	3,2
Netherlands	2	6,5
Norway	2	6,5
Poland	2	6,5
Portugal	1	3,2
Romania	1	3,2
Russia	1	3,2
Serbia & Montenegro	1	3,2
Slovakia	2	6,2
Spain	1	3,2
Sweden	2	6,5
UK	2	6,5
Total	31	100,0

### 1.3 Limitations and possibilities

A word of caution for the interpretation of the results is necessary. It is an unmanageable task to design a questionnaire that can equally well tap aspects of experiences in higher education systems that are extraordinarily diverse, not only across national borders but also within national systems of higher education. The structural, cultural, and conceptual differences are far from negligible. The questions and answering categories are thus both too general and too specific. Also in interpreting the results that are accounted for in this paper one should be careful not to exaggerate how generalisable the results are and how representative they are for views, perceptions and experiences of the academic community in Europe. First, there are countries that are not covered by this survey. Furthermore in this paper each EI-member organisation that completed the questionnaire represents the unit of analysis, which means amongst other things that equal weight is given to answers from organisations with a small membership as to answers coming from organisations with large constituencies. The same goes for size, i.e. the results are not weighed according to the size of the higher education system whose academic staff the respondents in this survey represent.

There are also differences in the type of membership that EI-member organisations represent. Some organisations that are included in this study represent academic staff broadly speaking, others organise the interests of more specific groups. The list of organisations that took part in this study is presented in Appendix II.

Finally we must underline that the voice of academics is not always in unison and reflects the heterogeneity of systems and groups of academics, both in views and experiences. The results presented here are the views of academics in Europe as channelled through their employee organisations, i.e. the organisations that are set to present their interests as core employees in European higher education.

A main purpose of the study has been to elicit the response of the involved organisations and provide some questions that would evoke reflection of a qualitative nature on the issues raised in this survey. The actual response to the call for comments bears witness that the survey did accomplish this – the space in the questionnaire allotted to comments was used extensively by some respondents and to some extent by others. Even though the questionnaire study we report on here is finished, the survey of the academics' perspectives and views is far from over. It is the intention of this report and of the conference where it will be presented, to evoke and even provoke stronger voices from the backbone of higher education in Europe, those persons who have their academic lives in institutions of higher education across Europe as teachers and researchers.

## **2 The Bologna Process and the academics –participation, information and awareness**

### **2.1 Participation at government level**

In order to understand the nature of the Bologna Process as it unfolds in national<sup>1</sup> level policy processes we asked a range of questions pertaining to ways in which EI-member organisations have been involved with national authorities in relation to the Bologna Process. The results are presented in table 2. These results indicate a mixed picture ranging from no participation at all to rather demanding forms of participation. Seven respondents report that they have not taken part in or been in any way in interaction with national authorities on the issue of the Bologna Process. The most commonly cited way of interaction at this level is simply that national authorities have provided information about the Bologna Process to the EI-member organisations, as reported by 21 of 30 respondents. Also it seems to be a rather common practice for national governments to organise meetings that have the Bologna Process as the item on the agenda (20 out of 31). The more demanding ways of participation at this level, such as direct contribution to writing national reports (6 out of 31) and being represented in committees/forum for the implementation of the Bologna Process (7 out of 31), are less common.

Only four organisations have been part of national delegations to international meetings with respect to the Bologna Process. One organisation reports that it initially was invited to be part of the government delegation to the Berlin Ministerial Conference, but that the offer was later withdrawn on grounds that trade unions are not formally members of the Bologna Process.

The comments we received also referred to access points in addition to the forms of participation listed in table 2. Several respondents mentioned, for example, Parliament and parliamentary hearings as important arenas where national discussions with respect to the Bologna Process have taken place, although not always with the representation of EI-member organisations. Also higher education councils, councils of university principles/university rectors and similar bodies at the national level have been mentioned as important sites for airing views and perspectives of stakeholders in higher education, and as channels for potentially exerting influence on the national level processes. A number

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper we use the term “national” also when the results include cases where other terms would be more appropriate.

of the respondents also point to the role of union statements and opinions that voice the perspectives of the organisation and serve as input in the policy process.

**Table 2 Participation of EI member organisations at national government level in the Bologna Process.**

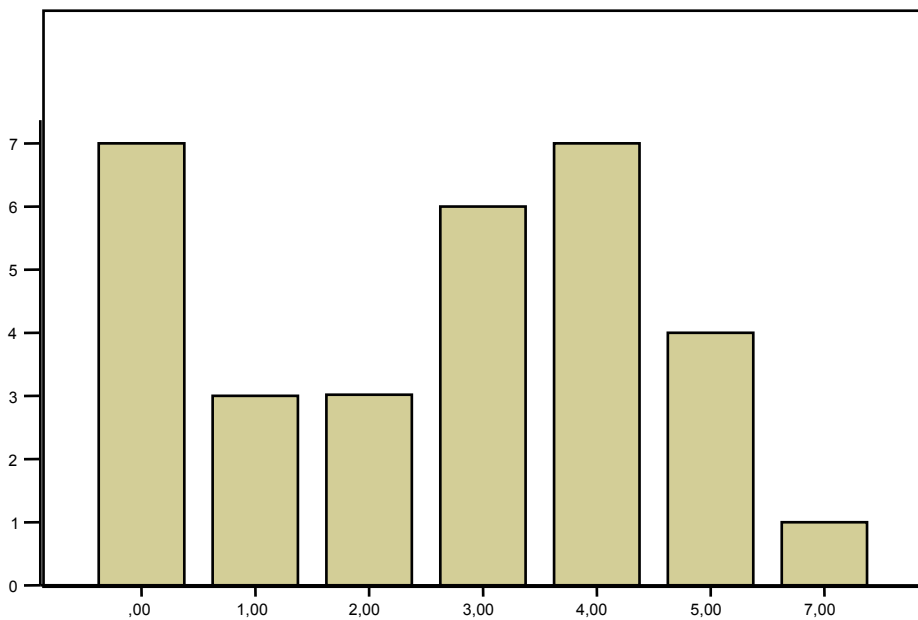
	Yes		N
	Count	Percent	
Our organisation has been informed about the Bologna Process by national authorities	21	70	30
The Bologna Process has been a topic of discussion during regular meetings our organisation has with national authorities	12	39	31
Our organisation has been invited to meetings with national authorities specifically arranged in connection with the implementation of the Bologna Process	20	65	31
Our organisation has contributed to the writing of National Reports for the follow-up of the Bologna Process	6	19	31
Representatives of our organisation have been part of the national committee(s)/forum for the implementation of the Bologna Process	7	23	31
Representatives of our organisation have been part of the national delegation to international meetings of the Bologna Process	4	13	31
Our organisation has in other ways been invited to contribute points of view to national authorities on the Bologna Process	13	40	28

In order to get a quick overview of the degree of participation we constructed a simple additive index for ways of participation in the Bologna Process at the level of national authorities. The results are shown in figure 1. We see from this figure that in the case of the national level activities of the Bologna Process several of the respondents seem to have had *multiple access points* to voice their views and to receive information whereas others have had none.

The group of respondents who report that they have had no access to the national governmental level processes related to Bologna do not have any obvious uniform characteristics. They represent countries that have come far in the implementation of the items on the Bologna agenda (see section 3.2), such as Italy and the Netherlands, as well as national systems where implementation of the main items is partial (Slovakia, Spain) or expected to happen in the near future, such as Portugal and Serbia-Montenegro. Some respondents explicitly state how the national policy processes have been sealed off from participation of any stakeholders in higher education – not only EI-member organisations but also the associations of institutional leadership.

The respondents that have accessed the Bologna Process in multiple ways at the central governmental level (scoring five or more points on the participation index) come from Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and Norway.

**Figure 1 EI members' participation in the Bologna Process at national governmental level – participation index. Frequencies.**



Participation index ranging from 0 to 7  
0= no interaction - 7= all types of interaction  
N=31 (missing are zero-coded).

On the basis of this survey we cannot draw any firm conclusions whether the patterns that have emerged are unique for national policy processes connected to Bologna or whether they reflect more general, national patterns and traditions of stakeholder participation in policy making and development in the higher education sector. Yet we can assume that at least in part the variations in access and participation revealed here are conditioned by national styles of policy making. They might also reflect the more overall position of employee organisations. What we also can see from countries where more than one organisation have responded to this survey is that the inclusion, access and participation in processes at the governmental level vary between organisations. In fact only one of the countries with multiple respondents shows a uniform pattern of interaction and participation – in this case no access/participation at the level of national governments.

The additional information that respondents have provided on the issue of participation and access at the national level can be summarised as follows. First, participation comes about in several ways. Some report that access to policy processes at the national governmental level takes place as a consequence of the formal right to participation and consultation when implementing Bologna entails changes in the legal framework for higher education. One respondent for instance describes how the membership in the national education council has granted the organisation inclusion in the process. The same

respondent points to an indirect influence of their organisation when they have participated in working groups in charge of the implementation scheme of the new higher education structure. Others report how their access to policy processes is not automatic or “natural”, but the result of hard work on the part of the organisations to assert themselves. The comments also indicate variations in how the Bologna Process is picked up at the level of national policy and in which context it is put. For instance, the case of Norway illustrates how the Bologna Process has blended with a comprehensive reform process for higher education. As such the participation of organisations in the Bologna Process cannot be seen in isolation from their participation in the overall reform of higher education.

