

A Sustainable Future for the European Higher Education Area 2010 to 2020.

The View of Higher Education Researchers

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1. Introduction: The Project

In October 2007, I was approached in my capacity as Secretary of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER)¹ by Noel Vercruysse from the Flemish Ministry of Work, Education and Training, Department of Education and Training with the request to tap on the CHER network of higher education researchers and recruit a number of experts to contribute research-based papers on a series of issues that the Ministry deemed important for the upcoming European debates about a sustainable future of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Apart from the stakeholders’ views, the Ministry was particularly interested to include the perspective of higher education researchers into the preparations of a strategic plan to secure a sustainable future for the EHEA in the decade from 2010 until 2020. The strategic plan will be submitted for discussion and decision at the Bologna Ministerial Meeting in 2009.

The Ministry had identified a number of challenges to such a sustainable development, in particular:

- the impact of globalisation and global transformation on higher education, society and economy,
- growing external pressures on academic work,
- demographic developments,
- new technological developments (e.g. open educational resources),
- the dilemma between convergence and diversity,
- the shift from education and research to innovation,
- more diverse funding sources,
- the dilemma between cooperation and competition,
- the growing importance of rankings and emerging classifications,
- the emergence of new higher education areas (e.g. China and India),
- the shift from the information age to the conceptual age,

¹ CHER is a worldwide organisation of higher education researchers founded in 1988 to provide a network for cooperation and exchange of research results. Its annual conferences are regularly hosted by one of its European member’s home university. For further information see: <http://www.uni-kassel.de/wz1/CHER/Welcome.html>

- the growing demand for performance assessment in teaching and research.

I am sure that this list of challenges could be complemented and extended. For the commissioning process I enlisted the support and cooperation of Prof. Jeroen Huisman from Bath University and Dr. Bjorn Stensaker from NIFUSTEP in Oslo to find contributors to the project looking in particular at expertise in the various topics to be covered and a track record in research. Each of the research-based papers that were commissioned was supposed to address five issues:

- What are current key features of the topic? How is the topic approached in research and what are its policy contexts?
- What are the expected developments between 2010 and 2020 of the European Higher Education Area with regard to the topic?
- What risks and opportunities are involved in terms of achieving a sustainable future for the European Higher Education Area?
- What are and what should be strategic objectives with regard to the topic for the period 2010 to 2020?
- What targets should be set for their achievement in 2020?

As you all might guess, researchers are considerably better at answering the first two or three of these five questions than the last two. We all have tried, nevertheless and I will present the ideas and thoughts in a moment. Let me first provide you with an overview of the topics of the papers. A list of preferred topics had been supplied by the Ministry which at the same time was open for further suggestions, changes and additions to that list. In the end, some aspects were dropped because no appropriate expertise was known to us. One topic was divided into two papers because a legal and a sociological perspective could not easily be reconciled, and other topics were not taken into account because the overall list was and is not claiming to be comprehensive but rather reflects priority issues of the Flemish Ministry.

The following topics were covered in the altogether 16 research-based papers that have been written and will be published in book form soon. Researchers from nine European and one non-European country contributed to the project:

- (1) The impact of globalisation on academic work and careers (Julien Barrier and Christine Musselin, France);
- (2) The impact of demographic, technological and societal developments in the context of the network society (Kurt de Wit and Jef Verhoeven, Belgium);
- (3) Diversity with a common purpose and the problem of transparency (Jeroen Huisman, United Kingdom);
- (4) The relevance of higher education to the knowledge society and the knowledge driven economy: education, research, innovation (Jussi Välimaa, Finland);
- (5) Quality, equity and the social dimension: The shift from the national to the European level (John Brennan, Rajani Naidoo, Kavita Patel (United Kingdom);

- (6) Main characteristics of a strong European higher education Area (Marek Kwiek, Poland);
- (7) Autonomous institutions and accountability: Meanings and targets (Guy Neave, France/Portugal);
- (8) Governance of institutions and steering of systems in the EHEA in the context of a growing disembeddedness from the nation state (Harry de Boer, Jürgen Enders, Ben Jongbloed, Netherlands);
- (9) New forms of doctoral education and training in Europe (Barbara M. Kehm, Germany);
- (10) New incentives and instruments for enhancing mobility of staff and students (Ulrich Teichler, Germany);
- (11) The university community in a European community: Investigating the notion of an engaged university (David Watson, Paul Temple, United Kingdom);
- (12) The ingredients of trust in European higher education (Björn Stensaker, Ase Gornitzka, Norway);
- (13) European higher education in search of a new legal order (Jan de Groof, Belgium);
- (14) European higher education in search of a new institutional order (Peter Maassen, Norway);
- (15) Funding of higher education in Europe (Pedro Teixeira, Portugal);
- (16) The external dimension: Positioning the European Higher Education Area in the global higher education world (Simon Marginson, Australia).

