

Executive summary

Outline of the 2007 stocktaking report

This report on the Bologna Process stocktaking was prepared for the London Ministerial meeting in May 2007. The report has three parts.

Part 1 explains the background to the 2007 stocktaking exercise, linking it to the findings of the 2005 stocktaking report and to the Bergen Communiqué. It also describes the methodology that was used in the 2007 stocktaking.

Part 2 includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of the stocktaking results.

Part 3 draws conclusions about progress towards achieving the goals that were set by the Ministers in Bergen and makes recommendations for the future based on the analysis of the 2007 stocktaking results.

Summary of findings from the 2007 stocktaking

There are three main findings from the 2007 stocktaking:

1. There has been good progress in the Bologna Process since Bergen.
2. The outlook for achieving the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010 is good, but there are still some challenges to be faced.
3. Stocktaking works well as an integral part of the Bologna Process strategy.

Conclusion 1

There has been good progress in the Bologna Process since Bergen

The 2007 scorecard shows that the overall picture within the Bologna Process is much more “green” than it was in 2005. The stocktaking results show that there has been considerable progress towards achieving the goals set by the Ministers in Bergen.

Good progress on the three-cycle degree system

The three-cycle degree system is now at an advanced stage of implementation across the participating countries. The access from one cycle to the next has improved, and there is a trend towards providing structured doctoral programmes.

Work has started on implementing national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Some elements of flexible learning paths in higher education exist in all countries. In some countries they are at a more developed stage and include procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

Good progress on quality assurance

Implementation of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, adopted in Bergen, has started on a widespread basis.

Student involvement in quality assurance has grown significantly since 2005, while there is more work to be done on extending the level of international participation.

Good progress on recognition of degrees and study periods

There is good progress towards incorporating the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in national legislation and institutional practice. However, not all countries have yet ratified the Convention.

Countries have developed national action plans to improve the quality of their recognition processes.

There is potential for a significant increase in the number of joint degrees awarded in two or more countries. Legal barriers to the recognition of joint degrees have been largely removed.

Higher education institutions have begun to recognise prior learning (including non-formal and informal learning) for access to higher education programmes and qualifications. However there is more work to be done in this area.

Linking higher education and research

Many countries are strengthening the links between the higher education and research sectors.

Some countries have concrete plans to increase the numbers of doctoral graduates taking up research careers.

Conclusion 2

The outlook for achieving the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010 is good, but there are still some challenges to be faced

There has been good progress up to now, however it is not uniform across all countries and all action lines. There is a need to look ahead and focus on reaching all the goals of the Bologna Process in each participating country by 2010.

The Bologna Process is an effective catalyst for reform at national level

The Bologna Process has driven the process of higher education reform at national level. Higher education institutions, their staff and students, business and social partners, and international organisations are more actively engaged as partners in implementing the Bologna Process than was previously the case.

The sharing of expertise has contributed to building capacity at both institutional and national levels so that there has been measurable progress across all participating countries.

There is a need to link all the action lines

While the 2007 stocktaking found that there has been good progress on specific action lines and indicators, it is not enough to look at these in isolation because all aspects of the Bologna Process are interdependent. There are two themes that link all action lines: a focus on *learners*, and a focus on *learning outcomes*.

If the Bologna Process is to be successful in meeting the needs and expectations of learners, all countries need to use learning outcomes as a basis for their national qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance. This is a precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010.

Conclusion 3

Stocktaking works well as an integral part of the Bologna Process strategy

Stocktaking within the Bologna Process involves collaborative peer-reported self-evaluation, which has been effective in encouraging countries to take action at national level. All countries have made progress, and stocktaking has made the progress visible.

From the experience of both the 2005 and 2007 stocktaking exercises, it is clear that stocktaking within the Bologna Process works best when it is an integral part of a goal-driven development strategy that includes five “steps to success”:

1. Agree the policy goals, linking them to a vision for the future that is shared by all participating countries
2. Set targets to be achieved within a certain time frame (make sure they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed: SMART)

3. Take action at national level and collectively (provide relevant support, share good practice, encourage peer collaboration)
4. Review progress individually: self-evaluation using agreed criteria (scorecard) complemented by qualitative reporting
5. Evaluate achievement collectively (stocktaking).

Recommendations from the 2007 stocktaking

Recommendation to Ministers

Set clear policy goals and specific targets for the next period of the Bologna Process, especially in the areas of the third cycle, employability, recognition, lifelong learning, flexible learning paths and the social dimension.

Recommendations for countries

1. Work towards fully implementing a national qualifications framework based on learning outcomes by 2010.
2. Link the development of the qualifications framework to other Bologna action lines, including quality assurance, credit transfer and accumulation systems, lifelong learning, flexible learning paths and the social dimension.
3. Ensure that progress is promoted across all action lines, including the more challenging aspects that are not easily and immediately attainable.
4. Make formal links between the Bologna Process and the ENIC/NARIC (European Network of Information Centres/ National Academic Recognition Information Centre) network to undertake further work on developing and implementing national action plans for recognition.

Recommendations for future stocktaking

Repeat the stocktaking in 2009, with the close collaboration of other partner organisations, including Eurydice European Unit, European University Association (EUA) and ESIB (National Unions of Students in Europe), in setting out the timetable and the arrangements for data collection and analysis.