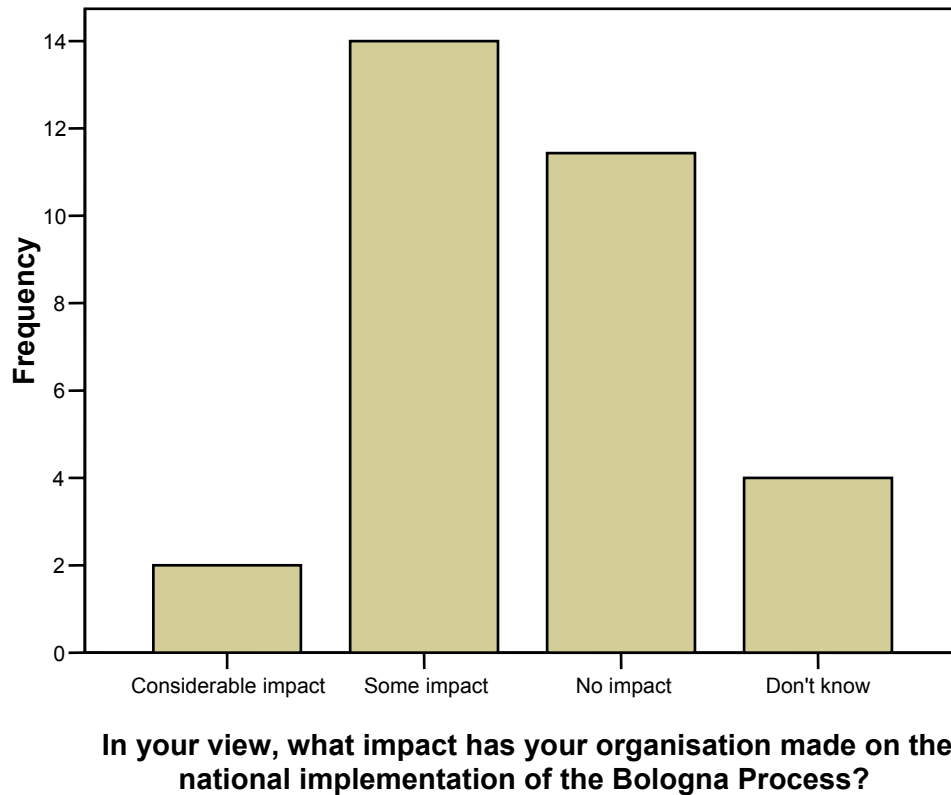
## **2.2 Effectiveness of participation**

As we have seen there is considerable variation among the respondents with respect to whether or not they are included as participants in the Bologna Process at the national level and the degree to which they are involved. However, we cannot just *assume* that participation necessarily has direct consequences for how national authorities are dealing with the Bologna Process. In other words participation as such is not always effective in terms of impact. To tap this issue we asked the respondents what impact they thought they had made on the process.

Figure 2 gives an indication of how member organisations assess their impact. Naturally it is difficult to make such an assessment – given the complicated nature of such links and the problem of ascertaining impact. Consequently, four of the responding organisations have reported that they cannot make such an assessment. Among those who have made an impact assessment, 11 are saying that their organisation has had no impact whereas most organisations report some impact. Only two respondents have reported to have had a considerable impact. The results of the survey clearly demonstrate a connection between the assessment of impact on national implementation and the extent to which EI-organisations have been involved in the process, the more types of involvement at the national level, the higher the tendency to make a positive assessment of the organisation’s impact. Two of the French organisations score high both on involvement in the process and their impact assessment, whereas the German respondent sees its impact as moderate, despite having been involved in a range of different ways with educational authorities. When we dichotomise the two variables the relationship between impact assessment and degree of participation is even clearer (see table 3).



**Figure 2 Assessment of impact on national implementation of the Bologna Process**



**Table 3 Respondents’ assessment of impact of own organisation on national implementation of the Bologna Process by degree of participation.**

Participation	Impact assessment	
	“Some”/“considerable impact”	“None” or “don’t know”
None or low (index value 0-2)	1	12
High (Index values 3 to 7)	15	3
Total	16	15

Frequencies. N=31.

Concerning the comments made on participation and impact issues we want to point to one respondent who has indicated that the impact of its organisation’s work with the Bologna Process has varied according to the stage of the processes. Its role has been central when the details of the national implementation have been worked out; while the impact has been much more moderate at the stage when the overarching, principled decisions were made. Similar comments are also made by others. Keeping the patterns of participation displayed in table 2 in mind, one careful interpretation of such comments might be that national authorities have “filtered” the involvement of EI-member

organisations according to a perception of these actors as relevant for supporting the implementation rather than for the actual policy development.

Some of the respondents are from countries that only recently signed the Bologna agreement. As such one might argue that there has not been much of a national level process in which to participate, let alone make an impact on, and consequently it does not make sense to make any kind of formal measurement of these issues. Against that one might argue that also the decision to join the Bologna Process is part of the “process” itself and a potential occasion for organisations to contribute and exert influence, i.e. the national systems’ and national actors’ involvement does not necessarily start with the national Minister’s signature. One might even conceive that interest organisations that are well-networked at the European level are just as informed about Pan-European processes as national administrations and could serve as a national promoter for the Bologna Process. However, none of the respondents has alluded to such processes at a “pre-signature stage”, but some have characterised their own role as that of promoter of national implementation at later stages of the process. Especially one case illustrates how an interest organisation can use its links to the institutional leadership association to convince reluctant actors (in this case some rectors) of the values of the Bologna Process.

### **2.3 Information and participation at institutional level**

There are many channels of influence that academic staff as the “street level implementers”, or rather “lecture- and seminar room implementers”, of several of the items on the agenda in the Bologna Process can use to influence the process, apart from through their organisations. Staff participation in the Bologna Process is clearly the case, for instance, in the practical work involved in the restructuring of curricula to fit a Bachelor/Master structure and other changes where the Bologna Process moves very close to the basic processes of higher education. Academic staff may also have other sources of direct or indirect influence at their disposal – especially through the participation in institutional governance structures and through institutional leadership and their networks. But for academic staff as employees their organisations may represent a primary voice and source of influence. EI-member organisations report that they also use their contacts with institutional leadership and their networks indirectly to influence the national implementation of the Bologna Process. In general the institutional level seems to some extent to be active in Bologna issues, in the sense that they provide information and organise meeting for academic staff where the Bologna Process is addressed. At least that is the impression of respondents in this survey. Only two respondents report that they are *not* aware of higher education institutions organising meetings that directly address the issues of the Bologna Process (see

Table 4). The majority of respondents report that they know of such meetings being organised on occasion or on rare occasions. So we are left with the impression that there are some activities going on at the institutional level to inform academic staff about the Bologna Process, but that this practice is not widespread among the higher education institutions. Also some respondents comment on the fact that information about the Bologna Process organised by the institutions themselves is not always for the rank and file of academic staff but restricted to the institutional leadership and the higher level of the administrative stratum in the institution.

The variation across countries is not great on this issue, but some of respondents from the Nordic and Eastern European Countries (Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Russia) are the ones to report that institutional “Bologna meetings” are a widespread practice. In addition almost half of the respondents say that universities and colleges also use other means of communicating with their staff about the Bologna Process.

**Table 4 Have universities/colleges in your country organised meetings for their academic staff related to the Bologna Process?**

	Count	Percent
Yes, it is a widespread practice	5	16,1
Yes, on occasion	12	38,7
Yes, but only rarely	12	38,7
No, not to our knowledge	2	6,5
Total	31	100,0

## **2.4 The role of organisations in informing and creating awareness**

According to the survey the organisations have taken a responsibility in providing information and stimulating awareness of the Bologna Process among their members. 77 Percent of the respondents have in some way or another provided information to their members on this issue. This includes putting the Bologna Process on the agenda of regular meetings of the organisation and also organising discussion seminars, and the like, specifically concerning the Bologna Process. The regular newsletters of the EI-member organisations are frequently referred to as a means of communicating about the Bologna Process. The organisations also target directly the organisations’ local representatives by providing them with information. In this sense the organisations act as information distribution centres.

**Table 5 Organisations’ role in informing academic staff about the Bologna Process.**

	Yes		N
	Count	Percent	
Our organisation has provided information to our members	23	77	31
Our organisation has had the Bologna Process as an item on the agenda at regular meetings among our members	20	67	30
Our organisation has organised discussions/seminars on the Bologna Process	19	68	28

The respondents comment on this issue that they use extensively their established information network that has a national reach. In this sense the organisations have had a role in creating a “public sphere” within the core of higher education stakeholders around the issues of the Bologna Process. At least policy makers will then know that there is an audience that pays attention to what is done “in the name of Bologna”, and that might have an effect in itself. Directing attention and creating awareness can also be seen as a way to exert influence if awareness becomes a basis for political mobilisation. Such a mode of influence then might come in addition to the direct access to policy processes at the national level or it might compensate for the lack of such access.

Of course, organisations are not alone in creating awareness and establishing a public sphere within the higher education community. Also information that is spread and seminars organised by intermediary bodies and national agencies, and so on, sometimes in cooperation with the interest organisations, serve to create awareness also among staff. And we must add that these information activities notwithstanding, the locus of attention towards the Bologna Process seems to rest primarily with the leadership at higher education institutions. As seen from the perspective of the organisations, the institutional leadership is more aware of the Bologna Process than local organisation representatives and certainly the regular members of the organisations. So the efforts of the organisations to inform and provide opportunities together with the other Bologna related activities organised by institutions have in the view of the organisations not led to more than low to moderate awareness of the process among rank and file academics. On the other hand only one respondent estimates that there is no awareness of the Bologna Process among its members in general.

Finally we note that one respondent reports having taken part in organising studies about Bologna related issues - which is of course not only a contribution to increasing awareness of the Bologna Process, but also a way of making the national response to the Bologna Process *better informed* and possibly evidence-based.