In carrying out the project, finding potential contributors, reviewing the contributions, summarising first drafts and eventually get the manuscripts ready for publication I am supported by Jeroen Huisman (University of Bath, UK), Bjorn Stensaker (NIFUSTEP, Oslo, Norway), and Yasemin Yagci, a Turkish doctoral student in our International Centre for Higher Education Research at Kassel University, Germany. We have tried to include contributors from a broad variety of countries using the membership of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers as our main source but also had to accept that some of the potential contributors declined our invitation to submit a paper due to the relatively tight timeframe. Although we tried to find researchers reflecting the diversity of countries participating in the Bologna Process, higher education research is not a field of research existing in all countries. Please also note that the project neither was given the task to prepare the strategic plan as such nor to be the sole contribution to it. Rather, it is supposed to contribute a research-based perspective on the issues at stake emphasising some of the principles and basic dilemmas underlying the policy options ahead, i.e. principles and dilemmas that tend to be forgotten during a policy process.

In the following parts of our presentation we will first summarise the view of higher education researchers with regard to the expected developments of the EHEA in the next decade. This will be followed by proposals in terms of strategic objectives and targets divided according to the European, the

national, and the institutional level. We will then present a view at the EHEA from outside, namely from an Australian colleague which turned out to be a good choice because an American colleague might have been differently involved since the European Higher Education and Research Area is explicitly created to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education and research vis-à-vis its main competitor, the United States of America. In the last part of my presentation I will try to draw some conclusions.

2. Expected Developments

This part of our presentation could be headed by a quote from Peter Scott (2000) used as a motto: “What is at stake now in the age of globalisation is the survival of the University as a recognisable institution.”

The developments of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the next decade anticipated by higher education researchers include some worst case scenarios, many mixed feelings, and also some positive expectations. Europe is regarded as the birthplace and cradle of the institution University and its cultural and historical heritage, its richness and diversity of academic traditions and institutional forms should be preserved and not abolished or substituted by models and structures from abroad, in particular from the United States. In order to strengthen the EHEA and make it more attractive distinctive European models and structures should be developed preserving existing diversity which is seen as an “inherent good” (Huisman).

Due to the existing time restrictions of the project no major surveys could be carried out to gain empirical evidence of this foresight-like part of the project. Instead, the contributors relied to a small extent on analyses of existing data sources and to a large extent on “synthetic judgement” (Marginson). Most papers (there are a few exceptions using a more historical approach, e.g. Neave, Välimaa) take current developments as a starting point and see the future as being clearly path dependent. This is the approach of almost all papers combined with an extensive review of the existing research literature on the respective topic.

The following developments are expected by a number of contributors. However, I'd like to point out that the expected developments are not always unidirectional and straightforward. The contributors to our project describe a number of nuances, contradict each other to some extent in their conclusions, and point at ambiguities.

- (a) *Challenges in achieving a diversified funding base:*
Reduced public funding of higher education and goal to further expand participation will lead to a strengthening of market mechanisms and privatisation (fees, private higher education). This might constitute a possible threat to issues of quality and equity. Contract funding and performance based funding will increase.

- (b) *A redefinition of higher education from public to private good and a commodification of knowledge production:*
The demand for more relevance will lead on the one hand to a commodification of knowledge production and on the other hand it will turn the relationship between teaching and learning into a provider-customer relationship. This might constitute a threat to other functions of the university pertaining to critical thinking, curiosity driven research and theorising.
- (c) *The growing concentration of research and its impact on the teaching-research nexus:*
The introduction of more market-like elements in the coordination of higher education will intensify competition and academic drift tendencies. The challenge to mimic research intensive, top level universities is stronger than the challenge to be unique or different. Rankings support this type of academic drift and threaten diversity. Furthermore, the competition might take on forms of an “academic arms race” (Dill) with high costs involved. Research will be concentrated more in protected and privileged top-level institutions while mass teaching will increasingly be concentrated in private institutions.
- (d) *A diminishing attractiveness of academic work:*
Vertical stratification and competition will also influence the attractiveness of academic work. There will be an increasing formalisation of the division of labour and changing conditions of academic work pointing in the direction of growing casualisation, the emergence of a primary and secondary academic labour market, and internal segmentation. Increasingly academics will be employees of the university rather than civil servants or employees of the state. Recruitment will become more complex. Despite the growing number of constraints no loss of professional autonomy is anticipated. The emergence of a European labour market is not yet visible as careers remain mostly national. However, there will be increased international recruitment for top positions.
- (e) *More governance, more market, more governors:*
The emergence of a higher education policy arena at the European level coupled with state deregulation, more institutional autonomy, and managerial approaches to institutional governance will not make state intervention superfluous but its traditional tasks and responsibilities will shift. On the one hand some tasks and responsibilities will “move up” to the EU level, others will “move down” to the institutional level, and again others will “move out” to agencies or private bodies (e.g. evaluation, accreditation etc.). More market does not imply less state as the state will be more strongly responsible to intervene in case of market failures and as contractor

of higher education services. At the European level a growing contractualisation of relationships is expected for which a common framework of rules will be necessary. At the same time there will be an increasing penetration of international conventions and declarations into domestic legal systems. This increasing number of interacting and overlapping layers of governance (by the state, by the market, by external agencies and stakeholders, by supra-national actors) affect the autonomy claimed to be given to the institutions and turn it into a conditional, even instrumentalised autonomy.

(f) *Agencification of quality assurance and establishment of instrumental forms of trust:*

Norm-based trust in European higher education (e.g. recognition based on estimates of equivalence) has been replaced by rationalist and instrumentalist forms of trust based on measurement and assessment. The effects of this shift have been an agencification of quality assurance and an emerging influence of private actors. Rankings support this shift and turn trust into a commodity. When norm-based trust is absent transaction costs will increase and legitimacy issues will appear on the agenda. Increased stratification will make the zones of mutual trust smaller and more clearly demarcated.

(g) *Less temporary student mobility and more degree mobility:*

The introduction of a tiered structure of study programmes and degrees is not necessary to facilitate temporary intra-European student mobility but will be an advantage for the increase of degree mobility of students from other parts of the world. But structured programmes are a barrier for recognition through trust. The increasing stratification of universities might become a problem for mobility as well. Furthermore, due to many opportunities to go abroad temporary student mobility is experiencing a decline in professional value. That might make internationalisation at home increasingly important. Academic staff mobility is less of a success story compared to student mobility and takes place mostly for purposes of research. In this context challenges for career models, employment conditions and social benefit systems are anticipated.

(h) *Heterogeneity of motives and purposes of doctoral education leading to a diversification of models:*

The increase in the number of doctoral students over the last ten to 15 years has not only led to a growing heterogeneity of purposes and motives for getting the degree but also to a proliferation of different models. Doctoral education currently is being reformed to give it more structure and ensure a systematic research training preparing for jobs also in non-academic labour markets. At the same time the focus is shifting away from the dominance of the product (thesis) to a focus

on the process. A further internationalisation of doctoral education is expected as part of the increase in degree mobility. For the time being there is less rather than more transparency and the EQF does not help to solve this problem.

3. Strategic Objectives and Targets

Not all contributors have explicitly defined strategic objectives and concrete targets to be achieved for the EHEA in the next decade. This is not surprising because the situation is complex and may not warrant setting clear-cut objectives and concrete targets. However, the analyses provide sufficient food for thought on these. The following strategic issues seem to emerge from the contributions:

- assuring the attractiveness and success of the EHEA;
- developing the emerging legal and institutional order by balancing national and supra-national responsibilities and institutional autonomy and considering appropriate systems configurations;
- balancing the needs and expectations of mobile and non-mobile students by more clearly distinguishing between degree and temporary mobility, intra-European mobility and mobility flows from outside Europe and utilising these forms of mobility in a more targeted manner to develop 'internationalisation at home';
- finding an appropriate balance between market induced competition and functional diversification, recruitment of best talent and guaranteeing equity and wider participation;
- preserving the teaching-research nexus and leaving space for critical thinking and curiosity driven research;
- enabling university to be responsive to external stakeholders while at the same time creating attractive working conditions for academic staff and high quality learning conditions for students;
- emphasizing the civic role of universities and their engagement with local and regional communities over their economic role and creating more trust based relationships;
- balancing knowledge production and research training for the knowledge intensive sectors of the economy and the role of universities as local repositories of global knowledge which can be accessed by everyone.