**Table 6 Assessments of awareness of the Bologna Process in domestic higher education. Frequencies.**

How do you assess the awareness of the Bologna Process among the following groups in your higher education system?	<i>High</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>None</i>	N
Among local union representatives	8	14	9	-	31
Among your members in general	3	13	14	1	31
Among leadership at universities/colleges	14	12	5	-	31

## 3 Views on trends in higher education

### 3.1 Introduction

Assessing the degree of implementation of public policy is a notoriously slippery exercise. What are the criteria that we can use to reasonably say that reforms, legislation or policy initiatives have been implemented? What are valid indicators for assessing the degree to which such implementation has occurred? This question is none the easier with respect to the Bologna Process – as many of the items on the Bologna agenda are open for multiple interpretations. There are various understandings of what the Bologna Process “is”. The assessments that are regularly made of the implementation of Bologna tend to focus on the more tangible and visible Bologna items: the two main cycles for structuring degrees, use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and the introduction of the Diploma Supplement, see e.g. Eurydice 2003. Also there are significant variations in the extent to which higher education systems are faced with adaptational pressures in order to fulfil the commitments made in the Bologna Declaration and the ensuing process. Some systems have longstanding traditions of Bachelor/Master degree structures and accordingly implementation of Bologna does not represent a great impetus for change. Furthermore, the causal relationships between Bologna as a common European cooperation process and changes in national higher education systems and institutions are tenuous indeed. A main point of departure would be to assume that the implementation of Bologna is significantly marked by the context in which it occurs. That is why this survey wanted to bring to the fore academics’ point of view on the more general trends in their higher education systems, and by doing so placing the Bologna Process in a context. We explicitly stated in the introductory letter to the survey that we did not expect the respondents to provide formal system information of a statistical nature. The idea was to gather information that would reflect the EI-member organisations’ *perception* of overall changes in their higher education system at a general level.

The Bologna Process might have all sorts of links and relationships to change processes in institutions and at a system level; there might be overall significant change processes that have nothing to do with the Bologna Process, or on the other hand they might have everything to do with it. These caveats notwithstanding, in this section we present some indications of the overall change patterns in European higher education as seen by national organisations as well as their views on how these are related to the Bologna Process.

### **3.2 Degrees of implementation**

We asked the respondents to make an assessment of how far their country has come in terms of implementing the Bologna Process. The intention was to get an overall assessment from the point of view of these organisations, and not to contribute to an evaluation of the national efforts to accommodate the items on the Bologna agenda. The overall impression is that the countries covered in this survey see the Bologna Process as being in the process of implementation. Only one respondent sees no signs of immanent implementation (i.e. within the coming 2-3 years). Of course these assessments most certainly reflect different perceptions of what it means for a country to “implement Bologna”. For instance, in some cases it is hard to classify the existing degree structure as according to Bologna or not, and it might be equally difficult to identify the main model in systems that operate with a conglomerate of different degrees (see also 3.6). This leeway for interpretation we recognise in our study. For instance, in countries where more than one EI-member organisation has responded to the survey, different assessments have been made of the degree of implementation. With that in mind, the overall impression is that higher education systems in the included countries are seen as on their way to implement the main items on the Bologna agenda. In Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Norway the perception is that all main elements have been implemented. Respondents in the Balkan region, Portugal and Sweden expect implementation to happen within two to three years time.

Most respondents refer to changes in the legal framework of higher education that have already been passed or that are in the offing as their reference for degree of implementation. To this issue several respondents gave comments that served to qualify the mere numerical expression of degree of implementation. They demonstrate that if we move one layer underneath the overall implementation assessment, we see that the way in which national systems of higher education adjust to Bologna is not straightforward. The Portuguese case, for instance, is a telling case of delays in legal changes and implementation getting entangled in more general political developments. The case offered by the Italian respondent illustrates to the point how implementation does not end with the passing of significant legal changes at the central level. As mentioned above, the Italian case has been marked by a closed policy process at the level of national authorities and a top-down approach to implementation. Since the passing of the law that changed the degree structure according to a 3+2 model, the Italian higher education system has had difficulties dealing with the practical and principled implications of such profound degree changes. Serious concerns have come up with respect to the quality of the first degree, the “professional” content of non-professional first degrees, etc. The comments made underline

that the reform process has suffered from a lack of assessment of the consequences of the first wave of reform before additional reform of – in this case – the first degree was proposed. The latter proposal has already been put forward by the Italian ministry, and has caused serious opposition in the academic community.

**Table 7 Assessment of degree of implementation.**

<i>“According to your assessment, how far has your country come in terms of implementing the Bologna Process?”</i>	Count	Percent
All main elements have been implemented	10	32,3
Some main elements have been implemented	15	48,4
None of the main elements have been implemented, but implementation is expected to happen within the next 2-3 years	5	16,1
None of the main elements have been implemented and there are no signs that implementation will happen within the next 2-3 years	1	3,2
Total	31	100,0

### **3.3 Changes in working conditions**

Few changes in higher education systems do not in the end lead to changes in the working conditions of academic staff. Also changes that may be related to the Bologna Process have potential implications for conditions that academic staff work under. Yet, such possible implications cannot be understood without reference to the overall change/stability of the working conditions in higher education. In order to address general trends of change in working conditions of academic staff, we asked the respondents to assess a number of possible developments and changes in their domestic higher education system. Naturally such assessments cannot bring to the fore the variety of working conditions that can be observed also within national systems of higher education, for instance, differences between conditions for academic staff in the college/polytechnic sector versus university sector, or between private and public sectors, or large inter- or even intra-institutional differences. Again we must underline the need to see the responses as indications at a very general level.

The responses give a mixed picture of changes in domestic higher education that have affected the working conditions of academic staff in Europe (see table 8). The perceptions of the changes in working conditions are not uniform across the higher education systems included in the survey. All the questions have some distribution across the answering categories. In general it portrays working conditions that are in transition across Europe – some more than others. The geographical distribution of assessments of changes in working conditions also shows no clear patterns. In the following we comment briefly on the results of the survey of the issue of changes in working conditions that are summed up quantitatively in table 8.



**Table 8 Changes in working conditions for academic staff.**

"What have been the most important changes in the working conditions for academic staff at higher education institutions in your country the last five years?"	<i>Increased</i>		<i>Decreased</i>		<i>No change</i>		<i>Don't know</i>		<i>N</i>
	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>%</i>	
Control over own working time	5	17	10	33	15	50			30
Academic staff's control over design and adaptation of curriculum	8	27	8	27	14	47			30
Freedom to pursue own research interests	4	13	11	37	13	43	2	7	30
Uninterrupted time for research			13	43	14	47	3	10	31
Opportunities for study visits, conference participation etc. abroad	8	28	7	23	11	37	4	13	30
Demands on academic staff to contribute to "lifelong learning activities"	15	50			10	33	5	17	30
Demands to participate in commercial activities/commissioned research	20	67			6	20	4	13	30
Evaluation of research on a regular basis	13	43	1	3	12	40	4	13	30
Evaluation of teaching on a regular basis	18	60			11	37	1	3	31
Influence of academic staff on internal governance in own institution	3	10	8	27	19	63			30
Use of short term employment contracts	19	63			11	37			30
Legal protection of terms of employment	7	23	4	13	17	57	2	7	30
Involvement of academic staff (e.g. through union) in negotiations on employment terms	8	28	4	14	17	59	2	7	29

Let us first turn to the issue of *control* over own working time, design/adaptation of curriculum, and research (freedom to pursue own research interests and uninterrupted time for research). Between 43 and 50 percent of the respondents see no major changes the last five years on these issues. The respondents from Southern Europe in particular see no major changes in staff's control over working time. For those respondents that report changes it is in most part a question of *loss* of control and discretion over key aspects of academic staff's work. This is in particular a tendency reported by North/Western European respondents, i.e. organisations from the UK, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Norway, partly Sweden and Finland. This is also the case for control over own working time, less freedom to pursue own research interests, and uninterrupted time to do research. There are some notable exceptions to the loss of control aspects of recent changes in work conditions for academic staff. First we note that three of the Central European respondents (Latvia, Slovakia and Romania) report an increase in the freedom to pursue own research interests. Second, the most mixed picture we find with respect to the control over design and adaptations of curricula in higher education. Eight of the 30 respondents (representing 8 countries) who answered this question felt that academic staff had increased their control over such activities, the same number (representing 6 countries) gave the opposite answer.

The overall picture provided by the respondents gives the impression that the pressure on academics the last five years has increased. That concerns especially the “outside” pressure – i.e. demands stemming from the economic/social environment of higher education, with increasing demands to participate in lifelong learning activities and to engage in commercial activities/do commissioned research. With respect to the latter, 67 percent of the respondents report an increase in such demands. Apart from Poland, Romania, and Macedonia, there are respondents from all countries in this study who see an increase in demands put on staff to participate in commercial activities and do commissioned research. Also the evaluative pressure is seen as increasing, especially when it comes to evaluation of teaching on a regular basis (60 percent of respondents).

We see a more mixed pattern of developments with respect to possibilities for academic staff to go abroad for study trips, etc. Also on this issue there are no clear geographical patterns in the way that respondents have answered. Here 8 respondents see an increased opportunity for this (France, Germany, the UK, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and one of the Finnish respondents), whereas the Southern European respondents see no change or declining opportunities for staff to take study visits abroad. A decline in such opportunities is also the situation reported by some of the Scandinavian, Belgian and Dutch respondents. This does not completely match the findings of the *Trends 2003* study. That study concludes that the *public funds* for staff mobility have increased in a majority of the EU countries and that a majority of the higher education institutions report an increase in the teaching staff mobility (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 9, 121).

Some aspects of working conditions of academics are in general seen as more in a state of stability than in a state of change. This refers first of all to staff influence in the *internal governance* of higher education institutions – 19 of the 30 EI-member organisations see no significant change in this aspect the last five years. Especially the Southern European respondents refer to stability in academic staff involvement in internal governance, but also part of the Nordic region (Sweden, Finland and Estonia) indicates stability rather than change with respect to this issue over the last five years. This might be a sign that this is an issue where little reform activities have been going on at all. Or that this was a much more salient issue in the 1980s and 1990s and that consequently higher education institutions have gone through changes more than five years ago (cf. also Amaral, Jones and Karseth 2002). On the other hand adaptation of the institutional governance is apparently still an issue in countries such as the UK,

the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Latvia and partly Norway – respondents from these countries report a decrease in the academic staff's influence in internal governance.