I will try to provide you with a summary which addresses different levels of policy making and defining strategic objectives, namely the European level, the national level and the institutional level. However, we need to keep in mind that policy making for higher education on all three levels is currently driven considerably by policy agendas generated outside of these levels or arenas: Globalisation and GATS, demographic changes and new technologies, public sector reforms, and economic competitiveness of nation states or world regions. At the same time all these issues will be mediated by national and

local settings so that we have to deal with a complex and truly “glonacal” (Marginson, Rhoades) configuration. This is particularly difficult for individual institutions to deal with and almost could be called a ‘mission stretch’.

3.1 *European Level*

Concerning strategic objectives and targets to achieve a sustainable future for the EHEA I will start with what Marginson very perceptively has termed “the European paradox” and which in various ways is also an issue with which other contributors have grappled. This “European paradox” can be described as follows: Innovation systems have been seen by policy makers in recent years as being flawed at national and European level because they are unable to turn basic research ideas into commercial products. Therefore universities have been pushed into a supply-side focus on linkages with industry (a push that Neave regards as part of an instrumentalisation of institutional autonomy). This has enhanced external networking and involvement of universities but did not generally foster increased industry demand for higher education research and development. Often this happened at the expense of long term basic research and curiosity driven work, thus making universities increasingly vulnerable to the vagaries of the market (Neave). This is a good example of what could be called mission stretch. Higher education in Europe is currently in a period with potential for a major re-balancing of internal and external relationships of authority, power and responsibility in university governance (Maassen) and the majority of contributors are concerned about some of the emerging trends and propose to find a better balance between conflicting and contradicting demands. Concerning the European level I will select four more general areas in which strategic objectives and targets have to be developed for the future of the EHEA: attractiveness, success, a legal order, and mobility.

Attractiveness of the EHEA

The attractiveness of the EHEA hinges on a number of conditions but in the forefront are conditions to make it an attractive labour market for academics, to make it an attractive place of study opportunities for students and to preserve its rich and diverse cultural heritage in terms of institutional cultures, teaching and learning styles and curricular diversity. In the majority of contributions warnings are issued against a too rigid separation of elite and mass institutions and a decoupling of the teaching-research nexus. Increased competition and the introduction of market-like elements are acceptable as long as European as well as national policy prevent an “academic arms race” on the one hand and protect systems and institutions against market failure on the other hand. A better balance of competing or even contradicting demands is needed which also entails that not only progress in implementation of reform goals should be monitored but policy makers should also ensure that progress is there for all (the equity issue). Instead of vertical stratification of institutions within Europe and within national systems, most contributors opt for establishing a horizontal and functional diversity.

Success of the EHEA

Many of the contributors have developed the view that a more even distribution of the means to achieve the common targets of the EHEA (and the ERA) is required. Participation of all in the network society is not only an issue of equity but also one of social cohesion. To achieve this goal targeted policies are needed (de Wit/Verhoeven). Brennan et al. pointed out that a key question for the EHEA is the extent to which a differentiation of higher education institutions maps onto and thereby re-enforces wider forms of social differentiation. The success of the EHEA can more likely be better achieved if measures are taken to counterbalance this trend.

A New Legal Order

Apart from the fact that a coordinated response at the European level is called for to deal with the (negative) effects of global competition, contributors also emphasized frequently that there should be policy interventions of the European level to maintain a balance between the economic and the wider social functions of universities. Taking this into account and translating it into issues for legal regulation de Groof emphasizes that market governance and competition will lead to the introduction and applicability of private law and competition law into the regulative frameworks of higher education. In addition there is the danger of a growing contractualisation of all kinds of relationships. His proposed agenda for legal issues to be dealt with at the European level comprises the following:

- inventions and ownership,
- contract research,
- the rights of researchers,
- professional status and careers of researchers,
- ventures.