There is also somewhat more stability than change reported when it comes to the legal protection of terms of employment for academic staff and with respect to influence of academic staff in negotiating employment terms. A small majority says that there has been no significant change in these matters, four respondents say there is a decrease and 7-8 report an increase in the legal protection and academic influence in negotiation of terms of employment. On the other hand, the use of *short term employment contracts* has been increasing the last five years. That is the case practically across all of Europe, which implies that there is in Europe an increasing segment of academic staff with a low level of job security. As commented on, especially by the Italian respondent, a higher education system is in a non-sustainable situation when a significant share of academic staff perpetually works under short term or “flexible” contracts.

The picture of academic “everyday life” in the first years after the signing of the Bologna Declaration is marked by increasing pressure to accommodate external expectations, and in parts of Europe a sense of loss of discretion over own work situation can be noticed. But we must underline that this is not the way that all respondents have presented the working conditions in higher education - as can be seen from table 8 there are notable exceptions to the dominant picture.

*What does the Bologna Process have to do with the partly mixed patterns of change and stability in the conditions that academic staff in Europe works under?* The questionnaire asked specifically for respondents to comment on the possible links of such changes with what was going on with respect to the Bologna Process in each higher education system. The answers were of course linked to how far into the Bologna Process the domestic higher education system was assessed to be. For some systems that have come far in implementation, one core comment is that the Bologna Process directly affects academic staff conditions as it *puts pressure on academics*. The Bologna Process entails, as one comment puts it, “a growing work load without compensation”. In part this is a question of the practical consequences of the reorganisation of study programmes. The structural changes related to the degrees entail that academic staff become directly affected and in most cases also involved as street level implementers. In part this is related to the pressure for internationalisation of teaching and learning that the Bologna Process is seen as being accompanied by. For instance, the mere pressure to teach in English is pointed to as a significant Bologna-related change in working conditions.

Several comments from respondents that operate in national systems with a high degree of implementation refer to side effects of the Bologna Process: the reforms and changes that have come in the wake of implementing Bologna have directed attention and energy towards the teaching function of higher education and in so doing have put pressure on the work of academic staff *qua researchers*. Consequently the conditions for conducting research are seen as having been impaired – there is less time to do research for the individual academic. There are more teaching related tasks, supervision and tasks related to evaluation, academic upgrading of certain programmes, and so on – while the number of staff and wage levels for staff have not been increased.

What both the comments and the responses to questions underline is that there are heavy trends of change that cannot specifically be related to the implementation of the items on the Bologna agenda – partly because such implementation is not yet a fact to any extent, or the “Bologna changes” have not had time to display any tangible effects on working conditions. But most importantly there are other heavy change agents that operate in the system. These impinge on national change processes that in turn affect the working conditions in higher education. In particular there are several comments made on the financial pressure put on higher education institutions and the consequences that it carries for the individual academic. A Swedish respondent reports that despite having a so far “non-implementing” higher education system, Swedish academics have experienced changes in most of the working conditions that were addressed in the questionnaire. Furthermore, respondents from the UK and Denmark, countries that are seen as having implemented the major items on the Bologna agenda, see no connection between changes in working conditions and the national implementation of the Bologna Process in their country.

### **3.4 Funding and institutional autonomy**

The funding of higher education institutions is clearly a matter that has been undergoing considerable changes the last five years in the eyes of the respondents. As indicated we had made it clear in the introductory letter of the questionnaire that in asking questions of this nature we wanted the respondents’ *impression* of changes in their higher education system. Consequently the results reported in table 9 and 11 should be seen in light of that. The respondents report both increasing and decreasing government funding. The comments they give point to the multifaceted aspects of government funding – and as such this is an extremely difficult question to assess because it may refer to such distinct issues as student financing, wages for academics, the student fees’ issue. It also depends on whether changes

in funding are measured in terms of public funding per capita or per undergraduate student. Some respondents see differentiated patterns of public funding – where some areas, and also types of institutions, have received more public funding and others not. The rise in student numbers has entailed an increase in funding - yet as suggested by several comments, student numbers have increased more than the corresponding funding. The funding of research in the higher education sector is seen as having decreased by several of the respondents. Notably increasing reliance on external funding is reported by some as a key aspect of the changes in higher education funding.

Almost half of the respondents indicate that not only the level of funding, but also the governmental funding *mechanism* with respect to higher education has changed the last five years. Performance funding and being paid “per student” are recurring phrases used to describe changes in the funding mechanisms.

**Table 9 Perceptions of changes in level of government funding the last five years.**

	Count	Percent
No major changes in level of government funding	8	26,7
Yes, increased level of government funding	12	40,0
Yes, reduced level of government funding	10	33,5
Total	30	100,0

The connection between these changes in public funding and the Bologna Process is, if existent, at least tenuous and indirect, or partially to marginally related to the national implementation of the Bologna Process (see table 11). Some comment on this issue by saying that the prospect of implementing Bologna has created an expectation of increase in government funds for higher education that has not been met. As we have seen with respect to changes in working conditions, especially implementing degree structure reforms is also a question of administrative and financial capabilities. Academic staff is seen as being put in a squeeze when such tasks come on top of an existing wide range of responsibilities that are underfunded.

On the other hand the situation reported by several of the Central and Eastern European respondents indicates a noteworthy pattern. First of all, six of these countries see an overall increase in public funding for higher education the last five years and at the same time four of them indicate that this increase is partially (marginally) linked to the Bologna Process. This linkage is reported by all or one of the respondents from Estonia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia (cf. also section 3.5).

**Table 10 Perceptions of change in institutional autonomy the last five years.**

	Count	Percent
No major changes in institutional autonomy	15	48
Yes, increased institutional autonomy	10	32
Yes, reduced institutional autonomy	6	19
Total	31	100

Half of the respondents report that the institutions have undergone important changes the last five years when it comes to their autonomy, i.e. more see increased rather reduced institutional autonomy (see table 10). Those who see changes in the institutional autonomy are more inclined to report that there is a connection of the implementation of Bologna with changes in institutional autonomy, compared to the assessment made of the links between changes in aspects of funding and the Bologna Process (see table 11).

**Table 11 Assessments of the relationship between changes in level of government funding, funding mechanism, and institutional autonomy and the Bologna Process.**

<i>Extent to which change is related to the national implementation of the Bologna Process</i>	<i>Changes in level of funding</i>		<i>Changes in funding mechanisms</i>		<i>Changes in institutional autonomy</i>	
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Highly related	1	4,5	-		4	22,2
Partially related	5	22,7	6	37,5	4	22,2
Marginally related	1	4,5	3	18,8	4	22,2
No, related to other national conditions	15	68,2	7	43,8	6	33,3
Total	22	100	16	100	18	100

Note: Those respondents who reported no significant changes are not included

### **3.5 Public responsibility, private supply and markets**

A majority of the respondents sees no significant weakening or strengthening of public responsibility due to the influence of the Bologna Process (19 out of 31). Those who assess that there has been a change in this respect are equally divided in perceiving this as weakening versus strengthening of public responsibility for higher education. Several remark that changes in this respect have little or nothing to do with the Bologna Process – a view that we also saw in connection with the more specific questions on public funding of higher education. Yet we note that some of those who perceive the Bologna Process to have had an impact on the public responsibility for higher education say that it has contributed to an increasing public responsibility; this applies to Croatia, Italy, Estonia, and Romania. In the case of the latter two this fits the responses of some of the Eastern European respondents on the issue of public funding and how that is related to the Bologna Process (see 3.4). The respondent from Romania describes how higher education has received attention at top governmental level and how

through a national conference on Romanian higher education a significant increase in public funding was agreed upon.

The survey also tapped several other aspects of the public-private divide in higher education that clearly displayed that the public role in higher education is far from merely a question of the formal ownership status of universities and institutions in higher education. Institutions may be formally private and still have the major bulk of funding from public sources, whereas with increasing decentralisation in higher education, also public institutions are left to grapple for other non-public sources of revenue, and so on.

One respondent also takes the opportunity to reflect not only on the public versus private responsibility, but also on the changes in responsibility across levels of governance, i.e. the weakening of *national* public responsibility comes together with an increase in European level responsibility for higher education.

In terms of *market conditions* the recent developments have not created conditions where institutions fail to attract a sufficient number of students. At least that is the perception of the respondents in this study. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (29 out of 31) claims that most higher education institutions are able to attract a sufficient number of students. Some respondents are inclined to see increasing competition for public institutions from private suppliers in higher education (12 out of 31), whereas 13 respondents are saying that private institutions are struggling to attract students. Only three respondents see recruitment of students to domestic higher education institutions as made problematic by students who choose studies abroad over domestic educational offers. The overall impression given is that higher education is not in a dire situation in the student market. There are, however, institutions and fields of study that definitely feel the pressure from loss of attractiveness in the student market.

### **3.6 Degree structure, credit and grading system**

Harmonisation of degree structures, introduction of the European credit transfer system (ECTS), and a common grading system are most often taken to be core elements towards arriving at an open European higher education area. The actual implementation of these elements is well covered by the evaluative reports that have been produced so far in the course of the follow-up procedures to the Bologna Declaration. Our survey did not intend to do an alternative or duplicative assessment of how far the respective countries have come in terms of introducing these elements to the domestic higher education

system. We did, however, include some questions that relate to these issues primarily in order to tap the general atmosphere surrounding these issues in the organisations that represent academic staff in Europe. As an introduction we asked them to indicate the degree to which the national degree structure now corresponds to the two-cycle structure (bachelor/master) that has come to be taken as the Bologna model for structuring higher education degrees. The responses to this question are summarised in table 12. They underline once more the various stages and contexts of the implementation that European higher education systems are in. Respondents from five countries indicate that there are no changes according to the Bologna model (see table 12). 20 respondents report that the Bologna model has either become the main model or that it has been introduced next to the traditional national degree structure.

17 Respondents provided additional comments and information on this issue. These bear witness to the rather profound changes that have already occurred in some of these systems. Yet the implementation of the degree structure reform is not seen as straightforward. Higher education systems that are seen to meet the requirements are faced with low adaptational pressure. As one UK respondent puts it, the general perception in the UK case is that the Bologna Process has so far had very little impact on the organisation and delivery of higher education. While another respondent from the UK indicates that the assumption of having met the requirements is only true in a very broad sense. When a 3+2 system is in place other changes can be introduced that may represent a breach with the “Bologna model”.

Several cases demonstrate the significant national variations that are contained within the overall 3-2 model. Traditional degrees linger alongside the new degree model, as is indicated in table 12. Furthermore the passing of relevant legislation is far from the whole story of implementing a Bologna model, as we have pointed to earlier. Also when it comes to such reforms the “devil may be in the details”. We have seen already how several respondents report that the detailing phase is when the Bologna Process really lands on the desk of academic staff.



**Table 12 Changes in degree structure and the implementation of Bologna.**

<i>"Has there been any change in the degree structure according to the Bologna model the last five years?"</i>	Count	Percent
Yes, the "Bologna model" is now the main model for our national degree structure	13	41,9
Yes, the "Bologna model" has been introduced next to our traditional degree structure	7	22,6
No, the degree structure was already according to the Bologna model	4	12,9
No, there are no major changes according to the Bologna mode (yet)	7	22,6
Total	31	100

The organisations' view on a number of specific issues related to the items in the Bologna Process paints again a rather versatile picture of the views and opinions of academics in Europe. Respondents most often do not take a neutral position to such issues, but rather tend in most cases either to agree or disagree with the statements they were asked to consider (see table 13).

One interpretation that we can make on the basis of the overall opinions on these issues is that the most unproblematic aspect of the Bologna Process is the introduction of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. Whereas the most problematic aspects refer to the adjustment of some study programmes to a two-cycle structure and also the issue of labour market relevancy of the first degree. As one respondent from Eastern Europe reports, the laws and legislation that introduce a 3+2 degree structure might be passed but the employers have in this case not accepted it, i.e. they do not consider the 3-year bachelor enough for what is demanded in the labour market.

In this the many comments provided by the respondents bring to the fore a range of controversial issues that are directly related to the Bologna Process. And what is perceived as controversial at some points has a definite national flavour. However, some common concerns centre on the issue of consequences from structuring study programmes according to a two cycle structure. Several responses communicate a strong sense of worry about the employability of the first degree graduates, especially for the academically oriented non-professional degrees. Yet the sense is also that this issue is very closely related, not only to the structure of the degrees, but also to more general factors that affect employment and transition to work of higher education candidates and the general problems of graduates in certain fields. In this sense the Bologna Process could become the scapegoat of transition problems that are beyond the control of higher education authorities and of those who structure and adapt study programmes at other levels in a higher education system. In general there is confusion and uncertainty

among academic staff as to what it means to implement the main items on the Bologna agenda and what the implications are from doing it. There are concerns voiced for students, for the balance between what is internationally “compatible” versus local and national traditions, as well as for the consequences for staff, support staff included.

Even though the actual distribution of responses is dispersed on the issue of creating a European quality agency (see table 13), this issue has created a heated response from some of the respondents – it is referred to as unnecessary and that it would be seen as an “intrusion from Brussels”. Other more nationally flavoured comments concern issues such as the grading systems and the strong opposition of academics in one system; in other systems this is reported as barely being discussed as an option.

Most respondents have taken a position on the issues we asked them to consider (see table 13), nevertheless we should make a note of what it means to be “neutral” in these matters. A neutral position might indicate that these issues are deemed to be of low relevance and for that reason they do not elicit any positively or negatively laden responses. Or it could be the case that on these issues there is a significant plurality of views and opinions *within* the organisation and the academic community that it represents. One of the respondents gave the latter remark concerning their seemingly neutral position on some of these issues –neutrality might actually represent controversy.

**Table 13 Views of EI-member organisations in Europe on issues concerning Diploma Supplement, ECTS, establishment of European quality assessment agency, grading scale and 3-year bachelor degree.**

“What is the view of your organisation on the following issues related to the Bologna Process?”	Does not apply		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Don't know		N
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Introducing the Diploma Supplement is/will be unproblematic for our higher education institutions	1	3,3	19	63,3	3	10,0	6	20,0	1	3,3	30
Introduction of a credit point system based on the ECTS is/will be positively welcomed by academic staff	1	3,2	16	51,6	11	35,5	1	3,2	2	6,5	31
Introduction of a European quality assessment agency will be positively welcomed by academic staff	2	6,5	8	25,8	9	29,0	8	25,8	4	12,9	31
Grading student performance according to a scale from A to F is causing/will cause resistance among academic staff	5	16,1	9	29,0	6	19,4	4	12,9	7	22,6	31
Students with a three year bachelor degree have/will have problems finding jobs in the labour market that are relevant to their education	2	6,7	11	36,7	7	23,3	5	16,7	5	16,7	30
Some study programmes have/will have severe problems adjusting to the two-cycle structure	1	3,3	17	56,7	2	6,7	7	23,3	3	10,0	30

### 3.7 Doctoral education and the position of doctoral students

The issues of doctoral education and the formal position of doctoral students are in many of the countries included in this survey on the reform agenda either as a topic of discussion or as changes that are already under way. This is especially the case with a formalisation of the training part of the doctoral studies through the introduction of (more) taught courses.

**Table 14 Assessment of changes in doctoral degree studies the last five years. Frequencies.**

	Yes	No	Reforms are being discussed	Total
More taught courses have been introduced as formal part of the doctoral degree	13	11	7	31
The formal length of doctoral studies has been reduced	7	20	6	31
Changes in the formal status (e.g. as employees) of young researchers working on their doctoral degree	5	19	6	30
Other major changes/reforms	5	10	6	21

When asked to report their opinions the respondents have rather similar views on most of the issues included. First of all there is a clear majority (27 out of 30) favouring the view that young researchers working on their doctoral degree should be seen as academic employees and that they should be given rights and terms of employment according to such a status. Some have commented on the phrasing of the question saying that in practice there is a mix of both employee- and student status and that makes the question difficult to answer.

No respondent disagreed with the desirability of doctoral students spending part of their time abroad and most are inclined to agree. A majority also recognises the problem that the conditions doctoral students are offered at national institutions might make it difficult to recruit the best talents to a research career. Conditions of research recruits and doctoral students are more affected by limited funding and material resources. Furthermore the career opportunities that a higher education system can offer *after* the doctoral degree might be just as important for the ability to attract the best people. That is seen as a major problem by one of the Scandinavian respondents.

However, the views are diverging when it comes to the issue of attractiveness of domestic institutions for foreign doctoral students due to the quality of doctoral education. The attractiveness for the doctoral studies for foreign students is not determined by its quality alone – as one respondent laconically comments – it is also a question of language and climatic conditions.

The most important results of our survey on these issues are probably found in the comments given rather than the numerical values summarised in table 15. It is very clear that the general nature of the questions raised in the questionnaire does not do justice to the complexity involved in organising and creating conditions that are conducive to the first stages of a research career. Terms of employment, formal status and qualitative conditions surrounding the work towards a doctoral degree are not only varying across countries, but to a significant degree also within systems.

**Table 15 Views on aspects of status and position of young researchers working on their doctoral degree. Frequencies.**

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know	Total
“Young researchers working on their doctoral degree should as the main rule be considered as academic employees and given rights and terms of employment accordingly”	27	1	1	1	30
“Young researchers working on their doctoral degree should as a main rule spend part of their doctoral studies abroad”	20	8	-	2	30
“The quality of the doctoral education in our country makes it attractive for foreign doctoral students”	7	12	6	5	30
“The conditions our higher education institutions offer young researchers working on their doctoral degree are making it difficult to recruit the best talents to a research career”	18	8	4	1	31

## **4 General perceptions and some tentative conclusions**

### **4.1 General perceptions of the Bologna Process among academics**

To get an overview of the attitudes towards the Bologna Process we asked as a concluding question the organisations to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of pre-formulated statements about the Bologna Process. The results are summarised in table 16.

From the responses we see that certain views on the Bologna Process are shared by practically all respondents – it is especially clear concerning the statement that the Bologna Process does address issues that are important in their domestic higher education system. On no other statement do the respondents' views converge to the same extent as on this issue – 87 percent of the respondents agree or partly agree. However, whether the important agenda of the Bologna Process is handled in a way that entails overall positive effects on domestic higher education, is another matter. For the most part the organisations included in this study see the Bologna Process as having positive effects, but there are also several respondents that disagree with this claim. Moreover we should note that 1/3 of the respondents take a neutral position on this issue, and we might argue that the neutrality reflects the mixed picture of diverse effects of the Bologna Process. That makes it difficult to assess whether the Bologna Process is unequivocally beneficial or detrimental to higher education systems in Europe. Or on the other hand it could also mean that there are diverging opinions within the responding organisation on this issue (see discussion in section 3.6).