Mobility

Some contributions pointed out a number of barriers for increased mobility of students, not least demographic changes and reduced value of temporary mobility for professional careers. Despite the fact that some further increase in intra-European student mobility is foreseen (although it will be increasingly degree mobility rather than temporary mobility) the emphasis is put on increased mobility of students from other parts of the world. For this no proper preparation is being made as yet. Growing proportions of mobile students from other parts of the world will impact on issues of quality, curricular change to accommodate their needs and expectations, the language in which programmes are delivered, and last but not least on home students and mobile students from Europe. Furthermore, a danger is foreseen that intra-European mobility will tend to concentrate in smaller zones of mutual trust among

institutions with similar quality and profiles. For these anticipated development guidelines are needed to deal with potential conflicts and tensions. The contribution of Barrier and Musselin focuses on the issue of academic careers and a growing casualisation of contracts and employment. In this context, issues of careers, social benefits, job security and pensions also need to be taken into account when promoting increased mobility and international recruitment of academic staff.

3.2 National Level

In the centre of policy issues and strategic objectives with regard to the national level are the ongoing reforms of the balance of authority, power and responsibility in governance. Should universities be granted more and more autonomy and left to fend for themselves on markets? What are the continued responsibilities of governments in the face of increasing deregulation? Why are higher education researchers increasingly concerned about the fact that for national level policy makers in the field of higher education the most important thing is to have an apex of highly protected and privileged “world-class” universities while the other institutions are being neglected? How can the tension be solved between increased participation which also needs increased funding and further cuts of public funding or concentration of resources? How can universities be equipped to function competitively in the transitional space between market and government? These are just a few questions being raised and addressed to the national level. I will again selectively present some points concerning strategic objectives and targets proposed for the national level in the context of assuring a sustainable future for the EHEA.

Markets and Competition

The message from the researchers is basically to strike a balance between national steering and market mechanisms. Universities should be protected by the state against market failures. Encouragement of institutions to diversify their funding base, improve their links with industry, become more international and more competitive is an accepted development. Universities should be supported to become more efficient actors in the knowledge driven society but not at the expense of basic research, critical thinking and theorising. One effect of the growing importance of competitiveness and pressures for better and better performance is a worsening of the conditions of academic work. If universities want to attract best talent they need to be provided with appropriate resources and conditions to make academic work more attractive and provide for more job satisfaction.

Social Equity

Widening participation and guaranteeing equity of access are important elements to foster social cohesion but will also need additional funding.

National policies have to be developed to achieve this and better ways have to be found to monitor the impacts of further expanded higher education systems. In cooperation with the universities governance and management arrangements should be developed reflecting wider public interests than those of the more immediately interested parties. Social equity issues will also come to the fore when increased degree mobility of students from other parts of the world will change the traditional forms and ways of internationalisation in higher education.

Legislation, Regulation, and Funding

Legislation and regulation should also support quality and equity. There is a continued need to balance horizontal and vertical diversification and to avoid rigid separation of mass and elite functions. At national as well as on the European level realistic ideas should be developed about the appropriate functional mix. Furthermore it is also suggested to develop a system of regulatory impact analysis (at national and European level) to reduce constraints and bureaucratic overload. Appropriate funding policies have to be developed. It is proposed to have a public debate and possibly a public consensus upon the need and the rationales for public funding of higher education. A worst case scenario would be the emergence of an underfunded privatised mass higher education sector and a privileged and protected elite sector. Finally, a growing contractualisation is observed in the relationships between higher education and the state as well as in intra-institutional relationships. This development might affect negatively normative forms of trust based on shared values, cultures and traditions.

Mobility

Concerning student mobility two proposals are put forward addressing the national level. The first one is to keep the systems open for mobile students from other parts of the world. The second one is to improve the strength and validity of data to be able to measure the impact of the Bologna Process on mobility. National student statistics have to be improved in order to achieve this.