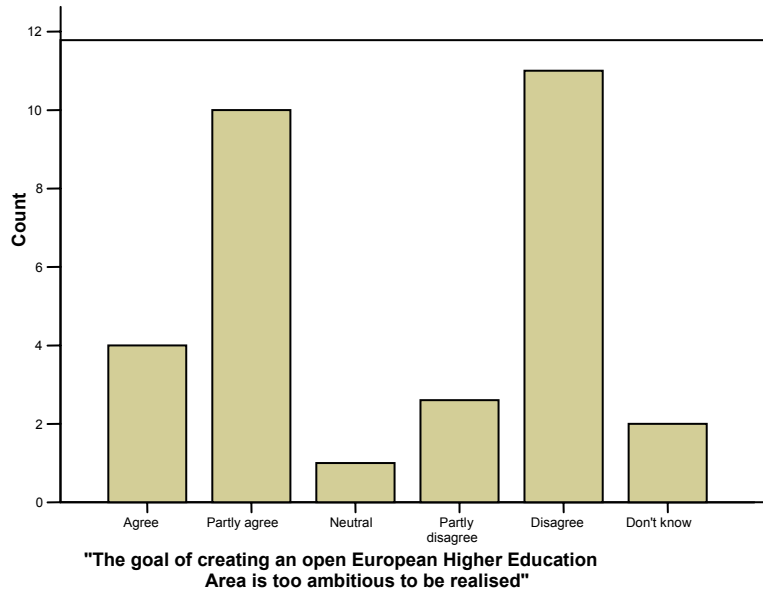
**Table 16 The general/overall view on the Bologna Process in EI-member organisations. The degree to which the respondents agree with or disagree with the following statements. Percent.**

	Agree	Partly agree	Neutral	Partly Disagree	Dis-agree	Don't know	N
<i>"The goal of creating an open European Higher Education is too ambitious to be realised"</i>	13	32	3	10	36	7	31
<i>"The Bologna Process has overall positive effects on higher education in our country"</i>	29	16	32	13	3	7	31
<i>"The Bologna Process contributes to standardising our higher education system in a way that is alien to our national traditions"</i>	23	45	7	10	16	-	31
<i>"The Bologna Process increases our sense of belonging to a common European higher education community"</i>	39	45	13	-	3	-	31
<i>"The outcomes of the Bologna Process are making it easier for our universities/colleges to interact with other European higher education systems"</i>	55	29	13	-	-	3	31
<i>"The Bologna Process represents a marketisation of our national higher education system"</i>	19	32	10	10	23	7	31
<i>"The Bologna Process is creating undesirable consequences for academic staff in our country"</i>	7	36	16	16	13	13	31
<i>"The Bologna Process is a necessary push for national reform"</i>	23	30	20	7	17	3	30
<i>"The time and efforts used on implementing the Bologna Process exceed the benefits our higher education system gets from it"</i>	7	23	19	13	22	16	31
<i>"The Bologna Process addresses important questions for our national higher education institutions"</i>	42	45	3	7	-	3	31
<i>"The Bologna Process takes the attention away from other more pressing issues in our higher education system"</i>	10	16	13	39	16	7	31

A majority of the respondents agrees with several of the claims that the Bologna Process entails in various ways a *Europeanisation* of national higher education systems. For instance, there is an overall high agreement that the Bologna Process contributes to an increasing sense of belonging to a common European higher education community. This one might interpret to signify that developing a European higher education area encompasses the forging of more intangible cultural links between higher education communities in Europe, in addition to and beyond the mere technical aspect of making interactions across systems easier. More than half of the respondents in this study support a statement that the outcomes of the Bologna Process actually will make it easier for European universities and colleges to interact. A clear majority also agrees that the Bologna Process represents a standardisation of national higher education systems that is alien to national traditions.

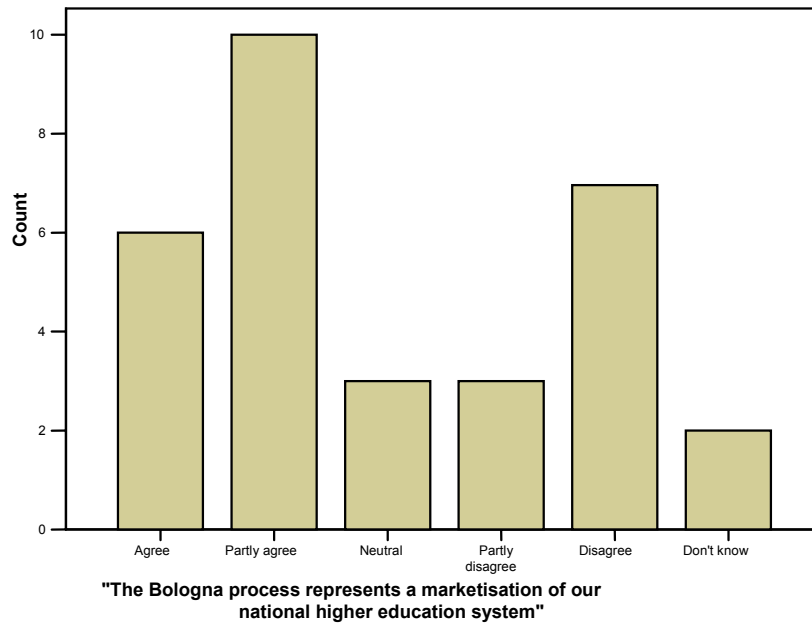
On the other hand there are some visible indications that opinions of organisations that represent the academic community in these countries are *polarised* on the views of certain aspects of the Bologna Process.

**Figure 3 EI-member organisations' views: "European Higher Education Area as too ambitious"**



This polarisation especially concerns whether the Bologna Process actually is *too ambitious* a project to be realised – the respondents are split in the middle on this issue (see figure 3). We could interpret this as an indication of high support for the idea of creating an open European higher education area, but moderate expectations as concerns its realisation. However, this statement is somewhat ambiguous: It could be an expression of lament that a good ambition will not be realised, or on the other hand it could reflect a view that the process is suffering from certain “delusions of European grandeur”. As such it is a statement that both optimistic “Bologna sceptics” and pessimistic “Bologna enthusiasts” could agree too, or disagree with if the scepticism is pessimistic and the enthusiasm optimistic. There is no north vs. south or east vs. west cleavage in the reported views on whether the goal of creating an open European Higher Education Area is too ambitious to be realised.

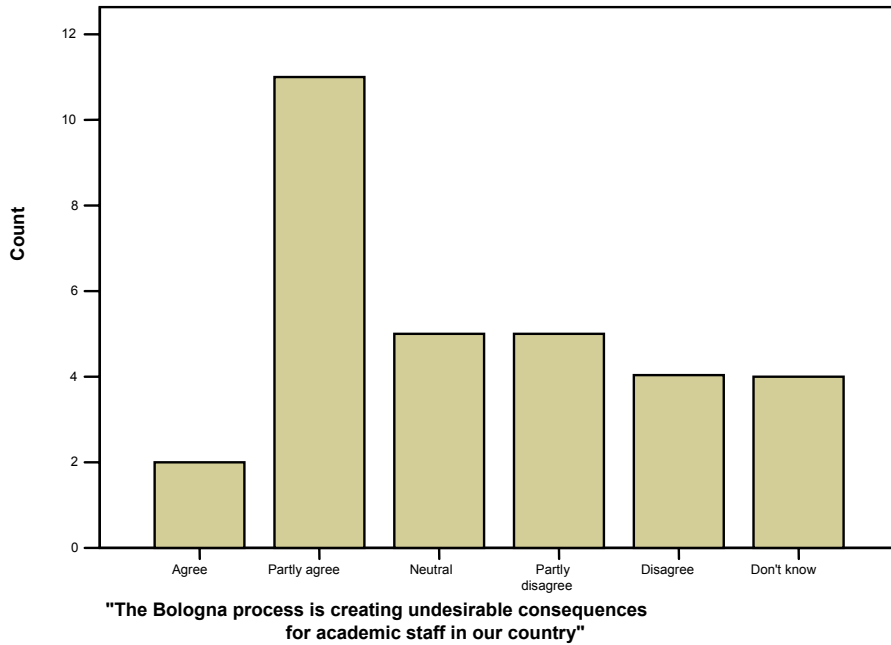
**Figure 4 EI-member organisations' views: "Bologna and marketisation"**



Second, respondents are also polarised over whether Bologna represents a *marketisation* of higher education (see figure 4). Why there are such divergent views of the issue of marketisation we cannot know on the basis of the results in this study - again there are no visible geographical divides. We find Scandinavian, Central/Eastern European, Northern and Western European respondents on either side in this issue.

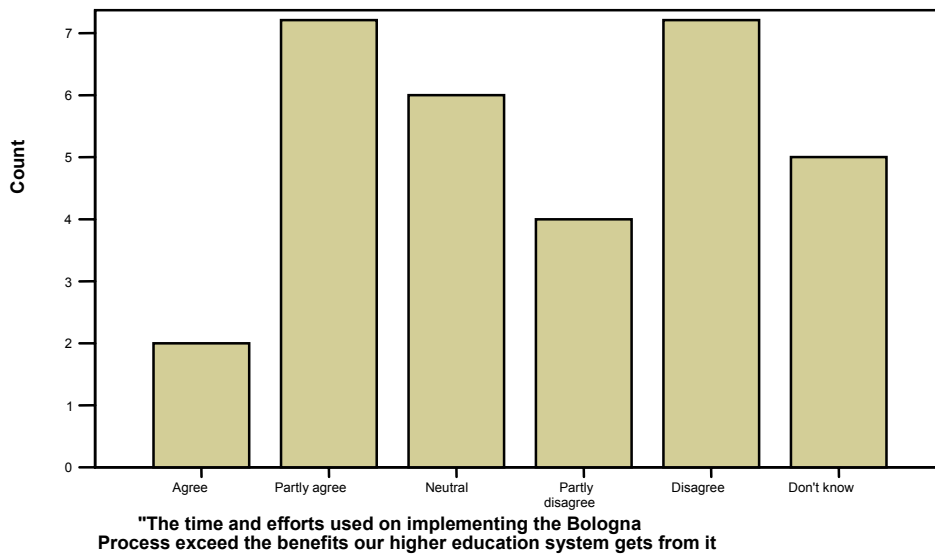


**Figure 5 EI-member organisations' views: “Bologna’s consequences for academic staff”**



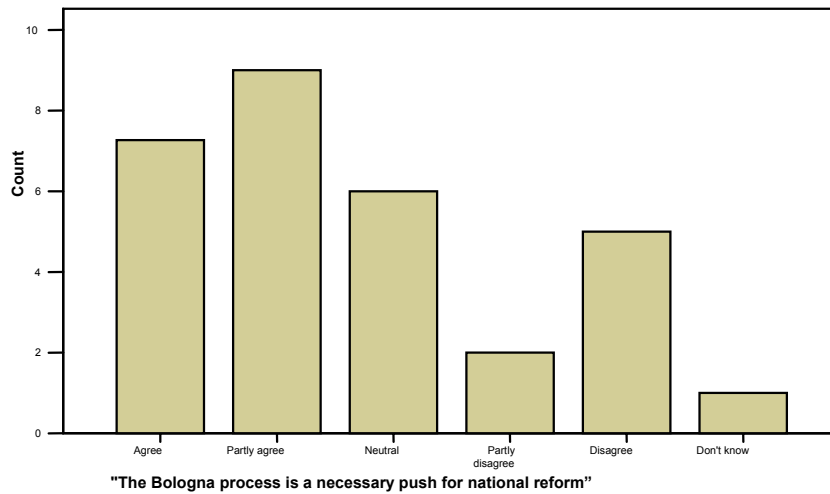
Neither do they converge in their view on whether the Bologna Process brings with it *undesirable consequences for academic staff* (see figure 5). The majority is inclined to agree with this statement, while at a same time a significant number disagrees. A fair share of the respondents takes a neutral position. On this issue there is a certain geographical pattern in the results. Apart from the Russian respondent, there are no Eastern or Central European respondents among those who agree or partly agree with the statement that the Bologna Process is creating undesirable consequences for academic staff in their country. A majority of the respondents from Southern and Western Europe and the Scandinavian countries is in the “agree/partly agree” group.

**Figure 6 EI-member organisations' views: "Time and efforts spent on Bologna"**



One of the most diverging opinions among the respondents comes to the fore with respect to the “costs versus benefits” of the Bologna Process (see figure 6). Clearly there are very different assessments of whether the time and efforts that are put into the process are actually giving a sufficient return for the national higher education system. Both the number of neutral positions and “don’t knows” signify the difficulty of answering such a question. Again we see no clear geographical distribution on the respondents’ views on this issue. Likewise there is no obvious connection between how far a country has come in implementing Bologna and the positive/negative perception of the cost/benefit ratio of Bologna.

**Figure 7 EI-member organisations' views: "Bologna as push for national reform"**



Finally the organisations voice opinions with respect to the effects of the Bologna Process on national higher education *policies*. Several respondents support the claim that the Bologna Process can be used to push necessary reforms in their higher education system (see figure 7). Respondents from countries like Croatia, Estonia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Italy agree with this statement. None of Central/Eastern European respondents disagrees with the statement – while some of the Northern European respondents do *not* see the Bologna Process as a necessary push for national reform. Among the latter are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and the UK. Also several comments made by respondents refer to especially national governments, but also other actors, *using* the reference to the Bologna Process to pursue reforms that go beyond the Bologna agenda seen in a strict sense. An effect of the Bologna Process thus is that it provides an opportunity to start more profound reform agendas in higher education, or the Bologna agenda blends with ongoing major national reform processes in higher education.

Concerning effects on the policy agenda, some national EI-member organisations see the Bologna Process as taking attention away from other more pressing issues that should be addressed by policy makers in their country. Yet most respondents take the opposite position on this issue, which is consistent with the majority view on the saliency for national higher education system of issues addressed by the Bologna Process.

## 4.2 Tentative conclusions

The results from our survey in general bring to the fore attitudes and perspectives on the Bologna Process that are versatile, nuanced and seemingly conditioned by nationally determined circumstances. Judging by the responses that EI-member organisations have given to this survey there is a distinct positive attitude in most national academic communities. For the most part there is, for example, an overall positive attitude towards the goal of creating an open European Higher Education Area and also a certain degree of expectation of what this process can accomplish. Moreover, it is seen by respondents to address important issues in European higher education. Despite the fact that many see a lack of realism in the ambitions of the Bologna Process, there are expectations that it might lead to easier interaction of higher education systems in Europe and also that it might increase the sense of belonging to a common higher education community. It is also seen as a necessary push for national reform. Yet, the assessments made of these ambitions are nuanced and able to distinguish differentiated effects of the Bologna Process in different aspects of higher education.

Implementation is not straightforward – and it does not stop with required changes in the legal framework of higher education. Furthermore, it is not entirely so that this process is *owned* by the academic communities across Europe. At least if one takes the participation of the employee organisations of academic staff as a legitimate expression of interests and views of academic communities. We have seen national variation in the degree of implementation of items on the Bologna agenda and in the access and participation of the EI-member organisations and other stakeholders in the policy processes at governmental level. Some higher education systems have kept an open process where the organisations have had multiple access points in the many stages involved in “implementing Bologna”. Other national authorities have kept the initial stages closed for stakeholder participation. The experiences of those systems that have had some degree of implementation underlines the following: when higher education systems are faced with the task of working out the details of implementation, academic staff is most certainly affected and may become a key factor.

The overall awareness of the Bologna Process is in many systems not high among the rank and file academic staff. The organisations are, however, engaged in informing their constituencies and in creating a “public sphere” for the Bologna Process among academics.

There are highly differentiated assessments provided of the extent to which the Bologna Process and the implementation of Bologna have made a significant imprint on national higher education systems

so far. Our study brings to the fore how the Bologna Process in some cases is seen as not representing a great deal of pressure to adapt a national higher education system. In other cases there has been high adaptational pressure and the impact of Bologna has been significant. In some countries implementation of Bologna and the possible consequences thereof are more expectations than realities.

The contexts within which the Bologna Process takes place in national higher education systems are partly undergoing similar, partly diverging developments. In general the survey portrays working conditions that are in transition across Europe – some aspects are changing more than others. The working conditions, it seems, are characterised by increasing pressures put on academic staff – especially there is an overall increase in the expectations of staff to do commercial activities and commissioned research. Developments during the last five years have entailed a certain loss of control over aspects of the work situation for academic staff, especially in some of the Western and Northern European countries.

Certain “side-effects” are reported by respondents in national systems where the Bologna Process has left a considerable mark. This concerns especially the general increase in work load for academic staff and the squeeze that academics staff is put in as researchers. The position of research at higher education institutions is in general a heavy concern among the respondents. Also there are other costs related to the Bologna Process that are not necessarily compensated. On the other hand, in Central and Eastern Europe there are some indications that the Bologna Process has entailed an increase in public funding and public responsibility for higher education.

The issue of ascertaining a causal link between the Bologna Process and changes in higher education is not an easy one. There are dynamics of change that are seen as only partly or totally unrelated to whatever is going on within the framework of the Bologna Process. Other times we can get a glance of chain reactions that connect, for instance, “simple” changes in degree structure to changes in several aspects of working conditions for staff and teaching/ learning experiences of students and their transition from study to work. Based on the results from this study we can only begin to underline the importance of being aware of differentiated effects and uncertainty of implications that are reported by our respondents.

There is a distinct national embeddedness in the many voices of academics in the European context. It may be so that there is a bias towards seeing national characteristics as the dominating ones – the mere

fact that “country” is a natural background variable may add to such a bias in a study like this. We have, on the other hand, failed to identify clear and consistent regional cleavages according to traditional north/south, east/west dimensions in the views on the Bologna Process in Europe. We acknowledge that the cross national variations might overshadow the possible intra-national variations that are less conspicuous at first sight. Yet, the data in this study bring to our attention some patterns of national variation that seem relevant for understanding the views and experiences of academic staff in Europe. An avenue of investigation would be to focus more clearly on identifying variation within a system in experiences and views of academic staff and to systematically address how they compare with the views and experiences of other actors that play a role in the Bologna Process. However, that is beyond the scope of this study.

## References

Amaral, A., G. Jones and B. Karseth (Eds.)(2002): *Governing Higher Education: National Perspectives on Institutional Governance*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Eurydice (2003): *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2003/04. National Trends in the Bologna Process*. Brussels: Eurydice European Unit.

Reichert, S. and C. Tauch (2003): *Trends 2003. Progress towards the European Higher Education Area. Bologna four years after: Steps towards sustainable reform of higher education in Europe*. European University Association July 2003.

# Appendix I: Questionnaire

31 organisations replied to the questionnaire, frequencies included.