3.3 *Institutional Level*

Universities are increasingly faced with the demand to be active and engaged on three levels: (a) They should serve the local or community and function as local or regional repositories of global knowledge enabling access to knowledge for everybody in the community; (b) they should contribute to the national innovation system and economic prosperity by producing relevant knowledge and competent graduates and by improving their links with businesses and industry; (c) they should be competitive in an international or even global context. Hardly any university will be able to be equally and equally successful engaged on all three levels. Together with a further

expected expansion in enrolments we are faced with the necessity of functional diversification. This should neither lead to an “academic arms race” with immense costs to the individual institution nor to a division into winners and losers nor to a much feared de-coupling of the teaching-research nexus. Despite the current preference of policy makers for “world-class” universities, the “others” have an equally important function in that they are talent pools and should be enabled to provide their students with high quality education. The strategic role of universities in providing access to knowledge, uphold appropriate values, transmit social skills and critically reflect on the developments of society and the nation is of utmost importance and should not be compromised.

Responsiveness to Stakeholders

Responsiveness of universities to stakeholders is all too often interpreted as increasing university-industry links and focusing on external stakeholder groups. Several contributors have emphasized that this interpretation is somewhat short-sighted. A notion of the “engaged university” (Watson/Temple) encompassing, even emphasizing universities’ role in and for the civic society might be able to solve the “European paradox”. Responsiveness to stakeholders also implies responsiveness to the needs and expectations of a growing number of mobile students from other parts of the world. It is as yet unclear how this might impact on issues of quality and curricular development but in general an increasingly heterogeneous body of students is one of the most important stakeholder groups of a university and all students should be offered high quality teaching which is research-based. Deteriorating working conditions and job satisfaction of academic staff is another issue in this context. To make European universities an attractive working place for the academic profession it is important to improve working conditions and have appropriate contracts.

Knowledge Production and Doctoral Training

Issues of improving the relevance of knowledge production and doctoral education have become increasingly important at the European, national and institutional level in recent years. This is an area to promote institutional cooperation while at the same time strengthening the international dimension of doctoral education and promote the degree as a key professional qualification. The various models into which doctoral education is currently being diversified reflect the growing heterogeneity of motives and purposes to embark on such a qualification. However, this requires also an effort for better information and more transparency. The EUA initiatives in this respect are a good beginning and should be complemented by a broad discussion and definition of what constitutes the particular form of “graduateness” doctoral students or candidates should have acquired when getting their degree. Doctoral students are an important part in the production of new knowledge and despite the fact that a more structured and systematic training is

supported which also prepares for work in research intensive sectors of the economy, universities have the responsibility to defend curiosity driven research and fostering a culture of creativity. Without this innovation will be much harder to achieve or can not be achieved at all.

Engagement and Trust

There is a necessity to develop institutional trust arrangements which can provide a sense of community and moral commitment. Adherence to professional academic standards is a fundamental building block for such kind of trust. Stability and integrity should not be given up in favour of short-term advantages. And this includes a role of universities as guardians and critics of cultural heritage as well as good civic engagement. Civic engagement can of course consist of a number of activities starting from service learning to outreach programmes and provision of lifelong learning opportunities. But the two issues which were emphasized most are (a) the role of universities in providing local access to global knowledge and (b) the role of universities in providing shared and open access facilities in sports, arts, libraries and information technology.

4. A View at the EHEA from Outside

It is interesting to note that our Australian colleague also emphasises that the activities which are shaping the EHEA have been generated from outside Europe and that the effects of the EHEA are playing out beyond Europe. Rankings strengthen external comparison but also threaten diversity. In addition, global rankings lead to research concentrations, global knowledge hubs and global knowledge cities. These new forms of global spatiality will re-enforce meta-national regionalisation, for which the creation of the EHEA and ERA are good examples. But there are also risks involved in this development. In Marginson's view the EHEA is so pre-occupied with intra-regional reforms that it is in danger of losing sight of the global setting leading to "strategic insularity". This danger will become even stronger if the global dimension is interpreted as a threat against which EHEA needs to protect itself. His proposal is: Rather than focusing on the global setting in competitive terms the EHEA should try to contribute to the global public good beyond Europe. Currently Europe is still rather blind with respect to China and other emerging knowledge societies in Asia. In addition, the United States are so advanced that trying to catch up or to compete with them is a futile exercise. The flaw of the Lisbon Strategy is that in it Europe imagines itself as first among equals with USA and Asia (esp. China and/or Japan) but these countries do not have equivalent global roles. Thus the EHEA and ERA reflect a rather narrow focus which does not cover the whole picture and in addition has a biased perspective. Marginson sees five areas for evolving external activities of the EHEA:

- to pay more attention to the formation and communication of a European higher education identity outside Europe;
- to put a priority emphasis on engagement with higher education in Asia and especially China;
- to establish a targeted programme of external initiatives in research, teaching, and institutional partnerships with Asia;
- to develop subsidized centres where research and global links have priority;
- to dismantle barriers to inward mobility of people and ideas.