## Bologna Process survey to EI member organisations

### Questionnaire to organisational secretariat

Please fill in 'x' for each selected choice and return to [bolognasurvey@nifu.no](mailto:bolognasurvey@nifu.no) before 12 Des. 2004

#### A. Participation in the Bologna Process

At national/government level:

- \*1. Has your organisation been involved with national authorities (e.g. Ministry of Education) in connection with the implementation of the Bologna Process in any of the following ways?**

	Yes	No
Our organisation has been informed about the Bologna process by national authorities	21	9
The Bologna process has been a topic of discussion during regular meetings our organisation has with national authorities	12	19
Our organisation has been invited to meetings with national authorities specifically arranged in connection with the implementation of the Bologna process	20	11
Our organisation has contributed to the writing of National Reports for the follow-up of the Bologna process	6	25
Representatives of our organisation have been part of national committee(s)/forum for the implementation of the Bologna process	7	24
Representatives of our organisation have been part of the national delegation to international meetings of the Bologna process	4	25
Our organisation has in other ways been invited to contribute points of view to national authorities on the Bologna process (please specify below)	13	15

Other ways/comments:

- \*2. In your view, what impact has your organisation made on the national implementation of the Bologna Process? (please tick off one alternative only)**

Considerable impact	2
Some impact	14
No impact	11
Don't know	4

Comments:

**At university/college level:**

- \*3. Have universities/colleges in your country organised meetings for their academic staff related to the Bologna Process? (please tick off one alternative only)**

Yes, it is a widespread practice	5
Yes, on occasion	12
Yes, but only rarely	12
No, not to our knowledge	2

Comments:

- \*4. Have members of your organisation been informed in other ways about the national implementation of the Bologna Process by university/college leadership? (please tick off one alternative only)**

Yes	13
No	12
Don't know	6

If yes, please indicate in what way:

Other comments:

**At the Union level:**

- \*5. Has your organisation taken any of the following initiatives to inform your members about the Bologna process?**

	Yes	No
Our organisation has provided information to our members (e.g. on our website)	23	8
Our organisation has had the Bologna process as an item on the agenda at regular meetings among our members	20	10
Our organisation has organised discussions/seminars on the Bologna process	19	9

Other ways/Comments:



## B. Views on trends in higher education in your country

**\*6. According to your assessment, how far has your country come in terms of implementing the Bologna process?(please tick off one alternative only)**

All main elements have been implemented	10
Some main elements have been implemented	15
None of the main elements have been implemented, but implementation is expected to happen within the next 2-3 years	5
None of the main elements have been implemented and there are no signs that implementation will happen within the next 2-3 years	1

Comments:

### Changes in working conditions:

**\*7. What have been the most important changes in the working conditions for academic staff at higher education institutions in your country the last five years?**

	<i>Increased</i>	<i>Decreased</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
a) Control over own working time	5	10	15	
b) Academic staff's control over design and adaptation of curriculum	8	8	15	
c) Freedom to pursue own research interests	4	11	13	2
d) Uninterrupted time for research		13	14	3
e) Opportunities for study visits, conference participation etc. abroad	8	7	11	4
f) Demands on academic staff to contribute to "lifelong learning activities"	15		10	5
h) Demands to participate in commercial activities/commissioned research	20		6	4
i) Evaluation of research on a regular basis	13	1	12	4
j) Evaluation of teaching on a regular basis	18		11	1
l) Influence of academic staff on internal governance in own institution	3	8	19	
k) Use of short term employment contracts	19		11	
g) Legal protection of terms of employment	7	4	17	2
m) Involvement of academic staff (e.g. through union) in negotiations on employment terms	8	4	17	

If there have been any such changes in the working conditions, are these in any way related to the implementation of the Bologna process? *Please indicate below, and if relevant make references to the letters assigned to the various aspect of working conditions listed under question 6.*

Relation to the Bologna process:

Other comments:

- \*8. Have there been important changes in the level of government funding of higher education institutions in your country the last five years? (please tick off one alternative only)**

No major changes in level of government funding	8
Yes, increased level of government funding	12
Yes, reduced level of government funding	10

If yes, please indicate the extent to which these changes are related to national implementation of the Bologna process: (please tick off one alternative only)

Highly related	1
Partially related	5
Marginally related	1
No, related to other national conditions	15
No, related to other international developments	
Don't know	

Other changes with respect to government funding/Comments:

- \*9. Have there been important changes in the way in which public funding of higher education institutions is distributed in your country the last five years?**

No major changes	17
Yes (please give brief indication below)	14

Brief indication of changes:

If yes, please indicate the extent to which these changes are related to national implementation of the Bologna process: (please tick off one alternative only)

Highly related	
Partially related	6
Marginally related	3
No, related to other national conditions	7
No, related to other international developments	
Don't know	

- \*10. Have there been important changes with respect to institutional autonomy in your country the last five years? (please tick off one alternative only)**

No major changes in institutional autonomy	15
Yes, increased institutional autonomy	10
Yes, reduced institutional autonomy	6

If yes, please indicate the extent to which these changes are related to national implementation of the Bologna process: (please tick off one alternative only)

Highly related	4
Partially related	4
Marginally related	4
No, related to other national conditions	6
No, related to other international developments	
Don't know	

Other ways/Comments:

## Degree structure and position of young researchers

- \*11. The two-cycle structure (bachelor/master degree structure) has generally come to represent the “Bologna- model” for structuring higher education degrees. Has there been any change in the degree structure in your country accordingly the last five years? (please tick off one alternative only)**

Yes, the “Bologna model” is now the main model for our national degree structure	13
Yes, the “Bologna model” has been introduced next to our traditional degree structure	7
No, the degree structure was already according to the Bologna model	4
No, there are no major changes according to the Bologna model (yet)	7

Comments:

- \*12. What is the view of your organisation on the following issues related to the Bologna process**

	<i>Does not apply</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Introducing the Diploma Supplement is/will be unproblematic for our higher education institutions	1	19	3	6	1
Introduction of a credit point system based on the ECTS is/will be positively welcomed by academic staff	1	16	11	1	2
Introduction of a European quality assessment agency will be positively welcomed by academic staff	2	8	9	8	4
Grading student performance according to a scale from A to F is causing/will cause resistance among academic staff	5	9	6	4	7
Students with a three year bachelor degree have/will have problems finding jobs in the labour market that are relevant to their education	2	11	7	5	5
Some study programmes have/will have severe problems adjusting to the two-cycle structure	1	17	2	7	3

Comments:

**\*13. Have doctoral degree studies been subject to changes/reforms in your country the last five years?**

	Yes	No	Reforms are being discussed
More taught courses have been introduced as formal part of the doctoral degree	13	11	7
The formal length of doctoral studies has been reduced	7	20	4
Changes in the formal status (e.g. as employees) of young researchers working on their doctoral degree ( <i>specify below</i> )	5	19	6
Other major changes/reforms ( <i>specify below</i> )	4	11	6

If changes/reforms, please give a brief indication:

**\*14. What is the view of your organisation on the status and conditions of young researchers working on their doctoral degree?**

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
Young researchers working on their doctoral degree should as the main rule be considered as academic employees and given rights and terms of employment accordingly	27	1	1	1
Young researchers working on their doctoral degree should as a main rule spend part of their doctoral studies abroad	20	8		2
The quality of the doctoral education in our country makes it attractive for foreign doctoral students	7	12	6	5
The conditions our higher education institutions offer young researchers working on their doctoral degree are making it difficult to recruit the best talents to a research career	18	8	4	1

Comments:

**Public responsibility, private supply and markets in higher education**

**\*15. Have higher education institutions in your country experienced problems with recruiting students in the recent five years?**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Most higher education institutions in our country are able to attract a satisfactory number of students	29	2	
Public higher education institutions are facing more competition from private domestic universities/colleges etc.	12	17	2
Private higher education institutions are struggling to attract students	13	13	3
Domestic higher education institutions have problems recruiting students because they prefer to study abroad	3	27	
Domestic higher education institutions are finding it more difficult to attract foreign students	11	15	5

Comments:

**\*16. In your view has the Bologna process affected the traditional responsibility of public authorities (in terms of access, funding and student support) with respect to higher education? (please tick off one alternative only)**

No, there are no changes	19
Yes, the public responsibility is weakening	6
Yes, the public responsibility is increasing	6

If yes, please elaborate/Other comments:

**C. General awareness and perceptions of the Bologna process among teachers and researchers at higher education institutions**

**\*17. How do you assess the awareness of the Bologna process among the following groups in your higher education system?**

	High	Moderate	Low	None	Don't know
Among local union representatives	8	14	9		
Among your members in general	3	13	14	1	
Among leadership at universities/colleges	14	12	5		

- \*18. What is the general/overall view on the Bologna process in your organisation? Please indicate to what degree your organisation agrees with or disagrees with the following statements**

	Agree	Partly agree	Neutral	Partly Disagree	Dis-agree	Don't know
<i>"The goal of creating an open European Higher Education Area is too ambitious to be realised"</i>	4	10	1	3	11	2
<i>"The Bologna process has overall positive effects on higher education in our country"</i>	9	5	10	4	1	2
<i>"The Bologna process contributes to standardising our higher education system in a way that is alien to our national traditions"</i>	7	14	2	3	5	
<i>"The Bologna process increases our sense of belonging to a common European higher education community"</i>	12	14	4	1		
<i>"The outcomes of the Bologna process are making it easier for our universities/colleges to interact with other European higher education systems"</i>	17	9	4			1
<i>"The Bologna process represents a marketisation of our national higher education system"</i>	6	10	3	3	4	2
<i>"The Bologna process is creating undesirable consequences for academic staff in our country"</i>	2	11	5	5	4	4
<i>"The Bologna process is a necessary push for national reform"</i>	7	9	6	2	5	1
<i>"The time and efforts used on implementing the Bologna process exceed the benefits our higher education system gets from it"</i>	2	7	6	4	7	5
<i>"The Bologna process addresses important questions for our national higher education institutions"</i>	13	14	1	2		1
<i>"The Bologna process takes the attention away from other more pressing issues in our higher education system"</i>	3	5	4	12	5	2

Comments:

#### D. Background information

Name of organisation

Country

Please feel free to add comments and views on issues that have not been satisfactorily addressed by the questions above.

Comments:

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE VIA E-MAIL TO NIFU STEP USING THE E-MAIL ADDRESS [bolognasurvey@nifu.no](mailto:bolognasurvey@nifu.no)

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire!

## Appendix II: List of respondents

ALMA MATER

AUT

SNS-CGIL

COC

DM

ESEUR

F.E. CC.OO.

FENPROF

FUUP

FUURT

GEW

IURHEEC

LIZDA

Läraryörbundet

NARW

NATFHE

OAb

OAJ

OCNV

OZPŠaV

SGEN-SFDT

SNES-FSU

KSN Solidarnosc

SONK

SULF

TUS

UEN

UNIVERSITAS

UNSA-Education

ZNP

ZPŠaV NKOS