In the forefront of Marginson's proposals of targets for the EHEA until 2020 is the suggestion to reformulate the Lisbon Agenda to aim at becoming the most *creative* and *globally engaged* higher education environment in the world and for Europe to become the most *innovative* knowledge driven economy.

5. Conclusions

Though the views of the researchers differ from each other to some extent, there is a shared concern about the achievements of some of the goals on the Bologna reform agenda. Sometimes more implicitly than explicitly the authors all point at the difficulty to implement policies in higher education and to bring about the intended change. This certainly is not surprising but less so because of the inertia of the institutions so often lamented about in public discourse. Instead the contributions to our project stress the ambiguity of the Bologna reform agenda, in particular if its relationship with the Lisbon Agenda is taken into account. Seen together these two reform or change processes send out a number of contradictory signals which we have tried to identify in the section on expected developments. Because of this it is difficult to come up with clear-cut answers about strategic objectives and concrete targets with respect to the developments of the EHEA in the coming decade. Most contributors have chosen a more modest approach in setting out directions and pointers for future policies and this is reflected in our conclusions as well.

A number of contributions have expressed more or less explicitly that further research is needed in order to provide more evidence-based policy and strategy recommendations. Although we do know a lot already, much of this knowledge is either lacks a proper empirical base or is limited either in analytical scope or depth due to time constraints.

We would like to conclude here with a few pointers to basic challenges which have to be confronted if a sustainable future for the EHEA is to be achieved.

- (1) It is necessary to find a **“European way”** to meet the future challenges and among other things this undertaking does indeed need an effort to build up (normative) trust. However, what characterises the “European way” more than anything is diversity, a diversity which seems not to be threatened by the Bologna Process so far and for which there is much agreement to maintain it.

- (2) Hence, there is a fundamental challenge as such to move Europe jointly forward while maintaining **diversity** as both a characteristic feature of the “European way” and an aim as such.
- (3) Diversity may be applied as a concept to a number of possible **scenarios** and actually is in one way or another linked to almost every contribution of the project. It can be applied to the following scenarios:
- functional, geographical or stratified diversity;
 - diversity of the student population and the issue of equity;
 - diversity of qualifications and skills needed by society and economy;
 - diversity of markets in which universities will have to compete and to which they will offer their services;
 - diversity of stakeholder groups with which universities will have to interact and the interests and needs of which they will have to take into account;
 - diversity of funding sources which will have to be developed in order to enable flexible responses to new needs and demands;
 - diversity of networks and forms of cooperation to be forged and joined by universities.
- (4) Last but not least the biggest challenge might be to develop and launch overarching policies at the European level to maintain and achieve diversity in order to demonstrate the **openness** of European higher education systems and institutions to the world rather than establishing a (symbolic) ‘fortress’ against it.

I thank you for your attention.

Contributors and Contributions to the Project (in lieu of a bibliography):

Barrier, Julien & Christine Musselin (Sciences Po and CNRS, Paris, France):
The Rationalisation of Academic Work and Careers: Ongoing
Transformations of the Profession and Policy Challenges.

Brennan, John, Rajani Naidoo & Kavita Patel (CHERI, London and University
of Bath, UK): Quality, Equity and the Social Dimension: The Shift from
National to European Level.

De Boer, Harry, Jürgen Enders & Ben Jongbloed (CHEPS, University of
Twente, Netherlands): Market Governance in Higher Education.

De Groof, Jan (College of Europe, Brussels, Belgium; University of Tilburg,
Netherlands, Government Commissioner for Universities, Flemish
Community Belgium): European Higher Education in Search of a New
Legal Order.

De Wit, Kurt & Jef C. Verhoeven (University of Leuven, Belgium): Features
and Future of the Network Society: The Demographic, Technological
and Societal Context of Higher Education.

Huisman, Jeroen (International Centre for Higher Education Management,
University of Bath, UK): The Bologna Process Towards 2020: Institu-
tional Diversification or Convergence?

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